

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### Introduction

The education of students with disabilities has been a significant international educational issue over the last twenty years (Hall, 1997). Western Australia (W.A.), like the other states in Australia, has not been immune to this trend. Here, the impact has been not only on the State's public education system but also on the various non-government education systems, including the Catholic system.

Between 1982 and 1997, a series of changes occurred in the policy of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (CECWA) with regard to the education of students with disabilities. The particular concern of the study reported in this dissertation was to analyse this situation. The study, located within the interpretivist tradition, was one based largely on the adoption of qualitative research methods of data gathering and analysis.

The general background to the study is the increasing interest in the education of children with disabilities. During the last quarter of the twentieth century, major attitudinal changes have taken place in Western society with regard to people with disabilities. These attitudinal changes have been part of broader, historical changes originating in the civil rights movement of the 1960s. As Semmel, Gerber and MacMillan (1995, p. 48) put it, the reformation in the education of children with disabilities world-wide in the late

1970s and early 1980s was “primarily a reaction to civil rights concerns already permeating school reform of the late 1960s”. While there was considerable diversity in some countries, the trends in the U.S.A. and the U.K. during the two-decade period following the mid-1970s signalled that the disability rights movement was becoming stronger and more influential in public life (Zola, 1994). In the period under discussion in this dissertation, namely 1982 – 97, the validity of the rights of people with disabilities, pushed by the social forces emphasising the importance of autonomy and justice, continued to be recognised (Rioux, 1994). Consequently, de-institutionalisation and greater autonomy became the norm for people with disabilities throughout the world.

CECWA policy with regard to the education of students with disabilities during the period 1982 – 97 was predominantly a reflection of the disability rights movement taking place worldwide. As such, it had its foundations largely independent of Catholic educational philosophy. Nevertheless, as the sixteen-year period progressed, CECWA policy became increasingly legitimated by Catholic theology and associated theory as expressed in official Catholic Church documents. Furthermore, by the end of the overall period, Catholic educational philosophy was becoming a significant force, albeit still a minor one, in influencing policy; forces arising out of the social justice impetus within the broader society remained dominant.

The various forces which impacted on CECWA policy with regard to the education of students with disabilities are identified and defined throughout the dissertation and in relation to each of the three sub-periods in which they were effective, namely 1982 - 86, 1987 - 91 and 1992 - 97. Furthermore, the relative effect of these forces varied during each of these sub-periods. For example, state government inquiries proved to be one of the dominant forces during the sub-period 1982 - 86. However, by the third sub-period, namely 1992 – 97, parent advocacy groups had become very influential.

The remainder of this chapter is an introduction to the dissertation. First, it explains the purpose of the study in more detail. Secondly, an overview on the context of the study is considered. Thirdly, an overview of the theoretical framework within which the research was located is defined. Fourthly, an overview of the research methods used in the study is presented. Fifthly, a definition of terms is given. Finally, the structure of the dissertation is outlined.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Policy analyses in Australian education can contribute to an understanding of the relationship between schools, society, and the realisation of the human potential (Prunty, 1984). They also enable us to examine the links between government and bureaucratic policy and practice within educational institutions (Crump, 1993). This dissertation reports a study that investigated educational policy with regard to children with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools in such a way as to allow for such a broad level of analysis.

The particular purpose of the study reported in this dissertation was to analyse the policy of the CECWA with regard to the education of students with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools from 1982 - 97. However, the significant changes that occurred in W.A. Catholic schools in relation to children with disabilities over the period have to be viewed within a wider context. In particular, the social justice movement that originated in the U.S.A and the U.K. in the 1960s strongly influenced Australian attitudes with regard to people with disabilities (Freeman, 1992). In Catholic schools in W.A., these attitudes resulted in a gradual change taking place with regard to the enrolment and education of students with disabilities in the period 1982 - 97.

Although there is evidence to suggest that students with disabilities were attending Catholic schools in W.A. as early as the 1940s, the first policy document that acknowledged the enrolment of such children, *Pupil Enrolment Policy and Practice* (CECWA, 1983), was formulated only in 1983. This policy document demonstrated cognisance of the many initiatives in Catholic schools with regard to the enrolment and education of students with disabilities. However, it also recognised that there were many limitations in the education offered. Three issues in particular that concerned many people associated with Catholic schools in W.A. at this time were highlighted. These were as follows: the restricted availability of services to students with disabilities; an ignorance of the number, location and type of disability of the students in W.A. Catholic schools; and a lack of funding.

In the period that followed the release of *Pupil Enrolment Policy and Practice* (CECWA, 1983), many formal and informal changes in the organisation of services for students with intellectual and physical disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools took place. However, the official written policy with regard to such students was reformulated on just two occasions. In 1988, *Special Education Policy* (CECWA, 1988) was produced, followed by *Students with Special Needs - The Enrolment and Integration of Students with Disabilities* (CECWA, 1992) in 1992. Each of these two policy documents, along with the original document of 1983, constitute key focal points for engaging in an analysis of the policy of the CECWA with regard to students with disabilities during the period 1982 - 97.

As the titles of the CECWA policy documents signify, CECWA policy with regard to students with disabilities underwent a gradual transformation between 1982 and 1997. The emphasis in this dissertation, however, extends beyond an analysis of these documents only. It takes the position that since policy is best thought of as a relational practice at all levels of the educational hierarchy (Fulcher, 1989), the significance of the documents

needs to be considered within a broader context which keeps three considerations in mind. The first of these considerations relates to the need for an identification of the initial reasons behind the development of each of the policy documents. The second consideration relates to the need for an investigation into the relation between the policy documents and what was actually occurring with regard to students with disabilities in Catholic schools in W.A. The third consideration relates to a need for an evaluation of how influential the documents were in affecting school change.

### **Context of the Study**

The nature of educational institutions was changed dramatically with the introduction of compulsory education into Australian states in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Before compulsory education was legislated, children with learning difficulties were often denied access to formal education, thus limiting their future opportunities (Casey, 1994). In the main, education for children with disabilities was considered inappropriate (Doenau, 1984). On this, of course, Australian society was simply mirroring other societies that also underwent periods in which the rights of people with disabilities were considered less legitimate than those of others. The history of Western ideas, attitudes and service delivery to people with disabilities has been summarised in terms of four motivating considerations, namely “threat to survival, superstition, science and service” (Hewett & Forness, 1984). Casey (1994, p. 7) contends that to these four variables “could be added a fifth variable, ‘rights’, that has substantially influenced the social acceptance of, and delivery of services (including education) to, people with disabilities”.

Internationally, it was the social justice movement that prompted a radical change in mainstream attitudes towards several minority or disadvantaged groups in the 1960s. As this movement gathered momentum, the concern for the rights of minority groups began to include a widespread acceptance of the

right of all persons to participate fully in the mainstream community (Fulcher, 1989; Cocks, Fox, Brogan & Lee, 1996; Foreman, 1996). Stemming from the social justice movement was the increased worldwide awareness of the rights of people with disabilities.

However, despite the 'battles' fought, the gaining of rights for people with disabilities seemed to be progressing quite slowly until about just two decades ago, when a number of important legislative decisions began to signify that progress in this area was being made. In some countries, legislation was enacted to address the discrepancies between opportunities in the community available to the able-bodied and people with disabilities. The *Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons* (United Nations, 1971) and the *Declaration of the Rights of Disabled Persons* (United Nations, 1975) were followed in the United States of America by the *Education for All Handicapped Children's Act* (1976) (Doenau, 1984). In the United Kingdom, the British *Education Act* (1981) legislated many of the recommendations of the *Special Educational Needs: Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People* (1978), known also as the Warnock Report. This report had examined the state of education and schooling for children with disabilities in the late 1970s. In Australia at this time, the Federal and state parliaments began to promulgate anti-discrimination legislation that highlighted the needs of children with disabilities (Casey, 1994).

In the period under review, namely 1982 - 97, there was an increased awareness internationally of the rights of people with disabilities. This awareness was heightened by the United Nations declaring 1981 as the *International Year of the Disabled Person* (Doenau, 1984). The declaration signalled an international belief about accepting the basic rights of people with disabilities (Casey, 1994).

Viewed from a wider perspective, the period of concern in this dissertation was one of great change in education in general. Against this background, the push for greater access and opportunity for students with disabilities took place as economic rationalist governments attempted to restructure education in many Western countries (Goddard, 1992; Clark, Dyson, Millward & Skidmore, 1997). This restructuring of mainstream education produced, in turn, intense pressure to restructure education for students with disabilities (Zigmond, 1993).

Many of the international trends that emerged in Australia during the period 1982 – 97 not only mirrored international trends but also reflected very different attitudes to those which existed fifty years earlier (Gow, 1989). People with disabilities began to be seen as consumers with equal rights. This, in turn, resulted in service providers extending and individualising services more than they had in the past. In this context, governments, system and school administrators, along with teachers and parents, began to look critically at the educational provisions, facilities and infrastructures and to suggest improvements and alternatives (Clark *et al.*, 1997).

With regard to the education and schooling of people with disabilities, a worldwide educational argument gaining prominence during this sixteen-year period centred on the right of students with disabilities to be educated within regular school settings. Supporters of this practice, known variously as 'inclusion', 'mainstreaming' or 'integration' (Chalmers, 1994; Thomas, 1997), argued that all students, irrespective of the degree of sensory, physical or intellectual disability, have the right to learn in the most educationally enhancing environment. Others, however, argued that the practice, while based on the philosophy of normalisation, "is more an ideological commitment than an empirically validated solution to educating students with special needs" (Elkins, 1994, p. 101).

In W.A., students with disabilities are enrolled in both government and non-government schools, although, as this study identifies, the proportions have altered greatly, particularly in the past two decades. While the W.A. Catholic school system is the focus of this study, the impact of the policies of other non-government and government agencies, including those of the W.A. Education Department, were influential in W.A. and are discussed throughout this dissertation.

### **An Overview of the Theoretical Framework**

In terms of educational policy analysis, there has been an increasing amount of literature generated in the past two decades. However, while there are several approaches to policy analysis, that of Ham and Hill (1993) was deemed appropriate for the present context as it accommodates the considerable complexity of educational institutions. They compare and contrast various definitions of policy analysis, argue that policy analysis occurs as the result of a web of complicated events and contend that the political agenda of people associated with these events often means that analysis of policy is rarely value free. At the same time, they believe it is possible to make precise distinctions between different kinds of policy analysis. On this, they cite Hogwood and Gunn's (1981) distinction between 'knowledge of policy' and 'knowledge in the policy process'. This study of the policy of the CECWA with regard to students with disabilities in Catholic schools from 1982 – 97, is an analysis of policy.

Because of Ham and Hill's (1993) notion that policy occurs as a result of complicated events, a qualitative approach to the research was adopted. In particular, an interpretivist position was deemed appropriate. This approach is based on the assumption that people act for a variety of reasons based on the meanings they have of certain others, events and 'things' (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).



Blumer developed this position in the form of three major propositions (Woods, 1992). The first proposition is that human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings they have for them. The second proposition is that the meanings of such things are derived from or arise out of the social interaction one has with others. The third proposition is that meanings are handled in and modified through an interpretive process used by the person dealing with the things encountered. These three propositions partly determine the nature of the guiding questions that are asked in studies that are underpinned by:

... a model of person as a constructor, creator or copier, continually interacting with the world, adjusting means to ends, and sometimes ends to means, both influencing and being influenced by structures. (Woods, 1992, p. 338).

There are three major reasons to justify such a qualitative approach being applied to policy studies. First, the concern that qualitative researchers have for 'meaning' is consistent with one of the foci of a policy study, namely the comparison between policy documents and policy in the empirical world. Secondly, qualitative researchers are concerned with process. The policy study reported in this dissertation uses interviews and documents to examine perspectives towards children with disabilities and to then investigate how these perspectives are translated into daily practice. Thirdly, qualitative studies have the natural setting as the direct source of data. All of the interviewees in this study were interactively involved in policy formulation with regard to students with disabilities.

### **An Overview of the Research Methods**

The policy study reported in this dissertation, located within the interpretivist tradition, adopted qualitative research methods of data gathering and

analysis. These qualitative research methods, underpinned by a belief that meaning and process are crucial in understanding human behaviour, influenced the guiding questions for the research. Initially, four guiding questions were developed to guide the analysis of CECWA policy with regard to students with disabilities during the period 1982 – 97:

- 1). In the period leading up to the emergence of each major policy document, what were the different understandings that the various stakeholders had with regard to the education of students with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools?
- 2). What were the characteristics of the CECWA policy in each of its major policy documents on the education of students with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools?
- 3). Which stakeholders dominated (and why) with regard to the eventual written policies?
- 4). During the implementation phase following the publication of each main policy document, what, if any, were the changes in the stakeholders' understandings of CECWA policy with regard to the education of students with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools?

It needs to be emphasised that these were only guiding questions. It was accepted from the outset that while these seemed to be the most intelligent questions to guide the study in the first instance, other questions were likely to suggest themselves as the study unfolded.

Data gathering took place using two of the major approaches of qualitative researchers, namely, document study and interviews. The document study commenced in 1995 and continued throughout the period of the research. Apart from the three key CECWA policy documents, further documents were obtained from Catholic Education Office (CEO) personnel and school administrators. The minutes of the meetings of the Catholic Education

Commission of Western Australia (CECWA) constituted another source of data.

The interviews were semi-structured and were conducted throughout 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998 and 1999. The interview framework initially consisted of a list of questions developed from the guiding questions. It was adjudged that interviews with a diverse range of people would yield a richness of data that would further enable a comprehensive analysis of policy. Accordingly, the population for this study involved twenty-five personnel who have occupied key positions pertaining to Catholic education in W.A. since the formation of the CECWA in 1971. These included school principals, parents, teachers, CEO personnel, CECWA members, bishops and priests.

Throughout the study, the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) of developing and verifying theory was used. The constant comparative method is one in which the researcher simultaneously codes and analyses data in order to build propositions (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). As the data collection progresses, these propositions are refined, discarded or fully developed.

### **Definition of Terms**

The use of the terms 'CECWA', 'students with disabilities' and 'special education' each require clear definition. Accordingly, the way in which each term is used in this dissertation will now be defined in turn.

In W.A., as in all Australian states and territories, a public school system and the non-government schools, including all Catholic schools, operate independently of each other. The Catholic education system constitutes a

significant part of W.A. education. It has evolved from a number of independently administered schools in the middle of the nineteenth century to an education system in its own right. An analysis of CECWA annual reports during the period examined in this dissertation, 1982 - 97, demonstrated that the Catholic sector catered, on average, for 19 per cent of the student population of W.A.

The origins of Catholic education in W.A. are in 1843 with the establishment of the Swan River Colony's first Catholic school. In over 150 years of operation, Catholic education has grown from this single school with thirty students to over 150 schools for over 50 000 students in 1998. Throughout its history, decentralisation has been a distinguishing feature of Catholic education in W.A., with members of the Catholic community sharing the responsibility for the provision of schools and other educational facilities.

In 1971, the CECWA was set up by the Bishops of W.A. specifically to assist the community to make provision for Catholic education in the state. Its executive office, the CEO, came into existence in 1973. The CECWA exercises its responsibilities through the CEO in Perth and through its regional offices in Broome, Bunbury and Geraldton (CECWA, 1993). The CECWA comprises twelve volunteer members who meet monthly and who represent a broad range of interest groups. The CECWA operates with four standing committees that make recommendations and provide it with advice. Each standing committee operates within specific terms of reference. Issues regarding students with disabilities are raised in the first instance at meetings of the 'Religious Development and Education Committee' which are held quarterly (CECWA, 1993).

In the first decade of operation, the distinction between the CECWA and the CEO was not clear in the minds of most people (Bowler, 1981). During this time, school personnel expressed strong fears about the growth and influence

of the CEO. However, the CECWA members were almost exclusively dependent on the CEO personnel for the information on which their decisions were based (Bowler, 1981). Therefore, despite a recommendation in a 1981 report for the members of the CECWA to have greater knowledge of, and more involvement in, the CEO's operations, the CECWA continued to decide only broad and very general matters of policy (Furtado, 1986).

At the same time, due to the continued growth of Catholic education and the increased accountability requirements of government, the CEO, of necessity, gradually increased its role. In a study of the CECWA from 1971 – 84, Furtado (1986) drew an analogy between the CEO and the public service. By this he meant that the CEO had come to be understood as the *de facto* authority of the CECWA.

Throughout this dissertation, the CECWA and the CEO are differentiated where appropriate. However, it is important to understand that in analysing CECWA policy, cognisance needs to be taken of the strong influence of CEO personnel. Therefore, any references to CECWA policy contain the assumption that most of the initiation, development and implementation of policy has its origins in the CEO. Through a number of standing committee, it is the CEO staff who inform the CECWA of changing educational trends.

The term 'students with disabilities' as used in this dissertation, also needs to be clearly defined. According to Foreman (1996) and Hickson (1990), most medical and educational bodies are today beginning to adopt authoritative World Health Organisation (1980) definitions to distinguish between 'impairment', 'disability' and 'handicap'; terms which are sometimes used interchangeably. On this, Hickson (1990, p. 3) concludes that "an impairment is a medical condition, a disability is a functional consequence of this, and a handicap is a social consequence".

There is considerable agreement among many researchers (Fulcher, 1989; Gow, 1990; Hickson, 1990) that it is unacceptable to use the terms 'handicap' and 'disability' interchangeably since whether a disability becomes a handicap depends on a variety of factors, including:

... the severity and prognosis of the disability, the extent to which it interferes with the individual's everyday life, the individual's self-perception, and the attitudes of other members of society. (Hickson, 1990, p. 3);

In this dissertation, the term 'students with disabilities' is defined as students assessed as having intellectual, sensory, physical, social, emotional or multiple impairments that satisfy the criteria for enrolment in special services provided by the state authorities.

Throughout this dissertation, the term 'special education' is used to refer to those forms of education that are provided exclusively for children with disabilities. By contrast, a range of terms, namely 'inclusive', 'integrated', 'regular' and 'mainstream' are used throughout the dissertation to indicate those forms of education that are not regarded as part of the 'special education' provisions.

### **Structure of the Dissertation**

There are nine chapters in this dissertation. Following this introductory chapter, two contextual chapters are provided. Chapter Two is an historical examination of perspectives on people with disabilities, with particular reference to developments within the state sectors. Chapter Three is a brief analysis of the development of Catholic education and a contextual overview of Catholic educational philosophy with regard to people with disabilities.

Concomitant with the attitudinal changes that have taken place with regard to people with disabilities since the 1960s, has been a burgeoning research literature with regard to students with disabilities. A review of this literature is included in Chapter Four. This chapter also includes a review of the literature concerned with policy studies on students with disabilities, with particular reference to Catholic education.

Chapter Five focuses on the methodology used in the research. This includes an outline of the theoretical positions underlying the research. The data gathering and data analysis methods used in the study are also outlined.

Chapters Six, Seven and Eight are three chronological chapters, each of which analyses CECWA policy with regard to students with disabilities. Each of the three CECWA policy documents, namely *Pupil Enrolment Policy and Practice* (CECWA, 1983), *Special Education Policy* (CECWA, 1988) and *Students with Special Needs - The Enrolment and Integration of Students with Disabilities* (CECWA, 1992) provide key focal points for engaging in this analysis of the policy of the CECWA for each of the sub-periods during the period 1982 – 97. Accordingly, Chapter Six reviews the sub-period 1982 to 1986, Chapter Seven reviews the sub-period 1987 to 1991, and Chapter Eight reviews the sub-period 1992 to 1997.

Chapter Nine summarises the study and identifies a number of common themes. It also makes a number of recommendations for future research and for the improvement of practice.

## CHAPTER 2

### AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF PERSPECTIVES ON PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

#### Introduction

An historical understanding of changes in perspectives on disability that have taken place in society and, more specifically in educational institutions, allows the reader to more accurately contextualise the policy of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (CECWA) with regard to the education of students with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools during the period 1982 – 97. This chapter is the first of two chapters which provides such an understanding. It does so in three ways. First, a general international perspective is provided. Secondly, national developments up until the period of this study, namely 1982 – 97, are considered. Finally, developments in W.A. up until the period 1982 – 97, are examined and discussed. Overall, the emphasis is very much on developments within state sectors. The next chapter goes on to examine developments within the Catholic context.

#### **Historical & International Perspectives**

Early Greek civilisations found people with disabilities to be a burden in their efforts, first, to survive and, later, to purify their race (Pritchard, 1963). The Athenians, even in the time of Plato, killed their deaf children. In Sparta, the laws approved the abandonment of ‘idiots’ and the exposure of handicapped infants to extreme weather conditions to ensure their death (Casey, 1994).



In the Christian era, the teachings of Christ and the Hebraic Law became known. The Christian and Hebraic laws highlighted the importance of people with disabilities being assisted. Consequently, attitudes towards people with disabilities softened (Pritchard, 1963).

This benign approach to people with disabilities altered in the Middle and Dark Ages. During these periods, societies began to look for the meaning of a disability. Intellectual disability in particular began to be associated with witchcraft and heresy (Casey, 1994; Digby, 1996). Later, when witchhunts were common, those with obvious handicaps in the community were especially scrutinised for evidence of evil possession (Condon, 1983). This idea of mental illness being a punishment from God or an association with the devil, lasted until well into the eighteenth century (Coleman, 1976; Digby, 1996).

It was not until the middle of the 1700s that the first documented research into the education of children with disabilities occurred (Pritchard, 1963; Sutherland, 1981). Schooling for children with disabilities came about as a consequence of educational and social trends that had begun with mainstream schooling. However, since the majority of children didn't begin to attend school on a regular basis until well into the nineteenth century, schooling for children with disabilities was not available until even later. The provision of formal education for children with disabilities has, therefore, been a relatively recent phenomenon.

There were other reasons throughout much of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for little action being taken to assist the education of children with an intellectual disability (Descourdes, 1928; Pritchard, 1963). The main reason, as explained by Pritchard (1963, p. 9), was that:

.... many of those whom we would now consider to be educationally sub-normal would not in the

eighteenth century be noticeably backward. When the ability to read or write is possessed by few, those who cannot read or write do not stand out. The child who would later be termed feeble-minded could successfully labour with his equally illiterate fellows.

It was only when a greater proportion of the population gained access to a formal education that the learning disabilities of many of the children with an intellectual disability became identifiable.

Some argue that the true origins of the education of children with disabilities can be identified in France in the middle of the eighteenth century (Casey, 1994). Schools for deaf and blind students were established and “this pattern of development of schools for students with sensory disabilities first, and other special schools much later, was repeated throughout the Western world” (Casey, 1994, p. 8). Edouard Sequin founded the world’s first school for children with intellectual disabilities in France in the 1830s. Later, he emigrated to the United States of America where several schools based upon his teaching model had also begun operating (Ashman & Elkins, 1994).

As the nineteenth century progressed, attitudes towards people with disabilities continued to alter in many countries. Consequently, educational provision for people with an intellectual disability during the late nineteenth century in Europe developed quickly. On this, Pritchard (1963, p. 115) stated:

The first official provision ... was made in Prussia when, in 1867, Dresden established a day school. Other German towns, including Elberfeld, followed suit. In 1880, the German Minister for Education, impressed by the success of the schools, called upon all towns with a population of over 20 000 to open similar schools. By 1894 there were thirty-two such schools with nearly 2500 children. Similar schools had also opened in Austria, Switzerland, Denmark and Norway.

In England, however, preparedness to cater for students with intellectual disabilities during this period was not as enthusiastic. Nevertheless, the Great Britain Education Acts of 1870, 1876 and 1880 brought universal, compulsory education, resulting in large numbers of students, all with varying physical, intellectual or learning disabilities congregating in schools (Pritchard, 1963; Ashman & Elkins, 1994). Accordingly, responses were required. By the turn of the century, seven of the largest school boards had established special classes for children with a mild – moderate intellectual disability (Hurt, 1988). The majority of children with a more severe intellectual disability, however, were denied access to formal education and, instead, accommodated in asylums or workhouses (O'Donoghue & Chalmers, 1998).

In terms of the educational provision for children with disabilities, the changes being made in Great Britain and Europe were impeded, however, by “the general acceptance of social Darwinism late in the nineteenth century” (Casey, 1994, p. 10). On this, Casey stated (p. 10):

It was the application of Darwin's concepts of survival of the fittest and natural selection to current western society that prompted many to see the upgrading of educational opportunity for the retarded and interference in this natural developing process.

As a consequence, children with disabilities, particularly those with an intellectual disability, were frequently assessed as ineducable and, therefore, were denied access to any formal education.

The twentieth century has, in general terms, been a time of enlightenment with regard to people with disabilities. The last half of the twentieth century has been characterised by considerable attitudinal changes taking place towards minority groups in Western societies and, in particular, a growing awareness of the rights of people with disabilities. In Australia, for example, people with disabilities have increasingly moved from segregated settings to

live and work within the general community in recent times. This, in turn, has been accompanied by a new philosophy underlying the education of students with disabilities (Shean, 1995; Foreman, Dempsey, Robinson & Conway, 1996).

In some countries, legislation has been the major catalyst for the 'normalisation' movement with regard to people with disabilities:

Legislative enactments and judicial decisions of the 1970s regarding the rights of the handicapped have nurtured a developing positive climate for exceptional persons within our society. Human rights, once denied the handicapped, are now more fully accorded them. Society's attitude toward meeting the need of exceptional people has thus undergone a major shift (Mandell & Fiscus, 1981, p. 26).

In terms of education, the rights of all children to be included in the education system in the United Kingdom were recognised in the 1970 Education (Handicapped Children) Act. This was followed by the *Special Educational Needs: Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People* (Warnock, 1979), also known as the Warnock Report. A major recommendation of this Report was the right of every child to be educated in a regular school provided that this was compatible with the needs of the child receiving the required 'special education' provisions, with other children not being disadvantaged, and with the parents' wishes.

In other countries, the theme of inclusive schooling had varied introductions. It was the repealing of 'special education' legislation that 'normalised' conditions for students with disabilities in Denmark, while in Norway, inclusion in its broadest sense existed since the inception of comprehensive schools (Fulcher, 1989). In the United States of America, the impetus for change came with the passage of the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act* through the Congress in 1975 (Ashman & Elkins, 1994). This Act asserted that, as far as possible, children with disabilities should be included in regular

school settings. In individual countries, therefore, there was considerable diversity in the way that cultures responded to the educational needs of children with disabilities.

### **The Australian Perspective**

Australia was only thirty years old as a British colony when welfare work began. In 1813, the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge and Benevolence was formed and in 1820 in Sydney, this society first admitted abandoned children to their orphanage. However, it was not until the latter half of the nineteenth century that the first special schools were founded specifically for students with sensory disabilities (Casey, 1994). A school for the hearing-impaired opened in Sydney in 1880 and a school for the visually impaired opened in Melbourne in 1886 (Ward, Bochner, Center, Outhred & Pieterse, 1987).

In the latter half of the nineteenth century in Australia, the need for special programs for children with intellectual disabilities and mental illness was being recognised by the appropriate state authorities. There are records of institutions in Sydney (1872), Melbourne (1889) and Adelaide (1898) all developing and implementing programs for children with disabilities. In Victoria, the Education Act of 1890 gave the government the power to establish special schools and the first of these was opened in 1897 (Casey, 1994).

By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, the prevailing attitudes towards people with disabilities still appeared to be one of 'out of sight, out of mind' (Casey, 1994). Almost all services with regard to the diagnosis and treatment of children with an intellectual disability were situated in children's hospitals in the State capital cities (Connell, 1993). Educational provision for children with disabilities was practically non-existent and children with serious

difficulties were either locked up in institutions or hidden away at home. Those with less severe problems were lost in overcrowded classrooms, with no attempt being made to cater for their special needs. On this, Casey (1994, p. 11) commented:

It was a period of general ignorance of, and callous indifference to, the needs of special children. Custodial institutions contained many children who nowadays would receive formal education. It is a rather sobering thought to consider the number of children, with considerable potential for learning, who would have been incarcerated because they had not satisfied some arbitrary criterion of capability.

Most people still believed at this time that children with disabilities learnt most effectively when they were taught separately from their same-age peers (Doenau, 1984; Ashman & Elkins, 1994). Consequently, children who were seen to be significantly different from their peers were almost always placed in segregated schools. Segregated specialist facilities proliferated in all Australian states and the study of 'special education' was still very new. The facilities for children with disabilities were usually provided on the initiative of private welfare organisations, such as the churches (Casey, 1994).

In the nineteenth century, the various Australian states had passed education acts that placed education under the authority of State Departments of Education, headed by a specially appointed educator who was responsible to an Education Minister (Hughes, 1987). By the middle of the next century, the Australian Education Council (AEC), comprising the Education Ministers from each Australian State, was formed and began to meet regularly. Overseas educators began to be invited specifically to comment on Australian

education, thus enabling comparisons to be made with education structures and policies in other countries (Connell, 1993).

Research also began to be conducted, including research related to 'special education'. A survey of educational facilities catering for children with disabilities revealed that in the twenty year post-World War 2 period, the number of students had increased from 3 600 to 19 000 (Doenau, 1984; Connell, 1993). Although provision for students with disabilities was usually in special schools and classes, some students with a physical disability were beginning to be included in normal school classes.

A steady expansion of services for people with intellectual and physical disabilities also took place after World War 2. Some of the programs for children with disabilities were inadequate and governments throughout Australia began to realise that the education of such children was a responsibility of the state. On this, Cowley (1996, p. 82) commented:

By the second half of the twentieth century, while some of the segregated schools were well equipped, and the teachers interested and well-motivated, others were ill-equipped and many schools, particularly those run by parent groups for children with intellectual disabilities, employed untrained teachers ... this left many children who had intellectual or multiple disabilities in inadequate programs which lacked educationally trained and experienced staff, and which had no systems of quality control.

Educators recognised that professionally organised institutions, specialised teacher training, and smaller class sizes were all necessary if effective education for children with disabilities was to occur (Cocks *et al.*, 1996). Consequently, many of the institutions being run by voluntary organisations were gradually taken over by the state (Connell, 1993).

Each state began to build up substantial facilities and services. On this, Connell (1993, p. 480) commented:

Children who were moderately physically handicapped ... were catered for in special or opportunity classes in most State systems, ... while the more seriously handicapped attended special schools. ... In addition private institutions run by voluntary societies or by the Catholic Church made a considerable contribution to the education of physically handicapped children, usually with some financial assistance and, sometimes, educational support from government sources.

One of the most important developments of the 1960s was the expansion within each State's education department of special branches for children with intellectual disabilities. These branches provided psychological services to schools in the form of testing, diagnostic services and advice to teachers. However, the use of intelligence testing affected the development of educational programs for children with intellectual disabilities by enforcing segregationist policies. Intelligence was based on the premise that it was a fixed entity and this was used as some justification to segregate children with intellectual disabilities from their peers (Casey, 1994).

The non-government sector also continued to play a key role with regard to the education of children with disabilities during this period. Although some of the segregated schools run by the charities were well equipped, others were not. Therefore, some children with intellectual or multiple disabilities were included in inadequate programs run by untrained teachers and volunteers (Andrews, Elkins, Berry & Burge, 1979). The State Departments of Education gradually accepted responsibility for providing education for all students, even those with the most severe disabilities (Cowley, 1996).

In the 1970s, the international trends that ultimately led to the inclusion of children with disabilities into regular schools throughout the world began to



have an impact in Australia (Casey, 1994). The question of greater inclusion in regular classrooms for children with disabilities, based on experimentation overseas, began to be argued in the professional literature (Ashman & Elkins, 1994). This was quite different to the impetus for change in the U.S.A. and Britain which, as noted earlier, came with national legislation (Connell, 1993).

The establishment of a Senate Standing Committee on Health and Welfare in 1970 in Australia demonstrated the Commonwealth's concern with regard to people with disabilities (Western Australian Council for Special Education, 1979). The Committee's recommendations included proposals for the Commonwealth to become involved in the funding of a variety of schooling programs for children with disabilities (Connell, 1993). However, it was the election of the Whitlam Labor Government in 1972 that was the catalyst for a major transformation with regard to educational provision for students with disabilities in Australia.

The election was quickly followed by the newly elected government appointing an interim committee, chaired by Professor Peter Karmel, to provide advice on the immediate financial needs of government and non-government schools throughout Australia. The committee was asked to recommend priorities and appropriate funding from the Commonwealth to the States to assist in meeting those needs (Connell, 1993). One of its terms of reference was to take into account "the particular needs of schools for the handicapped, whether mental, physical, or social and of isolated children" (Karmel, 1973, p. 3). Recognising that for a variety of reasons some students with disabilities were being enrolled and educated in regular schools, the Commonwealth Schools Commission, which was a creation of the Karmel committee, made resources available through a 'sub-element' of its funding, to assist schools with the education of such students. On this, Connell (1993, p. 485) stated:

With the publication *Schools in Australia*, known as the Karmel Report in 1973 and the subsequent development of the Schools Commission came sweeping changes to all aspects of education with regard to students with disabilities. The Karmel group favoured equality of outcomes for groups and although recognising the arbitrary nature of education for disabled students, strongly stated the view that regular schools and classrooms had the potential to cater for individual difference.

Despite its constitutionally weak basis for controlling or directing educational practices (Birch, 1986), the Commonwealth Schools Commission, continued this theme of support for children with disabilities throughout the 1970s. The Commission was convinced of the benefits of including children with disabilities into regular schools and classes, and from the beginning of its 'special education' funding in 1974, it encouraged education authorities to adopt a policy of inclusion (Connell, 1993).

The decade following the formation of the Commonwealth Schools Commission was characterised by critical changes to all aspects of Australian education. Through the Commission, the Federal Government substantially increased its involvement in education by making policy and supporting it with significant funding (Dudley & Vidovich, 1995). Funding increases were introduced for the poorer schools, many of which were Catholic schools (Connell, 1993). Specific changes to education, namely those that addressed disadvantaged groups, were also initiated (Hughes, 1987).

The Commonwealth Schools Commission played a pivotal role in the Australia-wide initiatives that took place in the 1970s with regard to the integration of children with disabilities into regular schools. The theme of inclusion was demonstrated in the *Report for the Triennium 1976 - 78* (Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1976), in which it was proposed that each of the Australian states be directly encouraged to increase the level of inclusive schooling and to provide the necessary support services (Casey,

1994). The Commission's commitment to inclusive education for students with disabilities was also stated clearly in the *Report for the Triennium 1982 – 84* (Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1982):

The commission's general position is that special assistance should be provided in the least segregated or restrictive environment compatible with the highest quality provision for students having special needs, and in circumstances which offer maximum opportunity to operate in and be accepted by mainstream society (Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1982, p. 231).

It was clear, therefore, that the Commonwealth Schools Commission, through a number of its economic decisions, intended to provide a new outlook for regular and 'special education' policies in Australia (Fulcher, 1989).

The movement of students with disabilities from special schools or units into regular classes became one of the specific targets of the Commonwealth Schools Commission in 1981 (ACER, 1994). The funds provided enabled State Government and non-government agencies to increase the supply of qualified teachers and to raise the level of materials and equipment for children with disabilities (Doenau, 1984). The education of children with disabilities was increasingly delivered by teachers who had undergone formal training (Connell, 1993). Furthermore, capital grants were paid for the construction of new schools and classes and the upgrading of old ones. The 'special education' recurrent grants available to government schools since 1974, were extended several years later to the non-government education authorities. Also, Commonwealth Schools Commission grants were made from 1977 for the *Severely Handicapped Children's Program*, and from 1981 for an *Integration Program* (Connell, 1993).

Research by Watts, Elkins, Henry, Apelt, Atkinson & Cochrane (1978) identified a common philosophy in the attitudes of three Australian states to the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities into regular classrooms in the period following the formation of the Commonwealth Schools Commission. Their study, based in Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales, found that many students with a mild intellectual disability were already enrolled in regular schools or in special classes attached to regular schools. Furthermore, each system was planning to extend this scheme, mainly because of “satisfaction felt about mainstream placement” (Watts *et al.*, 1978, p. 353).

With regard to the teaching of students with an intellectual disability, Watts *et al.* (1978) found that only about 25 per cent of classroom teachers felt confident to teach such children competently. This was a matter of serious concern to Watts *et al.* (1978, p. 359) who stated:

Teachers who do not feel confident of their ability to teach mildly intellectually handicapped students are not likely to be, in fact, competent. Lack of confidence breeds uncertainty which in turn is likely, at best, to lead the teacher to ignore these children or, at worst, to react negatively to them. In the long term, asking teachers to undertake tasks for which they feel ill-equipped may have negative outcomes on their teaching not only of the handicapped but also of their other pupils.

The need to introduce appropriate training for teachers still remained a priority for some time after the Schools Commission's interim report in 1973. Only a small percentage of teachers had any formal systematic training in teaching students with disabilities and many educationalists believed that some action was required if such students were to be effectively maintained and educated in regular school settings (Andrews *et al.*, 1979).

As the education of children with disabilities became a high priority in the 1970s, appropriate education began to be included in general undergraduate teacher training courses under the banner of 'special education'. There was also a number of post-graduate degrees offered in this field. On this, Connell (1993, p. 482) stated:

By 1970, following the initial lead of the University of Queensland, each of the other universities and most of the teachers' colleges were offering courses of training for teachers in that area, and several of the universities had established chairs and units to encourage research in various aspects of what was now usually referred to as special education.

In 1979, the Schonell Educational Research Centre at The University of Queensland, at the request of the Commonwealth Schools Commission, undertook a research project entitled *Survey of Special Education in Australia* (Andrews *et al.*, 1979). They drew attention to several problems, the major one of which was "the wide diversity of service provision patterns in both government and non-government sectors" (Condon, 1983, p. 25). The research found that many students with disabilities were in schools without even minimal support services. Of even greater concern was the finding "that over 30 per cent of severely handicapped children in residential care under the Health Department received no education whatsoever" (Condon, 1983, p. 26). It was clear that appropriate legislation, though a necessary prerequisite, was not itself sufficient to ensure the effective delivery of education to children with disabilities (Ward *et al.*, 1987).

By 1981, all Australian states had policies of educating children with disabilities in regular schools (Doenau, 1984). Furthermore, legislation had been framed in many states that emphasised that resources and services should, to the greatest extent possible, be school-based. For example, in Victoria the state branch of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) included a policy on inclusion in its platform for the 1982 state election and, once elected, was

committed to the idea (Marks, 1991). While the principle of inclusive schooling was beginning to be adopted throughout Australia as the preferred educational practice in the early 1980s (Doenau, 1984; Ward *et al.*, 1987), a 1981 report of the Commonwealth Schools Commission described the approach to inclusion by the States as one of diversity (Fulcher, 1986).

### *The Western Australia Perspective*

W.A. has tended to follow the lead of other states and countries with regard to the development of education for children with disabilities. In its early years, local changes reflected the innovations taking place overseas, particularly in North America and Great Britain. In more recent times, the gradual expansion of placement options for students with disabilities that has taken place overseas has also impacted on the W.A. education system.

Prior to Australia's Federation in 1901, each of the Australian states was self-governing. Individual states developed their own system of schools and the right of states to control education was entrenched in the Constitution. Australian states all adopted a pattern of free, compulsory and secular education (Goddard, 1992).

From the period of the establishment in 1829 of the Swan River Settlement, in what later became W.A., until the end of the nineteenth century, the range of options available for the care and support of children with disabilities, particularly those with severe or profound intellectual disabilities, was limited (O'Donoghue & Chalmers, 1998). Such children were usually cared for by their parents until they reached the age where they could be sent to an asylum for the 'insane or feeble minded' or to one of the private benevolent or religious institutions that had been established in metropolitan Perth and in some country locations (Fitzpatrick, 1988). In terms of catering for children with intellectual disabilities, the only institution in W.A. in the nineteenth century was the Salvation Army home for delinquents and the 'feeble-minded'

(Doenau, 1984). In W.A., the response from the authorities was that while efforts to provide segregated specialist schools in other countries were acknowledged, “bringing such children to a special school by means of vans with carefully selected conductors is not practicable in this state” (Chubb, 1927, p. 281).

In 1903, the construction of the Claremont Hospital for the Insane and the passage of the Lunacy Act in State Parliament signalled changes in the Government’s approach to the care and support of people with disabilities (O’Donoghue & Chalmers, 1998). For the first time there was an acknowledgment on the part of politicians and members of the medical profession that people with intellectual disabilities and mental illness required more than custodial care and that treatment and rehabilitation should be provided. At the same time, however, there remained concerns about the lack of services for children with an intellectual disability. Such children attended school but usually did not progress beyond the ‘infants’ level of instruction (O’Donoghue & Chalmers, 1998).

The Education Department was concerned about the number of children with intellectual disabilities who were not able to benefit from the ordinary teaching methods being used in schools and whose classroom behaviour was a source of disturbance to the class (Education Department of Western Australia, 1906). Consequently, the first two ‘special’ classes were established in W.A. in 1910 and 1912. However, both were disbanded within two years of opening on the basis of falling enrolments and relatively high levels of expenditure (Western Australian Council for Special Education, 1979).

The increase in community concern about the treatment of children with disabilities during this period did little to change the widely-held belief that children with severe intellectual disabilities should be excluded from formal

education. There was a firm belief among professionals as well as among the general community that competent custodial care was the best possible option (Davidson, 1993). Nevertheless, by 1926 over one hundred children with a range of disabilities were receiving special instruction at four schools in the Perth metropolitan area (Cocks *et al.*, 1996).

The economic depression during the 1930s imposed considerable financial constraints on all public expenditure. Despite the frequent demands from the teachers' union and parents that resulted in part in the education of children with disabilities becoming mandatory, the State's educational provisions for children with disabilities over the decade declined (Western Australian Council for Special Education, 1979). By 1945 the State government was still giving only limited financial support, leaving both the educational and residential responsibilities for most children with disabilities to the Churches and other charitable organisations (Western Australian Council for Special Education, 1979).

Significant development with regard to the education of children with disabilities in W.A. occurred from 1945 onwards. At around this time the W.A. Director of Education, Murray Little, showed interest in the education of students with disabilities. Within the Education Department by 1949, Little facilitated the development of the 'Guidance Branch' section, which comprised psychologists and guidance officers (O'Donoghue & Chalmers, 1998). Little stated in the same year that, in his opinion, it was the State's responsibility to participate in the education of children with disabilities and not to simply provide a subsidy to non-government organisations (Western Australian Council for Special Education, 1979). Some training sessions were provided to schools and many teachers became aware of the problem of the 'slower' children and made some attempts to provide for them (Connell, 1993).



In 1951, a public meeting resulted in the formation of the 'Slow Learning Children's Group of Western Australia'. The Education Department subsequently agreed to pay staff salaries if this organisation continued to raise funds for the purchase of land, buildings and equipment (Western Australian Council for Special Education, 1979). In 1952, the Education Act (Parliament of Western Australia, 1928) was amended to make the education of children with disabilities mandatory. However, despite the legislative change, the majority of children with severe disabilities continued to be denied access to formal schooling (O'Donoghue & Chalmers, 1998).

The implementation of policies and practices that led to a system of segregated education in W.A. was driven by much the same set of basic forces that had been operating overseas and in other Australian states. On this, O'Donoghue and Chalmers (1998, p. 8) commented:

These (forces) were the increasing power and influence of behavioural psychology, the strong support and advocacy of parents and other sections of the community, the administrative expediency of the education system, and the belief of teachers that the educational needs of children with intellectual disabilities should be met outside mainstream schooling.

Segregated education was strongly supported for a number of reasons. First, people believed that it was only in special classes that children with disabilities would gain access to a modified curriculum delivered by skilled personnel. Secondly, it was thought that segregated schools provided a school environment that protected children with disabilities from the harsh reality of regular schooling. Thirdly, the provision of formal education for children with disabilities was seen as a major achievement in itself. In W.A., as in other Australian states, the emergence of a strong behavioural psychology reinforced community attitudes that favoured segregated schooling for children with disabilities.

In W.A. during the period 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, the number of special education settings for children with disabilities continued to increase. The State Government assumed full responsibility for the provision of new buildings and equipment and, with the Commonwealth's decision to increase funds, the number of classes catering for children with disabilities in W.A. increased from thirty-four in 1961 to seventy nine in 1972 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1982). The Western Australian Council for Special Education was established by the Minister for Education in 1974 to advise and report on all aspects of special education. By 1979, most children with disabilities in W.A., including a greater number of children with severe and profound intellectual disabilities, were being educated at schools operated by the Education Department (Western Australian Council for Special Education, 1979). Moreover, the Education Department claimed that the placement of children with disabilities into regular schools was practised whenever possible (Ashman & Elkins, 1994).

### Conclusion

The historical analysis presented in this chapter contributes to an understanding of the contemporary education of children with disabilities within schools in Western Australia. The analysis was in three parts. First, a general international perspective was provided. Secondly, there was a consideration of national developments up until the beginning of the period of this study, namely 1982. Finally, developments in W.A. were examined and discussed.

It has been demonstrated that in the forty-year post-World War 2 period, through the impetus provided by a number of occurrences, there was a profound shift in the way that state education in W.A. managed the education of children with disabilities. The willingness of the public education authorities

to at first fund, and later take full control of institutions catering for the education of such children, reflected a growing awareness of disability as a human rights issue.

By the early 1980s, in terms of the education of children with disabilities, the situation in W.A. was similar to the arrangements existing in other states. State education authorities clearly accepted the responsibility to provide education for all children, regardless of the type or degree of disability (Doenau, 1984). This awareness had not yet developed to the extent of children with disabilities being educated in regular schools and classrooms; educational provisions for students with disabilities were still mainly being delivered in 'special' schools and classes.

Non-government organisations were working with the Education Department to complement the State's education programs for particular groups of students with disabilities. Catholic schools were also beginning to enrol more children with disabilities. Chapter Three now outlines the background to Catholic developments regarding the education of children with disabilities.

## CHAPTER 3

### CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES – A CATHOLIC CONTEXT

#### Introduction

Since the study contained in this dissertation relates specifically to students in Catholic schools, an analysis of the historical and contemporary perspectives of the Catholic Church on disability is also helpful by way of providing a contextual understanding. This chapter constitutes such an analysis. It is presented in three parts. First, a historical perspective of the Catholic Church's approach to people with disabilities is provided. Secondly, the development of Catholic education in Australia is outlined, with particular reference to Western

Australia (W.A.). Thirdly, the development of Catholic education in Australia for children with disabilities, with particular reference to W.A., is explored. Due to the study within this dissertation being confined to the years 1982 - 97, the focus of this chapter is on the period leading up to 1982.

**A Historical Perspective of the Catholic Church's Approach to People with Disabilities**

Throughout its history, the Catholic Church has undergone continual intellectual and spiritual renewal. In terms of people with disabilities, the early Jewish and Christian communities generally had compassionate attitudes. The scriptures of both Judaism and Christianity are marked by a Salient concern for such people. The Leviticus writer notes that people with disabilities are included as significant groups in society and are to be treated as importantly as anyone else (Webb-Mitchell, 1994). Job presents 'justice' as the foundational ideal of Hebrew spirituality and much of the Old Testament portrays a God who makes a place for people with disabilities. For example, Jeremiah lists "the blind and the lame" first among those of the remnant of Israel that will be saved (Jeremiah 31: 8).

In the New Testament, the gospel stories all describe Jesus as surrounding himself with the outcasts of society. Prominent in the Jesus movement were “the lame, blind, dumb and crippled and many other sufferers” (Matthew 15: 30). The Book of Acts notes the presence of “many paralysed and crippled folk” (Acts 8: 7) while the followers of John the Baptist were told of Jesus’ care for the “blind”, the “lame”, the “lepers” and the “deaf” as a mark of the authenticity of his mission (Matthew 11: 5).

In terms of education for people with disabilities, the Church nowadays argues that its teaching is exemplified in the Gospel of St Luke where Jesus says (Luke 4: 18 – 20):

The spirit of the Lord has been given to me,  
For he has anointed me.  
He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor,  
To proclaim liberty to captives  
And to the blind new sight,  
To set the downtrodden free,  
To proclaim the Lord’s year of favour.

Consistent with this scripture extract, the Church teaches that Jesus and his disciples demonstrated a strong belief in the value and dignity of each individual human life. However, notwithstanding the fact that charity, compassion and alms-giving have dominated biblical references to people with disabilities, the themes of marginalisation and discrimination have, historically, also been perpetrated in the name of religion (Eisland, 1994).

In the early Church, charitable societies merged charity and healing (Eisland, 1994). The Council of Carthage in 436 urged the bishops to build and maintain Christian hospices in close proximity to cathedrals (Webb-Mitchell, 1994). Hospices for people with a visual disability were established in Caesarea in the fourth century by St Basil and in the fifth by St Lymnaeus in Spain, and although little is known of these institutions, they provided the

traditions upon which later institutions were established (Hewett and Forness, 1984).

With the Dark Ages came the belief that disability was a sign of evil and a deliberate association with the devil (Coleman, 1976). During this period there was a more dogmatic approach to religion and people with disabilities and their families were stigmatised by the Churches (Casey, 1994). Such attitudes included the belief that 'feeble-mindedness' was inherited and linked with evil and a lower social class. Many people thought the fairies took the real human baby and left a changeling in its place (Ryan & Thomas, 1980).

In the early medieval ages, a disability was sometimes seen as a sign of grace among Christians. Many believed that as Christ himself healed many illnesses and disabling conditions, sickness and suffering became a way of purifying oneself of sins. Some believed that the utterances of a person with a severe or profound intellectual disability reflected a unique ability to communicate with the supernatural (Webb-Mitchell, 1994). However, people with an intellectual disability were also often treated as fools. In Germany there was a tower in the middle of one of the major cities where people with mental illnesses were confined (Casey, 1994). Court jesters were recruited from people with physical disabilities and mental illnesses. Such attitudes were also prevalent in the Church. Indeed, on the eve of the Reformation, Pope Leo X (1513 – 1521) held dinner parties where guests were encouraged to play cruel jokes and laugh at the antics of people with disabilities (Webb-Mitchell, 1994).

In the witch-hunts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, people with intellectual disabilities were treated for their afflictions by being whipped or hanged (Scheerenberger, 1983). In terms of the treatment of people with disabilities, more humane attitudes came into existence in early eighteenth century Europe, and there were efforts by some Catholic organisations to

take care of babies who were abandoned because they were born unwanted or with a disability. The provision of housing and care by the Church also continued into the nineteenth century with the establishment of residential care in Switzerland for children with an intellectual disability (Ashman & Elkins, 1994). However, with major changes taking place, such as monasteries being closed throughout much of Europe, the social support systems of the Catholic and Protestant churches became very tenuous (Webb-Mitchell, 1994). As the state realised that the needs of people with disabilities were not being met, it gradually took responsibility for their care.

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were times when major challenges to Catholic philosophy occurred (Bryk, Lee & Holland, 1993). During this period, the Catholic Church's teachings on the dignity of the human person underwent considerable scrutiny. Since Church attitudes towards people with disabilities are inextricably linked to the Church's position with regard to disadvantaged groups in society, the outcome of such debate impacted on Church attitudes towards people with disabilities. For much of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Catholic Church refused to adapt its teachings and, instead, continued to assert its power. Pope Pius VI condemned the French Revolution's *Declaration of the Rights of Man* in 1790 (Dwyer, 1994) and in 1869, the Catholic Church centralised its authority even more strongly at the First Vatican Council (Bryk *et al.*, 1993).

The Catholic Church, accordingly, did not affirm the dignity of the human person until a relatively late date in the modern era. Nevertheless, by the late nineteenth century, there was a growing belief in the U.S.A. and in many European countries that the Church should not remain silent in debates on social policy. Consequently, a modern Catholic scholarship began to gradually emerge. Changes in official Church thinking were reflected by Pope Leo XIII's encouragement for the renewed study on the thirteenth century writings of Thomas Aquinas. This study opened up previously forbidden



debates regarding the connections between 'natural law' and 'God'. Catholic teaching, instead of simply resorting to authoritarianism, became more open to examination (Bryk *et al.*, 1993). Also, while previously the Church had remained largely silent about social problems such as those arising from the industrial revolution, it no longer remained so. The change was particularly evident in the papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum: The Condition of Labour* (Leo XIII, 1891) which recognised that social justice required more from the Church than just prayer and charity.

Early in the twentieth century, activist priests began to emerge and "a traditional resignation toward human affliction and injustice as 'God's way' was replaced with an active commitment to redress social injustice" (Bryk *et al.*, 1993, p. 44). Consequently, new Catholic perceptions towards people with disabilities began to gradually emerge at this time. Condon (1983, p. 9) writes that "people began to see the handicapped as God's special children". This led to more benevolent attitudes and treatment. However, little help was given to parents. Children with disabilities were condescendingly looked upon as 'little saints', thus absolving the Church community of any ongoing responsibility (Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission, 1985).

A Papal pronouncement from Pius XI in 1929 urged communities to show a special interest in developing the skills of people with disabilities, surrounding them in an environment that promoted dignity and self-confidence (Carlen, 1990). Several years later, Pope John XXIII wrote about life in community as the context in which human dignity can thrive. However, by the early 1960s, many Catholics still had a view of an institutional and hierarchical Church that excluded many of its members from full participation (Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission, 1985).

It was not until the Second Vatican Council (1962 – 1965) that, in terms of people with disabilities, social justice principles were affirmed as Church policy

(Bryk *et al.*, 1993). The Council prompted the emergence of a different more participative theology that began to make some change in Catholic attitudes towards people with disabilities. It also demonstrated the Catholic Church's final embracement of modernity and its renewed emphasis on peace and social justice. On this, Bryk *et al.* (1993, p. 51) commented:

In each of the major developments from Vatican 11, the Church engaged critical concerns about its internal organisation and its relationship with the modern world ... Vatican 11 found the antidote to the arcane legalism and excessive devotionism that had developed in the Church over five centuries.

Instead of an emphasis on preparing the faithful for eternal life, the post-Council Church offered a re-discovered version of its social mission that was inclusive of all humankind.

The theme of children with disabilities was included in Church documents relating to education that emanated from the Second Vatican Council. In the Vatican Council 11 1965 document *Gravissimum Educationis: Declaration on Christian Education*, it stated that "considerable importance is to be attached to those schools which are demanded in a particular way (for) persons requiring special care as the result of some natural deficiency" (Abbott, 1966, p. 648). In *The Catholic School* (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, p. 44), similar sentiments were expressed:

Since it is motivated by the Christian ideal, the Catholic school is particularly sensitive to the call from every part of the world for a more just society ... It does not stop at the courageous teaching of the demands of justice even in the face of local opposition, but tries to put these demands into practice in its own community in the daily life of the school.

The Church was challenged to make provision for people with disabilities in both its attitudes and practices (Webb-Mitchell, 1994). In a post-Conciliar document, it was stated that:

The Church fully associates herself with the initiatives and praiseworthy efforts being made in order to improve the situation of the disabled and she intends to make her own specific contribution thereto. She does so, in the first place, through fidelity to the example and teaching of her founder [Jesus Christ]. (The Holy See, Vatican Council 11, [Vol. 2], 1981, p. 518)

This Vatican document went on to develop some basic principles in relation to people with disabilities. One of these principles stated clearly that integration, normalisation and personalisation should be the basis of making provision for people with disabilities and should include:

... a commitment to make the disabled person a subject in the fullest sense in accordance with his or her capacities, in the spheres of family life, the school, employment, and more generally, in the social, political and religious communities. (The Holy See, Vatican Council 11, [Vol. 2], 1981, p. 521)

The fourth principle of the same document developed this concept further, stating clearly that the principles of “integration, normalisation and personalisation” should be the basis of any Church policy with regard to people with disabilities. It also emphasised the Church’s commitment to include people with disabilities, in accordance with his or her capacities, in all aspects of Church life.

In the 1990s, the encyclical *Laborem Exercens: On Human Work* (John Paul 11, 1991) also referred to the rights of people with disabilities. It said:

Since disabled people are subjects with all their rights, they should be helped to participate in the life of society in all its aspects and at all levels

accessible to their capabilities. The disabled person is one of us and participates fully in the same humanity that we possess (Miller, 1996, p. 204).

Further references to people with disabilities were later contained in the updated Catholic Church catechism released to clearly announce the correct teachings of the Church in its international context. Paragraphs 1930 and 1935 (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994) state:

Respect for the human person entails respect for the rights that flow from his dignity ... these rights are prior to society and must be recognised by it ...

The equality of men rests essentially on their dignity as persons and the rights that flow from it. Every form of social or cultural discrimination in fundamental personal rights on the grounds of sex, race, colour, social conditions, language or religion must be curbed and eradicated as incompatible with God's design.

Nevertheless, in some Catholic quarters, the rights of people with disabilities remain largely ignored, even in the 1990s. They are sometimes further segregated by citing disability as "a fate to be avoided, a tragedy to be explained, or a cause to be championed rather than an ordinary life to be lived" (Eisland, 1994, p. 75). Also, Eisland (1994) argues that many religious organisations equate the rights of people with disabilities in terms of benevolence rather than as a core issue of the Church.

This section of the chapter has given a brief historical overview on the approach of the Catholic Church regarding its attitudes towards people with disabilities. It is now necessary to consider this matter within the W.A. context. Before doing so, however, the development of Catholic education within Australia, and particularly within W.A., needs to be outlined. This provides a broader context to the specific matter of how the Catholic Church in W.A. has approached the education of children with disabilities historically.

## **The Development of Catholic Education in Australia with Particular Reference to Western Australia**

This second section of the chapter explores the development of Catholic education in Australia and W.A. It does this by first looking at the national perspective. However, since the focus of the study within this dissertation is on developments within W.A., the development of Catholic education in this State is also considered. Each of these two perspectives is now considered in turn.

### *Catholic Education in Australia*

Over the past two hundred years, the fortunes of Catholic education in Australia have at times prospered and at other times floundered (Tannock, 1979). Furthermore, during this time there has been a constant re-examination of the underlying philosophy, purpose and rationale for Catholic schools (Dwyer, 1993). It was soon after the colony began in New South Wales, that semi-independent schools, including the first Catholic schools, evolved (Fogarty, 1959). The various governors of the early colony looked upon Catholic schools as being of great importance to the colony's future and by 1833, ten Catholic schools had been established. Each of the schools was fully staffed by lay people who in turn were paid by the government on the basis of a set rate for each child that attended school (Fogarty, 1959).

Despite regular policy changes taking place according to the sympathy various governors showed towards these Catholic schools, this situation lasted for forty years. However, in the 1870s, there was a sectarian reaction to the perceived threat of Catholic children in state schools (Fogarty, 1959). This was one part of the great debate in Australian education that took place in the latter part of the nineteenth century (Dwyer, 1993). However, the Catholic bishops were committed to an educational philosophy that saw religion as an integral part of education. Therefore, they made the decision to

financially support the establishment and maintenance of Catholic schools, a decision that was to have enormous ramifications for generations of Australians. The Catholic community financially supported Catholic schools in full. The education standards varied enormously but the local priests placed great pressure on Catholic parents to send their children to Catholic schools.

By the middle of the twentieth century, Catholic education throughout Australia was in a genuine crisis of survival and it seemed doubtful whether it could continue to exist without very substantial government assistance (Hogan, 1987). The massive migration and the population explosion that followed the Second World War had put incredible pressure on Catholic schools. In this post-war period, buildings and equipment were in a very poor state in many Catholic schools. The pupil growth, coupled with the declining number of religious and the corresponding need to employ more lay staff who had to be paid salaries, resulted in a drastic shortage of funds. In the next twenty years, the astute lobbying and politicking that took place resulted in some government financial relief trickling into the schools (Dwyer, 1993).

However, it was the election of the Whitlam Labor government in 1972 that provided the catalyst for major change with regard to the funding of Catholic schools in Australia. Dwyer (1993, p. 9) describes the election as “undoubtedly the most significant political event for Catholic schools since the Education Acts of the previous century”. The government’s commissioned report *Schools in Australia* (Karmel, 1973) recommended the construction of fairer and more equitable policies to ensure funds were channelled to the most needy schools, be they government or non-government schools. The Karmel committee had found that although there were considerable differences among Catholic schools, Catholic systemic schools in 1972 were operating at an average standard of resource use of about 80 per cent of government schools. Funding to address this inequality was soon made available and by 1981 Catholic schools were beginning to enjoy a close

working relationship with the Commonwealth government, which provided a large proportion of Catholic schools' recurrent and capital funding (Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1981). Furthermore, the Catholic school sector was also becoming recognised in each of the States, including W.A., as a significant provider of education and, as such, attracted further funding

### **Catholic Education in Western Australia**

The history of Catholic education in W.A. was entwined with the happenings on Australia's east coast and shared similar periods of rise and decline in terms of government aid and pupil numbers. Father John Brady arrived at the Swan River Colony on the 9th December 1843. He had been sent by Bishop Polding of Sydney in order to oversee the establishment of the Catholic Church in the Swan region (Tannock, 1979). Shortly afterwards, the first Catholic school commenced in Perth with about thirty children.

To ensure the continuation of Catholic schools, Brady successfully recruited a number of religious men and women, mainly from Britain and Europe (Fogarty, 1959). Consistent with its turbulent beginning, state aid to Catholic schools in W.A. fluctuated during the next one hundred years as a series of governors initiated policy statements that varied widely in their commitment to the non-government schools' sector (Tannock, 1979).

In W.A., the first two post-war decades saw enrolment numbers dramatically increase in Catholic schools. In the twenty-year period beginning 1950, Catholic education in Western Australia began to suffer as a result of several factors. On this, Bourke (1974, p. 250) commented:

... children from the high birth-rate years after the war, and from the accelerating migration programme began to seek places in Catholic schools. The resulting growth in both capital and recurrent costs put heavy financial strains on the traditional forms of funding and as enrolment increased, the traditional

teaching force of Catholic schools needed progressive supplement by lay teachers (which) was to add substantially to recurrent costs.

In the late 1960s, as part of a nationwide study authorised by the Australian Council of Education, an investigation of the needs of Catholic schools in W.A. was conducted. The findings were summarised in *A Report on the Needs of Catholic Schools in Western Australia* (Tannock, 1970) and, in projecting the needs of Catholic schools from 1970 – 1974, the report recommended the establishment of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (CECWA). In 1971, in order to ensure the creation and implementation of common co-responsibility policies that would incorporate optimum use of the available funds, and to create some kind of equity among the various schools, the CECWA was established (Tannock, 1979). In 1973, the Commonwealth Schools Commission began to inject funds into the Catholic school system through the CECWA “and the corresponding expansion of centralised activities was facilitated by the availability of Commonwealth funds” (Canavan, 1990, p. 36).

Prior to this time, Catholic schools operated either independently of each other (although in partnership with parishes) or as a congregational cluster such as the group of schools owned by the Sisters of Mercy. The formation of the CECWA enabled Catholic schools to begin to combine resources systemically. This change in the structure of Catholic education gradually gave more power to a central body and allowed it to make decisions regarding the planning, leadership, co-ordination and government negotiation that individual schools had previously done themselves (191196; 201196).

In the first decade of the CECWA, its executive office, the Catholic Education Office (CEO), was quite small, with a staff of less than a dozen people. Following the formation of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (CECWA) in 1971, Monsignor James Nestor was the CECWA



chairman and CEO Director until his retirement in late 1985 (Furtado, 1986). One of Monsignor Nestor's first appointments was his Chief Executive Officer, Dr Richard McSweeney. McSweeney, who had a doctorate in psychology, was recruited from Queensland University where he was working as a senior lecturer. His appointment reflected the CECWA's need to avail itself of the professional competence of someone who offered established and widely accepted research skills (Furtado, 1986).

McSweeney was visionary in his work at the CEO and was responsible for all of the Office's research, planning and policy work. For example, it was McSweeney who was the chief liaison between the schools and the CEO, and it was often on his recommendations that certain actions were initiated by the CECWA (041296). Therefore, for the first decade of the CEO's existence, it was McSweeney, in his role as the CECWA's research and policy officer, who alerted the CECWA to its responsibilities regarding the education of students with disabilities. The background to this activity will now be taken up in the next section of this chapter.

**The Development of Catholic Education in Australia  
for Children with Disabilities, with Particular  
Reference to Western Australia**

The final section of this chapter explores the development of Catholic education in Australia and W.A. with regard to children with disabilities. It does this by first examining the national outlook. It then goes on to focus specifically on developments in W.A.

*Catholic Education in Australia and the Education  
of Students with Disabilities*

The education and residential care for people with disabilities in Australia's early years was not dissimilar to the situation at the same time in Europe. In

the nineteenth century, each of the colonies had only rudimentary arrangements for children with disabilities, few of which were administered by the Catholic Church. By the turn of the century, however, several Catholic institutions caring for children with disabilities had been established in Sydney and Melbourne (Fogarty, 1959).

By the post-World War 2 years in Australia, charitable institutions were complementing the state's arrangements, albeit with financial assistance from the government (Connell, 1993). There was a small number of Catholic 'special' schools throughout Australia catering for children with specific disabilities such as deafness. There was also a small number of Catholic schools who, with minimal resources and large class sizes, were philanthropically enrolling one or two children with disabilities. However, the thinking at the time was that students with disabilities could not be educated effectively at regular schools. Since there were no 'special' schools provided by any Catholic agency for children whose physical disabilities hindered their access to regular schools, the majority of children with these disabilities were being educated outside of the Catholic education sector (Condon, 1983).

The new emphasis on equity contained in *Schools in Australia* (Karmel, 1973) gave renewed hope to everyone interested in the education of children with disabilities that the Commonwealth's increase in education funding would result in better educational provisions in Catholic schools for students with disabilities. Funding from the Commonwealth Schools Commission, in enabling Catholic schools throughout Australia to enrol greater numbers of children with disabilities, was crucial in three ways. First, it assisted those schools who had already enrolled students with disabilities, but who were doing so with poor resources, to employ teaching assistants, to offer in-service to teaching staff, and to purchase appropriate teaching materials. Secondly, the funding encouraged some Catholic schools, who had previously been reluctant to do so, to enrol students with disabilities. Thirdly,

the funding facilitated the employment of additional consultants whose role was specifically to assist schools with the enrolment and education of students with disabilities.

However, in terms of the enrolment of children with disabilities, changes in Catholic schools were relatively slow. By 1983, there were no significant provisions in Catholic schools anywhere in Australia for children with a severe or profound intellectual disability (Condon, 1983). Moreover, a survey by the Victorian Catholic Education Office in 1981 displayed some information that was of further concern. The survey found that the rate of students with disabilities in Catholic schools was only about 25 per cent of the rate found in all schools. While the terminology used in the Victorian survey was to some extent imprecise, the figures were certainly alarming. In addition, the survey found that very often the Catholic school's expectations for students with disabilities were too low, and that in terms of pedagogy for such students, increased teacher training for teachers in Catholic schools was urgently required.

In a report to the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) in 1983, there were extensive comments made with regard to the inability of Catholic schools to adequately cater for children with disabilities. While acknowledging that society's attitudes to people with disabilities had changed dramatically of late, the Church, it was argued, seemed "to be following slowly behind rather than leading the way in promoting awareness of the dignity and worth of people with disabilities" (Condon, 1983, p. 45). The report found that all too frequently children with disabilities were being denied enrolment at a Catholic school by hidden and subtle discrimination. Schools were often using staffing, location of school, and educational priorities to make parents and others arranging for school placement feel that a particular school would not be able to cope with their children (Condon, 1983).

Despite the gradual trend in some government schools for those children who had previously been educated in separate facilities to be absorbed into regular schools, this practice was still not a regular feature of Australian Catholic education by the 1980s. The report to the NCEC stated:

In general, the special school provision within the Church has been somewhat parallel to the voluntary movement provision within the wider community in that those providing it have been left to carry a large financial burden to provide for groups who would have otherwise been totally neglected ...

In the future, it is important that special schools move away from the situation where they are charitable works, heavily reliant on fundraising and be accorded a position in the total scheme of provision where their costs are seen, in justice, as part of the overall cost of educating Catholic children (Condon, 1983, p. 33).

Condon (1983) also found that Catholic education authorities had to make a decision about whether or not it was realistic to provide alternative schools for students with severe or profound disabilities. She believed that little commitment to the education of children with disabilities had been made and that it was considered by many “as a luxury Catholic education could not afford” (Condon, 1983, p. 33). She believed that adequate educational provision for all children, irrespective of their disability, should be an obligation of every Catholic school system.

Parents of children with a disability were seen as a particularly vulnerable group in that they were severely restricted by the guidelines placed on them by service providers. Quite a number of mutual support groups began to emerge. The late 1970s and early 1980s saw the strong growth of parent advocacy groups on behalf of people with disabilities. Condon (1983, p. 23) commented on this as follows:

The parent groups contain a number of articulate people (who) combine an intimate knowledge of the

day-to-day problems and needs of handicapped people with a good basic knowledge of recent trends in service provision for people with disabilities, both in this country and overseas.

A growing number of parents ... are growing in self-confidence (and) are becoming more conversant with their rights and those of their children. A growing number are no longer willing to accord a mystique to doctors and teachers....

In short, parents are becoming a well-informed consumer group. They are demanding educational services which are both high quality and appropriate to their children's needs. Their influence on special education in the next five years may well be considerable.

As noted later in this dissertation, Condon's prophecy proved to be unerringly accurate, particularly in W.A.

### **Catholic Education in Western Australia and the Education of Students with Disabilities**

In the first sixty years of this century, the Catholic Church in W.A. administered its own institutions such as Castledare which catered for orphans or abandoned children (Cocks *et al.*, 1996). Furthermore, due to the fact that pupils who applied for places were very rarely refused, there were also many children with severe learning difficulties enrolled in regular Catholic primary schools. Indeed, an inspector's report for a Catholic school in Perth in the 1950s refers to "a number of children experiencing trouble owing to limited ability" (Italiano, 1995, p. 58).

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (1982) reported that during the time of the formation of the Schools Commission, there were no segregated Catholic schools or classes in W.A. to cater for children with disabilities. One of the reasons for this was that there was no funding available from the State government:

Even if the Education Department wishes to help special non-government schools ... the Commonwealth Handicapped Persons Assistance Act compels the Federal Minister for Education to reduce Commonwealth funds to that school by the amount granted by the State. In each case, the handicapped child is the loser, a situation that needs urgent resolution. (Government of South Australia, 1978, pp. 125 – 126)

A small number of Catholic schools were, nevertheless, educating students with disabilities. A Catholic school in Tuart Hill educated a student with a physical disability in the early 1940s by including her in a regular classroom and, following the success of this, continued to make a similar commitment to other students with physical disabilities over the next thirty years (Italiano, 1995). This was quite different to the conflicting philosophy of segregation that was the prevailing wisdom of the time. Also, Mercedes College, a girl's Catholic secondary school in Perth, had a special class for students with disabilities as early as 1960. The few Catholic schools in W.A. that had already enrolled students with disabilities were soon able to take advantage of such resourcing, though it was limited, and the number of students with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools increased slowly. However, the inclusive schooling movement that impacted on many Catholic schools, while well intentioned, was also characterised by a shortage of resources, facilities and trained staff (251196).

The parents' advocacy movement became active in W.A. in the 1970s and impacted on the Catholic education sector as well as other sectors. Parents began to lobby the CECWA and argue that increases in recurrent funding for Catholic schools should ensure increased opportunities for children with

disabilities to enrol in W.A. Catholic schools. In the first decade of CECWA's existence, virtually all government funds were passed on to schools (201196). Therefore, although the response from the CECWA (or its administrative body, the CEO) to any queries from schools, parents or lobby groups seeking funding for students with disabilities was sympathetic, the CECWA believed that it could do little in financial terms to assist. The CECWA believed that it was each school's responsibility to use the funds in a manner that best suited its local community. There was simply no central 'pool' of money for the CECWA to assist schools with acquiring resources for students with disabilities (201196; 041296).

The CECWA's position was repeatedly demonstrated in its response to letters from various parents and interest groups who were concerned about what they perceived to be little action from the CECWA with regard to students with disabilities. For example, in October 1974, the Chairman of the Parents and Friends' Association of a Catholic primary school located on the outskirts of Perth, wrote to the CECWA informing it that "although the school we are involved in is valiantly attempting to provide for the handicapped child, we would like to know if further support and help can be envisaged with respect to staff training, facilities and financial support from the CECWA" (Mary's Mount Parents and Friends' Association, 1974, p. 1). The CECWA Chairman responded with a three-page letter which, in part, stated:

All in all, I consider that with its very limited resources, the CECWA has made considerable advances in this field (students with disabilities in Catholic schools). It realises that there is much more to be done in this and other specialised areas and it looks to the local Catholic communities to provide even greater assistance for students and teachers (CECWA, 1974, p. 2).

Also, in a reply to a different parent concern, the CECWA acknowledged that although the idea of including students with disabilities into regular Catholic

schools had the CECWA's support, it argued as follows: "You will appreciate that our not having access to adequate funding is a severe limitation on what Catholic schools can do for all children needing special assistance" (CECWA, 1978, p. 2).

Families of people with intellectual disabilities and other interested people established a self-help support group, named *Catholic Care for Intellectually Handicapped Persons*, in 1977. The founding members were concerned about families of people with intellectual disabilities receiving adequate support and they sought to create options for them by improving services and by influencing public policy. The Chairman of *Catholic Care for the Intellectually Handicapped* wrote in 1979 to seek a meeting with the CECWA, expressing the view that the organisation was "concerned that the Catholic community, including the CECWA, should become more aware of the special problems and needs of the handicapped" (Daly, 1979, p. 1). However, although the strength of the parent advocacy movement was significant, it was other forces stemming from society's changed attitudes that proved to be the strongest change agent with regard to the gradual increase in the enrolment of children with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools (131196; 191196; 041296).

By the late 1970s, the number of children with disabilities enrolled in W.A. Catholic schools, although not substantial, was increasing as the concept of inclusion gained wider acceptance in the W.A. community (Western Australian Council for Special Education, 1979). At its September 1979 meeting, the CECWA released a paper that directed that "school enrolment policies (were to) be adopted and promoted for all schools". The paper stipulated that certain principles of the CECWA, such as giving priority for enrolment to local Catholic families, were to be followed. However, each school was to formulate its own enrolment policy and, in particular, was asked to specify its position on certain key issues. One of these issues was entitled



'Academic Competence'. This was the first time, from a CECWA perspective, that the issue of the enrolment of less talented students was addressed. On this, the CECWA paper stated:

The CECWA recommends that the present practice of each school be continued with respect to the setting or not setting of certain minimum academic standards that are required to be met for entrance to a secondary school, provided that it is clearly understood and stated by the school and accepted that this requirement arises from the inability of the school to provide a suitable curriculum or adequate staff to cope with children of limited ability.

Any suggestion of academic or other elitism amongst our secondary schools is not in accordance with Commission policy. However, schools are urged to make provision for students with special needs, whether for enrichment or remediation. (CECWA, 1979, p. 1)

The CECWA's position was that Catholic schools should be places where justice and charity were exemplified and that a refusal to accept a child on behavioural or academic grounds did not reflect these two principles (191196; 201196). The Commonwealth Schools Commission had already introduced a sub-element to assist schools with the minor modification of capital facilities and, where capital facilities were suitable, some students with a physical disability were already attending W.A. Catholic schools. The intent emanating from the September 1979 CECWA meeting was, wherever possible, to encourage schools to accept students with disabilities (191196).

As noted previously in this dissertation, the United Nations (U.N.) declared 1981 as the *International Year of the Disabled Person* (Doenau, 1984). In W.A., Archbishop Goody issued a pastoral statement and discussion booklet

entitled *The Gospel Call: Break Down the Barriers* (Goody, 1981). In conjunction with the funding made available from the Commonwealth to support the U.N.'s *International Year of the Disabled Person*, the booklet prompted the establishment of a number of other Catholic organisations, namely *Emmanuel Centre*, *Faith and Light*, and *Chaplaincy for the Deaf*, all of which attempted to meet the needs of people with disabilities. In the opinion of Archbishop Hickey, the current Archbishop of W.A., the declaration of 1981 as the *International Year of the Disabled Person* brought a certain change of consciousness to the Catholic Church, and broke through the cautiousness that had previously existed (160299). For example, 1981 was the first year in which people with intellectual disabilities in W.A. received the Sacrament of Confirmation.

In terms of education, *The Gospel Call: Break Down the Barriers* (Goody, 1981) reminded school communities of their responsibilities “to ensure that they are acting justly to the student who is physically or intellectually handicapped or disabled” (Goody, 1981, p. 11). During that year, the chairman of the CECWA stated that there was “a growing recognition by the Church in general and the Catholic Education Commission of handicapped persons and commitment to them” (CEO, 1981, p. 1). The CECWA was enthusiastic about doing more for students with disabilities but the lack of money was still a major problem (CEO, 1981; 191196; 041296).

A further problem was the CECWA's reluctance to impose policy on schools (201196). By the early 1980s, while the CECWA had been in existence for a decade and often gave advice to schools, the philosophy of co-responsibility within a Catholic school 'system' in W.A. was very much undeveloped. Many schools, particularly the large metropolitan secondary colleges that were still 'owned' by religious orders, valued the independence of their decision-making and were uncertain of the role of the CECWA (Furtado, 1986). They feared that a growing CECWA bureaucracy would increasingly soak up school funds.

Moreover, they suspected that schools receiving proportionately high incomes would be financially penalised if, as seemed likely, the CECWA assisted smaller schools to remain viable (201196). In terms of the development of policy, therefore, the CECWA worked carefully and patiently to build a relationship of trust with schools.

However, as the Commonwealth's commitment to a number of equity programs, including students with disabilities, began to be translated into tangibles such as capital resources and recurrent funding, the CECWA began to use this opportunity to be more active. In an application to the Commonwealth Schools Commission early in 1981 for funding for the inclusion of students with disabilities into regular schools, McSweeney, on behalf of the CECWA, noted that several Catholic schools were making a determined effort to include students with disabilities. Prior to its submission, the application was discussed at the CECWA's February meeting and it was decided that schools should be called upon to indicate what they were doing to promote education for students with disabilities. The April edition of the *Catholic Education Circular* (CEO, 1981) did this in a supplement entitled 'Break Down the Barriers', where examples of students taking part in regular educational activities in W.A. Catholic schools were portrayed. The supplement included the following statements:

The teaching of the Church must not be confined to principles only. The following letter from Archbishop Goody is a reminder to school communities ...

Several Catholic schools in the Perth area have made provision for handicapped children to be integrated into the normal life of the school. The acceptance of these children into normal classrooms has meant that they no longer have to remain at home or in institutions.

The success of these efforts is an indication that though the task may sometimes appear to be daunting, it can be done and can produce worthwhile

results for other students as well as for the handicapped themselves. In any case, all associated with schools have an obligation to assist, as far as possible, all Catholic students who wish to make use of them.

No doubt these efforts will inspire other Catholic school communities to open their hearts and their resources to assist young people with special needs.... (CEO, 1981, p. 3)

This statement signified that the philosophy and procedures relating to the enrolment of students with disabilities, which had not been included in CECWA enrolment policies released in 1979 and 1980, became a part of the updated CECWA enrolment policy.

By the early 1980s, a large percentage of Catholic schools in W.A. were group-funded and the CEO had expanded its duties and services. These services, not unlike those offered by other state educational bureaucracies, included the negotiation of arrangements with governments, curriculum guidance, policy formulation and the administration of government-funded programs such as those for 'special education' (CEO, 1981). Moreover, an increasing number of W.A. Catholic schools were enrolling students with disabilities; CECWA records indicated the numbers of such students to be approximately one hundred, most of whom were being educated in regular classrooms. However, also growing was the number of purpose-built 'special education' units located on Catholic school sites, now numbering three (CECWA, 1982). These units were usually used to educate students with mild-to-moderate intellectual disabilities. The establishment of the units was a further sign of the emerging belief that students with disabilities had a legitimate place in Catholic schools (300796; 311096). Although the education of children with disabilities in the units resulted in a segregated class environment, there were usually opportunities for some integration with regular classes and students.

## Conclusion

This chapter was concerned with presenting an historical background to understanding the education of children with disabilities in Catholic schools in W.A. The analysis was in three parts. First, a historical perspective of the Catholic Church's approach to people with disabilities was provided. Secondly, the development of Catholic education in Australia was outlined, with particular reference to W.A. Thirdly, the development of Catholic education in Australia for children with disabilities, with particular reference to W.A., was explored.

This chapter built on the arguments presented in the previous chapter and further emphasised the historical changes that have taken place in society in terms of people with disabilities. The report *Schools in Australia* (Karmel,

1973) and the Commonwealth's resultant increase in funding impacted greatly on the CECWA's policies with regard to children with disabilities. Of course, the increased funding was itself a reflection of the growing awareness of disability as a human rights issue. Furthermore, this awareness manifested itself in the way that Catholic parents of children with disabilities, who previously had not considered a Catholic education as a possibility for their child, began to question the poor availability of services. Finally, the U.N. declaration of 1981 as the *International Year of the Disabled Person* (Doenau, 1984) further added to the call for Catholic schools to offer similar education opportunities for children with disabilities as those being offered by their public education counterparts.

In terms of the education of children with disabilities, the U.N declaration also resulted in the dissemination of a large amount of literature on disability. Much of this literature questioned some standard practices, such as the merits of segregated schools, and called for more research on the social and educational needs of children with disabilities. This, and other relevant literature to the study reported later in this dissertation is the focus of the literature review now presented in the next chapter.

# CHAPTER 4

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

There have been enormous changes to education in Australia in the past three decades. From considerations in previous chapters, it is clear that one of the areas of greatest change within the state sector has been the schooling and education of children with disabilities. Catholic schools, which comprise the largest non-government school sector in Australia, have also been experiencing great changes with regard to this student cohort.

In Western Australia (W.A.), teachers, principals, parents, consultants and administrators are dealing with a range of issues associated with the enrolment and education of children with disabilities. Catholic schools are no exception in this regard. Within this sector also there has been an upward trend in the enrolment of students with disabilities over the past two decades. Therefore, there is a growing need for the local research community to identify and engage in research on key aspects of this phenomenon. One very important aspect in this regard is that of the policy of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (CECWA) with regard to students with disabilities. The findings from such research should prove valuable by way of informing the debate and assisting in the development of policy with regard to the education of students with disabilities in both the school and system contexts.

Notwithstanding the great amount of research since the 1960s on the education of students with disabilities, one sub-area which has not been subject to a great deal of analysis is that of education policy regarding the education of students with disabilities. Accordingly, it is not surprising that

there is a paucity of studies relating specifically to an analysis of policy with regard to students with disabilities in Catholic schools. The study reported in this dissertation is one contribution to rectifying this deficit. It is also a study that has been informed by four bodies of literature. Each of these four bodies of informing literature is now considered in turn in this chapter.

The first section of the chapter looks at the literature on the philosophical values associated with the education of students with disabilities. This body of literature is important to consider because much of it is contradictory and inconclusive (Forlin, 1995). It leads one to conclude that while compelling arguments can be made to increase the numbers of children with disabilities into regular schools, and in particular, Catholic schools, these arguments are often based more on ideological commitments and philosophical positions than on empirical research (Hegarty, 1996). It is necessary to be alert to this when considering CECWA policy regarding the education of students with disabilities.

The next two sections of this chapter focus on the literature on two other key issues with regard to the education of students with disabilities, namely 'educational placement' and 'factors impacting on students with disabilities'. Overall, what is presented is a broad overview of the empirical literature rather than a detailed exposition. The decision to present such an overview rather than a more traditional literature review was based on the judgement that while the debate on Catholic education policy has been informed by much of the empirical literature, it is impossible to treat all of this literature in great detail. Presenting an overview, however, does give the reader some exposure to the nature of the research in the field while also informing the policy exposition in later chapters of this dissertation.

The third section of the chapter goes on to outline the literature which identifies those factors that are recognised as influencing the education of



students with disabilities. These factors are summarised in terms of principal and teacher attitudes, pedagogy and assessment, and home/school links. Finally, the fourth section of this chapter helps to locate the study reported in this dissertation within the research tradition of policy studies in education.

*The 'Values-Based' Literature on the  
Education of Children with Disabilities*

The development of education for students with disabilities has its origins in a complex mix of social, political and educational forces. In the past three decades, the emphasis has changed from one of protection of children's rights to that of autonomy, and from a welfare perspective to one of justice (Freeman, 1992). Consequently, the major change in the past thirty years has been a shift towards control in the community and away from segregated institutions (Fulcher, 1986; Lewis & Cook, 1993; Giorcelli, 1995; Foreman *et al.*, 1996). The arguments used to further the associated participation rates of minority groups have been used as the basis for promoting the education of students with disabilities (Chalmers, 1994). Equally, there is now a ready acceptance that children with disabilities have the same rights to education as others in the community (Jenkinson, 1993). Moreover, it is being increasingly recognised that children with disabilities can have their special educational needs met within a regular class (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1988; Mittler, 1995; Foreman *et al.*, 1996; Lipsky & Gartner, 1996).

It was back in the 1960s that the segregation of services to people with disabilities first began to be questioned in earnest with the release of several important research reports. On this, Casey (1994, p. 13) comments:

... questions were being asked about the efficacy of segregated placement especially in the U.S. and Scandinavia where a growing body of research was becoming critical of the 'dumping' of special children into segregated settings for the benefit more of the

regular class children and teachers, than for that of the children with special needs.

Since that time, many politicians and school administrators have reached considerable agreement on the desirability of inclusive schooling from a philosophical and social justice viewpoint. They believe that decisions made regarding the placement of children with a disability should be fair and that services should be allocated equitably and with due regard to need (Dempsey & Foreman, 1995). However, there is also at present a fundamental tension in Western societies between two opposing paradigms (Cocks *et al.*, 1996), with the state's economic and political needs often conflicting with the democratic ideals and demands for more equality (Carnoy & Levin, 1985).

In Australia, where the study of disability and education is currently informing part of a wider debate regarding the funding of social services, economic policies are at present dominating social policy. On this, Cocks *et al.*, (1996, p. 312) commented:

The relatively positive influences of the parents movement, the early rights discourse, the application of the developmental model, and the inspiration and energy provided by the powerful ideas contained in normalisation ... were very strong until overtaken by the rationalist discourse of economics from the mid-80s....

The discourse has (therefore) shifted away from concern for the subject arising from an understanding of their lives and needs, to a broader debate about the economic and political needs of society that may be as threatening to vulnerable people as was the period of indictment in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

It is of concern to many educationalists that the push for education to be part of the 'free market' makes it incapable of addressing the complex requirements of inclusive schooling (Ball, 1994; Slee, 1999) because equity becomes the victim of 'school effectiveness'. Some argue that, as a result:

... special education for the remainder of the decade and beyond will be located in and constructed by a mainstream education system dominated by concerns to raise achievement levels, secure value for money and generally create a market in education (Hegarty, 1996, p. 324).

Efficiency in an era of deficit spending is attractive to governments (Kauffman, 1995; Stainback & Stainback, 1996; Slee, 1999). There is a chance, however, that even though the efficiency of the inclusive schooling movement makes it attractive, marginalised groups, such as students with disabilities, can become further disadvantaged by the current emphasis on economic outcomes.

***Lobby groups, nevertheless, have continued to use powerful moral, social and political arguments to support the increased educational provisions for children with disabilities (Stainback & Stainback, 1990). They believe that if people with disabilities are to be part of mainstream society, the full inclusion of all students with disabilities into regular schools and classes should be an indisputable practice. However, no country in the world has reason to be satisfied with the quality of its educational provision for children with disabilities. In fact, there are still industrialised countries where students with disabilities, particularly those with an intellectual disability, are excluded from any form of schooling (Mittler, 1995).***

There are a number of strong proponents of inclusion who suggest that an analysis of inclusion should begin with the acceptance that raising questions about inclusion is redundant (Reich, 1990; Stainback & Stainback, 1990; Skrtic, 1991; Slee, 1998). The new starting point should be at the level of

school organisation. On this, Williams, Fox, Thousand and Fox (1990, p. 232) argue:

We encourage an end to discussions of where students labelled severely or multiply handicapped can or should be educated. Instead, we propose that the discussion go another way, that it focus upon how to document, further refine, and disseminate the instructional, organisational, and technological innovations that allow neighbourhood schools to respond to the diverse educational and psychological needs of any learner.

Such an approach is consistent with the view that every school should be capable of enrolling and educating a widely diverse student population.

There has been an enormous amount of debate concerning the merits of inclusive education for children with disabilities. Despite the different meanings that various groups have for the term 'inclusion', it can be recognised that the meaning of the term has evolved from the 'integration' model of the 1970s and 1980s. Furthermore, the underlying philosophical basis for 'inclusion' is consistent across the various definitions that have been given to the term. On this, Hegarty (1996, p. 328) states:

Numerous studies into various aspects of integration have been carried out and ...several reviews of these studies completed. This dominance reflects both the centrality of the topic itself and the political and public interest in it. Special education is defined essentially in terms of ordinary school provision (and particularly its limitations) and as a consequence, most topics in special education have an integration angle. Moreover, integration and segregation are bound up with value positions; sometimes these are strongly

held and lead to campaigning and consumer pressure.

Broadly speaking, the term 'inclusion', which has become the dominant topic in research in special education since the 1970s (Hegarty, 1996; Chalmers, 1998), is used by those who support the view that all students with disabilities should be educated in regular classrooms alongside their non-disabled peers (Mittler, Brouillette & Harris, 1993). However, as with terms such as 'integration' and 'mainstreaming', 'inclusion' has been defined in many different ways within the literature on the education of students with disabilities (Uditsky, 1993; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994).

Many educationalists believe that research in itself may never establish an equivocal position on inclusive or segregated schooling for children with disabilities. Thomas (1997) and Clark *et al.* (1997) believe that whether or not segregation proceeds and mainstream schools become more inclusive will ultimately hinge on society's values and its attitudes. That is, if inclusion succeeds in displacing segregated education it will have done so because society considers that it is right to do so.

There are some educationalists calling for radical changes within regular schools and the complete eradication of segregated schools. They believe that schools catering specifically for children with disabilities only exist because of the limitations of ordinary schools in providing for the full range of abilities among their students. Moreover, they believe that even a superbly well organised segregated school, offering the highest quality curriculum and educational input to its children, has no right to exist if that same education can be provided in the mainstream school. These advocates are also dissatisfied with having students with disabilities based in segregated classrooms within regular schools or in any other segregated settings and maintain that placement in regular classrooms is the most effective way of enhancing students' social competencies and developing positive attitudes

among teachers and other students towards students with disabilities (Stainback & Stainback, 1982; Perske, 1988; Dempsey & Foreman, 1995; Chalmers, 1998; Slee, 1999).

Therefore, a more radical approach to the education of children with disabilities has recently been proposed. This approach posits 'inclusion' within a radical reformation of the existing school system and includes "rethinking the entire curriculum of the school in order to meet the needs of all children, including those now outside the regular school system in special schools or classes" (Mittler, 1994, p. 2). Proponents of such an approach assert that schools organised along traditional lines are deficient in dealing with diverse student populations. Therefore, students with disabilities are either totally excluded or receive an inappropriate educational program.

There have been many calls for a form of school restructuring that would appreciate diversity and so would be inclusive of the social and educational needs of all students, from the most gifted to the most disabled (Reich, 1990). Accordingly, the operation of supportive schools and classes to meet the needs of all students would become the major focus. Within this view, the process of determining educational needs and the development of individualised programs is not unique to students with disabilities. Rather, it is seen as a routine matter for these students because it happens to all students in the class.

One of the most compelling ideological arguments in support of 'inclusion' is that segregated education is a violation of human and civil rights (Rogers, 1993; Mittler, 1994). Many advocates of 'inclusion' believe that all other considerations, such as cost and academic performance, are of minor importance compared to the social justice imperative that all children with disabilities be given the choice of placement in a regular class (Uditsky, 1993). They claim that all forms of segregated education are flawed because

they devalue people with disabilities and perpetuate the belief that there are two different categories of people, these being the handicapped and the non-handicapped (Gartner & Lipsky, 1987; Rogers, 1993). Furthermore, they argue that including children with disabilities in regular schools and classes benefits all students by providing them with a valuable perspective of people with disabilities. This perspective is seen to be particularly the case where many members of the community have had little direct contact with students with disabilities and are unaware of their educational potential (Jenkinson, 1993).

The principles of inclusion have been accepted and promoted by international organisations such as the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (van Steenlandt, 1995). In the *Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education* (UNESCO, 1994, p. ix), UNESCO proclaimed that in terms of students with disabilities, inclusive schools “are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all”. Nevertheless, as this section of the literature indicates, there is not consensus on what constitutes the principles of inclusion. It is important to keep this in mind in any policy study on the education of children with disabilities such as that reported in later chapters of this dissertation.

### *Educational Placement*

In Australian schools, inclusion has begun to supersede the previous segregated model of special education, and inclusive schooling for children with disabilities is being increasingly practised (Foreman *et al.*, 1996). A recent Australian study (Dempsey & Foreman, 1995) confirmed that there had been an increase in the number of students with disabilities in regular schools and a corresponding decrease of such students in segregated schools. Any

Australian research findings are, however, complicated by two factors. First, there are substantial differences among the states in policies and practices relating to special education. Secondly, definitions of disability are inconsistent. Therefore, the findings of Dempsey and Foreman (1995) regarding the 20 per cent decline in the number of students with disabilities attending special schools between 1976 and 1989 in Australia are, even according to the researchers themselves, not altogether meaningful.

Supporters of inclusive education maintain that regular and 'special' education should be amalgamated into a general education system providing for all children. Others prefer an education model that posits inclusion as just one placement alternative within a continuum of educational services to cater for the needs of all students (Forlin, 1995). This model requires the retention of special schools and special classes as part of a wide spectrum of educational provision (Mittler, 1995).

There are many educationalists who believe that there should be a range of school options for students with disabilities (Perry, 1993; Casey, 1994; Kauffman, 1995). They argue that the educational rights of students with disabilities can sometimes be more effectively met in a segregated educational environment. Others, however, believe that the goal of 'inclusion' is only reached when students with disabilities achieve full-time placement in regular classrooms (Rouse & Florian, 1997).

The assumption that non-disabled students have a right to an education free of distraction helped justify the growth of segregated schools and classes, even after the rights of students with disabilities to a public education had been established (Christensen & Dorn, 1997). However, inclusive education is increasingly becoming recognised as a basic human right. As a result, many school systems throughout the world are now offering places to children with disabilities.



The results of recent research within W.A. have provided little support for the current trend towards inclusive education. Forlin's (1995) doctoral study found that educators were not accepting of the inclusion of students with disabilities into regular classes and acceptance levels declined rapidly the greater the severity of the disability. Also, the views proposed for a complete merging of special and regular education into the one system were not supported in this study. Rather, Forlin's research confirmed the recommendations of Casey (1994) and Kauffman (1995) who have proposed that inclusion should be viewed as only one placement alternative within a range of service options.

Some research (Jones, 1981; Mittler & Farrell, 1987; Jenkinson, 1993) has suggested that, as an alternative to full inclusion, there are advantages in developing segregated classes in regular schools. This practice, referred to in the literature as a 'resource' model (Jones, 1981) is seen as a middle path between the segregation of a 'special' school and full inclusion. Advantages of such a model are threefold. First, it recognises that a flexible approach is necessary for educating children with disabilities. In particular, the amount of time each child spends in the regular classroom can be varied according to the child's needs. Secondly, the presence in the school of children with disabilities imitates 'real life' situations and fosters positive attitudes among the other students. Also, it enables siblings to attend the same school. Finally, it allows teachers who were initially apprehensive about teaching students with disabilities to become more positive as they begin to interact with students in a social and academic setting (Mittler, 1995). Properly resourced, any provision based on such a model could also facilitate teamwork among staff as they look searchingly at the academic performance of all of their pupils (Jones, 1981).

There are some educationalists who believe that while the educational needs of most children with disabilities can be met in the regular classroom, the educational needs of children with a severe or profound intellectual disability can be met most effectively in a segregated setting (Walker & Bullis, 1991; Kauffman & Hallahan, 1995). Perry (1993, p. 14) believes that adherence to the ideology of inclusion actually “prevents some students with disabilities from receiving an appropriate education”. Others, such as Jenkins, Pious and Jewell (1990, p. 125) insist that:

.... students with intensive educational needs should be excluded because their needs extend beyond the normal developmental curriculum that the classroom teacher is responsible for delivering and adapting for individual learners.

Kauffman (1995) believes that the inclusion of students with severe disabilities is sometimes easier than inclusion for students whose difference is less obvious. Moreover, Kauffman states (1995, p. 149) that:

Given the research available today, the generalisations that education in separate classes is never effective and that effective education in regular classrooms is feasible for all handicapped students (even for all mildly or moderately handicapped students) are indefensible.

The terms ‘medical model’ or ‘norm-referenced model’ have been used to delineate the assumptions and methods used to legitimise the segregationist approach (Condon, 1983; Lewis & Cook, 1993; Slee, 1993). This approach has been shaped by the ideas and beliefs of the medical and psychology professions which are based on assessment, measurement and the identification of a certain section of the population as ‘disabled’ (Chalmers, 1994). Once this difference has been established, the segregation of services, including education, is seen to be desirable.

There is a great deal of literature, however, refuting any segregationist approach to special education (Gartner & Lipsky, 1987; Chalmers, 1994; Dempsey & Foreman, 1995; Foreman *et al.*, 1996). This is associated with the non-medical view of disability. Such a view is based on the recognition that adaptations should be made to accommodate the entire population and ensure that all members of society are included in a continuum of difference (Chalmers, 1994). Gartner and Lipsky (1987) refer to this non-segregated approach as a 'merged' system and describe its characteristics as follows:

... effective practices in classrooms and schools would characterise education for all students. No longer would there be an education system that focuses on the limitations of 'handicapped' students, a teacher's incapacity to teach students because of a lack of special credentials, or instruction that is determined by the label attached to the students. Nor would blame be placed on students or on family characteristics. Rather, the focus would be on effective instruction for all students (Gartner & Lipsky, 1987, p. 388).

With such a non-segregated approach, assessment and analysis of the skills and knowledge of children would be conducted as a means of informing the classroom teacher of the starting points for future instruction, not for the purpose of labelling and segregation (Chalmers, 1994).

Mittler (1978) argues that the question of special or regular schooling depends on whether one believes that academic attainment is more or less important than social gains. However, there are many educationalists who believe that both the academic and social needs of students with disabilities can be satisfied in regular classrooms (Voeltz, 1982; Jenkinson, 1993;

Rogers, 1993). While the academic progress of children with disabilities in both inclusive and segregated settings has been a substantial area of research in the last twenty-five years, advocates of inclusion often cite the development of social skills as a key issue. Jenkinson (1993), for example, found that social interaction between all students does not take place spontaneously but needs planning. Also, Lavoie (1994) found that placing children with disabilities into regular classrooms does not improve their social skills unless an ongoing social skills program is in place.

In a W.A. study by Roberts (1989), empirical evidence from an investigation of the social efficacy of inclusion suggested that acceptance and positive interaction between students with and without disabilities was not automatically forthcoming with the placement of children with a mild intellectual disability in regular classrooms. This study also found that while such students were less frequently accepted and more frequently rejected than able students, the variables associated with social acceptance and social rejection for students with disabilities differed from those that were related to the social acceptance and social rejection for students without disabilities.

A report on inclusive schooling was completed for the *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development* (OECD) in 1994. This report, *The Integration of Disabled Children into Mainstream Education: Ambitions, Theories and Practices* (OECD, 1994), concluded that due to the methodological problems of comparing different groups receiving dissimilar kinds of education, the findings of many studies were inconclusive. A review of the 'inclusion' literature also reveals that the results of research to support either the segregation or the inclusion of students with disabilities into regular classrooms is often contradictory and inconclusive (Driscoll, 1992; Mittler, 1994; Hegarty, 1996; Pickering, 1996). There are several reasons for this. First, literature in this field is characterised by an absence of systematic

research data that investigates long-term outcomes for students (Jenkinson, 1993). Secondly, there has been little research on inclusive education on a regional basis. Instead, the focus has often been on small groups of students or individual schools (Center & Curry, 1993). Thirdly, many of the studies are not undertaken by independent researchers, thus lending the findings open to bias (Jenkinson, 1993). Finally, it is impossible to overcome the problem of selection artefact. That is, it is both impossible and unethical to match two groups of children and to allocate them randomly to segregated and regular schools (Mittler, 1995).

Baker, Wang and Walberg (1995) state that three meta-analyses, comparing the effects of inclusion with segregated educational practices in a total of 74 individual studies, gave results that reflected a small beneficial effect of inclusion on the academic outcomes of students with an intellectual disability. Moreover, in the results of several studies on inclusion, it was found that students with disabilities who were fully included in regular classrooms significantly outperformed other

students with similar levels of  
disability who were either segregated  
from mainstream education or were  
integrated on a part-time basis  
(Rietveld, 1989; Center & Curry, 1993;  
Baker et al, 1995). However, there  
has also been published research that  
contradicts these findings. For  
example, Forlin (1995) found that,  
particularly for students with greater  
support needs, inclusive education had  
not resulted in any positive academic  
outcomes. This reiterates the  
conclusion arrived at by Booth (1981,  
p. 303) over eighteen years ago that  
"there is no evidence to suggest that  
children reach higher levels of  
educational attainment in special  
schools as opposed to less restrictive  
arrangements with comparable levels of  
support".

An examination and comparison of the social interactions and friendships of children with disabilities in segregated and inclusive educational environments has also become a favoured area of research of late (Chambers & Kay, 1992). However, as for academic outcomes, the results for social outcomes are similarly inconclusive. For example, Chambers and Kay (1992, p. 48) found that:

In some instances, results have revealed successful social integration, characterised by social interaction between children with disabilities and other children and at least moderate levels of peer acceptance, while in other studies, low levels of interaction between children with disabilities by those without difficulties has occurred

***Furthermore, from a total of twenty-three studies, Chambers and Kay (1992) identified fifteen that reported positive social outcomes. However, contradicting these positive findings is a smaller number of studies, such as those of Center and Ward (1984) and Guralnick and Groom (1987) that reported negative findings. Also negative were the results of some recent research undertaken in W.A. (White, 1994) that examined the loneliness of children with disabilities who had recently been included into a regular school. The results of the study indicated that although many primary school students feel lonely and are rejected by their peers when they are at school, children with disabilities are significantly more lonely and are also significantly more rejected than are the 'regular' school students.***

***In light of the thrust of this section of the literature review so far, it is not surprising that Stainback and Stainback (1996) have concluded that there is quite a challenge ahead for supporters of full inclusion. In particular, they argue that if inclusion is to work, the resources that have been available to 'special education' must be transferred to regular***

***education. The primary goal of inclusive education, however, is not to save money. Rather, the resources that should be transferred must be used to achieve a mainstream that is adaptive to, and supportive of, everyone (Karagiannis, Stainback & Stainback, 1996; Stainback & Stainback, 1996).***

Overall, then, this section of the literature review has examined the literature relating to regular and segregated schooling for students with disabilities. However, while educationalists concur that the appropriate educational placement for children with disabilities is a critical issue, the literature also points to several other factors that influence the successful education of children with disabilities. Some of the major trends in this body of literature will now be considered.

### **Factors Impacting on Students with Disabilities**

This section of the literature review explores the literature with regard to the school, classroom and home environmental issues that impact on students with disabilities. Three main categories of such literature have been identified, namely school personnel attitudes, curriculum and pedagogy, and home-school links. Each of these will now be considered in turn.

#### **School Personnel Attitudes**

Research indicates that school principals strongly influence the degree to which inclusive education becomes a part of school life (Taylor, 1979; Center, Ward, Parmenter & Nash, 1985; Chalmers, 1994; Rietveld, 1994; Bailey and du Plessis, 1998). McDonnell and Hardman (1989) contend that due to their high profile position, the attitudes of principals are even more important than their actions. In this regard, it is instructive that in a 1985 study in New South Wales, the principals of Catholic schools were found to have the most positive attitudes to the inclusion of students with disabilities into regular schools (Center *et al.*, 1985).



Dolbel's (1991) study looked at the perceptions of government school principals with regard to inclusive schooling. This W.A. study found that while there were some concerns about the process, most principals held positive attitudes about inclusive education, a view supported by Bailey and du Plessis' (1998) study relating to the attitudes of 225 Queensland principals. The findings of both of these studies provide an interesting comparison to the results of attitudinal studies of principals towards integration conducted both in Australia and overseas. The latter have reported that the staffing and resources that are available often determine attitudes towards the inclusion of children with disabilities (Williams *et al.*, 1990). However, the findings of both Dolbel (1991) and Bailey and du Plessis (1998) do complement existing research that identified the importance of administrative support and co-operation between regular and 'special' educators as factors influencing attitudes to the inclusion of children with disabilities into regular schools (Thomas, 1987; Center & Ward, 1989; Driscoll, 1992).

The attitudes of teachers also have a powerful influence upon the nature and quality of education provision for children with disabilities (Forest, 1987; Center & Ward, 1989; Ballard, 1990; Jenkinson, 1993; Rietveld, 1994). In Australia, the links between teacher attitudes towards inclusion and the successful implementation of inclusive education initiatives has been well researched and documented (Chalmers, 1994; Sigafoos & Elkins, 1994). For example, O'Neill and Linfoot (1989) found that over 87 per cent of 850 teachers surveyed either agreed or strongly agreed that students with disabilities should be educated in regular classes. Leyser and Abrams (1984) and Janny and Meyer (1990) also found that the commitment of staff to the rights of students with disabilities to attend a regular school was a crucial factor underlying successful inclusion practices.

Research also indicates that teachers play a key role in minimising students' disabilities in the classroom setting (Cant, 1994). However, while research has shown that most educators believe in the rights of an equal education for all children, somewhat surprisingly, educators' attitudes towards inclusive placements have been generally quite negative (Sigafoos & Elkins, 1994; Forlin, 1995). Many teachers express a considerable amount of concern about the practicability of inclusive education, although this alters in a positive manner as the amount of contact and experience with children with disabilities increases (Frith & Edwards, 1981; O'Neill & Linfoot, 1989). Also, Whiting and Young (1996) believe that due to a lack of financial, moral and professional support, teachers have been left to struggle to implement the policies demanded by the school systems and the community. These researchers cite significant increases in stress and burnout among teachers as being due in part to the inclusion of children with disabilities into regular classrooms. This contention is also borne out by the research of Southorn (1994) in Queensland.

It is also noteworthy that while system policies have altered markedly in the past two decades and there has been a steady increase in the inclusion of children with disabilities into regular classrooms, there is evidence to suggest that some schools still resist such children, particularly at the secondary school level. In Rietveld's (1994) New Zealand study of twenty-two children with Down Syndrome, while all but one child began school in an inclusive setting, by high school age only five remained at a regular school. This was despite the fact that New Zealand's 1989 Education Act has a clause that states the right for all children to attend their local school. What is significant about studies of the type reported here is that schools need to address the disabling factors in context rather than focus on the child's perceived inability to cope with inclusive education.

## **Curriculum and Pedagogy**

Mittler (1995) argues that at the local school level, one of the keys to an effective education for students with disabilities is in the delivery, planning and access to a broad and balanced curriculum, designed from the outset as a curriculum for all. The last decade in Australia has been characterised by some developments reflecting this view. In particular, there has been the development of curriculum frameworks that are developmentally structured, outcome-based and intended to be inclusive of all students (Curriculum Council of Western Australia, 1998). In W.A., the introduction of a language program *First Steps* has been helpful in terms of pedagogy because it encourages teachers to move away from the traditional practice of teaching a set curriculum to all class members (Chalmers, 1994). The knowledge and skills are plotted on developmental continua, thus emphasising the variety of ability levels found in any one class.

In terms of assessment, there has been a change of focus in the past few years as the influence of the medical and psychology professions has declined (Lewis & Cook, 1993). This has shifted the emphasis away from the clinical tasks of measurement, assessment and labelling and has concentrated attention on the educational and social needs of children with disabilities (Chalmers, 1994). In the past, an excessive pre-occupation with standardising and testing, in particular the prolific use of psychological testing in schools, has led to a neglect of process, thus widening the gap between research and classroom practice (Sinha, 1981).

The use of I.Q. testing proliferated throughout the 1960s but research since this time has uncovered some concerns about the process. Ingalls' (1978) research was one of a number of projects that destroyed two myths about intelligence (Casey, 1994). Ingalls (1978) concluded that intelligence is not a fixed entity but is susceptible to the influences of experience and education. His research also uncovered evidence to support the argument that

intelligence is a multi-dimensional construct in the sense that children can be strong in one area but weak in others.

It was intelligence testing that led to much litigation in the U.S.A. in the 1960s because of its use in justifying segregated settings for students with disabilities (Mercer, 1973). Considerable research has found that eligibility testing is more likely to promote labelling than assist with individual programming (Christensen & Dorn, 1997). Research by Dunn (1973) and Heward and Orlansky (1992) led them to conclude that the cultural bias in I.Q. testing was invalidating the results for many students from a non-English speaking background. As a result of this research, the use of I.Q. testing is much less common in Australian schools than it was ten years ago (Casey, 1994). When it is used, adaptive behaviour scales, provided by parents and teachers, are also used to assist in identifying a child with an intellectual disability.

In terms of pedagogy, Conway (1996) outlines appropriate ways to teach all students effectively. These include giving all children access to a full curriculum, having realistically high expectations of students, developing good relationships with students, and utilising skills and interests. However, it is recognised that the thought of having to adapt curriculum is, for many teachers, an additional, unfamiliar task in an already hectic and pressured schedule (Conway, 1996; Stainback & Stainback, 1996).

There is some research that suggests that the successful education of students with disabilities hinges to a large degree on professional development and support for the teachers (Mittler, 1995). However, the past fifteen years have seen most universities severely limit courses in these areas, even though teachers themselves identify professional development as a crucial need in designing appropriate individualised instruction programs (Jenkinson, 1993). Indeed, a study in 1996 revealed that only half of the

teachers involved had received any 'special education' training (Foreman *et al.*, 1996). This decline in the number of 'special education' courses in the tertiary sector reflects the current emphasis on individualised instruction. It also reflects a belief that the knowledge and skills needed to teach children with disabilities can usually be transferred directly to the education of children with disabilities (Stainback & Stainback, 1984; Mittler, 1995).

At the same time, there is no shortage of advice to teachers on instructional techniques which need to be adopted if the effective teaching of students with disabilities is to occur (Wang, 1989). Casey (1994) describes a number of pedagogical emphases, based on research over the past twenty-five years, to assist students with intellectual disabilities. These include the minimising of information variables (Mercer & Payne, 1975), giving students more time for revision (Denham & Lieberman, 1980), placing more emphasis on drill and repetition (Dunn, 1973), providing numerous concept and/or skill practice in a variety of settings (Conway & Gow, 1990) and stimulating the formal learning environment with secure relationships (Wachs & Gruen, 1982).

Research has found that the teaching of children with disabilities is most effective when instruction is very structured. 'Direct instruction' and a 'task analytic approach' are two phrases used to describe such methods of instruction. They are reflected in curricula devised by Bender, Valetutti and Bender (1976) that were based on the basic tenet that children with an intellectual disability need to be taught differently because, unlike regular students, they do not learn incidentally through natural interaction with others and their environment (Casey, 1994).

Jenkinson's (1993) study concluded that students with disabilities have trouble generalising their learning from one environment to another. Therefore, an inclusive education provides the most appropriate environment for learning and preparation for independence to take place. In a similar vein, Conway, Robinson, Foreman and Dempsey (1996) state that the reality

of segregated classes is that they contain a very heterogeneous group of ages, ability levels and social skills. These only serve to complicate the teaching and learning processes, despite the presence of trained teachers and smaller class sizes (Conway & Gow, 1988).

Finally, the use of extra personnel to assist the teaching staff with the education of students with disabilities is seen in the research literature as being a worthwhile practice. In the past, when the charitable organisations had the responsibility of educating children with disabilities, the use of volunteers was necessary. As governments have taken over, however, the employment of trained teaching assistants has occurred and the voluntary workforce that was characteristic of special education has declined. Platt and Platt (1980) and Jenkins and Jenkins (1985) provide empirical evidence of the effectiveness of volunteers, teacher assistants and peer tutors. Evans (1995) also argues that the common feature of all successful inclusive education programs is that they are well resourced with specific personnel available to assist. Early advocates of the inclusion of children with disabilities into regular classrooms, such as Dunn (1973), also recognised the worth of support staff.

### **Home-School Links**

There has been a burgeoning literature concerned with parental involvement in the education of children with disabilities (Wood, 1988). There are two different foci in this literature. The first is the parents' participation in selecting their child's school. The second is the parents' and school's commitment to share the responsibilities for the child's education. Each of these will be treated separately.

Concomitant with the social justice viewpoint is the right of parents to be involved in the decision with regard to the most appropriate schooling placement for their child. The 1975 legislation in the U.S.A. was the result of parents and professionals challenging state decisions on their child's

schooling placement (Mandell & Fiscus, 1981; Lipsky & Gartner, 1989). Mittler, Mittler and McConachie (1987) called for recognition of the essential equality between parents and professionals and for parents to be involved in the process of all decision making. In Australia, the rights of parents to choose the most appropriate school for their child has been regularly challenged by the school, the school system or the state (Slee, 1993). In many states, legislation remains that effectively prohibits a child with a severe or profound intellectual disability from attending a regular school (Hastings, 1997).

The consistent research findings are that for children with disabilities, parental involvement in their child's education is vital to the child's success (Lipsky & Gartner, 1989). Mittler (1978, p. 248) agrees in saying:

No matter how successfully a child is taught in school, the effort is largely wasted unless systematic steps are taken to help the child use and apply his learning in his own home and in all other real life settings in which he moves. The collaboration of parents is indispensable for this purpose.

**In the U.K., the Warnock Report**  
**confirmed the importance of the role**  
**of parents by devoting a whole chapter**  
**to the subject (Barton & Moody, 1981;**  
**Wood, 1988). The recognition of**  
**parents as active participants in the**  
**educational process was further**  
**emphasised with a 1993 Education Act**

extending parents' rights regarding  
school preferences for their child  
(Knill & Humphreys, 1996).

The second focus in the literature  
presently under consideration, it will  
be recalled, emphasises the importance  
of parents and schools sharing the  
responsibilities for the child's  
education. On this, Lipsky (1989)  
believes that an understanding of  
family characteristics and a  
reconceptualisation of professional  
and parental relationships is needed  
with neither parents nor professionals  
being subordinate to the other.  
Similarly, Whiting and Young (1996)  
found that by working with exceptional  
children, the teachers' respect for,  
and relationships with, parents was



enhanced. Taking up the same point,  
Barton and Moody (1981, p. 146) state:

... issues about the nature  
of home-school relations  
become more pertinent,  
including the need for an  
understanding of the  
nature of those wider  
socio-economic and  
political features of  
society and how they  
influence the outworkings  
of this vitally important  
relationship in the life  
of schools.

However, any analysis of home-school  
links needs to be located in the wider  
ideological, political and economic  
aspects of society. In this regard,  
there are calls for new approaches to  
research with regard to the education  
of students with disabilities that  
take into account the sociological  
factors underpinning disability

(Hegarty & Evans, 1985; Barton, 1988;  
Fulcher, 1989). Such calls argue  
that a contemporary analysis of policy  
must be cognisant of the wider  
political and economic contexts.  
Furthermore, they contend that  
previous research has used  
predominantly quantitative  
methodologies based on psychologically  
dominated research and has largely  
ignored the sociological perspective.  
Advocates of a more qualitative  
approach argue that much of the  
research conducted in 'special  
education' has been shallow and  
sometimes of less than full value.  
This has sometimes resulted in the  
careless application of educational  
ideologies, policies and practices  
(Barton, 1988).

Emerging Policy Research Trends with Regard

## **to the Education of Children with Disabilities**

Education in general has undergone much reform of late. Equally, the education of children with disabilities has been subject to a great deal of legislative and policy change over the past three decades (Hegarty, 1996). Research has kept up with this change. The emphasis on the 'medical' model of disability resulted in most early research into disability being of a quantitative mode. However, as the question of school placement began to dominate the research agenda, a greater proportion of the population began to arrive at an understanding that the question of integration versus segregation was most often settled by reference to principle or ideology rather than empirical data (Hegarty, 1996). Consequently, in terms of students with disabilities, some educational research in the 1970s began to be conducted with a qualitative approach. However, as noted by Hegarty (1996, p. 334), twenty years later:

... the much-criticised medical paradigm has an influence still, as evidenced by the voluminous literature on attention deficit disorders and psychomedical research on specific learning difficulties.

Therefore, although qualitative studies are increasingly becoming common with regard to educational research, in terms of the education of children with disabilities, a quantitative research mode is still dominant (Copeland, 1993; Sebba & Ainscow, 1996).

There have been three discernible changes taking place within political, social and educational fora in terms of research into the education of children with disabilities. Each of these changes will now be identified in turn.

The first major change occurred in the late 1960s and early 1970s with the gradual acceptance of people with disabilities into the wider community.

Following worldwide debates with regard to the merits of segregating students with disabilities, the 1970 Education (Handicapped Children) Act, followed a decade later by the *Special Educational Needs: Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People* (Warnock, 1979) established the right of every child in the U.K. to be educated in a regular school, albeit with several provisos. In the U.S.A., the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act* legislation asserted that, as far as possible, children with disabilities should be included in regular school settings.

In terms of the education of children with disabilities in Australia, the first major change occurred in the 1970s. These changes were not, as in the U.K. and the U.S.A., prompted by legislation, but were the result of other factors such as new paradigms of disability, administrative and resourcing considerations, professional concerns and parent pressure (Fulcher, 1989; Hegarty, 1996; Slee, 1998). Chapter Two of this dissertation described how, after a long period in opposition, the Whitlam Labor Government came to power with a strong reformist educational agenda. This agenda was centred on the concept of equity and, consequently, in order to encourage the establishment of equal outcomes for all students, greater means were made available to student cohorts or schools that were poorly resourced. As a result, funds to widen the educational opportunities of students with disabilities were made available to schools and many of these students began to be integrated into regular schools. Policy research at the time, while in its infancy, tended to be oriented towards supporting these movements.

The next major change occurred in the 1980s with the questioning of the relationship between policy and practice (Fulcher, 1989). While the normalisation of people with disabilities into the general community was increasingly being noted in society generally, and school systems were moving to support the integration of students with disabilities, some policy

analysts began to see schools as constituting sites of conflict concerning resources. For example, Slee (1993, p. 1), in a policy analysis work, noted:

Discussions about the integration of students with perceived disabilities into the regular classroom are frequently reduced to debates over inventories of physical and human resources.... Suggesting that the struggle is simply one of getting more resources is inadequate. Depicted in this way, the politics of integration becomes the politics of struggling to open the public purse wider to wrest more funds for the integration program.

Other policy analysts argued that the solution to the problem of appropriate school resourcing was the development of a shared understanding of the conceptual and ideological issues relating to the education of students with disabilities. This, in turn, it was argued, would create an atmosphere within which the more technical aspects, such as resources, could be addressed with an increased chance of consensus (Higgins, 1992; Slee, 1993). Other policy analysts, yet again, noted that arguments about resources eclipsed the more ethical dilemmas of the education of students with disabilities (Sykes, 1989; Chalmers, 1994). For example, in an analysis of the situation in Victoria, Slee (1993, p. 195) further commented that:

Numerous schools have developed a cargo cult approach to integration. Many of the disputes over unmet resources submissions have resulted in students being denied access to the classroom.

It was also argued that for a large number of educators, integration was understood as a technical problem and, as a result, qualified approaches to integrating students with disabilities into regular schools were quite common

(Slee, 1993; McGlynn, 1994). For example, the qualifiers “wherever possible and practical” were often inserted in the enrolment policies of school systems. Analysts noted that, as a consequence, while public education policy encouraged the integration of students with disabilities into regular schools, the number of segregated students continued to increase (Slee, 1993).

Policy analysis research has also accompanied the growing belief in the 1990s that schools should stop conceiving and categorising students in terms of their disability and instead be fully inclusive of all students (Hegarty, 1996; Rouse & Florian, 1997; Slee, 1999). Advocates of this view believe that full inclusion is linked to children’s basic civil rights and that any form of segregation is unjust (Rogers, 1993). However, despite this increasingly popular belief, segregated schools have continued to exist. Slee (1999, p. 4) is one policy researcher who has focused on this phenomenon and has argued as follows:

Notwithstanding the international press for the integration of disabled students into regular classrooms, the special education industry has proven remarkably resilient. Professional special education discourse appropriates the lexicon of inclusive schooling and comfortably relocates itself to both regular and segregated educational settings.

Policy analysts also remind us, however, that the inclusion/segregation debate is about more than simply rights and justice. Current policy research has argued that the protected status of ‘special education’ can be attributed to the associated emphases on standards, school effectiveness and the free market (Slee, 1999). On this, Hegarty (1996, p. 334) noted:

What seems clear, however, is that special education for the remainder of this decade and beyond will be located in and constructed by a mainstream education system dominated by concerns to raise achievement levels, secure value for money and generally create a market in education

While the research literature that reports on most aspects of the education of children with disabilities continues to grow, there has not been a corresponding increase of studies focusing specifically on students with disabilities within the Australian Catholic education environment. Similarly, there is a paucity of policy studies relating to Australian Catholic school systems. Accordingly, it is not possible to locate the policy study reported later in this dissertation within a definite body of substantial policy research literature that relates specifically to the education of children with disabilities within Catholic schools. Nonetheless, it is possible to discern some slim threads in an emerging field of study.

There appear to have been just three major Australian studies on the education of students with disabilities within Catholic educational systems. *Special Education: A Catholic Perspective* (Condon, 1983) was a research paper commissioned by the National Catholic Education Commission back in the early 1980s. This paper attempted to present a general overview of the Catholic Church's educational provisions for children with disabilities. It also identified a level of apathy and ignorance and poor communication among many principals and teachers involved in Catholic education in Australia. Furthermore, it introduced readers to significant theoretical concepts such as 'inclusion' and 'catechesis' for children with disabilities enrolled in Catholic schools.

The second study, *Integration in Catholic Education: A Case Study in Implementation and Consequences* (Crimeen, 1986), investigated the inclusion of children with disabilities into Catholic primary schools in Victoria. The main focus of the study, conducted in four schools, was an examination of the impact of inclusion on staffing, support services, buildings, equipment and attitudes. The major finding of the study was that a lack of finance and a shortage of trained personnel both limited the schools' ability to effectively

educate students with disabilities. Crimeen (1986) concluded that a greater commitment to providing adequate staff would enable the parish schools to expand and improve their programs.

The third study, *Effectiveness of Integrating Exceptional Children into a Junior Secondary Coeducational Catholic School* (Kelly, 1994), centred on the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities into regular junior secondary classes in a junior high school in Queensland. This ethnographic study found that inclusion was effective in three areas: positive social outcomes for the students with disabilities; growth in academic and skill areas for these students; and the acceptance of the model of inclusion by the teachers, parents and administration of the school. However, the study also found that the inclusion would possibly be more effective if the teachers received more professional in-service training and the parents were more strongly involved in the educational decisions concerning their children.

Studies specifically aimed at analysing Catholic education policy in Australia are not plentiful and those focusing specifically on Catholic education policy regarding the education of children with disabilities are rare. This is surprising considering the important dimension of the Church's educational mission in Australia (Flynn, 1993). Twenty-five years ago there were calls for greater research efforts in this area and in the next decade, there was further complaint about the neglect of Catholic education in Australia by researchers (Furtado, 1986), but the response was not great.

At the same time, there have been several Australian studies that focus on the growth of bureaucracy in Catholic education. Luttrell (1993), D'Orsa (1994) and Jeffcoat (1994) all identify some confusion with regard to the rise of Catholic Education Offices as new and powerful bureaucracies. All three studies also speak in part about the tension between the benefits of



centralism and the mutually supportive ideologies as espoused in post-Vatican 11 Church documents.

In W.A. at least two research projects relating to Catholic education have been conducted, although neither contains any references to the education of students with disabilities. The first of these (Tannock, 1964) focused on the role of the teaching orders in the first century of Catholic education in W.A. However, since this research preceded the formation of the CECWA, its relevance to the study in terms of policy analysis is limited. The second recent piece of research, *An Evaluation of Certain Aspects of the Organisation and Administration of Catholic Education in Western Australia, 1971 – 1984 (Quo 'vasimus'?)* (Furtado, 1986) examined the formation and development of the CECWA and highlighted its limitations. The findings of Furtado's 1986 study were that while the CECWA was small and decentralised, its power and responsibility were growing. Consequently, the organisation of Catholic education in W.A. was increasingly resorting to formalised rules of operations. Moreover, the executive and secretarial functions of the CECWA were somewhat blurred. Furtado (1986) drew an analogy between the Office of the CECWA and the public service. He believed that to differentiate the Catholic Education Office from the CECWA was "to misunderstand the reality or power of the Office and the nature of the relationship between bureaucracy and the executive" (Furtado, 1986, p. 165).

### Conclusion

This chapter has presented a broad overview of the literature pertaining to the education of children with disabilities. It can be seen, however, that despite the increasing amount of research on this topic since the 1960s, there is still a great deal of uncertainty with regard to the optimum school placement for this student cohort. Furthermore, it is clear that within Catholic schools in W.A.,

there is a substantial lack of research in the dual areas of 'policy analysis' and 'the education of children with disabilities'.

This chapter was presented in four parts. First, the philosophical values underpinning the education of students with disabilities were examined. The next two sections of the chapter focused on the literature on two other key issues with regard to the education of students with disabilities, namely 'educational placement' and 'factors impacting on students with disabilities'. Finally, a review of policy studies with particular reference to students with disabilities and policy studies within Catholic education systems in Australia, was presented. It was concluded that this is a very neglected area of research. The research project that is now reported in the remaining chapters of this dissertation goes some way towards meeting this neglect.

# CHAPTER 5

## *METHODOLOGY*

### **Introduction**

This chapter is concerned with methodological issues associated with the research reported later in this dissertation. First, the particular theoretical approach underpinning the policy study contained in this dissertation is outlined. Secondly, the data-gathering methods utilised in the study are described. Thirdly, the procedures that enhance the reliability and validity of the study are considered. Finally, the methods of data analysis used in the study are presented.

### **Theoretical Underpinnings of Research**

In the last decade researchers have generated much literature on the issue of how policy should be examined and theoretically considered. Although Wildavsky (1979, p. 15) believes that “it is more important to practise policy analysis than to spend time defining it”, it is likely that research would lack direction without an agreed understanding of what is meant by policy. On this, Ranson (1996) believes that the idea of policy remains under-conceptualised and that education policy studies must focus on the policy itself. He describes ‘policy’ in the following way:

Policies are statements which are typically expressed both in utterance and in textual form. They have a

distinctive and formal purpose for organisations and governments in codifying and publicising the values that are to inform future practice and thus encapsulate prescriptions for reform. Policies ... project images of the ideal (and) are thus oriented to change and action, providing public intent of transforming practice according to ideal values (Ranson, 1996, p. 265).

This approach is also one that is consistent with Beetham's (1987) contention that the formulation of public policy is an intrinsically political exercise. Therefore, as he sees it, one of the important reasons for organisations to clearly enunciate policy is to enable a struggle to take place between different interest groups as they contest ideas and resources (Ranson, 1996).

Various theorists have tended to focus on specific aspects of policy. Foster and Harman (1992, pp. 310-311), for example, distinguish what they identify as two important aspects of policy work. The first of these is the collection of data that are needed to obtain an adequate picture of the past and the present with regard to a particular policy. Foster and Harman's second function of policy work (1992) is concerned with the efficient implementation of the policy decisions. In this regard, the work of Crump (1993, pp. 15-23) is also informative. He describes eight models of policy which vary from the *rational* model, popularised in the 1950s with an emphasis on the strong links between economic and social policy, to the *problem-solving* model, which is based on a premise that public policies are responses to and sources of problems. Crump concludes that while policy models are helpful, any one model struggles to accurately convey the policy process as it takes place in the real world. Crump (1993) also states that:

While rational behaviour may not be feasible or desirable, policy and leadership are neither purely a matter of chance nor totally uncontrollable. Choices can be fatalistic, accidental or ritual (Crump, 1993, p. 22).

Crump, along with Walker (1994), also believes that a plurality of policy models that define policy as 'process' rather than 'product' are the most accurate in describing the cyclical nature of policy. In this regard, it is noteworthy that in recent years there has been a growing resistance to the separation of formulation and implementation phases of policy.

This, of course, is not to argue that focussing on process is a relatively new development. Over twenty years ago, Dye (1976, p. 1) considered the process aspects of policy models when he stated that a study of policy means "finding out what governments do, why they do it, and what difference it makes". More recently, Ham and Hill (1993) argued that the main aim of policy analysis is (p. 11) "to interpret the causes and consequences of government action, in particular the processes of policy formulation". Ball (1994, p. 10) was even more explicit on this when he described policy as "both text and action, words and deeds; it is what is enacted as well as what is intended".

While the accommodation of process into models of policy analysis is to be welcomed, many models still do not reflect the fluid nature and considerable complexity of educational institutions. Nevertheless, there has been a strong focus in recent years on the acceptance that there are multiple, and often conflicting, influences on the policy process. Such a focus gives much greater attention, than have other models, to the role of individuals at the local level. In this regard, Ham and Hill (1993) offer a useful model of policy making that combines the decisional top-down perspectives on policy with action oriented perspectives. They settle on the term 'policy analysis' to describe policy studies because they believe that it assists in making the important distinction between analysis 'of' policy and analysis 'for' policy: They state:

This distinction is important in drawing attention to policy analysis as an academic activity concerned primarily with advancing understanding and policy analysis as an applied activity concerned mainly with contributing to the solution of social problems (Ham & Hill, 1993, p. 23).

They argue that the policy debate by academics has intensified in the period since the 1960s, believing this has been due to “studies which had originally developed out of the work of political scientists, economists and others (being) embraced by the emerging policy analysis perspective” (Ham & Hill, 1993, p. 2). They then go on to compare and contrast various definitions of policy analysis. These include the relatively basic idea that the role of analysis is sometimes to locate problems where solutions might be tried (Wildavsky, 1979). At other times, it is simply concerned with the description and explanation of the causes and consequences of government action (Dye, 1976).

Furthermore, Ham and Hill (1993) argue that, by drawing on a range of disciplines, policy analysis is useful in interpreting the causes and consequences of government action. They also concur with Fulcher’s (1989) idea of policy-making being very much a web of decisions when they state:

... a decision network, often of considerable complexity, may be involved in producing action, and a web of decisions taking place over a long period of time and extending far beyond the initial policy-making process, may form part of the network. A second aspect is that even at the policy making level, policy is not usually expressed in a single decision (Ham and Hill, 1993, p. 12).

In addition, Rein and Schon (1984), Ham and Hill (1993) and Hill (1997) have no doubt that the political agenda often means that analysis of policy is rarely value free. The fact that policy research is often funded by one of the parties

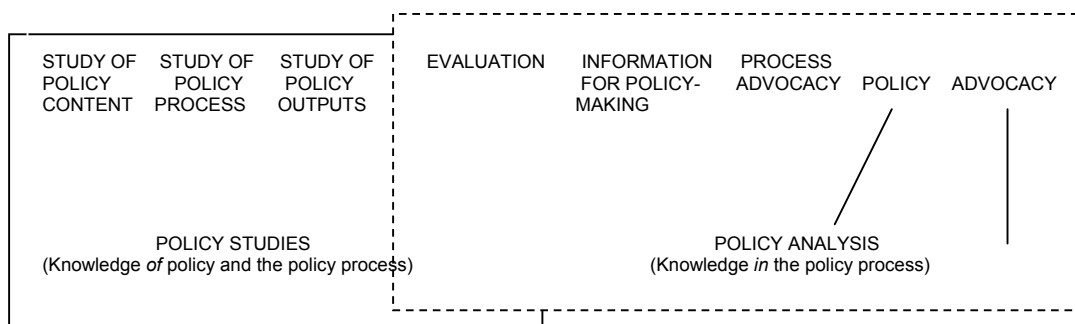
with a vested interest in the outcome means that the beliefs and assumptions of the researcher inevitably influence the research. Others, such as Smith (1982), agree and believe that there is a number of often unquantifiable variables typically interwoven in policy work. On this, Smith (1982) states that “typically, policy formation occurs within bureaucracies in which special committees, interest groups representations, advisory personnel and political realities are ‘mixed’ to produce pragmatic courses of action” (Smith, 1982, p. 148).

A most valuable aspect of Ham and Hill’s policy discussion is their distinction between an analysis ‘*of policy*’ and an analysis ‘*for policy*’. They state:

This distinction is important in drawing attention to policy analysis as an academic activity concerned primarily with advancing understanding and policy analysis as an applied activity concerned mainly with contributing to the solution of social problems (Ham and Hill, 1993, p. 4).

Furthermore, they argue that it is possible to make further precise distinctions between different kinds of policy analysis work. On this, they cite Hogwood and Gunn (1981) in pointing to a clear distinction between ‘knowledge of policy’ and ‘knowledge in the policy process’, and describe this schematically as follows:

**Figure 1 - Policy Study/Analysis**



Source: Hogwood, B. & Gunn, L. (1981). The Policy Orientation. University of Strathclyde: Centre for the Study of Public Policy.

The study being reported in this dissertation can be described in Hogwood and Gunn's (1981) terms as a study of policy and the policy process.

Ranson (1996) has considered a great variety of policy analysis models in order to develop his own comprehensive model. In doing so, he has identified four major traditions of policy analysis, namely *pluralist*, *neo-marxist*, *new right*, and *neo-pluralism*, and has identified these in terms of how they have emerged chronologically. Each of these will now be briefly summarised in turn.

The *pluralist* tradition, which emerged in the post-World War 2 era and remained dominant until the 1970s, is one based on partnerships between different tiers of government and the stakeholders within the administration. However, although partnerships are a key part of this tradition, this is not to say that the power is evenly distributed between the various groups (Ranson, 1996). The weakness of a *pluralist* tradition is that it assumes equality within the partnership. Another way of putting this is to argue that the pluralist tradition is not fully cognisant of the power wielded by the state in either policy formulation or implementation (Ranson, 1996).

In attempting to address the neglect of the *pluralist* tradition in understanding the state's role in policy-making, the *neo-marxist* tradition emerged in the 1970s. The *neo-marxist* tradition is one that recognises the dominant role of the state in the system of education (Prunty, 1984; Ranson, 1996). An example of a development of interest in this tradition in Australia was the *Schools in Australia* (Karmel, 1973) report that was part of a strong reformist agenda of a recently elected Federal Government. The new government recognised that, through education, it could use political leverage to influence strongly social policy.



During the 1980s, a new tradition yet again, namely *new right*, emerged (Ranson, 1996). This tradition recognised that policy formulation was a messy and complex process (Ball, 1990). Moreover, the *new right* tradition argued that the *neo-marxist* understanding of policy was too simplistic and did not take into account all of the complex elements involved in formulating policy. The *new right* tradition, on the other hand, recognised that it is often difficult, if not impossible, to control or predict the effects of policy. On this, Ball (1990, p. 3) states:

Policy-making in a modern, complex plural society like Britain is unwieldy and complex. It is often unscientific and irrational, whatever the claims of the policy-makers to the contrary.

It follows from this that the reasons for formulating a certain policy may be lost or appropriated very differently to what is intended by the policy. An example of this occurred in Australia in the 1970s with the involvement of the Commonwealth Government in educational decision-making. The original reason for its involvement in education was to attempt to provide equal educational opportunities to the poorer sections of the community. This reason, however, has been lost as the non-government school sector has grown and the public school systems have struggled to extract sufficient funds themselves from the State governments.

A fourth tradition of policy formulation, namely *neo-pluralism*, has emerged in the 1990s. The main thrust of the *neo-pluralist* tradition is that although partnerships are a focal part of any policy formulation, the state is the most powerful player and, through its power, is capable of wielding a tremendously strong influence. Therefore, although the results of policy can result in very different outcomes to those originally intended, as described in the *new right* tradition, Ranson (1996) believes that for any effective analysis of policy there must be a strong focus on the state.

On this latter matter, Ranson (1996, p. 263) goes on as follows:

While policies, like texts, cannot be controlled at the level of discourse, they can, unlike texts, be regulated at the operational level of practice. Although age-weighted pupil formulas may have allowed much interpretation at the level of discourse, in practice their implementation is tightly regulated at the level of local discretion.

An example of a *neo-pluralist* tradition is reflected in decisions in some states to introduce rigorous state-based assessment procedures to assess student achievement. Such a policy may lead to the introduction of league tables to rationalise low-performing schools and/or to narrow curricula.

Ranson (1996, p. 266) draws from each of these four traditions to develop a comprehensive framework for conceptualising educational policy. In doing this, he identifies some important dimensions. First, he states that the researcher must decide whether the policy process focuses on a particular issue or is part of a much bigger question encompassing a larger part of the organisation. Secondly, Ranson (1996) states that understanding the policy process requires cognisance of the 'moments' of policy, namely generation, formulation, implementation and evaluation. Furthermore, the researcher is required to discover if and how each of these 'moments' interrelate, and the information and resources available to the participants in the policy process. Thirdly, Ranson (1996) argues that for effective policy analysis to occur, an understanding of the organisation's control and regulations are needed. This enables the researcher to identify whether the policy change arose as part of a 'policy cycle' or whether it was prompted by another decision or event. It also enables the participants in the policy process, and the type of management of the organisation, to be identified.

Ranson's policy model is most comprehensive. Accordingly, it was deemed an appropriate model to underpin the research reported in this dissertation. The non-linear nature of the model also calls for a qualitative approach to research. Such an approach tends towards the descriptive rather than the numerical. In other words, data includes field notes and interview transcripts rather than questionnaires and statistics. Qualitative research is also concerned as much with process as with product and the setting of the study is usually the natural one, such as a school. Furthermore, it focuses not just on assessing what occurs but also explaining 'why'. In order to understand the reasons for a particular phenomenon, qualitative researchers believe it is crucial to explore the perspectives which participants have of aspects of their lives. Capturing these perspectives accurately allows the qualitative researcher to develop a theory about what is being studied.

The particular qualitative approach deemed appropriate for the research project reported in this study and based on Ranson's approach to policy studies, is that based on interpretivism. Interpretivist studies are underpinned by a belief that people act for a variety of reasons. These reasons are based on the meanings the people have of certain others, events and 'things'. Proponents of the interpretivist viewpoint share the goal of understanding the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it (Schwandt, 1994). Interpretivism is based on a belief that social actors construct a world of lived reality by attaching specific meanings to local situations. Interpretivist procedures and practices give structure and meaning to everyday life. This is because interpretivists believe that knowledge is always local, situated in a local culture and embedded in organisational sites (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Underpinning interpretivism are Blumer's (1969) three central propositions of symbolic interaction. The first of these is a belief that human beings act

towards things on the basis of the meanings the things have for them. The second proposition is that the making of meaning is a continuous process. The final proposition is that the attribution of meaning is the result of social interaction in our society.

These three propositions shaped initial thinking regarding the nature of the guiding questions that were asked in the study reported in this dissertation. These guiding questions were then developed in terms of understandings of policy at the 'process' stage, at the 'content' stage, at the 'output' stage and at the 'evaluation' stage (Hogwood & Gunn, 1981). Also, they were focused on the three major Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (CECWA) policy documents pertaining to students with disabilities in Catholic schools in the period 1982 - 1997, namely *Enrolment of Handicapped Students* (CECWA, 1983), *The Education of Students with Special Needs* (CECWA, 1988) and *Students with Special Needs - The Enrolment and Integration of Students with Special Needs* (CECWA, 1992).

What eventuated was the following set of guiding questions that were posed around each of the above-mentioned documents.

- 1). In the period leading up to the emergence of each major policy document, what were the different understandings that the various stakeholders had with regard to the education of students with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools?
- 2). What were the characteristics of the CECWA policy in each of its major policy documents on the education of students with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools?
- 3). Which stakeholders dominated (and why) with regard to the eventual written policies?
- 4). During the implementation phase following the publication of each main policy document, what, if any, were the changes in the stakeholders'

understandings of CECWA policy with regard to the education of students with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools?

However, it was also recognised that as the study unfolded, other questions were likely to suggest themselves. This is why the above were outlined as guiding questions rather than as specific research questions. The manner in which these guiding questions were then pursued through the use of particular data gathering methods will now be considered.

### *Data Gathering Methods*

Two of the three central methods of most qualitative studies, namely, document analysis and interviews (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984), were used in the study. The third approach, participant observation involves entering the field of the informants with the hope of establishing open relationships. Due to the retrospective nature of this study, it was not possible to use participant observation strategies to collect data.

### *The Interviews*

Interviews are defined as “a purposeful conversation, usually between two people, but sometimes involving more that is directed by one in order to get information from the other” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 96). In this study, interviews were used to gather data that assisted in formulating hypotheses pertaining to policy formulation. Also, they were semi-structured interviews. By semi-structured interviews is meant a “face-to-face encounter between the researcher and informants’ perspective on their lives, experiences or situations as expressed in their own words” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p. 76). Semi-structured interviews allow “greater depth than is the case with other methods of data collection” (Cohen & Manion, 1989, p. 308). This depth includes not only assessing the knowledge but also the values, opinions and attitudes of the person being interviewed.

In conducting interviews, the researcher took note of Kerlinger's (1970) point that while the purpose of the research determines the questions asked, their content, sequence and wording are completely in the hands of the interviewer. Accordingly, the interviews were carried out in a flexible manner. However, while being focused by the guiding questions already noted, neither the wording nor the ordering of specific questions asked was fixed. Trial interviews were conducted with people known to the researcher in order to refine questioning techniques, question structure and clarity prior to the formal interviews beginning.

The aim of the semi-structured interview format was to ensure an open, non-threatening atmosphere and to create a relaxed atmosphere for discussion rather than the more formal 'question and answer' session associated with structured interviews (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). The first contact with each proposed participant was through a letter outlining the purpose of the interview and including an abbreviated copy of the dissertation proposal. Those interviewed later in the process received additional information in the form of a restatement of the proposal as it evolved. Following the initial letter, personal or telephone contact was made with each person to set an interview date.

It was made clear to each interviewee that the principles of anonymity and confidentiality were to be observed at all times. It was also made clear that interview transcripts and research findings could be scrutinised by participants for accuracy, relevance or fairness, and the Director of the Catholic Education Office (CEO) would be consulted on the final results of the study prior to the submission of the dissertation to the University.

Each participant was informed that the interview would have two parts. The first part was an explanation of the study. The participant was invited to

discuss any aspects of the study during this time. The second part was the semi-structured interview itself. The interviews took place over a three and a half-year period from October 1995 to April 1999. The time and place of each interview was flexible and was determined at the participant's request.

In all interviews, the entire interview was audio-recorded, fully transcribed from the tape, and taken back to the participant. Each participant was then invited to make additions, alterations or deletions, with any changes being transferred to the original. The copy was then returned to the participant. Since each participant was asked to comment on, and offer perceptions of, not only his or her role, but also those of colleagues, former colleagues and others associated with this study, it was essential to maintain the confidentiality and scrutiny of the whole interview process. However, in order to round out and verify the historical data, a list of the interviewees, in a coded form to ensure anonymity, accompanies the *References* section at the conclusion of this dissertation.

The interviews were conducted with a series of people defined as having specific and relevant knowledge of the relevant policies during the overall period under study. The group of people chosen for the interviews consisted of those who motivated, developed and implemented policy during the period in question. This group included the Directors of the CEO, members of the CECWA, senior consultants at the CEO, Catholic Bishops, principals of primary schools, primary school teachers associated with the education of students with disabilities, and parents. Some of the parents also represented the Catholic Association for Special Education Services (CASES), a parent lobby group originating in the mid-1980s and formed to support parents of children with disabilities.

The series of guiding questions, which were listed earlier in this chapter, were used to develop a set of interview questions. The aim of the initial round of

interviews was to focus on the earliest period of the research. Subsequent interview rounds, which resulted in an alteration to the earlier questions, involved personnel who were involved with the CECWA policy with regard to students with disabilities in Catholic schools during a later period. Having several interview stages accommodated the likelihood of interviewing some key personnel on more than one occasion. Some personnel employed by the Education Department of W.A. (EDWA) and non-government agencies associated with the provision of education for students with disabilities, were also interviewed.

The reasons for the latter strategy were twofold. First, throughout W.A., many of the personnel involved in the formation of policy for students with disabilities throughout the time in question knew each other on a professional basis. In some instances interviewees now working in Catholic schools had not long previously been employed by the EDWA. It was likely, therefore, that commonalities would exist, in terms of students with disabilities, in the policies of both school 'systems'. Interviewing EDWA personnel allowed the researcher to become familiar with the relatively recent policy process with regard to students with disabilities in public primary schools and to compare the documentation and process of the two policies.

Secondly, many of the support systems provided to students with disabilities in Catholic schools during the period 1982 - 97 were provided by non-government agencies such as *The Sir David Brand Centre*. This necessitated considerable planning and teamwork between the school and the non-government agencies. It was important, therefore, that the understandings of the personnel in the non-government agencies be investigated.

#### *Documents Analysed*

Appropriate documentation also provided data for this study. Crump (1993) believes that analysing documents is useful because it:



... allows an identification of the spaces, gaps, accidents and missed opportunities in policy-making and, therefore, to make some comment on the role of the state in this context. This strategy should thus avoid rhetoric of solutions as well as avoiding a deterministic pessimism (Crump, 1993, p. 33).

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) distinguish between *personal documents* and *public documents*. Personal documents are those documents that are first-person narratives and describe a person's actions, experiences and beliefs (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Diaries and letters are examples of personal documents. Public documents, however, are written communications that are usually for public viewing. Examples of public documents are such things as newspaper articles and annual reports. However, some care needs to be taken when scrutinising some public documents. As Bogdan and Biklen contend:

These materials have been viewed by many researchers as extremely subjective, representing the biases of the promoters and, when written for external consumption, presenting an unrealistically glowing picture of how the organisation functions (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, pp. 135 – 136).

The qualitative researcher's task is to uncover the meanings and understandings people have of an organisation and its structures and policies. Therefore, although official documents are sometimes considered less important than personal documents, they can provide another insight into an organisation.

Documents on Catholic education in W.A. from 1982 to 1997 were one source of data. In particular, the policies released by the CECWA, entitled *Enrolment Policy and Practice of Handicapped Students* (CECWA, 1983), *Special Education Policy* (CECWA, 1988), and *Students with Special Needs - The Enrolment and Integration of Students with Disabilities* (CECWA, 1992)

were key documents. The minutes of CECWA meetings, reports, press releases and other public documents were also perused and analysed. Also examined were a series of reports released in this same sixteen year period by both government and non-government organisations. The *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Education in Western Australia* (Beazley, 1984) and *The Education of Students with Disabilities and Specific Learning Difficulties* (Shean, 1993) are two examples of State government-sponsored reviews which have had a profound influence on the education of students with disabilities in public schools. Such reports also had some influence on the policies with regard to students with disabilities in the Catholic school sector in W.A.

It has often been claimed that written material provides a more accurate indication of original meanings than do other types of evidence (Hodder, 1994). According to Derrida (1978), Western social science has long privileged the written word. However, as Hodder warns:

... meaning does not reside in a text but in the writing and reading of it. As the text is reread in different contexts, it is given new meanings, often contradictory and always socially embedded. Thus there is no "original" or "true" meaning of a text outside specific historical texts (Hodder, 1994, p. 394).

Nevertheless, document analysis is a necessary part of qualitative research methodologies for two reasons. First, document analysis enables the researcher to 'fill the gaps'. The researcher may find that the recollection of key events on the part of the participant during the interview process is sometimes less than perfect. Memories become faded over time and the existence of documents may be necessary for the clarification of certain aspects of the data. Without such documents, the people interviewed may be able to give only a partial account of the processes that contributed to the policy formation (Hodder, 1994). Secondly, documents also allow the qualitative researcher to interpret the data and to develop theories prior to

undertaking specific interviewing, thereby structuring questions so as to confirm hypotheses.

### **Issues of Reliability and Validity in the Research**

While the use of qualitative research methods has increased markedly in the past decade, nevertheless there remain many ardent critics who believe that the subjectivity and bias of the researcher effectively prohibits the precision of quantifiable measurement that is typical of the quantitative research approaches. However, qualitative research of the type outlined in this dissertation can also reduce subjective influences by including procedures that enhance the validity and reliability of studies. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) state that while they believe that quantitative researchers are concerned with the accuracy and comprehensiveness of their data:

Qualitative researchers tend to view reliability as a fit between what they record as data and what actually occurs in the setting under study, rather than the literal consistency across different observations (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 48).

Internal reliability addresses the question of agreement among researchers concerning a single research study. In this study, the review of the literature identified salient issues in the area of education for children with disabilities. These issues were kept in mind during the development of the research framework and subsequently became part of the document analysis and interview schedule.

External reliability in quantitative research exists if other researchers, having completed a similar study, arrive at similar findings. Given the complex nature of qualitative research, however, it makes more sense to think in terms of approaching external reliability rather than attaining it. In this regard, Guba and Lincoln (1989) suggest that reliability in qualitative research may be

enhanced by reporting protocols that document the researcher's movement through data collection, analysis and interpretation. It can also be enhanced if an appropriate explanation of salient features of the research methodology is provided.

This study addressed external reliability in a number of ways. A thorough search for appropriate documents was completed. All participants were selected through a detailed process and data obtained from interviews were triangulated with historical data and through cross-referencing with other interviewees.

External reliability was also enhanced in a number of ways. The aim was to present the report as clearly as possible so that other researchers might be able to use the original report as a guide in replicating the study. In order to attain this goal, the research paradigm, the nature of the research, and the research questions have been clearly described, as have the strategies for data collection and analysis. The pre-interview and interview stages have also been clearly outlined and have been characterised by the provision of information regarding the researcher's role and conduct throughout the stages of the research. Also, the strategies for data analysis have been clearly indicated, as have the sequence in which the stages of analyses occurred.

Steps were also taken to ensure that the study is valid. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) leave no doubts that rigorous qualitative research emphasises validity.

They state:

By observing people in their everyday lives, listening to them talk about what is on their minds, and looking at the documents they produce, the qualitative researcher obtains first-hand knowledge of social life unfiltered through concepts, operational definitions, and rating scales (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p. 7)

For qualitative research, the validity of a study rests with the researcher being able to demonstrate an accurate representation of participants' construction of realities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Furthermore, Goetz and LeCompte (1984) claim that a qualitative methodology using interviews as one of the research methods tends to have high internal validity because of the volume of data collected and because of the ongoing analysis in relation to the experiences and understandings of the participants.

Internal validity in the research outlined in this dissertation was sought in a number of ways. The participants' perceptions of the policies in question were entirely their own and were not constrained or limited to pre-defined question sequences or interview structures. The semi-structured interviewing ensured that the interviewees were able to express their opinions freely and to elaborate their answers. Participants' perceptions were elicited in an informal and naturalistic setting and were preserved in their original form as much as possible in the analysis. The process enabled the participants to remain anonymous and to withdraw particular comments if they so wished.

Efforts were also made to enhance validity by minimising researcher bias. In qualitative research, the researcher's influence must be identified in order to prevent, as much as possible, the incursion of bias. In the research outlined in this dissertation, a position of critical self-awareness was adopted at each stage of the research. A further aspect of the study in terms of attempting to ensure validity were the strategies of individual interview analysis, which incorporated the open coding memoing procedures described later in this chapter. The process of audio recording of the interviews also allowed the researcher to code and integrate the data, thus ensuring the data were screened for accuracy.

A further procedure to ensure validity during the processes of analysing the documents, developing and conducting the interviews, and analysing the

data, was the noting of personal reactions or assumptions to what was read, observed or experienced during the course of the research. These notes were made explicit by noting them in margins and were accompanied by brief descriptions of their nature. Subsequently, they were documented as memos in order to remain apart from the main body of data.

## **Data Analysis**

The process of data analysis is an ongoing process in qualitative research and involves the developing, testing and changing of propositions by:

... the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, fieldnotes and other materials .... to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 153).

The constant comparative method of data analysis was used in this study to develop and verify theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The constant comparative method is one in which the researcher simultaneously codes and analyses data in order to build propositions (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). As the data collection progresses, these propositions are refined, discarded or fully developed. This method of data analysis offers a systematic approach to collecting, organising, and analysing data from the empirical world in question.

Analysis progressed through the stages of open coding. Open coding is described by Taylor and Bogdan (1984, p. 126) as follows:

... the researcher simultaneously codes and analyses data in order to develop concepts. By continually comparing specific incidents in the data, the researcher refines these concepts, identifies their properties, explores their relationships to one another, and integrates them into a coherent theory.

During open coding, the data are broken down into concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). These concepts are then closely examined and compared for similarities.

The first stage of the analytical process was to gather all of the data, namely the documents and the interview transcripts, and organise them chronologically. The analysis of each interview began with its transcription. After the transcribing process, the interview was re-read several times to identify the major categories contained in the transcript. Data were simultaneously read thoroughly and appropriate notes, comments, observations and queries were made. In this study, each of the transcripts and interviews was coded on a line-by-line or paragraph-by paragraph basis. The aim of this exercise was to produce concepts that fitted the data. Code notes were written throughout the data analysis, mainly in the right-hand margins of the interview transcript sheets (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). This process is demonstrated by the following examples of open coding from two of the interviews.

#### **Interview 060896**

The C.E.O. director was very supportive of the changes I was trying to bring in and what I was trying to do overall. He had an interest in special education from his Commonwealth Schools Commission days and believed that schools weren't doing enough in this area. I was trying to change the culture in schools and the Director would say, "I'm with you all the way but you've also got to convince the Principals of our schools". He didn't usually visit schools but as a result of my beckoning, he visited all of the special education centres as a demonstration of his support. While the Director had little or no influence on our Commonwealth funding, I couldn't have accomplished half of what I did without his support.

***Director's support***

***Director's interest***

***prior knowledge***

***confidence, trust, faith***

***leadership***

***commitment***

***involvement***

***collaboration***

**Similarly, another extract from an interview was coded as follows:**



## Interview 250796

When I first started working at the C.E.O., I felt quite comfortable with what was happening as far as special education was concerned.

Although integration was in its infancy, I worked mainly with teachers who had kids with special needs in their mainstream classes.

Sometimes kids had been put in classes and forgotten about i.e. the placement was tokenistic but there was some conflict because some parents thought their children would be better off in a segregated setting while others wanted full-time placement in a regular school. In those days, schools were often ignorant of procedures and sometimes enrolled children who they had no chance of educating. On the other hand, children who were not toilet-trained had no chance of being accepted in a Catholic school.

***trust***

***collaboration***

***Integration of students with special needs***

***school/parent conflict***

***ignorance misunderstanding***

***conflict of mission***

A further example of the coding is demonstrated by the following example from a document.

### *An Overview of the Operations of the Special Education Service (CEO, 1987)*

Inroads into the provision of services for intellectually handicapped students have been made, but the numbers of students already enrolled in Catholic schools and being identified as falling into this range of handicap remains on the increase. It would seem the wisest and most prudent course to complete the "network" of services for this group of students throughout the metropolitan region and country areas before attempting any further provision of services to other sections of the "special" population. Application for places from outside the Catholic system are also on the increase as the devolution of Ministry services and personnel for this group of children continues.

***intellectual disability large numbers of applications***

***limit enrolments***

***non-Catholic students decrease in EDWA***

Cross-interview analysis was then undertaken to locate those concepts relating to phenomena which occurred regularly within the interviews and to

make comparisons with those concepts that had already emerged from the other documents. For example, comments such as the following (referring to the situation with regard to the placement of children with disabilities in Catholic schools in W.A. in the early 1980s) from three separate interviews were all included in the one concept labelled “low expectations of parents”.

*Interview No. 250796 - ... parents were so grateful that their child (with a disability) was in a regular school that they didn't make huge demands on the system.*

*Interview No. 251196 -.... there were a couple of kids with physical disabilities at Catholic schools but parents didn't expect Catholic schools to provide places for children with an intellectual disability.*

*Interview No. 240796 - ...there was no awareness that Catholic schools had a role; many people with disabilities were still being put in state-run institutions and forgotten about.*

A number of substantive concepts were identified. Referring back to the data and making comparisons between them refined the coding of the substantive concepts. In this way, concepts underpinning most of the data began to be developed and the research themes and propositions refined until they were ready to be integrated into the exposition presented in the next three chapters.

## **Conclusion**

The reader is reminded that the study in this dissertation was based upon a commitment to an interpretivist approach. Accordingly, a qualitative research approach was deemed most appropriate for the study. Also, Ham and Hill's (1993) 'policy analysis' framework was deemed useful for this study because it combines the 'top-down' perspectives on policy with 'action oriented' perspectives.

Data gathering took place using two of the major approaches of qualitative researchers namely document analysis and interviews. The results of these

two approaches yielded a richness of data that enabled a comprehensive analysis of policy to occur. Throughout the study, analytic induction methods were used for developing and verifying propositions.

By way of recollection, then, this chapter was concerned with methodological issues associated with the research reported in the next three chapters of this dissertation. First, the particular theoretical approach underpinning the research was outlined. Secondly, the data-gathering methods utilised in the study were described. Thirdly, the procedures that were drawn upon to enhance the reliability and validity of the study were considered. Finally, the methods of data analysis used in the study were presented. The next chapter, Chapter Six, now provides the first of three chronological chapters, each of which analyses CECWA policy with regard to the education of students with disabilities during the period 1982 - 97.

# CHAPTER 6

1982 – 86

## Introduction

The central thesis of this dissertation, it will be recalled, is that the policy of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (CECWA) with regard to the education of students with disabilities during the period 1982 - 97 was not a direct response to Catholic educational theory. Rather, it was more a response to a number of attitudinal changes taking place in Western culture with regard to people with disabilities. Nevertheless, CECWA policy during the period also became increasingly legitimated by Catholic theology and associated educational theory as expressed in official Catholic Church documents.

In considering further the forces acting on CECWA policy, it is important to keep in mind the point made in the previous chapter that policy formulation is a complex process that may result in outcomes different to those that were intended. It is too simplistic, therefore, to just state that a number of forces existed and that each directly impacted on the official CECWA policy with regard to students with disabilities. Rather, the influence of each of the forces often affected some of the other forces in an irregular and sometimes reciprocal fashion. For example, the introduction of equal opportunity and disability legislation, which had occurred as the result of changing attitudes, partly influenced other forces such as the growth of parent advocacy groups.

The forces impacting on CECWA during the period 1982 – 86 then, while they can be illuminated by focusing on the major policy document *Pupil Enrolment Policy and Practice* (CECWA, 1983), can also be revealed through a critique

of other formal CECWA documentation that emerged between 1982 and 1986. This includes submissions to Commonwealth and State education inquiries. Educational provision and practices with regard to children with disabilities within Catholic schools in Western Australia (W.A.) during this period are also worthy of examination.

The remainder of the chapter is in three parts, each of which deals with the foregoing argument in a number of ways. First, the broader contextual background with regard to changing attitudes in the wider society on the education of children with disabilities, is outlined. Secondly, the specific CECWA policy with regard to the education of students with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools, is analysed. This analysis focuses on the policy document, *Pupil Enrolment Policy and Practice* (CECWA, 1983). Finally, consideration is given to how the emergence of a particularly Catholic view on the education of children with disabilities was just beginning to influence the CECWA policy during the five-year period under discussion in this chapter.

### **The Broad National Contextual Background**

By way of background, it is important to highlight that the emergence of a coherent CECWA policy regarding the education of children with disabilities during the period 1982 - 86 was a reflection of cultural changes within the wider society regarding this student cohort. A main indicator of these changes was the inquiries into the education of children with disabilities that were taking place throughout Australia (Casey, 1994). These inquiries were prompted by the Commonwealth Schools Commission's focus on equality of opportunity and society's growing commitment to the human rights of people with disabilities.

The result of the inquiries was a plethora of reports that focussed in full, or in part, on the education of students with disabilities. In Victoria, a committee

to review the educational services provided for children with disabilities was established in 1982, in part as a result of lobbying from the parents' movement (Marks, 1991). The ministerial report that arose from the review, *Integration in Victorian Education* (Collins, 1984), was generally considered a radical document (Fulcher, 1986). This report stated that all children, irrespective of type or degree of disability, had the right to be educated in their neighbourhood school. It concluded that the segregation of educational resources either emphasised or generated differences which belied the similarities and denied the rights of students with disabilities (Marks, 1991).

The Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) was also active during this period in considering educational provision for students with disabilities. As a result of the Ministerial Committee established in Victoria, the Catholic Education Office set up an 'Integration Working Party' in 1983 (Marks, 1991). Statewide surveys were conducted and the results were used to form the basis of further papers, including *The Current State of Integration in Catholic Schools* (CECV, 1984) and *Educational Provision For Students With Special Needs* (CECV, 1986). The latter paper noted the dramatic increase in the numbers of students with disabilities enrolled in Victorian Catholic schools since the early 1980s (CECV, 1986, p. 2).

While emphasising integration and normalisation, the *Educational Provision For Students With Special Needs* (CECV, 1986) document, nevertheless, was not demanding with regard to its expectations of schools. For example, it stated:

Ideally, all students with disabilities should have appropriate opportunities to be educated in regular schools alongside other students, in the normal setting. However, limited resources place constraints upon a community's ability to achieve this ideal. Such constraints may require a segregated setting for some students as an interim measure.

**However, in all such arrangements, careful steps need to be taken to ensure that the student identifies primarily with the regular school** (CECV, 1986, p. 13).

The bold print noted above was included only in the policy's initial release to schools in March 1986.

In terms of students with disabilities, a policy statement was also drawn up by the state government in New South Wales (N.S.W.) during the 1982 – 86 period. This policy statement, *Strategies and Initiatives for Special Education in New South Wales* (Ministry of Education, 1982), drew substantially on the Warnock Report (1979) in the United Kingdom. In particular, the policy emphasised the importance of early intervention, parent involvement, and the involvement of a professional person to assist with assessment as a basis for a statement of needs (Fulcher, 1986). Terms such as “appropriate professional action”, “least restrictive environment” and “normalised education settings” were also regularly used.

A policy statement by the Education Department of Tasmania, *A Review of Special Education* (1983) also adopted the position of the Warnock Report (1979). The review was framed within a philosophy of inclusion where distinctions between ‘ordinary’ and ‘special’ children were dissolved. The review also emphasised that, wherever possible, children with special educational needs should be educated in ordinary schools (Fulcher, 1986).

The Sydney Catholic Education Office (CEO) soon came up with a policy, in 1985, similar to those developed by the states of N.S.W. and Tasmania. The policy statement, *Admission of Children with Handicaps into Catholic Schools* (CEO, 1985) stated that “in order to be faithful to gospel values, the Church endeavours to provide for those of its children who happen to have a handicap” (CEO, 1985, p. 1). Later, the document stated that, “The major approach to the admission of children with mild intellectual handicap, sensory

impairment or physical disability shall be to integrate them into the normal classroom" (CEO, 1985, p. 2).

In the case of W.A., the early 1980s signalled a change in direction for the education of students with disabilities in the public school system. On taking office in 1983, the Labor Government moved immediately to fulfil an election promise to review education by creating the Beazley Committee of Inquiry. The Inquiry was chaired by Mr Kim Beazley Senior (Goddard, 1992). Beazley had been the Federal Labor Minister for Education at the time of the Karmel Inquiry. One of the motivating forces for this inquiry was Labor's concern over educational disadvantage. Just as the Karmel Report had legitimated the pursuit of social justice issues in education through Federal intervention in State education in the 1970s (Goddard, 1992), so the Beazley Inquiry continued the theme, dealing with equity, equality, participation, choice and the alleviation of disadvantage (Beazley, 1984). A significant outcome was the W.A. State government's *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Education in Western Australia* (Beazley, 1984), locally known as the 'Beazley Report'. This was a wide-ranging review of education, with the social imperative of reform in education to enhance equity, equality and social justice being central to its terms of reference (Goddard, 1992).

The terms of reference of the Beazley Inquiry covered virtually all aspects of education, including the education of students with disabilities. Term of Reference No. 12 required the Committee to examine the adequacy of provision for students with disabilities (Beazley, 1984). On this, the Committee chose to determine its position on meeting the needs of people with disabilities and then to establish broad guidelines and recommendations for relevant authorities to pursue following the publication of its report (Beazley, 1984). In doing this, the Committee acknowledged the influence of two general sources. The first of these was a large number of submissions from individuals, parent organisations, schools and welfare organisations in



the community. The Committee also considered an extensive number of reports and papers on the education of people with disabilities, including several from the W.A. Council for Special Education, the Education Department of W.A. and the CECWA (Beazley, 1984). The great majority of submissions received by the Committee suggested that the transition of students with disabilities from segregated to regular school settings should occur progressively. The main reason for this was to take advantage of the many educational and social opportunities provided by normal school settings, not only for children with disabilities, but also for their families (Beazley, 1984).

The second major stimulus to the Committee's thinking was provided by the British study, *Special Educational Needs: Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People* (Warnock, 1979), known as the Warnock Report. This report, as noted earlier in this dissertation, was regarded as a blueprint for 'special education' in Great Britain and, in the opinion of Beazley's committee, had much to offer W.A. education. The most significant change suggested by the Warnock Report, and endorsed by Beazley, was that 'special education' provision should not be organised according to categories of handicap such as speech disorder or intellectual impairment. The *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Education in Western Australia* (Beazley, 1984) suggested that provision be arranged according to the needs of the individual and that services be recognised as additional or supplementary, rather than as separate or alternative. This 'needs-based' approach required the inclusion of students with disabilities, where possible, in mainstream classes (Beazley, 1984).

The Beazley Report also recognised the integration of students with disabilities that was already taking place in many Catholic schools. The report suggested that this was a model that the State's public education system might employ. The report stated:

The Committee observed that educational facilities in Western Australia for the child with special needs are organised largely on a 'medical' basis, and that in many instances provision is quite separate from the normal school setting. In the case of the Education Department of Western Australia, there are almost one hundred 'ordinary' schools where special classes are conducted for those defined as having a 'borderline' or 'mild' intellectual handicap. There are another twenty or so schools reserved exclusively for 'mild' to 'severe' cases of intellectual handicap. Children with physical handicaps are in many instances catered for in separate special schools, as are children with impaired hearing and other communication handicaps. Children from isolated areas or with emotional problems are catered for in yet other separate facilities. Some contrast is provided by the Catholic education sector. There are handicapped children fully or partially integrated into seventy-nine Catholic schools (Beazley, 1984, p. 300).

Despite this observation, however, parents of some children with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools were not totally happy with the situation. The Catholic Education Office (CEO) sometimes received letters from parents complaining that, due to a disability, their child was unable to gain enrolment at a W.A. Catholic school. Also, there was almost no provision in W.A. Catholic schools for students with severe disabilities. As the 1982 – 86 period progressed, greater numbers of parents of such children continued to lobby the CEO, the CECWA and the Archbishop for some action to be taken on this matter (280597). There was also some concern about a small number of schools who, with the best of intentions, had enrolled students with disabilities but had little idea of the planning that was required concerning the personnel

and resource implications for the school (300796). For example, one particular case involved a primary school educating a student with high support needs in a regular classroom with little or no assistance (250796).

In 1983, the parent lobby group, Catholic Association for Special Education Support (CASES), was formed. CASES originated from the first state conference for *People with Disabilities* which was held in 1983 (CASES, 1995). At that conference, the issues of Catholic education and children with disabilities were raised and following the conference, a group of parents who were experiencing difficulties gaining access to appropriate educational placements for their children made contact with each other and began to meet regularly. Initially, these meetings were held, usually on an irregular basis, and in response to particular needs of individuals (280597). As noted later in this dissertation, the development and influence of this parent advocacy group increased throughout the 1982 – 97 period.

It appears that much of this activity within Catholic education, as well as being influential within the Catholic system itself, also influenced the workings of the Beazley inquiry. Indeed, Peter Moyes, the CEO consultant on 'special education', was a key member of the Beazley inquiry. Of the twenty-two recommendations of the Beazley Report, many were based on practices already taking place in Catholic schools in W.A., while others were derived from Moyes' ideas and were to be future initiatives in Catholic schools (200696).

So far in this chapter, key reports on the education of children with disabilities that emerged in various states in Australia during the period 1982 – 86 have been considered. A common theme in each of these reports emanating from the Catholic and non-Catholic school sectors was that children with disabilities, wherever and whenever possible, should be educated within an educational environment that emphasised normalisation (Fulcher, 1986). In

order for this to occur effectively, the upgrading of the physical accessibility of schools, the provision of additional resources, and the development of alternative methods of teaching and assessment, were all necessary (Ward *et al.*, 1987). This was consistent with the historical shift, noted in Chapter Four, that used an Australian study to confirm that all school systems, government and non-government, were becoming cognisant of the needs of children with disabilities.

There were also two national reports commissioned during the 1982 – 86 period relating to students with disabilities. The first of these examined both the government and non-government school sectors, while the second focused only on Catholic schools. Consistent with the State inquiries, these two reports shared a belief in the philosophy of ‘normalisation’.

With regard to the first national report, a working party was established in 1983 to report on Commonwealth policy with regard to students with disabilities (Fulcher, 1986). The report, *Report of the Working Party on Commonwealth Policy and Directions in Special Education* (Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1985), provided extensive information on all aspects of schooling for children with disabilities. While the philosophy of inclusion used in this report was an undefined concept rather than an ideological commitment to total integration (Fulcher, 1986), it summarised ‘inclusion’ as being “without question the most widely discussed issue related to the education of disabled children” (Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1985, p. 31). The report, consistent with the world-wide movements in this area that were outlined in Chapter Four, recommended both inclusive and segregated provision for students with disabilities, depending on both the needs of the child and the resources available (p. 31). It criticised inclusion without adequate resources (p. 31) and identified additional target groups for Commission policies, including Aboriginal students with disabilities and students with disabilities from non-English speaking backgrounds

The report also stated that the need to ensure the basic right of access to an appropriate education for children with disabilities was a continuing responsibility of the Commonwealth. Furthermore, it emphasised the rights of parents to participate in all decisions which affect the education of their children and noted that the Commission was in an ideal position to act as an advocate for parents (Fulcher, 1986). This is consistent both with the findings of the Warnock Report and a matter raised in this dissertation's literature review, namely that for children with disabilities, parental involvement is vital for success. Finally, the report concluded that the education of all children with disabilities was a matter of special significance for the nation.

The enrolment and education of students with disabilities were also becoming of interest to the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC). In a report commissioned by the NCEC in 1983, *Special Education: A Catholic Perspective* (Condon, 1983), Catholic schools Australia-wide were criticised for their lack of initiative with regard to their policies with regard to children with disabilities. Condon (1983, p. 33) included in her report the following remarks:

In general, the special school provision within the Church has been somewhat parallel to the voluntary movement provision within the wider community in that those providing it have been left to carry a large financial burden to provide for groups who would otherwise have been totally neglected by the regular education system. ... There has been a largely "head-in-the-sand" attitude to these children. ... The assumption that they are adequately catered for does not necessarily reflect the reality of the situation.

*Special Education: A Catholic Perspective* (Condon, 1983) indicated that the situation with regard to the provision of Catholic schooling for children with disabilities in W.A. simply mirrored what was happening in the other Catholic

school systems throughout Australia. The pattern appears to have been one where the enrolment of children with disabilities into Catholic schools was usually spasmodic and, if it did occur, was often poorly planned and resourced.

A key outcome of all of the reports produced at both a national and state level during the 1982 – 86 period was the introduction of a certain amount of legislation. Commonwealth and State legislation in Australia concerned with the rights of people with disabilities began to be promulgated in the 1980s (Connell, 1993) and impacted upon the CECWA policy with regard to students with disabilities. In 1983, the Federal Minister for Social Security set up a *Handicapped Programs Review* (Grimes, 1983). This review proved to be the catalyst for the Federal anti-discrimination legislation passed by Parliament late in 1984. This review was also a hallmark with regard to nomenclature. In the papers derived from the submissions, the terms *disability* and *disabled people* (replacing other terms such as *handicapped*) were continually used and quickly became recognised as being more appropriate descriptors (Casey, 1994).

The *Disability Services Act* (Commonwealth of Australia, 1986) assisted in changing the nation's approach to people with disabilities (McCulloch, 1991). Quality of life, rights, increased independence and integration were some of the concepts underpinning the Act. The basic intent of the Act was to mandate that “education authorities, as well as other service providers, develop policies and programs appropriate to the needs of children with disabilities and to review these programs at regular intervals” (Casey, 1994, p. 20). However, the limitations of the *Disability Services Act* (Commonwealth of Australia, 1986) were also demonstrated by the inability of people with disabilities to pursue their rights (Birch, 1986).

In terms of people with disabilities, legislative initiatives were also taking place at about this time in the various States throughout Australia. A common theme in all of the legislation was a strong emphasis on consumer outcomes rather than the needs of service organisations. In the mid-1980s, equal opportunity legislation was promulgated in Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia (Casey, 1994). In W.A., the State Government enacted the *Equal Opportunity Act* (Parliament of Western Australia, 1984) that addressed discrimination against people on the grounds of sex, religion and ethnicity, while amendments to this legislation with regard to disabilities (1988) and age (1992) were later added (Casey, 1994).

The reports already noted on the education of children with disabilities led not only to legislation, but also to increased government spending in the area. The Commonwealth Government, as described in Chapter Two, had contributed significant financial resources to education since the mid-1960s, particularly to the non-government school sector (Connell, 1993). Despite the two changes of Federal Government since the major educational reforms in the 1970s, the Commonwealth continued to assist financially with the education of students with disabilities during the 1982 – 86 period (Connell, 1993). It did this through the policies of the Commonwealth Schools Commission that remained committed to the notion of addressing disadvantage in Australian schools (Dudley & Vidovich, 1995).

The Schools Commission expressed support for the education of children with disabilities in regular schools and classes in the initial report of the Interim Committee, and this remained an objective throughout the 1980s (Connell, 1993). During the period 1982 – 86, which is the focus of this chapter, there was a continuation of many of the non-government schooling initiatives begun in the 1970s. The Fraser Coalition government (1975 – 83) had reinforced the Commonwealth's involvement in education begun by the previous Labor government, and the election of the Hawke Labor government in 1983

promised to continue Commonwealth financial support for education. However, due partly to the changing educational climate, the 1983 - 86 period of the Commonwealth Labor Government was not characterised by traditional Labor tenets such as a strong reformist commitment to education and equality of opportunity (Fulcher, 1989).

The findings of *Quality of Education in Australia: Report* (Karmel, 1985) were that the Commonwealth's substantial increase in education funding in the previous two decades had made little change to the academic performance of students (Connell, 1993). Subsequently, the high political priority that education held in the 1970s began to slowly diminish. On this, Hughes (1987, p. 303) commented as follows:

This may have been caused partly by the exaggerated rhetoric of the earlier period which portrayed education as the solution to a variety of social ills. In Australia ... this rhetoric led to high, and highly unreal, expectations.... As the economic climate became harsher, bringing very high levels of youth unemployment, schools were portrayed less as part of the solution, more as part of the problem.

However, while the Commonwealth's overall financial commitment to education declined in real terms in the period 1982 - 86, the Commonwealth Schools Commission continued to agitate for continued financial support for a number of its educational programs. The aim of these programs was to create a more equitable and coherent pattern of schooling suited to the needs of a diverse Australian community (Connell, 1993). In *Quality and Equality* (Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1985a), the Commission argued that providing additional funding and resources would enhance the educational opportunities for disadvantaged groups (Connell, 1993). The Commission was successful in its discussions and the Commonwealth's



contributions to non-government schools to assist with the education of children with disabilities remained available during the 1982 – 86 period.

### **CECWA Policy with Regard to Students with Disabilities**

This section of the chapter focuses on CECWA's *Pupil Enrolment Policy and Practice* (CECWA, 1983) policy document, published in 1983. However, as noted in the previous chapter, successful policy analysis is about 'an understanding of the organisation's control and regulations' (Ranson, 1996). Therefore, the circumstances and environment of the implementation of the policy outlined in this document are also considered.

### **Critique of Pupil Enrolment Policy and Practice (CECWA, 1983) Document**

In 1983, the chairman of the CECWA, Monsignor J. Nestor, requested a review and redevelopment of a student enrolment policy for all Catholic schools in W.A. According to the 1983 CECWA annual report, the resultant policy statement, *Pupil Enrolment Policy and Practice* (CECWA, 1983) was "the outcome of widespread intensive consultation with parents, teachers, priests, bishops, board members and others involved in Catholic schooling" (CECWA, 1983, p. 3). The *Pupil Enrolment Policy and Practice* (CECWA, 1983) document, after being approved by CECWA at its September meeting, was released in October 1983. The document contained an introduction, an outline of basic principles and a development/review section. It replaced two earlier enrolment statements issued in 1979 (CECWA, 1979) and 1980 (CECWA, 1980).

The *Pupil Enrolment Policy and Practice* (CECWA, 1983) document was received by schools and their communities with little controversy (300796; 131196). There were two reasons for this. First, the release of the policy was preceded by consultation with school communities (131196; 201196). Secondly, *Pupil Enrolment Policy and Practice* (CECWA, 1983) was quite

conservative in its content. In most sections, the document was very much a reflection and an explanation of practices already taking place in schools (191196; 201196).

However, unlike previous CECWA enrolment policy documents, the *Pupil Enrolment Policy and Practice* (CECWA, 1983) document included some directions to schools with regard to students with disabilities. A special provision for the enrolment of children with disabilities was noted in the new policy document:

The Commission applauds the efforts of many Catholic schools in making special provision in their pupil enrolment of physically handicapped and other disadvantaged children (CECWA, 1983, p. 2).

Also in the *Pupil Enrolment Policy and Practice* (CECWA, 1983) document, under the heading “Entrance Tests”, the following appeared:

While schools may wish to have entrance tests that will help them decide on the best placement of new pupils, tests of ability applied as enrolment criteria should not be permitted.

On the contrary, schools are urged to make provision for students with special needs, whether for enrichment or remediation, and all Catholic schools should be open to all children (CECWA, 1983, p. 3).

The *Pupil Enrolment Policy and Practice* (CECWA, 1983) document also contained a statement which implied that schools would be expected to give special consideration to the enrolment of a child with a disability when siblings already attended that particular school. On this, it stated:

Because of the importance of providing support for family life and of strengthening the link between school and home, the school should provide for the

enrolment of siblings as a matter of high priority  
(CECWA, 1983, p. 3).

Despite the inclusion of such positive statements related to disability, however, the policy document also reflected some 'pragmatic courses of action' with regard to the enrolment of students with a moderate - severe intellectual disability.

The *Pupil Enrolment Policy and Practice* (CECWA, 1983) document opened with a statement that "all Catholic schools should be open to all children" (p. 1). However, it later stated that "when a child's disability is so pronounced as to make integration impossible, a school would be well advised to direct parents to where more specialist and professional help can be given" (p. 3). The pragmatism of the policy document was also demonstrated in its strong emphasis on the transition from primary to secondary school for students with disabilities. In this regard, it stated that "primary school principals who accept enrolments of handicapped children (should) explore with parents the availability or otherwise of Catholic secondary schooling" (CECWA, 1983, p. 3). All those who were interviewed in the present study believed that the inclusion of positive references to disability in the *Pupil Enrolment Policy and Practice* (CECWA, 1983) document demonstrated that most people associated with Catholic education in W.A. wanted to continue to encourage the enrolment of children with disabilities. However, practical considerations such as building restrictions, a shortage of funding, and a lack of trained special education teachers were also important considerations in the formulation of the policy document (300796; 311096; 131196; 191196). Therefore, the final document reflected a compromise. The CECWA certainly wanted more students with disabilities enrolled in W.A. Catholic schools (300796; 201196), but emphasised a process of encouraging schools rather than imposing policy on them. This was consistent with the description of the CECWA, offered in Chapter Three, as an organisation that

was more cooperative than demanding in its negotiations with individual schools, particularly in the first fifteen years of the CECWA's existence.

## **Circumstances Surrounding the CECWA**

### **Policy**

The maturity of the CECWA following its formation in 1971 was outlined in Chapter Three of this dissertation. So too was the CEO's inception in 1973 and its subsequent growth as the CECWA's administrative arm. Both of these developments effected CECWA policy with regard to students with disabilities in the 1982 - 86 period.

There were many challenges confronting the CECWA in its first decade of existence (201196; 041296). The acceptance by many priests and religious orders of the CECWA as a centralised statewide body, with an express charter of operations for local school boards, took some time. Furthermore, a lack of funds limited the number of personnel employed, thus making the liaison with schools throughout the state very difficult. By 1982, however, the CECWA had overcome many of its early problems and had established its credibility with the majority of groups associated with Catholic education in W.A. (201196).

It was noted in Chapter Three of this dissertation that the availability of Commonwealth Schools Commission funding from the mid-1970s onwards resulted in significant changes taking place in a number of CECWA policies leading up to 1982 (Tannock, 1979). One of these changes was in the area of children with disabilities. The CEO's success in gaining access to Commonwealth Schools Commission funding accomplished two purposes (201196). First, through the appointment of Moyes and the employment from the beginning of 1983 of another full-time consultant, the CECWA's belief in the importance of students with disabilities being included in

Catholic schools was articulated. Here we are reminded of the point made in Chapter Three that when the Church's views are compatible with the government's social welfare intentions, many policy changes in the Church are instigated by the availability of funds (160299).

Secondly, the availability of funding enabled information to be disseminated to Catholic schools about the importance of a Catholic school system providing education for students with disabilities and also about how some Catholic schools were already accomplishing this. Consequently, many school principals began to seek information concerning the CECWA's policy or guidelines for schools regarding the provision of educational programs for students with disabilities (200696). This supports the general thrust of the argument, already presented in the literature review of this dissertation, that by the mid-1980s, the inclusion of children with disabilities into mainstream schools was becoming more common throughout Australia.

Commonwealth government policy certainly impacted considerably on CECWA policy with regard to students with disabilities during the period 1982 – 86 (300796; 191196; 201196; 211196). Despite the more frugal national fiscal policy practised during this five-year period, the Commonwealth's continued financial intervention, which included assistance for the addition of capital infrastructure for students with physical disabilities, encouraged more schools to include students with disabilities in their enrolments (131196; 191196; 201196). However, it was never the Commonwealth's intention to supply the total amount of funding required for schools to educate students with disabilities. In successive *Guidelines to Schools*, the Schools Commission made it clear that its financial input was only supplementary to the contributions of schools and school systems (Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1985a). Therefore, the recurrent funding to support educational programs for students with disabilities

remained an issue for Catholic schools in W.A. despite the Commonwealth Schools Commission initiatives throughout the 1982 - 86 period.

In 1982, the CEO's chief executive officer, Richard McSweeney, recognised the possibility of gaining funding from the Commonwealth Schools Commission. Peter Moyes was subsequently employed as a 'special education' consultant (041296). Moyes' reputation was known to one of the consultants at the CEO, Michael Beech, and he was appointed without the position being advertised. Moyes had just concluded a distinguished thirty-one year tenure, mostly as Principal, of Christ Church Grammar School, a leading non-Catholic, independent school in Perth. During this time, he had established a reputation as a leading proponent of the enrolment and inclusion of students with disabilities into mainstream classes (110796; 191196).

There is considerable documentation to signify Moyes' important role in reshaping CECWA policy with regard to students with disabilities. Moyes was not Catholic but had been a member of the Commonwealth Schools Commission during its first triennium (1975 - 77). Since it was from the Schools Commission that the CECWA was to procure most of its funds for schools enrolling students with disabilities, Moyes' experience in, and good standing with the Commission was seen as invaluable (201196). His employment and subsequent work with schools proved to be a major stimulus for the inclusion of several sections pertaining to students with disabilities in the updated 1983 CECWA enrolment policy document, *Pupil Enrolment Policy and Practice* (CECWA, 1983) (191196; 201196). He was also a member of the committee responsible for the *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Education in Western Australia* (Beazley, 1984), the inquiry into W.A. education that was described earlier in this chapter.

From the period beginning March 1982, Moyes and McSweeney, under the chairmanship and encouragement of the CECWA Director, Monsignor James Nestor, began to raise the profile of the 'special education services' offered by the CEO and pursue further Commonwealth funding to enable more students with disabilities to be included in W.A. Catholic schools (131196; 201196). Consequently, the 1982 CECWA annual report made reference for the first time to the education of students with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools. Under the heading *Services for Students with Special Needs*, it stated that:

The Commission's Research Officer prepared a report on services for students with special educational needs which was endorsed by the CECWA for implementation (CECWA, 1982, p. 21).

The report, *Special Education Services* (Moyes, 1982) stated that by 1982, there were twenty secondary schools and twenty-eight primary schools in W.A. providing staffing, facilities and support, full or part-time, for over one hundred children with disabilities. The majority of these schools contained a maximum of three students with disabilities. The report confirmed that attitudes within W.A. Catholic schools towards students with disabilities were gradually undergoing fundamental change.

However, the report also identified a shortfall in enrolment places for students with disabilities. It established:

... (that while the growing numbers of students with disabilities being educated in Western Australian Catholic schools) is encouraging, as is the growing interest and concern, it must be appreciated that only a small percentage of the handicapped, whose parents want an alternative to government facilities, can be placed at the present time (Moyes, 1982, p. 22).

At the same time, it was clear that there was a commitment to address this situation in the long term.

In an edition of the *Catholic Education Circular* (CEO, 1983) just two months after the release of CECWA's *Pupil Enrolment Policy and Practice* (CECWA, 1983) document, two pages were allocated to the 'Special Education Services' being offered by the CEO. Apart from describing the assistance that could be provided to schools, the article provided an overview of the types of services and resources available, a description of categories of disability and funding procedures. The article concluded with the following statements:

Enrolment of children known to have special needs should be on a referral basis supported by full documentation - academic, medical and psychological. Details of the degree of handicap or multiple handicaps, together with the degree (that is, mild or moderate) must be provided.

Principals are advised and encouraged to discuss intending enrolments with Peter Moyes or Jennifer Heggart (a fellow consultant) before making a final decision regarding the enrolment of children with special needs in schools. Enrolment forms are available as well as help and advice regarding programming for each child (CEO, 1983, pp. 74 - 75).

Further documentation with regard to students with disabilities emanated from the CEO at regular intervals throughout the 1982 - 86 period. For example:

Provision should be made throughout W.A. for children who are educationally handicapped to be educated with children not so effected provided that:

- a). The schooling resources are capable of meeting those needs
- b). The educational needs of the children with whom they are to be educated are not adversely effected



- c). Proper consideration is given to the use of public resources
  - d). The wishes of parents and other members of the school community are properly considered
- (Moyes, 1983, p. 2).

In the following year came another statement:

(The) Commission's Office is committed to the pursuit of a policy of integration of intellectually and multiply handicapped children, of mild to moderate degree, into regular classrooms, whenever possible, within the financial and personnel resources of schools to achieve that objective.

In implementing this policy, this Office recognises that it is necessary in some instances to establish special units within the schools to enable handicapped children to improve their competencies. These units are not ends in themselves but means to an end, which is the development of the whole person to participate, as far as possible, in the regular program of the school (Moyes, 1984, p. 11).

Statements such as these reflected the CECWA's wish for students with all degrees of disability to be offered enrolment at Catholic schools. Moreover, the preference was for a philosophy of inclusion rather than exclusion (200696). This position was signalled in regular reports from the CEO during the 1982 – 86 period. For example:

Integration involves placing the educationally handicapped in the least restrictive environment with the emphasis on the child's special needs and the provision of a real opportunity to become independent.

The principle of integration requires that the education of the handicapped child with appropriate professional support take place in the same school setting as the non-handicapped, and that this typical setting is the best.

It is recognised, however, that the child's needs may require provision beyond this setting and therefore a range of options is necessary. The principle opposes the tendency to isolate and segregate, but it is appreciated that there are some children with such profound handicaps or disabilities that it is only in a special school that the concentrated help and resources can be given. Nevertheless, special schools should be located on a regular school site, being part of it, having social contact and sharing activities and resources (Moyes, 1983, p. 2).

It seems, however, that in part, the lack of available funding restricted the options available to schools (311096; 181196). Although the Commonwealth Schools Commission's 'Special Education' program was contributing grants, the ideal staff-student ratios and capital and recurrent resources required for the education of students with disabilities were enormous. In the short term at least, these requirements were still well beyond what the CECWA alone could hope to provide (201196; 211196). Furthermore, funding difficulties for Catholic schools enrolling students with disabilities were exacerbated by contributions from the W.A. State government gradually declining in real terms during the period 1982 – 86 (Goddard, 1992).

The funding difficulties soon became reflected in CECWA correspondence. In November 1984, Moyes wrote:

Since the number of identified handicapped children in Catholic schools in 1984 is more than three times the figure in 1982, there is an obvious necessity for increased funding if these children are to receive their rights to an appropriate education (Moyes, 1984, p. 3).

In a report to the CECWA at the beginning of 1985 titled *The Education and Integration of the Disabled and Educationally Handicapped in Catholic Schools in W.A.* (Moyes, 1985), financial limitations were again identified as a

reason for the CECWA's inability to cater for greater numbers of students with disabilities.

No move has yet been made to set up special schools (or more) educational support centres ... The limiting factors are financial and staffing resources and accommodation. Moreover, the regulations regarding capital grants and recurrent grants do not encourage schools to move in these directions (Moyes, 1985, p. 12).

Later in the report, the same point about insufficient funding was emphasised:

The drawing up of priorities and the strategies for implementing them are largely dictated by the availability and extent of financial and human resources and the incidence of handicaps and disorders among school age children in the metropolitan and country areas. It is obviously more difficult to provide for handicapped children in sparsely populated areas, and a knowledge of services which can be used is vital if the needs of such children are to be met (Moyes, 1985, p. 15).

In terms of students with disabilities at non-government schools, there were two types of Commonwealth funds available. An example of the distribution of these grants to Catholic schools in W.A. is provided by the 1984 *Annual Report* (CECWA, 1984). The report showed that in that particular year, seventeen Catholic schools received 'Special Education Integration' grants while twenty received 'Special Education Recurrent' grants.

'Special Education Integration' grants were available to schools to assist in the process of the integration of students with disabilities in regular schools and classes (CECWA, 1984). In many cases, these grants were to assist students with a physical disability only and were used to purchase special equipment such as electric typewriters, computers and software or to build ramps and provide special furniture or wheelchairs. 'Special Education Recurrent' grants were available to schools that undertook to enrol students

with disabilities in regular primary or secondary schools. These grants were to support schools which had devised specific educational programs in their school for students with disabilities and were often spent on recurrent expenses such as teacher assistant salaries or specific learning materials.

Prompted in part by the problems with resourcing W.A. Catholic schools which were enrolling students with disabilities, the CEO commissioned a report from Moyes at the end of 1986. The resultant *Report on Special Educational Programs in Catholic Schools, Western Australia, 1986* (Moyes, 1986) discussed, on a regional basis, the increase thus far in educational opportunities for students with disabilities, summarised the liaison between the CEO and the various schools, and proposed further priorities and strategies for the future. The report also included the collection and collation of valuable data pertaining to the enrolment and education of students with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools. The report then used the data to emphasise the importance of the inclusion of such students and their transition from primary to secondary Catholic schools. The report stated:

(It is a recommendation) that the Commission's Standing Committee for School Policy and Practice be asked to develop a policy statement on special classes for primary and secondary schools....

It would appear unwise to allow primary schools to establish special education classes unless there are arrangements for handicapped children attending such classes to be enrolled at a secondary special class at the appropriate time.... It should be emphasised that a policy of integration of handicapped children should be an essential part of such a model so that children may be integrated fully or partially at the appropriate level whether it be primary or secondary (Moyes, 1986, p. 8).

The report also stated that it should be a priority of the CEO that in each metropolitan region in Perth, there be at least one primary school and a co-educational secondary school with a 'special education' unit. Community

consultation was seen as a key part of the planning process and, following talks with the school boards, teaching and administrative staffs, and parents, plans were made for the establishment of at least one new 'special education' unit each year during the period 1982 - 86. However, the planning for units in the non-metropolitan areas, even in cities the size of Bunbury and Geraldton, was not a CECWA priority during this time.

Certainly the establishment of 'special education' units was a CECWA focus during the 1982 - 86 period. However, it was not done in isolation. Indeed, in 1984, Moyes had written:

(The CEO) recognises that it is necessary in some instances to establish special units within the schools to enable handicapped children to improve their competencies, their estimates of self-worth, and their capacities to be part of the educational mainstream in schools... These units can often provide a greater flexibility and range of opportunities for the integration of the child, depending on the kind and degree of handicap (Moyes, 1984, p. 5).

Nevertheless, despite this proposed increase in the number of 'special education' units, the vast majority of Catholic schools that were educating students with disabilities during the 1982 – 86 period did so in regular school settings (Moyes, 1985). Furthermore, regular reports from the CEO throughout the period demonstrated that in terms of students with disabilities, the most effective school programs were not always at those schools that had segregated 'special education' units and specialised staff.

Near the end of the 1982 – 86 period, two important leadership changes took place. The CEO's Director since its inception in 1973, Monsignor James Nestor, finished his tenure. Nestor's support and encouragement for the changes taking place with regard to students with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools had been crucial (191196; 201196). Dr Peter Tannock, who prior to

his CEO appointment was Chairman of the Commonwealth Schools Commission, replaced Nestor as Director of the CEO and Chairman of the CECWA in March 1985. Tannock had developed an interest in the education of students with disabilities during his Commonwealth Schools Commission incumbency and remained very supportive of educating such students in Catholic schools in the mid-1980s (060896; 251196).

In terms of the employment of the CEO's consultants who dealt with schools educating children with disabilities, a combination of circumstances in the 1985 - 86 period combined to create some uncertainty. At the end of 1985, Moyes resigned to take up an important position at a new institution in W.A., the Anglican Schools Commission. However, since there were no office premises available for his new position, he continued to work out of his CEO office for the next eighteen months. This proved valuable for Moyes' successor because it allowed for some change-over time and facilitated a continuation of services to the schools (060896). The position was first advertised in W.A. and, following a poor response, re-advertised Australia-wide. Joan Warner was subsequently offered the position.

Warner's employment began at the CEO in September 1986. Her qualifications included a Graduate Diploma in Special Education, while she had also completed some of the requirements for a Masters Degree in Special Education. She also had had several years of experience working in 'special education', although not specifically in an administrative role. In terms of students with disabilities, she immediately began to promote a new culture in W.A. Catholic schools by giving more emphasis to a model of integration and less emphasis to the 'special education' units (060896; 201196).

## **The Emergence of a Commitment to the Education of Children with Disabilities Based on Catholic Philosophy**

The reader is reminded that the central thesis of this dissertation is that although CECWA policy with regard to students with disabilities in Catholic schools during the period 1982 - 97 did not occur specifically as the result of Catholic educational theory, it became increasingly influenced by Catholic philosophy. In an earlier chapter, it was noted that, from its inception, the CECWA operated under a *Mandate and Terms of Reference* (Catholic Bishops of Western Australia, 1971). This original mandate was reviewed in 1982, and a new one introduced. The development of the new mandate gave the Catholic Bishops of W.A. an opportunity to influence official CECWA policy through a specifically Catholic philosophy (131196).

Under the new *Mandate and Terms of Reference* (Catholic Bishops of Western Australia, 1982), the CECWA now had a special responsibility shared by all Catholic schools, for the educational welfare of children who were disadvantaged in any way (CECWA, 1987). In the preamble, it was stated:

Ultimately, the chief *raison d'être* of the Catholic education effort is the Church's ministry to the real needs of the Australian community, especially its need for schools which implement authentically a Catholic philosophy of education and are true to Catholic principles (Catholic Bishops of Western Australia, 1982, p. 2).

The mandate stated:

Catholic schools and other educational agencies are required as a distinguishing feature, to strive to become a living Christian community based on justice and the double commandment of love of God and love of neighbour. They should aim beyond a narrow individualism to promote social responsibility in justice and charity (Catholic Bishops of Western Australia, 1982, p. 16).

As noted in Chapter Three of this dissertation, Vatican 11 had prompted some realisation on the part of Church authorities worldwide that the Catholic Church had a responsibility for the disadvantaged. Twenty years on, the growing awareness in the Western World of the rights of people with disabilities prompted some questioning of current Catholic Church policies. This, in turn, led to a reconsideration of the manner in which children with disabilities were being catered for within the Catholic school sector (160298).

As previously noted, the CECWA's official enrolment document, *Pupil Enrolment Policy and Practice* (CECWA, 1983), was the result of considerable feedback from Catholic school communities throughout W.A. Furthermore, a Catholic philosophy also underpinned Catholic schools' enrolment policies prior to, and during the period 1982 – 86. Consequently, greater numbers of students with disabilities began to be included in an increasing number of W.A. Catholic schools.

The main reasons for the increase were entwined. The worldwide awareness of the rights of people with disabilities resulted in more students with disabilities being enrolled at regular schools throughout this five-year period. Previously, when the segregation of students with disabilities was practised in schools, there were only a small number of W.A. Catholic schools with 'special education' units. With the move to inclusion came the realisation that a Catholic school education was now a possibility for students with disabilities. Moreover, some of the principals of Catholic schools began to realise that the inclusion of students with disabilities into regular Catholic



schools was long overdue and should have been occurring more frequently (191196; 211196; 251196).

It will be recalled that a small number of regular W.A. Catholic schools were including children with disabilities long before such a practice occurred in the W.A. public school system where segregation was the norm. The decision to enrol children with disabilities in Catholic schools, while not a directive from the official Church, was often based on a Catholic philosophy that was not reflected in official CECWA documents prior to 1983 (131196; 041296). Rather, as interviewees in the present study regularly stated, it simply felt 'right'. On this, one such interviewee commented as follows:

The idea of enrolling more children with disabilities into our (Catholic) schools was not a deliberate decision; more an idea that generated and escalated over a number of years. People tended to need direction in how we did it because at times it had been a little aimless (191196).

While the decision to include the paragraphs about the enrolment of children with disabilities in the *Pupil Enrolment Policy and Practice* (CECWA, 1983) document did not emanate specifically from the Catholic Bishops of W.A., it was, nevertheless, inspired in part by an emerging Catholic philosophy on the education of children with disabilities (131196; 191196; 201196).

### Conclusion

**The central thesis of this  
dissertation is that CECWA policy  
formulation with regard to students  
with disabilities in Catholic schools**

during the period 1982 - 97 did not occur specifically as the result of Catholic educational theory. Rather, a number of crucial events during the last quarter of the twentieth century proved to be indicators of attitudinal changes taking place in Western culture with regard to people with disabilities. Key personnel within the CEO in the sub-period 1982 - 86 have acknowledged that, in terms of students with disabilities, attitudinal changes were also taking place in W.A. Catholic schools at around this time (131196; 191196; 201196) .

The period 1982 – 86 produced some significant changes with regard to students with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools. The first of these changes was an official recognition that such students were enrolled. The references to students with disabilities in the *Pupil Enrolment Policy and Practice* (CECWA, 1983) document demonstrated this change, as did the CEO's

decision to employ consultants to assist schools with the enrolment and education of such students (311096).

A second change was the increase in enrolments. The early definitions of disability are imprecise but statistics indicate that the number of students with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools quadrupled to almost 500 during the 1982 - 86 period. These students were enrolled in 105 Catholic primary and secondary schools. Furthermore, although the vast majority of these students continued to be educated in schools without 'special education' units, the number of schools with units also increased.

Despite the increase in enrolments of children with disabilities, supply was still falling far short of demand. In one of Moyes' reports during the 1982 - 86 period, it was noted:

There are insufficient special education units in Catholic schools to cater for many of the children who have sought their services. Competition for places in units is so intense that any child who can cope in the mainstream situation is encouraged to remain in it provided sufficient in-school support is available (Moyes, 1985, p. 14).

The shortage of places in W.A. Catholic schools for students with disabilities was due mainly to two factors. First, despite the Commonwealth's financial contributions, funding for students with disabilities remained relatively minimal. Commonwealth grants were modest and covered only a portion of the costs associated with the education of a child with a disability (191196; 211196). The individual school was expected to pay the remainder of the costs. This proved to be a disincentive for schools to enrol students with disabilities (201196; 211196). Secondly, there was still the lingering perception in some Catholic school communities that the needs of students with disabilities were often best met in segregated 'special' schools (200696;

201196). As more and more schools enrolled students with disabilities, this belief gradually dissipated (060896).

There were also further changes. During this five-year period, the CEO established a standing advisory committee to provide advice to the Commission with regard to the education of students with disabilities. Furthermore, to assist system-wide planning, schools were asked to provide statistics regarding enrolments of students with disabilities in their school operational statements, the annual statistical returns that were processed through the CEO.

By the end of 1986, several clear elements of CECWA policy with regard to students with disabilities were beginning to emerge. The first of these was the inclusivity of the CECWA's approach. The CECWA believed that educating students with disabilities meant placing them in the least restrictive environment. The CECWA deemed the 'special education' units necessary as it was thought at the time that the needs of students with disabilities could not be met in

**the mainstream classroom. On this, the**

**CECWA stated:**

It should be emphasised that a policy of integration of handicapped children should be an essential part of such a (special education unit) model so that the children may be integrated fully or partially at the appropriate level whether it be primary or secondary (Moyes, 1982, p. 4).

As noted in the literature review in Chapter Four, such a view is consistent with the recommendations expressed by Casey (1994) and Kauffman (1995) who have both proposed that inclusion should be viewed as only one placement alternative within a range of service options. At the time of Moyes' appointment, there were just three Catholic schools in W.A. with 'special' classes dedicated for children with disabilities, although by the end of the five-year period under review, namely 1982 - 86, there were twelve 'special education' units located at Catholic primary and secondary schools throughout Perth. Nevertheless, in comparison to EDWA schools where most students with disabilities were being educated in segregated schools, Catholic schools were far less dogmatic about the segregation of such students. Some of those interviewed within the present study believed that this was due, in part, to the principle of all families being treated equally. In other words, the CECWA policy with regard to students with disabilities developed from the Catholic philosophy that all children from the same family should have the opportunity to be educated at the same Catholic school, despite the nature of any disability.

A second element of CECWA policy with regard to students with disabilities was the co-ordination of resources and communication between the various parties providing services to students with disabilities. The CEO's Chief Executive Officer acknowledged this in saying that:

The Commission recognises that there is a need for all to work together to achieve the objective of providing the delivery of services to the disabled within the least restrictive environment (McSweeney, 1983, p. 3).

Moyes' role throughout the 1982 - 86  
period was a critical one in this  
regard. His appointment, aided by the  
support of many of his fellow CEO  
consultants, facilitated the changing  
of attitudes towards people with  
disabilities among Catholic school  
personnel. At the same time, there  
were, as noted earlier, attitudinal  
changes with regard to the rights of  
people with disabilities taking place  
in the secular world (200696; 131196;  
191196; 251196). These attitudinal  
changes were demonstrated by the  
policy changes taking place with  
regard to students with disabilities  
in many other schooling sectors, both

## **Catholic and non-Catholic, throughout** **Australia.**

The third element of CECWA policy with regard to students with disabilities in the 1982 - 86 period was its focus mainly on students in the mild - moderate category of disability. Although W.A. Catholic schools employed several different educational models for children with disabilities, children with 'high support' needs, for the most part, were not able to gain access to a Catholic education. Instead, students in this 'high support' category were enrolled in the segregated EDWA schools and classes that catered for such students. Nevertheless, CECWA policy with regard to the education of children with disabilities during the 1982 – 86 period was characterised by an acceptance of the rights of students with disabilities to Catholic schooling, accompanied by a ready acceptance of the principles of inclusive education for such students (131196; 251196). The next chapter will now consider the period 1987 – 91.

## CHAPTER 7

1987 – 91

### Introduction

During the period 1982 – 97, the policy of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (CECWA) with regard to the education of students with disabilities, it will be recalled, was primarily a reflection of changes in attitude within Western culture towards the normalisation and de-institutionalisation of people with disabilities. During the five-year period 1987 – 91 that is the concern of this chapter, these attitudinal changes were principally demonstrated by the policy changes taking place in many education sectors throughout the various Australian states. The legislative changes and the growth of parent advocacy groups that were also occurring during this period provided further evidence of attitudinal changes. Nevertheless, there is evidence to suggest that during this time the CECWA policy continued to be also influenced in an increasing, yet still minor way, by an emerging Catholic educational philosophy on people with disabilities.

The policy of the CECWA during the five year period 1987 – 91 with regard to students with disabilities was identified and analysed by focusing on the major policy document of the period, *Special Education Policy* (CECWA, 1988). In conducting such an analysis, the examination of other official CECWA documents was also useful. Moreover, a comparison between the CECWA documents and the educational practices taking place regarding children with disabilities in Catholic schools in Western Australia (W.A.) was undertaken.

The remainder of this chapter is in three parts, each of which deals with the foregoing argument in a number of ways. First, the broader contextual



background with regard to changing attitudes in the wider society on the education of children with disabilities, is outlined. Secondly, the specific CECWA policy with regard to students with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools is analysed. This analysis focuses on the policy document, *Special Education Policy* (CECWA, 1988) and the surrounding circumstances of the CECWA and the Catholic Education Office (CEO) around this period. Finally, consideration is given to how the emergence of a particularly Catholic view on the education of children with disabilities continued to be a growing, but still minor, influence on CECWA policy during the period 1987 – 91.

### **The Broad National Contextual Background**

Once again, it is important to highlight that the development of the CECWA policy regarding the education of children with disabilities during the period 1987 - 91 was, in the main, a reflection of cultural changes within the wider society regarding the human rights of people with disabilities. As with the 1982 – 86 period considered in the previous chapter, the main indicators of the attitudinal changes taking place within the education sectors were the inquiries into the education of children with disabilities occurring nationally and in the various states and territories (Ashman & Elkins, 1994; Dempsey, 1996). The reports that followed from these inquiries confirmed that attitudinal changes were impacting on all of the government and non-government school sectors in Australia.

A plethora of reports was commissioned by the Commonwealth on the topic of 'students with disabilities' during the 1987 – 91 period (ACER, 1994). Each of these reports focused on a different area of 'special education'. *The Special Education Services Element of the Commonwealth Special Education Program: A Review* (Ashby, Robinson & Taylor, 1988) looked at school-age students, *Early Childhood Special Education: A Review of the Early Special Education Element of the Commonwealth Special Education Program* (Ashby,

Robinson & Taylor, 1989) focused on the education programs available to children in the 0 - 6 year range, and *Children With Severe Disabilities Program* (Bochner, Goodfellow, Pieterse & Price, 1990) examined the educational options for students in the 'higher needs' categories of disability. These reports all shared the themes of rights and inclusion.

Another report yet again, *Review of Integration in Australia: Summary Report* (Gow, 1989), merits some consideration. This report was based on a study in 1987 - 88 of the inclusion of students with disabilities of all ages in government and non-government schooling systems throughout Australia. The report identified the inclusion of students with disabilities into regular classes as being a key issue in every Australian state and territory. The chairperson of the report, Lyn Gow, was a strong advocate of inclusion. She strongly believed that the major advantage of inclusion was to bring about acceptance for students with disabilities as members of the same school community. Furthermore, she also believed that including students with disabilities into regular schools and classes provided all students with opportunities to participate in the same activities as other students and to allow friendships to develop (Gow, 1989).

Consistent with the changing nature of education at the Federal level came changes within government and non-government school systems in the various Australian states. For example, in the policy statement, *Students with Disabilities* (Education Department of South Australia, 1991), it was acknowledged that:

... the neighbourhood school is the first point of contact for the initial enrolment of all students. Upon enrolment, a child with a disability becomes a student. This enables the principal, parents, teachers and service providers to begin negotiations that determine an appropriate curriculum and support services and to identify a suitable placement

for attendance (Education Department of South Australia, 1991, p. 1).

The important feature of the South Australian policy was that there was no distinction made between students during the enrolment process, thus leading to a situation where, in some areas, children with severe disabilities were being educated full-time in regular schools and classes (Casey, 1994). In Queensland, too, a policy statement, *Educational Provision for Students with Disabilities* (Education Department of Queensland, 1991), emphasised a change from a dual system of education to one that focussed on the inclusion of all students (Casey, 1994). However, some argued that, despite the rhetoric, state policies often simply “attempted to manage contests and orchestrate compromises” (Slee, 1996, p. 105). This argument was consistent with the ideas of Beetham (1987) and Ranson (1996), already noted, namely, that policy formation often results simply in the production of ‘pragmatic courses of action’.

In W.A., the public school sector policy with regard to children with disabilities continued to undergo significant change. The State government’s educational aims were signalled clearly in the release of *Better Schools in Western Australia* (Ministry of Education, 1987). This policy document promised greater autonomy and considerable devolution of responsibilities to local communities (Goddard, 1992). Its introduction also halted the development of the ‘Educational Support Centres’ introduced as a result of the *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Education in Western Australia* (Beazley, 1984), while the ‘Education Support Branch’, previously responsible for the assessment and placement of students with disabilities, was soon disbanded (Goddard, 1992).

Following the release of *Better Schools in Western Australia* (Ministry of Education, 1987), local schools were expected to take on specialist duties that had previously been the responsibility of the Education Support Branch.

However, many Ministry of Education principals believed that local communities did not have the expertise required to fulfil these specialist duties (150696). As increasing numbers of students with disabilities were placed in regular classrooms, many teachers believed that they were not being supported adequately (150696) and, consequently, there was some unrest from the teachers' union. On this, Slee (1996) notes that the predicament was being paralleled in many other Australian states where "inclusion (continued) to be advanced as a technical issue focusing almost exclusively upon the redistribution of material and human resources" (Slee, 1996, p. 106).

Nevertheless, other developments soon followed. In accordance with Section 82 (b) of the *Equal Opportunity Act* (Parliament of Western Australia, 1984), a review of the provision of public education in W.A., *Discrimination in Government Policies and Practices* (Equal Opportunity Commission, 1990), was released in 1990. This review seemed to corroborate the teachers union's complaints regarding changes to students with disabilities emanating from *Better Schools in Western Australia* (Ministry of Education, 1987). The review emphasised that every child was entitled, by legislation as well as through natural justice, to the identification of his or her special needs and to the creation of a system in which those individual needs could be met. The review also expressed, however, a clear lack of provision in the W.A. public education sector for the identification, assessment, and formulation of individual programs and a lack of commitment of adequate resources for students with disabilities. Moreover, the lack of specially trained teachers and specific curriculum materials were identified as factors needing attention (Equal Opportunity Commission, 1990).

At the same time as the production of these reports was taking place, certain legislative changes, reflecting the attitudinal changes in society with regard to the education of children with disabilities, were also occurring. This, in turn,

reflected international trends. Earlier in this dissertation, the importance of legislation to the inclusive and integrative school practices for students with disabilities in the United States of America (U.S.A.) and United Kingdom (U.K.), was noted. In the period 1987 – 91, the climate in both the U.K. and the U.S.A. was one of firm commitment to people with disabilities in the legislative area (Dempsey, 1996). Unlike the U.S.A. and the U.K., however, national legislation that mandated specifically to ensure that educational services were provided to students with a disability, did not exist in Australia prior to 1987 (Casey, 1994).

In Australia, interest groups representing people with disabilities believed that governments weren't doing enough for marginalised groups within Australian society and that social needs were too often being sacrificed for economic purposes. To protect people with disabilities from discrimination, legislation was seen as necessary (Casey, 1994; Hastings, 1997). Also, in the five-year period 1987 – 91, Commonwealth and State governments in Australia began to more strongly acknowledge the rights of people with disabilities (Hastings, 1997). This period coincided with the passing of legislation in the U.K. (1988) and the U.S.A. (1991) that further mandated the provision of education for students with disabilities (Dempsey, 1996).

The introduction of the *Equal Opportunity Act* (Parliament of Western Australia, 1984) was discussed in the previous chapter. An amendment to this Act was legislated in November 1988, adding the area of 'disability' to the race, religion and sex anti-discrimination laws included in the 1984 Act. The 1988 amendment was followed several years later by the Commonwealth's *Disability Discrimination Act* (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992).

The amendment to the *Equal Opportunity Act* (Parliament of Western Australia, 1984) stated that it was discriminatory to deny access to any student with a disability to the benefits provided by educational systems to

regular students. Legislation such as the 1988 amendment provided students with disabilities in W.A. with legislative protection of all of their rights, including the right to equal opportunity in education. On this, a section of the 1988 amendment to the *Equal Opportunity Act* (Parliament of Western Australia, 1984) states (p. 10):

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66l. (1) It is unlawful for an educational authority to discriminate against a person on the grounds of the person's impairment -

(a). by refusing or failing to accept the person's application

for admission as a student; or

(b). in the terms or conditions on which it is prepared to admit

the person as a student.

In this way, the rights of students with disabilities gradually became enshrined in W.A. legislation (Dempsey, 1996).

The legislation also had considerable ramifications for the enrolment of students with disabilities in all educational institutions, including Catholic schools. No longer could schools legally prohibit students with disabilities from enrolling simply on the basis that they could not provide the necessary facilities such as wheelchair access. Instead, educational institutions were expected to implement capital development, curriculum and timetabling changes to facilitate the enrolment and education of children with disabilities.

Following the legislation in W.A., came the gradual realisation from most educationalists that students should be placed in the least restrictive educational environment (240796; 181196; 251196). However, 'escape' clauses were included in the 1988 amendment to the *Equal Opportunity Act* (Parliament of Western Australia, 1984). The amendment states:

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66 I. (4) Nothing in this section applies to or in respect of a refusal or failure to accept a person's application for admission as a student at an educational institution where the person, if admitted as a student by the educational authority, would require services or facilities that are not required by students who do not have an impairment and the provision of which would impose unjustifiable hardship on the educational authority.

Slee (1996) states that the legislation in all of the other states and territories in Australia included similar clauses.

By 1991 in Australia, the inclusion of students with disabilities, while becoming more common, was practised in a variety of modes by various schools and school systems (240796; 250796). Although inclusive education was often portrayed as a human rights issue (Chalmers, 1994), Australia contrasted with the U.S.A. and the U.K. in that there was no legal right to an appropriate educational placement (Hayes & McAlpine, 1986). Therefore, while the wording of various reports in Australia contained the principle that every child had a right to be educated in an ordinary classroom in a regular school, this legislation was never enshrined in legislation. According to Sykes (1989), the reason for this was that conferring such a right on students with disabilities might have been seen to be discriminatory to able students. Nevertheless, Australia did ratify the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* during this five-year period. This Convention recognised that education was one of a number of rights, and it went on to emphasise the principles of inclusion and the provision of appropriate educational support for children with disabilities (Dempsey, 1996).

As a result of the greater protection for people with disabilities legislated during the 1987 – 91 period, the parents of children with disabilities began to become more aware of their rights (Casey, 1994). During this period, as the

number of children with disabilities enrolled in Catholic schools in W.A. increased, so too did the influence of parent advocacy. With regard to the Catholic education sector in W.A., a group of parents with children at a 'special education' unit at a Catholic primary school wrote to the CEO Director in November 1987 expressing concern at the lack of facilities at Catholic secondary schools for their children. While acknowledging that their children had responded well to the secure environment of the 'special education' unit and at the same time thrived on the experience of "belonging" and being so well accepted by the whole school community, the parents stated:

When the unit was first set up at St Michael's in 1985, there was a very definite understanding that a follow-on provision would be established in a Catholic secondary school within the local region in time to cater for our children as they complete their primary education.... We, as parents, have watched and waited for at least two years now and have heard each time of the failure of the local Catholic secondary college to give anything but monetary reasons for not considering a Special Education facility or similar. We would very much like to register our disappointment and hope that in the near future that we have some positive response in answer to our very valid request. (St Michael's Special Education Parents, 1987, p. 2)

Similar parent advocacy took place in other school catchment areas, particularly by parents whose children had not been accepted into Catholic schools because of the level of their child's disability (060896).

It was noted earlier in this dissertation that the parent advocacy group, CASES, had formed in W.A. in 1983 and had begun to meet irregularly as a support group. During the 1987 – 91 period, the number of parents attending these meetings increased and many of the discussions began to centre on educational issues that included the enrolment of students with disabilities in Catholic schools (CASES, 1995). Following the Archdiocesan



1988 conference entitled 'People with Disabilities in the Christian Community', a CASES education committee was formed (280597). Over the next two years, as increasing numbers of parents sought enrolment at their local Catholic primary school for their children with disabilities, the education committee began to interview parents and collect data which was then fed back to the main body. In this way, CASES gradually became an advocacy group for families wishing to enrol a child with a disability into a Catholic primary school.

CASES believed that many of the services offered to students with a disability, if they existed, were poorly planned and rarely subject to accountability procedures. This was not inconsistent with documentation emanating from the CEO during this period. For example, it was recognised that:

There is clearly a need to extend the services in a co-ordinated manner with the aim of providing appropriate support for both students and teachers throughout the Catholic system (CEO, 1987, p. 1).

It was CASES' understanding that greater numbers of parents were experiencing rejection when they sought enrolment in Catholic schools for their children with disabilities. The parent organisation believed that what it perceived as un-Christian attitudes in this regard were sometimes quite destructive to many Catholic families who found the non-acceptance of their child at a Catholic school an overwhelmingly negative experience (280597).

The increasing influence of the CASES group led to representatives meeting with the Archbishop of Perth, William Foley, several times during the late 1980s (280597). Meetings between CASES representatives and CEO personnel were then held in mid-1990. All parties acknowledged that Catholic parents of children with disabilities, who previously had relied on

the public education sector, were increasingly looking to Catholic schools to educate their children. Consequently, the CEO was facing an overload problem in this area, with the demand for places outstripping those available and placing further pressure on the limited funding.

However, funding shortfalls were not specific to children with disabilities. The Federal Government's reforms during 1987 - 91, which were aimed at putting more efficiency, responsiveness and flexibility into Australia's education sectors (Pusey, 1991), impacted on all of the CECWA policies. During the period 1987 - 1991, the Australian Labor Party (ALP) was twice re-elected at the Federal level and continued to favour a policy that linked education more closely to national economic needs (Connell, 1993; Dudley & Vidovich, 1995). Also, schools and universities were increasingly expected to become servants of the national economy, with economic rationalism the dominant discourse (Birch & Smart, 1989). This development reflects, at least to some extent, Ranson's (1996, p. 259) notion, as already described in Chapter Five, of changes in education policy in the 1980s "being derived from contradictions within and between ideological, political and economic levels".

The Hawke Government's desire for a stronger and more direct influence in Australian education resulted in the gradual demise of the Commonwealth Schools Commission. On this, Dudley and Vidovich (1995) conclude:

Within this ideological framework, it was clearly both inefficient and unacceptable to maintain an autonomous Commission which was outside the direct control of the minister and his officers. Moreover, the Schools Commission was producing rhetoric and arguments counter to the 'national economic objectives' which the entire public sector was being directed to achieve (Dudley & Vidovich, 1995, p. 124).

By 1987, it was clear that the statutory independence of a Schools Commission did not conform to the preferred style of administration of the

Hawke Government policy. The Commission had most of its financial role removed from it and transferred to the Federal Department of Education. As a result, “the Commission became merely one adviser to the Minister amongst many others when it came to the disbursement of funds for capital and recurrent purposes to schools throughout Australia” (Hughes, 1987, p. 302). In 1991, a potentially more controllable body, the National Board of Education and Training (NBEET), was formed. From that moment on, “educational decision making was brought more tightly ‘on line’ under the minister” (Dudley & Vidovich, 1995, p. 128).

The Federal government’s fiscal policies clearly impacted on the policy of Catholic schools throughout Australia. In terms of students with disabilities, many of those interviewed for this study believed that a lack of sufficient funding was the major prohibiting factor with regard to the provision of appropriate educational placement and resources for such students in W.A Catholic schools during the 1987 – 91 period. The interviewees claimed that while attitudes towards students with disabilities were changing markedly among people associated with W.A. Catholic schools, the financial realities inhibited these attitudes always being translated into enrolments (131196; 191196; 211196; 251196).

The financial difficulties were further exacerbated by an increase in enrolment applications during this five-year period. Many parents of students with disabilities in the public school system in W.A. were dissatisfied with the closure of the educational support centres in the public school system. As greater numbers of Catholic schools demonstrated their willingness to accept students with disabilities transferring from public schools, some of whom were non-Catholic, further pressure for greater funding was exerted on the Catholic school sector (150696; 240796; 180397; 230397).

Despite the changes to, and eventual demise of the Commonwealth Schools Commission, funding for the education of children with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools during the period 1987 - 91 continued to come primarily from the Commonwealth. By 1991, almost one hundred Catholic schools in W.A. received funds totalling more than \$1.2 million. These funds were allocated through two elements of the program, *Intervention Support - Joint Element* and *Schools Support - Non- Government Element*, and were spent on teacher and teacher assistant salaries, the purchase of classroom materials and the construction and modification of capital facilities to facilitate the education of children with disabilities in Catholic schools (CECWA, 1991). Funds were also increasingly used to purchase laptop computers, electric hoists and motorised wheelchairs, the invention and development of which enabled more Catholic schools in W.A. to include students with physical disabilities into regular schools (051196; 180397).

Over the same period, however, the W.A. State government did not increase its contribution to the non-government school sector. In fact, it was forced to make cuts to all of its educational expenditure (Goddard, 1992). Consequently, in terms of students with disabilities, its financial contribution to Catholic schools was reduced substantially during the 1987 - 91 period (180397).

### **CECWA Policy with Regard to Students with Disabilities**

This section of the chapter focuses on the *Special Education Policy* (CECWA, 1988) policy document. However, as explained in previous chapters, this policy document cannot be studied effectively without considering related factors. In particular, the circumstances surrounding the CECWA and its administrative office, the CEO, also need to be considered.

## **Critique of the Special Education Policy (CECWA, 1988)** **Document**

It will be recalled that near the end of the 1982 – 86 period, there were two new key appointments made to the Catholic Education Office (CEO). Dr Peter Tannock became CECWA Chairman and CEO Director. Joan Warner, who was first employed as a consultant, shortly afterwards took over the co-ordination of the 'Special Education' section in the CEO. In her co-ordinator's role, it was Warner who was primarily responsible for the content of the CECWA's new policy document, *Special Education Policy* (CECWA, 1988), that dealt with the enrolment and education of children with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools.

The development of the *Special Education Policy* (CECWA, 1988) document was influenced by two factors (250796; 060896; 251196; 180397). The first of these was Warner's dissatisfaction with the lack of co-ordination regarding the enrolment and education of children with disabilities. The second was Tannock's appointment. One of Tannock's first directives was his insistence that all existing CEO policies undergo a comprehensive review (251196).

The origins of the *Special Education Policy* (CECWA, 1988) document occurred with the establishment of a working party in the latter half of 1987. The purpose of the working party was to examine the current CECWA policy that referred to children with disabilities, namely *Pupil Enrolment Policy and Practice* (CECWA, 1983), and to advise the CECWA on the formulation of an updated policy that more accurately reflected what was occurring in schools (060896). Warner was given responsibility for the formation of the working party. Her criteria for selection were that members should be supportive of students with disabilities, have some influence in the Catholic school system and also have high standing with their peers (060896). The working party consisted of representatives involved with Catholic education in W.A. and

included consultants, teachers and parents. CEO staff were also consulted in the development of the policy (211196).

Warner's aim was for the completed policy document to be a 'strategy' document with objectives that would be practical and achievable in the short-term. She also wanted the document to be accurately based on the 'worthwhile' practices already occurring in many schools (060896). In this regard, policy documents from other states, in particular New South Wales, were used by the working party as the basis of a CECWA draft policy (060896; 211196).

Members of the working party recall that a key discussion in early meetings centred on strategies to encourage the Catholic secondary schools in W.A. to be more active in terms of enrolling students with disabilities (060896; 211196). The working party believed that while many Catholic primary schools in W.A. had for some time been enrolling and educating students with disabilities, there was a lack of planning with regard to issues concerned with the transition of such students to secondary school. This, in part, drove the *Special Education Policy* (CECWA, 1988) document to argue for links between primary and secondary schools, stating that "every effort will be made to provide continuing special education, particularly in those regions where a primary special education program is already operating" (CECWA, 1988, p. 2).

The working party's draft policy document was formulated in 1987 and presented at a CECWA meeting in December. Warner was invited to the meeting to address the draft and put to the CECWA the recommendations of the working party. However, the CECWA called for several alterations to be made and stated that "the bias of the Church needs to be more strongly emphasised in the paper" (CECWA December 1987 meeting; Item 200/4, pp. 4 - 5). Furthermore, the same minutes stated (p. 5) "that the CECWA urge

Catholic schools to make special provision, wherever possible and practical, for the enrolment of children with special needs". The CECWA asked that the draft document also be circulated to schools for comment before returning to the CECWA for final approval.

The *Special Education Policy* (CECWA, 1988) document was distributed to schools in February 1988 and its importance was emphasised by Tannock in an accompanying memo to all school principals:

The attached statement, approved by the CECWA, is issued by this Office for the benefit of all Catholic schools and their communities.

Principals are requested to promote the document with staff, board and the parent community so that it will become properly understood and implemented (CEO, 1988, p. 1).

Tannock requested that any queries with regard to the document were to be directed to Joan Warner.

The *Special Education Policy* (CECWA, 1988) document itself, instead of being part of an overall CECWA enrolment policy as the 1983 statement had been, included an overarching statement of philosophy, followed by objectives, definition, principles and policy statements. The statement of philosophy was worded as follows:

The CECWA recognises the uniqueness of each child and acknowledges its responsibility to those children in need of special educational provision within the Catholic community (CECWA, 1988, p. 1).

It went on to say that the philosophy of integration, whenever and wherever practical and possible, was paramount with regard to the education of children with disabilities.

The *Special Education Policy* (CECWA, 1988) document reflected the fact that most Catholic schools in W.A. were now enrolling children with disabilities. Furthermore, the document acknowledged that in the last decade W.A. Catholic school policies had developed and now reflected a far more pragmatic yet compassionate view of students with disabilities. This new policy urged Catholic schools to make provision for greater numbers of such children but directed that CEO staff in the 'Special Education' section be consulted throughout the enrolment process.

Since the 'Special Education' section at the CEO also had responsibility for gifted and talented students, the *Special Education Policy* (CECWA, 1988) document was also inclusive of these students. The policy stated that "*special* in this context (policy) has an element of exceptionality that also includes children who have special learning difficulties because they are talented beyond the average" (CECWA, 1988, p. 2). However, since the focus of this study is on students with disabilities, the aspects of the document dealing with exceptionality are not analysed in this dissertation.

The *Special Education Policy* (CECWA, 1988) document gave some indication of plans for the future regarding the provision of resources to those schools which enrolled children with disabilities. The policy stated:

It is the policy of the CECWA to help Catholic school communities and parents fulfil their responsibilities for the educational welfare of children in need of special assistance within the Catholic school system (CECWA, 1988, p. 1).

Further on, the document stated:

The CECWA will maintain within the CEO a strong advisory service that will assist when necessary, Catholic schools and their communities (CECWA, 1988, p. 2).



Both of the above excerpts demonstrated the CECWA's imperative that each school should formulate educational policies that would be cohesive and coordinated. Furthermore, the document required schools to ensure that they had qualified staff who regularly monitored the programs that the students with disabilities were undertaking. Moreover, schools, when planning new building programs, were expected to consider the needs of students with physical disabilities. Schools were also called on to adapt their Religious Education programs to meet the needs of all students.

Included in the *Special Education Policy* (CECWA, 1988) document were statements summarising many core principles relating to students with disabilities. For example:

Parents, including parents of handicapped children, have the main responsibility for the education of their children.

In recognition of their responsibility to assist all students to develop as fully as possible, Catholic school communities are required to provide maximum opportunity for children with handicaps to participate in the educational, social and religious life of school or community (CECWA, 1988, p. 2).

The *Special Education Policy* (CECWA, 1988) document was, therefore, clearly enunciating that Catholic schools in W.A should be actively exploring strategies to ensure that all children had the same opportunities to attend and participate in Catholic schooling.

Part of the *Special Education Policy* (CECWA, 1988) document referred to assistance that could be offered to particular groups of people with disabilities. It stated that:

The CECWA fulfils this obligation by ensuring that the needs of all types of handicap are properly

considered, such as children with special needs in rural areas, handicapped children of pre-school age, handicapped children who have recently left school, and children who, because of their disabilities, cannot be accommodated in a special unit within a normal school (CECWA, 1988, p. 1).

These sorts of parameters applied not only in the case of Perth schools but also for students with disabilities in the non-metropolitan schools. However, in 1988, the vast majority of the CEO's resources were concentrated in the Perth metropolitan area (060897). Accordingly, following evidence to suggest that an increasing number of non-metropolitan W.A. Catholic schools were enrolling children with disabilities, the CEO began to place 'special education' consultants in major country centres (180397).

In the opinion of the consultants working at the CEO during this period, the response of most principals to the *Special Education Policy* (CECWA, 1988) document was positive. Feedback indicated that the document assisted school administrators to make informed decisions about whether schools would be able to effectively educate students with disabilities (060896; 180397) and was an encouragement to schools to integrate such students into regular classes with some assistance in the form of teacher assistants, (060896). However, while the policy document signalled an intention to take some of the focus away from the emphasis on the establishment of 'special education' units in schools, it also recognised that for some students, a part-time segregated placement was the most effective educational setting. On this, the document stated:

It is the policy of the CECWA to promote principles and policies of integration of students with special needs whenever possible... To promote this policy, the establishment of special units within certain Catholic schools, in accordance with an overall system plan for such services, will continue to be necessary (CECWA, 1988, p. 3).

In the previous chapter, the establishment of 'special education' units in W.A. Catholic schools was identified as one of the major emphases of CECWA policy during the 1982 – 86 period. Now, during the 1987 – 91 period, more schools were beginning to show an interest in establishing a 'special education' unit (060896; 201196). One of the concerns of the CEO personnel was that the system would be unable to support the capital and recurrent costs of such facilities unless they were planned on a systemic basis (060896; 201196). This concern was stated as follows in the *Special Education Policy* (CECWA, 1988) document:

It is understood that the nature and extent of this provision (for the enrolment of children with special needs) will be determined by each school's financial and human resources (CECWA, 1988, p. 2).

The CECWA policy document was clearly based on the notion of making provision for individual students with disabilities in an integrated setting when the school had the necessary resources to do justice to all the students in the class. As the 1987 – 91 period progressed, such students were increasingly included full-time in regular W.A. Catholic schools and classes.

#### *Circumstances Surrounding the CECWA Policy*

The development of the CECWA policy throughout the 1987 – 91 period was stimulated by attitudinal changes in society with regard to people with disabilities. These attitudinal changes increasingly resulted in the placement of students with disabilities into regular schools and classes in W.A. Catholic schools. However, despite this trend, it seems that some schools, particularly secondary schools, were still reluctant to enrol such students (060896; 201196). On this, Warner recalled Tannock's belief that Catholic schools weren't doing enough in this area and remembered him saying: "I'm with you all the way but you've got to convince the principals" (060896). Tannock did not often visit schools. However, as a result of Warner's beckoning he visited all of the schools with 'special education' units in order to demonstrate his

support. Richard McSweeney, who, it will be recalled, was a key advocate of students with disabilities in the CEO during the period 1982 – 1986, was also still working at the CEO and provided Warner with a further source of advice (060896; 201196).

An interim statement, authored by McSweeney and Warner, and issued in June 1987 by the CEO, outlined procedures to be followed by schools wishing to set up 'special education' units. It noted:

While the foregoing steps may appear cumbersome, experience has shown that adherence to them is most likely to save the time and energy of applicants; the correct procedure is time-consuming and therefore should be commenced early in the year (CEO, 1987a, p. 4).

The same document also offered an honest appraisal of the services and facilities currently in place for students with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools. In one part of the document, it was noted that 'special education' was characterised by:

- 1). The establishment of a few special education centres from which students can be mainstreamed, according to needs, into their regular class
- 2). Full integration of handicapped students into a mainstream school, usually with little or no support (CEO, 1987a, p. 25).

The document also stated that many 'special education' units appeared to have been established in an un-coordinated manner, with no real overview or long-term objectives relating to their role within their region. Moreover, primary or secondary units had been established without a 'twin' facility. For example, two 'special education' primary units had been established in a metropolitan region without any provision being made nearby for the secondary schooling of these students.

Several months later, a planning document by the 'Special Education' section at the CEO stated very clearly that, in the short-term at least, financial considerations would restrict enrolments of students with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools:

In the light of competing priorities, high level of enrolment in Catholic schools, and the high costs of resources needed to adequately educate special needs students, it is financially and physically impossible to accommodate ALL handicapped children desiring entry into Catholic schools (CEO, 1987, p. 3).

The CEO went on to claim that its provision of enrolments and resources for students with disabilities was a realistic evaluation of what schools could hope to achieve at the current funding level (060896).

The change of leadership in the area of students with disabilities during this five-year period also impacted on CECWA policy. While Warner's predecessor, Peter Moyes, had played a major part in developing policy in W.A. Catholic schools for such students, the emphasis of his approach had been on encouraging school personnel to enrol and educate students with disabilities (060896; 181196; 180397). The appointment of Warner signalled a somewhat different approach.

Assisted by the experience supplied by McSweeney and the authority of Tannock, Warner's vitality began to precipitate fundamental changes to the beliefs underpinning the education of children with disabilities in Catholic schools in W.A. (250796; 180397). Whereas Moyes' emphasis had been on the establishment of 'special education' units, Warner's model of education for children with disabilities was strongly based on integration. She believed that students with disabilities should be enrolled in their local Catholic schools and, wherever possible, be integrated with the other students (060896; 180397). She also believed that if Catholic schools were willing to enrol

students with disabilities, support in terms of both resources and personnel was essential (250796; 180397). Furthermore, she believed that the support should not be located at the CEO but, wherever possible, be placed in and around the schools where the children were enrolled.

Warner's ability to convince key CEO personnel of the importance of educating children with disabilities can be demonstrated by the appointment to her section of two further consultants by the end of 1989. Consequently, while she remained based in the CEO, these other consultants working in the CEO's 'Special Education' section were gradually sited at various metropolitan and country schools. This, Warner argues, gave the consultants the advantage of cutting down travelling time and, more importantly, being seen in a useful capacity by classroom teachers; schools were visited on a fortnightly basis by the consultants. Warner was also responsible for the setting up of a 'special needs' resource library at the CEO.

During her time at the CEO, Warner introduced many initiatives and played a major role in raising the profile of students with disabilities. Nevertheless, she realised that given the practical realities and financial constraints in which schools operated, more assistance to schools was required (060896; 180397). In a response to this need, the Volunteers in Special Education (VISE) training program was developed and first implemented by the CEO in 1987.

The VISE program was introduced to assist Catholic schools by increasing the level of assistance available to students with disabilities. Warner had previously observed the program in New South Wales and recognised its potential value to W.A. schools (250796; 060896). The program, which was initially conducted over a seven-day training period, was designed to provide members of the Catholic community with the necessary understandings and range of basic skills and strategies to assist students with disabilities. The

WISE program was also acknowledged by a Commonwealth study as being an effective program that assisted the inclusion of children with disabilities into regular schools (DEET, 1993). In the period 1987 – 91, approximately 350 volunteers attended the program that was first offered in Perth and later extended to Bunbury, Geraldton and Kalgoorlie (CECWA, 1991).

Warner was also responsible for initiating regular education reviews for children with disabilities. She had previously taught in Darwin and it was there that she had seen review panels operate successfully. The education reviews she introduced in W.A. involved a meeting each term. Minutes of these meetings, involving the CEO consultant, the classroom teacher, the child's parents and the principal, were kept. There were three purposes to the meetings. First, short and long term education and social goals were established. Secondly, the reviews enabled parents and teachers to exchange ideas and receive feedback. Thirdly, the reviews provided some accountability to the school for Commonwealth funds expended on students with disabilities (060896).

At the beginning of 1990, Warner resigned from her co-ordinator's position at the CEO to take up a job in Sydney. The reasons for Warner's resignation were not controversial. The innovations and hard work over the past four years, she claims, had begun to tire her and she was looking for a new challenge (060896). Furthermore, she was missing Sydney where she had spent much of her early life and so applied for and obtained a policy advisory position in the 'Special Education' branch of the public service in New South Wales.

The resulting CEO vacancy was advertised extensively, perhaps reflecting the attitudinal changes taking place in terms of students with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools. The successful applicant, was Maureen Thomson, who, in the period immediately preceding her employment at the CEO, was

lecturing in 'special education' at Edith Cowan University (formerly WACAE) in Perth. Thomson, whose formal qualifications included a 'Post-graduate Diploma in Special Education', also had experience in Catholic schools, having taught at one of the 'special education' units located in W.A. for three years in the early 1980s.

Thomson's job description, completed shortly after her appointment, served to illustrate the CECWA priorities in terms of students with disabilities at this time. She had four major duties. The first of these was the auditing and co-ordination of the CEO's program with regard to students with disabilities. Thomson's second duty was the revision and rewriting of the CEO policy with regard to such students. Her third duty was the development of an *integration handbook* with guidelines for integrating students with disabilities into mainstream settings. Finally, an outreach program and curriculum package designed to facilitate the integration of students with a physical disability in a mainstream setting was also to be developed by Thomson.



## **The Emergence of a Commitment to the Education of Children with Disabilities Based on Catholic Philosophy**

The central thesis of this dissertation, it will be recalled, is that CECWA policy with regard to the education of students with disabilities in Catholic schools during the period 1982 - 97 became increasingly influenced by evolving Catholic philosophy regarding disability. During the 1987 – 91 period, the legitimation of CECWA policy by Catholic theology was a tangible demonstration of this growing Catholic philosophical influence. The *Special Education Policy* (CECWA, 1988) document began with a quotation from the *Vatican 11 Post-Conciliar Documents (Volume 2)* (Holy See, 1981) specifically relating to the U.N.'s decision to declare 1981 as the *International Year of the Disabled Person* (Doenau, 1984). This quotation embodied a statement on the human rights of people with disabilities.

Since the person suffering from handicaps is a subject with full rights, that person must be helped to take his/her place in society in all aspects and at all levels as far as is compatible with his or her capabilities.

The recognition of these rights and the duty of human solidarity are a commitment and a task to be carried out, and they will create psychological, social, family, educational and legislative conditions and structures that will favour the proper acceptance and the complete development of the disabled individual (CECWA, 1988, p. 1).

Moreover, other formal correspondence to schools from the CEO throughout the 1987 – 91 period increasingly used Vatican documents to justify the official CEO policy with regard to students with disabilities (060896; 251196).

Apart from the use of Catholic theology, there were several other circumstances during the five-year period that reflected a stronger Catholic

philosophical influence. One of the members of the work party responsible for the *Special Education Policy* (CECWA, 1988) document stated:

With the (special education policy) document, we tried to do two things. By bringing the policy document to peoples' attention, Church philosophy became verbalised in terms of kids with disabilities. What I mean is that we attempted to put the philosophy of the Church and the running of the units together. We also tried to use Church teachings as a tool to encourage other schools to take on kids with disabilities (201196).

This statement is consistent with the idea, expressed earlier in this chapter, that CECWA members were very sympathetic to the idea of enrolling more students with disabilities in Catholic schools. One outcome of this was that they did not accept the first draft of the policy document (181196). Consequently, the following paragraph appeared in the final document:

The Church as a Christian community has an obligation to assist parents with the education of their children; there is an even greater obligation when those children have some deprivation or handicap (CECWA, 1988, pp. 2 – 3).

Warner believed that enrolling students with disabilities in some of the schools, particularly in the cases of some in the secondary sector, took quite some persuading since “it didn't go with the image of their school” (060896).

The inclusion of the above paragraph in the *Special Education Policy* (CECWA, 1988) document seems to indicate that the CECWA was aware of some schools' reluctance and, therefore, believed that the position of the Church in the policy document needed to be emphasised more strongly. There were other examples of hesitation on the part of schools to enrol students with disabilities. One principal, reflecting on this, commented:

When schools take on students with disabilities, the workload is quite hard; some schools didn't want to take this on (201196).

However, in terms of children with disabilities, it became obvious that there were many positive approaches being taken in the various W.A. Catholic schools. On this, another principal stated:

I was already enrolling children with disabilities because it's part of our Catholic philosophy - I didn't need the Church to tell me to do it (181196).

One of the purposes of the *Special Education Policy* (CECWA, 1988) document was to reflect the changes that had been occurring in W.A. Catholic schools since 1983 (060896). Several of the principals interviewed for this study talked about how a Catholic philosophy began to influence their particular school's organisation as far as the education of students with disabilities was concerned. For example, several secondary school principals argued that the religious personnel associated with the school's 'founding order' influenced their school's policy in this regard. On this, one of these principals described the situation thus:

While the motivating forces for enrolling students with disabilities were external to the Catholic school 'system', the (founding order) believed that it was a good thing to do. They always tried to put the philosophy of the Church into the way the 'special education' units were run. In this regard, the (founding order) continually reminded the School Board and the school's administration of the importance of Christian principles (201196).

This thrust reflects the way in which many religious orders went about examining their *raison d'être* in the light of post-Vatican II encouragement.

The influence of an emerging Catholic philosophy on the education of children with disabilities was also evident in the way that several interviewees in the

study mentioned that enrolling and educating students with disabilities was “part and parcel of Catholic education”. For example, one principal stated:

Part of the Catholic educational philosophy is that all Catholic children have a right to a Catholic education. As a Catholic system, we acknowledge the giftedness and difference of every child so these principles should be part of all of our school policies (181196).

The development of a Catholic philosophy on the education of children with disabilities was further demonstrated in other ways. Interviewees in the study, for example, consistently talked about the ‘Catholic school as family’ metaphor. Also, the advocacy of parent groups became more prominent as parents of children with disabilities declined the offer of segregating their child in a different educational environment. Instead, these parents gradually raised their expectations of what their local Catholic school should offer. Increasing numbers of such parents began to insist that their child with a disability should attend the same regular school as his/her siblings, partly because this was their understanding of what was required by the ‘official’ Catholic position on education (060896; 251196; 180397).

It will be recalled from Chapter Three of this dissertation that co-responsibility was a key principle underpinning the CECWA’s mandate from the time of its inception in 1971. The principle of co-responsibility called on schools to co-operate so that some kind of equity would exist among the various Catholic schools in W.A and that optimum use would be made of the available resources. The appointment of ‘special education’ consultants to regional areas was, therefore, another illustration of an emerging Catholic philosophy.

There is one final example of the growing Catholic philosophical influence that is worth mentioning. During the 1980s, the Catholic Church’s hard-line opposition to abortion meant that the early pre-natal identification of a life-threatening disabling condition was not grounds for the termination of the

foetus. Moreover, advances in medical technology enabled such children born with a life-threatening disability, who would have previously died in the absence of serious medical intervention, to live longer. These two factors resulted in the degree of disability and the variety of conditions also increasing among students with disabilities applying for enrolment at W.A. Catholic schools during the 1987 – 91 period (CECWA, 1991; 060896). The pressure was on the CECWA to develop its 'inclusion' policy in order to translate the Church's anti-abortion policy into educational policy and practice.

### Conclusion

The central thesis of this dissertation is that CECWA policy formulation with regard to students with disabilities in Catholic schools during the period 1982 – 97, did not occur specifically as the result of Catholic educational theory. Rather, a number of crucial events during the last quarter of the twentieth century proved to be indicators of attitudinal changes taking place in Western culture with regard to people with disabilities. It was these attitudinal changes which, in the main, impacted on CECWA policy with regard to students with disabilities during the period 1987 – 91. However, there is some evidence to suggest that the CECWA policy also continued to be influenced, albeit in a minor fashion, by a Catholic philosophy.

Focusing on the period 1987 - 91, this chapter illuminated the argument in a number of ways. First, the broader contextual background with regard to changing attitudes in the wider society on the education of children with disabilities, was outlined. Secondly, the specific CECWA policy with regard to the education of students with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools was analysed. This analysis focused on the policy document *Special Education Policy* (CECWA, 1988) and the surrounding circumstances of the CECWA and the CEO around this period. Finally, consideration was given to how the

emergence of a particularly Catholic view on the education of children with disabilities continued to be a growing, but still minor, influence on CECWA policy during the period 1987 – 91.

The development of a specific 'special education' policy occurred in the 1987 – 91 period because the CECWA wanted to promote the enrolment and education of students with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools (060896; 201196). The development of the CECWA and its administrative arm, the CEO, were important influences on the CECWA policy with regard to students with disabilities during this time. The decision to increase the number of CEO 'special education' consultants as greater numbers of schools began to enrol students with disabilities was a critical one and could not have proceeded without decisive leadership at the CEO (131196; 191196).

However, it seems that it was not only the CEO Director, Peter Tannock who was very supportive of children with disabilities being included in Catholic schools in W.A. During the five-year period under discussion, the CEO had dual deputy directors, Therese Temby and Joan Buckham, both of whom were identified by several interviewees as also being very supportive of including such children (060896; 250796; 051196; 180397). Buckham believed that the Catholic school approach in W.A. at the time was a practical and compassionate one. She acknowledged that while the CECWA would think of itself as being proactive in some policy areas in terms of students with disabilities, it was, in the main, responding and reacting to national and international agendas (251196). Her sense of the changes in terms of W.A. Catholic schools was, therefore, that as society's awareness of the rights of people with disabilities broadened, parents of children with disabilities began to consider enrolment at a Catholic schools because of their expectation of a stronger Christian environment. Temby, who assisted schools in gaining access to Commonwealth money for the development of capital works that

were necessary due to the school's enrolment of a student with a disability, was later to succeed Tannock as CEO Director.

The vast majority of people associated with Catholic schools, namely parents, teachers, CEO personnel and principals, appear to have supported the *Special Education Policy* (CECWA, 1988) document's philosophical thrust regarding the enrolment and education of students with disabilities. However, there were still schools avoiding their responsibilities in this regard. As considered earlier, the wording in the *Special Education Policy* (CECWA, 1988) document was, overall, supportive of schools enrolling greater numbers of students with disabilities. Nevertheless, by adopting a more legalistic approach "to release schools from the appearance of discriminatory practice" (Slee, 1996, p. 106), the document was sometimes used as a barrier to prohibit students with disabilities from attending Catholic schools. This matter is illustrated in greater length in the final chapter of this dissertation.

Finally, the reader will recall that during the period 1982 – 86, although the concept of the inclusion of students with disabilities was in its infancy in Australia, the overwhelming percentage of students with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools were enrolled in schools that did not have a 'special education' unit. The same trend continued throughout the five-year period 1987 – 91. By the end of this time, although the number of these units increased to eighteen, the vast majority of the students with disabilities enrolled in Catholic schools in W.A. continued to be educated in regular classrooms (CECWA, 1991). The overall number of students with disabilities had also risen significantly and numbered almost one thousand (CECWA, 1991). To support this increase, by 1991 the CEO had increased the number of consultants to seven, three of whom were based in country regions. The environment in which they worked over the next six years will now be taken up in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 8

1992 – 97

### Introduction

The attitudinal changes taking place in Western culture with regard to the normalisation and de-institutionalisation of people with disabilities continued to evolve during the six-year period 1992 – 97 that is the concern of this chapter. In Western Australia (W.A.), the nomenclature of the *Students With Special Needs - The Enrolment and Integration of Students With Disabilities* (CECWA, 1992) policy document was framed to reflect an inclusive approach to disability that reflected these attitudinal changes (240796). Nevertheless, the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (CECWA) policy during this six-year period was also becoming much more strongly influenced by an emerging Catholic philosophy on disability than it had been previously, and there was pressure from the Catholic Archbishop, in particular, for the inclusion of greater numbers of students with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools.

The development of the CECWA policy with regard to the education of students with disabilities during the 1992 – 97 period can be illuminated by focusing on the major policy document, *Students With Special Needs - The Enrolment and Integration of Students With Disabilities* (CECWA, 1992). It was also deemed useful in this regard to critique other formal CECWA documentation between 1992 and 1997, such as *Social Justice and Equity in Catholic Schools* (CECWA, 1994) and Catholic Education Office (CEO) reports. An examination of school policies and practices with regard to students with disabilities also facilitates an understanding of the development of CECWA policy.



Focusing on the six-year period 1992 - 97, the remainder of this chapter illuminates the foregoing argument in a number of ways. First, the broader contextual background with regard to changing attitudes in the wider society on the education of children with disabilities is outlined. Secondly, the specific CECWA policy with regard to the education of students with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools is analysed. This analysis focuses on the policy document, *Students With Special Needs - The Enrolment and Integration of Students With Disabilities* (CECWA, 1992). Finally, consideration is given to how the emergence of a particularly Catholic view on the education of children with disabilities continued to be a growing, while still somewhat minor, influence on CECWA policy during the period 1992 – 97.

### **The Broad National Contextual Background**

In order to contextualise this chapter, it is important to again highlight the fact that during the period 1992 – 97, attitudinal changes towards people with disabilities continued to strongly influence the CECWA policy regarding the education of children with disabilities. These attitudinal changes, a feature of the wider Australian society during the six-year period, were chiefly recognisable by the legislative changes taking place at both a Federal and State level. The most potent of these legislative changes was the Commonwealth's *Disability Discrimination Act* (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992) (Casey, 1994).

Casey (1994) and Hastings (1997) both believe that the *Disability Discrimination Act* (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992) was the predominant reason for the advancement of the rights of people with disabilities in Australia. On this, Hastings (1997, p. 18) states:

Despite disability being included in most State anti-discrimination legislation, it was only when the Disability Discrimination Act and a designated Commissioner came into being at the Federal level that significant national activity took place to ensure the rights of people who have disabilities to be full and equal citizens of Australia.

The major objectives of the *Disability Discrimination Act* (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992) were:

... to eliminate, as far as possible, discrimination against people on the ground of disability; to ensure, as far as practicable, that people with disabilities have the same rights to equality before the law as the rest of the community; and to promote community acceptance of the principle that people with disabilities have the same fundamental rights as all members of the community (Hastings, 1997, p. 5).

In terms of education, Section 22 of the *Disability Discrimination Act* (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992) stated that it was unlawful for an educational authority to discriminate against a person on the ground of the person's disability by refusing or failing to accept the person's application for admission as a student. In this regard, there were two critical aspects of the Act. The first was the definition of the term "unjustifiable hardship" (Hastings, 1997). The Act stated that:

... (it is) not unlawful to refuse or fail to accept a person's application where the person, if admitted, would require services or facilities that are not required by students who do not have a disability and the provision of which would impose unjustifiable hardship on the educational authority (Disability Discrimination Act, 1992, p. 18)

The second critical aspect was the lack of provision for the lawful exclusion of a student once admitted to an educational institution. That is, if the status of

a student changed throughout the course of education, there was no opportunity to refuse the continuation of education, even when obligations became too onerous (Hastings, 1997). However, the implications of the *Disability Discrimination Act* (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992) on educational institutions were unclear and during the 1992 – 97 period the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) was forced to establish a task force to draft disability standards in education under the *Disability Discrimination Act* (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992). It was hoped that these standards would set parameters for the elimination of discrimination and clarify the situation for education providers (Hastings, 1997).

Following the passage of the *Disability Discrimination Act* (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992), all of the Australian states and territories enacted similar legislation. The W.A. parliament passed the *Disability Services Act* (Parliament of W.A., 1993) in the following year. This Act altered the structure of service provision for people with disabilities in W.A. The 'Disabilities Services Commission' was created and became the conduit through which all W.A. government services for people with disabilities were offered (Disability Services Commission, 1993).

Apart from the legislative initiatives, the attitudinal changes with regard to people with disabilities were demonstrated by the changes taking place in both the Catholic and non-government schooling sectors throughout Australia. In W.A. during the 1992 - 97 period, there were two documents that reflected these changes. The first of these was *The Education of Children with Disabilities and Specific Learning Difficulties - Recognising Special Needs in Education* (Shean, 1993). The second document was *Social Justice in Education* (Ministry of Education, 1993). Each of these two documents will briefly be examined in turn.

In December 1992, in response to growing parent concerns about the problems faced by children with disabilities and specific learning difficulties, a task force on the education of students with disabilities was convened by the W.A. State government. One of the task force's briefs was to inquire into the provision of a strategic and co-ordinated support program in public schools in W.A. for students with disabilities. The task force's report, *The Education of Children with Disabilities and Specific Learning Difficulties - Recognising Special Needs in Education* (Shean, 1993) contained a range of recommendations based on wide consultation. It argued that "inclusion is not appropriate for all children" (Shean, 1993, p. 31) and placed importance on "retaining the existing range of placement options" (Shean, 1993, p. 98). Moreover, the report stated that parents and teachers should consider all options before making an informed decision based on the student's needs, rather than purely ideological considerations.

Such a position was consistent with some of the literature that was continuing to question how all students with disabilities could be included full-time in regular schools and classes. *The Education of Children with Disabilities and Specific Learning Difficulties - Recognising Special Needs in Education* (Shean, 1993) also recognised, however, that decisions regarding the school placement of children with disabilities were not being made simply on educational grounds. Rather, economic factors were also impacting strongly on policy.

The extent to which some social justice principles have been acted upon and enforced by governments will have been influenced by the economic situation that the State and the nation have been experiencing (Shean, 1993, p. 11).

The 'social justice principles' alluded to in *The Education of Children with Disabilities and Specific Learning Difficulties - Recognising Special Needs in Education* (Shean, 1993) were also recognised in the same year by the

formulation of a *Social Justice in Education* (Ministry of Education, 1993) policy document. This document included several references to students with disabilities. For example, it stated:

Provision for students with disabilities is one of the most rapidly evolving areas in education. Over the past forty years, there have been significant changes in attitudes and understandings about the nature of disabilities and the educational potential of students with disabilities.

Though the changes in educational provision have not been without controversy, there has been a steady move away from separate and segregated provision... Today, it is recognised that all students, regardless of their disabilities, are entitled to a quality education and can benefit from schooling.

It is also being recognised that students with disabilities should be educated alongside their peers. This principle was articulated in the *Beazley Report* (1984) and the Education Department policy *Changes to Services for Children in Need of Educational Support* (1984) (Ministry of Education, 1993, p. 2).

This document was later to strongly inform the CECWA's *Social Justice and Equity* (CECWA, 1994) document.

Elsewhere in Australia during the 1992 – 97 period, attitudinal changes with regard to the education of students with disabilities were reflected in the policy developments that continued to occur in the various states. In the Tasmanian public school sector, *Equity Policy* (Tasmanian Department of Education and the Arts, 1994) was released at the end of 1994, while in the Victorian Catholic sector, *Educational Provision for Students with Special Needs* (CECV, 1996) was released in 1996. Both of these documents stated that, to the fullest extent possible, students with disabilities had the right to be educated in the company of their peers in regular schools. Moreover, the documents stated that such children were also entitled to the provision of

both curriculum support and other support to ensure their needs were met, and that these services were to be in accordance with the principles and objectives of the relevant Commonwealth and State legislation (AASE, 1994; AASE 1997).

The South Australian Commission for Catholic Schools (SACCS) issued guidelines in 1994, entitled *Enrolment and Support Procedures for Students with Disabilities* (SACCS, 1994). The guidelines included the following statements:

Parents of children with disabilities can be assured that our schools will endeavour to provide educational services that are appropriate to the individual needs of their child ... The role of the Church is to support Catholic schools in the promotion of mutual relationships and partnership by preparing students to live and work in a world that increasingly values equality and solidarity among all people... (SACCS, 1994, p. 1)

Despite the encouraging rhetoric, however, the SACCS guidelines included a complicated procedure for parents wishing to enrol children with disabilities. The guidelines contained eight different stages and emphasised that resourcing constraints were a factor to be considered in the process. Unlike many other policies surfacing throughout the 1982 – 97 period, there was no acknowledgement in *Enrolment and Support Procedures for Students with Disabilities* (SACCS, 1994) that some form of inclusive education should be available for all students.

On the other hand, the report from a major study in New South Wales into the education of students with disabilities, carried out in 1996, comprehensively supported the inclusion of all students with disabilities into regular classrooms and schools. The report, *The Integration/Inclusion Feasibility Study* (McRae, 1996), contained thirty-nine recommendations, many of which were targeted at basic funding arrangements which had not been adjusted to accommodate and support the trend of more students with

disabilities being included in regular classrooms. The report concluded that “both law and policy clearly establish the right of students with disabilities to be placed in normalised education settings” (McRae, 1996, p. 97). The report also stated that current funding arrangements were considerable disincentives for regular schools to accept students with disabilities.

There was opposition to many of the recommendations of *The Integration/Inclusion Feasibility Study* (McRae, 1996). Most of the disagreement was based on the study’s conclusion of the suitability of inclusion for all students with disabilities. One newspaper report stated:

Academic literature from the U.S.A. is now emerging which convincingly demonstrates that the experience of so-called inclusion in that country has been based on ideological concerns and not on empirical evidence that it benefits students.

There can be no doubt that the adoption by the Government of N.S.W. of the key recommendations of the McRae Study would be a political decision designed to placate a small but vociferous lobby. It would not be an educational decision (Kenny, 1997, p. 14/15).

There were many other examples throughout Australia of groups opposing the idea of integrating students with disabilities into regular schools and classes at this time. For example, in summarising the debate, a representative from the Queensland Teachers Union argued as follows:

The refusal to admit that there are real practical problems associated with inclusion, or to contemplate any role for specialist facilities, or to recognise that there are possible positions other than total support or total opposition betray an essentialism tantamount to an almost religious fundamentalism in the position of some advocates of inclusion (McCallow, 1995, p. 3).

The teachers' union in W.A. also objected to the inclusion of more children with disabilities into regular classrooms. However, their objection was based on the belief that the inclusion of such children must be accompanied by a corresponding increase in resources (SSTUWA, 1995).

The union believed that the most critical recommendation of *The Education of Children with Disabilities and Specific Learning Difficulties - Recognising Special Needs in Education* (Shean, 1993) was the one that stated that the staffing formula for teachers and teaching assistants should be based not just on enrolments, but also on the degree of disability and support required. On this, the union stated:

Research indicates that children with severe disabilities can have their needs addressed more successfully in segregated classrooms. These alternatives need to be retained so that parents can ensure that their children's needs are met in the best possible way (SSTUWA, 1995, p. 2).

The conflict between the teachers' union and advocacy groups with diametrically opposed views on inclusion was first illustrated, and later heightened, by the increased media exposure on the issue. Many advocates of more inclusive schooling for children with disabilities were generally dissatisfied with what was occurring during the 1992 – 97 period, believing that despite the legislative changes, many education systems in Australia were slow to recognise the full educational rights of this student cohort. Their dissatisfaction was premised on the fact that while policy documents throughout Australia were almost uniformly unequivocal in their support for children with disabilities being educated in regular schools and classes, such practices were regularly frustrated at the school sites by arguments such as what constitutes “appropriate resourcing” (Slee, 1996).

Commenting on the situation in Victoria, Slee (1996) stated:



Eleven years after the publication of *Integration in Victorian Education: Report of the Ministerial Review of Education Services for the Disabled* (Ministry of Education, 1984) and three years following the enactment of the *Commonwealth Discrimination Act 1992*, there exists little evidence to feel sanguine about Australian schooling as a site for inclusive education (Slee, 1996, p. 102).

Not discouraged by what they perceived to be a lack of progress, many parents of children with disabilities continued to agitate for their children's placement at regular schools and classes during the period 1992 – 97. In 1995, in a widely publicised case in W.A., the Education Minister used Section 20 of the W.A. Education Act to ban a student with a disability from enrolling at his local public school. In the same year, Brisbane's *The Courier Mail* carried a series of news articles describing the suspension of a Year Two child due to her disability. The editorial (10/08/95), reflected the debate taking place on this issue in the Australian community:

There is a place in the general education system for children with a slight disability. As many of these youngsters as possible should be thus accommodated. But we must recognise that some cannot be: in their own interests as much as those of children whose schooling is disrupted by the unmeetable demands of a less fortunate classmate.

Several years later, in Victoria, further publicity on the issue of schooling and disability surfaced. In 1997, surgery for a brain tumour left a girl with injuries that impaired her short-term memory and her ability to walk and write. An application to the Victorian Department of Education to have her included in regular classes with extra support was denied, despite reports from many medical specialists supporting the request. The girl's death after her battle

with cancer galvanised parents of children with disabilities into action, with the father being quoted as saying: “Kids don’t get disabled on a timetable that fits in with budgets” (Wilkes, 1997).

These examples of parent advocacy in Queensland, W.A. and Victoria served to demonstrate that a key debate in ‘special education’ was taking place throughout the country. The debate centred on the importance of choice of educational placement and the provision of adequate support in regular schools for children with disabilities in times of economic constraint (Slee, 1996). The debate also highlighted that broad generalisations based on empirical data could not, by themselves, effectively gauge a child’s needs, and that all school systems needed to incorporate flexibility and empathy in their documents and practices (Wilkes, 1997). According to McCollow (1995), despite outward expressions of commitment to the principles of inclusion, active and passive resistance remained in the Australian educational community during the 1992 – 97 period, with the question of the adequate resourcing of schools being a perennial part of the debate. This is consistent with Ranson’s (1996) point made in an earlier chapter that a government, at an operational level of practice, can regulate policy by withdrawing or granting resources.

In 1994, a review of allocative mechanisms for Commonwealth equity funds for schools was commissioned. The report, *Schooling for Students with Disabilities*, (Ashenden & Milligan, 1994) found that:

Public purse strings have continued to tighten. Questions about the need for and use of scarce resources have been pressed harder. So far as educational expenditure is concerned, governments and others have asked whether schools have given enough attention to learning outcomes. Equity programs for schools are asked the further question: what difference, if any, do they make to the attainments of targeted students. The question underlying this examination of national allocative mechanisms is simply, are there ways of driving the

national dollar further (Ashenden & Milligan, 1994, p. 2).

The report emphasised that the Commonwealth's financial contribution had a significant impact on the quality of educational provision for students with disabilities. The report also noted that there were national patterns in the distribution of students with disabilities, one of which was that greater proportions of those with the more severe disabilities were found in government schools. Therefore, the inability of Catholic schools in W.A. to cater for many students with moderate - severe disabilities was being replicated in the Catholic education systems nationwide. The National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) believed that this was mainly due to a shortage of resources, stating that current Commonwealth funding levels did not reflect the increased pressures on schools to meet the current demand, let alone the increased demand for children with higher support needs (NCEC, 1994).

To address this issue, the NCEC made representations to the Commonwealth Government in each of the years 1993 – 95, seeking additional funding but its efforts were not successful and the overall allocation of Commonwealth funds to address equity in education did not significantly increase during the 1992 – 97 period (CEO, 1997). A Liberal – National Coalition Federal Government was elected in 1996 after thirteen successive years of Labor rule. Despite the change of government, by 1997 Australia was, in terms of education, continuing to reflect international moves taking place in many other OECD countries (Aspin & Chapman, 1994). These included an emphasis on decentralisation, attempts to make schools more financially and educationally accountable, and efforts being made to establish stronger links between vocational and school programs.

During this period, the Commonwealth continued to urge regular schools to enrol and include more students with disabilities into regular school settings

(ACER, 1994). Moreover, the willingness of parent groups to support the rights of children with disabilities was a common theme within the non-government schooling sectors throughout Australia. However, the Catholic school sector nationwide believed that it needed more financial support from the Commonwealth if this was to occur:

Commonwealth disability legislation and its counterparts at State level have created added pressure upon Catholic schools to provide for all students whose parents seek a Catholic setting.... The Commission's 1995 - 96 budget submission will again ask for increased assistance in the area of special education (NCEC, 1994, p. 16).

Further evidence of this argument was contained in the October 1995 edition of the *Review of the Australian Parents' Council (APC) (1995)*. The APC represented groups of parents with children attending non-government schools throughout Australia.

The aforementioned edition of the APC's quarterly bulletin contained a summary of the address to its 1995 conference by the APC President, Leo Dunne. Dunne believed that society had an obligation to provide schooling for all children and that governments should be providing the resources necessary to ensure that children with disabilities receive an education that would provide optimal opportunity to use their ability. Furthermore, he emphasised that:

The non-government school sector is endeavouring to cater for students with special needs, as far as that is possible. It is obviously an area that is of great concern to both government and non-government schools parents because of the need that exists and because of the high cost per student in this field... The Australian Parents Council urges the government to address this problem and the general shortage of funds in the equity area. Equity

and capital are both programs that earn the Commonwealth strong praise; however, they are currently slipping well behind the need that exists in the specific areas (APC, 1995, pp. 3 - 4).

As the struggle to extract more Commonwealth funds ensued, there was little financial relief to be gained from the state government in W.A. The election of the Court Coalition Government in W.A. in March 1993, was part of a nationwide movement that, by the end of 1997, had seen conservative governments elected to all mainland states with the exception of N.S.W. By the end of the period 1992 – 97, many associated with Catholic education believed that the current levels of government funding neither accurately nor adequately acknowledged the changing nature of ‘special education’ (160298; 070598; 250299). Moreover, from the interviews conducted for this study, there is ample evidence to suggest that the limited funding for children with disabilities in Catholic schools impacted on CECWA policy (181196; 201196; 251196). Furthermore, there was concern that while there were increased numbers of students with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools, the available funding for these students decreased in real terms (240796; 250796).

#### *CECWA Policy with Regard to Students with Disabilities*

This section of the chapter focuses on the *Students With Special Needs - The Enrolment and Integration of Students With Disabilities* (CECWA, 1992) policy document. However, an effective policy analysis necessitates a consideration of “both text and action, words and deeds ... what is enacted as well as what is intended” (Ball, 1994, p. 10). Therefore, the circumstances and environment of the CECWA and the CEO are also examined.

**Critique of the Students With Special Needs - The Enrolment  
and  
Integration of Students With Disabilities (CECWA, 1992)  
Document**

From evidence gathered in this study, it appears that there were a number of reasons for the re-writing of the CECWA's 'special education' policy. Nevertheless, it seems that the main factor was that the CECWA was receiving evidence to suggest that the process with regard to the enrolments of children with disabilities was varying substantially across the W.A. Catholic school sector. For example, at some schools the enrolment process was dominated by altruism but not always followed up by the provision of appropriate resources and personnel (240796). At other schools, it was difficult for any children with disabilities to gain access (250796).

As noted in the previous chapter, a new co-ordinator of 'special education', Maureen Thomson, was appointed at the CEO in mid-1990 (240796). The duty statement for the co-ordinator's position included the rewriting of *Special Education Policy* (CECWA, 1988). Thomson completed the task with some minor input from her fellow consultants and the new policy was passed with minor alterations at the March 1992 meeting of the CECWA (251196).

The nomenclature of *Students With Special Needs - The Enrolment and Integration of Students With Disabilities* (CECWA, 1992) differed greatly from its predecessor. While the new policy retained some elements of the *Special Education Policy* (CECWA, 1988), the structure and language clearly highlighted a different emphasis. To exemplify the growing awareness of the rights of people with disabilities, terms such as *inclusion*, *integration*, and *dignity* were used frequently in the 1992 policy, while descriptors such as *handicap* and *disabled individual* were omitted. An example of this inclusive language was as follows:

Schools are encouraged to foster positive attitudes towards and raise awareness of the needs and

attributes of those with impairments and disabilities or those who may be disadvantaged in other ways (CECWA, 1992, p. 2)

The new policy document was also underpinned by the principle of 'integration'. The policy opened with a rationale stating that:

The philosophy of integration, whenever and wherever practical and possible, is paramount and is in accordance with principles of normalisation, inclusion, equity and personalisation (CECWA, 1992, p. 1).

Later, it stated:

Principles of integration, inclusion, normalisation and personalisation should characterise educational provisions for students with special needs (CECWA, 1992, p. 1).

Language such as this reflected a cognisance in the 1992 document of the rights of people with disabilities which was much stronger than the preceding 1988 document.

Since the release of the *Special Education Policy* (CECWA, 1988) policy document, substantial legislation enforcing the rights of people with disabilities had been introduced in Australia. The proposed *Disability Discrimination Act* (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992) was phrased in such a way that once children with disabilities were accepted into a school, the school would find it very difficult to rescind its decision by arguing 'undeniable hardship' (Disability Discrimination Act, 1992) at some later time (240796). Therefore, the *Students with Special Needs - The Enrolment and Integration of Students with Disabilities* (CECWA, 1992) policy included the following guidelines:

Before enrolling a student with special needs the principal should establish the specific needs of the student, the level of support required and determine whether those needs can be adequately and effectively met by the school (CECWA, 1992, p. 3).

The *Students with Special Needs - The Enrolment and Integration of Students with Disabilities* (CECWA, 1992) document was very explicit in its directive to schools. The document stated that each Catholic school was expected to define and state clearly to its community its own policy statement with regard to students with disabilities. Such statements needed to be (CECWA, 1992, p. 2):

(1) congruent with and reflect the rationale, principles and procedures outlined in *Students with Special Needs - The Enrolment and Integration of Students with Disabilities* (CECWA, 1992)

(2) developed in accordance with advice from special education consultants from the Catholic Education Office

The document also stated:

School policy statements are context specific and as they have financial implications, the School Board needs to be involved in their development and review (CECWA, 1992, p. 2).

Throughout the policy document, there was clearly a constant struggle between the principles of equity, inclusion and de-categorisation on the one hand, and the practical aspects, such as funding and resources, on the other. The CECWA wanted the *Students with Special Needs - The Enrolment and Integration of Students with Disabilities* (CECWA, 1992) document to be a much more supportive, inclusive document than its 1988 counterpart (240796). However, the finished product contained certain safeguards that had existed in the *Special Education Policy* (CECWA, 1988) document and



which reflected Slee's (1993) concerns about an inappropriate emphasis on resources. For example, the policy document stated:

Integration of students with special needs into regular schools and classes should occur whenever possible and practicable, providing differential educational programs and appropriate resources are available to meet their special needs (CECWA, 1992, p. 1).

Again, it argued:

Catholic schools should make specific provision, whenever and wherever possible and practical, for the enrolment of students with disabilities. It is understood that the nature and extent of this provision will be determined by:

(i) specific individual need and the level of appropriate support required; and  
(ii) each school's capacity to meet these needs within the constraints of **State and Commonwealth government funding** as well as by the overall planning of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia for such students (CECWA, 1992, p. 2).

Later on, it stated:

Through their staffing arrangements, curricula provisions, capital development programs and resource allocations, Catholic schools will endeavour to provide a quality of education which best meets the needs of students with special needs within the practical realities of **State and Commonwealth government funding** levels (CECWA, 1992, p. 2).

By 1992, therefore, although access to W.A. Catholic schools by students with disabilities had improved a great deal since the early 1980s, there were

still restrictions in place that impacted upon these students. The following statement in particular emphasised the barriers:

For some students, the severity and complexity of their disabilities may mean that no suitable full time placement can be provided in Catholic schools (CECWA, 1992, p. 2).

The above statement was usually referring to those cases involving children with a severe or profound intellectual disability.

### *Circumstances Surrounding the CECWA Policy*

While Maureen Thomson continued to lead the 'special education' section of the CEO during the 1992 – 97 period, there was a change in the senior leadership position in the CEO at the beginning of 1993. Peter Tannock, Director of the CEO since 1985, resigned to take up the position of vice-chancellor at the *University of Notre Dame*, a Catholic private university located in Fremantle. Therese Temby was appointed the new CEO Director. It will be recalled from earlier chapters that although Temby's association with the 'special education' section had mainly been with regard to funding rather than policy, she was seen as being supportive of the enrolment of more children with disabilities into W.A. Catholic schools (060896; 240796; 180397).

By 1993, Maureen Thomson was responsible for the group of consultants, now numbering eight, who were expected to assist Catholic schools in implementing the new policy. Some of the 'special education' consultants were located regionally on school sites while others worked at offices at the CEO. Three of the consultants were based outside the metropolitan area, these being at the Diocesan offices in Bunbury, Geraldton and Broome. The 'special education' consultants also assisted schools in gaining access to funds and resources and in liaising with external service providers.

Earlier in this chapter, it was noted that other CECWA documentation is also helpful in identifying CECWA policy with regard to students with disabilities during the period 1992 – 97. Accordingly, it is worthwhile to briefly examine the *Student Enrolment* (CECWA, 1994a) document. In terms of each school's general enrolment policy, the document stated that students with disabilities were not be excluded solely on the basis of their disability. In fact, schools were asked to respond appropriately and ensure that the necessary resources and support mechanisms were provided.

The *Student Enrolment* (CECWA, 1994a) document also reflected the fact that full-time education for pre-primary children was now CECWA policy. In a response to the NCEC proposal for more Commonwealth funding, the CEO claimed that the introduction of full-time pre-primary schooling had led to a significant increase in the numbers of children with more disabling conditions in Catholic schools, particularly in the junior primary area (CEO, 1993). The reasons for this were twofold. First, the earlier entries to the school system meant that sometimes children were enrolled prior to a disability being fully diagnosed or, in some cases, even recognised as existing. Secondly, the vast majority of W.A. Catholic primary schools had begun to offer pre-primary classes by 1993, thereby strengthening the expectations of many parents that the Catholic education sector was offering the same options as existed in the public education system. Nevertheless, while most Catholic schools were enrolling children with disabilities, the lack of consistency throughout the Catholic school sector was a concern, with some W.A. Catholic schools still being unwilling to respond to the needs of this student cohort. Consequently, parent advocacy became an important influence during the 1992 – 97 period.

The formation and development of the group, Catholic Association for Special Education Support (CASES), as described in Chapters Six and Seven of this dissertation, strengthened with regular meetings from 1992 onwards. Many

families who attended CASES meetings argued that the references to 'enrolment' in *Students with Special Needs - The Enrolment and Integration of Students with Disabilities* (CECWA, 1992) should not be dependent on the availability of resources. Such families believed that the issues involved for families were wider and more complex than those of education alone (280597). Furthermore, they believed there to be a lack of acknowledgement and support within the Archdiocese and the Catholic community in general for the holistic needs of families that had children with disabilities.

To investigate these matters further, CASES allocated \$1 000 towards the cost of conducting a survey in 1994. CASES then approached Archbishop Hickey seeking his endorsement of the project. The Archbishop was very supportive and, as 1994 was designated as *International Year of the Family* (CASES, 1995), he commissioned CASES to conduct the survey as an initiative of the Archdiocese. A meeting was held with representatives of the CEO who provided minor assistance on the development of the survey and a steering committee comprising members of CASES was established to oversee the project.

In 1995, the results of the CASES survey, *Bringing Them Home* (CASES, 1995) were released amid a blaze of publicity. Widely reported in both the Catholic and public press was the finding that many parents were disillusioned and distraught with the way in which particular Catholic schools or CEO staff had treated them or their children. The survey found that in presenting their child with a disability for enrolment into a W.A. Catholic school, the experience of many parents had not been a positive one. Many parents claimed to have experienced partial or complete rejection. Others were given the impression that any assistance from the parish and school community was above and beyond what parents have a right to expect (280597).

Eleven recommendations emanated from *Bringing Them Home* (CASES, 1995), the most crucial of which were the first two;

Recommendation 1: That the Archdiocese of Perth begin to examine in detail its priorities and practices at all levels concerning children with special needs. This examination would include a complete review of the Catholic Education System.

Recommendation 2: That the Archdiocese and the Catholic Education Office in particular establish a process of discernment whereby the whole of the Catholic Education System will truly test its mission, programmes and practices in a spirit of faith and trust in God's promises (CASES, 1995, p. 14).

These and the other recommendations generated considerable discussion within the Catholic Church in general, as well as within all groups associated with the education of students with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools. While it had been expected by many that some criticism of current practices would occur, the severity and the overall negativity of the report angered many (240796). Of course, while the names of those being criticised were omitted from *Bringing Them Home* (CASES, 1995), it was clear that CASES believed that CEO personnel and Catholic school principals were two of the groups who had much to answer for as far as the perceived injustices were concerned.

At the 1995 September meeting of the CECWA's standing committee responsible for the 'Special Education' section, entitled the School Resources Committee (SRC), the CEO's co-ordinator, Maureen Thomson responded to the survey. She spoke of the current position of 'special education' within the Catholic system. She acknowledged that there had been considerable discussion in the media and this had led to some constructive discussion within Catholic education. Thomson indicated that changes in policy and philosophy in regard to children with disabilities, and provisions for such

students in regular school settings, had been dynamic throughout all sectors of education in Australia over the past five years.

Through the CEO, the standing committee requested that Thomson deliver to the Archbishop a written response from the CEO regarding the findings of *Bringing Them Home* (CASES, 1995). Thomson used her response to identify resourcing as a critical issue. While the CEO acknowledged that there had been unfortunate incidences where families attempting to enrol a child with a disability at a Catholic school had not been treated in a professional or considerate manner, the CEO's opinion was that in the present financial situation, Catholic schools simply could not provide educational support to all students with severe disabilities (240796).

The findings of *Bringing Them Home* (CASES, 1995) were that the overwhelming number of parents of children with disabilities were dissatisfied with the services and educational provision offered to their children. However, according to Thomson, this information was not consistent with the feedback regularly received by her consultants in their regular work with students with disabilities and their families. Thomson's conclusion was that a number of parents perceived the questionnaire to be directed only towards the identification of problems and difficulties, or the need for change. She believed that many parents who had not experienced any difficulties and who did not see a need for change felt that the survey was not pertinent to their particular situation and therefore did not complete the questionnaire or forward it to the group (Thomson, 1995).

Thomson also questioned the validity of some of the findings of *Bringing Them Home* (CASES, 1995). She expressed considerable concern with regard to the methodology and the associated conclusions of the survey. For example, she believed that the amount of information requested was excessive. Furthermore, she thought that the motives of the survey were

unclear and, therefore, the findings exaggerated the difficulties. Thomson's response to the Archbishop contained a further query regarding the historical nature of the data that was received in the survey. As no indication was given as to when or how long ago difficulties and problems had been experienced, she claimed that it was impossible to accurately identify current concerns or problems from the information presented in the report. In her opinion, the non-existence of a time limit resulted in the raising of some grievances that had occurred twenty years previously (Thomson, 1995).

There were further objections to the methodology. The CEO found the questions to be skewed more towards the negative rather than the positive, almost in expectation of a particular type of response. For example, Question 5 asked whether respondents had ever been unsuccessful in gaining placement for a child with a disability in a Catholic school in W.A., but were not asked whether they had been successful or whether placement had been easily gained in a Catholic school. Similarly, Question 6 focussed on problems experienced and did not balance this by querying details of pleasant experiences or instances where no problems were encountered. Thomson claimed that many families with children with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools did not perceive the questions on the survey to be personally relevant. Therefore, the number and type of responses received neither represented nor reflected an accurate account of needs or perceptions within the total Catholic community. This imbalance may, in Thomson's opinion, account in part for the following statement included in *Bringing Them Home* (CASES, 1995): "Examples of positive attitudes were few" (CASES, 1995, p. 11).

Thomson also made the point that while non-Catholic families made 26% of responses, the survey did not allow respondents to adequately explain the reasons for their rejection. For example, were the stated difficulties experienced due to the fact that schools have a commitment to provide for

Catholic children and that there were no available places in a specific grade in a particular school? She further queried the responsibility Catholic schools have for the education of non-Catholic children with a disability, particularly when the siblings attended other schools (Thomson, 1995).

By the end of the six-year period under discussion, namely 1992 - 97, documentation from the CEO indicated that there had been several major shifts in emphasis as far as CECWA policy with regard to students with disabilities was concerned. For example, developments in technology continued to influence policy. Technological development was the most significant reason for the large increase in the total number of enrolments of students with high support needs in Catholic schools in W.A. during this period (240796; 051196). Apart from the invention and development of laptop computers and appropriate software that assisted students with their academic work, technology also gave access to buildings and activities that had previously been inaccessible.

Further pressure was also placed on Catholic schools by the increased retention rates of students with disabilities at the post-compulsory level (CECWA, 1997). The emphasis on the importance of post-compulsory schooling was a characteristic of the Federal Government throughout the nineties (Dudley & Vidovich, 1995). This emphasis extended to students with disabilities. Consequently, instead of students finishing formal schooling at the end of Year 10 as they had done previously, they remained at school for Years 11 and 12. School-to-work transition became a part of every secondary school's curriculum. The retention of students with disabilities in these extra two years influenced CECWA policy by effecting a redistribution of resources (240796; 051196).

Shifts, such as those described above, were regularly discussed at CECWA meetings (251196) and the particular concerns brought to its attention were



noted. By 1997, the placement of children with a disability within Catholic schools in W.A. was established along set lines of procedure. A visiting teacher service assisted students with visual or hearing disabilities who were attending regular schools. If students had a physical disability only, schools would usually gain access to funding through a mixture of local funds and the *Special Education Capital Support Non-Government Element of the Program*, and modify or construct facilities to enable full participation. Students with mild - moderate intellectual disabilities were included in Catholic schools, most of which did not have 'special education' facilities, and so made use of part-time teaching assistants and/or volunteers to facilitate participation. Schools with 'special education' units used these to educate students with a mild - moderate intellectual disability, with inclusion of most students occurring for a proportion of each day. Although the enrolments of students with severe - profound intellectual and/or multiple disabilities were increasing, it was mainly students from these categories who could not become enrolled in W.A. Catholic schools (160298).

A decision by the CECWA to review all of its policies on a five-year cycle led to its decision in December 1997 to review all aspects of 'special education' in W.A. Catholic schools. The review was timely since CEO personnel were currently noting that the emphasis on the rights of all children to gain access to, and to be provided with an appropriate education in the least restrictive age-appropriate setting of parent choice was having a strong impact on the W.A. Catholic education system (CECWA, 1997). The CECWA stated:

The area of Special Education is dynamic and constantly evolving. All education sectors continue to experience difficulty responding to the impact of philosophical, societal, pedagogical and legislative change in regard to educational provisions for students with disabilities .... While the number of students with significant disabilities enrolled in Catholic schools (in W.A.) has tripled since 1990, there is an increased pressure from the Catholic

community for additional change (CECWA, 1997, pp. 1 – 2).

The CECWA noted that, accompanying the general increase in demand for students with disabilities in Catholic schools were higher expectations of the Catholic school system. It recognised a growing belief in the Catholic community in W.A. that Catholic schools should be enrolling and educating students with more severe degrees of disabling conditions and more intense support needs than those previously experienced and catered for. Furthermore, the CECWA believed that schools with 'special education' units should have a co-responsibility ethos, thus accepting responsibility for students with high support needs from other parishes (CECWA, 1997). Nevertheless, the amount of inclusion was a school-based decision and, consequently, the variation between schools was enormous. Most of the Catholic schools with 'special education' units practised part-time inclusion, with students spending the other part of the day in purpose-built support units with specialist teaching staff. The majority of Catholic schools, because of the small numbers involved, included students with disabilities almost fully in a normalised school program (CECWA, 1997a; 240796).

**The Emergence of a Commitment to the Education of**  
**Children with Disabilities Based on Catholic Philosophy**

The reader is reminded that, while remaining a relatively minor force, CECWA policy with regard to students with disabilities during the sixteen-year period was increasingly influenced by Catholic philosophy. During the six-year period 1992 - 97, a Catholic philosophical influence became more identifiable

within the CECWA policy with regard to students with disabilities. This influence was demonstrated in a number of ways that will now be considered.

A CECWA working party was formed in 1994 with a responsibility to develop a vision statement that would encourage Catholic school communities to raise the consciousness and practice of social justice and equity in their schools (251196). After wide consultation with school communities, a CECWA policy statement entitled *Social Justice and Equity in Catholic Schools* (CECWA, 1994) was ratified in August 1994. In part, the policy stated:

Each person in a Catholic school should have the opportunity to develop potential for which God has created them, regardless of variables such as race (including indigenous and non-indigenous people), ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender, physical and intellectual ability, or geographic location (CECWA, 1994, p. 2).

Later on, it stated:

The principle of human equality requires that human differences (for example those based upon age, race, physical abilities, intellectual and moral aptitudes and wealth) not only be recognised, but responded to with practices of generosity, kindness and the appropriate sharing of resources (CECWA, 1994, p. 2).

In releasing the policy, the CECWA asked all Catholic schools to become cognisant of social justice issues. There was a directive to schools to give special attention to policies relating to the disadvantaged. In particular:

This principle (of human equality) requires all those responsible for Catholic schools to ensure that... students with special needs be responded to within school communities with kindness and generously as far as school resources allow (CECWA, 1994, p. 3).

Furthermore, it stated that “schools were expected to measure the school’s progress by the extent to which the differences arising from variables such as physical and intellectual ability were minimised” (CECWA, 1994, p. 3).

Official Catholic documents during the 1992 – 97 period continued to emphasise the important role of the Catholic school in making provision for the poor and the marginalised. For example, a committee of the Australian Catholic Bishops issued an eight page Pastoral Letter to people with a disability and their families. In part it said:

It is not enough to affirm the rights of people with disabilities. We must actively work to realise these rights in the fabric of modern society. The Church faces an unceasing challenge to carry out the command of Christ to love our neighbours as ourselves ... If any disabled person is prevented from active participation within the Church, the Church community is incomplete (Australian Catholic Bishops [Committee for the Family and for Life], 1996, p. 7).

In terms of education, the letter was quite specific, stating that the Church must have ongoing concerns to ensure that inclusive education practices exist at both primary and secondary levels.

During the same period, a Vatican document, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997, n. 15) stated:

In its ecclesial dimension another characteristic of the Catholic school has its root: it is a school for all, with special attention to those who are weakest. In the past, the establishment of the majority of Catholic educational institutions has responded to the needs of the socially and economically disadvantaged.

This document gave support to some parent advocacy groups who were fighting for Catholic schools to enrol their child with a disability. It stated:

Parents have a particularly important part to play in the educating community, since it is them that primary and natural responsibility for their children's education belongs...The constant aim of the school, therefore, should be contact and dialogue with the pupils' families ... in order to clarify with their indispensable collaboration that personalised approach which is needed for an educational project to be efficacious (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997, n. 20).

In W.A., this emphasis on the rights of parents was expressed in various CECWA documents. The *Students with Special Needs - The Enrolment and Integration of Students with Disabilities* (CECWA, 1992) document spoke strongly of the obligations of a Catholic school. Schools were asked to promote the education of Catholic children with disabilities by "(1.1) enhancing the capacity of family, school, parish and community to respond to those needs" and to "(1.2) provide appropriate educational opportunities which acknowledge, respect and respond to the uniqueness of each individual student" (CECWA, 1992, p. 1). The document also stated unequivocally that:

The Church as a Christian community therefore has an obligation to assist parents with the education of their children. There is a special obligation when those children have an impairment or disability or suffer from some form of deprivation or disadvantage (CECWA, 1992, p. 1).

In W.A. also, the parent advocacy group, CASES, often used a Catholic viewpoint, such as that described above, to strengthen their argument for Catholic schools to accept greater numbers of children with disabilities.

CASES also acknowledged, however, that financial pressures on schools were, of necessity, a strong factor influencing the school's decisions with regard to the enrolment of students with disabilities, and that the solution to the problem lay with the wider Catholic Church:

There are still many parents who are unable to find places for their children with disabilities in Catholic schools.... At present it is not physically or financially possible to include all these children, but solutions must be found rapidly or we are not being true to our faith ... Perhaps the time has come to broaden this challenge beyond the Catholic school system to the whole Archdiocese, so that we all take responsibility for finding the money and the personnel to include these precious children into our schools without delay (Emmanuel, 1997, p. 3).

Although CASES conceded that steady progress had been made in the number of children with disabilities being enrolled into W.A. Catholic schools, the group believed that many parents were still feeling abandoned as they struggled to provide their children with a Catholic education (Emmanuel, 1997).

The active involvement of Dr Hickey, the Catholic Archbishop of Perth, was a further demonstration of the growing Catholic philosophical influence on CECWA policy during the period 1992 – 97. He was a strong supporter of CASES and his willingness to follow through the concerns of this advocacy group long after the media profile of *Bringing Them Home* (CASES, 1995) had diminished was notable (280597). The Archbishop's tangible support for CASES assisted in maintaining the vexed issue of children with disabilities high on the Church's agenda. He directly exerted pressure on the CECWA for the inclusion of greater numbers of students with disabilities into W.A. Catholic schools.

The Archbishop's response to the CASES report was a considered one. He stated that he had been happy to commission the report, even though he knew that it would probably be critical of the Archdiocese and the Catholic education system. In an article in the Archdiocesan newspaper, *The Record*, the Archbishop also acknowledged that:

Over the fourteen years since the International Year of Disabled Persons, the local Church has initiated a wide range of support services for disabled people and their families. The Catholic education system has worked hard to enable schools to accept individuals and groups of children with special needs. Resources of personnel and school facilities are costly, but despite the costs, mighty steps have been made to meet the requests of parents to accommodate their children (Hickey, 1995a, p. 3).

In the same edition of *The Record*, a most significant point was made when the Archbishop stated unequivocally that Catholic parents with a child with a disability "have every right to expect that the Church will love them, support them in every way, and find a place for them in our schools" (Hickey, 1995, p. 2). Later in the same article, he also stated that "in our education we must still search out for those in need, and the children with special needs must, therefore, have a great claim on our education system" (Hickey, 1995, p. 2).

The Archbishop consistently linked the inclusion of children with disabilities in Catholic schools with the Church's stance on abortion, that was itself occupying a strong media profile during 1997. As noted in the previous chapter, advances in medical technology enabled children born with a life-threatening disability, who would have previously died in the absence of serious medical intervention, to live longer. The technology, in combination with the Catholic Church's hard-line stance against abortion, meant that the number of Catholic children with high support needs increased. This, of course, placed more pressure on the Catholic school sector. Nevertheless,

during the 1992 – 97 period, the Archbishop of Perth emphasised the non-negotiable nature of the position of the Catholic Church on this matter:

We urge parents not to abort their children, even if they know in advance that they have a disability. We say that such children are precious in the sight of God and are of infinite value. If these parents reject the false values of the world around them, obey their faith and their conscience and give birth to these children, they have every right to expect that the Church will love them, support them in every way, and find a place for them in our schools (Hickey, 1995a, p. 8).

The Archbishop's strong views on the responsibility of Catholic schools to educate children with disabilities, as quoted above, were a strong indication that he expected the W.A. Catholic school system to do more in this area.

It seems that the same expectations were being raised in other Catholic school systems throughout Australia in the mid-1990s, with a number of Catholic educators questioning the Church's stance with regard to the education of children with disabilities. For example, the *Integration/Inclusion Feasibility Study* (McRae, 1996) had challenged Catholic schools in N.S.W. to examine their approaches to inclusive schooling for students with disabilities (Doherty, 1997). At a N.S.W. Catholic 'special education' conference in 1997, a senior administrator spoke of the concept of inclusion within the values of the Catholic Church.

Jesus challenged the conventions of the time. He went out of his way to include the disabled, the poor, and the marginalised because society excluded them.... The Catholic school's decision not to enrol a student with a disability (because of the disability) robs the whole faith community of an opportunity to put its values into practice (Doherty, 1997, p. 9).

A senior educator within the Catholic school sector in Queensland was echoing similar sentiments at around the same period:



To Catholics, the inclusion of people with disabilities is not just a question of rights or resources. Catholic schools are governed by justice as it was practised by Jesus Christ. They can't afford to justify their decisions by referring to Acts of parliament or government commissions. Catholic communities have to turn to the Holy Scriptures especially the Gospels and church documents to justify the decision they take regarding the enrolment of children with disabilities (Monaghan, 1997, p. 40).

In W.A, many agreed with sentiments such as those just described. Nevertheless, throughout the 1990s there was an emphasis on the rights of all children to be provided with an appropriate education in the least restrictive, age-appropriate setting of parent choice. This, in turn, had an impact on the Catholic education system, resulting in a ten-fold increase (from six to sixty) in the enrolment of students with more serious disabling conditions than in previous periods (CECWA, 1997). While the increased numbers of students with more serious disabilities being included into regular classes and schools was part of a worldwide trend (Chalmers, 1994; Mittler, 1995), the substantial increase of such students in W.A. Catholic schools was further evidence of the influence of a Catholic philosophy on CECWA policy.

### Conclusion

The central thesis of this dissertation is that CECWA policy formulation with regard to the education of students with disabilities in Catholic schools during the period 1982 - 1997 did not occur specifically as the result of Catholic educational theory. Rather, during the six year period 1992 – 97 that is the concern of this chapter, attitudinal changes in society towards people with disabilities continued to impact greatly (Cocks *et al.*, 1996) and remained the catalyst for the emergence of some major forces. It was these forces which, in the main, impacted on CECWA policy with regard to students with disabilities. Furthermore, although it remained a relatively minor force, there

is some evidence to suggest that the CECWA policy during this six-year period was more strongly influenced by a Catholic philosophy than it had been previously. Particularly significant in this regard was both the continuing pressure of the parents' group CASES, and the pressure exerted from the Catholic Archbishop for the inclusion of greater numbers of students with disabilities in W.A. Catholic school. One outcome was the ten-fold increase in the number of students with moderate – severe disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools.

Focusing on the six-year period 1992 - 97, this chapter illuminated the above argument in a number of ways. First, the broader contextual background with regard to changing attitudes in the wider society on the education of children with disabilities was outlined. Secondly, the specific CECWA policy with regard to the education of students with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools was analysed. This analysis focused on the policy document *Students With Special Needs - The Enrolment and Integration of Students With Disabilities* (CECWA, 1992). Finally, consideration was given to how the emergence of a particularly Catholic view on the education of children with disabilities continued to be a growing, but still minor influence on CECWA policy during the period 1992 - 97.

By 1997, the reality was that most Australian education systems were moving towards the placement of students with disabilities in regular classrooms (Carrington & Graham, 1997). This was a natural outcome of an international movement that emphasised normalisation for people with disabilities (Cocks *et al.*, 1996; Carrington & Graham, 1997). Although the debate between proponents of inclusive and segregated education continued worldwide, a push for more inclusive schooling was evidenced in Australia, with many people arguing that it was no longer acceptable for students with disabilities to be segregated within education settings (Chalmers, 1997). This was supported by a range of studies that had demonstrated that segregated

educational practices did not offer better results for either the students with disabilities or their peers. For example:

While there were some instances of the behaviour of integrated students having some negative impact on the educational opportunities of other students, it is not true of the majority of cases. Regular contact does appear to encourage other students and teachers to become more familiar with, accepting and tolerant of people with disabilities (ACER, 1994, p. 97).

In terms of Catholic education in W.A., the period 1992 – 97 resulted in significant changes to the way that provision was made for children with disabilities. Most students whose needs in the past would have been considered to have been best provided for in a 'special education' unit were, by the end of this period, being educated in regular classes with additional support provided.

## CHAPTER 9

### SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

#### Introduction

A series of significant attitudinal changes towards people with disabilities has taken place worldwide over the past three decades. These attitudinal changes have been part of the broader historical changes that originated in the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Since that time, de-institutionalisation and greater autonomy have become the norm for people with disabilities throughout the world. Consistent with these attitudinal changes has been a transformation in the way that students with disabilities are being educated.

In Australia during the same period, there has been an increasing interest in the education of children with disabilities. Throughout the states and territories, both government and non-government education sectors have undergone a regular examination of their policies with regard to this student cohort, particularly since the mid-1970s. Moreover, as Commonwealth government intervention has increased during this same period, the education of students with disabilities has also been scrutinised in the Federal arena.

Catholic schools, which make up the largest group of schools in the non-government sector within Australia, have also been reacting to society's attitudinal changes. The result has been a constant review of the 'special education' policies in each Catholic education system. In Western Australia (W.A.), the period 1982 – 97 has been particularly notable in this regard.

The aim of the study contained in this dissertation was to analyse the policy of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (CECWA) with regard to the education of students with disabilities during the period 1982 –

97. Chapter One of the dissertation consisted of an introduction to the study. Chapter Two, which focused on an examination of the pre-1982 W.A. contextual background, identified the policies pertaining to the education of students with disabilities in public schools. Chapter Three embodied a brief analysis of the development of Catholic education and an historical overview of Catholic philosophy with regard to people with disabilities. Chapter Four contained a review of the literature with regard to students with disabilities, while Chapter Five focused on the methodology used in the research.

Three chronological chapters then followed, each of which analysed CECWA policy with regard to the education of students with disabilities from 1982 - 97. During this time, there were three CECWA policy documents directly relating to this student cohort, namely *Pupil Enrolment Policy and Practice* (CECWA, 1983), *Special Education Policy* (CECWA, 1988) and *Students with Special Needs - The Enrolment and Integration of Students with Disabilities* (CECWA, 1992). Each of these documents constituted a focal point for engaging in an analysis of the policy of CECWA with regard to students with disabilities. Chapter Six reviewed the years 1982 - 86, Chapter Seven the years 1987 - 91, and Chapter Eight the years 1992 - 97.

This chapter, Chapter Nine, is concerned with summarising the study and discussing the implications of the findings. It is organised into five sections. First, a summary of the study is presented. Secondly, the findings of the study and recent developments are given. Thirdly, the research findings are examined in terms of their implications for relevant bodies of theoretical literature. Fourthly, the implications of the findings for further research are outlined. Finally, the implications of the findings for practice are considered.

### **Summary of the Study**

The aim of the study reported in this dissertation was to analyse the policy of the CECWA with regard to students with disabilities during the 1982 – 97 period. Although there has been a large amount of research since the 1960s on the education of children with disabilities, there have been few analyses of education policy in this area. It is not surprising, therefore, that there are even fewer studies relating specifically to an analysis of policy with regard to the education of students with disabilities in Catholic schools.

The study reported in this dissertation set out to make one contribution to remedying this situation. The research attempted to focus on how policy has changed and to develop an understanding of the reasons underpinning the changes. The study utilised the term *policy analysis* to reflect the active nature of the policy process. Ham & Hill's (1993) 'policy analysis framework' was utilised, as was Ranson's (1996) policy model which draws from a number of traditions to develop a comprehensive framework for conceptualising educational policy. Since the focus of the study is consistent with the concern that qualitative researchers have for 'meaning', namely the comparison between policy documents and policy in the empirical world, the study was also located within the general area of qualitative research.

Data gathering took place using two of the major approaches of qualitative researchers, namely document analysis and interviews. The document analysis focused mainly on the CECWA's significant policy documents of 1983, 1988 and 1992 relating to students with disabilities, although other data such as Catholic Education Office (CEO) reports, minutes of CECWA meetings, and unpublished correspondence were also used to discern CECWA policy. Semi-structured guiding questions were used during the interviews, which were conducted with a diverse group of people defined as having specific and relevant knowledge of the relevant policies, along with those who motivated, developed and implemented policy during the period in question.

The results of the two approaches to data gathering utilised, namely document analysis and semi-structured interviews, yielded an abundance of data that facilitated a comprehensive analysis of CECWA policy with regard to the education of students with disabilities. Procedures to ensure validity and reliability were also adopted throughout the study. Despite such safeguards, however, it is recognised that there are limitations to the study. In particular, it needs to be kept in mind that the results do not necessarily apply to all CECWA policy during the period. Similarly, the complex nature of policy formation, involving as it does so many factors and personalities, makes the accurate transferability of this study's findings to other Catholic sectors unlikely.

Nevertheless, it is possible that the findings of the study will have relevance for other settings and contexts. The study provides accurate and comprehensive data with implications for three areas, the first two of these being theory development and research. The third, policy development, is also significant as it allows one to reflect on and analyse how beliefs and values have influenced Catholic education and how they may continue to do so in the future. Each of these areas will be considered in greater detail later in this chapter.

### *Findings of the Study and Recent Developments*

#### *Findings*

The findings of the study can best be summarised by revisiting each of the three chapters that examined chronologically the development of CECWA policy with regard to the education of students with disabilities. Chapter Six focused on the years 1982 – 86. During this period, the increasing international and national awareness of the human rights of people with disabilities unleashed a series of inter-related and convoluted forces that, in

turn, resulted in changes to the CECWA policy with regard to students with disabilities. The United Nations decision to declare 1981 as the *Year of the Disabled Person* (Doenau, 1984) was also important. This decision recognized the enormous gains made by people with disabilities since the 1960s and also highlighted the discrimination against people with disabilities that was still occurring, thereby giving impetus to legislative developments. The Commonwealth and State legislation proclaimed during the five-year period was important in further alerting the Australian community to the rights of people with disabilities.

Therefore, CECWA policy with regard to students with disabilities had its foundations largely independent of Catholic educational philosophy during this five-year period. However, the CECWA policy was also influenced in part by an emerging Catholic philosophy on the education of people with disabilities. This Catholic influence was demonstrated in two main ways. First, the 1982 mandate from the W.A. Bishops to the CECWA asked Catholic schools to collectively take responsibility for Catholic students with disabilities. Secondly, the Catholic ethos of many Catholic schools was in evidence through the enrolment and inclusion of students with disabilities into regular Catholic schools, some time before the same practice occurred in most regular state schools. By the end of the 1982 – 86 period in W.A., the inclusion of students with mild disabilities into regular Catholic schools was becoming a more common practice. Moreover, the CECWA was also making increased attempts to provide adequate and appropriate support for students with moderate disabilities in the Perth metropolitan area, principally by the provision of 'special education' units.

Chapter Seven of this dissertation focused on the period 1987 – 91. The attitudinal changes in Australian society with regard to the normalisation and de-institutionalisation of people with disabilities continued to develop during this period. These attitudinal changes continued to be the catalyst for the



development of some major forces that impacted on the CECWA policy with regard to the education of students with disabilities. These forces, particularly legislation, emerged largely independent of, but were not contrary to, Catholic educational philosophy. Their influence was reflected in the significant increase in students with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools. In terms of such students, the CECWA policy document developed during this time was *Special Education Policy* (CECWA, 1988).

Also, Catholic philosophy did influence CECWA policy with regard to students with disabilities to a greater degree during 1987 – 91, than it had previously. This found expression in the insistence of the W.A. bishops that the position of the Church needed to be more strongly emphasised in the *Special Education Policy* (CECWA, 1988) document. A further example was provided in the regular encouragement from the CECWA to Catholic schools to make special provision for children with disabilities, and also in the CECWA's legitimation of policy by Catholic theology.

Chapter Eight of this dissertation focused on the years 1992 – 97. The CECWA policy document developed during this period with regard to students with disabilities was *Students With Special Needs - The Enrolment and Integration of Students With Disabilities* (CECWA, 1992). During this time, the CECWA policy with regard to students with disabilities continued to be strongly influenced by factors separate to, but not incompatible with, Catholic educational philosophy. The attitudinal changes in society towards people with disabilities that were characteristic of the previous two periods continued to be the catalyst for the continuation of some major forces between 1992 and 1997. It was these forces which, in the main, impacted on CECWA policy with regard to students with disabilities. Government policy, particularly in the area of funding, continued to be a strong influence on CECWA policy. So too was legislation. The proclamation of the Commonwealth's *Disability Discrimination Act* (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992) also impacted on the

CECWA policy document which, in turn, was used to define the enrolment policies of Catholic schools.

However, the CECWA policy with regard to students with disabilities during the 1992 – 97 period was also influenced more than before by Catholic education philosophy. This manifested itself in pressure from the Catholic Archbishop for the inclusion of greater numbers of students with disabilities into W.A. Catholic schools. There was also a stronger push from the CEO for more schools to enrol students with disabilities, an increasingly greater number of whom had more serious disabling conditions than in previous periods. A specific Catholic influence was also identifiable through the influence of the parent advocacy group, CASES, which enjoyed the support of the Archbishop of Perth and used Vatican pronouncements, official Catholic documents and Church teachings to sustain pressure on the CECWA.

Regarding the three sub-periods within the overall period considered, namely 1982 – 1997, a central thesis can be put forward based upon the findings of the study. The thesis was formulated through focusing throughout the study on the four different aspects of policy analysis, described and illustrated in Chapter Five. In order to describe the genesis and development of policy, there was a focus on *content*. The study also included an emphasis on *process*. This enabled the various influences on policy to be uncovered (Hill, 1997). There was, furthermore, a concentration on *outputs* which acknowledged policies as being dependent variables in terms of economic and other factors. Finally, so as to analyse the impact the policy documents had on W.A. Catholic schools, the study contained an *evaluation* element (Hogwood & Gunn, 1981; Hill, 1997).

The central thesis of this study, then, is that during the 1982 – 97 period, the CECWA policy with regard to students with disabilities, to a large extent, developed in a mood and manner compatible with the changes taking place in

the wider society. Nevertheless, as the sixteen-year period progressed, CECWA policy became increasingly legitimated by Catholic theology and associated theory as expressed in official Catholic Church documents. This thesis requires further expansion.

Earlier in the dissertation, it was noted that, with few exceptions, the Christian churches for the two millenia of the Christian era were not always inclusive of people with disabilities. Even when Church attitudes have been humane, the themes of benevolence and pity, rather than equality and social justice, have been the driving forces for change (Eisland, 1994). The emergence of the worldwide disability rights movement in the latter half of this century was the result of many factors, none of which were expressly associated with official Church institutions.

The disability rights movement, originating in the U.S.A. and the U.K., began to galvanise support in Australian society in the 1970s and transform peoples' attitudes with regard to the rights of minority groups, including people with disabilities. The United Nations declaration of 1981 as the *Year of the Disabled Person* (Doenau, 1984) provided further impetus. The changing attitudes in the wider society impacted on the Catholic Church and its institutions and, as a result, parents of children with disabilities began to have certain expectations, such as their child's inclusion into the full life of the local Catholic parish.

As the institution entrusted with the Church's mission in the field of education, Catholic schools were soon made aware of the changing attitudes in Australia with regard to students with disabilities. Prior to the 1980s, it was the public education system in Australia that fulfilled the task of educating most of this student cohort. However, local Catholic schools were now increasingly expected to facilitate the enrolment and education of all Catholic children, regardless of the nature of any disability.

In W.A., the pressures exerted on Catholic schools were similar to those elsewhere in Australia and the policy of the CECWA with regard to students with disabilities underwent great change. However, during the period 1982 – 97, these changes coincided for the most part with the attitudinal changes taking place in the wider society. In other words, the Catholic Church was not taking the lead in these changes but was, in fact, being carried along by them. This occurred primarily because the worldwide affirmation of the rights of people with disabilities was a movement compatible with Catholic thinking. The movement, in turn, gradually awakened the Church to its responsibilities in this area.

The study has highlighted a marked increase in official Church pronouncements over the sixteen-year period, supporting the rights of people with disabilities to be included in the wider society. Moreover, in terms of students with disabilities in W.A., both the official Catholic Church and the CECWA consistently made use of Catholic theology to support the inclusion of these students in Catholic schools. As a result, a growing Catholic educational philosophy became a more significant, albeit still minor, influence on CECWA policy with regard to students with disabilities as the 1982 – 97 period progressed.

### *Recent Developments*

A focus on developments since 1997 contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the study contained in this dissertation. At the beginning of 1999, approximately 1 500 students with a range of disabilities were enrolled in 133 W.A. Catholic schools, with almost 75 per cent of these enrolled in regular classes. The remaining students were enrolled in 26 'special education' units located on Catholic school sites in the metropolitan area. Although the units were, in the main segregated classes, the education of such students was complemented by their part-time placement in regular

classes. Furthermore, there were two 'special education' units established at Catholic schools in the Perth metropolitan area for students with moderate - severe disabilities. Another forty students with severe – profound disabilities, many of whom are totally adult dependent, were enrolled in W.A. Catholic schools throughout the state (CEO, 1999).

It was mentioned in the previous chapter that a decision by the CECWA to review all of its policies every five years led to a review of the CECWA's 'special education' policy in 1997. Consistent with the CECWA guidelines, the appropriate standing committee was responsible for ensuring that consultation was undertaken with principals' associations and other relevant groups. This led to the release of a draft policy, *Students with Special Needs in Catholic Schools* (CECWA, 1998) which was released for comment in November 1998. Unlike the 1988 and 1992 CECWA documents relating specifically to students with disabilities, the draft policy included an appendix with definitions of terms such as 'special needs', 'disability', and 'learning difficulty'.

The draft policy recognised that the Catholic school system in W.A. was increasingly being expected to take responsibility for every Catholic child's educational needs, regardless of the nature of any disability. Reflecting this, *Students with Special Needs in Catholic Schools* (CECWA, 1998) included the following statement (p. 1): "A significant challenge for the Catholic education system is to include an increasing number of students with special learning needs and disabilities". A stronger emphasis on Catholic philosophy was also evident in the policy's rationale (CECWA, 1998, p. 1):

The philosophy and practice of purposeful inclusion in an age-appropriate, most educationally enhancing setting is paramount in accordance with the Gospel values of respect and equity and the social justice teachings of the Church.

The influence of Catholic philosophy regarding disability on the CECWA policy was also identifiable in the Archbishop's continued commitment to the inclusion of all Catholic students with disabilities into W.A. Catholic schools. In a pastoral letter entitled *The Case for Life*, the Archbishop stated:

People with disabilities have at long last achieved dignity in our community as their rights to education, work, accommodation, and other social supports are acknowledged.... After these children are born, we must also follow through and include them fully into our community. It would be grossly inconsistent of us to urge parents to bring their children into the world if they then find that our parishes and our schools are closed to them (Hickey, 1998, p. 3).

The Archbishop argued that the full inclusion of children with disabilities in W.A. parishes and schools was an urgent issue that needed to be addressed immediately. On the same issue a year later, he elaborated as follows:

It must, therefore, be a matter of policy that Catholic children with disabilities be accepted within the system of Catholic schools at the request of their parents. While problems exist with regard to the availability of finance and trained personnel, especially in regard to high-level disability, a clear policy of inclusion will help to overcome the resource difficulties...

It is very pleasing to see the policy of integration already operating in Catholic schools with well over one thousand children with disabilities happily enrolled, many of them in special units. The decision of the Catholic education authorities to establish two units for high level disability is also very welcome... (Hickey, 1999, pp. 4 – 5)

The Archbishop also stated that Catholic schools should make every effort to accept children with disabilities, and “lead the way in support of those that society marginalises” (Hickey, 1999, p. 6).

Despite the CECWA's firm directions to schools in the *Students with Special Needs in Catholic Schools* (CECWA, 1998) document and the Archbishop's

strong advocacy, however, there remained some disagreements, particularly from the parent group, CASES, who believed that references to 'enrolment procedures' in the document implied a 'dual' enrolment policy. By this, they were objecting to the fact that 'regular' students underwent certain procedures to become enrolled in a Catholic school, but students with disabilities were expected to undertake a far more rigorous enrolment process. The irony of this debate was that the 'dual enrolment' policy was introduced initially to assist schools to enrol greater numbers of students with disabilities and was a demonstration of the CECWA's commitment in this regard (050896; 191196). At the time of writing, issues such as these have not been resolved and, consequently, the draft policy has not been ratified by the CECWA.

### **Implications for Relevant Bodies of Theoretical Literature**

The policy models of Ham and Hill (1993) and Ranson (1996) provided a focus for the study and, in turn, provided a justification for the use of these policy models in future studies. The outcomes of the study demonstrate the appropriateness of these models. For example, they accommodate a notion of policy formulation as a complex and political process that may involve different stages. The study has also demonstrated the value of these models in so far as they accommodate a view that policy documents, while useful in understanding process, are only one part of the policy-making process. Moreover, the study substantiates the notion that the policy process is not always linear, may have "a succession of feedback loops" (Ham and Hill, 1993, p. 24) and often begins at some indeterminate time in history.

The study also made a small contribution to the newly emerging body of policy literature with regard to the education of children with disabilities. Through its historical focus, the study has highlighted the considerable strength of the worldwide trend with regard to the normalisation and de-institutionalisation of people with disabilities in the Western world since the

1960s. There is now overwhelming agreement from many groups in the community that people with disabilities should have the opportunity to fully participate in society and to be recognised for their contribution.

When applied to education, the philosophy of normalisation translates into greater numbers of students with disabilities gradually being included into regular education. The current remaining segregated 'special education' facilities may remain as an option, but it seems inevitable that inclusive education will become the norm rather than the exception. This is particularly so when governments have continually demonstrated a willingness to support the rights of people with disabilities through legislation.

Within Australia, current legislation does not make any judgement as to whether segregated or inclusive education settings are more effective. The *Disability Discrimination Act* (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992) allows many parents to prefer segregated education, so long as it is intended to benefit the child and does not infringe on the child's human rights (Hastings, 1997). However, most educationalists believe that the inclusive schooling trends evident in Australia since the 1970s will continue (Giorcelli, 1995; Hastings, 1997). For example:

Even if schools and administrators are not convinced by the ethical arguments or empirical evidence in its (inclusive education) favour, it seems likely that they will have to respond to an increasingly anti-discriminatory legislative environment backed by vigorous rights movements across the world (Thomas, 1997, p. 106)

Throughout the present study, the strength of the inclusive schooling movement has been highlighted. It appears that the combined realities of parent advocacy, legislation and an inclusive school philosophy will make it very difficult for schools in the future to refuse the enrolment of a child on the basis of a disability.



Implications for an emerging body of literature on the development of Catholic education policy formulation in W.A. can also be drawn from the study. Since its formation in 1971, the CECWA has tried to make a distinction between statewide Catholic policy and local Catholic school policy. In the *Mandate and Terms of Reference* (Catholic Bishops of W.A., 1993), it is stated that:

....we outline the following principles. The first is the principle of participation and co-responsibility which requires that all within school communities (according to their level of competence) should be involved from the start in decisions that affect them. The second is the principle of subsidiarity which states that nothing should be done by a higher authority, agency or level that could be done as well, or better, by a lower one (Catholic Bishops of W.A., 1993, p. 10).

In terms of policy relating to the education of children with disabilities, the findings of the study indicate that in adhering to these two principles, the CECWA has struck a reasonable balance. Throughout the period 1982 – 97, the CECWA affirmed the local school community as usually being best placed to make decisions with regard to the implementation of policy. An example of this was the local decision-making taking place about the locating of 'special education' units, particularly during the 1982 – 86 period. At other times, however, the CECWA has asserted its power in reminding schools of their co-responsibility status in the Catholic sector and insisting that policy be more strictly followed.

Finally, the study contributes to an emerging body of literature relating to Catholic education policy with regard to students with disabilities in Australia, and in particular, W.A. It is likely that the inclusion of children with disabilities into regular schools and classrooms will increase in the Catholic school sector. Inclusive educational practices are consistent with an ethos of Catholic education that values the difference in each child and is reflective of a liberal political system and a pluralistic culture (Thomas, 1997). As the period of this study unfolded, policy documents and practices in W.A. Catholic

schools reflected a greater willingness to include children with a mild intellectual disability, a sensory impairment, or a physical disability into regular schools and classes. Moreover, by 1999, increasing numbers of children with 'high support' needs were also enrolled in Catholic schools in W.A.

### *Implications for Further Research*

This section of the dissertation focuses on how the findings of the study have implications for further research. The focus once again is on the four areas already referred to in the previous section.

The application of Ham and Hill's (1993) and Ranson's (1996) policy models in this dissertation was extremely useful. However, it would be beneficial to test their efficacy for studies of this type in the public education sector. While the fluidity, connectivity, and shared values incorporated into these models were appropriate in studying the Catholic education sector, it would be interesting to investigate whether they are equally relevant for a study of a much larger, more structured education system.

There are also implications for further research in the whole area concerned with 'students with disabilities'. This study illustrates the fact that the topic of 'special education' has been demystified. The increasing numbers of students with disabilities being included in regular classes has assisted many teachers and principals in recognising that the conditions underlying an effective education for students with disabilities are very similar to those applying to all students (Giorcelli, 1995; Kauffman & Hallahan, 1995). This is not to minimise, however, the importance of developing a wide range of mandatory support mechanisms that must exist for successful inclusive education for all children with disabilities to take place. These support mechanisms should include trained personnel, appropriate physical and

curriculum resources, positive attitudes from school leaders, and teamwork between staff and parents. Consequently, there are opportunities for further research on the most appropriate approaches to take regarding these areas.

A third area for further research is that of Catholic education policy. This study has not only described the development of CECWA policy with regard to students with disabilities over a sixteen-year period, but has also developed a perspective for viewing and analysing the context of Catholic education in W.A. This, in turn, suggests opportunities for further research into other areas of Catholic education. In other words, this study has found that in terms of students with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools, attitudinal shifts in the wider society were the main influence on CECWA policy. However, one can ask if, in other areas of education, is Catholic education reacting to changes taking place in other educational sectors and the wider society? Or, one might ask, is it a genuine partner in dialogue regarding some of the important issues such as curriculum or early childhood education that are currently concerning educationalists in W.A. society? Further research focusing on these issues would be very useful to the Catholic school sector in W.A.

The fourth area for which there are implications for further research is the CECWA policy with regard to students with disabilities. When 'special education' units in the W.A. Catholic system were originally established, they catered predominantly for students with mild to moderate levels of disability, and primarily intellectual disability. Students with a 'borderline' level of intellectual disability were also often included as 'special education' students. This practice was consistent with the philosophy and practice at the time when it was generally accepted that students with high support needs were better catered for in more specialised and segregated settings (Thomson, 1997). However, the educational needs of many students with disabilities now enrolled in W.A. Catholic schools are more complex and resource

intensive than those previously experienced. In this regard, it would be useful to know how in other Australian states and territories, Catholic education authorities and schools deal with these issues. Research of this topic conducted throughout Australia would enable effective comparisons and contrasts to be made with the present W.A. situation.

### *Implications for Practice*

Considerations thus far have centred on the implications of the research findings for the development of theory and further research. However, it has been stated from the outset of this dissertation that an effective analysis of policy must take into account both the policy documents and the way that the policy is exercised. In adopting such a perspective, this study illuminated some implications for better practice in W.A. Catholic schools. These implications will be now considered in terms of five specific and significant areas of Catholic education in W.A.: aims, policy, curriculum and pedagogy, organisation and administration, teacher education.

### *Aims of Catholic Education in W.A.*

The first area for which the findings of the study have implications for practice is with regard to the overall aims of Catholic education in W.A. It has been noted throughout this dissertation that changing philosophy and policy has resulted in significant changes to the way Catholic education authorities make provision for students with disabilities. Many students whose needs in the past would have been considered to be best provided for by segregated 'special education' settings are now educated in regular same-age classes with various types of additional support provided.

It is now accepted by many throughout Australia that Catholic schools, set up in the last century to educate Catholic children in a way consistent with broad Catholic theological and moral principles have a right to government

funding. However, with this right comes a concurrent responsibility to provide education for the full range of Catholic children. Catholic schools claim to be compassionate, humane institutions in which there is a concern for social justice (O'Donoghue, 1997). It would, therefore, be unjust if Catholic schools excluded students with disabilities.

Furthermore, the position of the Church, in keeping with the thrust of Vatican 11, is that Catholic education is part of public education, not an enclave (Pascoe, 1994). The provision of education for children with a full range of disabilities should, therefore, be an essential component of the Catholic school systems throughout Australia. Since the guiding principles built into the operation of Catholic schools are being proposed as ones that could underpin the successful restructuring of public school systems throughout Australia (Beare, 1994), there is an opportunity for Catholic schools to take a leadership role on this very topical issue.

### Policy

The findings of the study in this dissertation have implications for the development and formulation of CECWA policy. In terms of the policy documents examined, the CECWA undertook a study into the timing and method of its 'policy review' in 1996. Consequently, there is now a process involving the review of each CECWA policy on a five-year cycle. Notwithstanding this, the findings of this study do point to the need for a strong CECWA role in relation to schools which are reluctant to enrol students with disabilities.

Australia has been following directions in the U.S.A. and U.K. with regard to 'freeing up' the education market (Slee, 1999) and this has implications for the education of students with disabilities. Proponents of the push for greater parental choice of schools and more autonomy at the local level believe that this will result in a wide variety of schools, with parents choosing the one that

best suits their child's needs and abilities. The growing numbers of students being educated in non-government schools throughout Australia and increased funding from both Federal and State sources for such schools, reflects the fact that this is not incompatible with the government's wishes. However, some observers such as Gerwitz, Ball and Bowe (1995) and Slee (1999) have noted that such developments in fact limit parental choice of schools. They do this because, in an effort to be seen to be successful, schools have used enrolment policies which have tended to favour the higher achieving students. When this occurs, there is a possibility that the needs of minority groups, such as students with disabilities, will be overlooked.

Throughout this study, it has been regularly noted that the trend of greater numbers of students with disabilities being enrolled in regular schools will continue into the foreseeable future. Moreover, the number of such students being included full-time in regular classes with some support in the form of non-teaching staff, is also expected to increase. In turn, the level of disability of the students in the 'special education' units is likely to be higher. Therefore, notwithstanding the point made throughout the dissertation about some schools using the 'lack of resources' as a barrier to enrol students with disabilities, there is a need for schools to be given more financial assistance. At present, the amount is inadequate, with most of the funding coming from the Commonwealth government. However, the Commonwealth has consistently stated that its contribution towards the education of children with disabilities is supplementary only. Therefore, if the Church rhetoric with regard to the importance of including all Catholic children with disabilities into Catholic schools is to become a reality, further financial commitment from the system is required. The CECWA has an important role to play in convincing schools of the importance of their co-responsibility on this issue. Further lobbying of the State Government, who at present contribute only a minimal amount that is specifically aimed at assisting schools with the education of children with disabilities, is also required.

### Curriculum and Pedagogy

The third area for which the findings of the study have implications for practice is curriculum and pedagogy. The increasing number of students with disabilities being educated in W.A. Catholic schools has implications for the way that teachers deliver curriculum and assess learning. However, there are great varieties in the ways in which the enrolment and education of children with disabilities is organised and carried out (Forlin, 1997).

The development in the past decade throughout Australia of outcomes-based curricula has moved the focus towards the things that all students can accomplish rather than what they cannot do. In terms of students with disabilities, this has been an important change that has ramifications for curriculum and pedagogy and the whole administration and organisation of schools.

The recent introduction of a curriculum framework in W.A. should prove helpful since it requires the teacher to focus less on 'input' and more on identifying, and teaching towards, the appropriate outcomes for each student (Peterson, 1996). The curriculum framework has less emphasis on syllabi and, therefore, requires teachers to be less uniform in their instruction and student assessment. Such a creative approach is suitable for enhancing the education of students with disabilities. In order to ensure that the curriculum framework is inclusive of all students, a 'foundation' level for students with severe – profound intellectual disabilities has been included.

### Organisation and Administration

The fourth area for which the findings of the present study have practical implications is in relation to the organisation and administration of schools. In particular, the findings relating to the increasing influence of Catholic philosophy is instructive for principals and other school administrators who

have responsibility for managing the enrolments of students with disabilities. The Christian ethos of the Catholic school must be seen to be of paramount importance and, consistent with this, each school should be enrolling students with disabilities. At present, about 85 per cent of W.A. Catholic schools do so.

The findings of this study demonstrate that principals' attitudes have implications for the enrolment of children with disabilities. Early on, it demonstrated that principals with positive attitudes towards this student cohort 'led the way' in enrolling and educating these students even before such attitudes became common. This is consistent with the findings of recent research, including that of Chalmers (1994), Rietveld (1994) and Bailey and du Plessis (1998), whose studies all concluded that principals' attitudes were a critical factor for the successful inclusion of children with disabilities into regular schools and classes. With the government push for greater competition between schools, principals must be prepared to argue passionately that students with disabilities add a unique dimension to a Catholic school.

The increasing numbers of students with disabilities being included into regular schools and classes also has implications for the organisation of schools. In Chapter Four, the literature regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities was examined. This demonstrated that the normalisation and de-categorisation of people with disabilities is being increasingly practised in education. However, there is considerable disagreement worldwide about the benefits of full inclusion for all students.

The principle of inclusion appears to have been adopted throughout Australia as the preferred educational practice. However, Giorcelli (1995) contends that inclusive practices alone will not create substantial change in



schools. She believes that change is required in some of the existing attitudes that sustain a pedagogy of alienation.

This study has demonstrated that there is little, if any, support for full inclusion for all students, particularly in the secondary school sector. All of the interviewees recognised that the regional 'special education' units, established to provide a part-time, specialised teaching environment to complement the child's participation in a regular class, have served the Catholic schools in W.A. well. Even the strongest supporters of change with regard to CECWA policy, namely CASES, the parent advocacy group, do not have 'full inclusion for all students' as policy. Rather, CASES believes that all Catholic children should be included in Catholic schools and have the opportunity to participate as fully as they are able.

The position of the CEO is that most students with disabilities can be educated with assistance in regular schools and classes. However, for some students, the nature and severity of the disability is such that educational attainment in regular classes, even with the use of supplementary aids and services, is difficult to achieve (Thomson, 1997). Current thinking is, therefore, that for some children, part-time placement in a segregated class located on the campus of a regular school might be the most appropriate option. Hence, the recent establishment of the two 'high support needs' units. However, further thought is required on the issue of how best to cater for students with moderate, severe or profound needs in W.A. Catholic schools throughout the State.

### Teacher Education

The final area for which the findings of the study have implications for practice is teacher education, particularly since the number of students with disabilities being enrolled in W.A. Catholic schools is increasing. Moreover, the number of such students with high support needs is also increasing. Therefore, pre-

service education for teachers preparing to teach in Catholic schools must include the teaching of classroom management strategies that ensure that the individual needs of all students are met. This is also appropriate for in-service training where the philosophy of the education of children with disabilities should be posited in a religious context. Teachers in Catholic schools must understand that the education of students with disabilities is a non-negotiable aspect of Catholic schooling.

### Conclusion

The findings of this study provided insight into the reasons for the CECWA policy changes with regard to students with disabilities over a recent sixteen-year period. It is a contribution to the literature on the process of 'policy analysis' and in particular to that specific area of literature concerned with the education of children with disabilities in Catholic schools. The study has implications for the development of theory, for further research and for practice. However, the findings might also serve as a useful tool to be used by teachers and by system and school administrators to reflect on their own experiences. Moreover, since Catholic philosophy supports the normalisation of people with disabilities into society, it is the hope of the present author that the study goes some way towards providing new understandings, meanings and insights into how students with disabilities can be more effectively included in Catholic schools.

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## *LIST OF INTERVIEWS*

Apart from the interviewees identified within the study, the population for the study involved twenty personnel who have occupied key positions with regard to the education of students with disabilities in W.A. Catholic schools. These are listed and categorised as follows:

| <u>NO.</u> | <u>INTERVIEWEE CATEGORY</u>                 | <u>DATE</u> |
|------------|---|-------------|
| 1.         | W.A. Education Department Principal         | 15/06/96    |
| 2.         | CEO Special Education Consultant            | 20/06/96    |
|            | " " " (2 <sup>nd</sup> interview)           | 30/07/96    |
| 3.         | CEO Personnel                               | 11/07/96    |
| 4.         | CEO Special Education Consultant            | 24/07/96    |
| 5.         | CEO Special Education Consultant            | 25/07/96    |
| 6.         | CEO Special Education Consultant            | 06/08/96    |
| 7.         | Catholic Primary School Principal           | 31/10/96    |
| 8.         | CEO Special Education Consultant            | 05/11/96    |
| 9.         | Catholic Secondary School Principal         | 13/11/96    |
| 10.        | Catholic Secondary School Principal         | 18/11/96    |
| 11.        | Catholic Secondary School Principal         | 19/11/96    |
| 12.        | CEO Deputy Director                         | 20/11/96    |
| 13.        | Catholic Secondary School Principal         | 21/11/96    |
| 14.        | CEO Deputy Director                         | 25/11/96    |
| 15.        | CEO Personnel                               | 26/11/96    |
| 16.        | CEO Director                                | 04/12/96    |
| 17.        | Parent of a Student with a Disability       | 25/02/97    |
| 18.        | CSJC Project Officer                        | 13/03/97    |
| 19.        | CEO Special Education Consultant            | 18/03/97    |
| 20.        | Special Education Teacher (Catholic School) | 23/03/97    |
| 21.        | Parent of a Student with a Disability       | 19/03/97    |
| 22.        | CASES Representative                        | 28/05/97    |
| 23.        | Catholic Archbishop of Perth                | 16/02/98    |

|     |                                      |          |
|-----|--------------------------------------|----------|
| 24. | Non-Government Agency Representative | 07/05/98 |
| 25. | Catholic Primary School Principal    | 25/02/99 |