EDUCATION THAT FITS: REVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL TRENDS IN THE EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

FINAL REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chapter One: Introduction
1. The purpose of this review is to outline international trends in the education of students with special educational needs, with the aim of informing the Ministry of Education’s current review of special education.
2. The review does not include early childhood or post-school sectors, behaviour services or giftedness, as these fall outside the scope of the current review of special education for which the current review is intended to be a companion piece.
3. This review examines 15 issues, ranging from paradigms of special educational needs through the administration of special education, to school and classroom policies and practices.
4. Throughout the review, the term 'students with special educational needs' (abbreviated as SWSEN) will generally be employed.
5. Developments in special and inclusive education show similar trajectories across countries, especially those in the developed western world.
6. Broadly, there are four main sources of convergence of policies and practices: international conventions, the dissemination of influential legislation especially from the US and UK, the research literature and, more recently, the Internet.
7. In many ways, special education is a microcosm of education more generally and, indeed, of society as a whole.

Chapter Two: Paradigms of special educational needs
1. During its history, the broad field of special education has been the site of quite different paradigms, or models, which posit certain relationships between individuals with disabilities and their environments.
2. This chapter examined the three most dominant paradigms:
   (a) the psycho-medical paradigm, which focuses on the assumption that deficits are located within individual students,
   (b) the socio-political paradigm, which focuses on structural inequalities at the macro-social level being reproduced at the institutional level, and
   (c) the organisational paradigm, in which special education is seen as the consequence of inadequacies in mainstream schools.
3. While most countries have a mix of paradigms underlying their educational provisions for SWSEN, the preponderant paradigm remains the psycho-medical model, which still retains its adherents even when other paradigms that place an emphasis on the environment have gained traction in recent years.

Chapter Three: Definitions, categorisation and terminology
1. There is no universal agreement as to how SWSEN should be referred to, how they should be defined and what, if any, categories they should be divided into.
2. Differences in definitions and categorisation influence the structure and function of special education services and how they are funded.
3. This diversity reflects a variety of factors, including different philosophical positions; the history of organisations/systems; local traditions within school districts; legal foundations; and fiscal policies and constraints.
4. In order to deal with this diversity, the OECD obtained agreement across countries to re-allocate their national categories into three types:
   Category A: Disabilities: students with disabilities or impairments viewed in medical terms as organic disorders attributable to organic pathologies; their educational need is considered to arise primarily from problems attributable to these disabilities.
   Category B: Difficulties: students with behavioural or emotional disorders, or specific difficulties in learning, arising primarily from problems in the interaction between the student and the educational context.
   Category C: Disadvantages: students with disadvantages arising primarily from socio-economic, cultural, and/or linguistic factors, and whose educational need is to compensate for the disadvantages attributable to these factors.
5. In category A, the number of national sub-categories in OECD countries varied from two to 19, with most countries having 12 or 13 sub-categories and nine sub-categories being found in virtually every country.
6. Countries differed the most in relation to category C.
7. Some countries have adopted an anti-category approach, although none have abandoned them entirely and some are returning to a limited form of categorisation.

8. In the US, the President’s Commission on Excellence in Special Education (2002) was very critical of what it referred to as ‘the proliferation of categories and assessment guidelines that vary in their implementation, often with little relation to intervention’.

9. Several problems with classifications based on disability categories have been identified:
   a. they mask the role that constraining educational systems may play in creating failure,
   b. they wrongly suggest homogeneity within various diagnostic categories,
   c. many SWSEN do not manifest demonstrable disabilities,
   d. studies show that instruction based on disability categories is of limited utility,
   e. they require some judgement to be exercised about the relevant cut-off points for special educational purposes,
   f. issues of category boundaries arise through the co-occurrence of various disabilities, and
   g. disability categories may militate against seeing the student holistically.

10. As well as the diversity of categories outlined above, there are differences in the way the broad field of provisions are described internationally. There are three main divisions: ‘special education’, ‘inclusive education’, and hybrids of the two.

Chapter Four: Disproportionality in Special Education

1. Disproportionality, or disproportionate representation, is generally defined as the representation of a particular group of students at a rate different than that found in the general population.

2. There is an irony in considering over-representation to be a problem if students are purportedly gaining the advantage of special education.

3. There is clear international evidence of disproportionality of students from ethnic minority backgrounds in special education.

4. However, some caveats have been entered regarding the evidential basis of ethnic disproportionality – at least that coming out of the US.

5. The consistent overlap of race and poverty in the US has led some to suggest that race is simply a proxy for poverty and that ethnic disproportionality in special education is in large measure an artefact of the effects of poverty. However, the evidence suggests that where poverty makes any contribution to explaining disproportionality, its effect is primarily to magnify already existing racial disparities.

6. There is an extensive literature on how schools can prevent underachievement and failure at the school level, thus obviating the need for special education placement.

7. There is clear international evidence of a gender imbalance in the incidence of disabilities, special education enrolments and academic achievement.

8. Since the 1960s, the overall male to female ratio in special education has been between 2:1 and 3:1.

9. Some writers portray the gender imbalance as reflecting either or both an over-identification of males and under-identification of girls.

10. In addressing the question of the over-representation of males in special education and the corollary phenomenon of more underachievement among boys, a range of reasons have been advanced. These include:
    a. biological factors
    b. unacceptable behaviour patterns
    c. peer influences
    d. learning strategies
    e. under-identification of girls
    f. school factors
    g. ethnicity
    h. students’ age

11. Educators should recognize that, in general, boys are biologically at higher risk than girls for certain disabilities and should accommodate their teaching to take any associated learning difficulties into account.

12. In the case of students whose special educational needs are more clearly associated with environmental factors, schools should carefully evaluate their policies and procedures to deal with these factors.

13. Schools and those responsible for assessing students’ needs for special support should re-examine their criteria to ensure that problems that girls may have are not overlooked.
Chapter Five: Response to Intervention and Graduated Response

1. Response to Intervention (RtI) focuses on student outcomes and the evaluation of intervention.
2. In the US, RtI has a statutory and regulatory foundation, IDEA 2004 favouring a process in which the child ‘responds to scientific, research-based intervention’. This arose from a recommendation of the President’s Commission on Excellence in Special Education in 2002.
3. The National Center on Response to Intervention in the US defines RtI as ‘[The integration] of assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavior problems. With RtI, schools identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student’s responsiveness, and identify students with learning disabilities’.
4. Important educational decisions about the intensity and the likely duration of interventions are based on an individual student’s response to instruction across multiple (usually three) tiers of intervention:
   Tier I: core classroom instruction. This contains the core curriculum (both academic and behavioural), which should be effective for approximately 80% -85% of the students. If a significant number of students are not successful in the core curriculum, RtI suggests that instructional variables, curricular variables and structural variables (e.g., building schedules) should be examined to determine where instruction needs to be strengthened, while at the same time addressing the learning needs of the students not being successful. The teaching programme should comprise evidence-based instruction and curriculum and should be the responsibility of the general education teacher.
   Tier II: supplemental (or secondary) instruction. Interventions serve approximately 15-20% of students (some writers go as high as 30%) who have been identified as having continuing difficulties and who have not responded to normal instruction. This tier is still the responsibility of the general education teacher, but with the assistance of a relevant specialist.
   Tier III: Instruction for intensive intervention (tertiary). This tier serves approximately 5-10% (some say as few as 2%) of students and is targeted at those with extreme difficulties in academic, social and/or behavioral domains who have not responded adequately to Tier I and Tier II efforts. Students at this tier receive intensive, individual and/or small group interventions for an additional hour per day, with daily progress monitoring of critical skills. At this level a trained specialist would be involved. If Tier III is not successful, a student is considered for the first time in RtI as being potentially disabled.

5. For RtI to be effectively implemented, several conditions have to be met. These include:
   a. effective assessment procedures should be in place;
   b. evidence-based teaching strategies should be employed;
   c. a structured, systematic problem-solving process should be implemented;
   d. teachers, principals and specialists should receive appropriate pre-service training and in-service professional development on RtI;
   e. adequate resources need to be made available; and
   f. parents should be involved in the decision-making processes.

6. Although there is relatively little evidence as to the effectiveness of RtI, what research has been reported is encouraging.

7. In England, the system of ‘Graduated Response’ bears a close similarity to RtI. This approach recognises that there is a continuum of special educational needs and brings increasing specialist expertise to bear. The first level assumes that the classroom teachers do all they can to provide an appropriate education for their students through differentiated teaching. If this is not succeeding, the second level, ‘School Action’, is implemented. This involves providing interventions that are additional to or different from those provided as part of the school’s differentiated curriculum. Should further help be required, a request for external services is likely, through what is referred to as ‘School Action Plus’. The next step in the process is for the school to request a statutory assessment.

Chapter Six: The Educational Context

1. Policies and practices relating to the education of SWSEN must take account of the general educational context, especially those aspects that are derived from such neo-liberal philosophies as marketisation, decentralisation/devolution, choice, competition, and the setting of accountability criteria such as standards and high-stakes testing.
2. In most countries, the direction of the shifts in administration has been centrifugal (i.e., away from the centre), but in some it has been centripetal (towards the centre), and in still others there have been fluctuations in the balance as new settlements are reached.
3. According to some writers, neo-liberal market philosophies contain many elements that tend to work against equity, the valuing of diversity and inclusive education.
4. The shift of focus to outputs in the education system is making ‘unproductive’ students less welcome in schools.
5. The implication of these (presumably) unintended consequence is that the state may see itself as having an obligation to intervene to ensure that such consequences are prevented or ameliorated. It can do this through legislation or regulation and by close monitoring of schools’ behaviour.
6. The coexistence of inclusive education provisions and special schools (which is the case in almost every country) suggests that choices must be exercised as to where SWSEN are ‘placed’. In this process, the relative weight given to the preferences of SWSEN and their parents and those who administer education systems constitutes a major point of tension.
7. Accountability boils down to the multi-faceted question of who should be held responsible for what, how they can be evaluated, and with what consequences? Its scope therefore is quite complex.
8. Increasingly, decisions at all of these levels are evidence-driven, or are being expected to be evidence-driven.
9. How to measure the educational performance of SWSEN with validity and reliability is one of the major contemporary challenges facing educators around the world.
10. Several countries have developed policies requiring SWSEN to have access to general education accountability systems,
11. One of the educational battle cries in many countries since the 1990s has been for ‘standards-based reform’, with its goal of higher and more rigorous achievement standards for all students, including those with special educational needs.
12. Leadership should be exercised throughout an education system: by legislators, policy-makers, school governing bodies, principals and teachers. At the school level, developing a school culture for SWSEN requires the exercise of leadership, particularly by the principal, but also by others in a school.

Chapter Seven: Funding and Resourcing
1. The means of allocating resources to SWSEN, and the quantum of these resources, has long exercised policy-makers around the world, and continues to do so.
2. Funding is impinged on and, in turn impinges upon almost every issue explored in this review.
3. Historically, funding arrangements for special education have often been kept administratively separate from the mechanisms that govern fiscal resources for general education.
4. For the past decade or so, funding models for special education have been under review in many countries, driven by rising costs, concerns over efficiency and equity in the use of resources, and concerns about the incentives inherent in funding formulae for contra-indicated practices.
5. There is not a strong body of evidence to show that finance in itself has a direct and major effect on student learning outcomes.
6. Research has found, however, that particular types of expenditure do have a positive impact on student learning.
7. Overall, per student education expenditures for those who receive special education services in the US are 1.91 times greater than expenditures for students who received no special education services. This is comparable to other estimates.
8. Three funding models can be identified: (a) demand (b) supply, and (c) output. Each one has advantages and disadvantages, with the consequence that many countries employ mixed funding models.
9. Another taxonomy of funding models, based on the sources of funding for SWSEN, has five categories: (a) discretionary funding, (b) categorical funding, (c) voucher-based funding, (d) census-based funding, and (e) actual-cost funding.
10. Sources of funding for SWSEN vary considerably among countries, with different proportions coming from national, state and local educational authorities.
11. General principles that should be taken into account in determining the most appropriate funding model(s) for SWSEN include:
   a The starting point should not be with how to fund special education, but rather with how to fund general education.
   b Every funding model has strengths and weaknesses, incentives and disincentives, and positive and negative outcomes that may affect different students differentially, so a combination of funding models seems desirable.
   c Resources should be allocated in ways that are coherent with, and promote, system policy.
   d Arrangements to ensure accountability, including the monitoring of the use of resources and outcomes for children, should be included.
Chapter Eight: Curriculum
1. Approaches to conceptualising curricula for students with disabilities have moved from a developmental model in the 1970s, through a functional model in the 1980s and 1990s, to the contemporary model of embracing ways of enabling such students to participate in the general education curriculum.
2. In the US, IDEA 1997, IDEIA 2004 and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 specified that all students, including those with significant cognitive disabilities, must have the opportunity to participate and progress in the general curriculum.
3. To make the curriculum accessible, consideration should be given to the following alternatives in relation to content, teaching materials, and the responses expected from the learners: (a) modifications (e.g., computer responses instead of oral responses, enlarging the print), (b) substitutions (e.g., Braille for written materials); (c) omissions (e.g., omitting very complex work); and (d) compensations (e.g., self care skills).
4. Other modifications can include (a) expecting the same, but only less, (b) streamlining the curriculum by reducing its size or breadth, (c) employing the same activity but infusing IEP objectives, and (d) curriculum overlapping to help students grasp the connections between different subjects, for example.

Chapter Nine: Assessment
1. Increasingly, SWSEN, including those with significant cognitive disabilities, are being expected to participate in their countries' national or state assessment regimes.
2. High stakes' assessments can have the effects of jeopardising inclusive education, a risk that can be exacerbated by the effects of international comparative studies of educational standards.
3. In the US, legislation since IDEA 1997 does not allow SWSEN to be exempted from their states' assessment programmes. Instead, educational authorities are required to provide alternate assessment for students who cannot participate in state or district assessments with or without accommodations. IEPs now must include a statement of any accommodations that are necessary to measure the academic achievement and functional performance of such students on state- and district-wide assessments.
4. The main types of alternate assessments comprise portfolios, IEP-linked bodies of evidence, performance assessments, checklists and traditional paper and pencil tests.
5. The assumptions underlying these provisions are twofold: (a) that higher expectations will lead to improved instructional programmes and (b) that these will lead in turn to higher student achievement.
6. The requirements for all students to participate in state- and district-wide assessments have been shown in some research to have had unintended negative consequences for students with disabilities, including higher rates of academic failure, lower self-esteem, and concerns that they would experience higher drop-out rates.
7. Countries or states should include both content area specialists and experts in severe disabilities in validating performance indicators used in alternate assessment.
8. With the shift to all students being required to participate in their countries’ national or state assessment regimes, teachers of students with disabilities will need professional development on their country’s or state’s academic standards, alternate achievement standards, and curriculum design that goes beyond functional domains.
9. Formative assessment has been associated with positive outcomes for SWSEN and with improvements in teachers’ perceptions of students’ performances.
10. Functional assessment is increasingly being applied, not only to behaviour, but also to learning in general.
11. In determining assessment policies, it is important to recognise and resolve as far as possible the tensions between measuring the health of the education system and protecting the interests of students with special educational needs. In other words, educational policy-makers should optimise both the needs of the system and those of its students in determining assessment policies.

Chapter Ten: Evidence-based Pedagogy
1. Educators are increasingly expected to be responsible not only for helping students to achieve the best possible outcomes, but also for using the most scientifically valid methods to achieve them.
2. Evidence-based teaching strategies may be defined as ‘clearly specified teaching strategies that have been shown in controlled research to be effective in bringing about desired outcomes in a delineated population of learners’.
3. All students, including SWSEN, benefit from a common set of strategies, even if they have to be adapted to take account of varying cognitive, emotional and social capabilities. What is required is the systematic, explicit and intensive application of a wide range of effective teaching strategies.

4. To constitute evidence, research studies should meet criteria such as the following: (a) treatment fidelity, (b) reliable and valid measurement of behavioural outcomes, (c) adequate control of variables, (d) freedom from contamination, (e) adequate follow-up, (f) replicated in more than a single study, and (g) cost effectiveness.

5. Strategies that have a strong evidential base for use with SWSEN (and other students) include (a) cooperative group teaching, (b) peer tutoring, (c) formative assessment, (d) feedback, (e) cognitive strategy instruction, and (f) instruction in memory strategies.

6. A scale for evaluating teachers’ use of evidence-based teaching strategies is described.

7. In order to bridge the research-practice gap, it is necessary that teacher education - both pre-service and in-service must be upgraded to deliver programmes based on evidence.

Chapter Eleven: Inclusive Education
1. Inclusive education is one of the most dominant issues in the education of SWSEN.
2. It is not unproblematic, both conceptually and practically.
3. A commonly accepted definition of inclusive education is: SWSEN having full membership in age-appropriate classes in their neighbourhood schools, with appropriate supplementary aids and support services.
4. In recent years, the concept of inclusive education has been broadened to encompass not only students with disabilities, but also all students who may be disadvantaged.
5. Advocacy for inclusive education revolves around three main arguments:
   a. inclusive education is a basic human right;
   b. in designing educational programmes for students with disabilities, the focus must shift from the individual’s impairments to the social context, a key feature of which should be a unitary education system dedicated to providing quality education for all students; and
   c. since there is no clear demarcation between the characteristics of students with and without disabilities, and there is no support for the contention that specific categories of students learn differently, separate provisions for such students cannot be justified.
6. The characterisation, purpose and form of inclusive education reflect the relationships among the social, political, economic, cultural and historical contexts that are present at any one time in a particular country and/or local authority.
7. While many countries seem committed to inclusive education in their rhetoric, and even in their legislation and policies, practices often fall short.
8. The United Nations and its agency, UNESCO, have played, and are playing, a significant role in promoting inclusive education.
9. Inclusive education goes far beyond the physical placement of children with disabilities in general classrooms, but requires nothing less than transforming regular education by promoting school/classroom cultures, structures and practices that accommodate to diversity.
10. The evidence for inclusive education is mixed but generally positive, the majority of studies reporting either positive effects or no differences for inclusion, compared with more segregated provisions.
11. In general, the presence of SWSEN in regular classrooms does not have a negative impact on the achievement of other students.
12. Criticisms of inclusive education have focused on what some writers consider to be an emphasis on ideology at the expense of empirical evidence and challenges to the view that the mainstream can incorporate students with disabilities when it has so many difficulties in accommodating existing student diversity.

Chapter Twelve: Non-inclusive Educational Settings
1. The evidence related to student outcomes in inclusive education is usually compared with outcomes in some form of non-inclusive settings.
2. Non-inclusive educational settings range from special schools, through special classes/units and various forms of ability grouping, to individual instruction.
3. The ‘where to learn debate’ has been interrogated on ideological, philosophical and empirical grounds.
4. According to OECD data, the percentages of SWSEN in non-inclusive settings range from several countries with less than 1% to several with 4-6%.
5. There is evidence that the population of special schools is undergoing change. For example, recent data from England shows a gradual increase in the number and percentages of SWSEN attending
special schools as having behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders.

6. Many countries are developing new roles for special schools by converting them into resource centres with a range of functions replacing direct, full-time teaching of SWSEN.

7. Despite the lack of evidence for the beneficial effects of non-inclusive placements on learning, many parents and teachers strongly support a continuum of services, including special schools and units.

8. Research into ability grouping shows that, overall, it has little or no significant impact on student achievement, although high-achieving students appear to benefit more than low-achieving students, who suffer from disadvantages in being placed in low ability groups.

9. Paradoxically, individual instruction has a low impact on student achievement, suggesting that the social context of the classroom is an important contributor to learning.

10. A fitting conclusion would be that the continuation of non-inclusive educational settings should be based on the extent to which they improve student learning outcomes in ways valued by the students, parents, and teachers. Data and evidence, not conviction and ideology, should be the key considerations.

Chapter Thirteen: Teacher Education

1. Teacher education in the field of SWSEN involves consideration of four main areas:
   a. The nature of initial teacher education (ITE) for general education teachers and special education teachers.
   b. Specialist qualifications for professionals working in an advisory or consultancy capacity.
   c. The training of paraprofessionals.
   d. Professional development for professionals working with SWNEN

2. There is considerable variability with respect to all of these issues between and even within countries.

3. Many countries are adapting their teacher education programmes to take account of the recent emphasis on inclusive education.

4. Many jurisdictions are prescribing in considerable detail what is expected of various training programmes.

5. In England and Wales, a three-level model of teacher education is being implemented. This involves developing the following:
   a. Core skills for ALL teachers in ALL schools
   b. Specialist skills in SOME local schools
   c. Advanced skills for SOME teachers in ALL schools

6. In the US, there is debate over categorical vs non-categorical licensure and the extent to which special and general teacher education should and can be merged.

7. In the US, the 2002 President’s Commission was highly critical of colleges of education for not ensuring that their curricula and methodologies were empirically connected to improving student achievement and, accordingly, recommended sweeping reforms in teacher education.

Chapter Fourteen: Collaboration

1. Educating SWSEN requires collaboration among many people – several professionals and parents in particular.

2. Collaborative approaches to educating SWSEN are increasingly becoming embedded in education systems around the world. This is well illustrated in the sources of support for regular class teachers in their work with SWSEN in 23 European countries, which included school-based specialists, community-based agencies and special schools.

3. Successful collaboration depends on such factors as establishing clear goals, defining respective roles, adopting a problem-solving approach and establishing mutual trust and respect.

4. Co-teaching occurs in inclusive education settings when a general education teacher and a special education teacher combine their expertise to meet the needs of all learners in the class.

5. Paraprofessionals are generally inadequately appreciated, compensated, oriented, trained, supervised, and researched. Since 2001, paraprofessionals in the US have had more defined job descriptions and are expected to have a college level qualification.

6. Various countries have developed cadres of professionals to act as advisers/consultants to teachers of SWSEN, providing advice and guidance to the general classroom teacher on the programme to be followed.

7. In many countries, educational psychologists are considered to play a vital role, not only in the education of SWSEN, but also in education more generally and in community contexts.

8. A feature of leading practice throughout the world is a move towards ‘integrated support’, ‘service
integration’ or ‘wraparound services’, all of which are concerned with the delivery of specialised services in a more coordinated and integrated manner. Such coordination can take place at an institutional level, at an agency level, or at a government level.

Chapter Fifteen: Parent Involvement
1. Parents play important, if not critical, roles in educating and supporting their children’s education.
2. Parents have been considered in almost every chapter of the current review.
3. Many countries have legislation and/or policies on parent involvement in the education of SWSEN, at a minimum their participation in major decisions affecting their children, such as their IEPs and decisions regarding placements.
4. Five different levels of parent involvement have been identified: (a) being informed, (b) taking part in activities, (c) participating in dialogue and exchange of views, (d) taking part in decision-making, and (e) having responsibility to act.
5. Parents of SWSEN often require support and guidance in managing their children’s challenging behaviour. There is clear evidence that when this is provided both children and parents can benefit.
6. Three parent training programmes stand out as having good outcomes: (a) behavioural parent training, (b) parent-child interaction therapy, and (c) Triple P-Positive Parenting Programme.

Chapter Sixteen: Universal Design for Learning
1. Universal Design (UD) had its origins in architecture and engineering, and has been increasingly emphasised in education, where it is usually referred to as Universal Design for Learning (UDL).
2. UD may be defined as ‘the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for subsequent adaptation or specialised design’.
3. UDL involves planning and delivering programmes with the needs of all students in mind from the outset. It applies to all facets of education: from curriculum, assessment and pedagogy to classroom and school design.
4. Three overarching principles guide UDL: (a) provide multiple means of representation, (b) provide multiple means of action and expression, and (c) provide multiple means of engagement.
5. More specifically, UDL requires that the following criteria be met (a) equitable use, (b) flexible use, (c) simple and intuitive use, (d) perceptible information, (e) tolerance for error, and (f) low physical and cognitive effort.

Chapter Seventeen: Conclusions
1. The education of SWSEN is a complex process with many inter-related elements, most of which apply to education in general and some of which are specific to SWSEN.
2. Educational provisions for SWSEN should not be primarily designed to fit the student into existing systems, but rather, they should also lead to those systems being reformed so as to better accommodate diversity, i.e., education should fit the student.
3. Inclusive education goes far beyond the physical placement of SWSEN in general classrooms, but requires nothing less than transforming regular education by promoting positive school/classroom cultures and structures, together with evidence-based practices.
4. New roles for special schools, including converting them into resource centres with a range of functions replacing direct, full-time teaching of SWSEN, should be explored.
5. Educational policies and practices for SWSEN (indeed all students) should be evidence-driven and data-based, and focused on learning outcomes.
6. International trends in the education of SWSEN should be carefully studied and interpreted through the prism of local culture, values and politics to determine their relevance for New Zealand.
7. Issues in the education of SWSEN should be comprehensively researched.
8. Determining valid and reliable ways for measuring learning outcomes for SWSEN should be given high priority.
9. All decisions relating to the education of SWSEN should lead to a high standard of education for such students, as reflected in improved educational outcomes and the best possible quality of life, for example as outlined in the UK’s Every Child Matters outcomes for children and young people.
10. The rights of SWSEN to a quality education and to be treated with respect and dignity should be honoured.
11. National curricula and assessment regimes should be accessible to SWSEN, taking account of the principles of universal design for learning.
12. Educational provisions for SWSEN should emphasise prevention and early intervention prior to referral for more costly special educational services, through such processes as graduated response to intervention.
13. All educational policies should be examined to ensure that any unintended, undesirable consequences for SWSEN are identified and ameliorated.

14. Any disproportionality in groups represented in special education, especially ethnic minorities and males, should be carefully monitored and ameliorated where appropriate.

15. Partnerships with parents of SWSEN should be seen as an essential component of education for such students.

16. Collaborative approaches involving wraparound service integration for SWSEN should be planned for and the respective professionals trained for its implementation.

17. The roles of educational psychologists are going beyond the assessment and classification of SWSEN to incorporate broader pedagogical and systems-related activities, not only with such students, but also in education more generally and in community contexts.

18. Initial teacher education and ongoing professional development for teachers and other educational professionals should take account of the recent emphasis on inclusive education.

19. In order to improve the quality of education for SWSEN, leadership must be exercised throughout the education system, from legislators to school principals.

20. Finally, in order to give expression to the above conclusions, it is vital that a comprehensive national policy document, along the lines of the UK’s Code of Practice, be developed.