Introduction

Between 1990 and 1994, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) extended its work on the integration of disabled children by looking closely at current policy and practice in member countries. This work has been developed in three parts. First, twenty-one member countries provided reports on a number of aspects of policy, practice and provision. These reports covered the areas of educational organization, definitions and statistics, curriculum, teacher training, parental involvement and financial resources. Second, sixty-four case studies were completed in nineteen countries on aspects of practice relating to integration. The information provided was then divided into areas covering learning programmes, relationships between the individuals concerned, whole-school approaches, parental and community involvement, the roles of spe-
cial schools, external support services and issues relating to training. This information has been published as a book (OECD, 1995). The third part of the work reviewed the research literature and has been published in the *European journal of special needs education* (Evans, 1993). This paper will draw from these publications and discuss the key aspects of this work as they relate to the development of successful integration policy and practice.

**Background**

**Policy**

The majority of OECD countries have recent laws and policies which encourage integration. Austria, for instance, amended the School Organization Act in 1993, thus making it easier for special education to take place in mainstream schools. At the same time, it changed the role of special schools to include the task of co-ordinating measures at the regional level to improve quality and involve parents in determining provision. In the Netherlands, the Special Education Interim Act remains in force until 1995 and aims to encourage the transfer of pupils from special to ordinary classes whenever possible. In the future, legislation concerning special education will be subsumed within the Primary Education Act. Despite these developments it nevertheless remains true that, in all OECD countries, both special schools and special classes in mainstream schools have a major role in the provision of education for children with special needs.

**Definitions and Statistics**

Despite considerable homogeneity in OECD countries across many facets of their cultures, there are still significant differences in education systems, definitions pertaining to special needs groups and in the extent to which integration has been adopted. All these factors have an impact on the practice of integration. The classification systems in use, as well as the terms used to describe disabled children, vary substantially from country to country.

Broadly speaking, two classification systems are used. The first involves a description of disabled children according to a set of categories of handicap or disability which have their origin in a 'medical' treatment model emphasizing the impairment or disability. This model, extended in various ways, is widely used. The conceptual framework of the World Health Organization's *International classification of impairments, disabilities and handicaps* (1980) is commonly employed.

The second system, which is being used more and more extensively, has been developed following the recognition that medically-based categories are inadequate for determining the placement of disabled children within the education system. Many disabled children have educational requirements which are not necessarily best met through special provisions designed for their principal medical