Ko Marouna te toa

The effects of the Cook Islands Public Sector Reform on the delivery of education

Repeta Puna

2008

Ko Marouna te toa: The effects of the Cook Islands Public Sector Reform on the delivery of education

Repeta Puna

A thesis submitted to Auckland University of Technology in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy (MPhil)

2008

Institute of Public Policy

Primary Supervisor: Professor Marilyn Waring

Thesis Spine Specifications

Repeta Puna   MPhil   2008

Abstract

The effects of the public sector reform impacted on all aspects of public services including the performance of the economy. Central to this argument was the re-organization of the operations of the public service from the traditional administration system to the new public management (NPM). Education, a critical service in any economy was not spared. Literatures around the application of NPM (a derivative of market principles and practices) to education (which was value based) suggested that NPM was dangerous for education and could deplete the value system of education and replace that with a focus on accounting for money by individuals who were self-interested and who would seek to maximize their benefit with guile.

Arguments against NPM suggested that the human factor was neglected and that education had led to chaos among professionals, stakeholders and students. However, those who argued for the introduction of NPM suggested that it had made the provision of education more efficient, effective and relevant to the needs to the clients. It held those working in the education sector accountable for the resources used and made the system more responsive to the needs of the clients of education.

Education in the Cook Islands experienced many changes since western type education was introduced by the Missionaries in the late 1800s. Cook Islands people have always regarded education as a right and also believed their participation in education would improve their lives as well as positively contribute to economic growth. As the public sector reform was a global phenomenon, the currents of NPM also converged on the Cook Islands and affected the delivery of education. Those changes revolutionalized education in ways that was not commonplace in the Cook Islands. However, professionals and stakeholders within education made the most of the system and diverged some of the practices to suit the need, the environment and the culture of the Cook Islands people. Change also refocused education from teachers teaching to student learning reinforcing the dedication of many teachers and education administrators to ensure NPM served the best interest of their clients; the students, despite the workload placed on them. The challenge in this thesis was to understand how the NPM system affected education and how the Cook Islands education professionals worked within the system in their favour.

The stories of teachers and Ministry of Education professionals demonstrated that there was no resistance to the application of NPM system in the Cook Islands. In fact, the system was embraced by the education sector suggesting it was a positive change from their previous system of traditional administration. Much of their system was inherited from New Zealand where the environment, layers of bureaucracy and economic status of the country was different. Instead, it appeared the Cook Islands took much of what others deemed as dangerous for education and turned it into a positive opportunity for the Cook Islands education. This thesis presents the story of the revolution in the Cook Island education system.

Acknowledgements

Eia ngaru e tu i ruaikakau e Iro,
Tauatini tuamano, e tai i te rau ma iva
Uriuri i tana uriuri, pokipoki i tana pokipoki
Pupui ki te niu, raranga ki te vaka
Tiranga ki te karakia,
Ka eke ia ngaru, e ka eke.

Na te aroa nui o Iehova i akatae mai iaku ki teia ra, te akameitaki nei au iaia no tana tiaki, tana paruru, e tana arataki mai iaku.

Thank you to those hardworking and dedicated teachers and Ministry of Education officials who willingly opened their hearts and minds and shared their stories, their views and their experiences with the continuing changes in education. To those wonderful Cook Islands community people who happily and spontaneously agreed to be my participants and shared their stories, well beyond the boundaries of the questions asked, te Atua te aroa. This thesis would not have had much meaning and colour without your stories.

I am grateful to the Department of National Human Resources Development for the financial assistance and many other government ministries and individuals who tolerated my constant request for information and who unselfishly gave those information to truly reflect a Cook Islands position, thank you.

I am indebted to my supervisors Marilyn Waring and Grant Duncan who provided guidance, encouragement and great conversations during this thesis journey. In addition, to my colleagues in the Institute of Public Policy who unselfishly shared stories of their journey to enrich mine. To Peddy, thank you for your friendship.

The support of my family was incredible. To my parents, Pae and Elizabeth who supported my journey in many ways; kia vai mai te aroa atupaka o te Atua ki runga ia korua. To my brother Iro and sister Tai who took me and my girls in as part of his family and provided us with all we needed; na te Atua e akamaata mai i ta korua. To sister Tipoki who kept a check on my sanity, uncle Tuanu and aunty Ruth who constantly provided encouragement, and to my many brothers, sisters and friends, meitaki atupaka.

Most importantly, to my two beautiful daughters, Ioana and No'elle who shared this experience with me. I would encourage you two to one day take this journey as it would add deeper and more meaningful dimensions to your life. Lastly, to husband George, who held the fort at home and supported me whichever way he could, na te aroa nui o Iehova e akamanuia mai iakoe.

Kua eke teia ngaru, kua eke. Te akaroa.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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Repeta Puna

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Appendix 1 - Cook Island Research Permit

PERMIT TO UNDERTAKE

Research in the Cook Islands

This is to certify that: **Ms Repeta Puna**

Has permission from the Foundation for National Research to do research in the Cook Islands from: **1st June to 31st July 2007**

On the island of: **"Rarotonga".**

The topic of research is: **"The effects of the Cook Islands 1996 Public Sector Reform on the delivery of education".**

The Cook Islands Associate Researchers are: **N/A**

The following special conditions apply to this research: **To produce 3 copies of the final findings to the National Research Committee.**

Permit Issued on: **24th May 2007** Issued by: **Mr. Tuaere Tangianau,** **CHIEF OF STAFF**

Receipt Number: **N/A**

Reference Number: **13/07** **Signed**:

_____

For inquiries concerning this permit, please quote the Name of the Researcher and the Reference Number to the Chairperson, Foundation for National Research, and Office of the Prime Minister, Rarotonga, and COOK ISLANDS. Phone (682) 25 494, Fax (682) 23 792, or Email: coso@pmoffice.gov.ck or dcharlie@pmoffice.gov.ck Website: cook-islands.gov.ck.

Appendix 2

(a) Location of the Cook Islands in Oceania

source: http://www.forumsec.org.fj

(b) Map of the Cook Islands

(Source: www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/cw.html)

Appendix 3

Key Informant's Questions for Officials and Teachers

Questions for Ministry of Education officials

1. Could you tell me your experiences of the Education Sector before the 1996 Public Sector Review?

2. In your view, what were the factors that contributed to the success of the Education sector before 1996?

3. In your view, what were the factors that contributed to the failure of the Education sector before 1996?

4. What do you think were the key changes to the education sector since the 1996 Public Sector Reform?

5. The current government system requires the Ministry of Education to perform various tasks like bidding for money to provide for education, write business plans and be accountable for resources being used. What are your views on the effects this type of system would have on the way education is provided?

6. Do you have any suggestions on how the system could be changed to improve the delivery of education?

Questions for Teachers

1. Could you tell me about your teaching experience before the 1996 Public Sector Reform.

2. What were the main changes from the reform that affected your performance as a Teacher?

3. In your view, how have those changes affected the way Teachers have performed their jobs since 1996?

4. In your view, how have those changes affected the way students learn at school?

5. The current government system requires schools to write annual plans, submit financial reports to the Ministry of Education, and to account for resources used. What are your views on the effects this type of system is having on the way education is provided?

6. Do you have any suggestions on how the system could be changed to improve the delivery of education?

Participant Information Sheet

AUT
UNIVERSITY
TE WĀNANGA ARONUI O TAMAKI MAKAU RAU

Project Title

The effects of Cook Islands 1996 Public Sector Reform on the delivery of education services

Purpose of this research

Since the 1996 Public Sector Reform, many changes were made but no study has been done on its effects. This study will look at how the new system of New Public Management (introduced by the Public Sector Reform) has on the way education is currently being delivered.

How was I chosen?

You were purposively selected from a group of Ministry of Education officials and Teachers who worked before and after the 1996 Public Sector Reform and have experienced the system changes from the Traditional Public Administration system to the New Public Management system.

An Invitation

I am inviting you to participate by sharing your views on the effects the current changes are having on education. The information you will provide will contribute towards informing this study.

What you will be asked to do?

You are asked to share your views or tell me your story on the issues identified on the *Key Informants Interview Questions* in whatever language you feel most comfortable in.
You have given initial indication via our telephone conversation that you have consented to participate in this survey; your participation in this interview will be taken as re-enforcement of your consent. If you prefer that I read and translate the questions to you, just ask, I will be happy to oblige.

Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at anytime.

The benefits of this study

1. Information will be available on how the new system works to deliver a public good like education;
2. The public will know the kind of system used to educate their children;
3. Teachers will have a better knowledge of the system they are operating and the effects it has on their work as a Teacher;
4. This research will give me knowledge and confidence to conduct further research in the Cook Islands.

How will my privacy be protected?

All information collected will be treated with respect and care and will in no way be shared with anyone else. <mark>No information will be attributed to you by name. However, your privacy cannot be guaranteed due to the criteria of the sample and the size of the island.</mark> Interview notes and audiotapes will be stored in a locked cabinet in the supervisor's office. All transcribing will be done by the researcher and no third parties will be involved.

Results of this research

A summary of the research report will be made available to you at the conclusion of the degree, on request. Alternatively, as a requirement for conducting research in the Cook Islands, a copy of this thesis will be made available in the Cook Islands National Library, with the Ministry of Education library and with the Office of the Prime Minister.

Concerns about this research

If you have any concerns regarding the nature of this project, in the first instance, you should contact the Project Supervisor, Professor Marilyn Waring, marilyn.waring@aut.ac.nz or phone 09 921 9661.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEC, Madeline Banda, *madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz* , 09 921 9999 ext 8044.

For further information about this research

Researcher Contact Details:
If you would like more information about this research please contact Repeta Puna using email r.puna@xtra.co.nz .

Project Supervisor Contact Details:
Dr Marilyn Waring
Professor of Public Policy
Institute of Public Policy
Auckland University of Technology
PO Box 92006
Auckland

Marilyn.Waring@aut.ac.nz
Phone: 9219661

c) Research Consent Form

<table>
<tr><td></td><td># Consent Form</td><td>**AUT**
UNIVERSITY
TE WĀNANGA ARONUI O TAMAKI MAKAU RAU</td></tr>
</table>

Project title: **The effects of the Cook Islands 1996 Public Sector Reform on the provision of education services**

Project Supervisors: **Marilyn Waring and Grant Duncan**

Researcher: **Repeta Puna**

○ I have read (or have been told) and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated dd mmmm yyyy;

○ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered;

○ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed;

○ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way;

○ If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed;

○ I agree to take part in this research;

○ I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes○ No○

Participant's signature:
....……………………………………………………
………

Participant's name:
....……………………………………………………
………

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):
……………………………………………………………………………………..

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 27 August 2007. AUTEC Reference number 07/135
Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix 4

a) The Survey Questionnaire

The Survey Questionnaire

There are mostly closed, semi- closed and a few open questions in this questionnaire. Part One asks questions about you and your professional background. Part Two asks questions about your experience with the education sector before the Public Sector Reform of 1996. Part Three inquires your views on changes you noticed in the education sector as a result of the Public Sector Reform.

Part One: Personal and Professional Background

Please indicate with a (X) the category that best describes yourself.

 1.   I am

(i) female (   )   (ii) male   (   )

and my current age falls between this category

(i) 30-39   (   )   (ii) 40-49 (   )   (iii) >50   (   )

2. Do you have children currently attending school?

(i) Yes   (   ). If yes, how many (   )   (ii)No   (   ). If no, go to question 3.

What level (s) are they currently at?

(i) Primary   Years (   ) (ii) Secondary   Years (   )

3. Do you participate in paid employment?

(i) Yes. If yes, are you employed on a full-time or part- time basis? Full time ( )
                                                                                                    Part-time ( )
(ii) No

4.   Are you currently/ or have you been a member of the school committee?

(i) Yes   (ii) No

If yes, what years were you a member?

Year (   )

Part Two: Education before the 1996 Public Sector Reform
This section will ask you questions to gauge your views about education before the 1996
Public Sector Reform.

1. Were you educated in the Cook Islands?

(i) Yes (   )   (ii) No (   )

2. Upon reflection, what were some key services provided in school before 1996 that are
no longer provided?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. On average, how satisfied were you with the way your Teachers taught you in school?

I was:
(i) very unsatisfied   (   )   (ii) unsatisfied (   )
(iii) satisfied (   )   (iv) mostly satisfied (   )
(v) very satisfied (   )

Why? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. a) what did you do after you left school?

(i) got paid employment locally ( )   (ii) helped with home chores ( )

(iii) left the country to look for employment ( )   (iv) other, please state _____

b) Do you feel the school provided you with sufficient skills and knowledge with what you had to do after school?

(i)Yes ( ). Why _____

_____

(ii) No ( ). Why _____

_____

5. How would you summarize what your schooling achieved for you?

_____

_____

Part Three: Effects of Public Sector Reform on Education.

1. Do you think there were changes to the education sector after the Public Sector Reform?

(i) Yes   (ii) No   (iii) Don't Know

2. Do you think those changes improved our children's learning?

(i) Yes   (ii) No   (iii) Don't Know

If yes, what are your views on that? _____

_____

If no, what are your views on that? _____

_____

3. What are your views on the way education is currently being provided?

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. To what extent do you think the quality of children's education is better now than before 1996?

(i) Much better now than before 1996 (   )   (ii) Better now than before 1996 (   )

(iii) The same as before 1996 (   )   (iv) Better before 1996 than now (   )
(v) Much better before 1996 than now (   )
5. To what extent do you think Teachers are doing a better job now than before the 1996 Public Sector Reform?

(i) Much better job now (   )   (ii) Better job now (   )

(iii) The same as before 1996 (   )   (iv) Better before 1996 than now (   )

(v) Much better before 1996 than now (   )

6. Do you have any views on what the Ministry of Education has done to contribute towards improving the quality of children's learning?

Please briefly state your views: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____
Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Participant Information Sheet

Project Title

The effects of Cook Islands 1996 Public Sector Reform on the delivery of education services

Purpose of this research

Since the 1996 Public Sector Reform, many changes were made but no study has been done on its effects. This study will look at how the new system of New Public Management (introduced by the Public Sector Reform) has on the way education is currently being delivered.

How was I chosen?

You were chosen randomly using a spin-ball method and associating the numbers to locate you in the Cook Islands Telephone Directory.

An Invitation

I am inviting you to participate by completing the attached questionnaire and share your views on the effects the current changes are having on education. The information you will provide will contribute towards informing this study.

What you will be asked to do?

You are asked to share your views by answering the questions identified in the attached Survey Questionnaire in whatever language you feel most comfortable in.

You have given initial indication via our telephone conversation that you have consented to participate in this survey; your participation in this interview will be taken as re-enforcement of your consent. If you prefer that I read and translate the questions to you, just ask, I will be happy to oblige.

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For further information about this research

Researcher Contact Details:
If you would like more information about this research please contact Repeta Puna using email r.puna@xtra.co.nz .

Project Supervisor Contact Details:
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Professor of Public Policy
Institute of Public Policy
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Phone: 9219661

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 27 August 2007
AUTEC Reference number 07/135.

c) Research Consent Form

# Consent Form	**AUT** UNIVERSITY TE WĀNANGA ARONUI O TAMAKI MAKAU RAU

Project title: **The effects of the Cook Islands 1996 Public Sector Reform on the provision of education services**

Project Supervisors: **Marilyn Waring and Grant Duncan**

Researcher: **Repeta Puna**

○ I have read (or have been told) and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated dd mmmm yyyy;

○ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered;

○ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed;

○ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way;

○ If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed;

○ I agree to take part in this research;

○ I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes○ No○

Participant's signature:
......................................……………………………………………………………

Participant's name:
......................................……………………………………………………………

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):
…………………………………………………………………………………..

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 27 August 2007. AUTEC Reference number 07/135

Appendix 5   The Ministry of Education Organisation Structure

Secretary of Education

Outputs 1-5	Outputs 1-5	Outputs 1-5	Output 1	Output 2	Output 3 & 5	Outputs 3 & 4
Administration	**Finance**	**Secretariat**	**Operations**	**Teachers College**	**Audit&Quality Assurance**	**Govt Schools**
Director	Director	Director	Director	Principal	Director	Principals
Salaries Clerk	Snr Accounts Officer	Information Officer	Secondary Science Adviser ESP	Office Assistant	Secondary Qualifications Officer	Teachers
Files Clerk	Finance Officer	Research Officer	Health / PE Adviser ESP	Part-time Lecturers	Secondary Review Officer	Part-time ancillary
	Project Officer	Policy/Planning Officer	Maths Adviser ESP	10 Year 1 Teacher Trainees	Primary Review Officer	Teacher Aides (pre/pri)
	Computer Technician		Special Education Adviser ESP	15 Year 3 Teacher Trainees*	Exam Officer	Teacher Aides (spec ed)
	System Administrator		Social Sci Adviser ESP		Management Facilitator ESP - Northern Group	Secretary/Typists
	Assistant Technician		Careers-Guidance Adviser ESP	*5 Year 1 trainees on home islands*	Distance Education Facilitator ESP	Grounds persons
	Snr Maintenance Officer		Office Administrator			
	Asst Maintenance Officer		Collator/Office Asst			
	Groundsman		Printer			
			Driver			
			ECE Adviser ESP			
			Reading Adviser /Lecturer ESP			
			Primary Maori Adviser /Lecturer			
			Special Education Adviser/Lecturer			
			Primary English Adviser/Lecturer			
			Mathematics Adviser/Lecturer			
			Sec Maori Adviser/Lecturer			
			Visual Art Adv/Lecturer			
			Sci/SocSt Adv/Lecturer			

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Ko Marouna te toa – a message from my ancestors

Many years ago on the island of Aitutaki in the Cook Islands, were two groups of people who believed they were the first inhabitants of Aitutaki. One group was led by Ru who migrated from Tahiti in the east and Matareka from the west. They considered themselves as "uu enua" – indigenous people of Aitutaki. Overtime, they intermarried, cultivated land and formed their own social structures, rules and norms. Migration into Aitutaki continued steadily over time and men who visited Aitutaki, referred to as "aitus", married Aitutakian women and settled there. This practice continued and the number of aitus who came to Aitutaki increased over time.

Aitutaki had a patrilinial society, so men decided how resources were to be used. The aitus started to siphon resources from Aitutaki to send to their islands of origin to the point where resources depleted at a rate faster than they could be replaced. The uu enua were hungry in their land and were embarrassed about it. Maevarangi, a woman of great stature and respect among the uu enua decided to send for one of her grandsons, Marouna who lived in Rarotonga, to be the warrior to expel the aitus from Aitutaki. He first collected warriors from other islands of the southern group in the Cook Islands and Niue. When they got to Aitutaki, they planned with the uu enua that they would execute the aitus at night while they slept, to avoid any of their men being killed, to avoid any of the aitus from escaping and to kill all of them as fast as possible. The aitus were slaughtered in one night. Marouna re-established a social structure among the tribes and gave power back to the chiefs of each tribe. He married a beautiful woman in Aitutaki and settled there. One of his descendants, Sir Geoffrey Arama Henry, Prime Minister of the Cook Islands in 1996, led the Cook Islands into the 1996 Cook Islands Public Sector Reform. The Public Sector Reform will be explored further in Chapter 2.

Ancestors in their wisdom knew that resources were necessary for the sustainable growth of their communities. They established rules to govern their use to ensure future supply. If those rules were compromised, resources would deplete resulting in unsustainable supply for the community. They knew drastic measures had to be taken to return the stock of island resources back to sustainable levels. More importantly, they knew the invasion of the aitus was an important lesson learnt; this time the redistribution of power amongst the arikis had to be reallocated more carefully to ensure better compliance of community rules. Finally, change was inevitable during times of hardship, and where the community's well being was at stake, the community must regroup and redevelop strategies for their own survival. This story line closely resembled events of the 1996 public sector reform.

My motives for starting this journey

Over ten years ago, resources in the Cook Islands public sector depleted to the point where there was not enough money in the coffers to pay the public servants. The Cook Islands was spending more than it was earning and borrowing was significantly greater than the capacity to repay. The public as well as the private sectors were affected, forcing drastic measures to be taken. The 1996 public sector reform was done in one year with the traditional public administration system replaced with the New Public Management (NPM) system. The Cook Islands, was not alone in this journey, many of the other developed countries like including New Zealand, Australia and Britain had encountered this problem and had been through this process and had changed their system to NPM to help resurrect their economies and restore sustainable practices.

I was always a curious person. While I was a Ministry of Education official, I was lucky to be part of a group of people who put into motion some of the policies, procedures and guidelines for the establishment of the NPM system. It was a very exciting time in the Ministry of Education. However, I always wanted to know what teachers and the

community thought of the changes and how it affected them. Apart from all the media campaign the Ministry of Education was doing, I wanted to know whether the community knew what we were doing in the Ministry, whether they noticed any difference in the way their children were taught, or whether they even cared.

Parents and employers alike would lament at the lack of foundation skills students had when they left school and would claim that education during their time at school were much better than that of their children's. I wondered why after a major reform of the public sector, the provision of education services was still not perceived to be achieving its outcomes. I was curious what teachers thought of these changes and how it changed the way they taught in the classrooms. I also asked, what changes had NPM made to improve the delivery of education? When the opportunity to do research presented itself, I thought this was an opportune time to satisfy my curiosity. I knew this area had not been researched before and I was honoured to be the first. These questions formed the basis from which the main challenges for this thesis derive.

I am a Cook Islands woman with lineage from Aitutaki and Manihiki in the Cook Islands and Wales in England. I was born and raised in Rarotonga and learnt the virtues of living in a small community. Government had much power and resources to provide for the needs of its population and they were accorded respect. Many young people during my time at school found work in government an attractive and stable career for life. The 1996 Public sector reform shattered their notion of a career for life and I believed the introduction of an economic based value system went against the grain of their existence as a collective.

The Cook Islands as a research context

Before explaining the choice of the Cook Islands as the research context for this thesis, I would give you a brief introduction to the Cook Islands.

Where is the Cook Islands

The Cook Islands first appeared on the map in the early 1800s. Captain James Cook sighted many of the southern group islands and recorded them on the map which later appeared on the Russian Naval Chart. The Russians gave that group of islands the name "The Cook Islands" in honour of Captain James Cook.
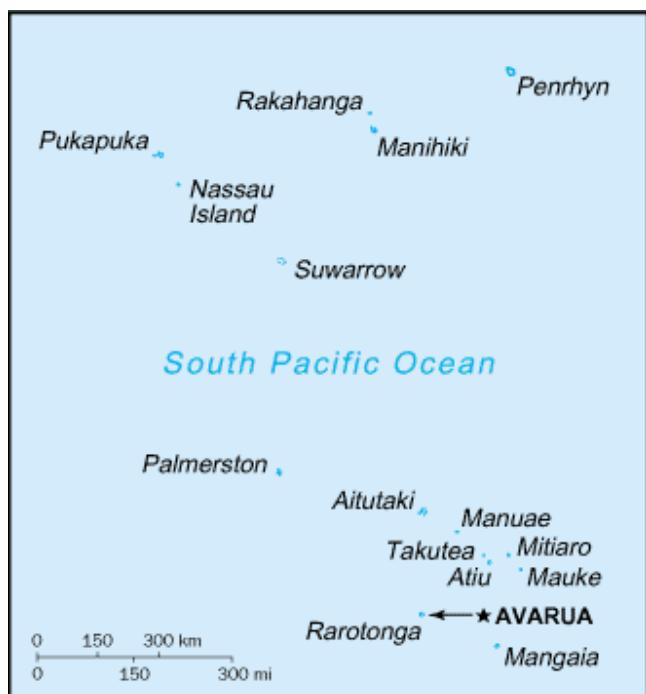
(Source: www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/cw.html)

The Cook Islands has fifteen islands spread out over an exclusive economic zone of about two million square kilometers in the South Pacific. It is located to the west of Tahiti, east of Tonga and Samoa, south of Hawaii and Kiribati and north east of New Zealand. The Cook Islands Exclusive Economic Zone lies between 156 and 167 degrees west in longitude and between 8-23 degrees south in latitude. The islands have an approximate land area of 240 square kilometers and can be separated into three main categories: the Northern group, the Southern group and Rarotonga. The Cook Islands position in Oceania is attached in appendix 2 (b).

There are seven islands in the Northern group: Penrhyn, Rakahanga, Manihiki, Pukapuka, Nassau, Palmerston and Suwarrow and are all coral atolls. Being coral atolls, these islands have a limited resource base because they are low lying, they are extremely vulnerable to cyclones and droughts. The islands of the Southern group are Aitutaki, Manuae, Mitiaro, Takutea, Atiu, Mauke, and Mangaia. Manuae and Takutea are coral atoll islands and are uninhabited. Mangaia, Mauke, Mititaro and Atiu are high-elevated reef islands. The centres of these islands are fertile, surrounded by jagged, dead coral – the 'makatea', remnants of the former reef. Aitutaki is a cross between a volcanic and coral atoll island with fertile soil. Rarotonga, a high volcanic island, is the capital and the administrative centre of the Cook Islands.

History, People and Population

The indigenous inhabitants are Cook Islands Maori. They are true Polynesians and have similar physical characteristics to Hawaiians, Tahitians, Tongans and Samoans. Tradition told stories of great warriors who sailed in search of land in frail canoes, as overpopulation caused scarce resources and limited land-space on the land they once inhabited. Once they found new land and claimed it theirs, they would fight off anyone who tries to impose on their territory. For example, when the commercial expedition from Australia and New Zealand went to Rarotonga for sandalwood in 1814 on a ship called Cumberland, many of the crew were killed and eaten including the captain's girlfriend, Ann Butchers, the only known white woman to be eaten by Pacific people.

The missionaries started their journey to convert Cook Islands people to Christianity in 1821 in Aitutaki and used a Tahitian translator to relay the message. John Williams was successful with his mission to stop cannibalism. The Missionaries tried very hard to keep their new converts from the influence of visiting European and American ship crews by teaching them to read and write and hired police officers (usually married men) to monitor their neighbour's activities at all times. This was the beginning of education in the Cook Islands.

Contact and acceptance of the outside world (missionaries and other Europeans) had devastating effects. The early missionaries estimated Rarotonga's population at first contact about 6,000 to 7,000 people. Western diseases spread very quickly and by the early 1900's population were estimated to be less than 2,000. A report by Stewart (1923) blamed the population decline on "severe epidemics, immorality, intoxicating liquors, and the careless use of European clothing" (pg xii), any excuse not to take the blame for the decline in population.

Migration from the outer islands to Rarotonga increased the population to 10,000 by June 1900. After World War II, a boom in the NZ economy required unskilled workers to work in factories. Many Cook Islands families left home and migrated to New Zealand. The Cook Islands population peaked in 1971 with 21,322 people, but declined dramatically soon after the opening of the Rarotonga International Airport in 1974 (Statistics office, 2001). This decline leveled off between 1986 and 1996,

Many people migrated as a result of the 1996 Public Sector Reform. The resident population for all the islands at the 2001 Census was 15,017, a decline of 3, 054 from the 1996 Census, where the figure was 18,071 (Cook Islands Statistics Office, 2001). In 2003, figures show that the resident population of the Cook Islands had again declined by 1,117 to 13,900 (Office of the Prime Minister, 2003). Between the period 1994 to 2000, there was a 19 percent decline in total population. Resident population by ethnic origin showed 87.7 percent Cook Islands Maori, 5.8 percent part Cook Islands Maori, and 6.5 percent as other ethnic origin.

Cook Islands people are fun-loving and very friendly people, and like other Polynesians are conservative and generally religious people who hold on to their customary way of life and culture. Cook Islands Maori language is the indigenous language and it is comprised of 9 dialects and the Pukapukan language. People of Palmerston Island spoke

English in the accents of Victorian Gloucestershire because Palmerston was inhabited in 1862 when a Gloucester man, William Marsters settled there with his three Polynesian wives. Almost everyone on Palmerston carried the Marsters surname. English was the official language of the Cook Islands until 2003 when an amendment to the Cook Islands Constitution put the Cook Islands Maori language alongside English as the Official National Languages of the Cook Islands.

Government

Before colonization, Cook Islands people had tribal governments in the sense that the power base was retained by the chiefs of the tribe, together with the appointed Mataiapo (sub-chiefs) and Rangatira. Resources were distributed according to their instruction, however, if people felt they were treated unfairly, they could contest. In a sense, while they had traits of a monarchy rule, they also had democracy through the notion that any chief's decisions could be challenged.

The arrival of the missionaries to the Cook Islands assisted with the protection of the Cook Islands and affiliation with the British. In 1843, the armed take over by the French of Tahiti frightened the Cook Islands people who, through Makea Takau (the only woman paramount chief), with the help of the missionaries, requested the British Empire, headed by Queen Victoria, to set up a protectorate to ward off any invasion by the French.

On October 7 1900, a Deed of Cession was signed by the five paramount chiefs without discussions about its implication. This Deed allowed the Cook Islands to be a colony of New Zealand with a Resident Agent as caretaker. In 1946 the Legislative Council was established, comprised of New Zealand administrators and selected chiefs of Rarotonga, a first step to allow Cook Islands people to participate in governing their own country. In the early 1960s, New Zealand 'gave' the Cook Islands self-rule.

The Cook Islands had been a self-governing nation in free association with New Zealand since 1965. The relationship between the two nations is fundamentally strong. However, the Cook Islands is dependent on New Zealand for its currency, security and foreign affairs. This means that Cook Islands people are New Zealand citizens. The Cook Islands has its own constitution and enacts its own laws. The Head of State is Queen Elizabeth of England, represented by an appointed Queen's Representative.

The country has a parliamentary system of government with 24 elected members. Rarotonga has 10 members of parliament while the rest of the islands elect the remaining 14. General elections are held every four years with Cook Island residents over the age of 18 eligible to vote. In addition to the central government, the outer islands (those outside Rarotonga) operate local government under statutory powers devolved by Parliament to local councils. Each island and each of the three districts of Rarotonga elect a local council and a Mayor. An Island Secretary manages the local government in the outer islands. The House of Ariki, established by government in 1969 was an avenue for traditional leaders to participate in governing the country, advise government on any matters of legislation, bureaucracy and governance. They have no legislative powers.

After the 1996 Public Sector Reform, many government assets and agencies were either sold, privatized or corporatised. The size of government reduced and the private sector expanded. ADB (2001) reported that the number of public sector employees was halved and the number of ministries reduced from 52 to 22.

Economy

The largest industry in the Cook Islands is tourism. Visitor arrivals increased from under 50,000 in early to mid 1990s to 83,000 in 2002 (Cook Islands Statistics Office, 2005). Tourism is largely based in Rarotonga with a growing market in Aitutaki and small operations on other southern group islands. In 2008, tourism (and its related activities such as transport, entertainment, and souvenir industries) is the country's main source of

income. Other commercial activities included the offshore banking, the black pearl and more recently long-line fishing industries. The black pearl industry is based on the islands of Manihiki and Penrhyn, the other industries were based on the capital, Rarotonga.

The Cook Islands has the highest per capita income in the Pacific. ADB (ADB, 1995) figures show that USD $3,400 per capita in 1990, and that increased in the year 2000 to USD $4,000 (ADB, 2001) reflecting growth in the tourism sector. The 2001 Census reported that 24% of employment was provided by the public sector compared to 56% by the private sector, with the majority of people employed in the Trade, Restaurants & Accommodation sector, this industry endured a rough ride before achieving good results. Between 1982 to the year 2000, the economy grew 2.8 percent annually in real terms. In 1994, there was a decline in economic output of nearly 10 percent to a trough in 1998 (ADB, 2001). As a result of the economy being reformed, government restored fiscal discipline, and transformed the economy from being closed and regulated to being open and private-sector led.

Education in the Cook Islands

Education is free and compulsory for children between the ages of 5 and 15. In 2005, there were 33 schools scattered through the 12 permanently populated islands; 14 on Rarotonga, 3 on Mangaia, 2 on Mauke, 4 on Aitutaki, 2 each on Manihiki and Penrhyn, and one each on Atiu, Mitiaro, Palmerston, Nassau, Pukapuka and Rakahanga. Eight of the 33 schools were private, six operated by the church and two by parents. Prior to the reforms, the Ministry of Education (2005) reported a steady increase in student enrolment; in 1990 the roll was 5,004, this number grew to 5,560 in 1996). After the 1996 public sector reform, school rolls decreased by 18 percent. The southern group had a 38 percent decrease, northern group 24 percent and Rarotonga had a 3 percent decrease in school roll. By level, there was an 11 percent decrease in pre-school roll, a 26 percent decrease in primary and an 8 percent decrease in rolls at secondary level. Forty eight percent of school children were girls and 52 percent boys (Ministry of Education: 2005). With

women having lesser children and having them later in life (Census, 2001) the education sector might have to a further decline in population.

As of 2005, there were 283 teachers in total. Seventy five percent were females and 25 percent males. Forty three percent of those teachers taught at the secondary level, 49 percent at the primary level and 8 percent at pre-school level. Just over half (59 percent) of the teachers were based on Rarotonga, 29 percent in the southern group and 12 percent in the northern group. Twenty one percent of teachers had an academic qualification leaving 79 percent without; however, 93 percent had a teaching qualification. Student teacher ratio was 16.2 which is one of the lowest in the Pacific. It is not clear from the Ministry of Education records how many teachers left the country as a result of the reform.

Public money allocated to education has been through dramatic changes. In the 1994/1995 financial year period, $8,540,000 was allocated to education. This decreased to $4,735,500 in the 1996/1997 financial year then gradually increased to $8,216,347 for the 2004/2005 financial year. The budget had five output classes; they were curriculum, recruitment and Cook Islands Teachers Training College, learning programs, school support, and standards. Eighty percent of the budget was spent on learning programs. Figures indicated above did not include funding for education from external sources like NZAID, European Union or other external sources, estimated to be close to $3 million. It is not compulsory for parents to pay fees in state schools, however, schools ask parents to make a voluntary contribution.

The role of the Ministry of Education did not change as significantly as the Ministry of Education in New Zealand. The Ministry of Education communicates directly to the schools. Cook Islands schools don't have Boards of Trustees responsible for school governance. School governance responsibilities are shared between the principal, school committee and the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education hires and fires

teachers on the recommendation of the school committee, the principal and the Directorate of Audit and Quality Assurance in the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education takes care of administration such as the payment of power bills, phone bills and the provision of stationery and cleaning facilities.

Education experienced many changes over time and there were several factors that shaped those changes. They were:

1. In 1989, the Ministerial Task Force recommended radical changes to the education system. The changes were thought to be before their time and not much was done until the 1996 public sector reform

2. Consequently, there were legislative changes to the way public servants operated, spent money and monitored. This legislation included the Public Service Act 1996, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development Act 1996, and the Public Expenditure Review Act 1996

3. Another review of the education sector in the year 2000 put into motion initiatives which would advance the education program and improve learning

4. Expatriate teachers and education advisors continued to initiate change at the school management and the Ministry of Education levels.

These factors of change were influential in the introduction of NPM practices in the Cook Islands education sector.

Future issues for education

A concern for Cook Islands education was its school population. The reality of the Cook Islands market was that total population had continued to decline since the 1996 public sector reform (Cook Islands Census Report: 2003). The Ministry of Education reported an overall decline in student enrolment of 18 percent (EMIS: 2007) and projections were for a continued decline. In a 2004 report commissioned by the Ministry of Education,

Demmke (2004) reported that the impact of a declining school population would mean that by 2016, 32.5 percent fewer teachers would be required in the classrooms.

A 2007 report by the University of the South Pacific into the status of teachers and education in the Cook Islands stated that with a declining population, schools had to compete with other schools to retain or increase student numbers in order to retain teachers (Johansson-Fua: 2007). It was anticipated that the effect this would have on schools and education would be decreased student teacher ratios, improved quality of teaching as schools attempted to attract more students, and increase the provision of accountability and transparent services to students and parents.

Research aims and objectives

There were three aims and objectives of this research

1. To explore how the practice of the NPM introduced by the Public Sector reform affected the provision of education;

2. To assess how the practice of NPM affected the achievement of desired education goals;

3. To contribute knowledge about the use of market-based approaches to the provision of public goods like education.

Why study the effects of the public sector reform on education?

The purpose of this study was to:

1. Raise public awareness of the effects of adopting the NPM to the delivery of education in the Cook Islands;

2. Explore the effects of the NPM on the way education was provided in the Cook Islands;

3. Highlight the difference in the provision of education using both the Traditional Public Administration and the NPM approaches.

In exploring these issues, a better understanding of the NPM paradigm, as applied in the provision of Cook Islands education might be gained. The effects of the NPM had been assumed and taken for granted but no research was done to ascertain the real effects of those changes. Research might be used to answer some of the questions around the difference in education before and after the public sector reforms. From a policy perspective, such research might inform Ministry of Education officials about the effectiveness (or limitations) of the systems they were working with, provide teachers with an explanation of the practice of NPM, and give parents explanations about the differences between the provision of education after the reform compared with the system before the reform.

Reports in 2001 (ADB, 2001; Cook Island Main Census report, 2001) indicated the economy was in a much healthier state than before the reform and the public sector was more efficient. The lack of specific research in the education sector indicated a gap in the body of knowledge. I intended to interview past and current Ministry of Education officials in decision making roles who worked in the Ministry of Education during the transition process from one system to another as the first group of key informants. The second group would be past and current teachers who worked as teachers in public schools before and after the transition process. These two groups of people would be interviewed to provide insights into the issues they were currently facing and how they had dealt with them. This research also had the potential to reveal how the Cook Islands could start redesigning more appropriate systems in government management for the provision of public goods suitable for the local environment.

Assumptions and Delimitations

I have started this study with many assumptions. These assumptions derive from my prior understanding and perceptions of education after the 1996 public sector reform. These assumptions will be tested and tried in this study.

This thesis assumed the following:

- That changes were made during the public sector reform to the education system to improve the delivery of education services;

- There were positive effects from the public sector reform on the delivery of education services;

- Traditional public administration practices were replaced by the NPM system;

- Teachers were not happy with the changes as it created more work for them.

This study was limited to:

- The effects on the Cook Islands education sector;

- To exploring 3 focus areas: public sector reform, changes from the reforms in the education sector, and the effect those changes had on the delivery of education services;

- To Rarotonga, Cook Islands and to the professional views of purposively selected research participants;

- State schools in the Cook Islands only, although through random selection, members of the public may refer to their experience from a private school.

Thesis structure and chapter outline

Chapter 1 presents the author of this thesis, discuses facts about Cook Islands, briefly outlines facts and figures and some questions about the education sector. I introduced the

research topic, specify the objectives and reasons for wanting to do this research, and identify the boundaries of this study.

Chapter 2 will look at literature written about the traditional public administration paradigm, its characteristics, practices and problems with the system that saw it replaced by the NPM. Literatures on education is also be explored in the context of learning and what it means in the Pacific. Three models of education are presented highlighting three different ways education was considered by education theorists. Discussion on the changing faces of education follows demonstrating that education in the Cook Islands is vulnerable to countries that governed it.

The literature review is focused on the public sector reform and the different types of reform. It will also consider how the public sector reform which was fashionable at the time it was implemented by countries that experienced economic problems during the 1980s and 1990s. The concept of convergence is explored as these reform practices swept across various countries carrying the gospel of NPM, but NPM processes and practices diverged and were different for various countries because they were implemented at various degrees depending on the existing structure, culture and practices of the country.

The NPM system is discussed with the 3 main theories that make up the concept; public choice theory, transaction cost economics theory and Agency theory. Managerialism is considered with a brief look at what criticisms there are of the theory. The concepts of efficiency, effectiveness, equity, and accountability are examined particularly as they were applied to other countries.

Chapter 3 identifies research methodologies and methods necessary for doing work in the field and will outlines my plan for research. I write about my experience in the field, the

highs and lows of working in the field and how it changed my perceptions about data collected in the field.

Chapter 4 presents results from the survey questionnaire and discusses key issues. The survey will represent the views of the community on whether they noticed any changes to education after the public sector reform. Chapter 5 presents the views of key informants; teachers and Ministry of Education officials. From those interviews, key findings are made which elucidate the views of key informants on the effects the public sector reform has on the way teachers taught in school, how the school was managed, the role of the Ministry of Education in making change, and their relationship with the school.

Chapter 6 will discusses findings from the survey questionnaire and key informant interviews with application to theories and literature presented in Chapter 2. It considers the findings within the Cook Islands context and compares the experience of the Cook Islands to countries like New Zealand, Australia, Japan, USA and Britain where similar studies were undertaken. To conclude the thesis, Chapter 7 reviews the arguments made in this thesis. These arguments are placed in the context of the literature and will revisits key themes in understanding the effects of NPM on education. A reflection of the thesis experience is provided in the conclusion.

CHAPTER 2

What have others said about Education, Public Sector Reform and the New Public Management

Education and learning

Education is the process of teaching someone to think (DeBono, 1991). According to DeBono, if a child mastered the art of thinking, that child was educated. He advocated that education be made available to everyone as a right and started off as a social responsibility by parents while the baby was in the womb. While De Bono and Delors both took a human development perspective on education, De Bono explored the thinking aspect of education while Delores put more emphasis on learning and suggested that education was the heartbeat of society and was all about learning.

Jacques Delors (1996) articulated four reasons why learning was central to education. He called them the pillars of education. They were learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together and to live with others. These pillars suggested that the purpose of learning was to gain knowledge in something. With that knowledge gained, a person would know how to do things, and to be (being a certain type of professional). The final pillar emphasized the social development and cohesion perspective that education was also about learning about other peoples and their social constructs so we could live in harmony in this "global village" (Delors:1996, pg177).

When talking about learning relationships, Gale and Densmore (2003) suggested that learning was much more than a client-professional relationship where a professional gave and a client would take. In education, the teacher gave information and the student would take. Paulo Freire (1996) described this relationship as "the human orientation towards being more" (pg 159). He said clients and professionals would meet on an equal

basis and exchange ideas and information through shared experiences, motivation and abilities. People's potential for learning is therefore the focus.

Richardson and Wolfe (2001) perceived learning in terms of process and outcome. They said learning was the outcome of the process itself. Current formal education was concerned with what was to be learnt via the curriculum, and what was learnt was evidenced through performance indicators with less emphasis on the outcomes of learning. Fromm (1978) described two modes of learning as "having" and "being". Those who viewed learning in a "having" way were interested in owning and keeping knowledge, in product. Alternatively, those who saw it as "being" were interested in developing knowledge, or in process. Fromm (1978) elaborated and said

> Students in the "having" mode must have but one aim, to hold onto what they have leant, either by entrusting it firmly to their memories or by carefully guarding their notes. They do not have to produce or create something new. The process of learning has an entirely different quality for students in the "being" mode. Instead of being passive receptacles of words and ideas, they listen, they hear, and most importantly, they receive and respond in an active, productive way (pg 37-38).

The difference in the "having" and the "being" mode closely reflected operations in the traditional administration system and the new public management, where one was interested in input (having) and in closely guarding rules and procedures, and another in outcomes (being) and in applying knowledge and skills in the workforce. What kind of learning did we have in the Pacific?

Education in the Pacific

Education was not a new phenomenon in the Pacific but had been in a state of transformation since colonisation. Before colonization, the purpose of education used to be for survival, transformation and sustainability and it still had not changed. What had changed was the situation under which we were educating Pacific people for survival,

transformation and sustainability (Pene, Taufeulungaki, Benson:2002). Taufeulungaki said that in order for Pacific people to survive in a globalised society, they needed to learn to know and learn to do. In the process of transformation and sustainability, Pacific people needed to learn the knowledge, skills, values, of western cultures as well as being grounded in their own in order to learn to live in their own societies, as well as positively contribute to a globalised society. Taufeulungaki argued that the Pacific was still in a process of transformation and confusion due to conflicting values being taught within our school and in our communities.

Thaman (1999) on the other hand stated that it was important for Pacific people to understand the difference between the two issues because of the restrictions people automatically associate with education and schooling. She said education was "an introduction to worthwhile learning" (pg 1) and schooling was "worthwhile learning that is organized and institutionalized" (pg 2). This distinction suggested that for people in the Pacific, education could take place anywhere whereas, schooling could only take place within an institution. Education was not a new phenomenon in the Pacific, but the way schooling was organized and provided for was. The organization of this type of education, as Kalolo pointed out when he talked about schooling in Tokelau (Pene, Taufeulungaki & Benson: 2002) was too rigid (timetabling was focused on time taken for a subject), had no context to the local environment (most of the subject contents were from textbooks imported from developed countries), and was to the detriment of some students (students could not apply meaning and contextualize subject content to their local environment).

Three models of education

Historically, there were many models of education but I want to highlight three discussed by Delores (2001). First there was the factory model, the more predominant model which suggested that schools were factories that mass produced future workers to grow the current capitalist economy. The establishment of public schools and the growth of industrialization in the early 1800s supported this view. There were a number of ways

schools resembled factories with their architectural and ideological frameworks such as total quality management in administration, standardization, time management, mass production, efficiency, bells and whistles. The factory model suggested that the purpose of schooling was to mass produce competent workers for the labour market. Knowledge became the tradable commodity where the more knowledge was gained by a student, the more successful the student became. This model remained the most dominant because learning was quantified (as it is gained in levels and by units) and mass production was at the centre of efficiency. The public loved this model as it quantified the efforts of teachers, met the same standards, and perpetuated the myth that everyone was treated equally. Any failure could be blamed on inadequate resources, flawed procedures, inferior workers and mismanagement.

Secondly, there was the journey model. It referred to learning as a journey traveled from point A to B but not arriving. During the journey, the student enjoyed, appreciated and understood different locations along the way. The teacher and student set the agenda for this journey as they took the journey together. However, the reality was the factory model was imposed on this journey and agenda. The factory's emphasis was on efficiency (in terms of cost and resources) and standardizations. There was so much to learn and understand to pass standardized tests which detoured students and teachers from their traditional paths. For most students, their paths were preset by standardized tests and teachers pushed students as fast as they could through the system. Some students took this journey either by supersonic jets, trains, buses, bicycles and others on foot. Destinations remained the same - the acquisition of skills necessary for employment.

Finally, there was the garden model where students were portrayed as flowers and teachers as gardeners. This model described ideally what teachers would like education to be. Teachers had control of student learning and defined learning as growth, in terms of skills acquisition, and sought the most efficient means to this end. Thus, most gardens quickly became farms where crops were mass produced for the market and were appreciated only for their market value rather than for their beauty. Self-actualization

and individual growth became enhancement rather than the primary purpose of schooling. Unfortunately, in most cases, the factory model overwhelmed the garden model.

The changing faces of education in the Cook Islands

In the Cook Islands, the right to education was embedded in the Cook Islands Constitution, the Education Act 1986/87 and various other conventions and international documents like the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Education For All, and Millennium Development Goals to which the Cook Islands was a signatory. Formal schooling for the Cook Islands started in 1820s when the missionaries settled in the Cook Islands and converted all tribes to Christianity.

It was interesting to note that the Ministerial Task Force (1989) as well as Gilson (1972) discussed five different types of periods with different types of authorities in power which were instrumental in shaping the evolution and development of education in the Cook Islands. They were:

1. The Mission period (started 1820's)

During this period, the missionaries converted most tribes to Christianity and established schools for their converts. Initially, the purpose of education was to make it easier for the missionaries to communicate with Cook Islands people about the Bible. It was instructional and doctrinal and available to converts. Basic literacy and numeracy was taught in Maori. Secular education was only for the elite which comprised of European history, geography and arithmetic. Exceptional individuals were trained as pastors or assistant teachers. There was heavy emphasis on the development of Christian attitudes and values towards sexual matters, sobriety and honesty. (Ministerial Task Force:1989).

2. The Protectorate period (started 1890's)

The British government had established government and taken power from the missionaries and chiefs. There was legislative reform which included secular education. The British administrators believed islanders were ill-equipped for industrialization. Free and compulsory education was introduced through legislation and endorsed in Federal Parliament in 1891. Compulsory English language instruction was introduced in schools and Maori language instruction was banished. Free secular schools were opened in each district. The Public Schools Act was passed in 1895 with the intention of taxing every citizen over the age of five to help pay for education.

3. The Annexation period (early 1900's)

During this period, the British gave New Zealand responsibility to administer the affairs of the Cook Islands on its behalf. New Zealand's plan for the Cook Islands was to develop trade and grow the economy which would fund social services. Administrators wanted to duplicate social services provided in New Zealand for the Cook Islands, but this was disregarded as unrealistic and a distant goal. The New Zealand administration felt secondary education was putting out too many "educated islanders" who refused to work on the land, only wanted white collar jobs, would leave the Cook Islands for New Zealand and were lazy. The secondary school was closed in 1911 because of a lack of funding and "low standards" and emphasis moved back to religious instruction after primary school level. Plans to reopen secondary education and improve standards to equal New Zealand's were denied.

4. The Colonial period (1915 - 1965)

Local participation in the development of social policies was denied. Most of the decisions about administering the affairs of the Cook Islands were done in Wellington. Economic development strategies failed to generate funds to pay for social services that met the needs and aspirations of Cook Islands people. Families started migrating to New Zealand in search of better education and employment opportunities. Secondary

schooling was reopened in 1955. Teacher training was started as well as recruitment of expatriate teachers to help support secondary teaching and the development of primary school management. Despite problems during this era, it ended on a high note for education where policy for universal standards of achievement measured by comparative New Zealand standards was supported and implemented.

5. The Independent period (1965 onwards)

At this time, the Cook Islands chose to become self-governing and became responsible for making decisions about the education of its people. The newly established Cook Islands government inherited a vertically structured administration of education reflected at levels of the education sector, each process governed by the Public Service Manual. At the micro level, Cook Islands people aspired towards high level education, a universal standard based education similar to that available in New Zealand. The recruitment program of professional teachers from New Zealand to lead local schools, especially secondary schools in the southern group were regarded a success. Scholarship programmes were established for outer island teacher trainees at the Rarotonga Teachers Training College. The College was expected to produce quality teachers and the best students at school aspired to train as teachers.

An Education Act was passed in 1965 which prescribed the administrative components of a free, equal and universal system of education. The first education policy statement was developed as a result of wide consultation with communities around the Cook Islands which emphasized lifting and maintaining high education standards within Cook Islands schools, the incorporation of Maori culture and identity in schools and encouraged competition among students which was hoped to achieve and maintain high standards of education. The first policy statement articulated by Maori people for themselves was developed and implemented. One of the effects of the policy statement was to lay a powerful ideological foundation for Cook Islands education upon which national and local objectives were built. These included bi-lingualism, Maori cultural identity,

equality of opportunity, free education at all levels and international standards of achievement which encouraged and promoted competition amongst children.

While the education policy statement expressed many ideological issues at the macro level, it did not address the micro-economic realities of the schools. Had the government put more emphasis on building the micro-economic structures of the schools first, macro-level policy statements would be achieved without a glitch. There was ongoing confrontation between educational objectives as set out in the policy statements, and successive government's capacity or willingness to supply acceptable levels of funding. The policy gap between the national level and realities at the school level seemed to be covered by various other services and external funding provisions. They included fundraising by parents and school committees, NZ expatriate teachers filled in positions vacated by local teachers, other overseas teachers and volunteers. Scholarships were funded by aid, the University of the South Pacific, and other charitable organizations. Government policy in the 1980's shifted emphasis towards finding new ways of satisfying "consumer" needs while education was not given much direction or resources to satisfy those 'consumers' such as parents, students and employers (Taskforce to Review Education Administration, 1988). Parents and teachers found they were powerless to change the system.

Teachers in a traditional administration system

For teachers, working in a vertical system of hierarchy disillusioned even the best of them. The teacher's union (Cook Islands Teachers Institute) which was supposed to represent teachers' work conditions, salaries and terms of service had no power to carry out its functions. Many well qualified teachers left the profession and defected to other departments, citing various reasons such as unattractive remunerations, the boring nature of teaching under those conditions, unattractive working conditions in schools, and very little opportunities for career development and progression up the steep hierarchy. They felt their work was not being valued by bureaucrats in the Department of Education, and the Public Service Commission was insensitive with their needs. After 1983, the

resources in schools deteriorated, bureaucracy and bureaucratic power grew, national administration over-centralized and teacher morale was very low.

The effects on students

For students, the defection of many good teachers from primary to secondary schools and to other government departments meant that the standard of education delivery was compromised. The curriculum and the limited resources which supported the curriculum were too academic and did not address the needs of 90% of students who did not reach Form 7. Although the Education Acts of 1965 and 1987 suggested that education was compulsory for students between the ages of 5 – 15, the reality was that some isolated islands did not have education programs for students over the age of 10 or 12. Ministry of Education data (2005) showed 90 percent of students who start school in one cohort drop out between the ages of 13 and 17. Only 10 percent get to the last level of school. Since the introduction of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) in 2001, the flexibility for students to take courses at various levels had decreased drop out rates by 20%, repeater rates by 25% (Ministry of Education, 2005) and ensured students left school with a formal qualification.

The New Public Management era

While the type of education provided was dependent primarily on the type of authority that was in power at the time and the type of system they operated, I believe the public sector reform in 1996 prompted another change in authority; the New Public Management (NPM) period. This period which started during the public sector reform, simply ended the traditional system of administration carried over from the colonial arrangements with Britain and New Zealand and adopted by the Cook Islands government in 1965. The effects of NPM including its principles and theories on the delivery of education in the Cook Islands will be explored in more detail in chapters which follow.

Education in the Cook Islands was deemed as a public good regardless of its private benefits. Economists argued that governments intervened in the provision of education because markets failed (Stiglitz, 2000; Brown & Jackson, 1992). Markets would fail in this regard because education was a right for all citizens, which meant that everyone had to have education whether they could afford it or not. Markets were not used to consumers not paying the price of a good or service, however, given that government legislation had given everyone the right to education government had to intervene and make sure everyone received education. In the case of education in the Cook Islands, it appeared that the Cook Islands had carried on from colonial administration and provided free and compulsory education trusting that it would promote equity (Harrison, 2004) and contribute towards the economic growth of the Cook Islands.

Transforming education

There were arguments for and against the use of NPM in the provision of education. People like Harrison (2004), suggested that NPM resurrected education from the doldrums of the traditional system and that the use of efficiency measures, accountability and effectiveness would improve the quality of education and make it more relevant to meet the individual learning needs of students and the economy. Others like Fitzsimmons (2004), and Spigelman (2002), suggested education was being treated like a product with no regards for the values and the purpose of education. Much of the literature with regards to NPM and education (Grant, 1997; O'Brien & Down, 2002) suggested that NPM was a dangerous approach for education to take considering its contradiction in values, principles and practices required. Grant (1997) argued that education should not be subjected to the efficiency and accountability practices of the market as it disregarded the values contained in the delivery of education services and only counted those services in dollar terms in producing education.

A survey conducted in the northern suburbs of Perth, Western Australia (O'Brien & Down, 2002) showed that teachers were not in favour of the NPM system because it increased their workload which distracted them from their core function of teaching.

NPM also isolated them from their peers and turned them into competitors who strove to out perform each other, rather than supporting each other as a team, and they felt they were being suppressed by the system.

On the other hand, economists perceived education not as a commodity but rather as an important investment (Harrison: 2004). Harrison felt the argument against the use of NPM in the provision of education was too harsh and opponents did not consider its merits as well. He pointed out that education couldn't really be bought and sold on the market like a cabbage. Money was required for its provision and schools and the Ministry of Education had to account for these resources. Accounting for public funds was absolutely necessary as the lack of accountability practices had forced economies into recession (ADB: 2001), especially the Cook Islands economy (Cook Islands Government:1996)

Pushing for change

The problems encountered by education sectors in the Cook Islands (Ministerial Task Force:1989) and New Zealand (Picot report:1988) were similar and required a major overhaul of the system. These problems included the lack of financial accountability, a lack of effective management practices, blurred responsibilities and accountabilities at various levels, and a lack of information and choice. A total replacement of one system for another, especially one with economic principles and ideologies adapted from private sector practices, had many education professionals worried. The nature of the two sectors in terms of its operations, objectives, motives for existence and values were different and any change would force a revolution of the purpose of education.

There were three types of changes to education. Schlechty (2001) described those changes to education as procedural, technological, and structural and cultural. The procedural change altered the way jobs were performed. Jobs were adapted around the sequence which events occurred. The quest for efficiency would have led to procedural

change. Technological change was the change in the means by which a job was done. The job remained the same but the tools were different. Structural and cultural (systemic) change involved changing the nature of the work itself, where purpose and intent were refocused, ie, focused on students and their needs. Systemic change involved procedural and technological change. It called on leaders to strategize and coached and inspire relationships that would nurture growth in an organization. Systemic change needed leaders that were wise, sometimes demanding but always supportive of and reassuring to teachers. I believed the public sector reform brought in structural and cultural changes to the Cook Islands with subsequent procedural and technological change. Before I would delve into changes brought in by the public sector reform, a brief examination of the nature and characteristics of the Traditional Administration Parardigm was appropriate.

The early Public Administration system

Gladden (1972) defined Public Administration as "… the work of the official in his several capacities, is a subordinate activity, devised to implement and to co-ordinate the policy-decisions of leader and community" (pg 7). This definition was preferred because of its reference to the community as an avenue for policy decisions. This was an important aspect because it placed the onus on the leader to make decisions and recognized that the community played a vital role in influencing and making of policy decisions. Secondly, it made policy decisions a collective process rather than one made in isolation of the community. This meant the community owned the policy, making implementation by the official easy.

The origins of public administration could be traced back as far as people who lived in tribal societies. Evidence suggested they had some form of oral administration. For written records they improvised with resources available to them like bones, wood, mud and rock tablets (Gladden: 1972). The Bible also suggested some form of government (a human leader with subordinates) and public administration was already in place during the time of the Pharaohs in Egypt, 22 generations from the creation of this world (Genesis 12: 18-20).

Archeology evidence pointed to drawings of pictures in caves and on tablets which indicated tribes settled there for a short period of time and then moved on to other locations. When they settled in one location and their social units grew in larger numbers, so did the social norms and rules that governed their social relations which was developed from being private institutions, where the family administered them to public ones where some form of public administration was required. They established cities and governments and rules and procedures governing from the centre to the periphery. Their technology for writing and recording events improved over time.

From the time of the Pharaohs and may be earlier, public administration was described as personal and based on loyalty to the leader, usually to a king or a chief. Culture had much to do with this kind of administration. The King would expect loyalty from its subjects and in turn, the King would provide for their needs. If the King died, he would be buried along with his loyal followers. Evidence of royal tombs comprising of a king and his followers were found in the city of Ur (Gladdens, 1972).

The idea of corruption and nepotism was not an issue in early administration days as it was normal practice one would hire who he knew and trusted to carry out certain activities. There was record that tax collectors and Police officers took a share of money they collected or activities they carried out for their personal gain (Hughes, 2003). According to Weber, governments existed and developed public administration that reflected values, culture and technology at the time (Waters & Crook, 1993). Government existed to give people direction and to administer projects, either to carry out the wishes of the elected or for the happiness of the people. These included the irrigation of water from the River Nile to provide for the Egyptian residents, the building of The Great Wall of China to protect the people of China from any external invasion, trade between one government and another, dispensation of justice to the construction and repair of public works (Gladdens:1972).

However, being in government didn't always work in favour of the elected. The evolution of capitalism from feudal societies, as described by Carl Marx (Brewer, 1990) was evidence that government worked to maximize benefits to themselves to the detriment of those not in the bourgeoisie class of society. One of the known examples of an elected government taking personal benefits from being in government was the "spoils" system in the United States of America, hence the saying "to the victor belong the spoils" (Hughes, 2003: pg 18).

However, this type of system was overshadowed by the assassination of President James Garfield by a disappointed job seeker (LeMay, 2006). This incident also indicated change was required to the current system. Owen Hughes (2003) described the practice of early administration as "personal, traditional, diffuse, ascriptive and particularistic" (pg 19). While this kind of administration served the administrative needs of people in the early years, early administration had to be replaced to keep up with the changing needs of society. In 1854, the Northcote-Trevelyan Report was released in the United Kingdom and in 1883, the United States of America Congress enacted the Civil Service Act also known as the Pendleton Act 1883 (LeMay, 2006). Other people were also influential in making changes to the early administration system. They were Woodrow Wilson, Max Webber and Frederick Taylor.

The Traditional Public Administration Paradigm

The Northcote-Trevelyan Report, Pendleton Act 1883, Woodrow Wilson, Max Webber and Frederick Taylor and a few others influenced, shaped and improved what was known as the Traditional Public Administration Paradigm. They wrote independently of each other but all had the same objective in mind, to improve on the early public administrative system and to make it more efficient and equitable to end political corruption.

What were its characteristics?

The 1854 Northcote-Trevelyan Report introduced the following characteristics to the Traditional Public Administration Paradigm (Hughes, 2003). They included:

1. a process of examination before appointment into the civil service;

2. appointment based on merit and examination replacing appointment by patronage;

3. entrance into civil service through lower levels;

4. filling of higher positions by merit through internal promotion from the bottom;

5. reorganization of central departments to manage the intellectual and mechanical requirements of the department.

Woodrow Wilson's main influence on public administration was the separation of political decision making from administrative activities, which ensured public servants remained neutral. He believed that the root of evil in the spoils system was the lack of boundary to separate the political and administrative spheres. Wilson argued (Hughes, 2003) that "… Public Administration is the detailed and systematic execution of public law. Every particular application of general law is an act of administration." (pg24). Owen gave examples of administration as tax collection, hanging of criminals, sending and receiving mails, appointment of personnel into the civil service, etc. However, broad government plans about what government should do was not administrative. Those plans were above the administrative sphere. How government carried out those activities was administrative. The separation of the two spheres would give public servants job for life and would guarantee continuity of service. Wilson's concept of separate political and administrative dichotomy meant that

1. the lines of accountability and responsibility between the two spheres and ultimately to the public were very clear;

2. politicians knew their role was to determine policy and public servants to administer policy, and to overstep the boundary was unprofessional;

3. public servants were to remain politically neutral and serve the government of the day.

Frederick Taylor introduced a scientific management system to the Traditional Public Administration paradigm, and argued for a standardized method of working, and for tight internal and external monitoring system to ensure standards of practice and compliance was maintained. He used the factory assembly line as base for his argument. Taylor advocated (Hughes, 2003) that:

1. public servants were to be paid according to their performance – those who put out more output be rewarded accordingly;

2. the work of public servants was to be standardized and everyone had to know and follow internal procedures, hence the development of manuals;

3. that their work was systematic and they started and stopped work at the same time;

Taylor's scientific management approach was very influential in public organizations and fit very well with government bureaucracy. It was very well received and the United States was the first government to practice such an approach, followed by Britain and various European countries (Bozeman, 1979).

Max Webber wrote quite extensively about bureaucracy in the German language. He was interested in countries with advanced public administration systems like China, India and Japan and how their social structures influenced the creation of bureaucracy or vise versa (Andreski:1983). Weber (Heady, 2001; Hughes, 2003; Waters & Crook, 1993) had the following description of the bureaucracy:

1. Hierarchy introduced a rational method of working where people of higher ranks provided direction and supervised work of those in lower ranks. This type of system would ensure cohesion and continuity within the bureaucracy, rules and

procedures within the organization, dictated how they were to behave in an organization and distanced personal interest from institutional requirements;

2. Specialization acknowledged division of labour and that different roles in organizations needed to be organized in a way which achieved organization goals. Competence recognized that those employed by the bureaucracy required sufficient education and preparation for the post. This paralleled Wilson's idea of examination before admission into the public service;

3. Rules and procedures were to be derived from law. This theory ensured the practice of public administration was consistent with requirements by the legal authority, there was consistency of practice regardless of the political party in power, and that public servants were clear with their performance requirements;

4. Public servant's personal lives were kept separate from that of the organization. This meant public servants who performed their duties according to law would take no personal responsibility for such actions;

5. Public administration was a full time profession and those who took on these posts needed to be committed and loyal to it as primary occupation and source of existence. Any other occupation or activity were to take second place;

6. Administration was a task that could be learnt as the public service had rules and procedures contained in manual books. These could be executed quite easily as everyone who took up posts would be clear on what was required and the standard with which duties had to be performed.

Theories and practice of public administration achieved what it had set out during its era. Improvements were made along the way with other Theorists like Elton Mayo who carried out the 'Hawthorne experiments'(Hughes:2003) to prove other social factors and not financial rewards were not the most important factor in motivating people to improve work output. Mayo left all principles in tact but changed the way goals were achieved in public administration. By the 1970's and 1980's it appeared the needs of people changed and the system had done its time.

Problems with the Traditional Public Administration Paradigm

Although Weber helped influence much of the Traditional Public Administration Paradigm, he was aware of its limitations (Waters & Crook, 1993). They included concerns that

1. the formal and technical aspect of the "Professionalism" theory. If training to become a professional civil servant required lengthy periods of time, only those who could afford the time and cost of training would get the job;

2. the rigid systems within the bureaucracy would result in officials being too involved in following procedures than solving problems;

3. public servants would no longer have the spirit for service, and more "red tape" would be created within the bureaucracy

Other limitation was the unrealistic separation of the political and administrative spheres. Hughes (Hughes, 2003) argued that the relationship between politicians and officials were complex because one depended on another for existence. Although administration was the implementing sector of government, they needed to work together. Hughes (2003) said "The work of public servants needs to be regarded as fundamentally political, although not necessarily party political" (pg 33).

The Traditional Public Administration was implemented vigilantly with manual books comprised of rules and regulations specific to every single task. It was too formal, had public servant in straight jackets and did not allow room for flexibility or creativity. It also separated them from being responsible for the results of their work and created a cozy spot for them to earn an income for life. All they had to do was carry out the tasks assigned to their post. How well they did the job, how timely, effective or efficient was someone else's concern. Just as the traditional public administration paradigm was ushered in as a global phenomenon, the public sector reform ushered in the new public management which replaced the traditional administration system.

The Public Sector Reform: a global phenomenon

Many people regarded the public sector reform as a global phenomenon (Sahlin-Anderson, 2002; McLaughlin, Osborne & Ferlie, 2003) but few studied how countries transformed their current system of administration to one of management.   These management systems embraced economic principles and ideologies pieced together to form a comprehensive reform package.   The need for this kind of package was used to rescue governments from traditional administrative systems and in most cases, an economic crisis that plagued the country.   Management theorists concluded that knowledge to carry out public sector reform, which was fashionable at the time (Pollit and Bouckaert: 2000), was transferred and transformed through two types of hypothesis; convergence and divergence.

General Hypothesis of Transformation

When an ideology traveled from one location to another, how it changed and adapted to the existing system would depend on how it was perceived. According to Pollit (2001) administrative reforms could be perceived in two ways; process and effect. Process was about the way things were arranged to take place in the public sector, for example, the design of systems for license applications, standards setting, achievement of outcomes, etc (Pollit & Bouckaert:2000).   In the Cook Islands, the process for the achievement of education standards were stipulated in the Cook Islands Education Act 1986/87 and interpreted in the Education Regulations 2002 and laid out in detail in the Cook Islands Education Guidelines 2003 (CIEG) and Cook Islands Administration Guidelines 2003 (CIAG).

The development of these guidelines was a direct result of transforming the New Zealand Education process outlined in the New Zealand National Education Guidelines (NEG) and the New Zealand National Administration Guidelines (NAG) and transforming them to suit the Cook Islands environment. Pollit and Boukaert (2000) also said that the effect

of an ideology like public administration considered the impact process had on activities undertaken. The effect of having these new standards transformed from New Zealand to the Cook Islands was that the delivery of education required teachers to have a certain level of qualification and registration before taking charge of a classroom (Education Act 1986/87, section 39; CIAG: 2003), and for parents to participate in shaping school policy (Education Act 1986/87, Part II) which was aimed at improved education provision in the Cook Islands.

The positive effect of this new system was the belief that higher qualifications of teachers meant higher standards and better performing teachers in the classroom. The negative effect was that the majority of local teachers did not have the required qualification for the job, which increased reliance on expatriate teachers especially at the secondary level. There were amendments made to section 39 of the Education Act 1986/87 to allow teachers who did not have the necessary qualifications to teach while they tried to fulfill the requirements for registration. Process and effect were not mutually exclusive units of analysis but were inseparable units where one could not function without the other, making the study of one difficult without intruding into the territory of the other. Christensen and Laegreid (2002) argued that there was insufficient evidence that the NPM reforms had any real effect on the achievement of desired outcomes, the side effects of NPM were difficult to trace, and there was insufficient methodology to evaluate it.

According to Christensen and Laegreid, (2002) NPM was an ambiguous set of beliefs; it could be acquired and adopted in any country, accepted, modified or edited. It could be initiated locally or nationally and the components of the package changed during implementation, which would cause further variation to the label of NPM. NPM reform was complicated by the adoption of various country and government structures that existed before its introduction and the interactions and relationships between various agencies at the international and national levels. New Zealand and the Cook Islands maintained a close relationship. New Zealand represented the Cook Islands on some

international issues and retained responsibility for the Cook Island's foreign affairs, currency and defence, and kept a close watch on governance; hence New Zealand had some influence on the Cook Islands. The transfer of the NEG and NAG from New Zealand required some changes and editing before it was implemented as the context of the Cook Islands education environment differed from that of New Zealand in terms of population size, layers of bureaucracy at the Ministry of Education and school levels, and economic status of the communities.

Why introduced NPM reforms

NPM reforms were introduced as a result of situational factors (Christensen & Laegreid, 2002; Pollit & Bouckaert, 2000; Boston et al, 1996). Some of those situations included the introduction of a fashionable practice at the time (Pollit, 1993), undesirable socio-economic country positions (Laughlin, Osborne and Ferlie, 2002), and the quest to find a better way for public sector agencies to operate (Pollit & Bouckaert, 2000). NPM reforms were either introduced into the country through the import of popular administrative doctrines or they were developed in country through existing administrative culture and traditions in response to a given situation. NPM was introduced to the Cook Islands as a result of an economic crisis (ADB, 1995), over-inflated public sector (Cook Islands Government, 1998) and the desire to change the system to one that would serve the needs of the people more effectively (ADB, 2001). At the time, NPM was in fashion and adapted by the Cook Islands using the New Zealand model as outlined in Boston et al, 1996. The Asian Development Bank and NZAID consultants, whom the Cook Islands government requested (Cook Islands Audit Report, 1995) to reform its economy, introduced NPM ideas to the Cook Islands.

What were the models of transformation

The model of transformation had three key explanatory factors; they were environmental, polity and administrative culture and traditions (Christensen & Laegreid, 2002). These factors had a major influence on the transformation of NPM reform ideas. Environmental

factors were about the status of the economy; the interactions between various players and its subsequent effect on the economy, for example, the relationship between the private and public sectors. In this context, the environment referred to the dominant ideology within a country, for example, capitalism, neo liberalism, or socialist ideologies. These ideologies determined the use of power within a certain environment. Polity was about the constitutional boundaries and foundations of a country and the legal structure within which government operated. Administrative culture was concerned about institutions that operated in the past and traditions practiced.

The Cook Islands used to have a traditional system where people lived in tribes (Crocombe et al, 2003). Each tribe would have a Ariki (chiefs), Mataiapo (sub-chiefs) and Rangatira. Power was basically held by the ariki and his small executive of mataiapos and rangatiras. These groups lived in self-defending societies and their power could be retained if they survived battles with other tribal societies. To be defeated in battle would mean change in hereditary titles. They could more closely be described as capitalists because they would go to battle to gain either material or human wealth that they would use to gain power over another tribe (Crocombe, 1980).

Colonization in the late 1800s by Britain saw the introduction of capitalism on a global scale. This new system took power from all the tribes of the islands they considered as belonging to one nation, named the group of islands "The Cook Islands" and centralized control to Rarotonga where people and chiefs were largely excluded from the political process (Crocombe et al, 2003). When the Cook Islands became a self-governed democratic state in 1965, it reconfigured the role of the chiefs as opposed to that of the state.

The Cook Islands still kept some of its ties with New Zealand and adopted much of its governance, legal and institutional systems from New Zealand. It would be fair to say that much of what existed in the Cook Islands was a reflection of what happened in

Britain and New Zealand. Bale and Dale (1998) suggested that this type of behaviour was typical where a developed country would transplant its systems onto developing countries but warned that it was seldom possible due to existing structures. While environment, polity and administrative culture explained how issues of NPM transformed and settled from one setting to another, similarities in the way systems were designed and the impact this had on people and environment was closely examined in a convergence hypothesis.

Convergence hypothesis

Convergence was best described by Christopher Pollit (2001) as a number of lines converging on a point. It referred to many organizations and jurisdictions adopting similar or identical organization forms and procedure from another jurisdiction or organization. Convergence may refer to structural forms in various kinds of organizations or specific procedures like performance budgeting, performance pay or total quality management (TQM). Christopher Hood (1998) suggested that change in organization structures would eventually be engrained in the practice, habits, minds and eventually hearts of everyone which would lead to some form of cultural convergence. Furthermore, the hypothesis of convergence suggested that the transformation of NPM related ideas and administrative instruments created the same type of process and effect and assumed a strong environmental pressure to three types of reforms while institutional, structural and cultural features were maintained (Christensen & Laegreid, 2002). However, most treatment of convergence only looked at the adoption stage; the point where an organization or jurisdiction could say that it had a certain program.

The four stages of convergence

Pollit (2001) explained that there were four stages to convergence. They were discursive convergence, decisional convergence, practice convergence, and results convergence. Discursive convergence is where many people, academics, practitioners and consultants alike talk and write about convergence. Decisional convergence was where authorities

decided to adopt a particular reform program or policies. Practice convergence was when organizations work in more similar ways than organizations in other countries. Results convergence was when reforms produced the intended or unintended effects, resulting in convergence of outputs and outcomes of public sector activities. Pollit made it clear that convergence at one stage does not mean convergence at the next. For example, if a country decided to adopt the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it did not guarantee that their implementation of the convention was the same as in other countries. Implementation was dependent on the existing structures, culture and political economy of the country at the time.

Theoretical convergence

Hughes (2003) wrote that Pollit's explanation of convergence was insufficient to describe convergence. He explained that convergence was most evident across a number of countries in underlying theory. Theoretical convergence helped to explain why there were similarities in different countries and why the details were likely to be modified by tradition and the extent of opposition. He further argued that there was substantial theoretical convergence in the instruments and strategies used by public sector reformers. To support his argument, Hughes quoted Boston (1996), "It is more important to argue that public sector reforms involved the same kind of policy instruments rather than the need for it or similarity with other countries" (pg 2). Kettl (2000) reinforced this. He wrote:

> The movement has been striking because of the number of nations that have taken up the reform agenda in such a short time and because of how similar their basic strategies have been". He lists the strategies as 1) productivity – producing more services with less tax money; 2) marketization – using market style incentives; 3) a service orientation; 4) decentralization; 5) policy – separating purchaser from provider; and accountability for results (pg 1).

Behn (2001) supported the view that strategies were different in various countries "the new public management is a worldwide phenomenon but with different strategies employed in different governments in different situation" (pg 26).

The most important similarity was that of underlying theory and how various countries used different instruments and strategies towards that theory. Hughes (2003) argued that it would be absurd to suggest that all countries adopted the same model of performance appraisal. The similarity of theoretical and policy instruments was the crucial point. Timing of reform may have differed in various countries but the instruments and strategies were the same.

Limitations of convergence

There was disagreement among practitioners and academics on the issue of convergence in public management. Pollit (2001) wrote that the distributions of public management reforms were global and direction would converge. Others were more skeptical and said convergence was partial and not as global due to the absence of countries like Japan (Hood, 1995) and Germany from the list (Flynn & Strehl, 1996). Even more commentators (Christensen & Laegreid, 1998; Pollit & Boukaert, 2000; Olsen & Peters, 1996) suggested convergence had been exaggerated; similar states in Europe had different starting points, but the directions they were taking public sector reforms were not the same. There was evidence of convergence of NPM related ideas in the Cook Islands, especially with regards to effect. The introduction of NPM ideas had changed the practice of administration to one of management (ADB, 2001), decreased the size of government, and increased accountabilities among public managers and politicians. Pollit (2001) noted that the convergence hypothesis required further research strategies to unpack and understand the various strands of convergence. The hypothesis of convergence was opposed by the hypothesis of divergence.

Divergence hypothesis

The hypothesis of divergence emphasized the point that NPM ideas were transformed to produce a different result in any country (Christensen & Laegreid, 2002). The NPM ideas would make those differences more apparent because the internal operating systems pointed in different directions. This hypothesis assumed NPM transformed when it traveled to different countries due to the difference in country experience of public administration, environmental, polity, administrative and cultural context NPM had to adapt to (Christensen & Laegreid, 2002). Pollit (2001) explained that countries which adapted NPM related ideas created their system and would not want to converge and travel in the same direction as other countries. For example, he suggested that France would not want to have the same system as Germany, neither would Finland want the same system as Australia because of the differences inherent within their environment, polity and administrative culture.

In the Cook Islands, the devolution of social services like education, health and police from Rarotonga to individual local island councils (Cook Islands Government Cabinet Office, 1999) was an example of divergence. Devolution of these services was one of the key activities resulting from the public sector reform in New Zealand (McKinlay, 1990). It was assumed that devolution would work at the same level in the Cook Islands as problems requiring decentralization were similar to those of New Zealand. According to the Picot Report (Grant, 1997), it suggested that education was over-administered, over centralized and not producing the results required to meet the needs of the country. The administration of education services was devolved from Rarotonga to outer islands Island Councils to promote the idea of taking services and decision making to the local level. After a few years of Island Councilors attempting to practice the ideologies of NPM to the provision of education on their respective islands, education was re-centralised to Rarotonga (Cook Islands Government Cabinet Minute, (00) 384, (00) 385 (02A) 401).

If there were convergence and divergence of NPM related ideas, how were they transferred from one country to another? Boston et al (1996) suggested that public

sector reform ushered in NPM related ideas. How these were distributed and penetrated various jurisdictions in different countries will be explored next.

Three types of Reforms

Christensen and Laegreid (2002) described three types of reforms. They specifically looked at how NPM ideas traveled from one jurisdiction to another and who was responsible for their exportation or importation. These reforms were described as nationally induced reform, internationally formed public management reform, and transnational formed public management reform.

Nationally induced reform

A reform was said to be nationally induced if a number of countries, for various reasons undertook the reform process independent of other countries. The main reason for this could be that countries faced similar problems and developed similar ways of developing solutions to their problems. Solutions might be nationally based and developed to cater for specific needs of the nation, and that might help explain the similarities and differences in different country systems.

Internationally formed Public Management Reform

The internationally formed public management reform did not have countries working in isolation of each other. One country, through its extensive networks learnt, imitated, and shared ideas with each other. As these ideas traveled around the world and were adopted by various nations, they took different shapes, the context and effect depending on how they were adapted. This process of transformation took effect through a network of reformers, located in different countries that designed and carried out these reforms. The adaptation of these reforms explained similarities and differences in different country systems.

Transnational Formed Public Management Reform

Apart from the use of reformers to transform ideas, there were people who advocated and promoted reform ideas like researchers, international organizations, Aid or humanitarian organizations, consultants and publications. They acted as avenues for which information about the reform processes, reviews and implementation, and the comparative experience of one country was relayed to another. They advocated guidelines and framed ideas and experiences, taught countries how to reform (Finnemore, 1996) and may be used a particular country as a model for others to follow. Having a combination of models from various countries formed a basis known as the transnational formed public management reform. The adaptation of these reforms would identify similarities and differences in various country systems.

The reform in the Cook Islands would closely fit the transnational formed public management reform description. An international organization, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and an aid organization NZAID, were requested by the Cook Islands Government to assist with reforming the Cook Islands public sector (CIGOV, 1995). ADB and NZAID jointly responded by sending a New Zealand consultant who, together with a team of government officials led the reform process in the Cook Islands. ADB sent an economist, located in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, to put in place public management process that would guide the Budget process of the Cook Islands Government (ADB: 2001). This was how NPM was introduced into the Cook Islands.

The New Public Management

NPM came into fashion in the late 1970s as a response for search for a better way to manage the public sector. Hood (1995) was the first to use the name NPM when he observed and compared changes in the styles of public administration in the OECD countries during the 1980s. He observed similarities in the reforms and differences in the process and pace with which countries carried out those reforms. While there were

consistencies in the models adopted, NPM was not a coherent and consistent reform model, instead, it was a group of ideas with variations on a theme (Hood, 1995).

The NPM was inspired by economic theory and normative values with the objective of increased efficiency (Christensen & Laegreid, 2002). Some of its characteristics were increased market orientation of public services, devolution of services from the centre, reduced state role in activities that could be best delivered by the market, managerialism and the use of contracts for the provision of some public services (Boston et al: 1996). One of the fundamental beliefs of NPM was that there were not a lot of differences between the private and public sectors, and similar theories could be applied in both sectors (Pollit: 1993). These key theories included public choice theory, transaction cost theory, agency theory and managerialism.

Public Choice Theory

At the heart of public choice theory are two assumptions; that individuals behave out of self-interest to pursue their private interests in both economic and political life, and that individuals were rational utility maximizers making the best decision that would yield the most benefit (Brown & Jackson, 1992, Lee May 2006; Self: 1993). There were striking similarities in the way private sector individuals and government officials behaved. Private firms would try to produce goods and services at minimal costs, sell the good or service at a price that would cover cost of production and maximize profit. In this case, with help from market signals, firms would decide what to produce, when to produce and how much to produce. Similarly, in government organizations, bureaucrats worked to maximize their departmental budget at the expense of other departments, interest groups would try their best to capture a large share of the national budget and politicians may abuse their power (Bale & Dale, 1998). For example, bureaucrats in the Ministry of Education would work to gain much of the national budget so they could have projects funded and their interests pursued without consideration that other Ministries would like the same, forcing competition amongst ministries for the biggest share in the national budget.

Boston (1996) suggested that the belief politicians were mainly concerned with the well-being of society did not factor in the concept of public choice theory. Issues of working in the "public spirit" or working for the good of the national interest were treated with skepticism. Politicians were thought to pursue their own interests at the expense of their constituents, interest groups would push their own interests at the expense of other sectors within the community and government ministries would do the same. They warned that rent-seeking behaviour would have individuals try to optimize their benefit without consideration for the needs of others and the achievement of other agency outputs.

In application to the public sector, Boston et al (1996,pg 17-18) and Self (1993, pg 32-36) stated that public choice theory would be concerned with the following:

1. work to maximize agency budget without regard for the budget of other agencies;

2. roles and functions of the purchaser of public services had to be separated from the role of the provider of public services;

3. emphasis on transparency, especially political interventions, and curbing role of vested interested parties in government policy making;

4. reduce scope for political interference;

5. the development of public financial legislations (in New Zealand The Reserve Bank Act 1989 and the Public Finance Act 1989) were mainly influenced by the concepts of public choice theory.

Given the right-wing nature of this theory, the aim of its application was to maximize liberty and free people from state coercion and control. This could be achieved by reducing the role of the state and control political interference in the economy through the introduction of legislation. Departments could not provide policy advice to their political masters and implement those policies at the same time. This would create a conflict of

interest. It would not work out in the best interest of society, but would provide opportunities for officials to maximize their utility. Public choice theorists (Boston et al, 1991) also suggested that where possible, the provision of social services like health and education be either privatized or made contestable.

Transaction Cost Theory

Transaction cost theory assumed that all individuals were self-interested and they behaved in ways that would maximize their benefit. In public sector organizations, this theory was responsible for reorganizing the structure of organizations, from one of hierarchical and authoritative based structures to one of flat and output based structures (Boston et al, 1996). Hood (1991) explained that having a hierarchal system would mean that individuals were subject to the commands of the institutional hierarchy. On the other hand, doing public management the individualistic way would mean that individuals were rational utility maximizers. They were in competition with others for what they could get out of the state, in other words, the ruled were out to find ways to exploit the rulers.

New Zealand used this theory as one of the bases for public sector reform to reduce the number of public sector organizations and employees and consequently reduce the cost of providing a service in the public sector. Bale and Dale (1998) suggested that in the public sector, transactions that could be contested on the market with qualities and quantities clearly measured would be better contracted out to market type arrangements. Transactions with high uncertainty and requiring high asset specificity would be better suited to hierarchical or rule-driven organizations. The intention was to shape public sector organizations in the best possible way to serve the purpose for which they were created. The greatest advocate of this theory, Williamson (1985) had five main concepts for transaction cost theory and they were uncertainty, small-numbers bargaining, asset specificity, bounded rationality, and opportunism.

Uncertainty referred to the constantly changing environment public servants work in which they were unable to control. These changes referred to political agenda, community mandates and the development of laws and regulations. *Small numbers bargaining* referred to the advantage few people (who may have skills, experience, or specialization) had over potential competitors in bargaining for lucrative or long-term contracts. The use of those few people who initially had the advantage over others gave them more advantage as they gain specific skills over other competitors and increasing their future bargaining position. The skills gained and the advantage acquired was known as *Asset specificity. Bounded rationality* suggested that individuals generally had limited information and capacity to hold information. As individuals specialize and gain skills and knowledge in one area, it restricted them from gaining knowledge and having information about other areas. *Opportunism* was about individuals prone to act in self-interested ways to capture and take advantage of other individuals.

According to Williamson (1985) firms aimed to minimize the cost of providing services which would make them more efficient, resulting in less cost and more profit. Public sector organizations were also expected to behave in a similar fashion to achieve efficiency and decrease cost of operating and consequently, the same or better level of output. Closely related to this concept is the belief that contracts may reduce the cost of providing a good or service.

Agency Theory

Agency theory was founded on the belief that the practice of social and political activities was understood by a series of contractual relationships (Boston et al, 1991). These relationships were entered into by two parties; the principal, and the agent. The principal would enter into a contractual relationship for reasons such as lack of expertise, skills, or specialized knowledge to perform a specific task. The principal would monitor implementation of contract and ensure that specific clauses of the contract are complied with. In a contractual situation, the principal would ensure that his utility was maximized where the agent performed an activity. On the other hand, the agent would ensure his

utility was maximized through favorable remuneration and conditions of contract. This theory saw both agent and principal as greedy and selfish individuals who would enter into contracts to maximize their own benefits. As the two parties had a certain power over the other, this theory suggested that negotiation of the terms of the contract would need to be rigorous to avoid conflict.

There were certain elements that the concept of agency theory did not address. The issue of the unequal distribution of power among individuals in an organization and in society was ignored and dwelt on opportunism by the agency and not the principle. It assumed that both the agent and principal were on equal terms. Power in human relationships in the Cook Islands determined, to a large extent, whether a person had to be subservient or take total control of a situation. Simple models of an agent and principal did not consider the complex nature of organizations where it was not clear who the principal might be.

This theory had wide application in the Cook Islands. The reduction in the size of the public sector during the economic reform of 1996 did not mean a reduction in its core functions. For the education sector, although there was a slight decline in the number of children in schools, there were still children to teach, schools to operate, budgets to bid, curriculum to deliver. The size of the Ministry of Education reduced from 60 to 40, specific technical work of the Ministry of Education, especially the writing of curriculum statements, development of planning documents and review of the education sector.

Managerialism

Managerialist ideas originated from Frederick Winslow Taylor when he developed an administration system based on a scientific approach to management in the early 1900s. This concept evolved over time, adjusted to suit time and conditions and converged with other concepts of public economics to make up what Hood (1990) referred to as the NPM. Managerialism assumed that management was generic and had a set of principles to

guide its activities. These activities were once instrumental in implementing the activities of the private sector and could well be applied to the public sector. Managerialism has had many slogans including "let the managers manage" and "managing for results" (Boston et al, 1996)

There was a distinct difference between management and managerialism. Lee May (2006) differentiated these, explaining that management was the use of resources to achieve goals, and managerialism used an entrepreneurial approach to emphasize the rights of managers to run the organization. Boston et al (1991) however, suggested that management was a key element of managerialism which included a set of principles that could be applied to the performance of both public and private sectors. Boston also outlined the key managerialist principles as:

1. preferring management skills over technical or professional skills which allowed the manager freedom to manage;

2. A move away from input control and procedure to outputs and performance measures;

3. Empowering of managers to manage, and the development of accountability mechanisms;

4. Separation of delivery mechanisms, policy from implementation, commercial from non-commercial;

5. The preference for contracting out, contestability and private ownership;

6. Copied private sector management practices like the development of corporate plans, contracting, mission statements, linking performance to remuneration, development of new management information systems and protecting corporate image;

7. Preference for monetary reward rather than organization values, ethics, and ethos;

8. An emphasis on doing more for less, efficiency and value for money. (pg, 8-10)

Pollit (1993) complimented Boston's explanation of managerialism when he emphasized that social goals could only be achieved through the use of economic goals and with people skilled in the discipline of economic production. A lot of these principles had a long history but what was unique about them was how they converged to form a new approach to doing things, and this time in the public sector and with a new attitude and vigor in their practice.

A manager's autonomy was central to the concept of managerialism which was widely practiced in many democratic countries like New Zealand, Australia, Britain and Canada. Where a manager's role in the traditional public service was to take orders and make sure officials complied with rules and procedures, the shift to managerialism made their role more challenging in that they were made accountable for the delivery of outputs, contracting of services, and for the investment in outputs and societal outcomes.

Criticisms of Managerialism

While managerialism had merit in the operations of organizations, managerialism also attracted criticisms (Pollit, 2001; Pollit, 1993). Key commentaries noted the following:

1. Economics was a flawed social science and its adoption from the private sector and application to government management was also flawed;

2. While economic principles could be applied to the economy and the private sector, it couldn't easily be applied to the public sector for the following reasons:

    (a) provider-consumer transaction was more complex in the public sector than in the private sector;

    (b) public service consumers were never merely consumers, they were also citizens which made things more complicated and had implications for the transaction. Citizens could demand more government service and on the other hand, complain about taxation levels. (pg 125-6)

While these criticisms about managerialism may be valid, much of its practice had introduced flexible values, conservation in the use of resources, and yet focused on the achievement of the outcomes of an organization in the public sector. Managerialism also sought to achieve four main issues which were drivers of the public sector reform (Boston et al, 1996, Pollit, 1993, Bale & Dale, 2003). They were efficiency, effectiveness, equity, and accountability.

Efficiency

Efficiency could be defined in the same context as more goods or service for less cost. Lee May (2006) defined efficiency as "the ability to produce a desired good, service or effect with minimum effort, expense or waste" (pg 24). United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) defined education as "An ability to perform well or to achieve a result without wasted resources, effort, time, or money"(www.unesco.org). Wojtczak (2002,) defined efficiency as "An ability to perform well or achieve result without wasted energy, resources, effort, time or money" (pg 7). It appeared there was clear and definite understanding of what efficiency was. Improved productive efficiency of the public sector was one of the fundamental reasons for public sector reforms (Boston, et al, 1996; Pollit, 2002; Bale & Dale, 1998; Hood, 1998; Flynn, 1997). The kind of efficiency ushered in by the NPM reforms was similar to that practiced in the private sector.

Efficiency and education

Many academics and professionals (Spigelman: 2002, Fitzsimmons: 2004, O'Brien & Down: 2002) argued that market based principles and practices were not compatible for the social sectors in the public service. They said that government was obligated to provide social services like education to its citizen as a right (enshrined in international conventions like the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Education for All (EFA) and the United Nation's Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) as well as a national legal requirement (in the Cook Islands, the Education Act 1986/87). The

provision of education did not have the same status as a private good like bread or milk exchanged for money in a private setting. Education had to be provided by government as a national and international legal requirement without the exchange of money from its users. Goal two of the EFA framework for education required all member countries - the Cook Islands is one - to provide free and compulsory basic education to all its citizens. By comparison to the market, no private entity would provide any product without the exchange of money to cover the cost of producing the good. The equation, Cooze (1991) explained, was price equals marginal cost (P = MC). Their main objective was to make profit. A government's objective was the fulfillment of their legal obligations to its citizens.

What did it mean to be efficient in education? Did it mean fewer teachers for better student scores, or lesser education expenditure for better desired education outcomes for parents, school and society? According to Cooze (1991) and Harrison (2004), the problem with education efficiency was trying to find the right mix of education inputs like teachers, class size, buildings, curriculum, etc.. to achieve the maximum output and eventually outcomes. In education, this was not so viable because outputs were not quantifiable in terms of market prices and because there was, in practice, no clearly defined function which correlated to a single well defined indicator of output. In short, this would make the calculation for what government would get out of its investment a very difficult job (Harrison, 2004).

On the other hand, Harrison (2004) argued that market efficiency promoted education efficiency in New Zealand schools by way of offering students a wider choice of schools to attend through dezoning schools, opening up participation from parents into the way schools were run, decentralization of school operation to the school level, hold schools accountable for the use of resources, and allowed students the right to decide on the quality of the product through voting with their feet. While there were elements of truth in Harrison's message, there were also huge underlying assumptions. While students would ideally have liked to attend the school of their choice, the fact remained that

parents chose the schools their children attended and that would depend mainly on accessibility by geographic location and affordability (Kinsler & Gamble, 2001). Parent's participation in the running of schools assumed that parents knew how to participate in the running of the school and in their children's learning. Decentralizing operations to the school level complimented the managerialist concept which allowed managers the power to manage. Each New Zealand schools were made the responsibility of Boards of Governors. These Boards of Governors were made up of parents (as recommended by the Picot Report) whose children attended that school and were given the power to govern the school.

Efficiency remained an elusive concept for education. UNESCO, as part of its technical assistance to its member countries, taught Ministry of Education officials quantitative calculations for education internal efficiency which included a straight-line calculation of cohorts progressing through year levels in school. It operated much like a commodity being put through a factory production line, where the number of inputs into the processing line would come out the same at the end of the line; any rejects or reprocessing was deemed inefficient. In terms of education, students were put through education at the start of each level as a cohort to progress through the school levels. Each student had an associated cost which was a reflection of the cost of resources divided by the number of students. If a student repeated a level or dropped out part way through, the system would be deemed as inefficient. This system assumed the Cook Islands education system operated the same way as a machine in a processing factory and also consistent with the factory model of education (Delores, 2001).

Accountability

Accountability was defined by Stewart (1984,) as

> a responsible person or institution … on whom is laid a task, function or role to
> perform, together with the capability to carry it out. There is also conferred some
> discretion and the liability to account for the performance of duty, which should

induce the person or institution to act with concern for the consequences of the decisions made and, in so deciding, to act in conformity with the wishes and needs of those who conferred the authority and received the account (pg 15).

This definition suggested that accountability was dependent on a particular type of behaviour by the public servant on behalf of the public (Funnell, 2001). Funnell also argued that accountability could not be equated with efficiency in terms of satisfactory experience of public services because it had a deeper meaning in describing the relationship between the individual, community and the government.

The concept of accountability was introduced to the New Zealand public sector during the public sector reform. One of the aims of the reform was for greater accountability of the bureaucracy and the political executive (Boston et al, 1991, 1996). Legislation was changed to ensure greater accountability and changes in financial and performance measure practices to reflect the type of accountability required of the bureaucracy and the political executive.

Three types of accountability

Funnell (1988) advocated two types of accountability, constitutional and executive accountability. Constitutional accountability provided the foundation for all other kinds of accountability and was dependent on government honoring the constitution both in its express provisions and its intent. Executive accountability, which stemmed from constitutional accountability, referred to the activities carried out by chief executives to ensure services entrusted by the public to be performed on their behalf was carried out in the best way possible. However, Boston et al (1996) added managerial accountability, which referred to various processes (usually entrenched in the Public Finance Act) public servants had to abide by in order to be transparent with duties executed on behalf of the public.

In education, Anderson (2005) argued that there were three types of accountability systems in education; compliance with regulations, adherence to professional norms, and results driven. The system of compliance with regulations demanded that statues and regulations were complied with as part of the process of providing education, in which case, educators were accountable for compliance with rules and accountable to the bureaucracy. Adherence to professional norms suggested that there were agreement on certain principles and practices such as assessment standards, delivery standards and standards of education achievement all outlined in the Cook Islands National Education Guidelines (2003). With this system, educators were accountable for compliance with standards and accountable to their peers. Results driven accountability system was about results of student learning, a system stemmed from increased political involvement in education. The "No child Left behind" requirements in the United States and the Cook Islands Teacher Performance Management (Ministry of Education:2003) system were examples of results-based systems. In this system, educators were accountable for student learning as well as accountable to parents and the public.

Accountability versus Responsibility

Accountability must not be confused with responsibility. Accountability implied a mechanistic compliance to rules, practices and norms of an institution without any sense of personal obligation, apart from what was required. Responsibility on the other hand, was beyond what was required by law or practice and infused a sense of individual value and responsibility for the service (Funnell, 1988). Roberts (1981) further made the distinction that, to be accountable, one must be made to explain the circumstances and decisions that led to an activity. Whoever was accountable did not take the blame. To be responsible, however, meant that one did not explain but took the blame. This meant that in the execution of public duties within the public sector, public servants were accountable to their ministers; the ministers in turn were accountable to the government and to the public for any transgression made in his/her ministries of responsibility.

Martin (Boston et al, 1996) argued that the public sector reform introduced 'consumerism' into the public sector, which caused many changes to the culture, ethos and ethics of the public servants, and especially to the relationship between the public servant, the public and the minister. While the main objective of the private sector was to satisfy customers and maximize profit, the public sector was not as clear cut, particularly when it came to the provision of social services like welfare, health and education, and when funding for those services came from taxation, rates and other public sources. In this case, public servants also become the custodians of public interest (Martin,1988) and they carried out their duties 'imbued with the spirit of service' (Boston et al,1996. pg 327). Being inspired with the spirit of service would clearly contradict the spirit of the public choice theory where public servants were deemed guileful, individualistic, and self interested, and out to exploit others in order to maximize their benefit (Self, 1993) It would seem impossible for both concepts to co-exist!

Accountability in the Cook Islands

The Cook Islands had their fair share of change in process to ensure accountability within the public sector. The introduction of the Public Expenditure Review Committee and Audit Act (PERCA) Act 1996, Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MFEM) Act 1996 and the Public Service Act 1996 contained rules and processes by which public servants were to carry out their duties in the collective interest of accountability (ADB, 2001). As an extension of these legislative procedures, changes were put in place by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, Audit Office and the Public Service Commission to ensure standards for the achievement of public services (Government of the Cook Islands, 2001). These documents reflected the type of behaviour required of a public servant within a public sector organisation, the type of information required for reporting to the minister, and information required for reporting to the public. The Ministry of Education was expected to provide the Minister and the Public Service Commissioner with a quarterly report, half yearly report and annual reports to show what was done in the education sector to achieve given outputs and outcomes. That was the type of technical transparency expected of public organizations to maintain the

confidence of the employer and the minister to ensure the Ministry of Education was working in the best interest of the public.

Were these procedures sufficient to maintain the confidence of the public? At the bureaucratic level, the Ministry of Education had complied with procedures of financial accountability as stipulated by the central core agencies like the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, Public Service Commission and the Audit office. At the community level, if one considered the number of reviews the education sector had and the comments from parents about education (Ministerial Task Force: 1989, Ministry of Education: 2001) it was clear that the community did not have much confidence in the education sector. Community accountability was one concept that did not feature much in the NPM approach as there was no such thing in private sector practices.

Conclusion

The changing periods in the Cook Islands education system highlighted the degree in which the Cook Islands was vulnerable to global changes despite its self-governing state. The provision of education was also changed and influenced by authorities who administered the Cook Islands to a level where much of the education suited their purpose and ideals. The convergence of the currents of public sector reforms came unhindered, transformed much of what was established by the traditional administration system and replaced it with NPM, a global phenomenon practiced by various developed countries in varying degrees. The period of transformation from 1996 was at a speed never experienced by any other countries as the Cook Islands was reformed by consultants and international agencies experienced in reforming economies and public sector practices. Given the similarities in problems experienced by the Cook Islands, it readily lent itself to be reformed with minimal divergence in practice or in process, closely following in New Zealand's footsteps.

Education, a social service provided as a right under local laws and international treaties was deemed by some commentators to be incompatible with the changes introduced. The nature and the purpose of its existence suggested that it should not be subjected to private sector practices because it would endanger the values and practices of education and would be considered like a commodity traded on the open market (Fitzsimmons, 2004; Spigelman, 2002). Education theorists like Jacques Delores (1996), on the other hand, had already articulated the provision of education based on the factory private sector model and closely emulated its practices (bells, standardization, time management, efficiency) where the purpose of education was the mass production of future worker for the labour market. The introduction of management practices, performance measure and issues of efficiency, effectiveness, equity and accountability were not easily accepted by many as they pondered over what may come of this system. Studies undertaken in Australia (O'Brien & Down, 2002) suggested that these concepts were detrimental to education. In Britain, Woodhead (1996) warned that while teachers may be uncomfortable with the change, the rhetoric of the new system should not cloud the purpose of education but best practices were to be adopted in the delivery of education programs.

The NPM system introduced by the public sector reform with all its espoused ideologies and concepts proved that it could turn rigid, centralized, uniform and rules based practices into a system that provided a certain degree of freedom and flexibility. The concept of public choice theory considered education professionals as individuals who worked to achieve the most they could out of their service for their own benefit and the benefit of students, and also to be strategic in securing resources to ensure most of their goals were achieved. Transaction cost theory then suggested that as self-interested and rational maximizing individuals, they would re-organise the machinery of the organization to ensure that it achieved maximum outputs. The development of contracts for the provision of some services might be one way to achieve given outputs with least cost. Managerialism then put the control of the activities of bureaucrats in the hands of managers to control resources, account for their use, monitor the activities and ensure outputs were achieved.

The focus of those concepts was that more education services were provided in the best way possible at the least cost. The many ways of quantifying and qualifying efficiency had made this concept elusive and difficult to grasp, but that was not the case with the concept of effectiveness. Effectiveness was the quantification of activities that would lead to the impact of a service on an output or outcome which translated into monetary terms. The quantification of activities for the whole public sector was administered by the Auditor General's office in New Zealand and the Cook Islands. For teachers, the Teacher Performance Management System was used. However, it was not always easy for teachers in the current education system where the lines of accountability pointed to many directions; the management, parents, community and students, all necessary but important.

The direction and pace of change in education globally affected the provision of education in the Cook Islands in many ways. The experience of many developed countries were sifted and sorted by New Zealand before it converged to the Cook Islands. The introduction of NPM included structural and cultural changes (Schlechty, 2001) necessary to align the practices of the delivery of education towards the achievement of given goals and objectives. In the Cook Islands journey towards the achievement of those goals, it had to be very clear, as Woodhead (1996) warned, why it was in that business in the first place.

CHAPTER 3

Looking for answers in the field

Before the field

Research, according to Tuhiwai Smith (1999, pg 83) was inextricably linked with European imperialism and colonialism. She said "research was a dirty word" in the indigenous world's vocabulary which would stir a sense of unease among indigenous people. The unease with research should have deterred indigenous people from research but in the case of Pacific people, they developed their own methodology by which knowledge could be collected from them in the most relevant and consistent manner with their culture and way of life. Manuatu (1999) argued that the use of *talanoa* as a research methodology among Pacific people was necessary in acquiring deep and meaningful knowledge about the reality of their world as understood by them. In conducting research in the Cook Islands, I understood that talanoa was the primary and most relevant methodology to be used as characteristics of talanoa was consistent with the Cook Islands culture and way of life. As a Cook Islands person, I was confident the use of talanoa would help me keep my status as an insider so my research participants would in no way feel I was imposing something foreign on them.

Talanoa

Talanoa, according to Johansson Fua (2007) was the sharing of ideas between two people who share the same understanding of the nuances in the language of communication. The verbal sharing of ideas described the foundation upon which Cook Islands knowledge was shared (Crocombe et al: 2003). Johansson Fua (2007) further stated talanoa was a skill, and to be able to use the skill properly, one would need to be informed of the social structure and relationship that existed between and within each level of society. One must understand literal and implied meanings of a language, the

difference between spoken and unspoken words, their meanings, when they were to be used and not used.

Talanoa fell under the qualitative approach which could be said to operate from a social constructivist perspective. This meant knowledge would be transmitted through the process of talking with participants, sharing of experiences based on common understanding of social structures that shaped those experiences. For this exercise, talanoa would be applied during the key informant interviews, survey questionnaire and the collection of official documentations so I anticipated the timeframe set for data collection may have to be extended a little. In an interview setting, the participant and I would be engaged in prolonged conversation that would delve deep into the meanings and contexts of their experiences. A Survey questionnaire on the other hand would discuss meanings, but not in as much detail as interviews. The use of talanoa in the collection of official documentation would be the extent that I needed to converse with the contact person in the relevant organization explaining the type of documentations I was searching for, and the work I was involved in. Knowledge would be transmitted, albeit on an informal basis, through conversation. I felt a sense of excitement and anxiety in the application of the talanoa methodology to the Cook Islands because as far as I knew, this would be the first time talanoa was used in academic research in the Cook Islands; secondly, I would be anxious to know people's response to this emerging Pacific methodology.

I knew the importance of fieldwork in relation to the effects of public sector reform was that I had to have direct and personal contact with people in their own environment in order to fully understand the realities of their natural world (Patton: 1990). My familiarity with people, culture and language of the Cook Islands, I felt was an added bonus for me. I was conscious the data I would be collecting was about professional, and to some extent personal experience before and after the public sector reform. Some recollection of past experiences was required, I would need to give my participants time to reflect and tell me their stories in a way they were most comfortable with. The essence

of their shared experiences needed to be captured to create themes for this study. The use of grounded theory for this would be used to further develop theory grounded in data (Mayan: 2001).

Grounded Theory and Phenomenology

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), grounded theory was both a method and product of inquiry. It was a method in the sense that it could be a set of flexible analytical guidelines that could be used to collect and analyse data, and product because theory would be created, grounded in data collected and analysed. Much of the theory that would be created from this study would be a conceptualization of the experience of teachers, Ministry of Education officials and randomly selected members of the public. Grounded theory would also be used to analyse relationships between the participants and their experience of the two systems of traditional administration and new public.

My experiences of the systems would also be used in the process of data analysis. According to Scott and Morrison (2006), phenomenology was an art where an individual would break down complex issues into simple parts in an attempt to understand how the issue came to be known. Phenomenology also had a process of construction where taken-for-granted knowledge about relationships between people was accessed. The process of understanding the components of a whole and reconstructed in a different setting might take different forms or meanings.

Methods

The method employed in this study focused on both qualitative and quantitative approaches where data would be collected and analysed through both inductive and deductive forms. However, more emphasis would be put on the qualitative analysis of the data where the application of qualitative methods in this study was aimed at bringing the 'human factor' into the analysis (Boyle et al:1998). This approach would allow a

deeper understanding of the effects of the introduction of the NPM on how education was delivered.

Survey Questionnaire

Data collection was by way of conducting a survey and a key informant interview. The survey questionnaire would have 11 closed, 3 semi-structured and 4 open questions. Participants for the survey would be randomly selected from the Cook Islands telephone directory using a spin-ball method to obtain numbers, and those numbers would be used to identify a telephone number. I would ask to speak to a member of the household over the age of 30 and explain the purpose of this survey and invite them to participate in the survey. If there was agreement, a time and place would be arranged at the participant's convenience for the survey questionnaire to be completed. The criteria for being a participant in the survey would be that they would have been educated in the Cook Islands before the 1996 public sector reform.

Key Informant Interviews

Participants for key informant interviews were purposively selected. The criteria was that they had worked in the Cook Islands Ministry of Education or been a school teacher at a senior or decision making level before and after the 1996 public sector reform. However, after the public sector reform, a fair number of people had left the country. In addition, those who held senior positions in government were middle aged to older people. Many of them had either retired or were deceased resulting in a very small sample group available for these interviews.

The interviews provided opportunities for participants to reveal their own experiences elucidating meanings behind people's views of the change from one public administration system to another. The genuine interest in participant's lives, evidenced when the researcher allowed participants to express their ideas and opinions, built trust and created an environment which sensitive issues could be explored (Chambers, 1997,

de Vaus, 1991) For this reason and others, and as talanoa suggested, all interviews would be conducted on a one to one basis. Additionally, I would endeavor to keep a journal of my experiences in the field to record my observations, expected and unexpected events in the field. I trusted this would be an enriching experience.

The sample

I had planned to recruit a total of 30 people; twenty for the survey questionnaire and 10 for the key informant interview. I realized that 20 was a very small sample size for the population that fit the criteria to be a participant, however, I was not seeking views to be generalized to the whole population, rather, the survey questionnaire was designed to collect the views of a specific cohort of Cook Islands people. My familiarity with Rarotonga and its population would help determine whether or not people recruited for this survey met the criteria.

Of the 10 key informant interviews, 5 would be Ministry of Education officials and 5 school teachers. These people would be purposively selected to fit the criteria of people in decision making roles at both the school and ministry levels. For this qualitative research, sample size was not a critical consideration, since the emphasis of the analysis was focused on understanding the meanings and situations of specific issues in a specific context, rather than allocating overall representation (Bradshaw & Stratford: 2000).

Ethical issues

As the object of this study concerned human beings, ethical issues were very important (Babbie, 2001, Scheyvens et al, 2003). Before collecting data, administration of ethical issues with the university would be sorted and approval granted before going into the field. Before conducting the interviews, I planned to contact the participants by telephone, introduce myself (if I didn't already know the family), I explained that I would be conducting research, explained the purpose of the study and invited a member of the household aged 30 and over to be a participant. If there was agreement, further

arrangements were made for an interview at a place and time convenient to the participant. At the meeting, I again explained the purpose of this study, the ethical risks that may be involved, and assured them that data collected would remain confidential. I discussed with them the possibility that participants might be identifiable as a result of the public views they were known to hold, which might be reflected in the thesis. All these issues were covered in the information sheet for participants (Appendix 2 (b)) which was given to them. I didn't anticipate them reading or taking the form, but that would be at their discretion. They would be told that participation was completely voluntary and asked whether they would be comfortable signing the consent form (attachment 2 (a)). If they objected to written consent, their verbal consent would be recorded. Participants were also advised that they were not obliged to answer any questions if they did not want to and that they could withdraw from the interview at any time.

I anticipated various situations in which people would choose to be interviewed, for example, I expected to interview people who were in the process of work. In respect for their space and time, I would ask if they would prefer that I read the questions out to them and their response would be written down and double checked with them before I left. Whatever the situation, I would be mindful and respectful of the wishes of the participant.

To preserve the anonymity of the participants, personal or professional details such as names and positions of responsibility are included in the final thesis. Participants are identified by code and number only. Survey participants are identified with code SP1 to SP20; the first participant was allocated code SP1, the second SP2, the third SP3, and so forth. Similarly, the five Ministry of Education key informant participants are referred to with code KIM1 to KIM5; the first informant would be allocated KIM1, the second KIM2, and so forth. The five Teacher participants are referred to with code KIT6 to KIT10. While Seidman (Seidman:1988) claimed that anonymity was the central issue of informed consent, I was aware that given the size and population of the island, I might

not be able to protect participants from being identified as their views reflected in the thesis may be recognised by people to come from a certain individual. This issue was raised in the information sheet and consent forms.

Before I embarked on the fieldwork, I was mindful that there were other basic guidelines that must be followed, aimed at respect for protection of the right and interests and sensitivities of the people being studied. Tuhiwai Smith (1999) reasserted in relation to Maori researchers that codes of conduct were set in cultural terms. Even with familiarity with the Cook Islands culture, values and way of life, I still felt I needed to tread carefully, be respectful of others in what I said, how I presented myself and what I did, and how I engaged with them in appropriate conversation, talked and listened.

Logistical Issues

As the mother of two young children, my study program was scheduled around my children's program. Conducting my fieldwork had to be in the third term holiday (September 2007) so they could visit their extended family while I conducted my fieldwork.

The fieldwork for this study was conducted in Rarotonga only. Rarotonga is the capital of the Cook Islands, the seat of government and where most government decisions are made. Conducting fieldwork in Rarotonga was important as it would ensure data was collected close to the action and immediate impact of the public sector reform. It would mainly explore the participant's experience with the education system under the traditional bureaucratic system, the consequent change of system, and the effect that change had on the current system and stakeholders, especially teachers and decision makers.

Babbie (2001) suggested "Before you observe and analyse, however, you need a plan. You need to determine what you are going to observe and analyse, why and how." (pg91).

I planned to be in the Cook Islands for three weeks, which I was confident would be sufficient time to interview 10 key informants, survey 20 participants and search for more official documentation required for this study. As my key informants were participants from the Ministry of Education; I intended to conduct interviews with them during work hours and those with teachers after school hours. The Secretary of Education had shown interest in and support for my research so he allowed me up to 2 hours of work time per participant for key informant interviews. My familiarity with staff within the Ministry of Education and with teachers in schools helped me identify and recruit my participants very quickly. I also planned to arrive one day before the weekend which would be used to recruit my participants for survey and key informant interviews, use the weekend to spend time with my family and get my children reacquainted with the beach, the sun, sand and the tropical climate.

Work in the field.

I arrived on Rarotonga excited about my mission but I also had a sense of hesitation as I wasn't sure if my potential participants would be willing to cast their minds as far back as ten years ago and beyond and reflect on their experiences before the reform. I also tried to articulate what some of the relevant events could be to prompt them to remember and unravel their past education experiences. I thought I could try some of my experiences, and then ask for theirs. Fortunately for me, my primary school classmates were planning a class reunion so I joined in and got some tips from them as we pondered on our experiences at school. As Rarotonga was the only place I would do my field work, I was happy to be there. The process for doing the job was fixed as I had this written down before I arrived, but whether my participant would oblige was yet to be tested.

Recruiting my participants

<u>Key informant interviews</u>

Before arriving in Rarotonga, I had some ideas of names of people who would make good key informant participants; the next task would be finding out whether they were

still available and on island. I had to interview ten, five ministry of education officials and five teachers. I planned to make initial contact by telephone and invite their participation, however, when I did that, they were constantly unavailable. The next best thing was to go to their place of work and invite them face to face. I did. I recruited Ministry of Education officials first. Having worked in the ministry, I met many old friends and work colleagues who were keen to update me on events that took place after I had left. I found only two of the five potential participants at work that day, successfully recruited them and organized a time and day to meet them. One of my potential participants had retired so I made contact with him at home; another had gone back to teaching in the school so I met with him there. My last participant was on an audit visit to Manihiki, an isolated island in the northern group of the Cook Islands, and well known for pearl farming. Luckily for me, she returned in two weeks and I was in Rarotonga for three.

The next group was teachers who had taught before the public sector reform and were still teaching now. Past knowledge of teachers in schools suggested that I knew who might fit the criteria as participants. Before coming into the field, I had planned to make initial contact with these teachers after school by telephone once they got back home. After trying a couple of potential participants and finding out that it was difficult to get them by phone, I tried to catch them at school straight after students went home. I was more successful this way.

I found people to be very receptive to requests for interviews; they made time within their busy schedule to share their experiences with me. Some of them would have either done research as part of their tertiary qualification or as part of their job so they were familiar with the process and were sympathetic with me. There was no need for introductions, we got straight into other issues of importance. There were a few participants I recruited who asked to be interviewed right away. I quickly learnt that with this line of work in the Cook Islands and in this kind of environment that I had to make myself available at any time and not to recruit a participant just before interviewing another one. This practice

was also consistent with the belief that in arranging time and place for interviews, participants were to choose a time and place that was convenient to them (Johansson-Fua, 2007).

My participants had no objections to being tape recorded. I found some of them were quite formal with their initial responses and as time went by forgot about the tape and relaxed. One participant actually started off speaking Rarotongan Maori and after she relaxed, started using the Manihikian dialect. I didn't have any problems with this as I quite enjoyed conversing in the Manihikian dialect.

Conducting survey questionnaires

I planned to randomly select 20 survey participants using the Cook Islands Telephone Directory. Having acquired a set of housie marbles, I proceeded to group the numbers for two draws; the first draw was for the page number of the telephone directory. The page number for Rarotonga residents started from page 57 to page 119 so I took numbers 37 to 99 and would add 20 to the number drawn. The second draw was for the row number, and numbers 1 to 60 was used.

Having identified my potential participants I tried my planned method of contact which only proved successful for five of my potential participants. I knew it was time to change my plan and to employ the only strategy I thought was more effective. I went to town during lunch hour and found the majority of my potential participants there. A couple of my potential participants, when invited to participate, established connection between me and one of their children whom I went to school with. That resulted in their getting their children to be participants for my study.

Administration of research

Most of my key informant participants were more interested in the questions and less interested in the administration of this research. From observation, none of them read the consent form. When I tried to explain the consent form to them, the first question would be, "where do I sign?". Three of my key informant participants refused to sign suggesting that verbal consent was sufficient and that getting them to sign the form indicated that I did not trust their verbal consent. As they also refused to give consent on tape, they then wrote on the consent form the words "Verbal consent given" and signed their name next to the statement. To maintain good rapport and trust between the key informants and me, and allowing them some degree of flexibility and control, I allowed them to dictate the terms. I also knew that they were doing what was right in cultural terms because Cook Islands Maori people have a verbal rather than a written culture. Tongia (Crocombe et al:2003 pg 107) mentioned that the Maori language was used more for speaking rather than for writing. He also quoted (2003:108) "Maori culture has been taught almost exclusively as the creative arts: dance, song, carving, weaving, drama etc". So to expect Cook Islands people, especially older people in an environment where spoken rather than written language was predominant, to be receptive to the idea of signed consent was unreasonable.

Participation Information Sheets

From the records I kept of my research observation, I noted that almost all key informants and all survey questionnaire participants were not interested in the contents of the Participation Information Sheet by way of my discussing the contents with them nor reading the sheet for themselves. They were more intent on getting to the questions and discussing the issues than listening to administrative matters of research. I felt that the university may have been too stringent with their requirements of the information sheet which was of no interest to most of my participants, except for one. On one hand I was happy they were open about their lack of interest in the information sheet but on the other hand, I knew that if I had been someone they were not comfortable with, they would not have been as comfortable to express their lack of interest.

Gender and age of participants

In purposively selecting my key informant participants, I was primarily looking for participants that were able to provide me with rich data rather than striking a balance of the genders. The criteria for participation also suggested that they would be older, and they were. Upon analysis of the data, I found a perfect balance of the genders. The criteria for survey participants was a bit more open and more younger people participated in the survey with gender slightly favoring females as illustrated in table 1 below.

Table 1. Gender and age of participants

Key Informant Participants			Survey Questionnaire Participants		
Age (years)	Gender		Age (years)	Gender	
	Female	Male		Female	Male
30-39			30-39	7	4
40-49			40-49	5	1
> 50	5	5	>50	1	2
Total	5	5	Total	13	7

The interviews

Talanoa

The concepts of talanoa were constantly on my mind as I conducted my interviews. I envisaged my interview experiences to be one of story telling where rich data could be extracted and that was exactly what happened, in key informant both the interviews and more surprisingly, in administering the survey questionnaire. Although I had estimated 15-30 minutes to complete the survey form, I assisted with the completion of 17 forms and found that it had taken more than an hour for each one. People had lots of stories to tell about their experiences of the education sector, especially before the public sector

reform. I allowed them to take the time to share those experiences and in turn I would share some of mine where necessary. I was surprised how open they were with sharing their experiences, not only those I was familiar with but also those I had seen around the island but not conversed with.

At the point of recruitment, I made a point of starting a conversation in Cook Islands Maori so they knew that I was local, introduced myself if necessary, told them briefly about the work I was doing, and the purpose of my study. However, with those I had associations with; catch up on the coconut wireless network preceded any conversation regarding work. It was then that I realized that the process of talanoa as stipulated by Manuatu (2000), Johansson-Fua (2006) and Vaioleti (2001) with regards to gaining respect, ensuring equality between parties and gaining rapport between the two parties did not apply in cases where that was already gained.

On the other hand, I understood the importance of allowing participants flexibility in determining how they would deal with the administration part of research, especially with regards to consent forms. I noticed some of them would hesitate and leave signing to last, the majority signed without reading a word on the paper so long as I indicated where to sign, and a few generated interesting discussions on this practice in relation to culture. The message I gained from this practice was that the older generations were less inclined to comply with the signing of the consent forms but the younger generations were more likely to just comply and get it out of the way because it was something that had to be done. Also, having allowed them the right to determine the time and venue of interview, I realized that Cook Islands people were less particular with this kind of thing. Some of my interviews took place where I found survey participants and this included the front teller area of a bank, the reception area of an office or under the ironwood tree in the middle of Avarua township.

Listening, I believed was also one of the most valuable concepts of talanoa (Johansson-Fua, 2006). Where participants felt they had something to say, I allowed them time to speak freely and openly and I listened attentively, picking up the nuances and insinuations of both spoken and body language. I prompted where it was necessary and further explained an issue or clarified a point by using my own experiences. I felt to a large extent, the stories they told and the knowledge that came as part of it, were very valuable. By listening, I felt I was their student, and they were my teachers (Kleinman & Copp: 1993).

The insider and outsider concept

Throughout the process of interviewing people, I found that I was always treated like an insider. This was reflected more in the comfort my participant and I felt as a result of our common experiences, the familiarity I had with some of them, or being seen around the place and knowing that I was one of them. During key informant interviews, the languages of conversation were either Cook Islands Maori or English with many intrusions into various Cook Islands Maori dialects. I felt they spoke to me like I was still a Ministry of Education official in the sense that they were using acronyms that I once used at the Ministry of Education, it was as if nothing had changed. Being an insider and with the level of comfort I felt with my participants, I laughed, joked, criticized, sympathized with my participants as we reflected on old times.

During the time I interviewed my key informants, there was a high number of deaths on the island, one involved a year 10 student at the national college and another, a family member of a Ministry of Education staff. As an insider and an indigenous researcher, I knew that even though my participants had agreed to be interviewed and had made arrangements to meet with me at a certain time and place, if they were involved in the funeral process, I needed to respect that and give them space. Tracking them down again and rescheduling another time at their convenience was my responsibility.

Even in situations where they had no adverse incidents to attend to, I knew I had to show understanding when they were late for our appointments, as Vaine Wichman stated in Crocombe et al (2003, pg 145) that for Cook Islands people, "Time management is problematic. Some of our people in paid employment still apply the relaxed attitude to attendance and performance that becomes embedded in our culture from subsistence living in a lush environment".

Reflections of the field

<u>Changes to perception:</u>

Before going into the field, I assumed that teachers would be against the application of the new public management system because it had tripled their workload, especially teachers who were teaching before the reform and had experienced the difference in the two systems. I based this assumption on the study done in Western Australia (O'Brien & Downs: 2002) which showed that teachers who had experienced teaching in the traditional system in Western Australia were not happy with the current system of NPM and its impact on the way they were expected to deliver education in the classroom. I was wrong. Data collected from Cook Islands teachers showed that they were in favour of the NPM model, despite the fact that it had tripled their workload. According to them, the NPM model was the best thing that happened to the education sector.

Conclusion

The focus of this study was to allow the voices of Cook Islands people be heard on an issue that had not yet been explored in the Cook Islands; the effect of the public sector reform on the delivery of education. This was achieved using talanoa within the qualitative methodology of research. I believed I acted appropriately in facilitating participants to speak freely using whatever language and methods comfortable for them. The rich stories and illustrations of the participants provided insights into dimensions of the public sector reform that I had not anticipated at the start of this fieldwork.

During this fieldwork, my familiarity with people in the education sector and the community had allowed me to work and be treated as an insider. My cultural background allowed me to converse with them, hear their voices, interpret their hesitations and silences and understand their experiences in a context that was relevant to their experience (Johansson_Fua, 2007). All information shared was done on the basis that there was common understanding of that information and there was no risk of them being misconstrued. I also realized that this experience in the field had allowed me to learn that respect and humility was very important in my culture and its application in other cultures can also be very different; how I applied it was important for my survival as a researcher in the Cook Islands field. More importantly, as I was being exposed to various experiences, I realized that I was an instrument in my own research DeLyser (2001) and I couldn't successfully hide the personal behind the professional.

The methodology adopted in this research provided a deeper understanding of the changes resulting from the public sector reform, and the effects of the NPM on the delivery of education. The participants in this research had shown that the current system of public management had a profound effect on teachers and had revolutionized the delivery of education in the Cook Islands in a way that was good for the students, preparing them for life inside and outside of the Cook Islands. It was apparent from this fieldwork that there was not a good understanding of the changes in the education sector among the community. These voices and stories must be heard if a deeper understanding of the effects of public sector reform on education was to be achieved.

CHAPTER 4

Public's Perception of Cook Islands Education

The Survey Questionnaire

The survey was used to gain an understanding of the views ordinary members of the public had on education. Education in the Cook Islands, according to the Cook Islands Education Act was free and compulsory from the ages of 5 to 15, which meant that everyone in the Cook Islands would have experienced education during those years of their lives. One of the criteria for being a participant was that they had attended school in the Cook Islands before the 1996 public sector reform period. It would have been unrealistic to interview the whole population or to get a population size that could be generalized to the whole population given time constraints and geographic location of many other islands in the Cook Islands. I believed participants recruited for this survey were a good cross section of people in the community, despite randomness in the recruitment process.

There were three parts to the survey. The first part asked about the participant's personal background, the second contained questions about the participant's experience of education before the public sector reform of 1996 and the last part asked for their views of the education sector after the public sector reform. For this chapter, data from all three parts of the survey will be presented first, then discussion of that data will follow concluding with key findings.

Part 1: Background of participants

As mentioned in Chapter 3, 13 females and 7 males participated in the survey. Participants were from the ages of 30 and older. Eleven participants were between the ages of 30-39, 6 between the ages of 40 – 49 and 3 50 years or older (see table 1.)

Sixteen of the participants had children currently attending school and four did not. Nineteen were in employment with 18 in full time employment and one working part-time. The participant not in employment had retired. When asked whether they were members of the school committee at all, only five indicated yes and 15 said no.

Part 2: Education in the Cook Islands

Questions in part two were about collecting the views of participants on their experiences of education before the public sector reform. Participants chosen for this survey would have had first hand experience of the education sector during this era and would draw from these experiences to respond to questions in this part of the survey.

1.   All twenty participants indicated they were educated in the Cook Islands. This was important as they required this experience to draw from in order to provide informed responses and have credibility with their views.

2.   The second question in this category asked participants to reflect back on what services were once provided during their time at school but no longer provided after the public sector reform. They were not restricted with the type of responses they could give by having services already indicated for them, but they were given the freedom to indicate as many as they would like. Participants indicated more than one service which suggested they noticed more than one service missing from school after the reform, hence the reason for total responses being more than 20. A summary of their responses were as follows:

Table 2: **Key services no longer provided after the reform**
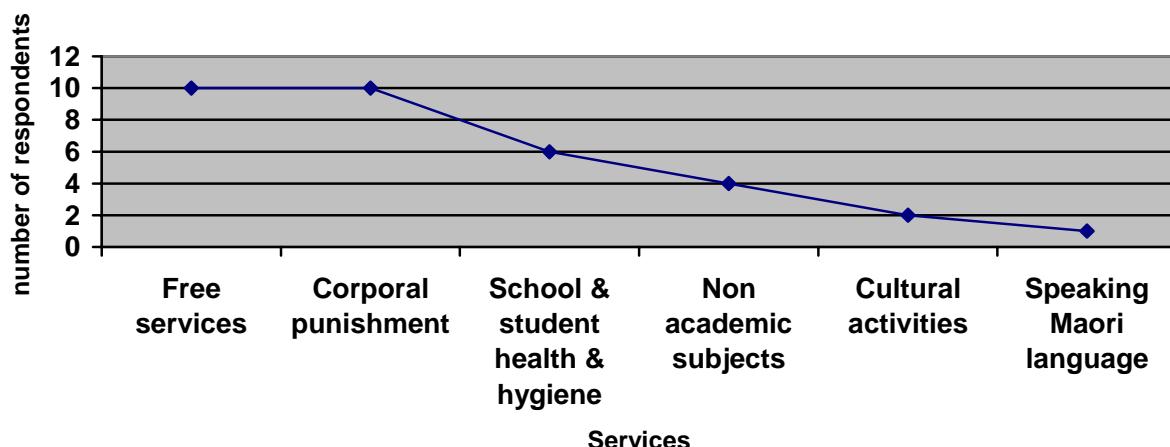
It appeared more participants missed free services like transport, milk, stationery, and surprisingly, corporal punishment in schools than actual learning programs like cultural activities learning the local language. The teaching of the local language was always part of the curriculum.

3. The next question asked how satisfied the participants were with the way their teachers taught them in school. Participants were required to indicate the type of satisfaction option that closely reflected their level of satisfaction. There were five levels of satisfaction which ranged from very unsatisfied to very satisfied. In reflecting on this question, many of the participants considered how well they were treated by their teachers rather than how well they were taught. Most of them had fond memories of their school days despite mixed feelings about this question. The following were their responses:

Table 3: **Student satisfaction of teaching services**

It appeared that the majority of participants were satisfied with the way their teachers taught them in school. They were asked to provide reasons why they chose the categories they did as indicated above. Given no participant indicated "unsatisfied", there would only be four categories (see Table 4). All participants gave one or more reasons to justify their choice of level of satisfaction.

Table 4: **Justification for levels of satisfaction**

Level of satisfaction	Reason for chosen level of satisfaction
Very unsatisfied	Lack of teacher ability to cater for student's learning needs
	Teachers personalized treatment of students
Satisfied	Too much corporal punishment
	Teachers were always right
	Teachers not involving students in many learning activities
	Didn't understand teacher
	Taught relevant skills
	Treated students equally
Mostly satisfied	Teachers in control of classroom
	Students achieved academically
	Most teachers good, odd ones didn't care.
Very satisfied	I was not subject to corporal punishment

Level of satisfaction	Reason for chosen level of satisfaction
	Teacher met student needs with balance of learning activities
	Provided me with sufficient foundation skills for employment
	Good teaching of the Maori vernacular

4 (a) As an attempt to summarize what participants achieved from their education, and how they used the education they gained, participants were asked what they did after they left school. All participants gave a straight answer to this question without much hesitation or reflecting. They were given four general categories to pick from which included local employment, tertiary education, left the country, and helped with chores around the home. Given the limitation in accessing tertiary education in the Cook Islands, those who indicated tertiary education also implied that they left the country. Those who indicated they left the country meant that they left the country to look for employment overseas, mainly New Zealand.

Figure 1: **Activities undertaken after leaving school**
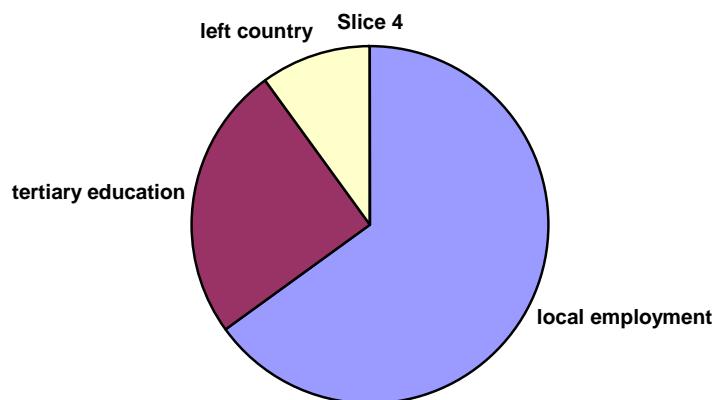
Of the twenty participants, 13 indicated they got local paid employment after leaving school, 5 left the country to gain tertiary education, 2 left the country to look for employment and no one stayed home to help with chores.

4 (b) Participants were asked if they felt the school provided them with sufficient knowledge and skills with what they had to do after school. They were given a choice of either a "yes" or a "no" and were asked to provide justification for their choice. One participant picked both "yes" and "no" and gave reasons for both taking the total responses to 21. Figure 2 has the summary of the results.

Figure 2. **Schools provide sufficient knowledge and skills**
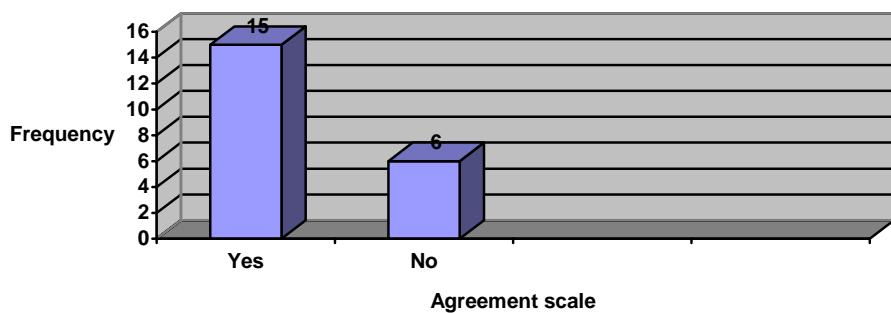
Of the 20 participants, 15 said their schooling provided them with sufficient knowledge and skills with what they had to do after leaving school and 6 said their schooling did not provide them with sufficient knowledge and skills. When they were asked to give reasons why they chose "yes", participant's reasons included that schooling provided them with sufficient knowledge and skills for tertiary studies, vocational studies, employment and networking. Those who chose "no" expressed dissatisfaction at the amount and variety of knowledge and skills they were given while at school which they felt were insufficient for what they had to do after they left school.

5. The last question in part two asked what they thought they got out of their schooling. Almost all participants had to carefully reflect on this open question and answered it with sincerity. A summary of their responses were presented in Figure 3 below:

Figure 3: **Education achievements before the reform**
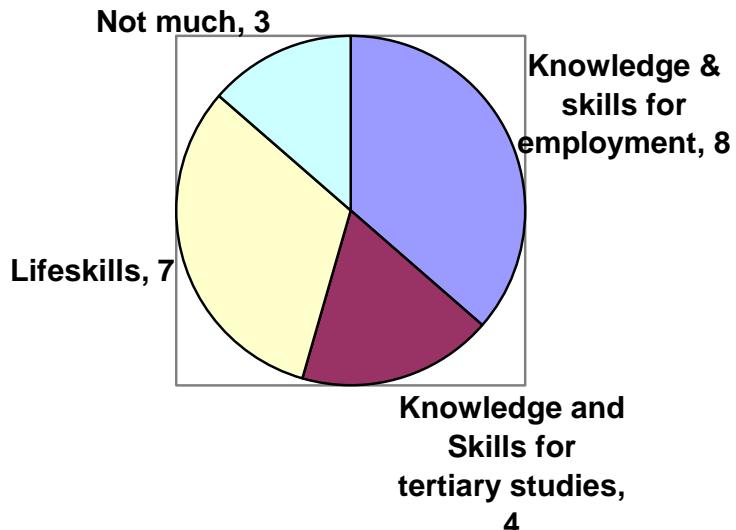
Most respondent gave one answer each except for two participants who gave responses that could fit into one or more of the categories. In total, eight participants suggested they gained knowledge and skills for employment, four said schooling gave them knowledge and skills for tertiary studies, seven opted for life-skills and three were less optimistic and said they did not learn much from school.

Part 3: The effects of the Public Sector Reform on education

This part of the survey got participants to indicate what they thought, were the effects the public sector reform had on the delivery of education. It asked participants to provide their views on changes to student learning, the current system of education, to compare the quality of education, the performance of teachers and the contribution of the Ministry of Education in the delivery of education. Many of their responses were dependent on whether they were active participants or passive observers of education.

1. The first question asked whether there were changes to the education sector after the public sector reform. Participants were given three options of either "yes", "no" or

"don't know". Of the 20 participants, 16 indicated there were changes to the education sector after the public sector reform, while two said there were no changes and another two said they didn't know.

2. When asked if those changes improved student learning as a result of public sector reform, eight people said it did, seven said it didn't and five didn't know.

To support their responses to question 2, participants were then asked to justify why they thought changes during the public sector reform improved or did not improve student learning. Of the 20 participants, three of the five who chose "don't know" provided no reason for their response. Justifications for their responses "yes", "no and "don't know" are illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5: **Why changes improved or did not improve student learning.**

YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Takes time for changes to take effect	Local teachers lower standard of education	Not sure of any effects on student learning
Changes on par with global trends	No changes taken place	Depends on how students are motivated to achieve
Teachers now motivate students	No quality teachers	
Teachers more amenable to student needs	Students lack desire to learn	
Increased roll and better achievement	Increased student migration	
More career guidance in schools	Constant changes confuse parents	
Students now independent thinkers	Lack of quality education	
Teachers work harder		
More parent/teacher interaction		

For those who agreed changes improved student learning, they pointed to the teachers as the drivers of change citing teacher performance, student achievement and better

interaction between teachers and parents. Those who did not agree blamed the teachers, student migration and desire to learn, and the number of changes which caused confusion.

Participants were asked to share their views on the way education was currently provided after the 1996 public sector reform. Their views varied and spanned from being optimistic about education, to making suggestions on what it should focus on, to being negative about the current provision of education. Table 6 lists a summary of their responses.

Table 6: **Views on the way education is currently provided**

Views	frequency
Increased technology and resources	6
Good quality teachers	4
Delivery is good, children don't value education	4
Need to raise standards with literacy, numeracy and lifeskills	1
Should tailor education towards employment	1
No improvement in student learning	2
Students missing out on subjects due to economies of scale	2
Teacher quality not there	2

The majority of the views tended to be in favour of the way education was provided in schools. A few made suggestions as to improvements the school could make such as the need to raise standards with literacy, numeracy and lifeskills, and that education should be tailored towards employment. Others expressed concern about the lack of improvement in student learning, teacher quality and students missing out on subjects due to economies of scale.

4. Question four asked participants to make a general comparison of the quality of education before 1996 with the quality of education after 1996. They were presented

with five options to assist with their comparison. These were "much better than before", "better now than before 1996", "the same as before 1996", "better before 1996 than now" or "much better before 1996 than now". Figure 4 presented their comparisons of education during the two eras.

Figure 4: **Comparing quality of education before and after the reform.**

There was clear majority favouring quality of education after the public sector reform than quality of education after the reform with three people saying that it was the same as before.

5. Turning their attention to teachers, participants were asked to compare how well they thought teachers performed before and after the public sector reform. Again, they were given the same. Each participant chose one option that best represented their view of teacher performance of the two eras.

Figure 5: **Teacher performance before and after the reform**

There was a split vote for teacher quality with nine more participants favouring teacher performance after the reform than before the reform. Again, 3 participants said there was no difference in teacher performance before the reform as compared with teacher performance after the reform.

6. The last question sought participant's views on the role of the Ministry of Education in improving the quality of learning in schools. This was an open question which provoked a variety of responses with the majority being optimistic about the Ministry of Education's role in improving the quality of education in schools. Most participants provided more than one answer which meant that they had knowledge of the role of the Ministry of Education.

Table 7: **What the Ministry of Education had done to improve education.**

Views	Frequency
Increased investment in teachers through improved quality	10
Increased learning resources	8
Don't know	4
Done nothing	2
Not much	2
Increased operating budget	1

Views	Frequency
Increased access for students with special needs and drop outs	1
Introduced diagnostic testing	1

More participants commented on the Ministry of Education improving learning resources in schools as well as investing in the improvement of teacher quality. There were others who were less optimistic with comments like "not much" or "done nothing" but there were also those who were specific with what the Ministry of Education had done, such as noting an "increased operating budget", and "increased access for students with special needs and dropouts".

Discussion of data

To have an understanding of the community's views on how the public sector reform had changed the delivery of education in the Cook Islands, the views of twenty community people were collected. These people were randomly selected and given the small sample size, their views were not generalisable to the whole population but a reflection of the views of selected members of the community. Technically, everyone in the community were stakeholders of education whether they were direct participants or passive observers.

All participants chosen indicated they were educated in the Cook Islands and the majority (16) had children currently attending school. While they shared their experiences of education before the reform, they did so as students with first-hand experience of the system. For the period after the reform, they provided their views as parents, caregivers or community members.

Education before the public sector reform

The twenty participants were asked to identify what services or programs were provided before the reforms that were no longer provided. Surprisingly, free services like transport, health, milk, and stationery topped the list alongside corporal punishment with 10 people

stating those services. Six people chose making students responsible for their own grooming, the cleanliness and hygiene of the school and only three people indicated options like music, sports, life-skills and trade subjects. Interestingly, only two people chose cultural activities and one speaking the Maori language, alongside gender specific courses like agriculture and home science. This finding suggested that more people preferred free services and corporal punishment to have continued in education than the teaching of cultural activities and the local language. This lack of interest in the teaching and learning of the local language in school confirmed the findings of a study conducted by the Cook Islands Ministry of Education and the Institute of Education at the University of the South Pacific in 2005 (Johansson-Fua:2005). The study showed that 33 percent of students in their last year of schooling did not speak Maori, confirming parents did not value the teaching of the Cook Islands Maori language in schools.

When asked whether they were happy with the way their own teachers had taught them, the majority indicated they were satisfied, mostly satisfied or very satisfied. Only two indicated they were very unsatisfied. The reasons for a high satisfactory response ranged from the way the teacher controlled the class, the way they delivered their lessons, the amount of corporal punishment dished out or how student outcomes were achieved. This data could be interpreted to mean that while students may have been mistreated, their reflection of their overall experience of how they were taught by their teachers was somewhat positive.

A study on the effects of physical punishment undertaken by Anne Smith (Smith:2006) from the Children's Issues Centre, University of Otago, suggested that corporal punishment has a long term effect on cognitive and intellectual development. However, she also cited another study carried out in cultures where physical punishment is normative, and the effects of it are less negative (Lansford et al:2005). Many of my participants would often say "I was spanked, I am fine". Corporal punishment in the Cook Islands was perceived as a normal way of controlling children's behaviour under an adult's care and perceived as culturally acceptable. Personally, I don't condone such

management of child behaviour but culture would have to change before any school policy or Ministry of Education directives on corporal punishment would be effective, and that might take a little while.

In an attempt to ascertain the effectiveness of education before the public sector reform, participants were asked what they did after they left school. This was an important question as it addressed issues of the purpose of education in the pre-reform era and was a measure of whether education achieved its purpose and objective. The majority (13) of participants stated that they gained local employment after leaving school, five migrated overseas for the purpose of gaining tertiary education and two left the country to seek employment opportunities. The fact that these people gained employment, were able to access tertiary education and gain employment in New Zealand, proved that education must have been successful in the achievement of its goal in 1975 of educating people for life in a traditional society as well as the modern society (Ministerial Task Force, 1989).

Participants were then asked to summarize what they got out of schooling. There was a mixed range of responses from being optimistic to a flat "not much". The majority of responses were optimistic that their schooling provided them with the necessary knowledge and skills for the workforce (8), tertiary education (4) or life skills (7) leaving only three disgruntled that they did not get much from school. These comments confirmed De Lore's (UNESCO:1999) five pillars of education. He argued that education was a life long learning process and that the role of education was to ensure its citizens learnt to be, to know, and to do, and learned to live together and live with others. Participants had shown that their schooling had achieved for them the type of professional they wanted to be, provided them with the kind of knowledge they required, taught them to perform certain activities in their professional and personal lives and taught them life skills and social skills that enabled them to live together with others in their local environment and in environments outside of the Cook Islands.

Comparing education before and after the public sector reform

All participants of the survey experienced education as students before the 1996 public sector reform. Their views from this period after the reform were those of parents, caregivers or employers. Their views were from the stand point of an observer rather than a direct participant in education.

The majority (16) of participants knew changes had taken place to education as a result of the public sector reform; two said there were no changes to education and another two said they didn't know whether any changes had taken place. This may be an indication of the awareness parents or community members had of the education sector. I know the Ministry of Education had attempted to inform the community of progress or activities in the education sector through television promotion programs or newsletters from schools to parents. The small numbers who were unsure whether any changes had taken place may mean that changes may not have been obvious enough for them to notice.

When asked if those changes improved student learning, half of those surveyed said it did, seven said it didn't and three didn't know whether changes improved student learning. Studies in six western Australian (O'Brien & Down:2002) schools which interviewed teachers who experienced the change in system in education, indicated that there was no convincing data that changes from the Australian reform improved student learning.

When asked to justify why changes improved or had not improved student learning, the focus of the "yes" respondents was on how student learning was shaped and achieved from their observation. These comments also suggested that these participants shared an active role in the education of their children. Those who said "no" indicated a lack of participation or dissatisfaction with changes to the education currently being delivered. The Ministerial Task Force (2001) who commented on the consultation data collected by the Victoria Link Consultants Group in 1999 reported that this attitude was quite common in the population.

Participants were then asked for their views on the way education was provided. There was a mixture of responses indicating that the participants took this opportunity to express concerns or provide compliments about the way education was delivered. Compliments included comments like "more resources more advanced, better quality", "student teacher ratio has improved" and "education has kept pace with globalization". These comments reflected the significant resource injection the European Union made from 2003 to 2005, the school refurbishment programs from ADB (ADB Economic report (2001) and the introduction of the Cook Islands Ministry of Education Staffing formula Policy in 1999 and the Ministry of Education Special Needs Policy 2000. The investment made by the European Union, ADB and NZAID enabled the quality of classroom buildings to be improved in standard and appearance and also provided students with much needed learning resources. The Ministry of Education ensured that there were sufficient quality teachers in the classrooms to cater for the individual learning needs of all students.

However, some participants were less impressed with the way education was delivered with comments like "not enough education in the local context", "students missing out on subjects due to economies of scale", "quality is fine, students just don't value education", "parents would rather educate their children", "quality of teaching is not there" and "don't know what's going on". The education reviews conducted of the education sector, Polynesian Way in 1989 and Tupuanga Okotai in 2001, both commented that parents were dissatisfied with the quality of education delivered in schools. It appeared from this survey that parents were still dissatisfied with education. This issue was quoted as one of the many reasons for Cook Islands people having left the Cook Islands (Koteka: 2006). There were many factors that impacted on the quality of education. While teaching had the biggest (up to 60 percent) influence on student learning (Alton-Lee: 2001) there were also other factors like the home environment and parents participation. The issue of "not enough education in the local context" was a real concern expressed many times through education reviews, consultant reports and research projects but from my experience, a lot

less local context was being used in schools after the reform than when I was at school before the reform.

There were also suggestions given which participants felt required more attention. They were that "education should focus more on employment possibilities" and "emphasis should be on literacy, numeracy and lifeskills". These were valid suggestions. From experience, the Ministry of Education worked hard in improving human and learning resources and improved assessment and monitoring programs for literacy and numeracy in schools. The Ministry has had some success with the introduction of trade training programs at Tereora College with New Zealand accreditation. Attempts have been made to introduce pearl farming techniques to the northern group islands and tourism in the southern group islands. Issues of economies of scale due to low roll numbers and decreasing population (Demke, 2004) were major issues beyond the Ministry of Education's control. The Ministry of Education continued to work hard on these two issues and planned to improve on these over the next 15 years (Ministry of Education 15 year plan:2008).

Participants were then asked to compare the quality of education with that before the public sector reform. Although half (10) favoured the current quality of education to those before the public sector reform, a good minority (7) favoured the quality of education before the reform. This was not a surprising response as comments to earlier questions suggested some dissatisfaction in the NPM provision of education. What was interesting but not surprising was that there were a small number of people who believed the quality of education did not change. Two issues may help explain these results:

1. The "good old days" mentality where parents thought education was not the same as before;

2. lack of involvement in the education of their children which would help them understand the process of change with the schools. (Olsen and Fuller: 2003)

Participants were asked to compare teacher performance from the two periods. They were asked whether they thought teachers were doing a better job now (after the public sector reform) than before the public sector reform. In total, eight participants favoured teacher performance before the reform. On the other hand a total of nine participant's favoured teacher performance after the reform and the remaining three said there was no difference in teacher performance between the two eras.

This was an interesting finding as it had an impact on community perception on teacher performance in school, school effectiveness and parental confidence in the provision of education. This finding may also mean that some schools provided parents with good information about their children's progress and others didn't. Alternatively, some parents were too busy to be involved in their children's education, creating a barrier of mistrust and misinformation about the school.

On the other hand, given the significant work the Ministry of Education had done to improve teacher performance and quality, the large proportion of vote for teacher performance before the reform may be that participants were students before the reform and had a better understanding of teachers during that time. It could well be that parents and teachers don't have a good understanding of each other's roles. A curriculum review (Ramsay et al:1993) conducted in New Zealand schools to explore how schools planned and implemented change as a result of the recommendations from the Picot report (1988) found that parents and teachers had misconceptions about each other's roles in education. The study had created conditions in which those barriers were removed and an open relationship established. The Cook Islands might benefit from a similar study.

In the Cook Islands teachers were regarded as leaders of the community and were used to leading out in community cultural activities, for example as leaders of dance groups from the outer islands to Rarotonga for constitution celebrations (Crocombe et al, 2003). McDonald (Olssen & Fuller, 2003: 103) also said that parent perspectives of teachers and

schools can be affected by parents having a "good old days" mentality. She argued that parents with this mentality believed that "teachers don't work as hard as they used to and teaching isn't the calling that it once was". In conducting this survey, the "good old days" mentality was obviously at work and more obvious where parents did not have a good experience with their children's teachers or their schools.

The last issue in the survey asked participants whether they knew what the Ministry of Education had done to improve education. The majority of the votes went to increased investment in teachers through increased professional development and improved learning resources in schools. Twenty eight percent of the responses made comments such as "didn't know", "done nothing", or "not much". The remaining seventy two percent had specific knowledge of the Ministry of Education's contribution where they were making statements like "increased operating budget in schools", "increased access for students with special needs and drop-outs" and "introduced diagnostic testing". Upon review of the type of participants and their response, I found that those people who had intimate knowledge of the system had had involvement with the schools either as school committee members, or as teachers, Ministry of Education officials or parents who had taken a keen interest in the education of their children.

Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the diversity in views of selected members of the community about education before and after the public sector reform of education. There was a certain degree of awareness that changes in the education sector had taken place and had influenced the delivery of education but whether they were positive or negative changes were dependent on how one perceived their experience and the experience of others in education.

The voices of participants in this survey portrayed fond memories of their overall education journey before the public sector reform despite the occasional negative

experience. They were mostly happy with the way their teachers taught them and could claim to have achieved the necessary knowledge and skills for employment locally and internationally, tertiary studies, and the provision of life skills. Many of them put those knowledge and skills to good use after they left school by gaining employment or progressing further in education. A small percentage of the participants did not share the common view and said that they did not get much from school but achieved their knowledge and skills from outside school.

The comparison in education between the two eras showed that participants were split in their views on whether changes improved or did not improve student learning. A few still had to be convinced there was any difference in learning. For those who were convinced of the changes, they pointed to teacher performance, student learning, and better teacher / parent interaction as signs of changes which impacted on student learning. By the same token those who were not convinced there were improvements to student learning blamed teacher quality, student migration and lack of desire to learn and the rate and amount of change in education. According to Burden (2003) open communication between all stakeholders of education must take place to ensure teachers have a better understanding of parent's expectations and parents have an understanding of their role in the education of their children.

While the majority of participants thought there was an improvement in the way education was provided, they made suggestions that would further improve it. There was a slight majority on the participants who said the quality of education was better now than before, but several of them were adamant that education had better quality before the reform. On the other hand, participants were split in their views as to whether teachers were of better quality before the reform than afterwards. These were the issue that forced the many reviews of the education sector (Ministerial Task Force, 1989; Education Assignments Group, 2001).   According to the Ministerial Task force (1989) that in their consultation with Cook Islands communities, people were unanimous that education lacked quality in its programs and teachers.   It could be that people were exhibiting the

"old school mentality" (Olsen & Fuller: 2003). Interestingly enough, the majority of participants knew that the Ministry of Education had improved teacher quality and learning resources in schools which meant that good news did get around in a small island community in like the Cook Islands.

It was interesting to note from randomly selected people in the community their views of education and the effects of changes they think may have taken place. From the information reported in the Ministerial Task Force of 1989 where the community was asking for change to improve the quality of education, to the Education Sector Review of 2000, where the "community consultations often highlight weaknesses; they seldom identify strengths or opportunities"(Education Assignments Group: 2001, pg 4) public perception of education has gradually changed. From the data collected, it appeared that changes during the public sector reform had either given the community something to compare with the previous system, standards, or quality of education. Alternatively, knowing that the Ministry of Education had invested in improved education quality through teacher quality, with more learning resources in classrooms, and the advent of information technology making all conceivable information available, the community expectation of education may have increased, expecting outcomes to be realized in a short period of time, which may have led to some negative comments from participants.

CHAPTER 5

Voices of Teachers and Ministry of Education officials

Themes from the field

Themes from the Ministry of Education officials and teachers were rather similar when talking about their experiences and the issues that mattered to them in education before and after the public sector reform. There were four basic areas they focused on; administration and management that supported education, teacher quality, student learning, and parental participation in education. Although they were asked different questions, the focus of their responses was similar albeit at different levels of the education spectrum.

Ministry of Education officials

Ministry of Education officials focused on the macro level of education and on policy issues like teacher quality (which meant teacher qualifications and quality performance), school management (which meant the smooth operation of the school in compliance with the Cook Islands Administration Guidelines, Cook Islands Education Guidelines and the Education Act 1986/87), quality learning (which meant having the correct environment, resources and attitude to acquire knowledge) and working in partnership with parents to achieve optimum learning at school. They were concerned with fulfilling the requirements of their outputs by ensuring systems were in place in schools to satisfy and monitor those outputs and were also mindful that they were accountable to the Minister and the community for the quality of education delivered by the schools.

Teachers

Teachers on the other hand, were more concerned with effects on the delivery of education programs at the school level. They focused on the feelings of teachers in

having to work within those systems required by the Ministry of Education and the effect those systems had on student learning. There was a feeling of optimism amongst teachers with the current management system introduced as a result of the public sector reform as it had created an environment of co-operation and optimism amongst teachers and transparency between the schools and its stakeholders. Although teachers were coy with some of the requirements, they realized the merits of having to fulfill those requirements. In the Cook Islands, as in any situation, the system took a while to be operational and people working in the education sector needed change if they were determined to improve the delivery of education.

Themes

From the qualitative data collected, four key themes emerged:

- Decentralisation of school management increased school autonomy, and improved financial and work accountability;

- Teachers' work conditions improved coupled with increased workloads and expectations to account for their work outputs and outcomes;

- Student learning conditions and resources improved as well as student achievement;

- The system created more avenues for parents to participate in the education of their children but they needed to be more active in this partnership.

Education before and changes after the reform

The old system of education administration.

Schools administered from the centre: Schools were administered by the Ministry of Education using administration guidelines from core agencies. Peter Etches from the Ministry of Education recalled that "A great deal of power was held by the Secretary but

the Secretary had to work through the Public Service Commission and negotiate finances through Treasury….". He added that the schools had to go through layers of bureaucracy to purchase simple items. For example, "If they wanted a pencil or pencil sharpener, they had to send it to the Ministry and we had to send it somewhere else,…" KIM4 said that the Traditional Administration system was a "straight-laced system", "regimented" and "suppressed the use of creativity in the administration and the implementation of the system". She further suggested that this system created competition amongst officials for higher office positions and that the better an officer was at compliance with rules and procedures, the better their chances were of promotion by merit. Another participant (KIM2) commented on how hierarchical the structure of the system was which resulted in the Ministry of Education having too much control of activities at the school level and teachers were "not allowed to step outside of the box".

Classroom teachers (KIT10) on the other hand agreed with comments by the Ministry of Education officials and said that "we were quite restricted with what we can do… schools didn't have any written policies…. and we get allocation of basic supplies". He further stated that there were insufficient documentations of decisions made causing confusion and dissent among staff. The lack of documentation indicated that although the Public Service Manual and the Public Service Act existed, there were certain factors within the operation of the school that required their own rules and procedures and these were shared beliefs among staff members. By 1989, a ministerial review (Ministerial Task Force, 1989) was conducted of the education sector where they concluded that the management of schools was very inefficient and ineffective and one of the main contributing factors to successful education was to have good management practices. They wrote:

> The organization of our schools at present is wasteful in manpower resources and facilities. It often involves duplication of materials, expenditure and resources, offers a great number of overlapping responsibilities and is, in brief, inefficient. There is virtually unanimous perception offered in our submissions that it is also ineffective. (pg 161)

The community was well aware of the inefficient practices in schools and wanted change. Another issue of concern for the participants was the lack of learning resources in schools.

Insufficient resources:

There was general agreement among most participants that learning resources were scarce in schools where teachers and students had to improvise with existing resources. KIT6 recalled "… the system was that you hardly had that many resources. You had to have your own, you looked for your own, you make your own…… you just have to go and look for things to help you with your teaching". KIM4 said that when she was a teacher, teachers were expected to share the little resources they had and teachers were not allowed to explore with the kind of learning activities they could use. KIT7 supported this view and said that while the Ministry of Education made teaching easy for teachers through the provision of teaching assignments, a lot of improvising needed to be made with resources by sometimes getting resources "from within your own environment to teach children".

KIM2 put the resources issue into perspective and suggested that while the Ministry of Education provided basic resources for schools like school stationery, the provision of other learning resources like textbooks and reading books had not kept up with the changing needs of the school resulting in the oversupply of one type of resources like newsprints and a real lack of supply in others.

At a more general level, a Ministry of Education participant (KIM5) perception, he suggested that resources would not result in high education standards but the desire to value education would lead people to achieve. He said he believed in a philosophy that

> "Your environment is your classroom for life". He further argued that Cook Islands people's mind was fixed on commercial resources and we "refuse to look at them because our mindset has been developed to a stage where we believe we

have to buy, we have to copy". While this was a single voice amongst the participants, it had a degree of relevance if the purpose of educating Cook Islands children was only for the local market.

Apart from lack of learning resources in the classrooms, another concern for teachers and Ministry of Education officials was the low remuneration package for teachers and subsequently, low morale.

Low remuneration and morale:

KIT6 suggested that teacher remuneration was a real issue which caused a negative environment within schools. She said that "the teachers were quite dedicated but there was an undercurrent, especially with the pay. If you looked back to the teacher salaries during that time, it was not very good compared to what it is now". However, KIT9 explained that one thing that kept them in the teaching profession was that student behaviour was really good and "you enjoyed teaching because students behaved themselves".

Associated with low teacher remuneration was teacher morale which, according to KIM2 before the reform was low. He said "Teacher morale is ground level. They work really hard and they make the best they can …. coupled with that, there is always this fear for the Ministry and the morale was very low". Teacher's views of low morale were confirmed by the Ministerial Task Force (1989) which reported that "…national administration is viewed as having become over-centralised; teacher morale is reported as being very low" (pg 31)

Insufficient checks on learning outcomes: There was also a sense of relaxed accountability system with what was delivered in the classroom. Inspections from the Ministry of Education were not regular but there was an understanding that the principals were the Ministry of Education's agents in the schools ensuring compliance within the

confines of the rules. KIM2 reflected on his experience as a school principal before the reform and explained that "school management did not exist. The principal was the Ministry's watchdog. They are always checking on the teachers to make sure they are teaching what is prescribed by the Ministry. If you step outside the box, you get disciplined". KIT6 supported the issue of lack of inspection and said "we have one classroom inspection by the principal and from there he makes out a report".

Speaking as a school inspector in the 1980's, Peter described the process and said that inspections did take place by the Ministry of Education but transportation to the outer islands was problematic which left some schools unreachable for inspection. School inspection by the Ministry of Education was really for compliance with Ministry of Education procedures, and they were more about how teachers were teaching and not about how students were learning. While the Ministry of Education had the principals to ensure compliance on a daily basis, the Ministry also tried to get to the schools to get first hand knowledge.

Restricted access to higher learning

Participant KI7 said that students behaved and strived to do well at school because they wanted to have access to higher learning. She noted that students "were eager to learn, they wanted to learn because when they come to a certain grade where only a few would carry on. Places in the school were limited so you had to make sure if you wanted to carry on and had better education that you worked hard".

Documentary evidence suggested that (Ministry of Education:1995) of all the students who started school in year one, 90 -95 percent would have dropped out between form 3 and form 6 which up till 1986 was the last level of secondary school (Ministerial Task Force:1989). Only 5 to 10 percent of students get to the last level of school (ADB:2001). My experience in this type of system was that most students were forced to leave school if they did not pass the New Zealand external examinations. Students would be given the

choice to repeat, however, if that student did not succeed the second time, that student would not be allowed back in to school. There was also stigma around repeating a class, where a student would be labeled a repeater by students from the lower levels who had progressed up to the next level. So if a student were not pushed out by the system, its peers would do the pushing.

System easy to follow: There was a sense of complacency with the traditional administration system. KIT8 clarified the issue and said "Quite simply, the system before was easy with not much paper work, the system was easy to work in". This type of complacency was the result of a process that was common in the education sector which the teachers were comfortable with. This process was perceived as having derived from the public service manual.

While the system may have been easy for teachers to follow, the community, according to the Ministerial Task Force (1989), reported that the public service manual prohibited a lot of initiative and control at the school level. It wrote:

> The extension of the Public Service Act, its manual, procedures and requirements into the realm of classroom teaching and school administration has created, in the Cook Islands, a most unusual experience. We believe that as long as the teachers and managers of learning institutions continue to be full-blown public servants subject to tight central control, …rigid procedures and a bureaucracy often remote from the institution, then sound modern management, healthy initiative and vital local decision making will be absent from the heart of the education system by structural necessity (pg 7-8).

The report further suggested that any changes to the system were to ensure that "learning institutions must be provided with funds and information to meet their objectives and must have close control over how they use their resources. A partnership needs to be established at all levels" (page 7). In describing the ideal system for Cook Islands

education, the report further suggested that "the system must be flexible and responsive to change, especially the rapidity of change currently occurring in the Cook Islands"(pg 9).

Teachers before the public sector reform acknowledged that the system did serve its time and purpose and needed to be changed as KIT10 affirmed "prior to 1996, education was serving its purpose pretty well to suit the time". This view was supported by KIT9 who said that the system during those days suited the culture of the time. The above statements were specific with their message explicitly stating that change was required to keep abreast with global changes and the economy. Two critical factors for change was the quality of teachers in the classrooms and the way teacher's performance was assessed.

The new system of education administration

Devolution empowered schools:

One of the results of the new system ushered in by the public sector reform was that management of schools, which had been the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and other core agencies like the Public Service Commission and Treasury was to be devolved to individual schools. From the data collected, all participants interviewed were of the view that the devolution of school management was a very good move. KIM1 was optimistic about school devolution and explained that "we have empowered the schools, we've strengthened them, their management". As a result of the devolution of management, the schools were also given powers to manage their own financial affairs through providing schools with operating budgets which increased as student roll increased. He further elaborated on devolution and said "the school has more autonomy, you know they can do most of the stuff themselves without them running to us all the time, it was good".

Teaches were also happy about devolution and like the Ministry of Education official's comment, Participant KIT10 commented that "one thing the reform has brought into the

schools was that schools were able to manage their own affairs ….. it's a real big plus for the school because we are responsible for the expending of that budget, the money was directed at priority areas, areas the school know needs to be addressed first". This type of arrangement meant that teacher's real needs as well as students learning needs within the school as opposed to their perceived needs by the Ministry of education were met.

As schools were given autonomy to manage their own activities, they were also expected to account for all resources used, given outputs and outcomes. Principals were made school managers and the Ministry of Education allowed them the power and resource to manage the school in partnership with the School Committee. According to the teachers, administrative matters that came as a result of school autonomy required policy documents to be developed, accountability reports submitted to the Ministry of Education and internal systems were developed to ensure efficiency gains were made within the confines of resources provided. Peter Etches said the Ministry of Education was very active in assisting schools develop their management systems to comply with Ministry of Education requirements and also New Zealand accreditation requirements, especially for schools delivering New Zealand Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA). KIM4 said that:

> The school management advisor did a lot of work to ensure management structures are in place for all the schools. She helped the schools develop policies. The policies replaced the rule book and those policies are done to better suit the needs of the school, so whatever you do, you are safeguarded by the policies – and it's the school's policy. The Ministry has its own which provides guidelines to schools but the school develop its own to suit itself.

At the classroom level, teachers (KIT7, KIT8, KIT6) reported their core function was student learning and that they were not required to actually write policies or accountability reports for the Ministry of Education but that the Principal consulted them on issues of policy; the Principal would write reports on their behalf leaving them more time to attend to their core business of teaching.

Much of the classroom management styles adopted in the Cook Islands were modeled on those practiced in New Zealand. Through the Cook Islands Ministry of Education and NZAID, schools in New Zealand were selected to partner with schools in the Cook Islands to share good classroom management practices under a scheme called "Twinning"(Ministry of Education: 2005). Teachers in the Cook Islands would travel to their partner school in New Zealand to observe and learn classroom management strategies and adapt them to suit their own situation and environment in the Cook Islands. Also, with NZAID funding, the Cook Islands continued to contract New Zealand teachers, traditionally to take over management positions in schools like principals and heads of departments, but now mostly as curriculum advisors in various specialist subjects.

Participant KI10 suggested that a more effective way he dealt with getting the best management practices from New Zealand was to have a classroom teacher sent to New Zealand for training and use her to role model efficient practices to other teachers in the classroom. He also said that, as principal, he was not afraid to try new things and to improve on them for the good of the students, and that he was open to continuous improvement suggestions if it would improved student learning. "If it serves a purpose, and there is some good in there for the kids, not for the teachers – we are here to work….. At our school when we try it and it didn't work, we will assess it and see where we failed, how could we make it work".

In allowing schools autonomy, it empowered them to use initiative and creativity to meet the learning needs of their students, operate within the confines of the Ministry of Education framework, human and financial resources, and be accountable for the use of those resources. A process currently enjoyed by both teachers and principals.

Increased resources:

As the Cook Islands economy improved and more resources were available to government, the amount of resources available to education also increased. The Ministry of Education (2005) reported that in the financial year 1996/1997, total appropriation to education was $4,735,500.00, by the year 2005, net appropriation to education was $8,216,347.00. As a result of increased funding to education, teacher salaries were increased, learning resources within the classrooms were improved with the assistance of external aid donors like NZAID, European Union and ADB, and teacher training and up-skilling were significantly improved.

At the macro level, the objective of the public sector reform was achieved in the sense that the economy was able to grow and improved financial efficiency for the provision of public goods like education. At the micro level, there was unanimous agreement that achieving financial efficiency within the economy was good for education in terms of improved learning resources. Participant KI7 said

> I am so happy now that there are so many resources around to assist teachers with teaching. Books are now available, graded according to ability levels. Computers are in classrooms now and students as old as 5 and 6 years are starting to explore new things on the computer, the alphabets and their sounds.

For participant KIT8 resources were of "different colours, different shapes, and children have more exposure to different things at an early age".

Increased remuneration: The increase in financial resources available through budgetary appropriation and with improved teacher skills also meant the teacher's salaries were improved. The Ministry developed a Teacher Salary Scale which classified and paid teachers according to qualifications and good performance. This was phased in over a five year period from 1999 to 2005 (Ministry of Education, 2003) which ensured teachers were paid on par with other public sector officials. Where a basic teacher's starting

salary in 1995 was $8,000, in 2006, it was now $19,000. The significant change in teacher salary meant that older teachers (aged 60 +) refused to leave the profession and mature students who took on teacher training. The improvement in Teacher salary also meant that they were now required to perform better in their jobs and be accountable to the school, parents and the Ministry of Education for student learning.

Participant KIT10 said that while remuneration was increased, teachers were of the view that it was fair that workload also increased. Some teachers had other ideas as KIT10 explained "some have the attitude that yes, I am now paid well but I will continue doing what I was doing before – no. The pay is doubled and the expectations are three times as high – for the good of the kids".

Teachers also know that they were awarded when they complied with the standard of work required in the Teacher Performance Management System (TPMS). Participant KI8 explained that "today, you need to provide evidence to prove you're planning; that is how you will get a higher standard and consequently increase in salary". This assurance and rewarding of teachers with appropriate remuneration for good work encouraged teachers to perform well and to work for their individual benefit.

Increased accountability:

The Ministry of Education also developed, as part of their monitoring of teacher quality, the TPMS which ensured that teachers performed all tasks expected of them and at a high standard. Participant KI3 explained the intention of the TPMS despite some odds:

> I suppose with education we probably went further than most, in terms of teacher accountability; we put them into performance management. Everything you read about it said that you don't do it for teachers but we thought well, if you are going to improve the quality you've got to have some sort of accountability.

When asked whether he thought it was a private sector practice, he said:

> Oh, I don't see it as coming from the private sector. It's a matter of what is your job, what you are meant to do, to what standard, and you know if you do it really well, you get rewarded, and so the reward was set into it that people could improve their salaries from it.

He went further to state the consequence of non-compliance with the TPMS after follow up help and advice from the Ministry of Education advisors and inspectors would eventually be to remove teachers from the system.

On the other hand, Ministry of Education officials recognized that increased accountability meant an increase in documentation and record keeping of learning activities. Participant KIM4 explained that teachers who were unhappy with the increase in workload were "just being lazy" to document their activities because they were used to the Ministry of Education planning their work for them. She said "all they are being asked to do is long term plan, unit plans for all subject areas, assessments and have them recorded but the teachers are failing on writing their unit plans. This is what they are moaning about".

Accountability from the schools to the Ministry of Education, I believe came in two forms; financial and output accountability. Classroom teachers were less concerned with financial accountability but were more concerned with output accountability in the form of student achievement. Participant KI8 explained that "Teachers write reports about assessments of their students. The Principal reports to the Ministry of Education on finances, annual plans, he writes our policies and just consults with us on how we think our policies should be". She also added that teachers needed to get their planning and assessment of documentation up to date because "the Auditors do it on a random but as a teacher you must be aware and prepared every time".

Increased accountability for student learning has meant that teacher's workload increased. Teachers interviewed unanimously agreed that the new system the public sector reform introduced into the public sector had tripled their workload. Participant KI10 claimed that "the workload before the reform compared to after the reform has tripled". KIT8 compared the workload to before and after the public sector reform and said "quite simply, the system before was easy with not much paper work, now, there are so many paper work".

The increase in workload was problematic for teachers as they tried to balance workload between the home and the school as participant KI7 explained,

> I know that some teachers are staying at school after school hours to catch up on their work or to plan for the next day, if not, they take it home and plan their work for the next day; when everyone in the family are asleep, the teacher stays up to finish off work, ready for the next day.

She also offered advice about the management of paperwork for teachers, suggested that keeping on top of the workload is not difficult when you plan exactly what you will do, how you will carry it out and what resources you would use to make your learning happen. From this, a teacher would have a good understanding of how she would attend to different ability groups. She added that "teachers must do these things, if they leave it, things will accumulate and they will loose focus and will not be willing to do things properly. That is why teachers moan about workload, if you do it in time, then it should not be a problem".

Teacher quality and performance before the reform

Monitoring teacher performance and quality:

Training of teachers to teach in the Cook Islands for primary and secondary levels was the responsibility of the Cook Islands Teachers College in Rarotonga. Entry criteria to train as primary school teachers would normally be recruited from students who

completed the Cook Islands and New Zealand secondary school examinations like Cook Islands School Certificate, New Zealand School Certificate or University Entrance. Recruitment for secondary teaching would either be from the pool of primary school teachers or high achievers in the New Zealand secondary school examinations. Training usually took 2 years for primary and secondary. At the end of the years of Teachers College training, a diploma would be awarded. The teacher would then be required to undertake a probationary year in the classroom where upon successful completion of that year, a teacher's certificate would be awarded (John Teao, Director of Administration, Ministry of Education, 2008)

In March 1997, the Ministry of Education reported that 13% of the teachers in schools had a university degree and 90 percent had a teacher's certificate, which meant they were trained at the Cook Islands Teachers Training College in Rarotonga.

At the school level, teachers were happy with the system because they had control over their classroom and their students. When compared with the previous system, KIM2 explained that teachers were just implementers of teaching assignments. The Principal, however, was the watchdog where the Ministry of Education was also monitoring them.

Principals monitoring of teachers were very stringent as KIM4 stated that during her time as a teacher, the Ministry would do the planning for the teachers and send those teaching assignments to the schools, and then it's the teacher's responsibility to ensure the steps they took to teach were planned and checked by the Principal. She also added that teachers were not allowed to teach without a workplan as there were consequences. "Nine in the morning is the deadline, no workplan, you will be sent for. You will be asked for your workplan because you cannot teach if you don't have a plan".

Monitoring by the Ministry of Education, was also not regular. Participant KIT8 said that before the reform, when the inspectors came, they were complacent with their work.

"Their reporting on teacher performance was quite limited I didn't see much reporting in those days like what we have now".

Lack of professional development:

While the Ministry of Education was responsible for the training of teachers, they recognized that the skills teachers acquired at Teachers Training College and assistance by curriculum advisors were sufficient to equip a teacher to perform well in the classroom. In-service training did not exist for teachers to upskill themselves, participant KI6 indicated that for selected teachers, their up-skilling came in the form of expatriate teachers passing on skills of the job to a local teacher while they were under contract and holding responsible positions in schools. The Ministerial Task Force (1989, pg 106) reported that teachers were frustrated because of the lack of professional development and upskilling. They wrote, "During the course of our work, we met with concerned, well-meaning and courteous body of teachers, each expressing a clear desire to improve professionally".

May be, according to KIM4, it was not necessary to have in-service training as everything was prepared at the Ministry of Education, and all teachers do was to follow and teach it. Furthermore, participant KI3 was critical of teacher quality in the period before the reform and was of the opinion that there were so many teachers and that there was more quantity than quality amongst the teaching force. The above views confirmed that the traditional administration system was more focused on the standards of inputs of a public service rather than the quality of what it should produce.

Professional isolation:

Teachers were of the view that professional isolation was an issue of concern before the public sector reform. Apart from participant KIT8 indicating she would ask selected people at the Ministry of Education for help, other teachers referred to professional sharing among teachers in school. Participant KIT7admitted that "I held back on some of

my trump cards from other teachers", as she explained that she did not want other teachers to take the merit from her because for a while she gathered her trump cards over the years and was not willing to share them with others. She added that with all the schools she had taught in, teachers were left to their devices to "articulate how they should teach".

Participant KIT6 also said that she remembered feeling isolated and had no one to talk to about professional issues. This type of system created competition and self seeking behaviour amongst teachers where they held on to their knowledge so the reward would not be taken by other teachers, participant KIT10 described this type of operation as inefficient and not beneficial for the whole school. He asked, "If you were to hold that information from new staff, where would that lead the teachers to? What good would that do for the school?" He further suggested that working co-operatively was the way of the future which resulted in "coming up with big savings". He explained that the lack of professional sharing was a thing of the past, and that teachers used to think that they would work for their own good and not for the good of the collective. "In that belief, the person would be quite reluctant to offer things that he knows to others because you could well be helping the other person take the merit from you".

Teacher performance and quality after the reform

<u>More professional development</u>

The Ministry of Education realized that teachers were its most important resource in the delivery of education and with findings from various education reviews that teacher quality was a concern (Ministerial Task Force: 1989, Education Assignments Team: 2001), the Ministry of Education devised a plan to provide in-service training for teachers at the local, national and international level. Peter Etches of the Ministry of Education stated that the Ministry had a 3 strategy approach to up-skill teachers and lift the standards of education. They were:

- The deployment of three management facilitators to work alongside principals and teachers; one for the north, one for the south and one for Rarotonga;

- Twinning. Teachers in the Cook Islands would be sent to schools in New Zealand to observe best practice methodologies and emulate them in schools in the Cook Islands;

- Upgrade school managers through the offer of the Graduate Diploma in education management program through Auckland University to Principals and senior teachers in schools.

My experience with working in the Ministry of Education was that the Ministry of Education would plan to have in-service training programs during the school holidays and would ensure there were sufficient budget allocated to bring teachers from the outer islands to Rarotonga.

Teachers were of the view that professional development was important and their needs were not sufficiently met before the reform because of lack of upskilling sessions. After the reform, opportunities for professional development sessions are so many that teachers felt they were missing out on their holiday breaks. Participant KIT6 summed this up by saying:

> Before the reform, I don't remember having attended any professional development. One thing the teachers are not happy about is getting their holidays taken away by these professional developments ….I would rather they have it during the holidays than having it during school times….Its for their own good when they are given this new knowledge.

With increased professional development and better teaching methodologies being taught to teachers, they were also expected to translate them into improved performance in the classroom.

<u>Increased expectation on teachers to perform:</u>

Teachers generally agreed that being accountable for the standard and quality of education was important and an issue they were happy with. They acknowledged it as a good thing for them and the students they served, however, they had some difficulty getting used to the change in the system. Teacher participant KIT7 suggested "that old teachers like me find it hard to adjust to the amount of paper work required and still maintain quality delivery in the classroom". She maintained that teachers were not to share their workload because it was important that they be involved in the full cycle of work critical in the student learning.

She also explained that teachers had kept up with their work on a daily basis, if they deferred it, "then it would cause problems and they would start to blame the system and blame other things because of their lack of organization skills". She encouraged teachers to take advantage of the partnership system operating within the school to share teaching methodologies to help those who needed help.

Participant KIT8 stated that change was not the problem but the frequency in which change had taken place. She explained that each time there was change, the Ministry of Education would issue thick documents for each subject areas, and not long afterwards, they would be told to disregard that change and follow another one. She added that "sometimes when we are really accustomed to one practice, we are asked to change, and after all those changes they asked us to go back to what we were doing initially". The frequency of the changes had forced this teacher to draw from old teaching methodologies to compensate for what she was not really sure about.

<u>More professional sharing</u>

The quest to improve the quality of delivery led some principals, as managers of the school, to ensure teachers shared their knowledge, experience and worked together as a team. By sharing, they also gained from the experience and skills of others.

Participant KIT7 shared her experience and said:

> You know all the schools I have been in, teachers have been left to their devices to articulate how they should tech, but when I came to this school under the management of this principal, there is a spirit of co-operation among the teachers. Teachers of each level will sit together and plan together, this way there is not only consistency in what you teach in various classes of the same level but there is also equal standard being used. Delivery strategies and teaching methodologies are shared among teachers, how you actually deliver is your prerogative.

This was not an isolated incident, a secondary teacher from another school KIT6 said that apart from sharing within the school, there is inter-school professional sharing between her school and other schools, "I remember when I was at Tereora, I didn't have anyone to talk to about things, but now we have subject panels, we exchange ideas, we moderate each others work so assessment is consistent across board". Participant KIT10 also said that professional sharing was part of the regular running of the school and improved teacher performance. He also added that "syndicate heads of each section also help out with their teachers in terms of planning".

KIT10 also explained that the intention of professional sharing apart from consistency of standards was to "cut back on time we spend on planning, and if we were to put in more time, it would be to improve the quality of planning".

At the Ministry level, they offered in-service training for various subjects at each term holidays. The Ministry would have planned in-service training one year in advance so they could budget and fund for these training programs. Apart from in-service training

was the twinning program which was aimed at school principals and senior teachers being attached to partner schools in New Zealand to learn best practice models and translate them in classrooms in the Cook Islands.

How students behaved, learnt and achieved before the reform

<u>Students behaved very well</u>

Teachers often compared student behaviour before the reform as favourable. KIT9 commented that teaching was made easy in those days by students behaving very well despite the low salary. It could be argued that the over-emphasis of schools on student behaviour might be detrimental to student learning, however, participants tended to prefer student behaviour before the public sector reform than after it because they listened to the teacher. After the reform, participant KIT9 said that "students won't listen and are really stubborn"

Participant KIT7 also preferred students during the pre-reform period because they worked hard and showed teachers respect. She further commented that upon reflection, she was not sure whether good behaviour was a result of respect or fear of teachers. students behaviour:

This type of comments indicated that students were very passive and carried out directions as they were dished out by teachers. They were obedient, respected authority and were a pleasure for teachers to teach. In a cultural sense, this was the type of behaviour and respect required of Cook Islands children. Jon Jonassen (Crocombe et al:2003, pg128) identified some of the key values of a Cook Islands person as patience, unity, humility. He further suggested that while these values were also reflected in other cultures, it is in the application of those values in the Cook Islands context that sets Cook Islands people apart. As a Cook Islands student who came through the education system, I believed the practice of humility and respect required of students were practiced to suit the teacher and to a certain degree detriment for the student. I recalled being ostracized

by a teacher because I asked a question she thought was stupid. I was then sent outside to stand in the sun on one leg for the rest of the lesson.

Low achievement levels

Teachers generally said that student achievement levels were really good (KIT9) and that they achieved a high standard of education (KIM5) as reflected in the jobs they hold. One Ministry of Education official (KIM5) commented that historically:

> The highest achievement anyone could ever achieve was the Sir Maui Pomare Medal…there was much competition for that medal. Our level of schooling was high". A few years later we had University Entrance, then University of the South Pacific Foundation Courses in 1986…. then to Bursary in 1992. When we take those levels of schooling we can say we achieved quite well in education.

While the KIM5 may be correct in saying that the level of schooling was high, however, documentary evidence suggested that student achievement was not high. Documentary evidence showed achievement of Cook Islands students in the New Zealand examinations system was not of a high standard.

Ministry of Education figures (EMIS, 1995) showed that of all the students who started school in year one, 90 -95 percent would have dropped out between form 3 and form 6 which up till 1986 was the last level of secondary school. Only 5 to 10 percent of students get to the last level of school (ADB,2001). Student achievement at the end of primary school level comparing 1989 and 1992 in English literacy and Mathematics (in table 8 below) showed that Cook Islands education had not achieved the results desired by the community.

Table 8 - **Grade 6 Standardized Test of Achievement (STACI) 1989 and 1992**.

	Rarotonga		Southern Group		Northern Group	
	1989	1992	1989	1992	1989	1992
English	63	62	58	51	40	47
Mathematics	51	52	45	49	n.a	38

n.a. means not available   *source:* Department of Education 1993.

Achievement rates at secondary level also indicated deeper concerns for education in the Cook Islands.   Students normally sat Cook Islands School Certificate (CISC) in form 5 before sitting New Zealand School Certificate, and standards seemed to have fallen. CISC results showed an overall decline over the years 1989 to 1991. This meant the average score for mathematics was 40; English 46 and Science 56 (Department of Education Exams Unit, 1993). A recent analysis of New Zealand School Certificate Examination taken showed there was only 3 percent grade A passed and 14 percent of grade A to B achieved meant only one sixth of students in forms 6 and 7 were prepared for pre-university studies (ADB economic report 1995, pg 171).

Rote learning:

Both Ministry of Education officials and teachers agreed that rote was the style of learning which was not really good for students learning. They said that it encouraged copying and memorizing without full understanding of the lessons being taught. KIT9 said "Before the reform, students I believe were spoon fed. Teachers gave a lot of the knowledge to students through writing on the board and the students just come along and write it into their books".

Participant KIM4 argued that the Ministry promoted rote learning by preparing everything for the teacher and handing it over for them to teach. This type of system was emulated by teachers to their students, and students would progress through the levels by

memorizing lessons from the previous level. She said that students were required to learn the lesson at one level so it would help them with the previous levels.

Participant KIM2 was concerned about rote learning because he was of the view that no real understanding of the concepts were being displayed by students, it not encourage thinking or researching by students, all the content knowledge was given by the teachers to the students. Students were considered clever if they were good at rote learning.

Participant KIT6 also explained that students take what the teachers tell them for granted and did not question or critically examined what they were being taught because to question it would be considered as cheeky.

Consistent with the system of following procedures and officers being told how to carry out certain activities, learning in schools was also in a style of dictation. An ideal student was one where he/she behaved like a sponge where they were expected to behave nicely and take in all that was being taught and squeezed them out at the end of the year in examinations moderated in New Zealand. Teachers agreed that rote learning was not the best style of learning and that it hindered teaching and learning to think.

How students behaved, learnt and what they achieved after the reform

Student learning as the focus of education:

The focus of education had changed from teaching to learning (Teasedale: 2005) turning the focus of education from teacher's teaching to student learning and their needs. Participant KIM4 said that one of the positive developments from the reform was that rote learning was abolished from the schools:

> Yes, that's the main development now which is getting them to think critically. They may be slow in writing their thoughts down, that will come over time.

When I go into schools now, I see children talking and asking questions in class; students were not allowed to ask questions in the old system.

Student learning have now become the focus of education and that was evidenced in the way everyone worked in the education sector. For teachers, KIT10 said "If we have to do things, we have to do it to make a difference for the kids". He explained that there was a need for a database to monitor student learning which was good for the kids because there would be a record of their learning at various stages and also good for stakeholders like parents and Ministry of Education.

Participant KIT7 suggested that parent's participation in education would greatly improve student learning. Parent's participation would be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. KIM2 was of the opinion that with the significant number of resources poured into the classrooms and teachers being allowed to be creative, student learning should be much better now than before. He explained that "the child of 2000 should be a better child than one prior to the reform". He clarified that since teachers were allowed to be innovative and experiment in the classroom, he expected that the outcome would be that "the child of today is different to the one before the reform". While there was a difference in student learning and achievement, the difference in student behaviour was different to that of student learning; student behaviour was deemed by teachers as challenging.

Student behaviour challenging

As a former Ministry of Education official, I remembered a memorandum being sent from the Secretary of Education to all Principals and teachers directing teachers to abstain from administering corporal punishment to students and to comply with the sections 55 and 56 of the Education Act 1986/87 requiring teachers to treat students with respect and that corporal punishment was to be administered by the Principal or by the teacher with permission from the Principal, only if all other courses of action had failed.

This meant that a change in practice for teachers in the classroom. They were now required to manage student behaviour as part of their teaching methodologies and classroom management practice. Teachers were not very happy with this change.

Participant KIT9 said that students after the reform would swear at teachers making them harder to teach. The problem, according to participant KIM4 with student being allowed to ask questions to the teachers and be critical about knowledge given to them was that teachers felt their power over their classroom was weakened. She also added that the older teachers found it difficult to adapt to this type of practice which was different to the new teachers coming out of Teacher' College.

In support of the older teachers' stance, KIT7 suggested that greater exposure to the outside world meant that students emulated bad behaviour. They smoke, take drugs in schools and are rebellious to the teacher. She further suggested that student's behavior reflected behavior in the home where good homes would have good children and they do well at school.

Student achievement promising

Ministry of Education documentation showed more students were accessing and achieving at the senior secondary levels and a lot more students were getting to the end of the secondary school, improving retention levels at secondary school and leaving school with university entrance qualifications as outlined in Table 9

Senior Student Retention Rates
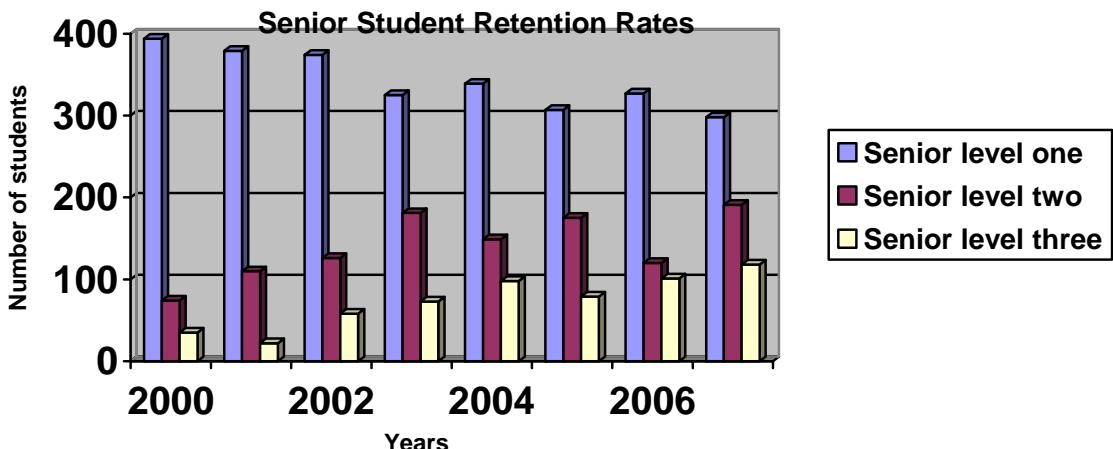
KIM2 also confirmed this saying that retention rates before the reform from primary to the last level of secondary was 5 percent of the overall intake, however, taking Tereora College's figures in 2007 which was over 600, over one hundred are in the last level of secondary school. This marked a significant improvement for education.

Teachers were optimistic that the new system was served the students well compared with the old traditional administration model. The Ministry of Education officials were also of the view that student achievement results were more promising than the old examination system. Participant KIT10 commented that student learning improved evidenced in the interaction between students and overseas teachers in the classroom:

> The question whether students are doing better, yes, no doubt. Anybody can just walk into any school and talk to kids and pick that up straight away. We get teacher trainees from Australia and New Zealand and it surprises them. One of the teachers actually reported that before she came here she underestimated the levels here, she was surprised to see the level these children are operating at, when she went back, she rated the levels here much higher than she was teaching in Australia.

Another measure of improved student learning was the ability of students from the Cook Islands to cope with schooling in New Zealand. Participant KIT10 further stated that

I have no doubt learning in the schools have improved a lot. That is being clearly proven by students who have gone overseas and come back. The common feedback from parents is that their students are doing very well in the New Zealand schools and in fact a lot of them have surprised the schools that they have enrolled into.

Participants KIT8 and KIT7 were rather skeptical of the improvement in student learning citing lack of parental support from home. "There is not much improvement with student learning now, when you ask parents to come to school and discuss their child, they are very reluctant to come and see you so student progress is not great". On the other hand, KIT8 said that there was no different to student learning as they learn at different paces. "The achievements of children before and after the reform are much the same. When the child is ready to learn they will learn. I think children are ready at different times and they learn at different speeds, just when they are ready". There was overwhelming evidence (Fuller & Olsen:2003, Getswiki: 2007) that parental support was critical in student achievement and success in school. In the Cook Islands these participants held the same views.

Parents support for education before the reform

Strong parental support

Parent's role in education, according to the Cook Islands Education Act 1986/87, was to assist the school with any fundraising, maintenance and ensuring welfare of the school was catered for. Parents were actively involved in the education of their children as they realized its importance. Participant KIM5 recalled that the spirit of parents before the reform was very supportive of their children's education so their children could achieve the highest standard possible in education. Participant KIM2 cited economic reasons for parent's support of their children's education because "it was difficult getting stuffs out of the Ministry because the system at the time was very much centralized in terms of finances".

Apart from ensuring the successful implementation of articles of the Education Act, the relationship between parents and the school was minimal. Parents believed that what teachers were doing was best for their children didn't question their teaching or assessment. On the other hand, teachers were encouraged by the support they received from parents which indicated trust and support for their role in their children's lives.

There was trust between teachers and parents

Parents had a fair amount of trust in the teachers and the schools to provide the best education possible for their children. Their assessment was never questioned by the parents. There was not much interaction between the teachers and parents but trust existed because teachers were perceived by parents and the community as leaders and experts in teaching and learning. "The student reports at the time were taken as gospel truth. KIT6 and KIT7 commented and said that the parents trusted the teachers so there was no question about what the teachers say about the student". People also considered them as leaders in the community, especially in small outer island communities (Ministerial Task Force: 1989).

If their children failed to gain a place in higher education, blame would never be apportioned to the school or the teachers, the student and parents would blame themselves. Parents would have their children migrate to foreign countries to gain better education or employment (Crocombe et al:2003). Participant KIT6 confirmed the above view saying. KIM4 also supported comments from the teachers saying "Yes, teacher's words were gospel truth and you can't change, the student is always wrong and teachers are right". I believed only culture could explain the relationship that existed between teachers and parents, as Jon Jonassen explained (Crocombe et al: 2003) that to be a Maori person meant "to have the wisdom of the ages which was evidenced by respect" (pg128) for taungas (experts), in this case, teachers.

KIT6 also recalled and said that said communication between parents and teachers were quite minimal and she did not remember parents questioning their children's school reports which were common practice after the reform. My experience as a student was that communication between parents and teachers were very limited. I would be given a report to take home to my parents and my parents would be invited to the school prize giving. My report would state how well I had achieved in various subject areas and my placing in each subjects and my overall placing in class. There would be no discussion between my parents and the teacher but if I didn't do well in any of the subjects, I was forced into a position to account to my parents for my performance. Much had changed since those respectful days, from the way government governed to the way students behaved in classrooms.

Parental support for education after the reform

<u>Teachers more accountable to parents</u>

Having to account to parents was also a requirement that teachers had to undertake. As a client of the service, parents had to be satisfied that teachers were delivering education to a standard expected of them. Participant KI10 said that the school's most important stakeholder was parents. "Yes, being accountable to the Ministry of Education who is supposedly in charge of education but more so in our school accountable to the parents, the parents of children that are in our school".

As teachers were deliverers of the service, they were responsible for the provision of information and of service that met the learning needs of students and expectations of parents. While it might be difficult to find balance between the needs of students and parents' expectations, participant KIT10 said that reversing the role from a teacher to a parent should help clarify parent's expectations of teachers. He suggested that teachers are also parents. Their expectation of their own children should be the same for any other children. He said that the worse thing would be accounting for failure, " I don't think I can look parents in the eye and know that I have failed their child".

Since the public sector reform, the role of parents was expanded to include parental involvement in strategic planning and policy development. The intention of the expansion was to ensure greater ownership of the provision of education by parents and better understanding of the school operations. In a private market, it was necessary that information about a product was provided to the clients so they were able to make informed decisions. In this case, schools were willing to share the responsibility of school management with parents who were supposed to be their client and also their partner in the delivery of education. Participant KI7, when talking about the necessity for teachers to plan their own work, recommended that "we must also prove to parents that we can meet the learning needs of their children, then they can trust us and we can all work in partnership with them".

As teachers, they were conscious of the fact that when performing their duties in school, they were accountable to parents and the Ministry of Education for the standard in which their duties were performed and their consequential results. This had made teachers more conscientious with how they delivered education and gathered evidence or kept evidence of learning. Participant KIT7 said: "…I know that teachers have to make good use of their head and make sure that what and how they deliver their lessons are to the benefit of student learning". As well as being accountable to parents, there was also more communication between the two parties.

More communication between parents and teachers

Reporting to parents on their child's learning was now more frequent than before. Parents were also invited at any time during the year to discuss with teachers any concerns they have about their children's learning. The whole idea of reporting to parents now appeared to be providing parents information about their child's learning at school so they were able to help with their child's learning from home. Participant KIT6 told me that reporting to parents takes place three times a year, so parents were kept

informed with their children's progress in education. Should any issues occur during the year, teachers and parents could address it and have it dealt with before it would become detrimental to learning. Students were also encouraged to be part of the dialogue between parents and teachers so students could explain the situation or provide defence.

Participant KIT7 said that as a way of involving parents in the education of their children, she encouraged them to come to school and observe their children learn. She believed that parents would be better able to help if they had good information about student learning and they could see what actually goes on in the lives of their children.

Apart from communication from the school to parents, avenues were created by the Ministry of Education Policy through the Cook Islands Education Guidelines that parent's role were to be expanded to include them in decision making at the school level. This was important for parents, who become part of the school committee, because they felt like they had ownership of decisions made for the school. KIT10 said "Parents now have their say recognized which were raised through the school committees. School Committees became more active, they became more purposeful in the affairs of the school".

Slack parental support

On the other extreme, one of the major concerns expressed by teachers was the fact that some parents chose not to participate in the education of their children which proved to be detrimental to student learning. Participant KIT7 was rather disappointed with slack parental supported because it defeated what she worked so hard to achieve in school.

She admitted that she was rather disappointed that with a buoyant economy, better access to knowledge and resources, students continued to go to school unprepared to learn. "When you asked them why, they would tell you that they have been watching DVD or playing computer games, or some students will stay home". KIT8's only suggestion for

improving the current system of education was for "parents to do their share and work in partnership with teachers and the school to improve student learning".

These concerns indicated teacher's immense desire to see students succeed and that they were willing to work with parents to improve student learning. Where education was different from a private service was the fact that clients couldn't choose whether or not they could have education. The Education Act 1987 and other international conventions stipulated that education was a right for every child and must be accessed by every child under the age of 15. The Cook Islands reported in 2006 that it had achieved most of the goals of the Millenium Development Goals with 100% universal primary education and an adult literacy rate of 93 percent in 1999.

Conclusion:

This chapter exemplified the voices of experienced teachers and Ministry of Education officials who experienced both eras of education. As they reflected on their experiences of the past traditional administration system, they shared what they believed were both the strengths and weaknesses of that system and compared them with their experiences of the current management system. It showed that the public sector reform had a major effect on the delivery of education in the classrooms, in the Ministry of Education and especially support from parents.

Management: The rigidity of the administration system led teachers, the Ministry of Education officials and the community (Ministerial Task Force:1989) to seek alternative systems of administering the schools. Teachers were restricted in what they could do in teaching methodologies and they had little by way of teaching resources available to them. Their remuneration package was low and so was their morale. This frustration was shared with the Ministerial Task Force in 1989 and with me during my key informant interviews. The Ministerial Task Force of 1989 outlined a management system that was autonomous and empowered schools to make their own decisions at the local

level, basically advocating for devolution of powers from the Public Service Commissioners Office to the schools themselves.

The significant change from school administration to school management was not only a change in term but also a change in practice, in environment, in relationships and in systems that supported the work of teachers and managers alike. It encouraged the use of creativity and innovation at the classroom level and at management level, allowed the principals to manage the school through the allocation of an operating budget to each school, and given them mechanisms to control resources, both financial and human resources in the most appropriate way for the school. Devolving managerial powers to the school also required the schools to be accountable to the Ministry of Education for the use of those resources. This process, although complex, was hailed by teachers and Ministry of Education officials as the best thing that happened to education.

Teachers: One of the biggest effects of the public sector reform was the effect on teachers. Teachers being the instrument of education delivery had to adapt to many changes, in teaching methodologies, to planning, teaching, assessing and evaluating learning programs increasing their workload, responsibility and outputs for accountability. Some teachers were optimistic that the increase in workload was justified and were designed for the benefit of the students. Others were not so optimistic which made the journey an unpleasant experience for them.

One of the positive changes as a result of the reform was the increase in professional sharing. This initiative was a drive to make the provision of education more efficient; saving in teacher time and resources. Those teachers who were optimistic about the changes were also those who were optimistic about professional sharing within the school and between schools. Professional sharing, according to participant KIT10 was to ensure planning in subject areas at every level was consistent and should be done across the

levels. Professional development, on the other hand was something the teachers were not keen on as it took up their term breaks and intrudes with their time with their families.

Teachers were also held to account for the learning of each student in school. They were held accountable by the Principals, the Ministry of Education and parents. The process of gathering evidence for accounting to these stakeholders can be time consuming for teachers but for teachers who realize the importance of being accountable to these stakeholders, they work hard to ensure they meet the accountability requirements. They also needed to be good with time management to organize their work so they could keep on top of recording assessment of learning activities. Not all of them are successful with keeping up with the changes, others reminisce the old system, however, they try and do their best for the sake of the children.

The Ministry of Education confirmed teacher's views on teacher workload and performance. They confirmed the establishment of Teacher Performance Management System as part of the accountability mechanisms. As former teachers, they were conscious of the additional burden the new system would put on the teachers, and were confident good teachers would be able to handle the pressure. KIM3 seemed to think the process of accountability was a "natural one" rather than one borrowed from the "private sector".

Students: The effect on students, according to Ministry of Education officials was promising. According to KIM4, interaction between students and teachers improved with students no longer afraid to ask questions, explore, and students were excited to go to school. Ministry of Education documentation also show student retention rates, especially at the senior secondary levels, increased significantly allowing them access to higher levels which only about 5 to 10 percent of students who start school before the reform would attain. Whether that was a result of the new NCEA system is not known.

KIT6 believed that student's access to information through the internet challenged teacher's content knowledge of the subjects. Rote learning and passive student behaviour were things of the past. The focus of education changed from teaching to learning (Teasedale: 2005) and everything that is done in the school was, according to KIT10 "for the good of the kids". Although student behaviour was challenging, teachers were required, as part of their teaching methodology, to manage student behaviour, ensure learning takes place and high achievement standards gained.

Parents: Parent's roles were also affected. Where they were passive observers of education in the past, supported their children with their learning through spending time with them and supporting the school with fundraising, and trusted the teachers on their assessment and report on their children's progress, the doors were now wide open for them to be a partner in the education of their children. Parents were required to continue as they were doing in the past but no longer as passive observers but part of the decision making process on policy and the expenditure of the operating budget. The Ministry of Education officials were optimistic that the inclusion of parents in the operation of the school would allow parents to feel they were an integral part of the school and would increase their participation for the benefit of the education of their children. According to teachers, there were some parents who commit the time and effort for their child's education and there were also those who made no effort to be supportive of their children either through ensuring they were well rested before a school day or provide their children with healthy lunch. Participant KIT8 suggested that a way forward for education in the Cook Islands was for this partnership to be strengthened

Ministry of Education officials and Teachers as key parties in the delivery of education believed that the effects from the public sector reform was positive for all stakeholders involved, especially for students. While it may have caused some resistance on the part of teachers to change their practice from that which they were comfortable, however they realized that if students benefited from the change, then that would have reflected victory for them. While Ministry of Education documentation has shown increased achievement

in student learning, parents also needed to realize that increased parental participation in the education of their children also contributed to success in children's learning and they needed to be more active in that regard.

CHAPTER 6

What were the effects?

A global fashion trend

The public sector reform was a global phenomenon (Sahlin-Anderson, 2002; Ferlie et al, 2003) which set the platform for education reform to take place. Against the backdrop of the public sector reform was a sick economy (Shick, 1996) and a public sector fixated on rules and procedures without much consideration for the effects its activities had on the people it served. Central to the public sector reform movement was the introduction of the NPM system which replaced the traditional administration system of government.

Industrialised OECD member countries like Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States of America and developing countries India, Jamaica, and Thailand (Pollit et al, 2000, pg 3) implemented these reforms at different paces and at varying degrees. Hood (1995) commented that Japan had not adopted NPM reforms in much the same way as other OECD countries and Pollit (1998) also argued that Japan and Germany were rather lukewarm towards their adoption of the NPM principles. According to Hiromi Yamamoto (2003) negative perspectives held by Japanese bureaucrats about NPM principles, coupled with a clash between cultural practices and NPM principles, such as the use of contracts hindered the adoption of much of the NPM principles in Japan.

The Cook Islands followed the fashion trend

For the Cook Islands, the introduction of the NPM system did a complete overhaul and re-engineered the machinery of government to a stage where the structure and the culture of government were affected (Schlechty, 2001). The currents of NPM ideologies for the Cook Islands were global. Those currents travelled from New Zealand who tested those

ideologies before they were shifted to the Cook Islands through discursive convergence (Pollit, 2001). The transformation was swift and adoption almost immediate to save an ailing economy. The effect of the reform on the economy was almost immediate. By 1998, the Asian Development Bank (2001) reported an increase in income per capita of 8.9 percent above the pre-crisis level and an overall economic growth of 2.7 percent in 1999 and 4.1 percent in 2000, fuelled mostly by the restaurant/accommodation sectors.

Why follow the fashion trend

Stakeholders in the Cook Islands education sector were disillusioned and wanted change (Ministerial Task Force,1989). Their problems were similar to that of other countries. New Zealand (Picot, 1988) had a centralized decision making process where all decisions were made at the centre which affected relevancy and timing of decisions at other levels. The centralized system was also vulnerable to interest groups and political interference, did not provide much information about the work of the education sector and lacked effective management practices. There was a lack of accountability. Everyone in the system was bound by rules and procedures and there was no incentive to strive for excellence in the execution of management duties. The same could be said of other countries like Hawaii, Samoa, Tahiti (Ministerial Task Force, 1989) and Britain (Hogget, 1996). Many of the principles of the NPM, which was in fashion at the time was used to resurrect them from the doldrums of the old traditional administration system. What was not considered however, was the effect these proposed changes would have on the values and the culture of Cook Islands people and its transformation over time on succeeding generations. It had come to this because the Cook Islands government had depended on the traditional administration system (and waited for something new to converge from New Zealand) until it failed, dragging the economy with it. At that point, they once again turned to New Zealand for help.

The cart before the horse

For the education sector, the groundwork for such changes were laid by the Ministerial Task Force in 1989 in a report entitled *The Polynesian Way* with ideologies and framework borrowed from the New Zealand Picot report of 1988. The problem was the mismatch in system for the implementation of such recommendations, where the Cook Islands was still operating under the Traditional Public Administration system and the recommendations were to be implemented within an NPM system. Problems which prompted the reforms in the New Zealand education sector (Picot, 1988) were similar to those of the Cook Islands education sector (Ministerial Task Force, 1989). The impact of most of the recommendations were not fully understood at the time and thought to be too radical. The Public Sector reform of 1996 provided an avenue for these recommendations to be implemented.

The effects on school management

The biggest change during the public sector reform was the change from administration to management. The adaptation of economic concepts like public choice theory, transaction cost economics, agency theory and managerialism proved to be the drivers of change in the economy and subsequently in the schools. The voices of teachers and Ministry of Education officials confirmed their practices reflected the application of these concepts at the school level, where the process (Christensen & Laegreid, 2002) of such concepts were adapted to the needs of the Cook Islands and consequential effects were also specific to the Cook Islands. A key management change was the devolution of management powers from the Ministry of Education to the schools.

Devolution of management

The idea of devolution was readily accepted by government and the community as it promoted what they had wanted in education; schools not to be restricted by the centralized system of traditional administration but schools that were efficient, had local autonomy, good management practices and schools with control over their activities and

resources (Ministerial Task Force, 1989, pg 5). Devolution practices that converged from New Zealand also carried similar principles (McKinlay, 1990). With details mapped out in the Polynesian Way report, the Cook Islands accepted the new management concept with few variations.

Diverging in devolution

There was one important divergence the Cook Islands made from the New Zealand type of devolved school management system. Although recommended by the Ministerial Task Force of 1989, Boards of Trustees were not established to govern the schools. The roles and responsibilities of the Board of Trustees were divided between the Ministry of Education and the school committee. The Ministry of Education felt that such powers may not be properly used by small isolated island communities like those of the northern and southern groups. More to the point, people in those communities have not had the training to manage schools, and the frequency of change of executive members of the Board would increase the risk of mismanagement. For the size of the Cook Islands, establishing Boards of Trustees for each school would be a mammoth task decreasing economies of scale in the provision of education and the risk of compromised quality. The risk of uncertainty and individuals trying to maximize their benefit by using system they were comfortable with which might not comply with the required processes was too great.

The Ministry of Education shared responsibility for the hiring of teachers with the Principal and School Committee. The determination of teacher, principal and ancillary staff salaries including the administrative task of payment of wages, electricity and telephone bills were retained by the Ministry of Education. The remaining funds were given to schools as operating budget to purchase resources required by the school. Decisions for the use of this budget would be made in conjunction with the school committee. They had to report to the Ministry of Education accounting for the use of such funds. By the same token, the concept of transaction cost economics urged the provision of public services be arranged in a way to achieve efficiency gains. For the

Cook Islands education system, this was the most efficient way the provision of services could be arranged to achieve efficiency in the provision of education given the number and size of schools.

Ministry of Education's role in devolution

The Ministry of Education participants were of the view that their role in the devolution of powers was to set the direction and indicate the boundaries for the schools to operate. Devolving the management of school operations to the schools was a way of empowering the schools rather than being dictated to. Participant KIM3 commented "The Ministry saw its role as setting the playing field, the policy, then allowing as much freedom within schools to work in rather than making every decision for them. I think that was pretty good".

In identifying the playing field for the schools, the Ministry of Education allowed schools flexibility in the use of their resources, boundaries within which they might operate, standards which they were to provide their service, and the short term outputs and long term outcomes expected of them. The schools were to report to them on a regular basis and this formed part of their monitoring system for the schools. It appeared from the comments of teacher participants; they were happy with this system. This type of arrangement confirmed Osborne and Gaebler's (1993) illustration of "steering and rowing", where, in this case, the Ministry of Education was responsible for steering and the schools for rowing.

With the schools being allowed flexibility and resources to operate as an autonomous entity, it encouraged them to strive for good results; to perform to a good standard and to be accountable for the resources used. The schools were allocated human, material, learning and financial resources using a formula dependent on the number of students on the school roll. That number of students would translate to the number of teachers required and the amount of operating funds allocated to the school. Some (Grant, 1997;

Thrupp, 1999; Halsey et al, 2001; Kinsler & Gamble, 2001) argued that this was an unfair way of distributing resources as it would lead to competition amongst schools for students. Osborne and Gaebler (1993) argued on the contrary and said that it was one way of providing incentives for schools to improve the quality of their education so they could attract more students into their school. The Ministry of Education's practices were more in favour of Osborne and Gaebler's argument to provide incentives to stimulate competition.

While they were given power to use their resources as they saw fit, they were also expected to account for the use of those resources according to Ministry of Education guidelines. For the Ministry of Education, it paved the way for a better relationship between teachers and the Ministry of Education, removed the fear they once had of the Ministry as the controlling authority of education and replaced that with partnership in the delivery of education. While this practice was perceived by Cook Islands teacher participants as empowering, the western Australian teachers (O'Brien & Downs, 2002) perceived it as another way of the Ministry of Education wielding power over them in a top-down manner. The difference might be that Australian teachers did not have to look for resources under the Traditional Administration system whereas Cook Islands teachers had to contend with aid donated or very limited teaching resources from developed countries like Australia.

Devolution established partnerships

The partnership through devolution also ensured that the Ministry of Education was able to easily and quickly collect information from schools that were necessary for decision making at the Ministry of Education level. My experience at the Ministry of Education was that schools were happy to provide information to the Ministry of Education. For urgent requests, a telephone call was sufficient to get a response from the schools. Principals were more than happy to collate information and send them to the Ministry of Education in a short period of time. Information about any policy decisions were also communicated to the schools and in many cases, schools were consulted on policy issues

that required decisions to be made. This kind of relationship strengthened the bond between the Ministry of Education and the schools and increased ownership in the implementation of those policies at the school level.

Schools were also optimistic with this type of arrangement as it ensured they were involved in the advancement of education at the Ministry of Education level and kept informed with any developments. Lines of communication were always through the Principal or the monthly Education Gazette put out by the Ministry of Education. They were also aware of their rights to influence decisions on any policy through either their principal or the Cook Islands Teachers Union. On the other hand, the direct link between the school and the Ministry of Education, (see appendix 5) with no other layers of bureaucracy in between, made communication and understanding clearer on both parties. In this case I believed the Cook Islands had an advantage over other countries like New Zealand and Australia as the layers of bureaucracy were not as thick, and the size of the country not as big.

Teachers happy with devolution

Teacher participants were optimistic with the devolution of management responsibilities to the schools because it meant that they could determine and acquire the kind of resources relevant for the needs of their students. Schools were able to develop their own operation policies. Schools were able to work with parents, and they were able to have a voice in the decision making process of the Ministry of Education.

Another big plus for the schools was that principals were given the power and the freedom to manage the school like any manager would in a public agency. The Principal was responsible for ensuring teachers were accountable for the delivery of education services in their classroom which included the planning, delivery, assessment and reporting of education programs for students within their respective classrooms. Principals were also responsible for teacher performance and ultimately for student

achievement in their respective schools. This new system encouraged principals to use various methods to motivate teachers to be creative in their teaching practices to enhance student learning.

Managerialism advocated that managers be given the power and autonomy to manage an organization, to focus on outputs and results, and to establish accountability mechanisms for activities undertaken by the organization. These were all critical concepts used by the Ministry of Education in the establishment of the framework for management of schools; the Cook Islands Education Guidelines and the Cook Islands Administration Guidelines (Ministry of Education, 2003). This framework was created by adapting the New Zealand National Education Guidelines and the New Zealand Administration Guidelines, yet again, a typical style of discursive convergence. For the Cook Islands, copying public sector processes and practices from New Zealand was a historical custom given that New Zealand used to administer governance of the Cook Islands, and today the Cook Islands was still not an independent nation.

Financial issues of devolution

The allocation of an operating budget to each school based on a set formula also helped give principals a degree of freedom to expend public money to assist with the enhancement of student learning, and in return, be accountable to the Ministry of Education for the expenditure of those funds. Giving schools freedom to expend financial resources was part of giving principals the freedom to manage the school. Principals were responsible for communicating with the Ministry of Education which included filling in forms and managing teacher workloads within the school. Teachers were especially happy with this process as it meant they were not restricted with time in acquiring resources or the type of resources they could get for teaching. This process gave them more time to focus on their core job of making learning happen in their classrooms. These changes were a welcome reprieve for teachers who once had to improvise on the learning resources by creating their own, being dictated to by the Ministry of Education and given teaching assignments, and had principals as

"watchdogs" to ensure teachers were teaching exactly what and how the Ministry had instructed.

Financial accountability for the use of public funds by the schools through submission of financial reports and in accordance to contract, according to teacher participants was very important and a process that was the responsibility of the principals. Agency theory (Boston et al,1996) suggested that in this case, the school was the agent, the Ministry of Education the principal. Although there were contracts to govern the expectations of one party to another, the management of those contracts in the Cook Islands context were done on a partnership basis where the Ministry of Education would send personnel to the school to assist them with any procedural difficulties they may have in terms of compliance, reducing distance between the agent and the principal and consequently, the possibility of adverse selection and moral hazard. On the other hand, the school would signal to the Ministry of Education if there were issues of confusion for them.

System of Accountability as fair

Teachers felt the system of accountability for outputs in schools was fair on all parties concerned. They admitted that they understood why they had to account to stakeholders, especially the Ministry of Education and parents, and were happy to comply with the process of accountability. In terms of the expenditure of schools operating budget, they were of the view that accountability was the consequence of spending public money, and was a fair expected of them   They did not feel it was a process of extra control by the Ministry of Education. In fact, it was perceived as an act of transparency, where specified activities took place evidenced with a receipt or student work. A study undertaken in Western Australia (O'Brien & Down, 2002) asked teachers what they thought about new managerialism in school revealed that "Accountability was a one-way process where teachers do not have the opportunity to make their views heard" (pg 129). This was very interesting finding of the same professionals using NPM which mirrored Pollit's (2001) argument that convergence may be similar in underlying ideologies across

locations. However, the implementation of those ideologies was dependent on existing structures, culture and political economy of the country at the time.

In this case, the existing structure and culture might be factors that could explain the differences between the findings of this study and the Western Australian study. For the Cook Islands, the existing structure from the schools to the Ministry of Education and other government core agencies was flat, unlike western Australia which had central and regional offices in between the Ministry of Education and the school (O'Brien & Down, 2002) which may explain disillusionment on the teachers' part that their voices were not being heard. In the Cook Islands, there was a direct line of communication from the Ministry of Education to the schools, and that included teachers. In terms of culture, there was still an element of trust and obligation to authority among older teachers in the Cook Islands as opposed to teachers in liberal democratic societies like Australia, who may have a culture of suspicion for authority.

Effects on Teachers

Teachers lamented the low morale, low remuneration and lack of professional sharing and resources within the traditional administration system. They were given teaching assignments by the Ministry of Education that told them exactly what and how to teach. The new system ensured they were professionals tasked with being managers of learning where they used discretion and initiative in the delivery of their learning programs rather than being dictated to. They were also given incentives to work with associated rewards. Teacher morale picked up and they were given clear pathways through the Teacher Performance Management system to progress through ranks. Teacher professional development was also common practice and offered by the Ministry of Education at the end of every term break.

Teachers as partners in education

Unlike a private business where there was one set of clients, it was not the same for teachers. They had students as their immediate client but also had parents as another set of clients. Teachers acknowledged that they had to work in partnership with parents and students to ensure successful outcomes in education. Teachers' word about student learning was no longer taken as gospel truth but likely to be challenged by both students and parents. As a result, teachers had to be objective with their reporting to parents and appreciated the merits of accountability mechanisms, especially where evidence of student work was required.

On a more regular basis, teachers were required to give an account to the principal on the progress in student learning of each individual student. As manager of the school, it was the principal's job to monitor the achievement of outputs and outcomes of the school through the achievement of each individual student. The principal also monitored the achievement of outputs through the teacher performance management system which gave teachers an indication of what was expected of them and the standards to which they were expected to perform.

The introduction of the Teacher Performance Management system in 2003 gave teachers clear guidelines on what the Principal and Ministry of Education expected of them and the standards they were expected to perform at. This system promoted results-based accountability systems which ensured student learning was at the centre of all activities in the classroom. For teachers, it took away the element of surprise out of performance reviews by the Principal and inspection by the Ministry of Education. Some (Grant, 1997; Thrupp, 1999) argued the disadvantage of TPMS was that teachers concentrated their efforts only on issues where they would be assessed and shirk others as not important, especially those that could not be quantified. The concept of moral hazard (Boston et al, 1996) suggested that the principal would not know the marginal product of each worker and would put into place performance measures to measure outputs which would lead to goal displacing behaviour by agents.

The best person to manage performance was the professional her or himself (Abbot & Lonsdale, 1992). Performance management was about empowering teachers to direct their own work efforts. The ongoing support by the Ministry of Education in terms of the provision of curriculum advisors and regular professional development suggested that teachers were not left in the lurch to fend for themselves. If there were weaknesses or limitations identified, teachers were encouraged to take advantage of the many opportunities for professional development by the Ministry of Education and professional sharing within and between schools, to improve themselves as professionals and to better direct work efforts to better achieve student learning.

Increased professional sharing

Professional sharing in schools and inter-school was also commonplace for teachers today. Teachers were enthusiastic about these sessions as it provided them with opportunities to learn from other teachers (KIT7) which ensured consistency in standards of practice, confirmation of good practice (as identified by KIT10) across the levels or schools and acted as a check on quality of education delivery. The ultimate aim in this practice, according to KIT10 was to minimize time and effort in the planning of work and maximize time in the delivery of learning.

Kinsler and Gamble (2001) argued that professional isolation among teachers limited their access to new ideas and better solutions. It would make them withdraw from interactive sharing any of their ideas or teaching methodology with others, permitting incompetence to the detriment of students and education quality. Isolation also produced conservatism and would resist innovation. As professionals and adults, teachers needed time to share with others not only to strengthen and grow their capacity to better manage their teaching but also to ensure student learning needs were properly met. As work of teachers in the Cook Islands changed to meet the expectations of a market system, their

focus was to improve quality, maximize student learning and maintain or increase student rolls, which would lead to more teachers for the school and more operating budget.

Increased workload a challenge

Taking on the role of managers of learning increased teachers workload. Teachers found it a challenge because they were used to being dictated to and being given directives and not having to create their own path for the development of their learning programs. Now they were expected to complete the whole process of planning, teaching, assessing and reporting all on their own. They often resorted to satisficing behaviour (Boston et al, 1996), the old and established ways of doing things, when they could not keep up with changes. However, they admitted that all the things they was required to do were necessary for student learning and they needed to change and better manage their time and workload.

Effects on students

Teachers thought student behaviour was more challenging after the reform than before the reform. They believed the new way they were required to manage student behaviour in the classroom weakened their power to control students. They resorted to other forms of student management and as KIT7 explained "Students now will run riot the moment they loose interest, so you are being assessed on how you manage that kind of behaviour without resorting to corporal punishment, which was the accepted practice back then". The shift in focus now of student learning rather than student behaviour meant that if student management was weak then behaviour would become an issue. Those issues were covered as part of the teacher performance management system and closely monitored by the principals.

The centre of learning was the student

This change in focus from teaching to learning meant that student retention rates increased especially at the senior secondary levels. The significant improvement in

student retention indicated student's desire to learn and achieve qualifications. Students before the reform also desired to stay at school longer but they were denied access by an unforgiving examination system. Despite that, students were optimistic that the education they received gave them sufficient knowledge and skills for the workforce and tertiary studies.

The consistent improvement in student achievement suggested that the new market system of client-focused services was successful in the achievement of goals of improved education quality and improved education achievement (Ministry of Education, 2007). Over the last four years (from 2004 – 2007), there was a 12.5 percent increase in the number of students who achieved university entrance (refer to appendix 5), and a 12.6 percent increase in the number of students achieving NCEA level 1 examinations over the last six years. If the Cook Islands kept this trend, over three quarters of its NCEA level 3 students could qualify for university entrance and just under three quarters would achieve NCEA level 1 within the next four years, a significant increase in achievement compared to historical student achievement data (ADB, 2001).

Having student learning as the epitome of the new system meant that the work of teachers and the school centered on the learning needs of the student. Learning programs now had to be made to suit the individual needs of the student which would lead to improved achievement. On the other hand, the more students enrolled in a school, the more operating budget and teachers for that school. This new approach closely aligned with the central belief of public choice theory (Boston et al, 1996) that just as a private market would seek to maximize their profits, a school would seek to maximize their operating budget by convincing parents of the quality of education they provide, and hence get more students.

Effects on parents

Whether parents liked it or not, they were partners with the school in educating their children. The days of sending children to school with the expectation that the school will do the educating were long gone. Parents were expected to take a more active role, to help with their homework, be part of a decision making process in the school and to help with maintaining the welfare of the school.

The demand on parent's time to attend to their children's learning at home coupled with the demand for their time to ensure the financial survival of their family meant that parents had not always been successful at striking a balance between the two. The New Zealand Curriculum Review Exploratory Study (CRES) conducted in 1987 (Ramsay, Hawk, Harold, Marriott & Poskitt, 1993) just after the Picot report was released suggested that parents also stated similar reasons for lack of involvement in their children's education. Teachers lamented the lack of parental involvement which included adequately preparing children for school like the provision of food for school lunches and a safe environment to learn while children were at home. The role of parents in the preparation of children for school and learning had not changed, the changes for parents were the extension of parental involvement in the decision making process of the school and calling teachers to account for their children's learning. An assessment of the Flaxmere project in New Zealand in 2001 (Clinton, Hattie and Dixon, 2007) (conducted to increase parental understanding of the work of the school and encourage parental involvement in the education of their children), found that parents were enthusiastic about being involved once they understood what the school did and were clear about their role to help their children with their homework.

On the other hand, parents increasingly demanded more information from teachers with regards to their children's learning. As KIT10 explained, parents had a lot of power. "In order to keep our jobs we will have to market the school by keeping parents happy by providing quality information to you [the parent] and quality education to your child". With schools being funded using a formula, the power to provide for the critical element

of the formula were in the hands of the parents. Parents were in an unusually powerful position. They were both stakeholders and clients at the same time which meant that if they were not happy with the quality of education of one school, parents could choose to send their child to another school or even overseas (Koteka, 2006) which would decrease power of one school to access resources and increased for another. Realistically in the Cook Islands, parents could only exercise choice in Rarotonga as most of the outer islands have one school on each island. However, if families in the outer islands don't have families in Rarotonga to send their children to, they would send their children overseas where they have families to care for them.

This demonstrated the similarity in practice between the market and the public agency where clients were free to shop around for products. Education in this case was open for scrutiny and if one school could not meet the need of parents, then they would just take their children to another school. One could argue that parents were maximizing their interest by getting the best education for their children, and in the Cook Islands, teachers were conscious of this issue and realized keeping parents involved was the key to their survival as professionals.

Conclusion

The effect of NPM on education in the Cook Islands was positive. Ministry of Education officials and Teachers were able to work together to develop a system that was consistent with transaction cost economics (Boston et al, 1996), achieved efficiency, improved accountability and improved student learning. While some community members were stuck with the "old school mentality" that education before the public sector reform was better than after the public sector reform, slightly more people believed that education had improved.

The effect of these changes was felt across all stakeholders of education. For the Ministry of Education, it ensured change was consistent with the new public management

system and its principles yet relevant to the size of the population, geographic location and culture of the people. It was a results-based system which required transparency at all levels, clear lines of accountability and communication. Many of the processes of this system were borrowed from New Zealand. However, where it didn't suit, the Ministry of Education diverged. The management of the process was also made easier through the willingness and co-operation of the school.

Teachers were happy with the changes in the system. They were now professionals who developed a program of learning specific to the needs of students, accountable for those programs and were able to influence change in the school system. The new system fostered co-operation among teachers to share their knowledge and teaching methodologies with other teachers to ensure consistent standards of delivery and efficient use of teacher resources. Being a partner and a focal point in learning, increased expectation on teachers to perform at a level desired by parents and stipulated by the Ministry of Education, a difficult position to be in but a challenge taken for the benefit of student learning.

It appeared that the Ministry of Education and Teachers were working together to improve student learning and achievement. While it may seem the Ministry of Education were doing much of the steering (Osborne & Gaebler:1993), it was done in consultation with the rowers which ensured they had good understanding of each other's roles. The community members, however, were still trying to understand and accept the changes to education. These changes were done with the belief that it would improve student learning and give them a better chance of survival in the local and globalised world. Recommended by the *Polynesian Way* report of 1989 and not implemented until a decade later, the effects of those changes were being experienced today but not fully understood by all.

The NPM revolution in education had affected not only the administration of schools but also the interaction between the Ministry of Education and the schools, the work of teachers, student learning and the relationship with parents. This study had shown that the Ministry of Education provides guidelines to schools which were consistent with the principles of NPM and allowed them the freedom to mange the school in the best way possible. The schools enjoy the freedom to be able to purchase their own resources, manage their physical, human and learning resources, in achieving learning outcomes, and despite the boundaries of the Ministry of Education guidelines. They thought it was a better system than having being managed from outside of the learning institution. Teachers were expected to work like professionals and be accountable for their teaching and for student learning which has tripled their workload but they were intent on achieving results. Results of student learning had improved remarkably suggesting that working around the learning needs of students pay off. Parents were coming to terms with their new roles in the education of their children. While they treasured the memories of the "good old days" when they were at school, they might need to take their roles in educating their children seriously.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

A rainbow of experience

The experience of doing this program and writing this thesis had given me many different experiences, ones I will remember and will value for many years to come. These experiences had coloured my world in many different ways, like a rainbow displaying many different colours. From the people I interacted with, colleagues, supervisors, university administrators, Cook Islands teachers, Cook Islands Ministry of Education officials and the Cook Islands community, especially those who gave me their stories, to the many different literatures I read, they positively contributed to the development of this thesis and the revolution of my colourful experiences. These experiences also altered the shades of my perception and turned my assumptions into definite bold colours.

What those changes meant

Change was not a new phenomenon in the Cook Islands, especially in the public sector. The story of Marouna told us that change would take place if the situation required it. The many years of government change, initially of colonial powers and then of administration systems gave Cook Islands people no real choice but to follow those changes. They became receptive to change and to make the most of those changes to their advantage with the notion that what comes from outside of the Cook Islands was good and positive. As a result of changes in government and administration, effects were also felt in the education sector. Many of the changes depended on the type of influence from external agencies and from leadership locally.

One of those changes was the 1996 public sector reform. This change introduced the NPM system which had market principles and practices. The effect of NPM on the

education sector, according to participants of this study, was positive. It provided ample flexibility within the system to allow school managers to manage school operations and resources, be accountable to stakeholders and ensure given outcomes were achieved.

For the school

For the school, this meant that they had the power to appropriately deal with situations within the school, to change things around as they saw fit that was relevant for the environment, and within given Ministry of Education guidelines. The school also made decisions about the learning environment for students, decided on its priorities and determined their future. Devolution of management powers gave principals the power to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in their operations and to be accountable for the management of resources. This meant that the success and failure of school operations was dependent on the skill of the principal together with the school committee. While the Ministry of Education created incentives and opportunities to ensure principals had the necessary management skills, they also gave the principals three year contracts to prove their management skills. Principals were forced into a position to make things work and prove results.

For teachers

Teachers on the other hand, claimed they had a good understanding of the system and were, to a large degree, optimistic that this system would produce the required results. They realized that the requirements of this system meant that they had to do more work and work harder. They were no longer restricted to teaching assignments but they were required to use initiative, creativity and innovation in the teaching and learning in their classrooms. According to KIT7, they had to "manage their time better" so they could keep up with the demands of planning, preparing, teaching and evaluating student learning. Being able to behave like professionals and share best practices with other teachers encouraged them to achieve the best results possible for students in their care, effectively making student learning the central feature of education. For teachers, NPM

also meant they were encouraged to express themselves and reflect personality and flair in their teaching. While this might have taken some teachers time to get used to this practice, they accepted this practice because they knew students were the ultimate benefactor in terms of improved student learning outcomes.

For the Ministry of Education

Ministry of Education records showed that student achievement had improved, especially at the senior secondary level since the introduction of the NPM system. Student retention rates were also encouraging which suggested that students were happy with school and had the desire to stay at school for longer. Students were made the centre of learning which ensured all activities in the education sector revolved around supporting the ultimate education goal of improved student learning and achievement. For students, this approach to learning could only mean a further trend of improved learning and improved achievement which gained better qualifications for the workforce and better access to tertiary education abroad.

For Parents

The change of role in education for parents had some of them struggling to keep up with the requirement of this role and balance the demands of their jobs, the demands of home and the requirement to participate in the education of their children. For some parents these changes meant that their children might not get the level of support expected of parents from home, and for others, parents might have to make sacrifices to allow time to spend with their children. While the expectation was greater after the reform than before it, teachers were of the view that more parents find it a challenge to be able to support their children with their learning at home.

Significance of this study

Studying the effects of the 1996 public sector reform was important because it revealed a number of issues that could determine the future direction of education in the Cook Islands. They were:

1. Using the NPM system in the delivery of education was positive in that the achievement of education outcomes had improved significantly;

2. That teachers feel like they were treated like professionals responsible for the delivery of education and for the management of learning within their classrooms;

3. That it was necessary for concepts to have diverged as they travelled from developed countries because the Cook Islands has its own structural arrangements, issues and challenges that were specific to itself;

4. That the schools, being able to make decisions for themselves were able to develop strategies to make learning more relevant for students;

5. The market principles of efficiency and accountability that underlie the NPM system was perceived as a "natural thing to do" (see participant KIM3) and not a foreign concept borrowed from the private sector;

6. Some parents find their role in the education of their children a challenge because of other competing demands on their time.

Gaining this knowledge, would indicate to the Ministry of Education that teachers were happy with the system and were amenable to change brought about by NPM. It revealed that allowing schools a voice in the decision making process of the Ministry increased the chances of success at the implementation level. The Ministry of Education would be able to further develop strategies with confidence for the education sector using the NPM system.

Changes at the school level meant that monitoring of school activities and student learning were all done at the local level and at the point of action. As proven by student

achievement results, there was a significant improvement in student learning, achievement and willingness to learn since the introduction of the NPM system. While it might take some time for older teachers to adapt, they were willing to better organize themselves to meet given objectives and outcomes.

Theoretical implications

The Cook Islands appeared to have accepted and practiced the principles and concepts of NPM in the delivery of education in schools. The concept of accountability encouraged transparency and trust between stakeholders and encouraged an environment of co-operation within the schools. Teachers seemed to have worked openly with parents and encourage meaningful dialogue to reach a position that could encourage better student learning. The Ministry of Education was also instrumental in ensuring a steady flow of communication between itself and the school so teachers were clear on their position of financial and outputs accountability.

Without much knowledge of the concept that governed their behaviour and practice, public choice theory was widely practiced within the education sector. While teachers claimed to share teaching methodologies and best classroom practices between schools, there existed a notion that individuals within schools would work for the benefit of the school. They competed for students (KIT10 & KIT7) to increase their role numbers which would consequently increase their staff entitlements and operating budgets. On a more individual level, teachers knew that working hard and complying with the Teacher Performance Management system meant that they would be rewarded accordingly (KIT6). However, there were doubts whether issues identified in the Teacher Performance Management system were sufficient to measure the success of education in schools as those issues that could be quantified were the ones identified in that system. This issue remains a question that could be further explored in another study.

The Ministry of Education was active in ensuring the organization of the education sector was effective and yielded efficiency gains. Taking on some of the administrative duties of the school allowed them to focus more on their core business decreasing the requirement and cost for ancillary staff. Governance issues for schools were important but given the size and location of schools, it was better that governance issues were shared between the Ministry of Education, school and the school committee. As it turned out, teachers were happy with such arrangements, which meant their time at school was dedicated to teaching and learning and management of those activities were effective.

Empowering principals to manage the school was a welcome reprieve for teachers who used to be managed by the Ministry of Education and the Public Service Commission's office with procedures that were too centralized (KIM2). Having their manager on site ensured that school issues could be attended to and understood by those involved in the institution (KIT8). Decisions could be made on site and carried out within a timeframe acceptable to those concerned. The principals, being able to manage human and physical resources within the school suggested that much of the success in achieving the school's outputs depended on the ability of the principal to manage those resources (KIT10). Also, the introduction of outputs and outcomes for teachers appeared to have made daily activities meaningful for them, and seeing the link between small units of work to what they were trying to achieve in the long term and to the national curriculum (KIM4). In terms of achievement, they were able to match the achievement of students in small units of work to an overall achievement and gain a better understanding of individual student's learning needs.

Public policy implications

For government, the use of NPM in the education sector could be counted as a success. The resulting improvement in student learning and the increased student retention rates suggested that there might be issues from the education sector that could be adopted and adapted in other government agencies like health and justice. Given the level of funding, the priority accorded by government (Cook Islands Government, 2006), and the nature of

the provision of public goods in health and justice, I believe the level of success could also be the same.

Government should also further investigate the difficulty some parents found to participate in the education of their children. Education in the Cook Islands had the potential to further improve under the system of NPM and it would be necessary at this point to ensure that every avenue was taken to encourage sustainable growth.

The effect of this period of transition and reform for me

Challenging my personal assumptions of education was a key point of transition and reform for me while undertaking this study. During my time as Ministry of Education official, I held certain assumptions that this study had proven to the contrary. They were, firstly, that the community had a good understanding of what was going on in the education sector. The constant television promotion of providing tips for parents on how to prepare their children for school, and various media coverage on education developments and teacher professional developments led me to believe that the public were aware of what was going on in education. The size of the country was also a factor where, from my experience, news traveled fast. This study had shown that although the majority of people were aware of changes introduced by the public sector reform, only some participants knew what they were and whether they contributed to changes in the quality of learning. However, as compared to the 1989 period where the Ministerial Task Force reviewed the education sector where people were unanimously asking for change, this study revealed some level of contentment with the system and more people aware of developments in education.

Secondly, I believed that teachers were not in favour of the current system because it resulted in their workload being increased. From the data collected from teachers, they indicated that changes certainly led to increased workload. However, they acknowledged that they needed to be better organized in their work. They also indicated that because

they saw improvement in student learning, they were happy to comply with the amount of workload expected of them.

Areas for further research

I know this study had left many questions unanswered and issues unaddressed. It was not possible in the scope of this study to cover them all, however, as I came to the end of this journey, I hoped I had created paths for other research work to be undertaken. There were areas that needed further investigation, some of them included:

1. How do Cook Islands people live in a collective and co-operative society and yet operate public institutions with principles that contradicted those of a co-operative society;

2. Given that the Cook Islands copied a lot of its NPM practices from New Zealand, how much of those practices had the Cook Islands changed and for what reasons?

3. What were some of the community issues that were once important to people in the Cook Islands that were excluded by the NPM in education and its statutory and legislative frameworks;

4. How had schools in the Cook Islands been successful in balancing their core business of teaching and learning as stipulated by the TPM and also cater for the caring functions of schools;

5. How much of the core business of education was excluded through the use of the Teacher Performance Management System?

The end of this rainbow

As I come to the end of this rainbow and reflect back on my many colourful experiences, I realized that the richness of this experience was more valuable than gold. These experiences were like the public sector reform where certain aspects in life were reorganized and challenged to make things work better. I was also reminded that change

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was a constantly evolving phenomenon, but how we reacted to change and how those changes affected various countries was also different. The effect of change during Marouna's era ensured that Aitutaki was given back to its indigenous people and social structure reinstated in a way that would ensure a sustainable supply of resources to support the local community. Similarly, the effects of NPM on education were positive for teachers and students, indicating constant improvement in learning. Teachers felt they were treated like professionals, schools could make decisions for themselves and parents were encouraged to have a greater role in education.

A lot of my prior assumptions about education were challenged certainly in the data collected from key informant and survey participants. My assumptions stemmed from my prior experience in the education sector and similar studies abroad suggesting that the market principles of NPM do not serve the education sector well. The contrast in findings from the field certainly came as a surprise to me. Nevertheless, I found this journey an exciting and fulfilling experience, one that will be used to interrogate my future perceptions and enrich any future challenges.

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