

Principal's Sabbatical Research Report



A Journey into the Pacific: Research aimed at improving the ability of students from Tuvalu and Kiribati to access to New Zealand education.

Teresa Thomson
Principal, KingsGate School
Pukekohe

Introduction

The idea for the scope and purpose of this research came out of a school where our ESOL support is well established, where professional learning and development has been completed and implemented over a number of years, and where good Oral Language techniques are being engaged to support our English Language Learners.

KingsGate is a small school but has had up to one-third of the roll at any given time made up of students from the Pacific. Until 2015, these Pasifika students were only from the two island groups of Tuvalu and Kiribati, but there has been little information or resources that available to specifically support their learning.

The purpose of this study was to add to an existing high-quality ESOL programme by ascertaining whether there were other cultural elements, specific to students from Kiribati and Tuvalu, that also had an impact on students' ability to learn.

Table of Contents

<i>A Journey into the Pacific: Research aimed at improving the ability of students from Tuvalu and Kiribati to access to New Zealand education.</i>	1
Introduction.....	1
Table of Contents	2
Part 1: Keys from Literature on Effective Pasifika Education.....	5
Research into Effective Pasifika Education	5
Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills vs Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency	5
Jim Cummins’ Language Continuum	5
Further Generic Techniques	5
The importance of being culturally appropriate:	5
Use of wait time	6
Making Pasifika families welcome.....	6
Make the information clear, explicit, practical	6
Part 2: Survey Data and New Zealand-Based Research	7
Method of Data Collection	7
Summary of Responses	7
Conclusions from Survey Data.....	9
Traditional and community-based	9
Success is measured in English language proficiency	9
Desired to be involved but not always sure how to be so	9
Good character and behaviour seen as vital learning for children	9
Part 3: Observational Findings from Visits to Tuvalu and Kiribati.....	10
Scope of the Observational Research	10
Overview.....	10
Background Information	10
Location	10
WWII legacy.....	10
Location Summaries	11
Tuvalu	11
Kiribati	12
Environment	12
Language and Pronunciation.....	14
Tuvaluan language.....	14

Tuvaluan numbers	14
Kiribati language	14
Kiribati numbers	15
English letter names and pronunciation	16
English Language Learning	16
English language learning in Tuvalu	16
English language learning in Kiribati.....	16
Observations of Education	17
Observed factors common to school in both countries.....	17
Observations of education specific to Tuvalu	17
Observations of education specific to Kiribati	17
Technology in Education	18
Tuvalu	18
Kiribati	18
Part 4: A Photo Journal of Education in Tuvalu and Kiribati	20
Pictures of education in Tuvalu	20
Pictures of education in Kiribati	23
Part 5: Summary of Information from Interviews with the Educators	30
Education in Tuvalu	30
Descriptives of education in Tuvalu	30
What works for education in Tuvalu	31
Advice for effective teaching of immigrants from Tuvalu.....	32
Education in Kiribati	33
Descriptives of education in Kiribati.....	34
What works for education in Kiribati	35
Advice for effective teaching of immigrants from Kiribati.....	36
Part 6: Resources	38
Overview.....	38
<i>Children of the Pacific</i> series.....	38
School-generated resources.....	38
Resources used in Tuvalu	39
Resources used in Kiribati	39

Part 7: Conclusions	40
Conclusions from Observations and Interviews.....	40
Teachers' advice is valuable	40
A familiar classroom practice essential for new immigrants	40
Introducing technology	40
Maintaining a caring student classroom culture.....	41
Language and pronunciation	41
Christian culture and education	41
An opportunity for community education	41
Engaging parents in their child's New Zealand education	42
Be aware of what immigrants leave behind	42
The impact of a traditional home life.....	42
Part 8: Limitations of this research	43
Limitations on time and travel	43
Difficulties in collating data and information.....	43
No research into of secondary education	43
Part 9: With Grateful Thanks...	44
School Community.....	44
Educators in Tuvalu and Kiribati.....	44
The New Zealand High Commission, Tarawa	47
New friends	47

Part 1: Keys from Literature on Effective Pasifika Education

Research into Effective Pasifika Education

Of the information that has been published about Pasifika Education, none of it appears to be specific to students from Kiribati and Tuvalu. However, there are some key facts and ideas that good practitioners are using for students from all Pasifika countries.

Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills vs Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency

Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) are used to highlight the difference between social language and academic language when teaching English Language learners.

Here are some key points from the research of Jim Cummins (*BICS and CALP: Clarifying the Distinction*, 1999):

There are clear differences in acquisition and developmental patterns between conversational language and academic language... Differences in the rate of acquisition of the two levels needs to be considered so that the academic language education of bilingual children with good conversational English ability does not suffer.

An instructional program for bilingual students should address: (1) cognitive skills; (2) academic content; and (3) critical language awareness.

What this means is that a Pasifika student, who is able to converse freely in the playground and with their peers, may not have the academic language resources necessary to achieve success in school. It is easy to think that this slowness reflects a lack of academic ability, when it may simply be an indication that more explicit vocabulary teaching is required.

Jim Cummins' Language Continuum

Jim Cummins' Language Continuum (Jim Cummins, *BICS and CALP: Clarifying the Distinction*, 1999) states that students take 1-2 years to develop BICS (or social language proficiency), but that CALP (academic language proficiency) takes 3-7 years to develop.

This means that effective ESOL programmes will continue to help and support students higher in the school, as they develop the academic vocabulary they need. This requires time and specific teaching. For example, during the teaching of a Year 7 Pasifika student it was established that the student knew what a parallelogram was, but had no idea what parallel lines were. As a parallelogram is named because it has two sets of parallel lines in it, this was a key link that needed to be made in the student's mind.

Further Generic Techniques

Additional techniques of good practice that have worked in the classroom with students from Tuvalu and Kiribati, are ones which were found either in resources such as *The Pasifika Teacher Aide Handbook*, published by the University of Auckland and the Ministry of Education, or developed through experience and networking with other schools. These are:

The importance of being culturally appropriate:

To make every effort to ensure that there is nothing in the schools teaching style or cultural mannerisms that makes a newly immigrant students feel alien or uncomfortable. This requires research and conversation, learning from the families themselves what is the norm in their environment and what is not. The challenge here is to also recognise and utilise where appropriate the methods used in other countries, especially if they are clearly efficacious in teaching children from those countries, even if they are not the most up-to-date New

Zealand pedagogy (Kevin Donnelly: *The Chinese have some important things to teach us about educating our kids*, The Washington Post, 25 November 2014).

Use of wait time

Pasifika students are at times very slow to answer a question in class, to the point where the teacher may feel uncomfortable. It is difficult to know what to do in that long moment, because there are many reasons a Pasifika student may be slow to answer:

- They may not understand the language of the question (so it needs a re-phrase)
- They may not want to be wrong (so they need to know it's ok to have a go)
- They may not know the answer (so they need to be re-taught)

Or,

- They may simply need time to process the answer – it can take some time for them to (1) translate the question into their first language from English, (2) find the answer in their first language and (3) translate that answer back into English before (4) being able to answer the question.

As a result, it is important to give a student adequate space first, before re-phrasing and checking they understand. Otherwise a teacher can end up talking right through the student's thinking time, meaning they will never be able to access the answer.

Making Pasifika families welcome

To ensure connection with the Pasifika community requires extra effort, time and resources. The more effective a school is in connecting with and welcoming Pasifika families, the more likely it will be to be doing a number of the following things:

- Learning to say names of students and their parents correctly
- Learning basic greeting and farewells in the variety of languages represented in the school
- Encouraging the importance of using their first language well at home
- Conducting home visits to meet families
- Inviting parents to share their crafts, food, and culture within the school
- Ensuring that all Pasifika parents attend parent-teacher-student conferences
- Recognising the role of religion in the home life of the students and including it at school (particularly for schools of Special Character)

Make the information clear, explicit, practical

Information that is presented to students who are English Language Learners needs to be broken down into carefully scaffolded steps. Students processing in another language will need more support and more structure than students who are proficient in the language of instruction.

Part 2: Survey Data and New Zealand-Based Research

Method of Data Collection

To gather this information, interviews were conducted with parents who had immigrated from Tuvalu or Kiribati following a set format (i.e. a questionnaire). Language difficulties and the range of responses meant the data was largely a collection of anecdotal notes based on oral discussion around the questions.

It should also be noted that, due to the small size of the school in which the research was conducted, the sample size here is small. However, the overall impressions of the parents in this school community should give a reasonably accurate picture of the wider Kiribati and Tuvalu community in New Zealand.

Summary of Responses

When asked to reflect on their experiences and understanding of education in their home island, most parents identified good behaviour, manners and values as the key descriptions of education. Further to this, they identified almost entirely positive attributes of their education experience, including good subject and content knowledge, with poor learning of English the only negative aspect they identified.

Without exception, the reason that parents had moved their families to New Zealand was for the education and opportunities for their children. That said, most of the parents (and

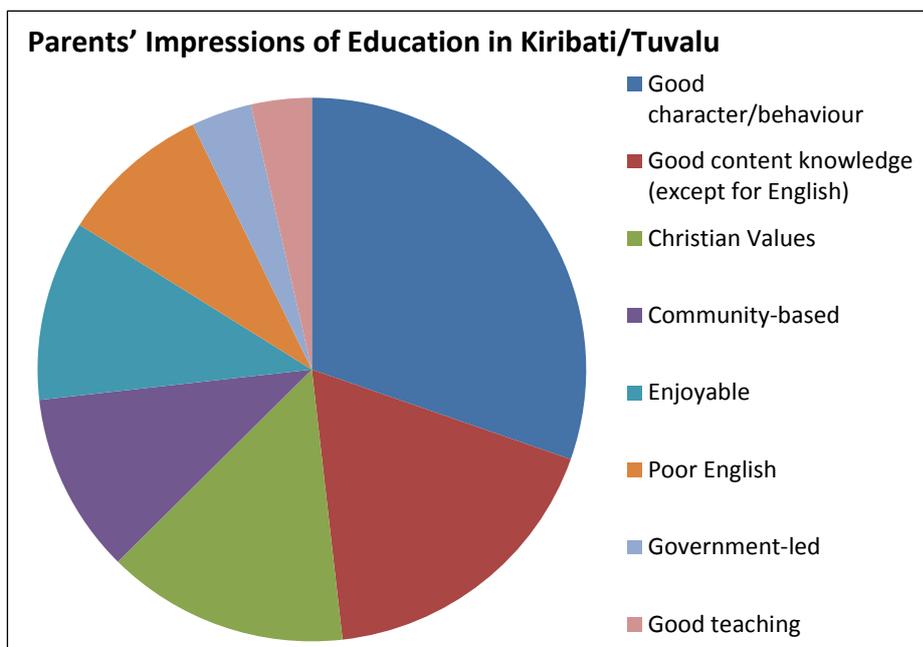
particularly those from the more remote islands rather than the capital) preferred the lifestyle in the islands for themselves but felt that there was a better opportunity for work and employment in New Zealand – so the goals of an economy driven society were perceived as better for their children than the relaxed “live on your land, in your house and eat what you grow” life of Kiribati or Tuvalu. In part, this seemed a contradiction: Why if the life of the islands was preferred, was a life in New Zealand felt to be better for their children?

The major obstacle identified by parents regarding their children’s educational success in New Zealand was their poor English. The overall feeling was that if New Zealand teachers just made sure their immigrant students’ English was good, every other aspect of their learning would be without issue. No parents identified cultural difficulties as a difficulty, despite clear cultural differences in their houses and environment from those of the majority of cultural New Zealanders.

Many parents made statements that assumed the teacher led the classroom, and were clearly not fully up-to-date with current trends in New Zealand teaching styles and techniques, aside from the fact that they readily identified that there was more availability and use of technology in New Zealand.

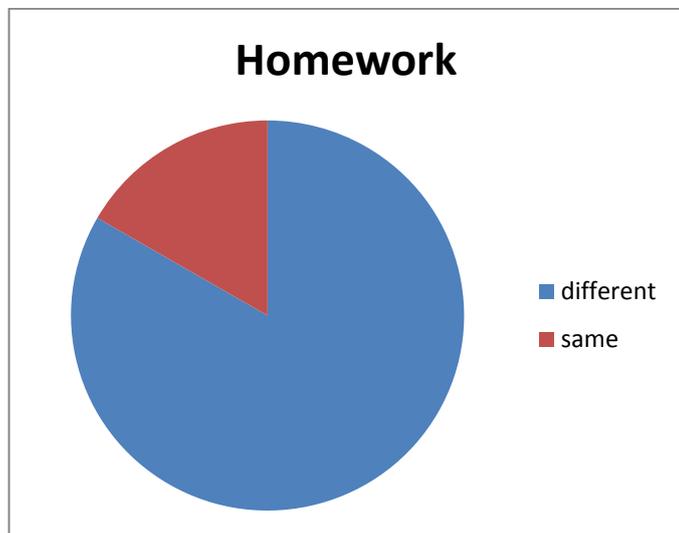
While several parents acknowledge that teaching was to some degree different in New Zealand, only one parent identified a difference in teaching techniques and felt that New Zealand had a better variety of techniques (due to increased resources). Most parents felt that the classrooms were largely run in the same way as those in New Zealand, with the exception that in the islands teachers could use corporal punishment.

Interestingly, corporal punishment was seen by parents in a very positive light, with all except one saying it was good because it meant students had a healthy fear of being naughty and were therefore better behaved, but that they weren’t scared and still enjoyed school. Most parents had the strong impression that students in

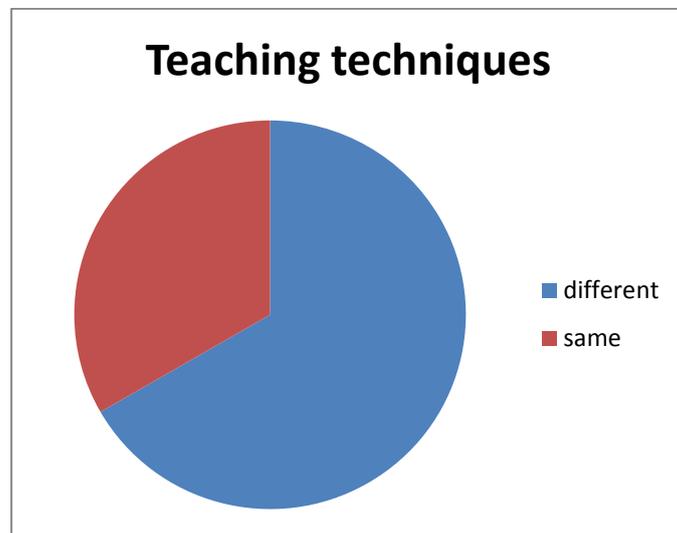


the islands were considerably better behaved than those in New Zealand

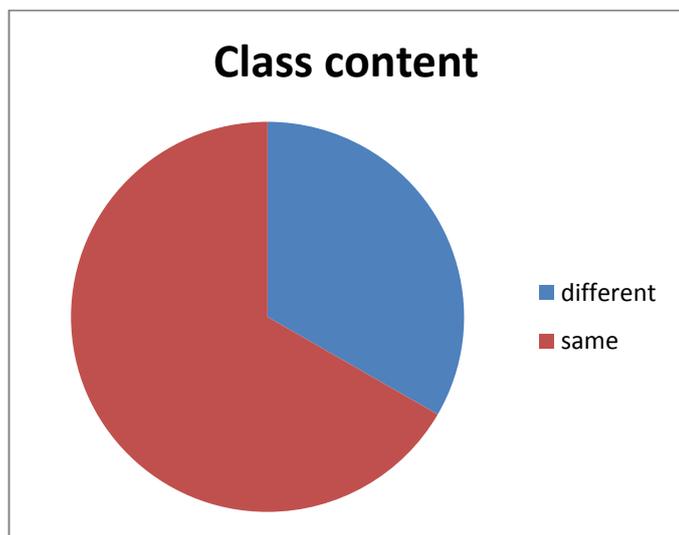
When asked about the place of religion at school in Tuvalu and Kiribati it became clear that all schools in Tuvalu and Kiribati teach Christianity to some degree – there are many church schools, but the government schools also teach Christianity. One parent mentioned that 95% of Tuvaluans are Christians. This created a clear cultural link between the New Zealand school community and those in Tuvalu and Kiribati, as the parents who were interviewed had made the choice to send their children to a state-integrated Christian school (even though it was a more expensive option as a result of attendance dues).



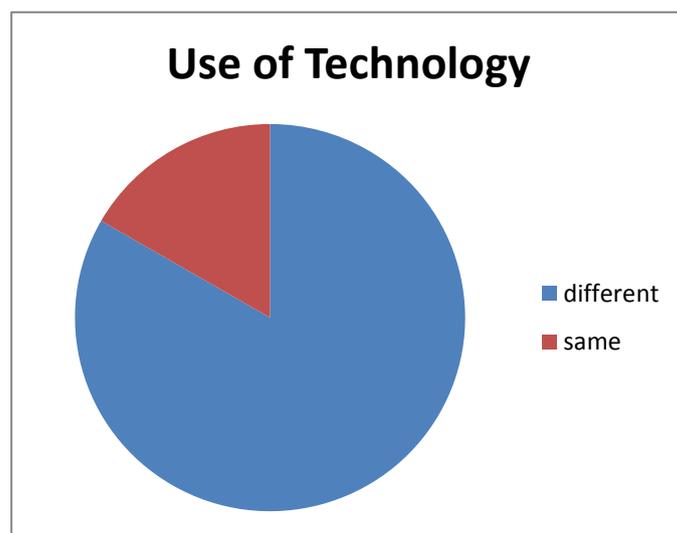
The homework routines in Kiribati and Tuvalu, according to most parents, was inconsistent and dependant on the teacher. The regular homework requirements (reading material, computer-based Reading and Mathematics support programmes, etc.) provided by the school in New Zealand was seen as very helpful.



Most parents could not identify any differences in the way they were taught (in the islands) as children and the way their children are being taught in New Zealand. Those who felt there was some difference identified a more ‘teacher from the front with a blackboard’ style in the islands than there is in New Zealand. One parent felt that New Zealand had a better variety of techniques due to increased resources.

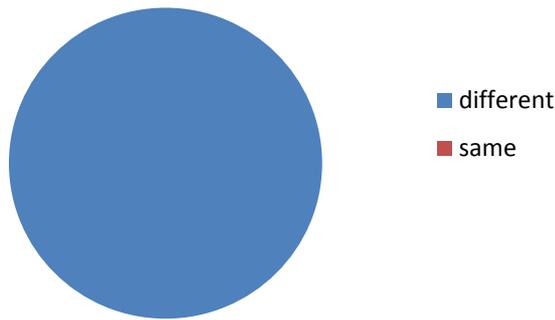


Class content – the academic levels of learning – was seen by parents as largely the same. As previously mentioned, parents felt the Mathematics instruction was particularly good, but the English Language learning particularly poor.



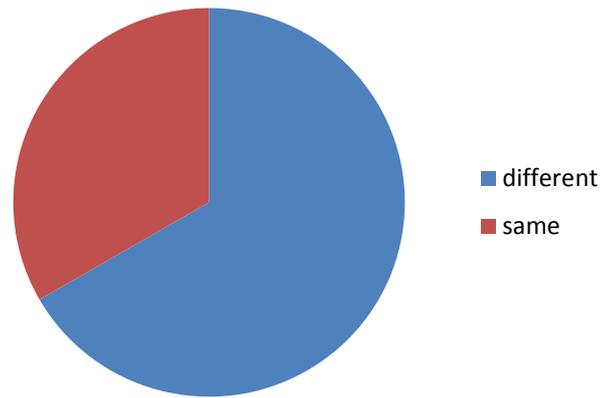
When the parents interviewed were at school, there was no technology at all used. Several mentioned that there is now some level of technology – computers and internet – but mostly at a secondary level.

Work/study opportunities



Without exception, parents felt that there are more work and study opportunities in New Zealand than there are in the islands of Kiribati and Tuvalu. Some mentioned that there were secondary scholarship opportunities, but it was also mentioned that even a secondary education was no guarantee of future employment.

Home culture



The responses to this question were very interesting, in that the parents who felt that their home culture was quite different in New Zealand were still actively involved in their own-language church and often had extended family dwelling in the one house. But even though their home culture was still clearly culture-based, they felt it was significantly removed from their culture in their home islands.

Conclusions from Survey Data

Traditional and community-based

Parents in the school community who completed their primary education in Kiribati or Tuvalu remember a character-based education, traditional in presentation but of a reasonably high standard, that reflected the Christian culture of their community. They felt that the close-knit relationships within their community also played a significant role in their education.

Success is measured in English language proficiency

Parents also gave a strong impression that they want their children to succeed in their New Zealand education, in fact their child's education was by far the main reason the applicants gave for immigration to New Zealand, and that they see the acquisition of the English language as the key to that academic success.

Desired to be involved but not always sure how to be so

Parents were interested in their child's progress and wanted to be involved with their education, but often didn't know how to show this support and interest. For others, the language barrier made their participation in school life very difficult.

Good character and behaviour seen as vital learning for children

Parents' memories of their educational experience in their home island were mainly positive and most reported that they had enjoyed school. Parents felt that children in Kiribati and Tuvalu were well behaved and they expressed a desire for their children to behave well in New Zealand too. This character element of education was recognised by them as culturally very important.

Part 3: Observational Findings from Visits to Tuvalu and Kiribati

Scope of the Observational Research

Overview

The information presented in this section of the research was gathered during a two and a half week trip to the Pacific. Due to time restraints, limited flights and the logistics of travel in the islands, the visit to Tuvalu was confined to the capital, Funafuti and the visit to Kiribati to North Tarawa (the nearest rural island) and South Tarawa (the capital). Information was collected through a series of sight visits and formal and informal interviews with educators, members of the community and other visitors to the islands.

Background Information

Location



Kiribati (left-hand location map from *Google* above) and Tuvalu (right-hand location map from *Google* above) are “nearest neighbours” in the Pacific – in that their ocean territories border each other. The island groups were formerly known as the Gilbert (Kiribati) and Ellice (Tuvalu) Islands. While travel distances are actually enormously far between them, there is a degree of intermarriage and relational ties between the two. That said, the islands are also uniquely different from one another.

WWII legacy

Both islands were used as bases by military powers in World War II. Tuvalu was used by the USA, but did not see any conflict. The lasting legacy of the USA base has been the runway (now a key link to the rest of the world) and the borrow pits – holes dug in the island to get the coral ‘earth’ needed to make the runway flat and left to become filled with water, rubbish, pigs and disease. New Zealand Aid is now running the Borrow Pits Project, to empty, clear and line the pits, then fill them with sand dredged from the ocean. This project, which will finish in 2015, will increase the useable land on Funafuti by one-eighth!



Borrow pits – this is after they have been cleaned of pigs and most of the rubbish



Pits drained and with the lining in place to stop the sand sinking once it is put into the hole

A Journey into the Pacific: Research aimed at improving the ability of students from Tuvalu and Kiribati to access to New Zealand education.

By Teresa Thomson



The stockpile of sand on the cleaned out Funafuti landfill (left), and a filled-in borrow pit (right)

Kiribati was occupied by the Japanese (who were not kind to the local people) in WWII and then fought over by the USA in their most bloody conflict (the battle of Tawara Lagoon). The gun mounts and bunkers left by the Japanese are still along the sides of Red Beach – the beach at Betio, named for the blood of the many casualties of the battle for the atoll.



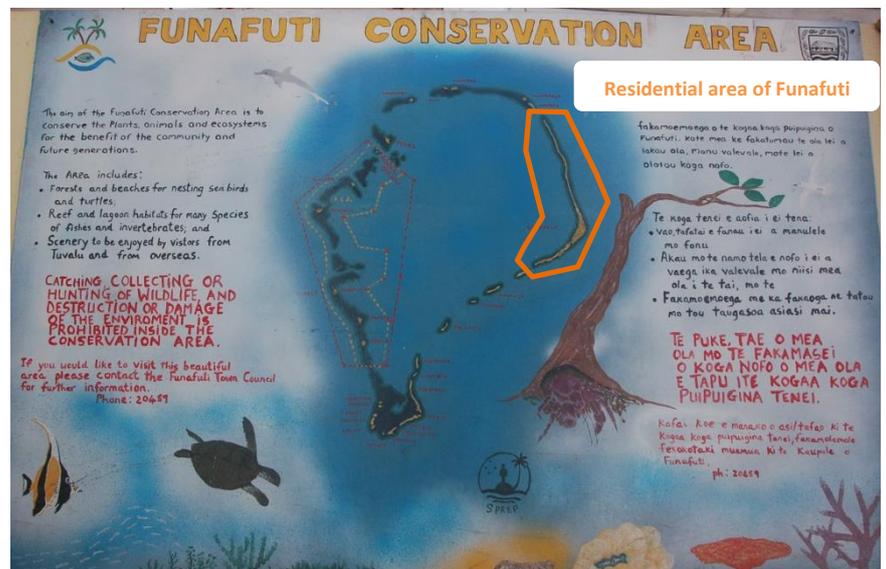
The guns along Red Beach, Betio

Location Summaries

Tuvalu

Tuvalu is a Polynesian country, and the majority (perhaps 6 000) of its 10 000 resident population live on the capital, Funafuti. According to locals on Funafuti, there are many empty houses and vacant plots of land on the outer islands, as more and more people move to Funafuti to gain employment or a perceived better education for their children. Teachers on Funafuti feel that the education on the outer islands (with class sizes of 10-15 rather than 30-40) is actually better, but the population drift to the capital shows parents feel differently.

Funafuti is the capital island of Tuvalu. The part of the atoll which is inhabited is very narrow and very small – only about 12km long and with only one road down the middle. In the map of the Funafuti Conservation Area (right), it seems there is a reasonable amount of land on the atoll, however people only live in the area marked on the map. Additionally, the size of the lagoon is such that you can only see the tops of some of the tree on a few of the other islands from the shore and, essentially, you feel as though you are on a very isolated, very skinny island.



While there is relatively more paid work on Funafuti (and hence the opportunity to gain a monetary income), 85% of employment on the island is for the government: as teachers, contract labourers for aid projects, or in the government building. The remaining 15% is private enterprise such as retailers and restaurants, of which a lot are owned by immigrants from China or other countries. Many households have a few who work and other family members (spouses, children and extended family) who live with them and don't work, or whose children live with them so they can attend school.

Apart from one small Methodist Secondary School, secondary education is in a boarding school on another island, so there are not a lot of secondary aged children on the island.

Funafuti has a small wharf and very few multi-storey buildings. The main form of transport on Funafuti is motorbike or motor scooter.

Kiribati

Kiribati is a Micronesian country of more than 100 000 people. Compared to Funafuti, the capital (South Tarawa) feels massive. It is longer and wider, has a large network of roads and alleys and towns with many multi-storey buildings, one even has a mall with an escalator. South Tarawa has a large wharf and many cars. It has very dense population.

Again, there is a massive population drift to the capital from the outer islands for employment and education. As with Funafuti, many households have a few who work and other family members (spouses, children and extended family) who live with them and don't work. Income earned by workers is channelled through the banks first an up to 50% goes to your church, perhaps 25% to your home island and 25% to your extended family – so even those earning an income have little discretionary income.

Primary education is free, but secondary education is not, so families who end children to secondary education will often take a loan out to cover the cost of education. This is perceived to be a good option because the loan repayments are taken out by the bank before the rest of the income is distributed.

The main forms of transport are private vehicle (there are a lot of cars), boat, public ferry or public bus (mini vans or small buses).



Children skipping in Betio village

Environment

Both Kiribati and Tuvalu, and in particular their capitals, are really struggling with litter pollution and what to do with waste from imported goods. In the past, before western materials became more accessible, all the produce and building materials (and therefore the waste) were of natural fibres or animal products. The obvious way to deal with this type of waste was to throw it into the sea, and there it was eaten by fish or decayed easily.

With the introduction of tinned food, alcohol and soft drinks; plastic wrapped produce and equipment; and metal vehicles and tools came a large amount of non-biodegradable rubbish. Unfortunately, it came without the necessary education and infrastructure to deal with the waste. Adding to this issue is the harsh environment of the islands – metal rusts easily, coral sand is sharp and abrasive, there is a great deal of heat and humidity. Not only are many of the residents ill-equipped or ill-trained to carry out maintenance on

vehicles, equipment or buildings, but the environment means they breakdown or decay more easily than in many other countries.

While both nations do now have landfills, even these are an issue. For a start, many people just do not send their rubbish to landfill, they simply throw it in the sea (from where it comes back to line the beaches) or just leave it on the ground (even cars are simply left abandoned beside houses to rust away). But even when people do adopt the use of the landfill, what will happen when the landfill is full? They cannot easily arrange to export their waste to a nation with greater land mass, so they may still resort to packaging it up and dumping it at sea.



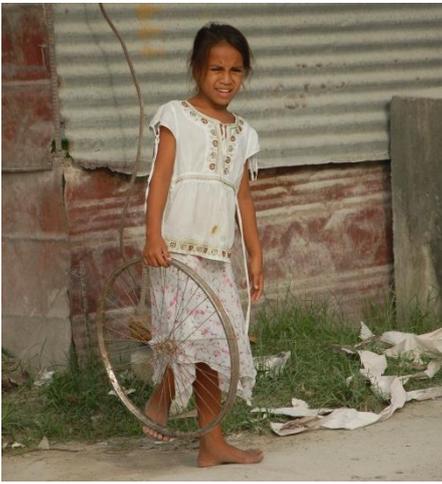
A young boy goes out to swim on Funafuti, past the vast array of rubbish washed up on the seashore



The Funafuti rubbish tip after it has been compacted and buried under dredged sand as part of the NZ Borrow Pits Project. This method for tidying up the tip will only work once...



Rubbish lying along the beach at Betio, South Tarawa



A young girl makes a toy from an old bicycle wheel amid the rubbish strewn streets of Betio

Because of its much greater and more dense population, the problems of pollution on South Tarawa are more significant than those on Funafuti. Additionally, most families in South Tarawa have no toilet facilities, and just go out to sea to relieve themselves. While the water is clear and looks beautiful, it is not clean – and yet it is the greatest food source that the people of South Tarawa have.

Language and Pronunciation

Tuvaluan language

Tuvaluan is a Polynesian language and shares much in common with other Polynesian languages like Māori and Samoan. Tuvaluan uses the same long vowel sounds as Māori (aah, ear, eee, oor, eeew) and some of the words are very similar also. For example, the traditional house is a fale, although there are not many built with traditional materials on the capital these days. One spelling difference from Māori is that the letter ‘g’ is called ‘nga’ and makes the ‘ng’ sound (in Māori the two letters ‘ng’ are used). In Tuvaluan, Viaku Lagi Hotel is pronounced *Vii-aa-ku Laa-NGi*.

Tuvaluan numbers

The numbering system is nearly the same as Samoan and very similar to Māori

1. *Tasi*
2. *Lua*
3. *Tolu*
4. *Fā*
5. *Lima*
6. *Ono*
7. *Fitu*
8. *Valu*
9. *Iva*
10. *Sefulu*

Numbers greater than ten are said either as groups of ten and one, or by simply reading the digits – hence 45 is *fā sefulu lima* or simply *fā lima*.

Kiribati language

Kiribati is a Micronesian language and quite distinct from Tuvaluan. The name Kiribati is a transliteration of the word *Gilbert* (from the Gilbert Islands). The people are Kiribati or i-Kiribati (foreigners, white people, are i-matung), and the language is Kiribati or Gilbertese.

In Gilbertese, the letters ‘ti’ say ‘ss’ or sometimes ‘see’ so Kiribati is *Kiri-bass* and the town Betio is *Beh-see-oh*. The letter ‘u’ makes a ‘w’ sound; the letter ‘w’ makes a ‘v’ sound at the start of a word or after a vowel, but sometimes (when following a consonant) makes no sound!

The base vowel sounds in Gilbertese are shorter than those of the Polynesian languages, for example 'a' says 'ah' as in apple, rather than 'aah' as in aardvark. The 'w' (where it makes no sound of its own) is used to lengthen the sound of the vowel that comes after it into the longer (Polynesian) vowel sound and is only used after a consonant like b. So the Kiribati boys' name Bwati is pronounced *Baa-see*.

An additional complication is that there seems to be a variety of correct spellings, with an apostrophe or a doubled vowel used in place of a 'w' in some spellings to make the long vowel sound (so bwa, b'a, and baa can all make the long 'baa' sound – this means, for example, that *B'aan Nei Kanna Primary School* is also spelt *Bwaan Nei Kanna Primary School*. Also, the letters 'ui' can be used in place of a 'w' at times. What this means in practice is that mastering the written language for i-Kiribati is not easy, and the knowledge, once gained, does not transfer as easily to English.

A few Kiribati words are similar to other Polynesian words, for example *ika* is fish (as it is in Māori), but most are very different, eg. Traditional house is a *maneaba* although, again, there are not many of them on the capital. In South Tarawa this shortage of traditional housing is because there are not enough pandanus trees to make the thatch for all the roofs.



Village housing on North Tarawa is still made from traditional materials

Kiribati numbers

The Kiribati numbers are very different from those of the Polynesian languages. For a start, they have three different numbering systems – one for counting objects, one for counting people and one for counting groups. The set of numbers for counting one to ten objects is as follows:

1. *Teuana* (*te-wa-na*)
2. *Uoua* (*wow-wa*)
3. *Teniua* (*ten-you-a*)
4. *Aua* (*ah-wa*)
5. *Nimaua* (*nem-ah-wa*)
6. *Onoua* (*on-oh-wa*)
7. *Itiua* (*ee-soo-wa*)
8. *Waniua* (*va-noo-wa*)
9. *Ruaiua* (*ru-wai-wa*)
10. *Tebwina* (*te-bee-na*)

Numbers greater than ten use a 'tens and ones' system, but the tens number has an altered ending. The following are the numbers from eleven to fifteen, to illustrate the pattern where *tebwina* (10) becomes *tebwi* and the *ma* is the 'and':

11. *Tebwi ma teuana*
12. *Tebwi ma uoua*

13. Tebwi ma teniua
14. Tebwi ma aua
15. Tebwi ma nimaua

Continuing the pattern of the altered ending, the tens numbers from twenty to one hundred are as follows, (remembering that the 'ma' would still take the place of an 'and' before a ones number, so twenty-three is uabwi ma tenuia):

20. Uabuii
30. Tenibui
40. Abuii
50. Nimabuii
60. Onobuii
70. Itibuii
80. Wanibuii
90. Ruabuii
100. Tebubua

(Please note, this is the exact spelling that was given by a native speaker, and it also illustrates the concept that the 'ui' is an alternative to 'w' so 'uabwi' and 'uabuii' seem to be interchangeable).

English letter names and pronunciation

In both countries the names of the English letters varies slightly from New Zealand pronunciation. One letter where this is particularly noticeable is the letter 'r', which is named 'ah-ra' not 'arr'. This makes it difficult when people spell out their name or other words to a native English speaker. In general, people from both islands tend to like the softer vowel sound on the end of the letters, so 'n' may be said 'enna'.

A second complication to be aware of when going through alphabet sounds with new immigrants is that they might name letters for the sounds they make in their own language, so a Tuvaluan could name the letter 'g' as 'nga', and an i-Kiribati might name the letter 'u' with a 'wh' sound.

English Language Learning

English language learning in Tuvalu

English is seen widely as the most precious commodity of education and the level of conversational English on Funafuti is very good (although teachers acknowledge that the jump from conversational to academic English is difficult for their students).

Teaching is mostly in Tuvaluan for Years 1-2, but increasingly in English from then on: Questions, answers and most bookwork is written in English, with teachers using Tuvaluan to explain topics and vocabulary that the students do not understand.

English language learning in Kiribati

English is being increasingly recognised as important by many of the residents, but is not widely spoken. Conversational English is limited among the residents of the capital, and even more limited on the main islands

2015 is the third year of a new curriculum in Kiribati, and it appears to have made some major changes to the teaching and learning of English. One change that has been made is to focus on mother-tongue proficiency first, thus there is oral English only for Years 1-2, and formal, written English language study from then on.

Observations of Education

Observed factors common to school in both countries

In both Tuvalu and Kiribati, teachers worked hard to create warm and interesting classroom environments – whether the classroom buildings were new and bright or old, dark and small, many teachers had hung paper or painted coconut shells outside to make the environment attractive. Some had carefully tended decorative garden areas and many had pictures and students work displayed on the walls. Overall, each classroom, in every school felt like a classroom, teaching and learning was going on, and there was a mixture of loud and quiet activities. Education in these countries is recognisable as education.

There is also a clear, intentional, educational focus on the environment and particularly on education regarding rubbish disposal. Each nation was making some attempt to dispose of waste properly and even recycle. Teachers at some schools had also begun to grow edible gardens with their students and others were working on composting organic waste.

One surprising difference was that punctuality appeared to be very flexible. At all schools there were students walking in and around the school, and in and out of class while lessons were going on. At many schools it seems that students are able to walk out of class at any time to eat.

During visits to the classrooms, there was a lot of teacher-led whole class activity or individual board work being done. There were also classes where students were working on grouped activities but at no point was a teacher observed working with a small group while others were on a different rotation. What appeared to be meant when teachers spoke of group work was to have all students working on the same topic, but at differentiated levels or in mixed-level groups. Observed teacher techniques were teacher-led chanting, singing, individual board work, students working at their desks or on the floor in grouped or individual activities. The teachers in all the rooms were either at the front of the classroom (standing or seated with the class in front of them), or at their desk.

Observations of education specific to Tuvalu

The Director of Education in Tuvalu (Katalina Pasiele) has studied in New Zealand, so much of the change that is being introduced into Tuvaluan education has a similar sound to the rhetoric of New Zealand's educational pedagogy. Teacher competencies have recently been introduced and teachers spoke of a change focus to student achievement rather than content presentation. All teachers in Tuvalu must have a teaching qualification, and the majority of training is completed in Fiji.

The expectation of the Department of Education is that schools develop their own curriculum (which is often done using Australian Curriculum documents), in consultation with their community. There is a desire for students to know their current stage of learning and also be aware of what criteria they need to know next. The role of the teacher is to gather what is important from the world of education and bring it to the students in their classes.

The community is very involved in the running of the schools in Tuvalu, but teachers acknowledged that the majority of the input comes from 50-80% of the parents. They do struggle to engage some of their parents in their children's education and the running of the school.

Students in Tuvalu attend school from 8am to 12pm in Years 1 and 2, and from 8am to 1pm in Years 3-8.

Observations of education specific to Kiribati

As previously mentioned, 2015 is the third year of a new curriculum in Kiribati. The new curriculum provides teachers with a pack that supplies everything: curriculum documents, class resources, marker pens, blank paper, students' books and even pens and pencils. The curriculum is also very prescriptive – for example, there are readers specifically for Year Four, Term 2.

It will take time to see what effect the new system has on education in Kiribati, and whether it improves the education and conversational English language fluency, however teachers are overall very positive about it (the only questions any asked were whether they should start formal English instruction from Day One). It seems that the new curriculum has provided students with a far better educational experience and that the students are enjoying and attending school more as a result. An additional benefit of the prescriptive curriculum is that all students in all schools cover the same content and have largely the same educational opportunities.

Teachers in Kiribati are trained at the Kiribati Teachers College, in South Tarawa. There appears to be a shortage of teachers, with many schools having to combine classes when a teacher is absent. Also, teachers are permitted to have their own infants and preschool children in the classrooms with them, even leaving the class at times to breastfeed.

Many of the schools that were visited did not have enough desks or tables, and several did not have enough classrooms. A lot of the classrooms were small and dark and very crowded with students, even in the rural schools. There were some new (and light) classrooms being built by aid projects in South Tarawa, but there is a great need for more.

The local community in Kiribati is not so involved in the running of the schools (and have no say in the selection of the curriculum), but they are expected to meet the needs of the school if presented to them by the staff.

School days vary in start time and length across Tarawa, some starting at 8am, but others at 9am. The finish time for school is likewise varied.



Technology in Education

During interviews with parents now living in New Zealand an impression was given that there was a degree of technology used every day in Kiribati and Tuvalu (indeed, a small percentage parents felt there was only a small difference between the technology use in New Zealand and that now used in their island). The reality of internet and technology availability in the islands was vastly different from the expectation.

Tuvalu

There was only one principal's laptop in Funafuti. None of the classrooms had any computers or devices in them, and even if they had, the access to the internet for teaching resources would have been very difficult. The Wi-Fi strength provided by Tuvalu Telecom is very poor across the island, and you access it using Wi-Fi recharge cards. To get any reasonable signal strength for sending emails many people went to the hotel and even then there was no possibility of getting video feed. As a result, there is no way teachers can supplement classroom teaching with educational video information from the internet, or allow students to conduct their own research on study topics.

Kiribati

It is possible to purchase a remote internet connection device in Tarawa, but the signal strength was weak and the devices were often not successful in connecting. None of the schools that were visited had a Wi-Fi system and there were no computers or devices in any of the classrooms. There was one school with teachers' laptops in South Tarawa – the international school (Rurubao Primary School), where parents pay fees for their students to attend.

Some schools in South Tarawa had small printer/copiers (inkjet and therefore costly to run) but the current excitement was the new, large laser photocopiers that had just been delivered to most of the schools by UNICEF. The schools were still waiting to open these and be trained to use them. Prior to this delivery, for schools without a small printer/copier, any photocopying that had to be done was taken to the print shop and had to be paid for there. These photocopiers may make a considerable difference in schools where there are not enough readers or texts for each child and where most teachers use the blackboard as the basis for presenting questions and written work.



Seventh Day Adventist School, Funafuti, Tuvalu



The environment: Tuvalu

Pandanus trees and rubbish along the shoreline, evidence of the need for environment education



Organised Saturday morning activity
A table tennis tournament



Nauti Primary School, Funafuti, Tuvalu



An interesting choice of play equipment, outside the school gate and in the rubbish bin...

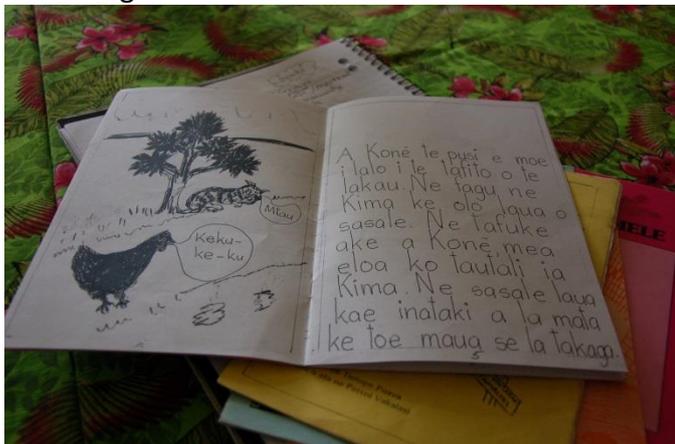


Tuvaluan educational resources

Printed school resources: Australian Curriculum documents and Sunshine readers



Teacher-generated resources:



Tuvaluan class lesson

In this class at Nauti Primary, students were learning the parts of the body in English. The list of the parts of the body was fairly exhaustive, with thirty-three body parts, including eyebrow, eyelid, eyelash, ankle, calf, shin, and fingernail.

First of all, they went down the list of names on the board, saying the part, and spelling it aloud, in a whole class chant, “finger: eff, eye, enn, gee, ee, ah-ra, finger” (notice the different pronunciation of the letter ‘r’). Then, students were selected, one at a time, to choose a body part from the list, and move it to the appropriate place in the photograph.

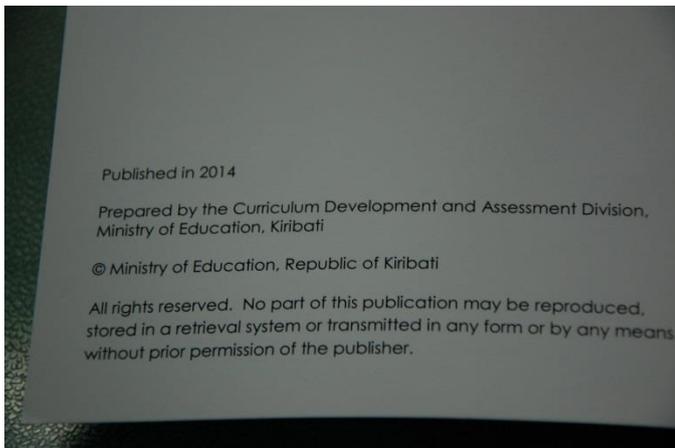
During the observation, one of the students placed the word finger next to the elbow of the figure on the board, this was not corrected by anyone while the lesson was observed, but may have been corrected at the end.



Pictures of education in Kiribati

Resources

Readers in Kiribati and English from the new curriculum, those in some schools were generated as part of an Australian aid programme, in other schools the readers had been produced by the Ministry of Education in Kiribati.



Nooto Primary School, North Tarawa

Note the attractive arrangement and decoration outside this small classroom, built of traditional materials



B'aan Nei Kanna Primary School, North Tarawa





Children playing in Betio township



The environment: Kiribati

Due to the dense population, there is an even great issue with rubbish on Tarawa than on Funafuti



Dai Nippon Primary School, South Tarawa

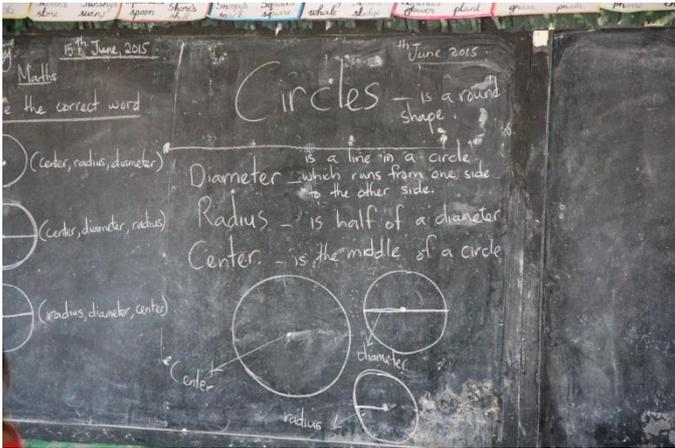


As in Tuvalu, there is a project in Kiribati schools for sanitation and waste





New classrooms...



St John Bosco Primary School, South Tarawa
(originally a Catholic Mission School, but now given to the Kiribati government)



...and old classrooms



Washing your hands...



Taaken Bairiki Primary School, South Tarawa



Teachers with young children have their children in class with them



Using the school toilet block...



Concrete materials being used to learn colours



...or not



Rurubao Primary School, South Tarawa
(English Medium, international, fee paying)



Abaunamou Primary School - in the rain!



Ringing the bell...



War Memorial Primary School, South Tarawa



Tabon-Te-Maneaba Primary School

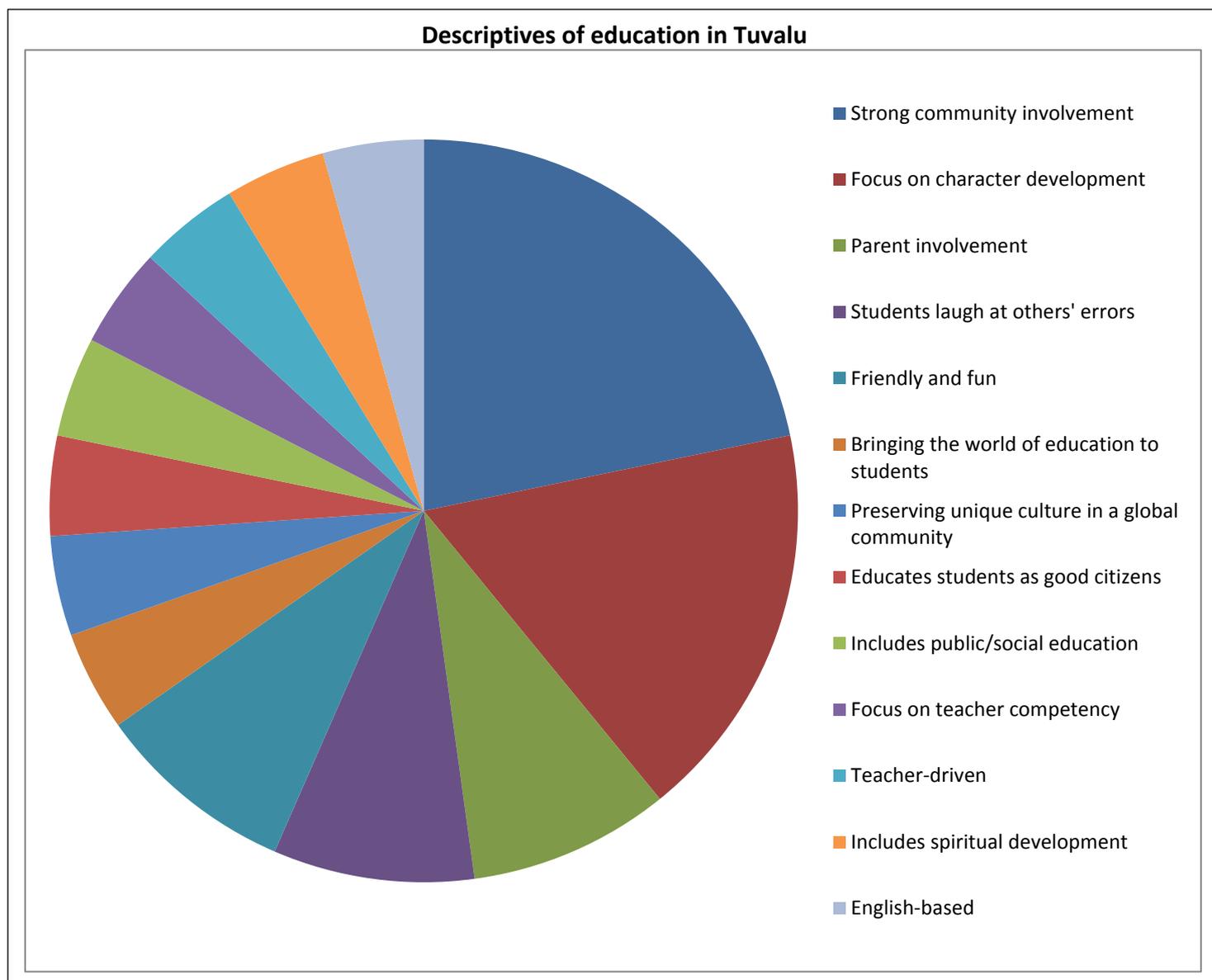
They have not enough classrooms, so the school maneaba becomes a type of modern learning environment





Part 5: Summary of Information from Interviews with the Educators

Education in Tuvalu



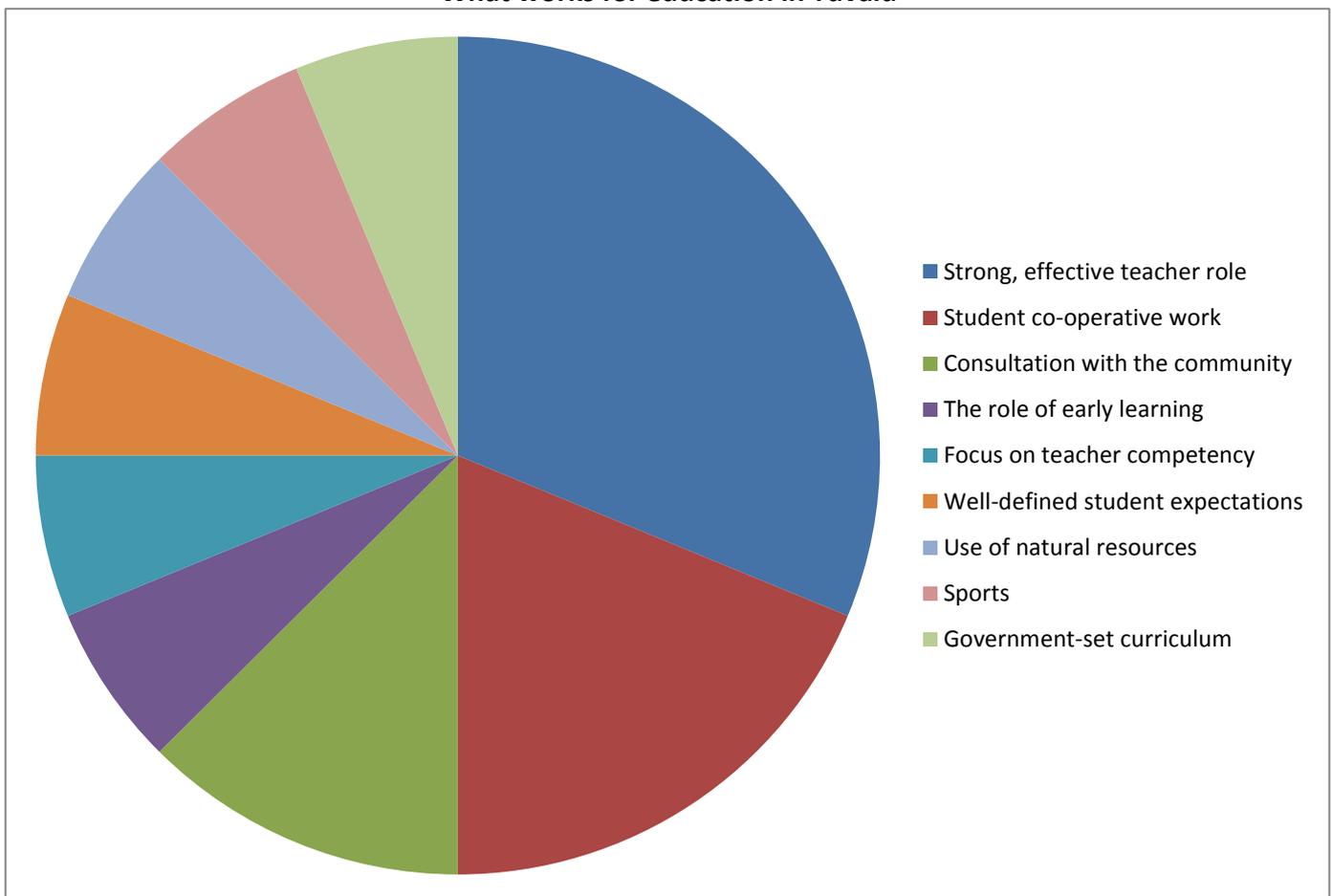
Descriptives of education in Tuvalu

Educators who were spoken with in Funafuti used the following categories as they described the education that children are experiencing today in Tuvalu:

- **Strong community involvement** – the expectation in Tuvalu is that the community, through consultation, will have significant input into the school curriculum and calendar
- **Focus on character development** – Tuvaluan students are expected to be respectful and behave well, they do this without losing their zest for life or noisy enthusiasm
- **Parent involvement** – the teachers acknowledged that some factions of their parent body are difficult to engage with the schools, but they do have a lot of community involvement from 50-80% of their parents
- **Students laugh at others' errors** – it is a cultural habit in Tuvalu for students to laugh if a student answers a question and gets the answer wrong and, while the teachers recognise that this is not a useful habit in a positive learning environment, they acknowledged that a cultural habit is a very difficult one to change
- **Friendly and fun** – the students in Tuvalu enjoy school, they like to learn and form good relationships with students and teachers

- **Bringing the world of education to students** – this concept comes from the Department of Education and influences the changes they are making to Tuvaluan schooling
- **Preserving unique culture in a global community** – this concept comes from the Department of Education and influences the changes they are making to Tuvaluan schooling
- **Educates students as good citizens** – this concept comes from the Department of Education and influences the changes they are making to Tuvaluan schooling
- **Includes public/social education** – This involves focuses on Environment Day and how to correctly dispose of waste
- **Focus on teacher-competency** – These were new to schools in Tuvalu and were mentioned as a tool for shifting the focus towards students achievement and away from the simple presentation of knowledge by the teacher
- **Teacher-driven** – the teacher’s role was to present the information to students in such a way that they could then learn it effectively
- **English-based** – Education up to Year three is in Tuvaluan to teach English, and from Year 4 onwards is in English with Tuvaluan support and explanations where necessary

What works for education in Tuvalu



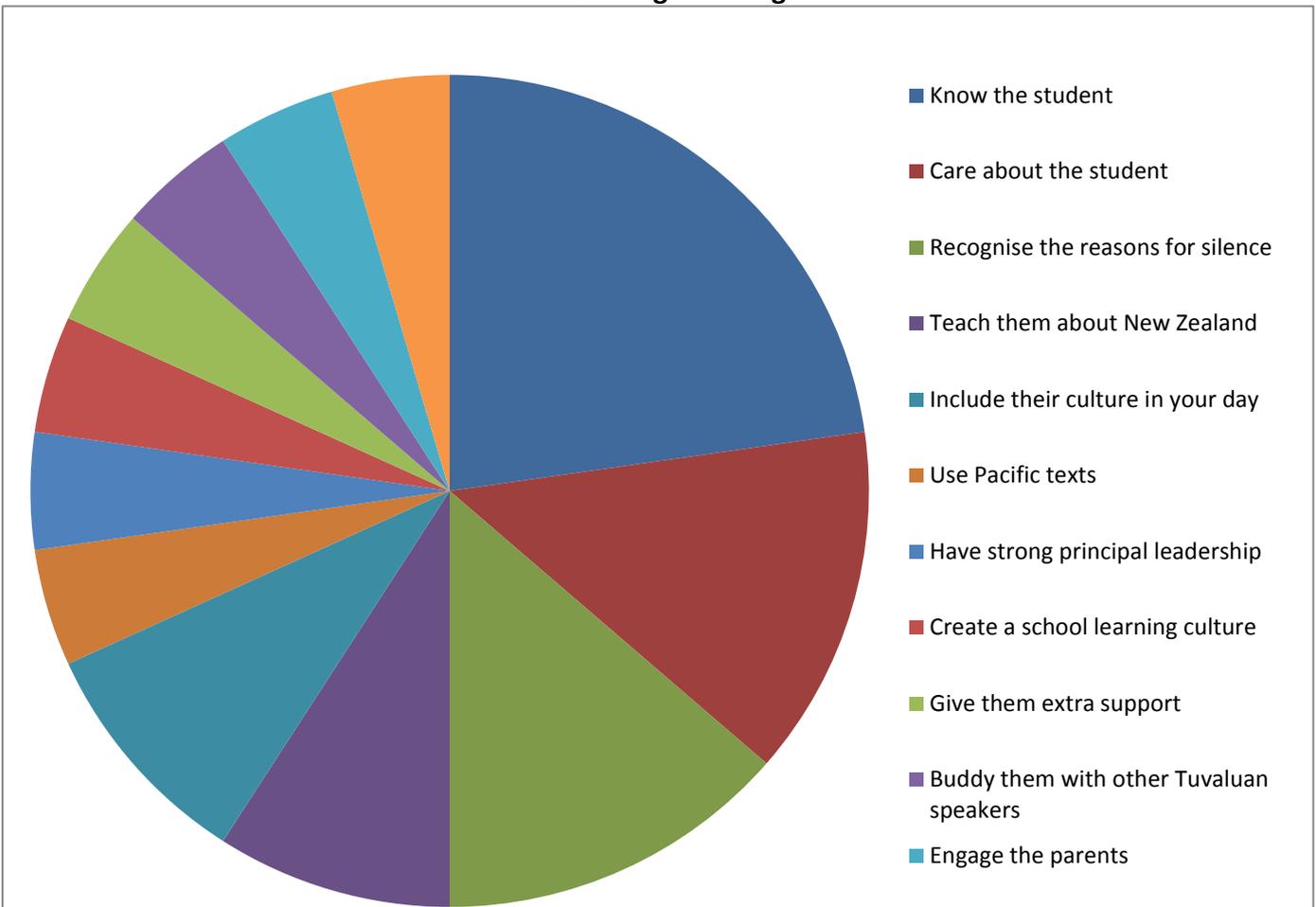
What works for education in Tuvalu

When asked what techniques and strategies worked in Tuvalu, or what was observable in a class with a good teacher, the educators in Funafuti gave the following responses:

- **Strong, effective teacher role** – as mentioned in the descriptives of Tuvaluan education, it is an expectation that the teacher will bring the world of education to their students and , in an environment where there is little (if any) other access to information it is an understandably necessary element of education

- **Student co-operative work** – where students are able to work in mixed ability or levelled groups to complete work, teachers felt that students were able to perform better
- **Consultation with the community** – again, the expectation in Tuvalu is that the community, through consultation, will have significant input into the school curriculum and calendar
- **The role of early learning** – Tuvaluan children have to attend early childhood education from age two onwards, teachers felt this gave them an early start to education and the basics of English language
- **Focus on teacher competency** – as mentioned, this was a new initiative and seen as very positive for student achievement
- **Well-defined student expectations** – teachers in Tuvalu wanted their students to know their role in their learning and what they needed to do to achieve success
- **Use of natural resources** – using local materials the children are familiar with to assist with learning – sand trays, coconut shells, etc.
- **Sports** – Tuvaluan children love games and sports
- **Government-led curriculum** – teachers felt the directives provided by the government were helping to improve the standard of education

Advice for effective teaching of immigrants from Tuvalu



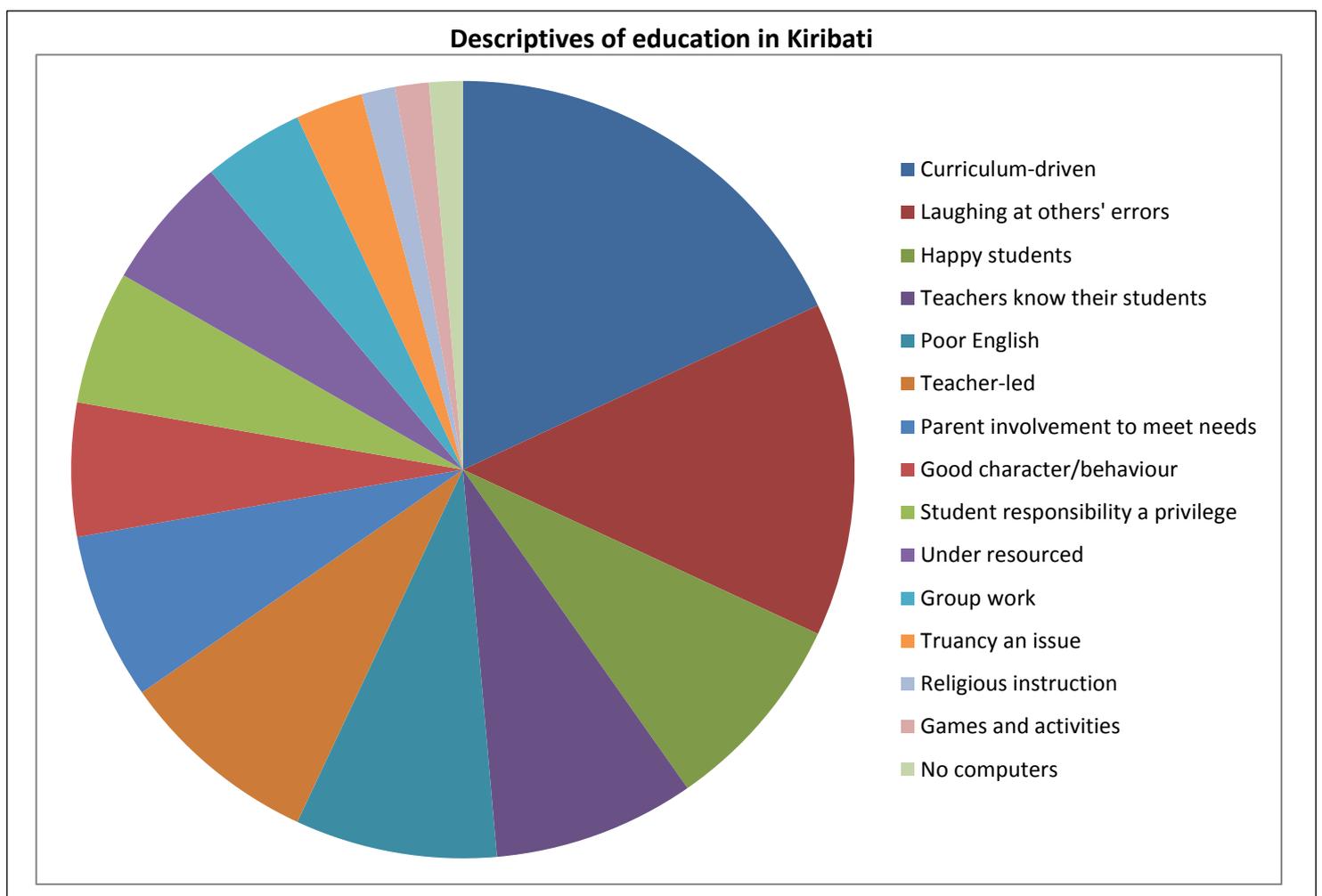
Advice for effective teaching of immigrants from Tuvalu

The following are the suggestions provided by the educators in Funafuti, when asked what advice they would give to a teacher in New Zealand who had a newly immigrated student from Tuvalu in their class:

- **Know the student** – relationship is key, knowing your student’s character and educational ability is key to building that relationship

- **Care about the student** – a further key to relationship, the student needs to know you care about them personally so they can trust you
- **Recognise the reasons for silence** – students in Tuvalu are silent if they are showing you respect, but they may also be silent if they are too shy to answer in front of others
- **Teach them about New Zealand** – help them to understand New Zealand food, vocabulary and culture
- **Include their culture in your day** – perhaps give the Tuvaluan student the opportunity to teach the class something
- **Use Pacific texts** – texts which are about the world that the students know are easier for them to understand
- **Have strong principal leadership** – the principal leads the school and if they lead well in their help of Tuvaluan students, the school will follow
- **Create a school learning culture** – develop an environment where it is permissible to make a mistake or try something new
- **Give them extra support** – take the extra time to teach the vocabulary and cultural elements (as well as the language) that students may not understand
- **Buddy them with other Tuvaluan speakers** – enable them to use the similar experience of others
- **Engage the parents** – when parents know the culture, language and expectations it is easier to contribute, recognise that this is hard for immigrant parents and make extra effort
- **Use the Tuvaluan dictionary online** – it helps to know the Tuvaluan word when you are explaining something new

Education in Kiribati

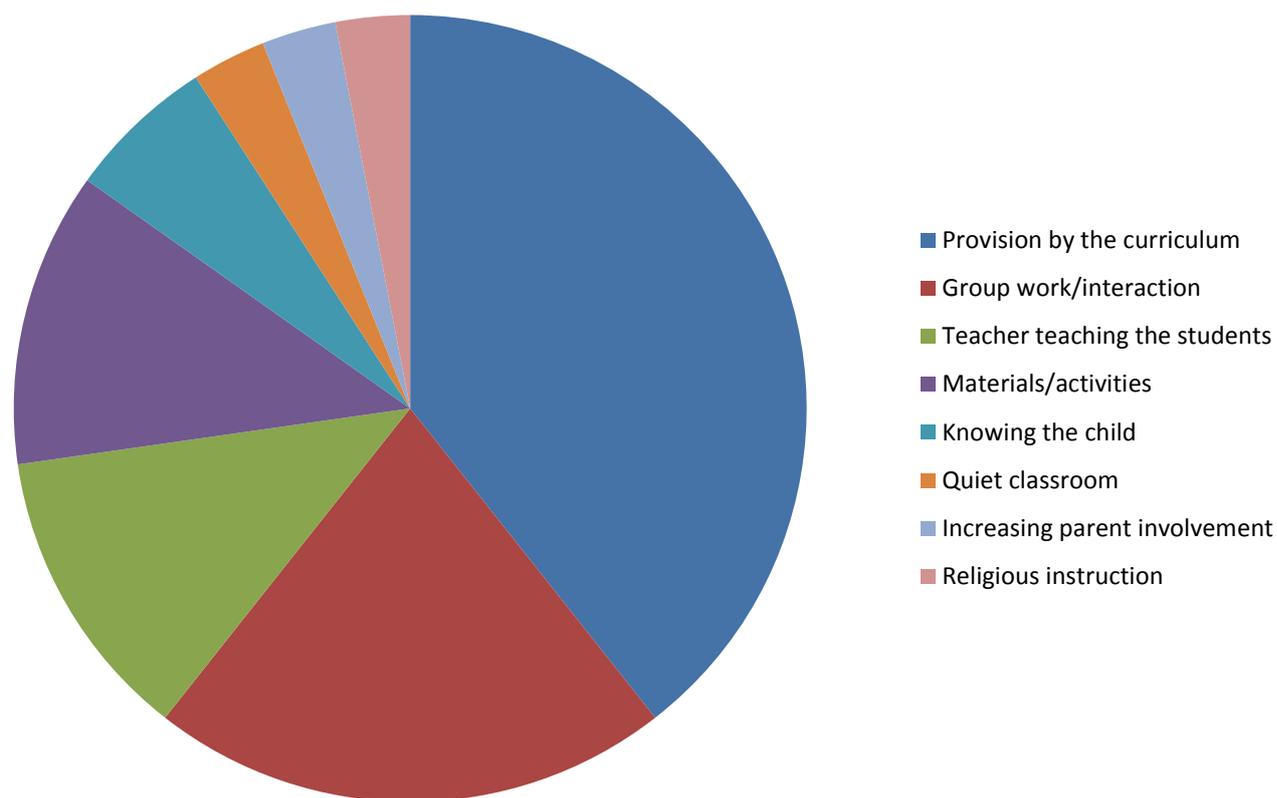


Descriptives of education in Kiribati

Educators who were spoken with in North and South Tarawa used the following categories as they described the education that children are experiencing today in Kiribati:

- **Curriculum-driven** – the new curriculum directs the specific areas of study and provides all the necessary resources for education at each year level
- **Laughing at others' errors** – it is a cultural habit in Kiribati for students to laugh if a student answers a question and gets the answer wrong and, while the teachers recognise that this is not a useful habit in a positive learning environment, they acknowledged that a cultural habit is a very difficult one to change
- **Happy students** – teachers felt that their students were happy to be at school, particularly since the introduction of the new curriculum
- **Teachers know their students** – relationship is seen as a key element of education
- **Poor English** – teachers in Kiribati recognise that the nation does not have a good English language proficiency, they hope that the new curriculum will change this over time
- **Teacher-led** – the teacher's role was to present the curriculum information, using the resources and activities, to students in such a way that they could then learn it effectively
- **Parent involvement to meet needs** – schools felt that the parent community were effective at meeting the needs of the school (eg. tidying up the grounds) when they were presented to them
- **Good character/behaviour** – Kiribati students are expected to be respectful and behave well, they do this without losing their zest for life or noisy enthusiasm
- **Student responsibility a privilege** – teachers gave extra responsibility (eg. a class leader for when the teacher was out of the room) to students as a privilege
- **Under resourced** – teachers recognised that they often had not enough classroom space or desks and, while the new curriculum provides all the other resources, there was not always enough of those for the large class sizes
- **Group work** – this is an element to Kiribati teaching that has been introduced by the new curriculum and teachers have noticed its effectiveness, as in Tuvalu, where students are able to work in mixed ability or levelled groups to complete work, teachers felt that students were able to perform better
- **Truancy and issue** – some schools were working hard to get their students to attend but still had up to 20% absence on any given day
- **Religious instruction** – all primary schools in Kiribati have religious instruction as part of their curriculum
- **Games and activities** – this is another element to Kiribati teaching that has been introduced by the new curriculum and which teachers felt has added value
- **No computers** – teachers in Kiribati recognise that they have very limited ability to use technology in the classroom

What works well for education in Kiribati

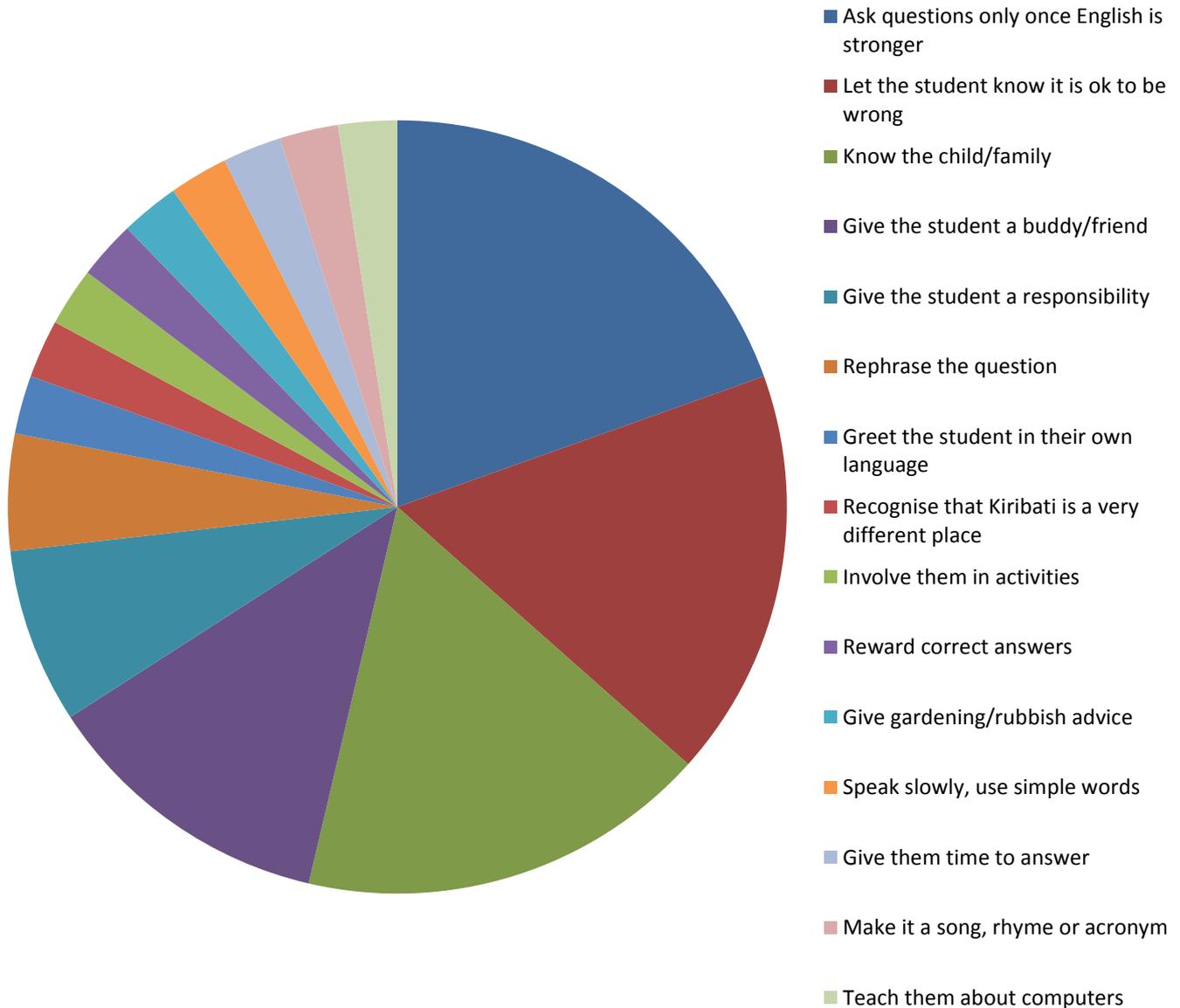


What works for education in Kiribati

When asked what techniques and strategies worked in Kiribati, or what was observable in a class with a good teacher, the educators in North and South Tarawa gave the following responses:

- **Provision by the curriculum** – teachers viewed the changes brought by the new curriculum in an extremely positive light, as it not only provided resources they were previously without access to, but it also introduced the idea of group work, games and activities as part of the educational programme
- **Group work/interaction** – allocating students to mixed level or ability groups to complete certain activities is a strategy that has been introduced with the new curriculum
- **Teacher teaching the students** – in an environment where there is little (if any) other access to information it is an understandably important element of education, teachers took their role very seriously and recognised that without their teaching the students would have little chance of being introduced to anything outside their local area of knowledge
- **Materials/activities** – specific ideas for games and activities are outlined in the programme provided by the curriculum
- **Knowing the child** – teachers stressed the importance of good teacher-student relationships to successful educational outcomes
- **Quiet classroom** – this description was given in relation to when students were working on individual tasks, at other times, the classrooms were vibrant with learning noise
- **Increasing parent involvement** – some schools are seeking to educate parents on how they can support their child's learning at home, they felt this was important but acknowledged the difficulties they were facing, particularly where the parents themselves were not educated
- **Religious instruction** – all schools in Kiribati have religious instruction as part of the curriculum

Advice for effective teaching of immigrants from Kiribati



Advice for effective teaching of immigrants from Kiribati

The following are the suggestions provided by the educators in North and South Tarawa, when asked what advice they would give to a teacher in New Zealand who had a newly immigrated student from Kiribati in their class:

- **Ask questions only once English is stronger** – Kiribati children are shy, particularly in the speaking of English, they will be more confident to answer a question if they know they have enough vocabulary to answer it correctly
- **Let the student know it is ok to be wrong** – recognise the cultural fear of ridicule for being wrong and take the time to assure the student that the learning culture is different in New Zealand classrooms
- **Know the child/family** – relationships are key to all of life in Kiribati and the classroom is no exception, so a student will appreciate an effort to know them, their culture and their family
- **Give the student a buddy/friend** – allocate a student to help the new immigrant with their work, their English and their social connections
- **Give the student a responsibility** – having a teacher-appointed responsibility is an honour in Kiribati, giving a new immigrant a specific responsibility will give them a sense of being valued

- **Rephrase the question** – ask again, using more simple language
- **Greet the student in their own language** – learn the correct greeting and farewells ('mauri' ('*maw-ri*') for hello; 'tiabo' ('*saa-bore*') for goodbye) and use them in your day to day classroom life
- **Recognise that Kiribati is a very different place** – there will be a great deal of culture shock for the new immigrant, and the size of their school world will be much greater than that of a Kiribati classroom
- **Involve them in activities** – make sure they are included in games and activities and not left on the periphery
- **Reward correct answers** – in Kiribati, correct answers are rewarded with marks, in New Zealand there are other ways to reward correct answers and attention
- **Give gardening/rubbish advice** – students won't know what to do with rubbish (don't just drop in on the ground) and won't know what can be grown in fertile soil
- **Speak slowly, use simple words** – try to keep the vocabulary you use at a level they can understand
- **Give them time to answer** – use wait time to allow them to process a response
- **Make it a song, rhyme or acronym** – Kiribati children love music and chant, they also respond well to memory techniques like acronyms
- **Teach them about computers** – a student from Kiribati may not have used any form of technology before, and may not have any idea how to access learning support programmes or how to care for computers or devices, they will need to be taught this

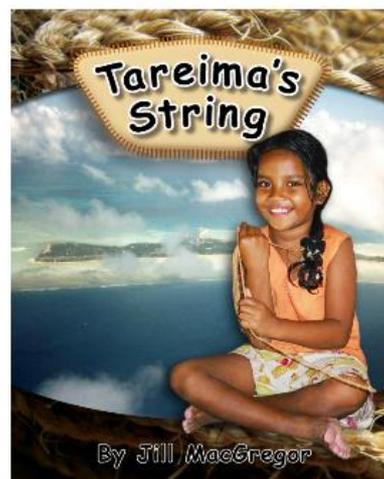
Part 6: Resources

Overview

Part of the aim of this research was to ascertain whether there were any more available resources which can be used with students from Kiribati and Tuvalu that relate to the world they know, and recognise their proficiency in their first language. The resulting search has revealed that there are very few resources that relate specifically to students from Kiribati and Tuvalu, but those that were found are listed below.

Children of the Pacific series

Children of the Pacific is a series of children's picture books written by Jill MacGregor (and available from www.childrenofthepacific.co.nz). These books tell stories from a variety of nations across the Pacific, using ideas and an environment familiar to immigrant students from the Pacific. One of these books, *Tareima's String*, is actually set in Kiribati.



The method for making string from coconut husks which is written about in the story is common in Kiribati.



School-generated resources

By utilising the skills of parents and immigrant students now in secondary school, KingsGate has begun to develop a set of bilingual texts in English and Gilbertese from the early level readers. With the use of the generic text and a digital camera, individualised texts can be produced that are able to be read by parents and their children in two languages. This is an early element of the ESOL support programme that the school offers.

The text for the first book, *Ngai/Me*, is as follows:

Ngai
Me

I moi.
I am drinking.

I amwarake.
I am eating.

I ngarengare.
I am laughing.

I tang.
I am crying.

Ngai
Me



I moi.
I am drinking.

I taetae.
I am talking.

I ongongora.
I am listening.

I ā.
I am yawning.

I matu.
I am sleeping.



I amwarake.

I am eating.

Resources used in Tuvalu

For the majority of the curriculum material, it appears that teachers in Tuvalu use the Australian Curriculum documents and adapt the content from there. There were some teacher generated-readers in Tuvaluan that were printed by the school, but teachers were excited by the new availability of Sunshine Readers, printed in Tuvaluan and set in the Pacific. A picture of these resources is included in this report in *Part 4: A Photo Journal of Education in Tuvalu and Kiribati*. It is hoped that there might be a way to access these resources for schools in New Zealand too, but this has not yet been determined.

Resources used in Kiribati

The new Kiribati Curriculum, published by the Curriculum Development Resource Centre (CDRC) in Kiribati, provides schools with Readers in Kiribati and English as part of the new curriculum. The readers in some schools were generated as part of an Australian aid programme, in other schools the readers had been produced by the Ministry of Education in Kiribati. These readers form part of the complete provision of resources of the new curriculum, and a picture of them is included in this report in *Part 4: A Photo Journal of Education in Tuvalu and Kiribati*, however it is unlikely that these resources will be able to accessed in New Zealand.

Part 7: Conclusions

Conclusions from Observations and Interviews

Teachers' advice is valuable

The suggestions and advice given by the educators from Tuvalu and Kiribati, for teachers in New Zealand with new immigrants in their classrooms, are valuable and worthy of the time required to study them. Of course, not all of the suggestions will work for any given student, but where teaching practice is able to be altered to include some of their suggestions it can only add to the level of support students receive. For example, recognising that a position of responsibility may provide a Kiribati immigrant with a sense of value in the classroom could be the key to them starting to feel like they belong in what is otherwise a very different place.

A familiar classroom practice essential for new immigrants

Many teachers in both Tuvalu and Kiribati spoke of a move to student-focused education, although they also recognise that the education they provide is very much teacher-driven. What they mean by student-focused is that teachers are now being asked not just to deliver curriculum information (and attribute any failure to the fault of the child) but to ensure the students are active in the learning process. Tuvalu is implementing new teacher competencies and Kiribati has a new curriculum, both of which aim to see student attainment increase. Also, teachers in both countries are adding an increasing variety of group and practical activities into the classroom. They report that these have made a noticeable difference and that the obviously happy students are enjoying education more now than ever before.

That said, it is vital that teachers of newly immigrated students recognise the significantly different style of teaching that students will have experienced in Kiribati and Tuvalu. In those islands, there is a lot of work that students answer or copy straight from the blackboard, there is a lot of the teacher teaching, and there is very little student choice in what is learnt – and this is an understandable necessity when you remember that there are not enough books for each student to have one and that often the only source of information is from the curriculum documents. It is, however, very far removed from an environment in New Zealand where, *“there are no teachers standing at the front of a classroom in front of a big group of students, but moving around the rooms, providing guidance or help where needed.”* (Kate Bleasdale: *Creating a learning space for today's students*, Education Gazette/Tukuku Kōrero, Tuesday 28 April 2015)

In an island country with limited practical resources and no technological support (although teachers are working hard to provide resources wherever and however they can), there is a necessarily limited scope of study and students are not able to drive their own learning in the way that many schools in New Zealand would like them to. While in New Zealand teachers are *“faced with the exciting and challenging task of preparing young people for a world that is not yet imagined – a world in which every young person is a competent and confident life-long learner, able to innovate and adapt quickly to change.”* (*Modern learning environments: case studies*, The Education Gazette/Tukuku Kōrero, Tuesday 28 April, 2015), in the islands of Kiribati and Tuvalu teachers are struggling to educate students in the knowledge of a world that is perhaps disappearing.

The end result of this difference is that fact that a new immigrant from Tuvalu or Kiribati will not be able to leap immediately into the world of student-driven, technology-laden learning in a modern learning environment, and a good teacher in New Zealand must recognise this fact. Teachers of new immigrants will need to provide their students with clear classroom leadership in order to create the necessary sense of security and familiarity for their students. This is a significant element of what it means to teach Pasifika students as Pasifika: they are used to, and comfortable with, a classroom culture where the teacher leads. At least to begin with they won't know what to do with a free learning environment.

Introducing technology

Another clear distinction between the education in New Zealand and that in Kiribati or Tuvalu is the huge

difference in the availability of technological resources and devices. Teachers should be aware that a newly immigrated student from Kiribati or Tuvalu may not have used any form of technology before, and almost certainly will never have experienced the speed of ultrafast broadband!

Further to this, students, as well as their parents, will most likely also have no idea about how to access learning support programmes or how to care for computers or devices, and will need to be taught how to do this. Where an internet-based learning system is to be used at home to support students' learning, it will be important to first ascertain whether there is an internet connection as well as a computer, laptop or tablet at home that they are able to use. Some families' access to the internet may be confined to a data plan on a telephone.

Maintaining a caring student classroom culture

Students in Kiribati and Tuvalu are friendly and happy, but it is common practice in their culture to laugh at the mistakes of others. This carries into the classroom and the teachers recognise that changing the cultural habit is extremely difficult, indeed some teachers seem to accept it as 'not good, but just who we are'.

For students who arrive in New Zealand there are two ways this needs to be addressed in the classroom. Firstly, the student will need to be assured that the culture is different in the New Zealand classroom and that a learning environment exists where attempts and effort are honoured rather than ridiculed. Secondly, students in a class where there are a number of immigrants will need to be made aware that laughing at the mistakes of others is not accepted classroom practice.

Language and pronunciation

For students who have learnt the English alphabet in Kiribati or Tuvaluan, there will be a difference in the way students name some of the letters. For example, the letter 'r' is named 'ah-ra' and students will make slightly different sounds when naming 'g' and 'n' also. Teachers should take care in diagnostic assessment not to mark this as incorrect (when the child does know the letter and the sound, albeit with an accent), but to assist students with learning and becoming familiar with the common ways of naming the letters in New Zealand.

Teachers should also recognise that Kiribati children will most likely have a harder job learning the English letters and sounds because they are used very differently in their own language ('ti', 'w' and 'u' in particular) and the letters will therefore will require explicit teaching. Additionally, because conversational English is much better in Tuvalu, if a Year 6 student from Kiribati and a Year 6 student from Tuvalu started in a New Zealand classroom on the same day, it is very likely that the Tuvaluan student will have a better understanding of (at least social) English.

Christian culture and education

Both Tuvalu and Kiribati have a strong Christian heritage and elements of their religious way of life and values are woven without thought into the classroom environment – even more so where the school is a church or mission school. Where an immigrant family chooses to send their child to an integrated school of Christian character, the cultural similarity of belief will bring an instant similarity between the home and the school environment. Where a school is a state school, it is worth considering whether the inclusion of some elements of religious or values instruction might be another element of teaching Pasifika students as Pasifika.

An opportunity for community education

Parents from Tuvalu or Kiribati who enrol their students at a New Zealand primary school also present schools with an opportunity for important community education. It would be a great asset for schools to develop methods or systems whereby new parents are carefully informed about what students need to do with rubbish at school; how families can dispose of rubbish at home; how and what to recycle correctly; how to grow a vegetable garden; and perhaps even how to cook some simple and affordable recipes with New Zealand ingredients. These will all be elements of their new life that won't come naturally without some support. It would also provide key ways to make connections with the students' families.

Engaging parents in their child's New Zealand education

Parents who have moved their family to New Zealand have most likely had the education of their children as one of the primary motives, but without help and support may not know some key pieces of information about school in New Zealand that could help their child succeed. Schools in New Zealand have greater autonomy of curriculum and governance, they are different from one another, and parents have the right to choose what school is best for their child's needs. Schools, particularly in Kiribati, all do the same things and follow one set curriculum path. Newly immigrated parents may, first of all, need assistance to find the right school.

Once a child is enrolled, they and their parents may need to have it carefully explained when and where students eat and when they don't – in Kiribati and Tuvalu students seemed to be in and out of the classroom at any time eating or collecting their lunch, they even left the school grounds and then came back in. Students in New Zealand will need to know when they can and can't leave the school grounds, and also how to leave the school grounds at the end of the day or if they need to leave for an appointment. Parent would also most likely benefit from careful explanation as to where to park their car when they come to collect their children, as traffic laws in the islands do not define parking spaces around schools.

Another key part of engaging parents in their child's education in New Zealand is the need for punctuality and regular attendance. Parents may not understand how vital this is in New Zealand. They will likewise need careful explanation of any homework processes and the importance of attending parent-teacher-student conferences. Parents will not know the ways they are encouraged to check their child's progress unless they have it explained to them.

Be aware of what immigrants leave behind

While the regular life of residents in Tuvalu and Kiribati may seem a long way removed (and even behind) the regular life in New Zealand, there are some wonderful elements of life that immigrants may not realise they will be leaving behind. There is a great sense of family and community relationships in every element of life in the islands. There are community events (like nightly bingo or rides on the motorbike in the cool of the evening) and a sense of living in and out of each other's houses that is not common practice in New Zealand. There is also a relaxed approach to life that is far removed from the stresses of an economy driven society.

Family, community, relaxation. These are great things to enjoy, and things that will be very much missed by immigrants who leave them. Some parents, who move to New Zealand with a fire of enthusiasm about new opportunities and the possibility of increasing income and gaining material possessions previously undreamed of, may not have at all considered the cost of what they leave behind. Schools should be aware that immigrant parents in their community are likely to be grieving the loss of the familiar and their students may be too. While a move to New Zealand is perceived as a great opportunity, it is still a leaving of the place with which you are familiar, the food that you know and the environment that is yours.

The impact of a traditional home life

Among the community of immigrant parents that were visited for this study some had maintained a more traditional home life in New Zealand than others. This will have an impact on the speed with which students are able to adjust to New Zealand school culture. Where a home is more traditional, even being born in New Zealand may not be an indicator of whether the student will have access to resources and technology at home.

Where a child is being brought up by immigrant parents in a traditional Kiribati or Tuvaluan environment, the child will be daily working through the differences between the culture within the home and the culture without it. It is important for schools that they provide students with the advantages of modern school culture and the use of technology without reducing the value of the home culture in the eyes of the student. A student will not benefit from feeling that their home life is somehow unusual, wrong or inferior.

Part 8: Limitations of this research

Limitations on time and travel

The vast majority of the data presented in this report is from observations and interviews conducted on a trip to Kiribati and Tuvalu. Ideally, the trip would have involved a wide area of travel – to the most and the least populated islands of the countries. Unfortunately, travel between islands is difficult, the public ferries are not optimal for their purpose and it takes a week or more to travel to the outer islands. The length of time and difficulties involved made more in-depth research therefore impossible at this time. Instead, the information gathering relied on the knowledge of others for information regarding the more remote areas of the islands.

Difficulties in collating data and information

Information from conversations with locals, educators or aid workers was recorded as accurately as possible and then collated into a picture of the whole. There are no doubt unintentional discrepancies and errors as a result of this process but it is sincerely hoped that they do not make the overall picture in any way inaccurate.

No research into of secondary education

The scope of this study did not include any elements of secondary education. From what was observed in passing, there are different and unique difficulties facing families in Kiribati and Tuvalu who want their children to continue into secondary education. These would create a different set of immigration issues for students in their secondary school years.

Part 9: With Grateful Thanks...

This research was hugely reliant on the time, efforts and input of others. Without the support of the communities in New Zealand and overseas, I would not have been able to gain the insights I have. My thanks to the following people for their contribution to my research

School Community

To the members the KingsGate School community, particularly to Tewima Kauaua, Tirean Taru, Teueroa Antoon, Waioko Lekasa, Lisia and Manapa Panapa, Maupati Taomia, Fealuina Leuli and their families, for welcoming me into their homes, for being willing to share their memories and experiences and for giving me advice and assistance as I made the preparations to visit their home countries.

Educators in Tuvalu and Kiribati

To the following educators in Tuvalu and Kiribati who allowed me to come into their schools and workplaces, who were available to answer my questions and willingly shared their insights and experiences.

Tuvalu Department of Education



Katalina Pasiele (Director of Education) and Evotia Tofuola (School Supervisor)

Tuvalu Primary Schools



Kaai Fauoiga (Head teacher): Nauti Primary School, Funafuti



Alice Ave (early childhood educator) and Katrina Henderson (volunteering OT from NZ, not pictured): Fusi Alofa Special School, Funafuti



Tineiafi Pedro (Head Teacher, not pictured): Seventh Day Adventist School, Funafuti



Rosie Paueli (HoD Intermediate – Year 5-6 – and Special Education), Wendy Nemaia (Year Four, all subjects), Taulupe Fusi (English teacher, Year 8), Fale Kabweia (Form 2 Social Science), and Kaai Fauoiga (Head teacher): Nauti Primary School, Funafuti

Kiribati Primary Schools



Kamwakin Ioane (Head Teacher and Year 3-4 class teacher): Nooto Primary School, Nooto, North Tarawa



Taam Kirarima (Year 3-4 classroom teacher): Bwaan Nei Kanna Primary School, Abaokoro, North Tarawa



Alofa Tebiria (Acting Head Teacher): Dai Nippon Primary School, Betio, South Tarawa



Birikarere Teteki (Principal) and Terira Biketaake (Deputy Head): St John Bosco Primary School, Betio , South Tarawa



Tibera Rouben (Acting Principal): Taaken Bairiki Primary School, Bairiki, South Tarawa



Teniti Uakitonga (Principal) and Frances Hermann (volunteer from NZ): Rurubao Primary School, Bairiki, South Tarawa



Mwakeia Kotua (First Assistant to the Head Teacher): Abaunamou Primary School, Teoraereke, South Tarawa



Atiria Kararau (Assistant Principal) and Melina La meko (primary class teacher): War Memorial Primary School, Bikenibeu, South Tarawa



Taiman Bunaua
(Principal): Tabon-Te-
Maneaba Primary
School, Bikenibeu East,
South Tarawa

The New Zealand High Commission, Tarawa



To Taara Tokamaen of the New Zealand High Commission in Tarawa, for liaising with the Ministry of Education in Kiribati and organising my itinerary of visits to the North and South Tarawa Schools (and to Peter Kemp, unpictured, for putting me in contact with Taara). I am grateful again to Taara and also to Lailai Takfai for arranging and accompanying me on the trip to North Tarawa.

New friends

To locals and fellow visitors to the shores of Kiribati and Tuvalu, particularly to Taeka, Losilini, Amalinda, Graham, Sharon, Tim, Margaret, Chris, Samantha, Toka and Teresa, for the informal conversations, factual information and number knowledge that helped fill in the background and answer my questions.