



Cook Islands

Education for All 2015 National Review

This report was prepared by the relevant national authorities in view of the World Education Forum (Incheon, Republic of Korea, 19-22 May 2015). It was submitted in response to UNESCO's invitation to its Member States to assess progress made since 2000 towards achieving Education for All (EFA).

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The paper can be cited with the following reference: "Education for All 2015 National Review Report: Cook Islands". For further information, please contact: efa2015reviews@unesco.org



COOK ISLANDS
Ministry of Education
Maraurau o te Pae Api'i

Ripoti na te Kuki Airani no te EFA 2014

Cook Islands EFA Report 2014



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Note: all data is sourced from the Ministry of Education unless otherwise stated.

Chapter 1: Cook Islands

1.1 The Context

The Cook Islands consists of 15 islands located in the South Pacific Ocean from 156 to 167 degrees west and from 8 to 23 degrees south. Its nearest neighbours are Samoa and Niue to the west and French Polynesia to the east. The total land area of the Cook Islands is only 236.7 square kilometres but its exclusive economic zone covers an area of approximately 2 million square kilometres.

The Cook Islands can be divided into 3 regions; Rarotonga, the Southern Group and the Northern Group. Rarotonga is treated separately because of its dominance in terms of population size, economic activity and government administration. The Southern Group comprises seven islands which are all located within 200-300 kilometres from Rarotonga. The Northern Group consists of Palmerston Island, located some 500 kilometres from Rarotonga, and six other islands located between 1000 and 1400 kilometres to the north of Rarotonga.

Rarotonga, the Southern Group Islands and Palmerston are volcanic in formation. They are all fringed with a coral reef with lagoons. The land is fertile and agriculture for both subsistence and the market place is well utilized. The Northern Group Islands are all coral atolls. Agriculture is harder to sustain as is a secure clean water supply.

The people of the Cook Islands are of Polynesian descent. The two official languages of the Cook Islands are Maori (the indigenous language) and English. The former is predominant in social events with English being most frequently used in business and government administration. The people of the Cook Islands have automatic rights to New Zealand citizenship through the free association agreement with New Zealand.

The total resident population was estimated to be 13,900 in December 2013. The majority, 58.76%, of the population reside on Rarotonga, with 28.39% on the other Southern Group Islands and 12.85% on the Northern Group Islands. About 50.74% of the population is male. The age distribution profiles within the Cook Islands reflect higher proportions of children and older members of society in the outer islands. The average number of live births over 2005-2009 was 273 per annum with 88.14% of these births on Rarotonga. The predominant migration flow has been from the Outer Islands to Rarotonga, then to New Zealand and beyond.

1.1.1 Economic Environment

The Cook Islands has a relatively small economic base due to its isolation and accessibility from key global markets and limited primary resources including land space. The economy is driven by the private sector and the key industries are tourism, marine (fishing and black pearls), the offshore financial services and agriculture. In 2012 the real gross domestic product was estimated at NZD379.2million, per capita estimate was NZD19, 659. While these GDP figures look impressive in the current global climate, like the social indicators, there are still a number of underlying concerns. There is a disproportionate distribution of income and uneven employment opportunities across the islands. Although there remain some employment opportunities, these are mainly in Rarotonga and to a lesser extent Aitutaki. As a result, some of the outer island populations do not fare well in terms of cash income due to limited income generating opportunities and employment available on their home island.

The Cook Islands economy is subject to various structural, geographical and demographic constraints such as small markets, isolation both nationally and internationally, inadequate infrastructure, lack of natural resource, risk of natural disasters, declining population, and reliance on a small number of sectors for income. These issues make the Cook Islands more vulnerable to changes in the global economy. The recent stresses on the global economy have been reflected in the Cook Islands through the increased cost of imported goods, in particular, commodities such as fuel and electricity.

The economic environment, particularly as it relates to the private, commercial and service sector, greatly impacts on all schools, particularly those in the isolated Northern Group. The continuing reduction in the frequency of air and shipping

services, and their increasing costs, to these islands increases the isolation of these schools and opportunities for development of staff and delivery of infrastructural support eg resources, telecommunications. To help address aspects of this issue the Ministry has developed a differentiated funding policy so that these isolated schools receive additional funding to cover the costs of increased freight, power and telecommunications. However, it is increasingly difficult to staff such isolated schools or provide regular and ongoing professional development opportunities to the teachers that are there.

Emerging economic challenges include the difficulty of recruiting employees for the tourism sector and concerns that a diluting of the Cook Islands Maori culture will harm the uniqueness of the tourism experience and reduce the flow of tourist dollars into the country. As a result, employment of foreign workers is rapidly rising. Visitor numbers are an important component of the Cook Islands economy and play a vital part in determining future growth. The number of foreign tourists in the country at any one time is continuously rising as numbers exceed 100,000 per year. There is a degree of general uncertainty on tourism numbers given the impact of fluctuations in the world-wide economy.

Perhaps the biggest development challenge now faced is the long term trend decline in the population of people of Cook Islands descent. Those born of Cook Islands descent are also New Zealand citizens which enables free access to the New Zealand and Australian job markets and the New Zealand health, education and social security systems. People who receive funding (government or donor) for further tertiary education at international institutes are bonded to return to the Cook Islands at the completion of their study for a pro-rata period of time.

1.1.2 Social Environment

The Cook Islands' social development indicators are high relative to other Pacific Countries in terms of health and education standards. The Cook Islands has achieved the targets of:

- universal primary education for boys and girls
- elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary education
- low and decreasing child and maternal mortality rates
- access to safe drinking water

Such national outcomes however hide disparities between islands.

Life expectancy is 73 years (2006) and infant mortality is 3.9 per 1000 live births (2012). Immunisation levels for children are almost 100%. Primary and secondary school enrolment levels were in the upper 90 percentile (a drop in secondary enrolment ratios in the last two years is due to a change in legislation and is expected to return to previous levels in the short term) with female enrolment level on a par with male students (Ministry of Education, 2010). These impressive statistics however, can hide some worrying social trends. The prevalence of non-communicable diseases is rapidly increasing and there is a high level of depopulation in the outer islands leading to limited access to basic social services and utilities. This creates economy of scale issues for the Education sector to address. There is an increasing road toll and increasing community discontent with an increasing foreign workforce, particularly in the hospitality industry, and increasing rates of youth crime.

The dynamics of the social environment for young people, particularly in Rarotonga, are constantly changing. The personal situations, including increased teenage pregnancies and youth alcohol abuse, show young people find themselves in situations in which the choices and decisions they have to make vary considerably from even 10 years ago. Support structures for the ongoing holistic well-being of learners are a necessity. Changed community expectations in relation to meeting students' needs has meant that the Ministry of Education has had to increase the scope of programmes offered and introduced structures to support student well-being such as guidance programme.

1.2 The Structure of Education in the Cook Islands

Education in the Cook Islands, in the main, is provided by government institutions. There are currently 32 providers including 8 primary school (all of which include Early Childhood Centres), 4 secondary schools and 19 area schools (schools which provide education from ECE through to secondary level on one site and under one management). Included in these numbers are five church schools (2 primary, 2 area and 1 secondary), one private primary school. There is one private Early Childhood Centre. The geographical spread of these schools is shown on the map on page 4.

All church and private schools receive 100% of the equivalent allocation of funds that they would as a government school from the national budget. All government and government-funded church and private schools are required to be open to both educational and financial audit. The total enrolment for 2013 was 4052. Every child in the Cook Islands is entitled to free education from the age of 3 years. Universal education has been legislated for more than 50 years. Attendance at school is compulsory from age 5 to 16 (increased from 15 to 16 in 2012). There is no upper age limit to school enrolment although adult learners in mainstream schools are not common (adults will predominantly access community and other education programmes out of work hours).

Figure 1.1 The Structure of Education

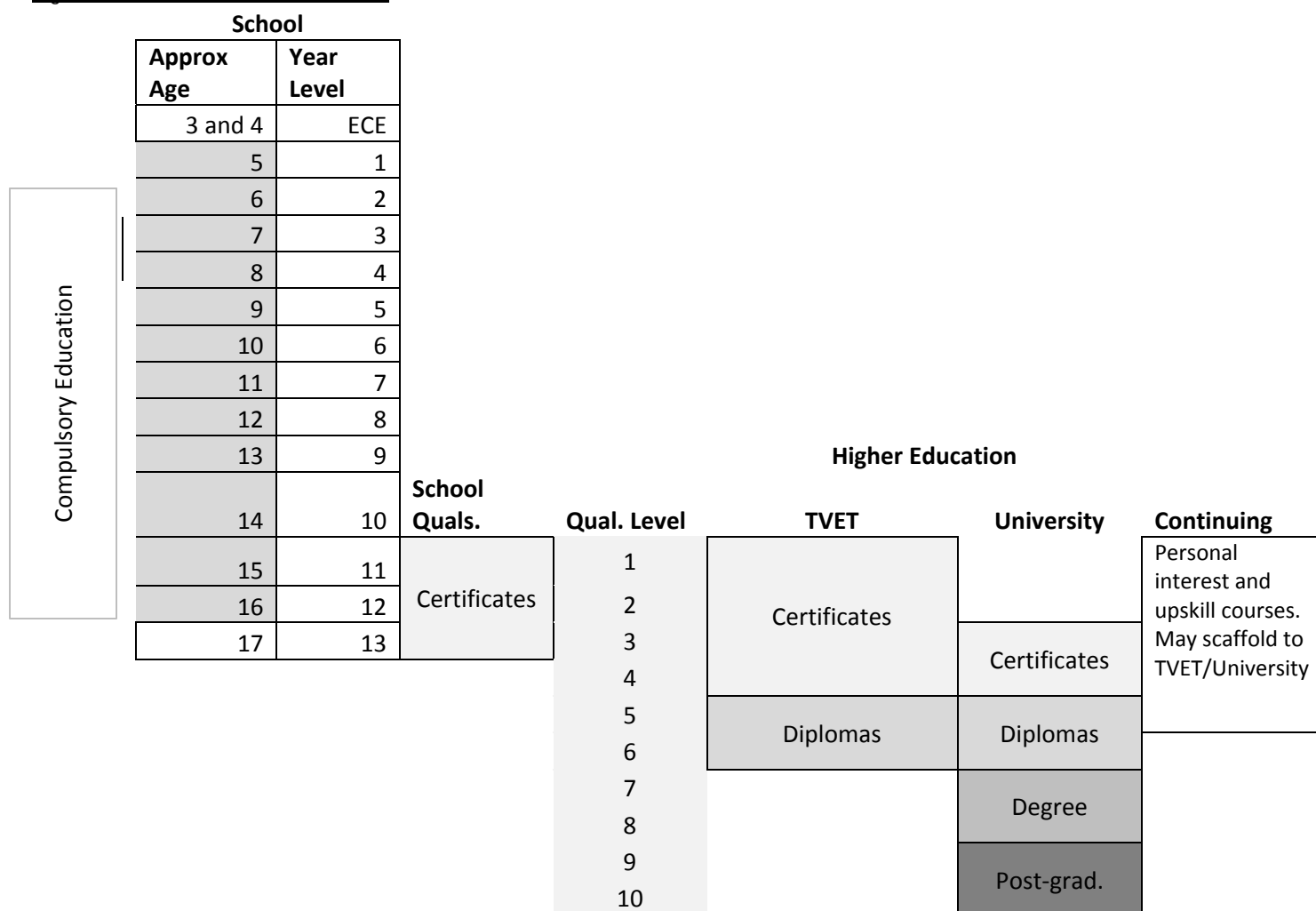
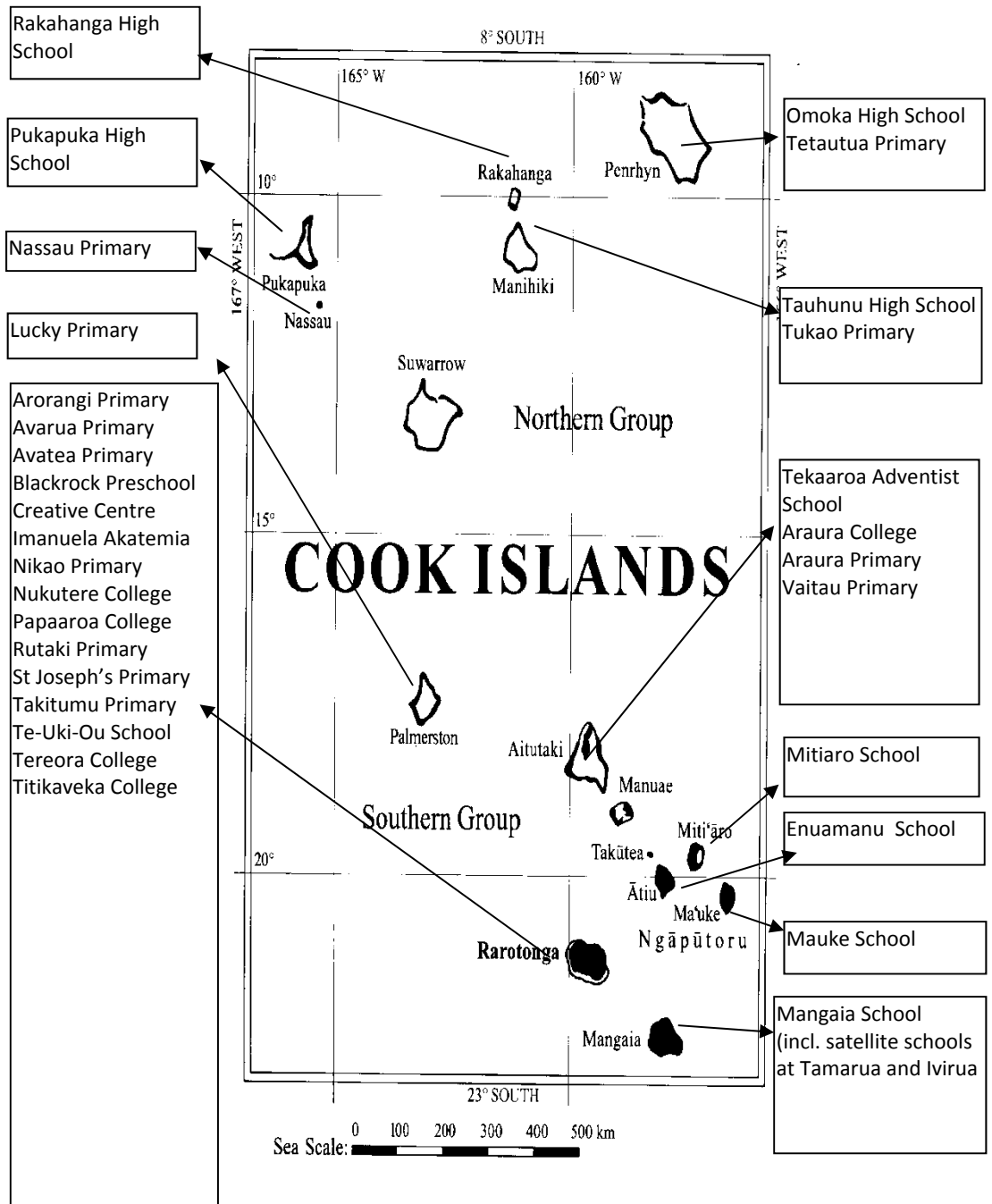
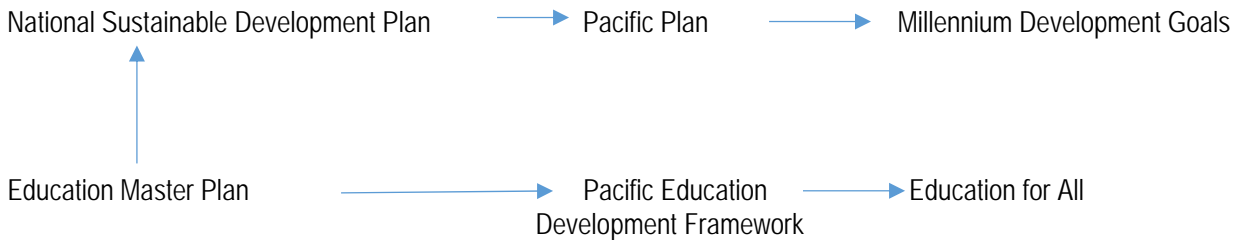


Figure 1.2 The Geographical Spread of Schools in the Cook Islands.



1.2.1 The Education Sector and EFA

Education responds to a number of linked documents at a sector, national, regional and international level as shown below:



Rather than a separate plan for the implementation and achievement of EFA, this is reflected in the Education Master Plan. The Education Master Plan, its development and links to EFA are discussed further in the next chapter.

The Cook Islands Education Guidelines and the Cook Islands Administration Guidelines provide schools with statements of purpose and the intent and focus areas for policy development. These guidelines provide the mandate for schools to develop policies that meet the needs, and provide opportunities that are appropriate to each local community while still contributing to the overall goals of education in the Cook Islands. The Cook Islands Curriculum Framework is the basis for learning and teaching programmes in Cook Islands schools. This framework identifies eight essential learning areas, eight essential skills and a number of values and attitudes that schools should work to include in their learning and teaching programmes in partnership with the local community.

The Ministry of Education as the agency responsible for implementing and coordinating EFA is cognizant of the following stakeholder relationships:

| Key Stakeholders | Considerations in EFA |
|---|--|
| 1. Learners, schools, providers and their communities | Accessible and quality educational programmes and outcomes from 3 years of age including early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Competency in literacy and numeracy, culturally relevant and innovative curriculum. Skilled teaching professionals, managers and leaders. Continuing education and training opportunities, career guidance and pathways. |
| 2. Employers – government and private sector | Ensuring that training programmes develop people who have credible and fit for purpose qualifications, skills for the labour market and are work ready employees. Access to ongoing training for employees at all levels with suitable delivery methods. Value for money training opportunities. Consult with and be responsive to labour market needs including the use of Industry Advisory Boards. |
| 3. Other Government agencies | Informed, reliable and quality policy advice to the Minister Other Social Sector agencies eg Health, Culture, Internal Affairs (Youth, Disability) – coordinated support to programmes with overlapping outcomes e.g. health education, youth development. |
| 4. NGOs and CSOs eg youth, women, teacher organisations | Information on and access to support for their own programmes. Recognition and inclusion in consultation on educational priorities. |

Chapter 2: National Strategies and EFA

2.1 Jomtiem, 2000 and Today

After the 1990 World Conference on Education for all in Jomtiem there were a number of reviews undertaken and reports written on the education system in the Cook Islands. Many different projects and strategies were recommended. In 1996, the country went through an economic crisis followed by a period of significant reform. Over half the public service positions were disestablished including 17% of teaching positions, 29% of Ministry of Education administration positions and 54% of school ancillary staff. Teacher salaries were also cut by 15%. For the education sector, the downsizing resulted in improvements in efficiency and effectiveness that have been embedded and developed on further since that time. The vast majority of the reports on education developed post Jomtiem were developed by consultants, recruited and remunerated by donors. There was little local ownership and it would be difficult today to find staff within the Ministry who remember the reports or their recommendations. However, whether by design or accident, some of the ideas of these original plans were trialed. Many have since been further developed and incorporated into sector strategic planning (the Education Master Plan) and some have been disbanded. With high enrolment and participation since the late 1980s, focus has always been on quality rather than quantity, the ongoing development of teachers, curricula that meets the needs of students and ensuring equity across all learners.

In 2000, five strategies were set to address what were considered the priorities of Cook Islands education in the new decade. Although again these were developed by consultants, there did appear to be a greater level of local staff participation although no ToR or report on the methodology can be located. In the post 1990 reports, the need for a curriculum framework was raised. In 2000, curriculum diversification, update and resourcing was the first of the five new strategic priorities. In 2002, the new Cook Islands Curriculum Framework was launched. This moved from what had been a very prescriptive approach to a more open ended document giving flexibility to teachers in the contexts and approaches they used and allowed for integrated theme studies rather than individual subject teaching in the primary school. In the same year, a new secondary school qualifications framework was introduced which also created different pathways for secondary students to achieve qualifications and allowed for students working at different levels in different subject areas. The Curriculum Framework has again been reviewed in 2012/13 to ensure currency. The relevancy and quality of curricula is reflected in the Learning and Teaching focus area of the current Education Master Plan (EMP).

A second strategy referred to teacher competency. Professional standards have been developed for teachers at all levels and Principals. These are attested annually and registration is valid for three years before requiring renewal. A system of quality assurance and advice and guidance works to ensure that all professional staff and maintaining the relevant standards. The positional description for a teacher requires at least a first degree. In partnership with the regional university, all teachers who do not hold a degree are now on individual pathways to achieve this. The Ministry underwrites the cost of this programme. Many teachers have commenced post graduate studies and also receive some financial assistance towards this. Early Childhood Teachers have seen the biggest change. In 2000, it was identified that many teachers working at this level had trained as primary school teachers. No ECE specific training was offered in-country at that time. It was recognized that the approaches to ECE are quite different and that specialist training was required. An advisor within the Ministry was appointed to support this sector and the regional university again used to provide certificate, diploma and degree level training. ECE teachers gained pay parity with teachers of primary and secondary level in 2013. Teacher quality is reflected in the Infrastructure and Support focus area of the current EMP.

These first two strategies align to the third strategy of improved delivery and student learning. With teachers having greater flexibility in the use of the curriculum, classroom programmes can be developed that better respond to the interests and contexts of the learners. This improves engagement and therefore overall student learning. The improving of teacher qualifications and ongoing teacher professional development programmes have focused on pedagogy and shifting the mindset of teachers from transmission to facilitation. This will be an ongoing process moving forward.

The fourth strategy was based on the development of management and was also a recommendation of the post – Jomtien reports. In the 1990's this was seen as the strengthening of administrative management within the Ministry of Education. From 2000, school based management was identified as a priority and this continues today. From 2002 – 2007, three School Management Facilitators based at the Ministry of Education worked across all schools supporting planning and policy functions at the school level. This included school responses to the Cook Islands Administration Guidelines which outline the requirements for schools in the following areas:

- Curriculum and Delivery
- Documentation and Review
- Personnel
- Finance and Property
- Health and Safety
- Administration.

Since 2010, the Ministry has enrolled all teachers appointed to Principal positions in a programme for beginning Principals with the University of Auckland in New Zealand. Starting in 2014, identified middle managers have access to the "Aspiring Principals" programme. The quality of school management is currently addressed through the Infrastructure and Support focus area of the EMP.

The final strategy referred to the range and quality of secondary education. In the 1990s, the concern had been around access to secondary education for students in the more remote islands and the diversity of programmes available. From 2000, the emphasis was on the range of qualifications available. In the late 1990s, schools on four of the five inhabited southern group islands (not including Rarotonga) gained accreditation with the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. This meant that these schools could offer the same secondary school qualification as schools on Rarotonga and in New Zealand. Since then, population decline and decreasing cohort size (sometimes only 2 or 3 students per level) has made it difficult to sustainably offer a full range of qualifications and levels in these schools. Although all of these schools still offer the first level of qualification, subject choice is limited and higher levels not available on island. Students can take correspondence courses for subjects where a specialist teacher is not available to can shift to Rarotonga for the academic year and receive financial assistance to support their study.

Secondary schools on Rarotonga continue to offer a full range of subjects – the National College going through to the highest possible school qualification level (NCEA Level 3). Students have a range of options to choose from. A language and mathematics are compulsory with the Level 1 certificate only. Students can access technical and vocational courses as part of their school based qualification (see the Dual Pathways programme detailed later in this report).

For the north, Te Kura Uira (an online school launched in 2014) supports students who stay on their home island until Year 11 when they may also shift to Rarotonga to complete study. These students attend the local school and are part of the school community but do the majority of their lessons on-line with Rarotonga based tutors. A facilitator in their own school provides oversight and pastoral care. The access to and quality of programmes is currently addressed through the Learning and Teaching focus area of the EMP.

Many of the challenges identified in the 1990's and early 2000's are still challenges today. The recruitment of teachers for specialist subjects at the senior secondary school and fiscal constraints on operational expenditure are both still issues. The Ministry has introduced a programme that allows for concurrent training of people with specialist knowledge but no teacher training in the community so that they can commence teaching with a reduced timetable and undertake pedagogical training at the same time. Fiscal constraints and decreasing government appropriation to education continue. The education sector however has moved from a project to multi-year targeted budget support model from our main donor which adds a level of flexibility and sustainability to programme funding. The challenge of meeting the needs of teachers and students on the outer islands has increased over the period of EFA. Flights to the outer islands have decreased in frequency and overhead costs have increased. With smaller cohorts, many classes are now multi-level and the Ministry will need to address the teacher development needs that this raises.

2.2 The Education Master Plan and EFA

As introduced in Chapter 1, the education sector in the Cook Islands responds to a number of national, regional and international mandates. The focus for Education is the Education Master Plan. Approved by Cabinet in 2008, this plan is supported by a set of strategic policies and a Monitoring and Evaluation framework. Whilst the development of the plan was grounded locally, cognizance of EFA and coverage of its intended outcomes were considered. The following table helps to summarise the EMP and its linkages to EFA.

Table 2.1 The Cook Islands Education Master Plan and EFA

| Focus Area | Intent | Related Goals | Linkages to EFA | Supporting Strategies |
|--------------------------------|--|---|---|--|
| Taku Ipukarea Kia Rangatira | For education to develop a strength in Maori language, culture, perspectives and aspirations and provide a firm foundation for engagement with the wider world | Improved Maori literacy at all levels Relevant learning and teaching styles and methods for Cook Islands classrooms are identified and developed Develop as a centre of excellence for all things Cook Islands. | Goal 2 UBE/Goal 5 Literacy Goal 6 Quality Goal 6 Quality | Identify the best approaches to learning and teaching for all learners in the Cook Islands Develop and produce resources across all essential learning areas in Maori (the national language) Maximise the role of Cook Islanders as regional and global citizens through high level participation in international programmes Provide opportunities for every island to be actively involved in learning programmes on language & culture Create programmes that attract people to study in the Cook Islands. |
| Learning and Teaching | Equitable access to quality learning and the experience of success through a range of programmes that meet individual needs and celebrate individual talents. | Equitable access for all learners to quality learning programmes Improved literacy and numeracy outcomes for all learners Increased enrolment in ECE Centres Increased access to vocational courses at senior level Systems that enhance student wellbeing Significantly increased participation in tertiary education Increased number of accredited institutions and courses available in country | Goal 6 Quality Goal 2 UBE/Goal 5 Literacy Goal 1 ECE Goal 3 Youth and Lifeskills Goal 2 UBE/ Goal 3 Youth, Adults and Lifeskills Goal 3 Youth, Adults and Lifeskills | Develop strategies that meet the professional needs of teachers in the northern group and other isolated practitioners Strengthen ECE Centres to offer high quality play based learning environments for children Produce appropriate culturally sensitive and gender inclusive/balanced resources Support inclusive education environments Develop strategies for distance education, isolated students, second chance learning and adult education Develop pastoral care and guidance systems Ensure high level of compliance with professional standards Develop, implement and resource an active tertiary sector within the Cook Islands |

| | | | | |
|----------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| Learning and Community | A high level of community involvement in determining quality educational outcomes. | Increased participation by parents in educational policy and decision making. Wide community support and understanding of inclusive education. Increased participation of the wider community in ongoing learning. | Goal 1 ECE/Goal 2 UBE Goal 2 UBE Goal 3 Youth, Adults and Lifeskills | Establish and resource community education centres and programmes Develop and implement programmes to engage parents in the education of children, especially in the early years Develop strategies/policy to support inclusive education, early intervention and transitional programmes Develop and implement Healthy Schools' programmes |
| Infrastructure and Support | The provision of appropriate legislation, research, guidelines and standards which support delivery and enhance opportunities for learning. | Adequate budget resource for education. High quality buildings, grounds and facilities Effective, well qualified and resourced teachers, administrators and support staff. High quality management systems. | Goal 6 Quality Goal 6 Quality Goal 6 Quality Goal 6 Quality. | Review the Cook Islands Education Act Develop strategies for the training, recruitment, evaluation, remuneration and retention of teachers Utilise audit processes to ensure quality, compliance and strategies for improvement Ensure disability access to all education buildings Provide for the establishment and resourcing of specialist areas eg ICT, Performing Arts Provide administrative support to learning centres |

How the strategies have been implemented and how this contributes towards the progress on individual goals of EFA will be discussed in the next chapter.

2.2.1 Policy Support for the EMP and EFA

There are five high level strategic policies that create the environment in which the EMP (and EFA) can be achieved. These policies are:

- Akonoanga Maori
- Equity, Access and Participation
- Quality and Relevance
- Community, Communications and Partnerships
- Governance and Management

These are summarized along with their link to EFA in the table below:

Table 2.2 Education Strategic Policies and their links to EFA

| Policy | Intent | Strategic Objectives | Links with EFA | Other supporting policy |
|-----------------|--|---|---|--|
| Akonoanga Maori | Cook Island learners develop a clear sense of their own local cultural identity, built on a strong foundation of their own culture, language and spirituality, with a deep pride in their own values, traditions and wisdoms which are both protected and transmitted effectively to future generations. | <p>Ensure the quest for successful New Zealand-type schooling does not lead to the demise of Cook Islands culture and heritage.</p> <p>That the cultural values, identity, traditional knowledge and language of the Cook Islands peoples are recognised, celebrated and protected by integrating aspects of it into the content of what is presented to learners at all levels of education.</p> <p>Schools safeguard the self-confidence of learners and their pride and security in their own language and culture which are integral to the development of a positive sense of self and group identities. Improved Maori literacy at all levels of education.</p> <p>Relevant learning and teaching styles and methods identified and developed.</p> <p>Develop a centre of excellence for all things Cook Islands.</p> <p>Ensure the knowledge of traditional sustainable practice and customs are continued to strengthen and establish sustainable resource and environmental protection by all Cook Islanders. That Cook Islands culture is a key driver in establishing positive relations with the rest of the world. Cook Islands culture and traditional performing arts provide worthwhile opportunities for employment and national economic development.</p> | <p>Goal 2 UBE/Goal 4 Literacy</p> <p>Goal 6 Quality</p> <p>Goal 6 Quality</p> <p>Goal 2 UBE/Goal 3 Youth, Adults and Lifeskills</p> | Cook Islands Curriculum Framework (Languages/Arts) Development Sabbatical Policy Maori Language Framework |

| Policy | Intent | Strategic Objectives | Links with EFA | Other supporting policy |
|----------------------------------|---|---|--|---|
| Equity, Access and Participation | All people living in the Cook Islands, regardless of social, cultural, economic, intellectual or physical status, will have access to, and be able to participate in quality, appropriate and timely educational experiences which will enable them to realise their full potential, enjoy a quality lifestyle and contribute to Cook Islands society in a meaningful way. | <p>Ensure that all education programmes are accessible to the widest possible range of stakeholders.</p> <p>Support specialised programmes where necessary to increase participation of under-represented groups.</p> <p>To consider the different needs of the wider community in the development of a range of educational programmes.</p> <p>Ensure that learning environments meet the needs of learners.</p> | <p>Goal 2 UBE/Goal 3 Youth, Adults and Lifeskills</p> <p>Goal 2 UBE/Goal 3 Youth, Adults and Lifeskills</p> <p>Goal 3 Youth, Adults and Lifeskills/ Goal 6 Quality</p> <p>Goal 2 UBE/Goal 3 Youth, Adults and Lifeskills/ Goal 6 Quality</p> | <p>Lifeskills</p> <p>Inclusive Education Policy</p> <p>Fitness of Purpose Polciy</p> <p>Pa Enua Students Education Assistance Policy</p> <p>Continuing Education Policy</p> |
| Quality and Relevance | Education in the Cook Islands will consistently demonstrate standards of excellence. High quality of learning is achieved through the provision of sufficient qualified teachers, administrators and support staff. Relevant national curricula and programmes will be supported by modern, relevant teaching and learning materials and facilities, and high standards of student literacy and numeracy. A culture of evaluation and quality assurance will promote ongoing development. | <p>To improve quality at all levels of education by:</p> <p>Provision of an appropriate number of effective, qualified teachers, administrators and support staff in the education sector.</p> <p>Development and maintenance of high quality approaches to learning and teaching based on pedagogical best practice.</p> <p>Development, distribution and use of relevant, high quality and current national and local provider learning programmes.</p> <p>Provision of an adequate current, relevant teaching and learning infrastructure and resources.</p> <p>Targeted professional development for all education sector staff.</p> <p>Monitoring and assessment of standards of student literacy and numeracy and students' progress in other learning areas and programmes.</p> <p>Developing and resourcing efficient and effective tertiary education within the Cook Islands.</p> <p>Effective overall monitoring and evaluation systems.</p> | <p>Goal 6 Quality</p> <p>Goal 6 Quality</p> <p>Goal 6 Quality</p> <p>Goal 6 Quality</p> <p>Goal 6 Quality</p> <p>Goal 6 Quality</p> <p>Goal 3 Youth, Adults and Lifeskills</p> <p>Goal 6 Quality</p> | <p>Teacher Professional Standards</p> <p>Monitoring and Evaluation Framework</p> <p>Annual Statistics Report</p> <p>Fitness of Purpose Policy</p> |

| Policy | Intent | Strategic Objectives | Links with EFA | Other supporting policy |
|--|--|--|---|---|
| Community, Partnerships and Communications | The acceptance that everyone has a shared responsibility to education is practiced through creative and dynamic partnerships with learners, family, educators, the wider community and other partners sharing knowledge and expertise with each other to produce higher educational achievement and individual success. | <p>Increased participation by parents in education policy and decision-making.</p> <p>Wide community support and understanding of inclusive education.</p> <p>Increased participation of the wider community in ongoing learning.</p> <p>Maximise the role of Cook Islanders as regional and as global citizens through high level participation in international programmes.</p> <p>High level of national/community understanding and support for education initiatives.</p> <p>Enhanced regional and international reputation for Cook Islands education sector.</p> <p>Valid and reliable information is available to all stakeholders with which to make informed decisions</p> <p>Regular community consultation occurs to ensure and understanding, acceptance and support for education approaches and systems.</p> | <p>Goal 2 UBE</p> <p>Goal 2 UBE/ Goal 6 Quality</p> <p>Goal 6 Quality</p> <p>Goal 6 Quality</p> | <p>Communication Strategy</p> <p>Inclusive Education Strategy</p> <p>School Committee Handbook</p> |
| Governance and Management | There will be responsive, participatory and accountable systems of educational governance and management in place along with issues and operational policies which translate the objectives contained within the EMP into effective education programmes. To achieve this sound planning processes, both short and long-term, will be established. A process of monitoring and evaluating programmes and outcomes will ensure that decisions are informed and evidenced based. | <p>The desired objectives of strong governance and management structures and processes include:</p> <p>Quality administration and delivery of education which includes a philosophy of continual monitoring, evaluation, development and improvement.</p> <p>Maximising student achievement.</p> <p>Efficiency and effectiveness of resource use.</p> <p>National and international recognition.</p> <p>Effective and efficient financial processes that result in unqualified audit reports.</p> <p>Opportunities to enhance human resources development.</p> <p>Fulfilment of objectives fixed by law.</p> <p>Use of tenets such as ethics, citizenship, sustainable production and reduction of environmental risks.</p> <p>Coherence of all formal learning.</p> <p>Shared vision and harmonisation at all levels of the sector.</p> <p>Sound health and safety protocols across the sector for all stakeholders</p> | <p>Goal 6 Quality</p> <p>Goal 6 Quality</p> <p>Goal 6 Quality</p> <p>Goal 6 Quality</p> <p>Goal 6 Quality</p> <p>Goal 6 Quality</p> <p>Goal 6 Quality</p> <p>Goal 2 UBE/ Goal 6 Quality</p> | <p>Monitoring and Evaluation Handbook</p> <p>Administration Guidelines (for schools)</p> <p>Code of Conduct (Review Officers)</p> <p>Professional Development Systems</p> |

Chapter 3: The Achievement of EFA Goals in the Cook Islands



3.1 Early Childhood Education

Measuring progress towards EFA Goal 1: Expanding and improving comprehensiveness of early childhood care and education especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

Links to the Cook Islands Education Master Plan:

Focus Area: Learning and Teaching

- *Increased enrolment in ECE Centres*

Focus Area: Learning and the Community

- *Actively involving parents in the education of their children*
- *Early intervention diagnostic programmes for young children.*

3.1.1 Legislation and Mandating Documents

Te Kura Apii a te Tamariki Potiki o te Kuki Airani is the official curriculum document for Early Childhood Education in the Cook Islands. It mandates a play based approach to ECE around the elements of identity, inquiry and involvement. Legislation (Education Act 2012) defines and creates access for ECE which, whilst not compulsory, is government funded from the age of 3. ECE remains a focus for the Ministry through to 2015. The Planning and Development Division of the Ministry has established ECE specific quality assurance indicators and there are separate professional standards against which ECE teachers are attested. As of July 1st 2013, ECE teachers have pay parity with teachers of primary and secondary school.

3.1.2 ECE Participation

Although enrolment rates nationally suggest a high uptake of education at this level, disaggregation shows pockets of the population where ECE is not being accessed. This was particularly noticeable in the smaller more isolated communities (population and cohort size so small (<10) that GER/NER comparison distorts results). The Ministry has addressed this through parental education programmes, specific media campaigns eg national radio talkback sessions and individual community based responses eg home visits. Te Kakaia, the parental education programme has been particularly engaging for parents of ECE aged children. This “toolbox” for parents has helped maximize and enhance parents’ knowledge, role and enjoyment of their child’s early years learning.

As well as addressing the areas of low enrolment, Te Kakaia has had a positive impact on parental involvement in ECE on the main island as well. Most centres on Rarotonga have experienced increased parental involvement due to parents understanding how children learn and how they can help their child. Parents changing attitudes and greater awareness of their children’s learning needs, saw them questioning teachers about what was going on in the classroom and with their child. Whilst challenging for some teachers, this level of interest from parents is promising as there is a strong belief in the correlation of parental involvement and positive outcomes for children at this age. As a result of this increased interaction, some teachers also became involved in small scale action research in their centres which was shared with parents.

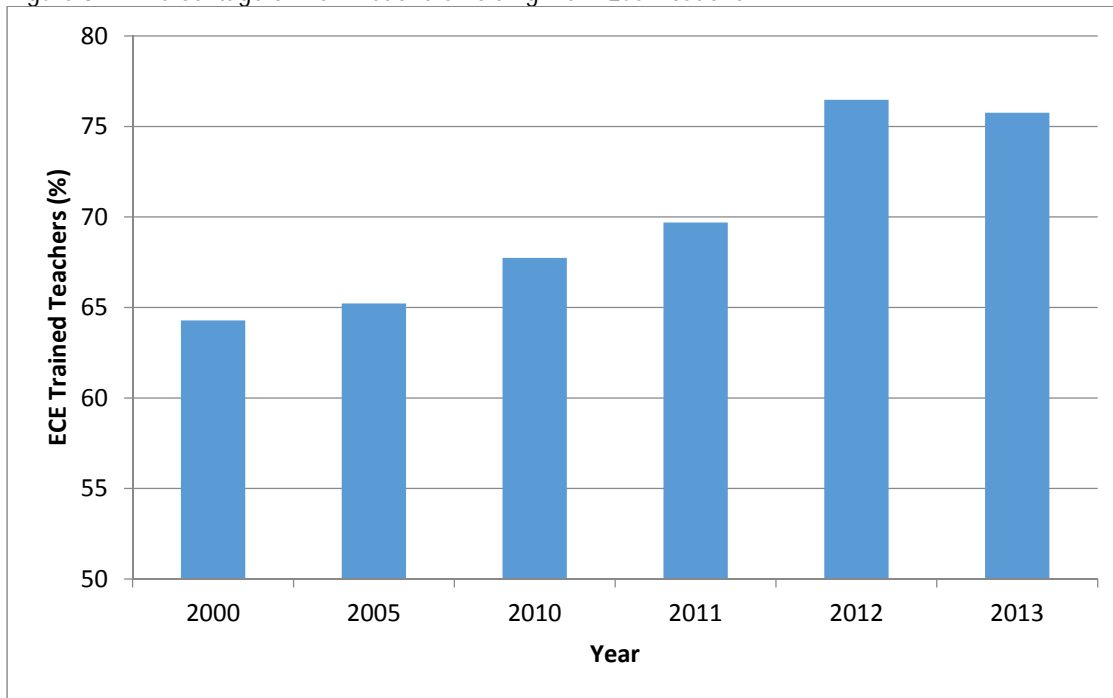
The 2012 change in legislation has had a short term impact on GER (98% in 2012 and 84% in 2013) due to an increase in eligibility that has not yet been fully utilized by all communities. The continuing community education on the changes and engagement with parents should address this over the next 18-24 months.

3.1.3 ECE Teachers

Considerable investment has been made into ECE specific training and upgrading the qualifications of teachers. Historically, ECE centres were staffed either by teachers with primary teaching qualifications or by ancillary staff who had shown an interest and willingness to take these duties on. With the introduction of the curriculum document and change in approach to ECE the expectation of the Ministry of teachers in this area also changed to specific ECE training and qualifications.

The minimum expectation of ECE teachers is now the Certificate in Early Childhood Education and all ECE teachers are expected to be studying towards a degree in Education specific to ECE. The Ministry support this study through the payment of university tuition fees and text books as well as coordinating intensive summer school programmes with the university to help teachers reach diploma and then degree level status.

Figure 3.1.1 Percentage of ECE Teachers holding ECE Qualifications



There are still a small number of teachers (8) teaching in ECE with qualifications in primary teaching. These teachers tend to be older and by natural attrition will leave the system and be replaced by those with ECE specific training.

As noted earlier, there are specific professional standards for ECE teachers. These cover the following dimensions:

- Learning and Teaching
- Learning and Environment
- Support for and cooperation with colleagues
- Contribution to wider ECE operations
- Administration

Each of these dimensions has identified standards and each standard a number of indicators of good practice against which teachers can self and peer appraise. All ECE teacher are expected to participate in performance management and professional development programmes. Teachers who are struggling to consistently meet the standards are supported through a period of advice and guidance to improve their practice.

There is a specialist ECE Advisor within the Learning and Teaching Division of the Ministry who provides professional development support to teachers. This includes networking meetings, cluster workshops and one-on-one support for teachers in their classrooms. Currently, this advisor is also on the Steering Committee of the Pacific Regional Council for Early Childhood Care and Education (PRCECCE) and the Pacific representative on the Asia-pacific Regional Network of Early Childhood (ARNEC).

3.1.4 Remaining Challenges

In the next five years, the following challenges have been identified for the Early Childhood Sector:

- Autonomy of ECE within primary and area schools
- Understanding by school principals and senior management of the special nature of ECE and its pedagogy
- Training of new ECE teachers (many are nearing retirement)
- Maintaining and resourcing high participation levels with the lowering of the age of eligibility

- Maintenance and enhancement of Centre infrastructure (especially as many are vulnerable to environmental changes)
- Additional and sustainable professional development support for ECE teachers

Case Study: Te Kakaia – supporting parents as leaders of their child's development.



Parents are the first teachers of their children and they can have a very strong impact on the early learning of their child and their later attitudes towards school and more formal education.

The Kakaia is a native bird of the Cook Islands. The metaphor of the Kakaia is used for this programme as the bird is one that nurtures its young in the nest for a long time. Care is shared between the male and female who take turns both incubating the egg and feeding the young terns on hatching.

The programme uses a “toolbox”, designed to provide parents with a range of positive parenting strategies that can be used at different phases of their child's life. The three different tool boxes cover the early years (0-6), middle years (7-12) and teens and tweens (13+). The toolboxes are introduced in community workshops and additional support can be provided through a one on one network with additional media campaigns to reiterate key messages of the programme.



The programme places an emphasis on practicing good behaviour at home from a very young age, building relationships and spending quality time together and setting consistent boundaries and easy to follow routines. All of this is underpinned by strengthening parents knowledge and understanding of the different stages of development that children go through.

Te Kakaia is supported by a fulltime employee in the Ministry who coordinates the programme in strong collaboration with community ante natal clinics and the Ministry's ECE Advisor.

3.2 Achieving Universal Basic Education

Measuring Progress towards EFA Goal 2: Ensuring that by 2015 all children have access to and complete free and compulsory education.

Links to Cook Islands Education Master Plan:

Focus Area: Learning and Teaching

- *Equitable access for all learners to quality learning programmes*
- *Improved Literacy and Numeracy outcomes for all learners*

Focus Area: Learning and the Community

- *Increased participation by parents in education policy and decision making*

Focus Area: Infrastructure and Support

- *Effective, well qualified and resourced teachers, administrators and support staff.*

3.2.1 Legislation and Mandating Documents

The Education Act (2012), requires the Crown to pay the cost of providing instruction, administration and facilities for a person's education at a government school for all Cook Islanders resident in the Cook Islands. The Act does allow the government to charge fees to international students at school in the Cook Islands. To date, as the majority of international students are the dependent children of contract workers in the country, the Ministry has chosen not to apply this provision. The Act also defines the period of compulsory education from the day at which a child turns 5 years old until the day on which they turn 16. Funding is available from age 3 for Early Childhood Education although this is not compulsory. Exemptions can be made for an earlier leaving age if a young person is moving to an apprenticeship or a recognized training programme.

There are no upper age limits for primary or secondary schooling. The Act explicitly states that a child is not exempted from schooling on the basis of learning or behavioural difficulties or, in the case of young female students, becoming pregnant.

The Equity, Access and Participation Strategic Policy of the Ministry of Education states that "equity, access and participation" means that all Cook Islanders, regardless of ability, gender, wealth, location, language or ethnic origin, will be able to participate in relevant, quality and appropriate learning experiences. It is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education (MoE) to provide such opportunities and mitigate any barriers to accessing them that may exist.

The policy has the following objectives:

- Ensure that all education programmes are accessible to the widest possible range of stakeholders.
- Support specialised programmes where necessary to increase participation of under-represented groups.
- To consider the different needs of the wider community in the development of a range of educational programmes.
- Ensure that learning environments meet the needs of learners.

These are also supported by the National Sustainable Development Plan, Te Kavienga Nui, which states a priority outcome as "A Cook Islands where all people who reside in our islands can enjoy opportunities to fulfil their potential, prosper and participate in the social, economic, political and cultural life of our communities and nation" (Cook Islands Government, 2005, pg 15).

It looks to achieve this through:

- Ensuring equitable access for all learners to quality learning programmes
- Enabling every young person to have access to the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills to gain qualifications that they need to contribute to the development of the Cook Islands.

As the minimum age at which a child may leave school in the Cook Islands is 16 and this would place most students in the first year of senior secondary school, universal basic education is considered to cover Primary as well as full lower and commencement of upper secondary. Therefore, all three of these levels is discussed in this section.

3.2.2 Mitigating Barriers

Geography

The challenges of meeting the needs of isolated students have already been raised in this report. With falling school rolls on smaller islands it becomes extremely difficult for the MoE to maintain student access to the same scope of subjects at a post primary level. A grant scheme allows for students who have completed the highest possible level of education on their home island to transfer to Rarotonga for senior secondary school. This grant includes travel costs and a small allowance paid to a host family on Rarotonga. This grant is accessed annually by between 40-50 students.

Correspondence School programmes from New Zealand had historically been utilised for students in isolated schools. Issues with this approach included the context of the learning and the timeliness of transport to get hard materials to and from the students concerned. Despite the goodwill and support of Te Aho o te Kura Pounamu in New Zealand, there was not a high level of success in terms of neither completion nor achievement using these programmes. The MoE is currently trialling *Te Kura Uira*. This is our e-learning school which offers a programme that allows teachers/tutors on the main island to teach groups of students on multiple other islands simultaneously through the use of skype. Locally developed resources are used and placed on line for students to access as part of their school timetable. Organised times are arranged for teachers and students to meet on line and discuss the learning that has occurred, provide clarification on issues encountered, and set new tasks. Each student group also has an on island support person who tracks their progress and meets their pastoral needs. Currently Te Kura Uira provides support in English, Maori, Mathematics, Social Sciences and Science. This initiative will be evaluated in late 2014 before being extended to other learning areas and islands. The opportunity to video conference would greatly increase the capacity of this programme. With video conferencing, quality of both visual and audio links would be improved.

To help maintain access and participation but also ensure quality, the MoE has created “satellite schools”. These are small units in isolated villages that offer programmes at reduced year levels eg ECE only or ECE – Year 3 with small numbers of students (generally less than 15). They come under the administration of a larger, more central school. A bus is provided to move older students to the larger school in a more central location on a daily basis. Whilst the satellite school serves its community and meets the needs of the very young, its association with a bigger school means it has direct access to support, higher levels of resourcing and provides the critical mass required for quality assurance.

Behaviours and Abilities

The Inclusive Education Policy of the MOE was implemented in 2002 and reviewed in 2011. This policy created a shift from “special needs” units to an inclusive approach. This means that children with particular learning and physical needs are, as much as possible, mainstreamed into school classrooms. Support is provided for the teacher and student through the use of Teacher Aides. Teacher Aides may provide one on one support to an individual child or support a small group within a class depending on the level of need. Teacher Aides have received specialist training, many gaining the NZQA recognised Certificate in Teacher Aiding. Teacher Aides are utilised at all levels of education from ECE through until the end of secondary schooling. There are over 40 Teacher Aides currently employed in Cook Islands Schools.

Assistive Technologies are also being utilized to meet the needs of these students. A range of netbooks, i-pads and other devices are loaded with suitable applications and integrated into the learning programmes of students requiring extra support. The intervention consists of the diagnosis of learning needs and provision of technology to support students who would otherwise struggle to participate in learning programmes. This service aims to ensure that the right students have the right technology at the right time to remove barriers to learning and raise achievement.

The Inclusive Education policy addresses the learning needs of students with physical, behavioural, developmental and intellectual difficulties as well as gifted children to ensure that all students have learning programmes that are developed to their needs and are resourced to support them achieve agreed goals.

Cost to Families

Education in a government school is “free” to the extent that there are no tuition or other fees that impact on an individual child’s access to a school. However, there are other costs involved that families need to meet. All schools have a uniform; there is a voluntary donation to the School Committee (Parents Association); and for senior secondary students, there are exam fees and in some subject areas additional resources that need to be purchased as part of a course. On the main island, there can also be transport costs to reach one of the two government secondary schools. Families are then often involved in fundraising activities such as raffles, school picnics etc where they may be expected to provide food or other resources to support the event. On average, this would be a cost to parents of between \$250 per year per child at a local primary school through to \$800 per year per child at a secondary school. With a GDP per capita of NZD 19,659 (MFEM, 2012) this cost may seem reasonable but for some families on lower incomes and with multiple school aged children, funding costs such as new uniform for all at the start of an academic year does create hardship. A child benefit of \$33 per fortnight is paid for all children between the ages of 1-12 which can go some way to support families but does not cover the ages of the more expensive upper secondary level student.

3.2.3 Transition between Levels of Education

Over the period of 2010-2014, the transition rate between primary and secondary education has averaged 98.5%. With education compulsory to the age of 16, we would expect to see a 100% transition. In the context of the cohort size, this 1.5% loss equates to no more than 3-4 students. With a highly mobile population, this could easily be explained by 2 families moving off shore. In many cases, such a high rate is facilitated as students actually stay in the same school on the same site for both primary and secondary education. Having schools on the same site, with the same management and teaching force, also allows for more efficient use of staff across levels of education.

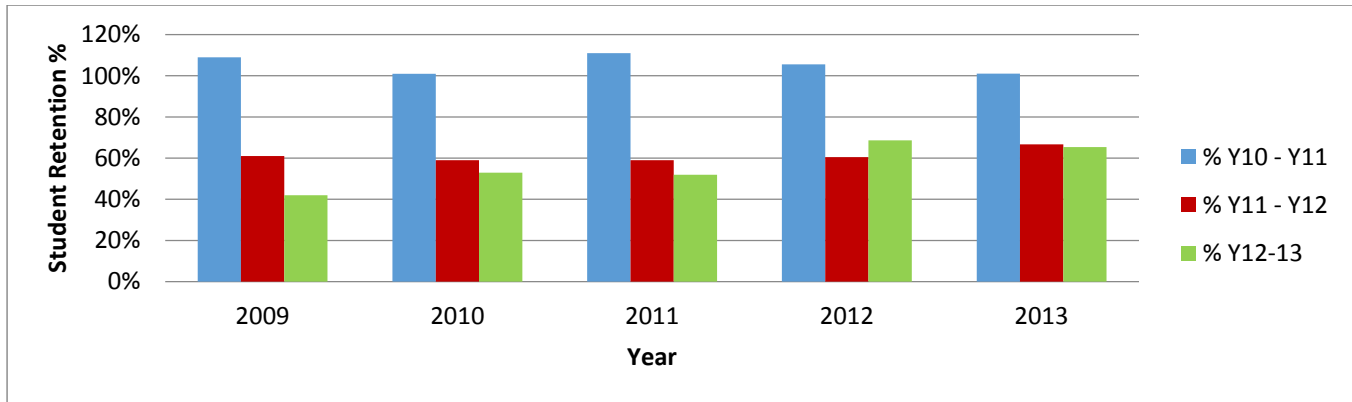
The transition rate from Year 10 to 11 (lower to upper secondary) often appears over 100%. This can occur because students reenter the system at upper secondary in order to meet the residency and attendance requirement to access University scholarships from Year 13. The qualifications pathway in upper secondary approximates one qualification per year as shown below (although the framework allows students to work in a subject at any qualification level that fits their ability in that subject).

Table 3.2.1 Year Level and Qualifications at Senior Secondary

| Year Level | Approximate Qualification |
|------------|---------------------------|
| Year 11 | NCEA Level 1 |
| Year 12 | NCEA Level 2 |
| Year 13 | NCEA Level 3 |

A number of students will leave school after the first or second year of upper secondary as these initial qualifications give them access to the workplace and tertiary vocational courses. The Ministry has identified completion of the NCEA Level 2 qualification as our target for school leavers and will need to work on achieving this through the range and quality of programmes it provides at senior secondary as discussed further in section 3.6 Quality Education.

Figure 3.2.1 Retention from Lower to Upper and through Upper Secondary



3.2.4 Education for Sustainable Development

The theme of sustainability covers a number of concepts for the Cook Islands. The Education Master Plan looks for sustainability through programmes that:

- enhance learning in language and culture
- celebrate, manage and protect the island environments of the Cook Islands
- develop livelihoods that encourage retention of population and build economic growth and opportunities.

A number of developments have helped to support the sustainability of Cook Islands language and culture. These include:

- Cook Islands Maori being legislated as an official language of the country (2005)
- The development of a diagnostic instrument in the different dialects of Cook Islands Maori for assessing and identifying the literacy levels of young children. This tool was introduced to schools in 2007
- A curriculum document for Maori language learning was developed for levels 1-8 (Year 1-13) and advisory staff employed and resourced to support its implementation in schools (2005)
- A specific position was created around language and research to look at the Cook Islands Maori language and also research pedagogy for first and second language learners (2012)
- Differentiated funding was introduced so that schools that run full immersion programmes for at least Year 1-3 receive additional funding to resource language learning
- Standards on traditional knowledge have been developed and registered and work in this area can be included in formal qualification programmes
- The Canoe is the People, is a UNESCO learning and teaching resource on traditional voyaging and navigation. The Cook Islands has worked extensively with the LINKS Centre of UNESCO on the development of this resource and its use with teachers. This is now being introduced Pacific wide.

The sustainability of our natural environment is well covered in both the Science and Social Science curriculum documents. There are also many NGO groups involved in programmes for environmental sustainability. These include youth programmes such as the Mangaia Rangers and organized activities through NGOs such as the Girl Guides and Boys Brigade. The Cook Islands has been actively involved in the UNESCO Sandwatch Programme and many activities from this are successfully integrated into school programmes under these two curricula. The Ministry of Education in partnership with the National Environment Service and a regional NGO have also been working with teachers to produce contextualized resources that incorporate aspects of biodiversity and conservation into students learning. A similar approach has been taken with the government agency Emergency Management Cook Islands to introduce students to concepts around disaster risk reduction and mitigation.

At the other end of the learning spectrum, a new development in Early Childhood Education sees the youngest Cook Islanders caring for and sourcing from an organically grown vegetable garden based at their learning centre. This programme benefits these young learners through

- learning about planting and caring for gardens

- learning about planting for consumption
- the value of growing something that is economically more viable than buying
- developing respect for the environment

3.2.5 Remaining Challenges

In the next five years, the following challenges have been identified for the Universal Basic Education Sector:

- Continuing to develop, innovate and resource new ways in which to reach isolated learners
- To best exploit the opportunities of ICT to support learning
- To ensure gains made in increase of scope for senior secondary students are sustainable and meet the needs/interests of those learners
- To ensure student wellbeing systems identify and support students at risk to maintain their engagement with learning
- The recruitment of teachers for specialist subjects at the senior secondary school
- Creating pathways between formal education and the labour market

Case Study: Assistive Technologies

This programme utilizes technology to support students with specific learning needs to be able to access learning programmes that help them to develop to the best of their ability and be included in mainstream classrooms.

In 2012 an assistive technology framework and guidelines were drafted as part of the Inclusive Education initiative. This Assistive Technology service is not simply a mechanism for accessing resources and equipment. It is essentially an assessment and problem solving process designed to overcome barriers to students' learning and participation.

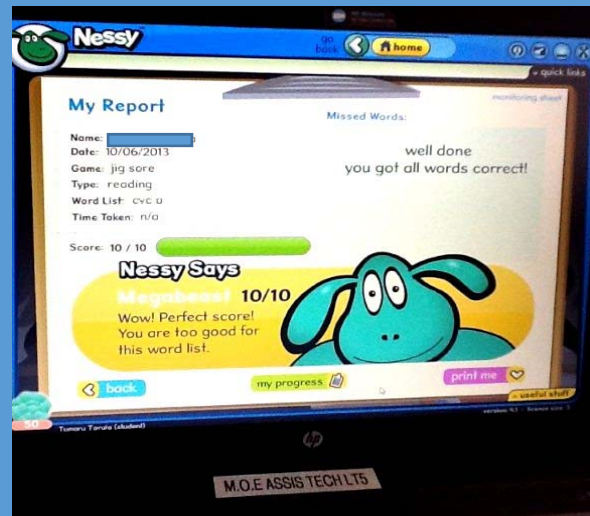
The aim of the initiative has been to provide assistive technology to enhance performance of students with special educational needs by overcoming specific barriers in three areas: presence, participation (engagement) and learning.

Most students have been identified, by teachers, their families, inclusive education advisor/ other agencies, as having needs that are not being met within the existing classroom programme. These students typically have needs within the following categories: physical, sensory, mental health, learning difficulties.

Initially classroom and curriculum adaption is tried and an appropriate individual education or developmental plan is implemented. If very little or no progress is made and low technology assistance has been unsuccessful then the assistive technology process is carried out. To date, students where assistive technology has been implemented have demonstrated the following outcomes:

- *Students at the upper level of primary age are engaged and participating and are no longer truant from school*
- *Significant progress in literacy levels of achievement as well as self-confidence and noticeable improvement of self-esteem within students.*
- *Students are given the opportunity to self-assess and to monitor their progress.*
- *Students are demonstrating achievement in a range of ways.*

Currently, over 40 devices are being used to support of learning of young people



3.3 Meeting the Needs of Youth and Adults

Measuring progress towards EFA Goal 3: Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes

Links to the Cook Islands Education Master Plan

Focus Area: Learning and Teaching

Increased access to vocational courses at senior levels

Systems that enhance student wellbeing

The underpinning theme of the Education Master Plan is *Learning for Life*. The intention is for the phrase to be read in two different ways; learning for life – the learning that you need to do to be successful in your life and have the life style of your choice and learning for life – that learning continues throughout your whole life.

The Ministry of Education has taken a number of approaches to this area, these include

- life skills programmes
- school guidance and careers advisory services
- enhanced TVET and tertiary provision
- specific programmes for isolated youth

3.3.1 Legislation and Mandating Documents.

The Education Act 2012 makes the minimum school leaving age 16 years old. There may be exemptions for students on home schooling programmes or those from age 15 moving to a recognised training programme. There is no upper age limit to education and the Crown must pay the cost of providing instruction, administration and facilities for a person's education at a government school. In this context, school means an institution that offers any or all of education at ECE, primary or secondary level.

Vocational Training is currently able through the Cook Islands Tertiary Training Institute (previously a Trades School and Hospitality School under the Department of National Human Resources Development). This Institute responds to the overarching goals of the EMP and utilises a National Tertiary Strategy including community outreach, internships and apprenticeships to guide the modalities of provision. There is also a Cook Islands Campus of the University of the South Pacific (a regional University).

3.3.2 School Guidance and Careers Advisory services

The Ministry of Education employed its first Guidance Facilitator in 2005 and now has three full time positions. Guidance Counsellors provide formal assistance to individuals and their families as well as oversight of whole school guidance systems that support student wellbeing. Such systems include form and house teachers, deans, senior student peers etc. Systems are put in place to ensure that students have an environment that is physically, emotionally, socially and culturally safe.

Careers education programmes were first introduced to schools in 1999. These programmes are to provide students with opportunities to investigate career families and pathways. The programmes also provide students many opportunities to develop skills in information literacy, problem solving and communication as they reflect on their own interests and consider possible future careers. An itinerant Careers Advisor works one on one with senior secondary students scaffolding them through developing their own responses to career and further study questions. An annual Careers Expo is held and senior students also have the opportunity for attachments to gain “work experience” in the sector they are considering pursuing in terms of work or further study.

3.3.3 The Lifeskills Programme

This programme is for the benefit of secondary school students on all outer islands. This project aims to provide vocation, transitional and lifeskills to students in order to expand their curriculum; to provide face-to-face, practically orientated learning opportunities; to increase student retention especially for boys; and to involve skilled community members in schools as

educators on a paid basis. The strength of the Lifeskills programme is its flexibility and adaptability to meet the needs, requirements and available resource of each individual outer island. The subject of the course depends on the needs of students as well as skills available in each community.

Funding for this programme is from the Ministry’s personnel budget and is based on the enrolment levels and numbers of the schools concerned. Schools apply to the Ministry for course approval by describing course objectives, delivery and methods of evaluation for each course, keeping in mind that the teaching and learning is informal and “hands on”.

Ultimately, as these courses develop, they will also be linked to qualification credits for students. This can be achieved in a number of ways including partnerships with the Trades Faculty of the Cook Islands Tertiary Training Institute, apprenticeship models and increasing the scope of schools’ accreditation. The programme must continue to be very flexible so that each island can use it to meet its own needs and utilise its own resources.

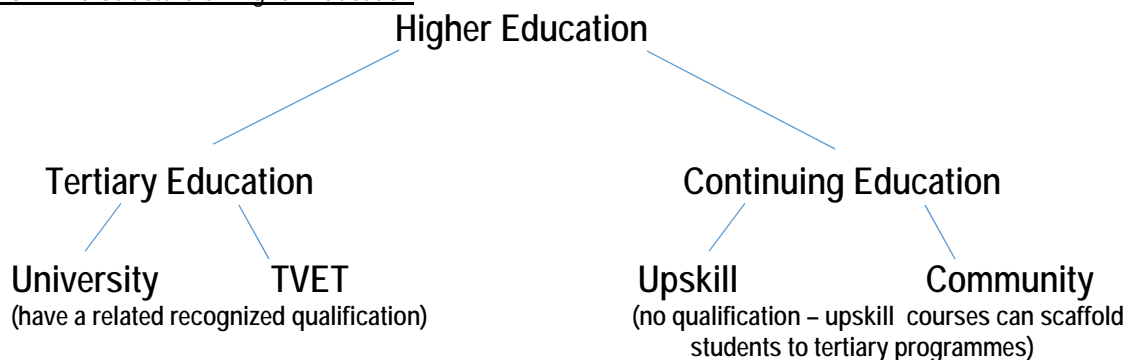
Table 3.3.1 Lifeskills Programmes in School 2011-2013

| Course type | Craft | Fabric & Design | Cooking Baking | Oratory Music Composition | Carpentry | First Aid | Turtle Project (Conservation) | Automotive | Netmaking |
|-------------------|-------|-----------------|----------------|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------------------------|------------|-----------|
| Number of Courses | | | | | | | | | |
| 2011 | | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | |
| 2012 | 2 | 2 | | 2 | 2 | | | 2 | |
| 2013 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | | | 6 | 6 |

3.3.5 Access to Higher Education

A variety of pathways exist for Higher Education in the Cook Islands as shown below. Continuing Education will be outlined further in the discussion on Goal 4.

Figure 3.3.2 The Structure of Higher Education

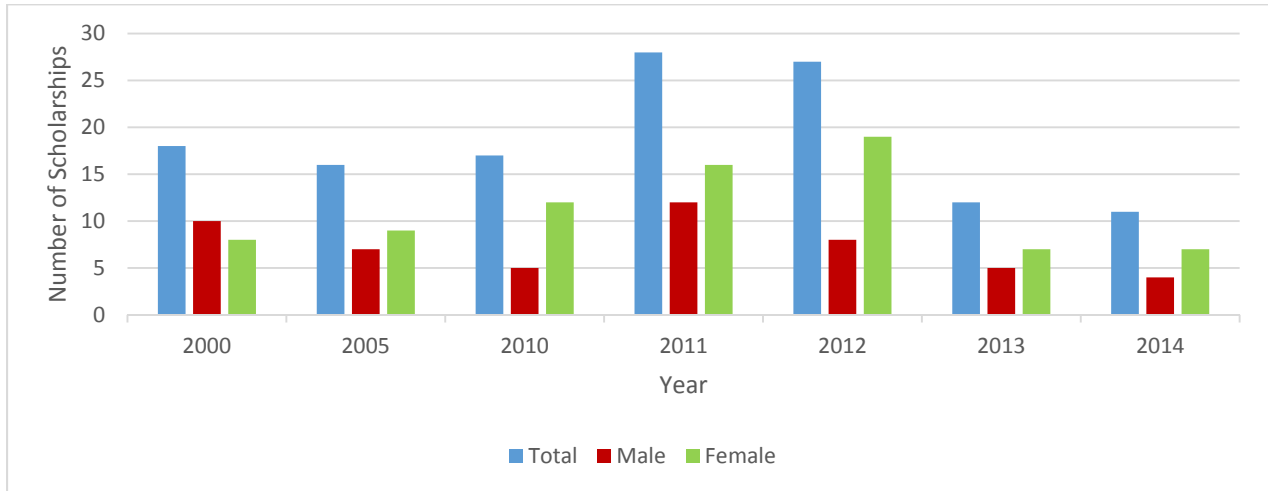


Young Cook Islanders have a number of options for tertiary education. There is the USP Centre through which programmes up to degree level may be accessed by distance as well as through a number of summer and winter schools. There is a well patronised Cook Islands Tertiary Training Institute with a Trades and Technology Faculty offering courses in electrical, carpentry, automotive engineering, plumbing and small machine maintenance; a Hospitality Faculty offering programmes in Culinary Arts, Food and Beverage and other related service programmes; and a Hair and Beauty Centre to meet the training needs of that sector.

A number of scholarships are also offered each year for university study. Some of these are funded by donors and others by the Cook Islands government. They generally provide access to regional institutes such as the University of the South Pacific or Fiji National University, or through to New Zealand institutions. The vast majority of Cook Islanders also hold New Zealand

passports (an agreement as part of the “special relationship” between the two countries), which means they may enrol at any New Zealand institution for tertiary study and receive financial support through the New Zealand student loan system. Whilst the Ministry currently tracks scholarship and short term training attachment progress, we are not always aware of students studying independently in New Zealand.

Figure 3.3.3 Scholarships Awarded by Gender



Short term training attachments are also available for a period of up to 12 months. These attachments take place with training providers/workplaces in New Zealand. Recipients are generally people currently fully employed who are given leave of absence to undertake specific tasks related training. These cover a wide range of industries including; Airport Safety, Baking (Fine Foods), Disabilities, Information Technology, Parliamentary Hansard Reporting, Health (Laboratory) and Border Management. A breakdown by gender of recipients in recent years is shown below:

Figure 3.3.4 Short Term Training Attachments by Gender



3.3.6 Meeting the Needs of Youth in the Pa Enuā

Through the Cook Islands Tertiary Training Institute (CITTI), the Ministry is putting programmes in place to provide ongoing learning opportunities for young people on their own more isolated islands (the Pa Enuā). The philosophy of CITTI in relation to the Pa Enuā is to retain youth on-island by providing a range of on-island training opportunities. When deciding on the programmes to be offered on each island, both the community plans and priorities and individual learner interest inform the training options for that island. The educational and training programmes should integrate indigenous cultural values with 21st century skills using project-based, place-based and e-learning opportunities. Each island in the Pa Enuā has its own unique strengths and resources. Tertiary education will capitalize on the strengths of the on-island youth, community and natural resources.

The programmes target both youth and adult learners in the community. Current certificate level programmes being offered include:

- CITTI Certificate in Applied Trades and Skills (CAPS). Trades training has been identified as a need and an area of interest among youth on all the islands in the Pa Enuā. This includes practical hands-on training in automotive, carpentry and electrical programmes run through the government infrastructure work sites. Theoretical training is provided via online support from the Trades Faculty in Rarotonga.
- CITTI Certificate of Achievement in Culture & Arts with specializations such as vaka (traditional canoe) building.
- CITTI Certificate of Achievement in Computing and Enterprise Studies, which includes online enterprise course study, lifeskills and on-site training placement.
- CITTI Certificate in Employment & Training. This programme includes online-course study with on-site training and placement.

The physical distance and access to infrastructural support is a challenge for these programmes. Ensuring the work site training is adequately supported and supervised, and that the supervisors themselves are supported in what tends to be a new role, is also important. Each island community presents its own unique range of priorities and interests generally determined by the underpinning economic activity of that island.

The multi-faceted position of “learning broker” has been created on the islands involved in the programme. This person has the responsibility of supporting educational and employment opportunities for the youth and second-chance learners by making and supporting the connections between the learner, the workplace and relevant training.

3.3.7 Apprenticeships

Apprenticeship programmes provide learning opportunities through partnerships between CITTI as a learning provider, and a range of Cook Islands private sector employers. As an assistance mechanism, this programme focuses on retaining young people in learning while providing work experience and a basic income. All apprenticeships have a relevant internationally recognized qualification attached. In addition, they are a tool for building a stronger relationship between the education and private sectors as an example of a PPP.

3.3.8 Remaining Challenges

In the next five years, the following challenges have been identified for meeting the needs of youth:

- improving connections between learning and employment, especially in the Pa Enuā
- consolidating life skills and academy courses
- ensuring IT infrastructure and capacity to support learning programmes
- build clearer focus of scholarships on the human resources development needs of the country

Case Study: Senior Secondary Academies



The senior secondary academies are a range of courses available at senior secondary level that provide students with the opportunity to gain both school based and vocational qualifications. Developing from the “dual pathways programme” which allowed students to gain some credits towards vocational programmes whilst at school, the academies work at a higher level and with more focus on the vocational pathway. Students spend most of their day in their academy subject stream but still take two or three other subjects as well.

The academies help to break down the walls between schools, education and the workplace, recognizing that learning happens in a variety of environments and is not the sole domain of the Ministry of Education. They provide students with real life working experience and help improve engagement and retention at senior secondary level. Students in the academies self-select and tend to be those not looking for the traditional school subjects. All students in the academies are still required to do literacy and numeracy programmes. Different groups of students within the academies may be on slightly different programmes depending on what they have identified as their goals and intended next steps. All students are on a pathway to the National Certificate in Educational Achievement and a relevant vocational qualification, with some students also on programmes that will make them eligible to gain the NZ University Entrance qualification.

Currently academy programmes are available in Horticulture, Hospitality, Building and Construction, Business, Trades (Electrical and Automotive), Sports and Performing Arts.

3.4 Adult Literacy

Measuring progress towards EFA Goal 4: achieving a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.

Links to the Cook Islands Education Master Plan:

Focus Area: Taku Ipukurea Kia Rangatira

- Improved Maori literacy at all levels of education

Focus Area: Learning and Teaching

- Improved literacy and numeracy outcomes for all learners

Focus Area: Learning and the Community

- Increased participation of the wider community in ongoing learning

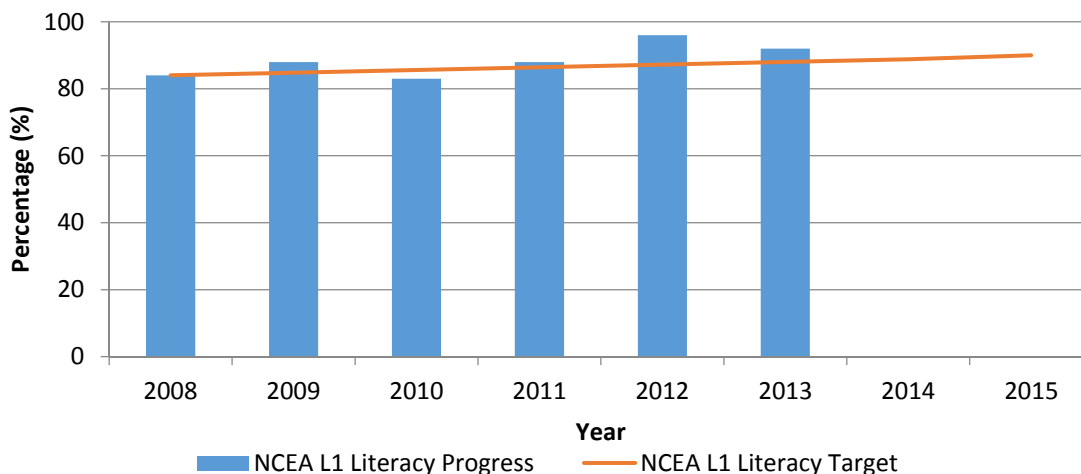
3.4.1 Legislation and Mandating Documents

The Cook Islands has very little information on adult literacy. Although some studies have been done on Cook Islanders migrating from the Cook Islands to New Zealand, this cannot be said to be representative of the current Cook Islands adult population. Anecdotally, the Cook Islands is seen as a highly literate community. Non-government organizations however, have brought to the Ministry's attention an identified small portion of the community, predominantly young males, who need further support in this area in order to make the most of other employment and training opportunities.

3.4.2 School Leavers' Literacy Levels

The minimum school leaving age in the Cook Islands is 16 years. At least 98% of students of this age are in a Year 11 programme which is the first year of senior secondary school. This is also the level when students will be assessed for national qualifications (NCEA) including a compulsory literacy requirement. This qualification provides an indication of youth literacy levels (89.4% of 16 year olds are in school). The literacy requirements of this qualification include the achievement of both reading and writing standards.

Figure 3.4.1 NCEA Level 1 Literacy Achievement.



The 5 yearly national census also provides information on years of schooling and school qualifications gained of the resident population. Although not a measure of literacy, these do give some indication as to the literacy of the population as proxy indicators.

Figure 3.4.2 Highest level of Schooling Completed: Resident Population 15 years and over by Gender

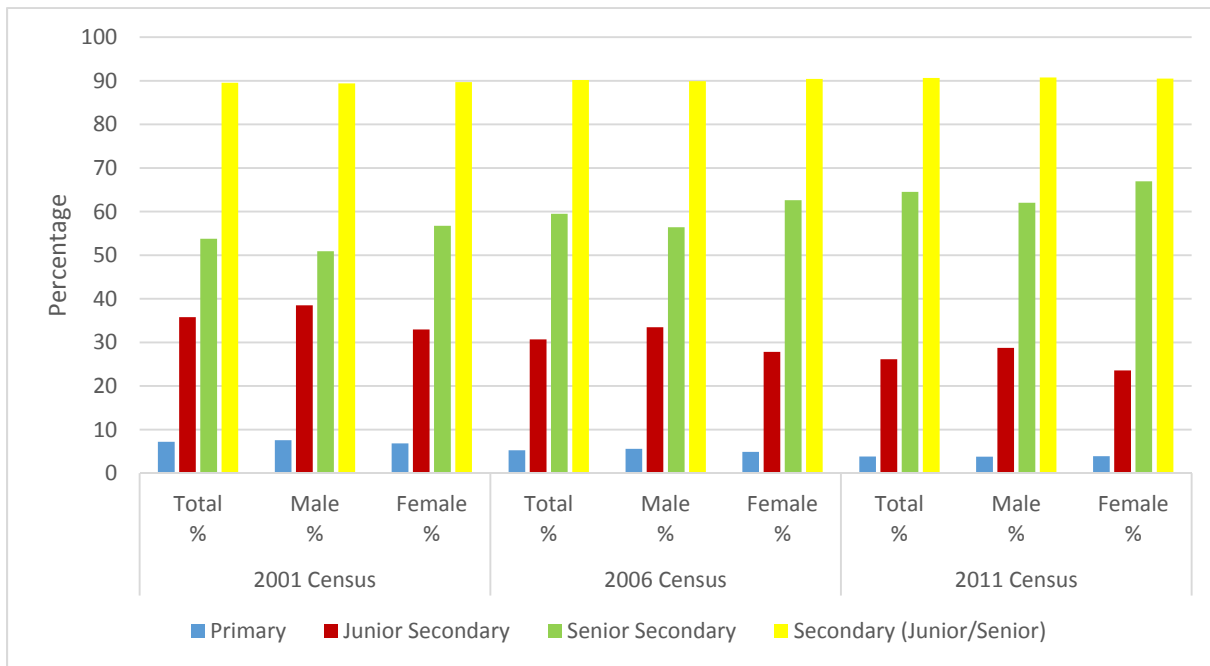
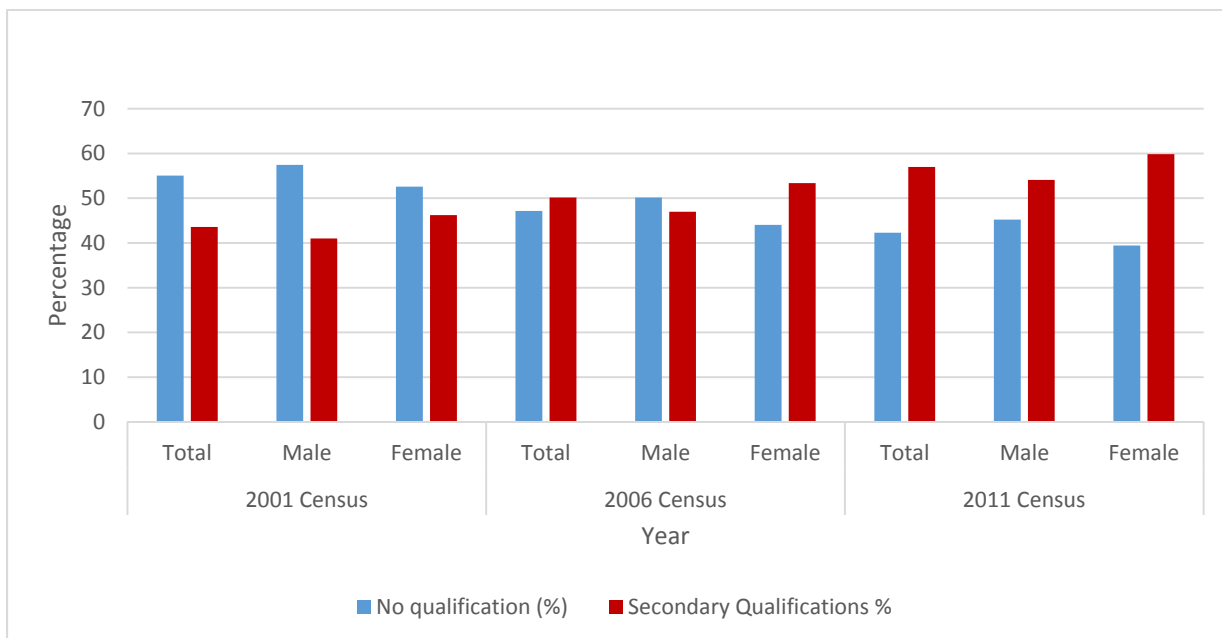


Figure 3.4.3 Resident Population 15 Years and over with Senior Secondary Qualification by Gender



3.4.3 Literacy in Rehabilitation Programmes

International research emphasises that education is the number one factor responsible for reducing rates of recidivism. The Ministry of Education, is working in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice, to provide for this. The current rehabilitation programme includes educational opportunities with an emphasis on improving the basic literacy and numeracy skills of prison inmates..

Classes focus on building vocabulary (most of the inmates are ESL), teaching basic punctuation and grammar, writing skills, reading for understanding and functional numeracy skills. These classes occur three times per week within prison grounds.

In addition to this, tutoring in a university paper (USP) is provided for a small group of inmates unable to attend the standard morning classes.

The initiative has two main purposes. Firstly, to up-skill the participants in their functional literacy and numeracy. Running concurrently, and of equal importance, is the goal of increasing self-esteem, particularly in relation to learning. It was hoped that together these two goals would lead participants to enrol in formal education qualifications upon their release.

Other less tangible outcomes have included participants writing poetry, writing a letter to the editor of the local newspaper, writing letters to the NZ High Commissioner, and one participant has submitted a letter to a Youth Organization meeting (outlining his ideas for helping youth in trouble). In addition, participants have become more vocal in expressing their ideas and opinions, they are reading books (for some this is the first time ever), and they are expressing their personal stories in written form.

3.4.4 Continuing Education

Continuing Education meets workforce needs by providing upskilling courses generic to a range of industries eg customer service, first aid as well as general interest courses for the wider community. The programmes are run through the Cook Islands Tertiary Training Institute (CITTI), a government institution. They do not have a specific qualification attached to them but the upskilling courses can help scaffold adults who have been away from education for some time back into the more formal vocational education programmes.

Work is currently being carried out on the evaluation of recent courses and surveying different communities. This will allow CITTI to gain a clearer picture of the areas of interest and need so as to provide further programmes of interest and extension programmes where applicable.

3.4.5 Remaining Challenges

In the next five years, the following challenges have been identified for the Adult Literacy and Continuing Education Sector:

- to ascertain true baseline for adult literacy
- to build and sustain recent programme development in continuing education (inclusive of literacy support programmes)

Case Study: A different kind of Literacy

The University of the South Pacific: Communication and Information Literacy

It is no longer enough to be able to read and write with the traditional pen and paper, we need to be able to read and write (and more) in the digital world. We are living in the information age surrounded by computers, mobile devices, tablets, all linked via the Internet. Having the right skills means a competitive advantage; being able to use a computer, to effectively locate, access and evaluate information, to solve complex problems and make decisions based on solid data and information and to share this information with others using a variety of modalities. The sheer volume of information available online requires a different set of skills to filter and make decisions on the validity of what is being presented. These are all key skills that are necessary in this day and age by a wide range of people – managers and employees in the workplace, teachers and students, housewives, virtually anyone anywhere.



The University of the South Pacific is acknowledging this fact by re-designing the curriculum to incorporate compulsory courses, such as UU100, that develop these information literacy skills in students during their first year of study; skills that are readily transferable to the workplace.

3.5 Gender Equality

Measuring Progress towards EFA Goal 5: Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2015, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.

Links to the Cook Islands Education Master Plan:

Focus Area: Learning and Teaching

- Equitable access for all learners to quality learning programmes

3.5.1 Legislation and Mandating Documents

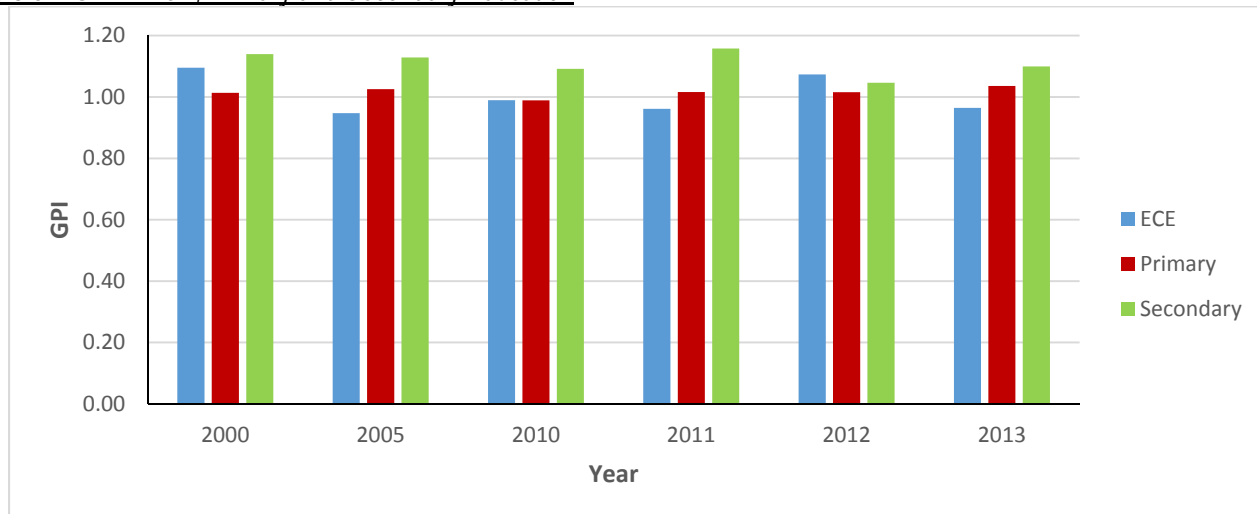
The Education Act (2012) states as part of its purpose "ensuring that everyone involved in the education system is treated with dignity, respect and understanding in a way that is consistent with...the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and the Convention on the Elimination of All Form of Discrimination Against Women...".

Under the priority area of social development, *Te Kaveinga Nui*, The Cook Islands National Sustainable Development Plan, includes the strategies to "Ensure Gender Equality and Empower our Women" (Government of the Cook Islands, 2011, pg. 32). It continues "Our vision for gender equality and women empowerment is based on our national vision where all individuals in our society are able to live with dignity, enjoy their human rights, achieve their full potential and contribute to the development and the wellbeing of society; where women and girls have equal access to and benefit from the development of the country; and where women and girls are protected from all forms of discrimination and violence" (ibid).

The Ministry of Education responds to this through its Equity, Access and Participation strategic policy which states "For the purposes of this policy 'equity, access and participation' means that all Cook Islanders, regardless of ability, gender, wealth, location, language or ethnic origin, will be able to participate in relevant, quality and appropriate learning experiences. It is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education (MoE) to provide such opportunities and mitigate any barriers to accessing them that may exist" (Ministry of Education, 2012).

As can be seen in the graph below, GPI has been close to 1 in all levels of education over time. The index favours females at the secondary level and the Ministry has worked to address this as discussed below.

Figure 3.5.1 GPI in ECE, Primary and Secondary Education



3.5.2 Gender Groups at Risk in Education

The ongoing monitoring of the EMP and a 2006 review of truancy on the main island of Rarotonga, as well as reports from the Juvenile Crime Prevention Committee, suggested that a group of young 11-14 year old boys were at risk. Lack of success and disengagement with mainstream schooling raised issues of absenteeism, disciplinary issues, non- and under-achievement and behaviour in the community that could lead to criminal conviction. In response, and in partnership with a concerned community NGO, the Ministry has developed and funded an alternative programme for these students. Starting in 2010, and called *Rakei Toa*, its emphasis was on self-identity and discipline. The programme included ensuring basic literacy and numeracy but did so through a range of different contexts such as sport, carving, art, agriculture and basic vocational skills. The intention of the programme was always to scaffold these young students back into mainstream schooling. Over the last five years, the programme has developed with considerable coordination between counsellors and Inclusive Education Coordinators at the secondary school level. Now these students are identified in primary school and by Year 9 have individual learning programmes which allow them to follow an area of interest eg hospitality or trades with specialized units while getting ongoing one on one support with an identified assistant for literacy and numeracy who can also monitor attendance and provide the student with access to additional support when it is needed.

When the period of EFA started, young women who became pregnant while still at school, generally did not finish their education. Although there were no school rules that said the student must leave, the expectation of families and in many cases teachers was that this was the acceptable practice. Acknowledging the impact of lower levels of maternal education on post natal development and the impact of a lack of qualification on the future ability of the young woman to find employment, the education sector wanted to shift opinion and practice in this area. The Education Act (2012) specifically states that a student cannot be exempt from compulsory education on the basis of pregnancy. School programmes took on a level of flexibility so that the young mother could take time away from school for feeding her baby or do a reduced number of classes for a period of time before returning as a fulltime student. Counselling services were made available in school to support both the student and her family in decisions around the pregnancy and care-giving. Over time, attitudes within schools (teachers and fellow students) and the community towards young pregnant women at school have changed. Aware of the risk of "glamourizing" pregnancy, school programmes are in place to try and address the issue before it arises. The development of a new Health and Wellbeing curriculum in 2005 expanded more traditional health and sex education to one with a more holistic view of the student and his/her development. This now includes the emotional and social aspects of relationships and sexual activity and not just the physical/mechanical teachings. The curriculum aims to give students strategies around decision making and dealing with peer pressure as well as the development of relationships and decisions pertaining to sexual activity.

3.5.3 Gender and Curriculum Programmes

As stated earlier, the GPI at senior secondary level favours female students as do retention figures at this level. A study in 2008 suggested a review of the range of programmes and subjects being offered at senior secondary level to increase those that would encourage the ongoing participation of boys. The Dual Pathways Programme allows students to access a wider scope of vocationally based subjects as part of their school programme. Success in these courses contributes to both school based qualifications and the commencement of vocational and/or apprenticeship qualifications that can be continued full time on leaving school. These courses are available through a day release mode on the main island and through block courses on the Pa Enua (outer islands). Originally intended to improve boys' retention, there is no gender bias in the access of girls to the courses and indeed many have successfully participated in areas that were traditionally considered male domains.

Career's Education programmes also help to break down barriers around perceptions of certain jobs or professions being male or female. In response to the lower number of girls taking science in secondary schools, a programme called WISAT (Women in Science and Technology) created an opportunity for young women at school to spend time with women in science and technology careers eg air traffic controllers, microbiologists. Likewise, a programme named BoysZone was developed for male students involving male journalists, teachers and other social sector based professions.

The National College has recently started “academy” programmes for students on career pathways to specific sectors. Enrolment by gender is generally balanced across hospitality, horticulture, sports and business with only the Trades Academy showing a significant gender imbalance towards male students.

3.5.4 Gender and the Teaching Profession

The teaching profession in the Cook Islands is highly female. All of our teachers at ECE level are female. At the primary school level, 89% are female and at secondary level this figure is 57%. This ratio continues into school management where 62% of Principals and 80% of Deputy Principals are women. The senior administration of the Ministry of Education has gender balance.

3.5.5 Remaining Challenges

In the next five years, the following challenge has been identified in the area of gender:

- continue to monitor gender inclusiveness and outcomes through disaggregated data and ensure appropriate programme response.

Case Study: National Council of Women

Tivaivai and Gender and Governance Training in the Pa Enuu



Mia religiously attends her weekly *tivaivai taorei* (intricate patchwork bedspread) workshop in the evening on her island. It is a chance for her while the family rests at home to get away and learn a craft form that she has always wanted to master but a man and children got in the way and took up most of her time.

The Cook Islands National Council of Women supports the promotion of home and craft skills on each island through informal workshops hosted by women craft experts usually from that island. During these evening sessions, we ask our Presidents in the islands to raise discussions on women in governance and women in climate change to help our women get up to date with how these issues are affecting them. Through these informal workshops our women are able to provide input and feedback to the CINCW executive to be able to better represent their voices at decision making tables and tables we get invited to sit and discuss country development on.

Mia goes home in the evening happy with the progress she is making in sewing her *tivaivai taorei*. She thinks “it will be for our daughter as a wedding *oora* for the day she gets married”. Then she recalls an interesting point the President made about getting more women on to the Island’s Council. She enjoyed the group discussion on this topic and it made sense she thought when she and her husband work together and make decisions together in the home, the work that comes from the decisions gets done well and in an environment of growth.

Source: Cook Islands National Council of Women, Women and Local Governance Program, 2013

3.6 Quality Education

Measuring progress towards EFA Goal 6: Improving all aspects of the quality and excellence of education with measurable learning outcomes

Links to the Cook Islands Education Master Plan:

Focus Area: Learning and Teaching

- *Equitable access for all learners to quality learning programmes*

Focus Area: Infrastructure and Support

- *Adequate budget resource for education*
- *Effective, well qualified and resourced teachers, administrators and support staff*
- *High quality management systems*

Having high levels of access and participation from the early stages of EFA, the focus for the Cook Islands has been on quality outcomes for the young people progressing through the education system. In the strategic policy “Quality and Relevance” quality outcomes are acknowledged as more than the level at which learners achieve the knowledge, skills, and behaviours specified in the national curriculum. The policy states: “Society and parents expect more than good test scores; they also have expectations regarding students’ attitudes and behaviour that are not easily measured but do affect public perceptions of the quality of education delivery” (Ministry of Education, 2011a, pg.1).

The ideas relating to quality are addressed in this policy through the actions relating to Quality Teaching, Quality Leadership, Quality Learning Environments and Quality Programmes.

3.6.1 Legislation and Mandating Documents

In 2008, Cabinet approved the Education Master Plan (EMP – 2008-2023). This plan sets out four focus areas for the education sector and a set of goals, targets strategies that work towards achieving them. Overarching results of the EMP include parents having confidence in the quality of their child’s education and equipping people for the career and lifestyle of their choice. The Education Master Plan is supported by a 5 year (3+2) Statement of Intent that outlines current priorities and annual business plans and budget documentation.

After the endorsement of the EMP, the Education Act was rigorously reviewed and a new bill drafted which passed through Parliament in 2012. Changes in the Act impacting on the quality of education include:

- Mandating of the teacher professional standards
- A requirement for renewal of teacher registration every 3 years
- Bringing into law the Cook Islands Curriculum Framework and related documents such as the Education Administration Guidelines

The Cook Islands Curriculum Framework was reviewed in 2013 to ensure its relevancy to Cook Islands’ learners and classrooms. The new curricula maintains foundation in the Cook Islands and provides the flexibility needed for teachers to develop programmes that meet the needs of learners and reflect the community in which they live as well as connecting to the wider world.

The Quality and Relevance strategic policy is supported by several operational policies and guidelines developed to focus the use of resources and the deployment of personnel to quality outcomes. These policies include:

- ECE Resourcing Policy
- Maori Language Resourcing Policy

- ICT Resourcing Policy
- Teacher Performance Management Policy
- Teacher Professional Development Policy
- Teacher Registration
- Fitness of Purpose: Learning Areas Policy
- Green Practices Policy
- Inclusive Education Policy

3.6.2 Measuring for Quality

A Monitoring and Evaluation framework is in place to measure progress towards the outcomes of the Education Master Plan. By design, many of the indicators used also allow the Ministry to respond to the goals of other mandates such as the National Sustainable Development Plan, the regional mandate of the Pacific Education Development Framework as well as EFA.

Although a number of input indicators are used such as budget, teacher qualifications, pupil/teacher ratio; greater emphasis is being placed on output indicators as measures of quality. Student outcomes in literacy and numeracy (at four different year levels) as well as school leaving qualifications have been measured for a number of years. As the Cook Islands has a policy of social promotion, class repetition is not a valid indicator. Student retention – and particularly retention between lower and upper secondary and within upper secondary are considered important indicators of quality. These indicators reflect student engagement and desire to continue with schooling and parental belief in the quality and value of ongoing attendance¹. Recent research has looked into the non-cognitive outcomes of quality education and further work will continue in this area.

Baseline information, collected in 2008, was used to develop mid-term 2015 targets against which progress is recorded and tracked. This information is used to make decisions on priorities, policy changes and resourcing allocations. Information can be tracked at a national, regional and school level so that strategies for support can be individualized helping to ensure the effectiveness of inputs to the education system.

An Evaluation Plan means that the Ministry regularly reflects on programmes and initiatives. This prevents programmes that are not making the desired progress from continuing without informed interventions. Such evaluations use the lenses of relevance, equity, sustainability, quality, efficiency and effectiveness.

3.6.3 Quality Teaching

Over recent years, the Ministry has invested significant financial resources into the professional development of teaching staff – amounting to an average of \$200, 000 NZD pa (USD \$165,000) over the last three years. The majority of this investment is spent on supporting teachers through university studies towards a first degree. Additional funding is used for programmes such as “shared teaching” where one teacher will spend time at a different school observing practice in an area of interest to them. The “host teacher” is identified by the Ministry of Education as a professional with strength in this area. A reciprocal visit is organized so that the host can then offer ideas and advice to the teacher in their own context.

In 2012, the Ministry of Education reviewed the position description and performance indicators of teachers and submitted these to the Public Service Commissioner for job-sizing consideration. The positions for all teachers (ECE, primary and secondary) were upgraded through this process and teacher salaries now sit in the middle of the public service pay scale. As noted in the section on Early Childhood Education, this also gave teachers in that sector pay parity with those in primary and secondary education.

¹ ECE, primary and secondary education are all government provided so apart from opportunity cost, cost to parents for ongoing upper secondary education are reasonable and financial support is available through other government agencies if required.

The Quality Review process for schools involves classroom observations and review of documentation of all teachers along with interviews and discussion groups with teachers holding additional responsibilities. Any teacher identified during this process as struggling to maintain the professional standards is provided with support and if necessary, a formal period of advice and guidance. Individuals who continue to fail to meet professional standards will be deregistered and therefore unable to be employed in a teaching position in a Cook Islands school.

3.6.4 Quality Leadership

The Ministry of Education recognizes the importance of school leadership. As leaders, Principals lead the staff in setting goals and implementing programmes. Principals are the curriculum, pedagogical and administrative leaders of a school. We cannot assume that good teachers can just become good Principals – there are specific skills, knowledge and strategies that need to be developed. The Ministry places people moving into Principal positions on an internationally based “First Time Principals” course over a period of 18 months with in-country mentors. In a similar fashion the Ministry currently has its first cohort of “Aspiring Principals” – a programme for current school middle managers who have shown potential as future school Principals.

For remuneration, Principals are paid on a different scale from classroom teachers with the level of salary dependent on the size of the school, qualifications and years of experience. Principals’ positions are now job sized within the top third of government job bands. In addition, staff who take on management roles within schools such as Heads of Departments or Syndicates, receive further remuneration through recognized “management units” being additional to their base teaching salary.

Case Study – First Time Principals’ Programme

Engia Pate Baxter is the Principal of Takitumu School in the village of Matavera on the island of Rarotonga. Takitumu School is an ECE – Year 6 school with a roll of 160 students. Engia describes her experience on the First Time Principals’ Programme:

This was a one year course made up of two conferences in New Zealand and then meetings and networking sessions with others on the course who are based here in the Cook Islands. We had a mentor to provide support and help us compile evidence of our work. There were four of us from the Cook Islands on the course – we would meet and support each other but the work you did in your school was on your own. This included setting goals for our schools and identifying the strategies needed to achieve them. We also looked at how to have impact on our school as leaders.

I found the course was good – especially in collaboration with the University papers I have been doing and the Principals’ Workshops held by the Ministry of Education. It wasn’t the type of course that brings about immediate change but is a range of skills and approaches that you can add to your leadership.

When you are a new Principal you have to go the extra mile. Build relationships with your staff. You have to be prepared to make changes and if necessary enforce the changes with your staff. Be prepared for the challenges. This course alone is not enough – you can’t expect all the answers to be handed to you. But go out there and do your research and ask for guidance to help you develop.



3.6.5 Quality Learning Environments

Positive learning outcomes happen in quality learning environments. The learning environment can be broadly defined as the “social, physical, psychological and pedagogical context in which learning occurs and which affect student achievement and attitudes (Fraser (1998) in Nix, Fraser and Leadbetter, 2005). It is not only the physical environment of the classroom but also the social environment and interactions between teachers and learner that impact on the learning and teaching processes. The environment impacts not only on the direct learning outcomes for students but also on the “hidden curriculum”.

An important part of providing quality education involves providers ensuring there are effective guidance and support processes available to all learners. The learning environment of the school must be conducive to learning where the learners feel secure, confident and are motivated to learn. The Ministry is currently reviewing the themes of “modern learning environments” and this relates to both physical spaces and the pedagogy used in them. This shift is make a focus on student self-directed learning rather than teacher transmission.

Actions by the Ministry to ensure Quality Learning Environments exist include:

- Establishing fully resourced providers to meet the teaching and learning needs of all students.
- Ensuring equitable access for all learners.
- Provision of teaching spaces that are conducive to meeting the needs of all learners in relation to size, layout, heating, lighting, ventilation, safety and display.
- The provision of teaching areas (internal and external) that are flexible and can support a variety of formal and informal teaching approaches.
- Supporting providers in developing cultures which respect individuals, value positive relationships and welcome and support learners according to their individual needs.
- Strategies which support the holistic development and wellbeing of learners.

The Ministry of Education’s Fitness of Purpose policy states that learning areas will be developed that are safe, conducive to learning and acknowledge the special character of specialist subjects and areas. The purpose is to make sure that quality learning can take place because the learning environments are developed to take into account the special nature of different levels of learning and to take all practicable steps to ensure safety by complying with relevant health and safety legislation, standards, and codes of practice.

In recent times, the Ministry has focussed on the learning environments of Early Childhood Education, Science and Performing Arts. There has also been significant investment in the TVET areas of hospitality and health and beauty.

3.6.6 Quality Programmes

The Cook Islands Curriculum Framework was approved for implementation in 2002. This framework shifted away from a prescriptive content driven approach to curriculum delivery to one of achievement objectives that were open to a range of contexts and content. This has allowed primary school teachers in particular to plan integrated theme studies rather than discrete lessons in different subjects. A theme study may run for 3-6 weeks and cover objectives from a number of different curriculum areas such as language, maths, science, health or social science and art. This has led to school programmes that are significantly more relevant to our students and the different islands they live on.

Literacy programmes at primary levels have focused on reading comprehension. These interventions included professional development on reading strategies and the production of graded readers in the different dialects of Cook Islands Maori. A shift has been recently made to a focus on the written language strand of the Language Curriculum. Developing teachers’ ability to assess written language is important so that their findings can inform the next step of learning for each student. A fully literate young person has skills across all areas of literacy including reading, writing, oral and visual language. Language across the Curriculum is important at all levels of education. Although it has been a challenge to get the full involvement of secondary

school teachers in this programme, change is beginning to occur. Further support will be needed to ensure this is embedded in practice and sustained.

A Numeracy programme based on both knowledge and strategy has been implemented in primary schools since 2005. This programme focuses on foundational skills and knowledge to enable children to solve mathematical problems, make sense of numbers, calculate without calculator/pencil and paper, estimate with accuracy and be able to explain and record the approaches they took to working out problems. It is supported by teacher professional development and physical resources. Schools are developing the ability to use evidence of student achievement in this area in decision making and classroom planning.

In 2005, the qualifications framework utilised by the Cook Islands changed to remain in line with that of New Zealand. The National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA) is a standards based qualification that has increased the scope and pathways available for students to attain a recognized qualification. In turn, this has increased student retention in the senior school and has also increased student demand for an increase in the range of subjects available at the senior secondary level. With a worldwide shortage of secondary teachers, and particularly those with NCEA experience, a challenge for the Ministry is to attract and retain quality teachers across a wide range of learning areas for the senior secondary school. In particular, the challenge is to maintain parents' confidence in the range and quality of education provided in the Cook Islands so that senior students remain in country and involved in learning programmes.

To support students and their parents in making decisions about subject selection and pathways, the Ministry of Education has made Careers Education a compulsory part of learning programmes from Year 7. An itinerant Careers Advisor also moves between schools interviewing and supporting all senior students in making decisions about the workforce or further study. A regular Careers Expo is held and regular updates of current information are supplied to designated Careers Lead Teachers in each school.

Dual Pathways and Lifeskills programmes are also available to secondary students. The Dual Pathways programme allows senior secondary students to commence tertiary level vocational programmes whilst still at school and include credits gained towards both their school and vocational qualification. The Lifeskills programme is for secondary students on our more isolated islands. This programme employs experts from the community as tutors in skills particularly relevant to practices of the island. Many of these are related to livelihoods but also include skills such as oratory and drumming as part of maintaining the cultural identity of the island concerned. The Ministry of Education has recently developed a series of standards on Traditional Knowledge for senior secondary school which have been accepted onto the New Zealand Qualification Framework.

3.6.7 Quality Student Outcomes

Examination and qualification results can be used as a proxy indicator for the quality of education provided. Recent analysis of NCEA results demonstrates a high percentage of school leavers achieve at least the minimum qualification as long as they remain participants in learning programmes until the end of Year 13. With respect to Tereora College, the national college, analysis of results for the last three years shows that over 90% of students remaining until the end of Year 12 will gain at least the Level 1 qualification and at least 95% of students staying until the end of Year 13 will gain the Level 2 qualification. This analysis makes it even more important to ensure that the scope of senior secondary programmes is broad enough to meet a wide range of student interests and is flexible in terms of multi-level and multipurpose (academic/vocational) courses. The overall outcomes for students must also be considered in terms of their emotional, social and physical wellbeing and how the quality of education can make a positive contribution towards this. As noted earlier, further work needs to be done on defining

and identifying ways of measuring the non-cognitive outcomes of a quality education which research suggests are at least as important as the cognitive outcomes of schooling (Brunello and Scholter, 2011, Rosen, 2010).

3.6.8 Remaining Challenges

In the next five years, the following challenges have been identified in the area of quality:

- currency of the physical learning environment to changing pedagogical approaches
- shift in focus of assessment from information for reporting to information for learning
- sustaining teacher professional development programmes and ensuring equity of access for isolated teachers
- sufficiency of financial appropriation to education for the ongoing implementation of quality initiatives

Case Study: Dual Pathways

Dual Pathways are similar to the Academies discussed within Goal 3 but are shorter in length. This means that students do not complete the whole vocational qualification whilst still at school but do get it started. Dual Pathways programmes run in the smaller secondary schools who do not have the capacity to run academies but want to make sure their students still get the opportunity to investigate possible tertiary/vocational options.

Courses are available in the areas of carpentry, automotive engineering, electrical engineering, hospitality and cookery. Where necessary, the Ministry of Education will send tutors and equipment out to the more isolated schools for blocks of time so that these students also have access to the programmes. .

The Ministry's expectation of this scheme is that it will keep students involved in learning for longer by:

- helping students to identify possible future study pathways and make the linkages between those and their current schooling
- helping students to identify a wider range of linked career paths for future investigation
- helping students to identify what they don't want which is just as important
- giving students for whom traditional school learning has not been particularly accessible an opportunity to achieve and experience success to reengage them with other learning.

Chapter 4 Emerging Challenges and Government Priorities

As a Small Island Developing State, challenges to the education sector in the Cook Islands reflect our size and geography.

4.1 Economic and Fiscal Challenges

The Cook Islands has a very small economic base. The country's dependence on tourism makes it particularly vulnerable to global shocks and the lack of economic diversity can make any progress tenuous. Well over 90% of the country's economic activity is generated on the main island.

The health of the Cook Islands economy and robustness of its GDP obviously impacts on the funding available through government appropriation to the education sector. The percentage of GDP and percentage of government appropriation to education are an indication of its priority within a country. As noted by both the 2013 Public Expenditure Review of Education and the 2013 Forum Compact Peer Review, the current level of education expenditure by government (*3.4% of GDP and 11% of appropriation*) are "*disproportionately low compared to both developing and developed countries*" (PIF, 2013, pg. 4). Although a precise link between expenditure and student outcomes cannot be made (due to the large number of other variables), a minimal level of expenditure is required. The Public Expenditure Review noted that the gains made in the education sector have come from activities that are predominantly donor funded and that current government expenditure alone would be unlikely to secure such gains and in some areas is working against them (McIntosh, 2013). Some donor funding has been diverted to cover core operating costs for schools during 2013/14 thus reducing the amount available to contribute to development.

Core costs to schools such as freight, electricity and communications are already increasing. These increases come in an environment already stretched by across the board cuts and impacts of inflation over the last 6 years. Since 2008/09 the real buying power of the Ministry's operating budget has decreased by almost one million dollars.

4.2 Infrastructure Challenges

The majority of school buildings in the Cook Islands were built in the 1930's and 1940's. Although refurbishments have taken place, the buildings are not conducive to the development of modern learning environments. Considerable investment will be required to redevelop existing buildings into those that support changes in pedagogy. Issues such as full disability access, cyclone proofing and the removal of residual asbestos remain. As a 21st century education sector, the integration of ICT into learning programmes, use of assistive technologies for students with special needs, and the connectivity to provide on line learning to our isolated students and for community lifelong education are priorities. A challenge to the Ministry is ensuring all of our schools are appropriately resourced to take advantage of these opportunities and to provide the appropriate professional development for teachers to best employ ICT in their classrooms as an enhancer of learning. Connectivity issues remain, the impact of O3B and security and appropriate band width and speed for sustainable use in education programmes for isolated learners is yet to be fully realised.

4.3 Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management

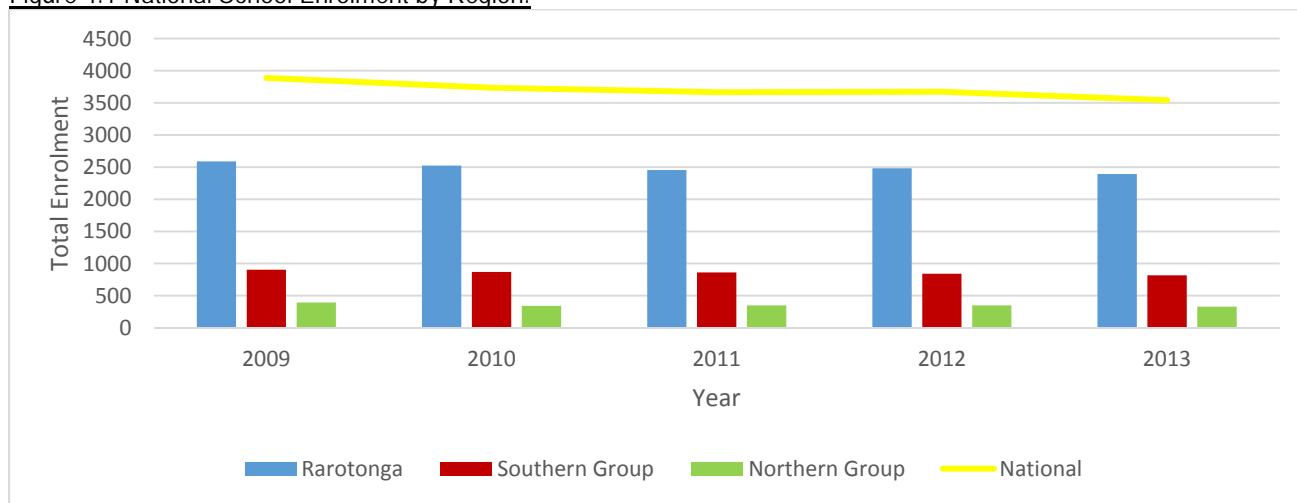
Climate change impacts all facets of education. The physical placement of schools, particularly in the northern atolls makes them particularly vulnerable to adverse weather events and sea level rise. On many of these islands there are few alternative building sites therefore cyclone proofing and mitigation of risk is the only feasible approach.

Climate change also has considerable impact on the school community – both students and teachers. The loss of housing or livelihood post disaster can see the shift of families from the Pa Enua to the more urban main island or further afield to New

Zealand or Australia. This shift impacts on family support structures, linkages to the land and first language dialect which are also put at risk. This movement of people also impacts on school roll and individual cohort size with considerable decrease seen in the northern group. In recent years, this has led to an increase in the number of composite classes at primary level in these schools and difficulties in maintaining subject specialist teachers at secondary level. The development of on line learning modalities is being used to address these arising issues.

The graph below shows total school (primary and secondary) enrolment by region over recent years. With a national decrease of 9% across the period of 2009-2013, disaggregated data shows a 7.5% decrease in Rarotonga and a 16.5% decrease in the northern group.

Figure 4.1 National School Enrolment by Region.



4.4 Capacity Challenges

The education sector in the Cook Islands is mandated to meet the learning needs of all Cook Islanders across a full spectrum of human endeavour for life. As a government agency, the Ministry of Education is also expected to meet a number of public service mandates and requirements. A workforce plan for schools through to 2024, allows the Ministry to predict capacity needs in the teaching profession across the different islands and at different levels of education. Current forecasts suggest that the Ministry is well placed to meet these needs and that current initiatives around teacher training will meet demand. The issue of specialized subject positions at secondary school level remains a challenge due to the high mobility of this workforce and the need for smaller schools to have teachers that can deliver across a range of subject area programmes. It is also a challenge to staff senior management positions in the Ministry with capacity in policy and planning a challenge across the whole public service.

4.5 Policy Challenges

Support to the implementation of the Education Master Plan has been bipartisan. However, successive governments have different priorities and the education sector needs to be able to respond to these whilst still ensuring it meets its core business of ensuring quality basic education. Continuing policy development around modalities of tertiary education and more explicit dialogue about the contribution of education to economic development may address some of these challenges.

The education sector is supported by donors through a targeted budget support model. Whilst this provides a level of security and flexibility to the Ministry in developing programmes when compared with project based funding, there are policy drivers from donor governments that can influence the priorities of such funding mechanisms.

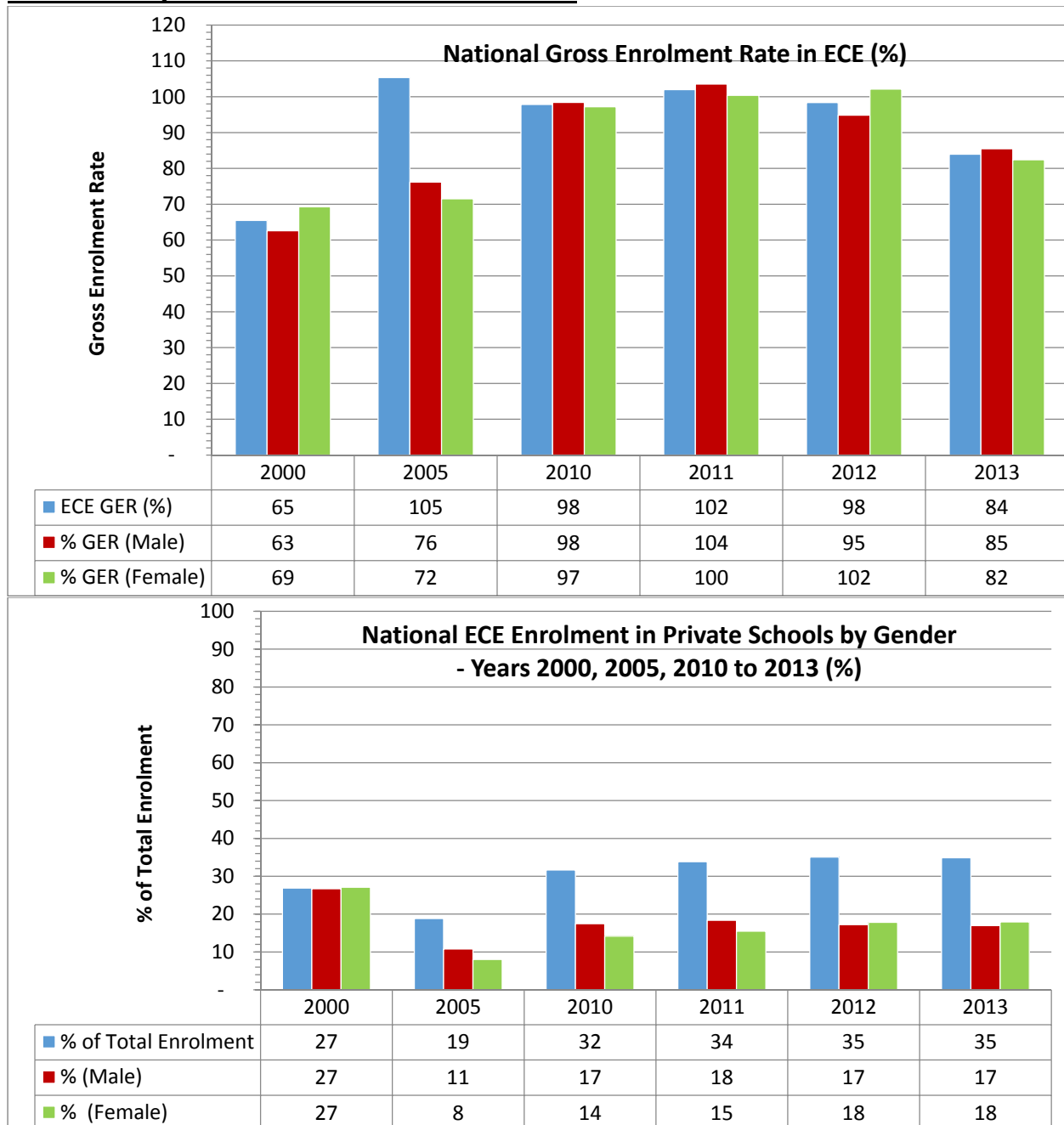
Chapter 5 Conclusion

The Cook Islands is a small island state in the east of the South Pacific Ocean. It is vulnerable to many natural and economic external factors but has shown itself to be future focused and resilient. Contributing to this is an education system that commits to provide quality education and having the confidence of parents in the education provided to their child and the engagement of the wider community in ongoing learning.

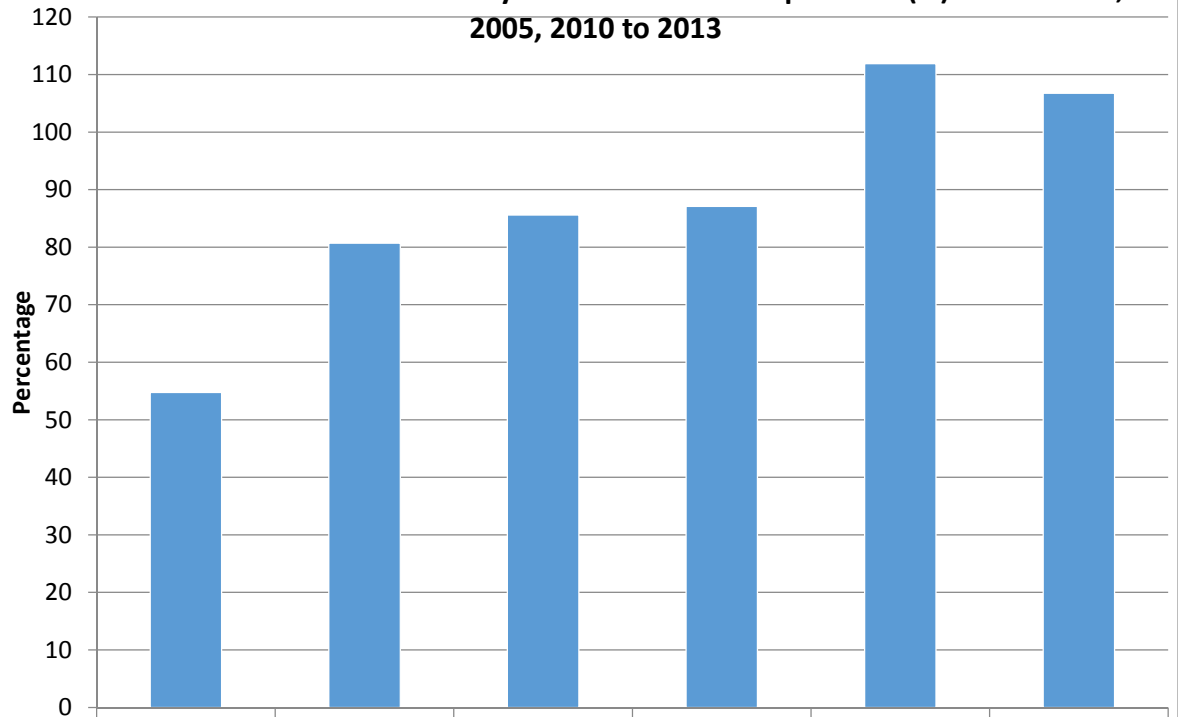
The Cook Islands has been active in pursuing the goals of EFA and has regularly reported on progress (2000, 2007, and 2011). In preparing this report, the Ministry of Education has identified ongoing work to be undertaken in the next five years to ensure it fully meets and sustains the outcomes of Education for All. The report provides a platform for further work to ensure that “all people of the Cook Islands will have equal access to quality learning opportunities across the full spectrum of human endeavour from birth” (Ministry of Education, 2008).

Appendix 1

Goal 1: Early Childhood Care and Education

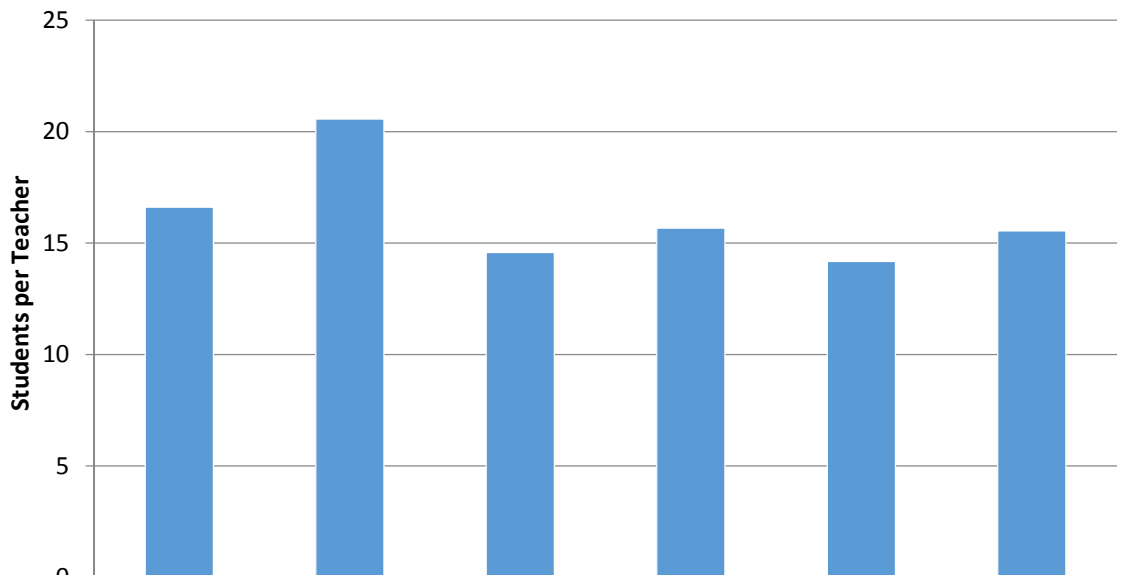


National New Entrants to Primary Grade 1 with ECE Experience (%) - Years 2000, 2005, 2010 to 2013

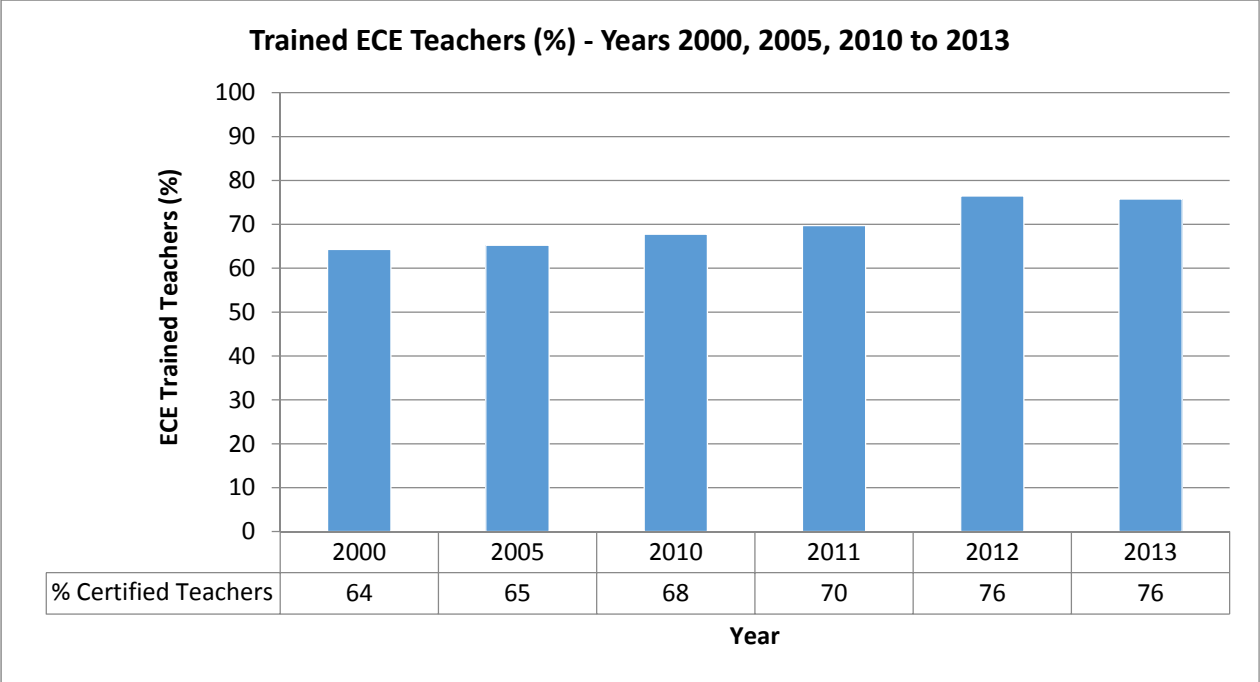


| | 2000 | 2005 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| % with ECE Experience | 55 | 81 | 86 | 87 | 112 | 107 |

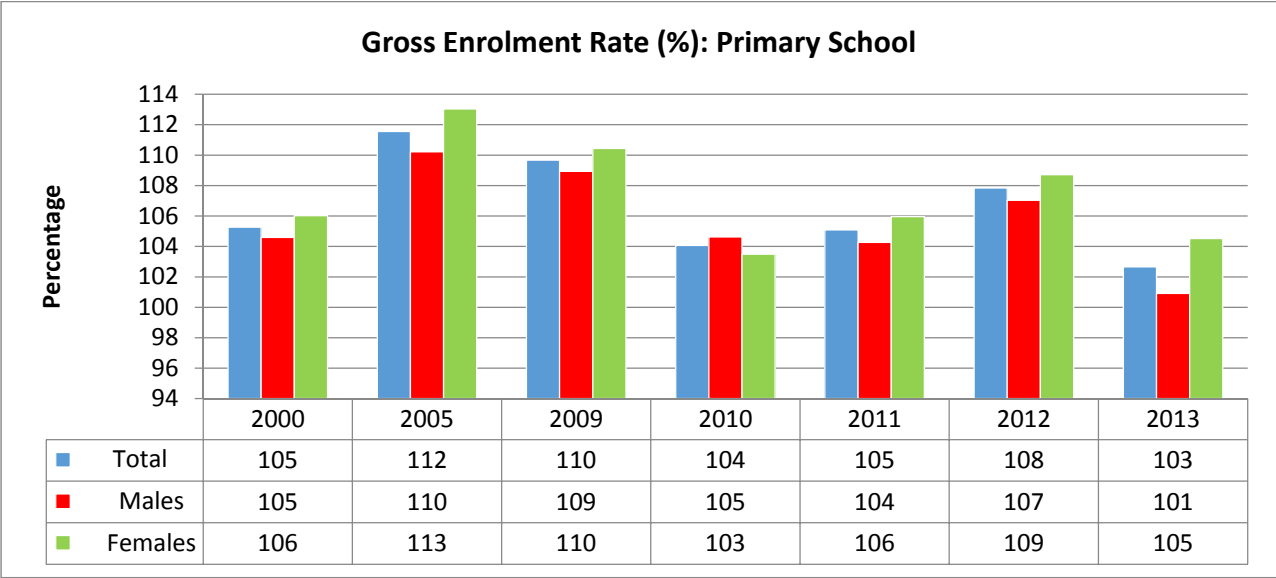
ECE National Pupil - Teacher Ratio - Years 2000, 2005, 2010 to 2013



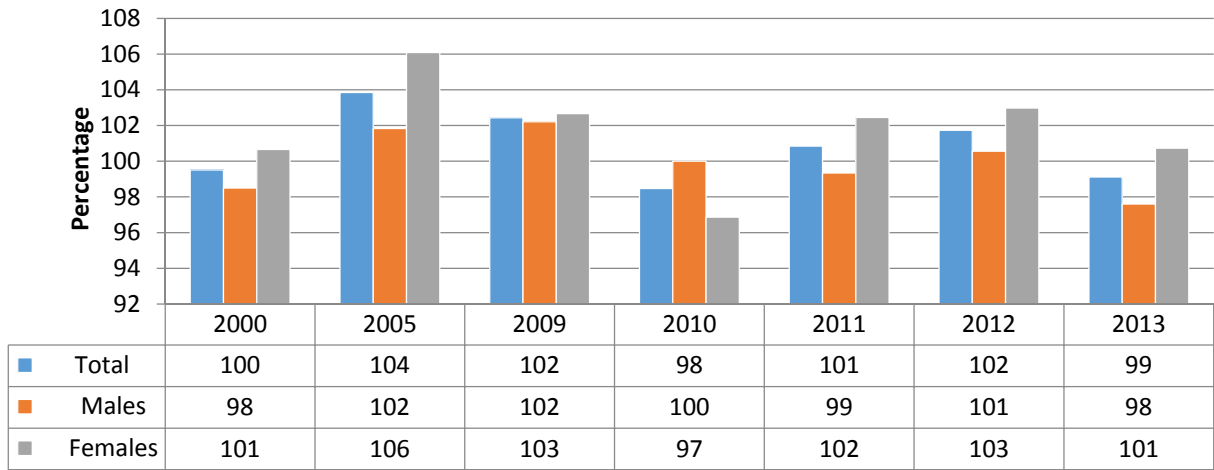
| | 2000 | 2005 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Student : Teacher Ratio | 17 | 21 | 15 | 16 | 14 | 16 |



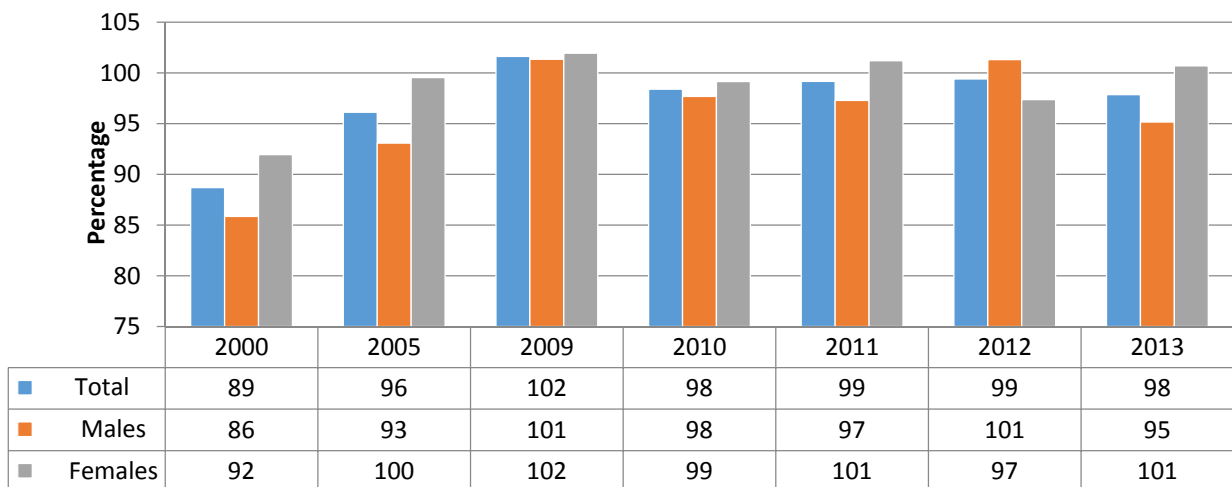
Goal 2: Universal Basic Education



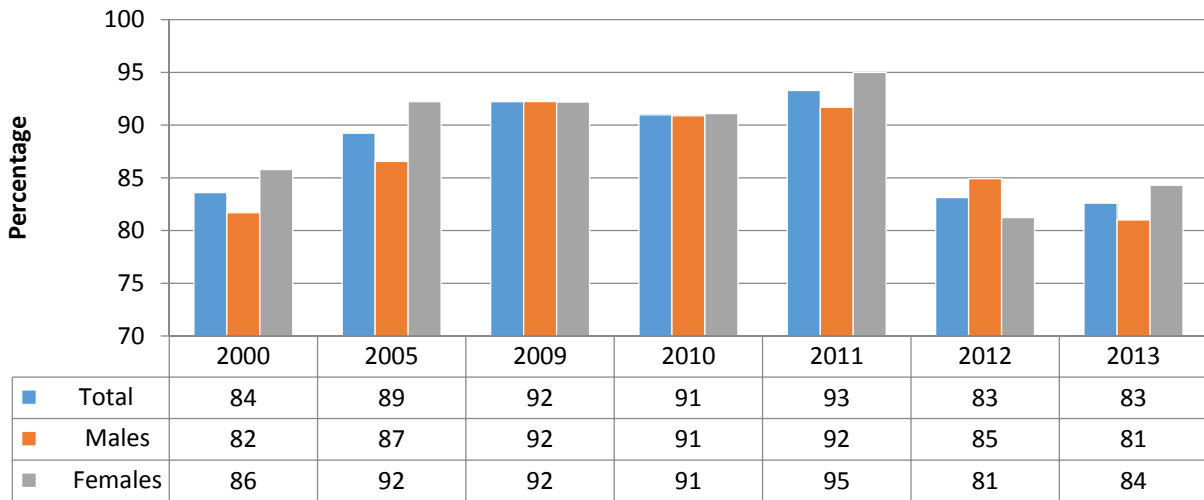
Net Enrolment Rate (%): Primary School



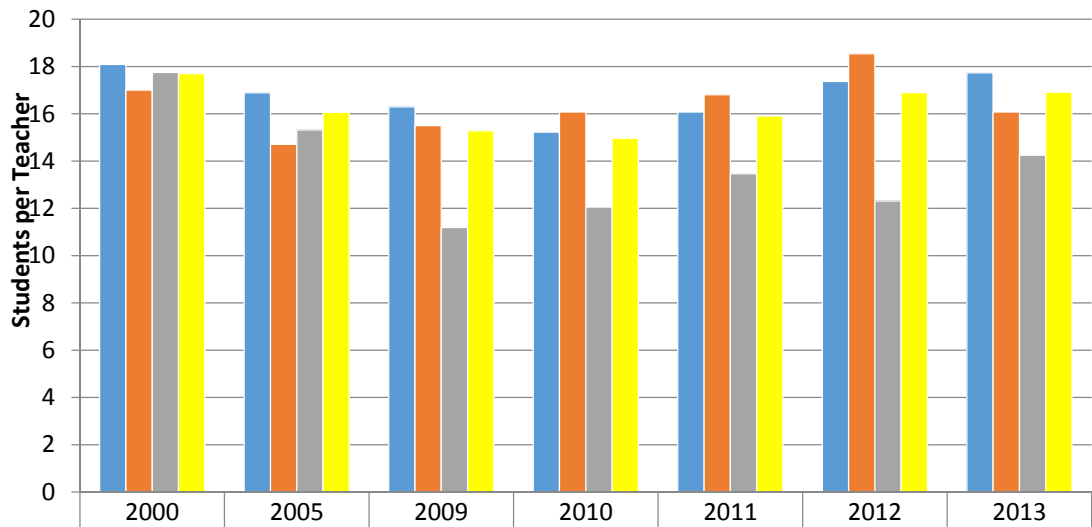
Gross Enrolment Rate (%): Lower Secondary



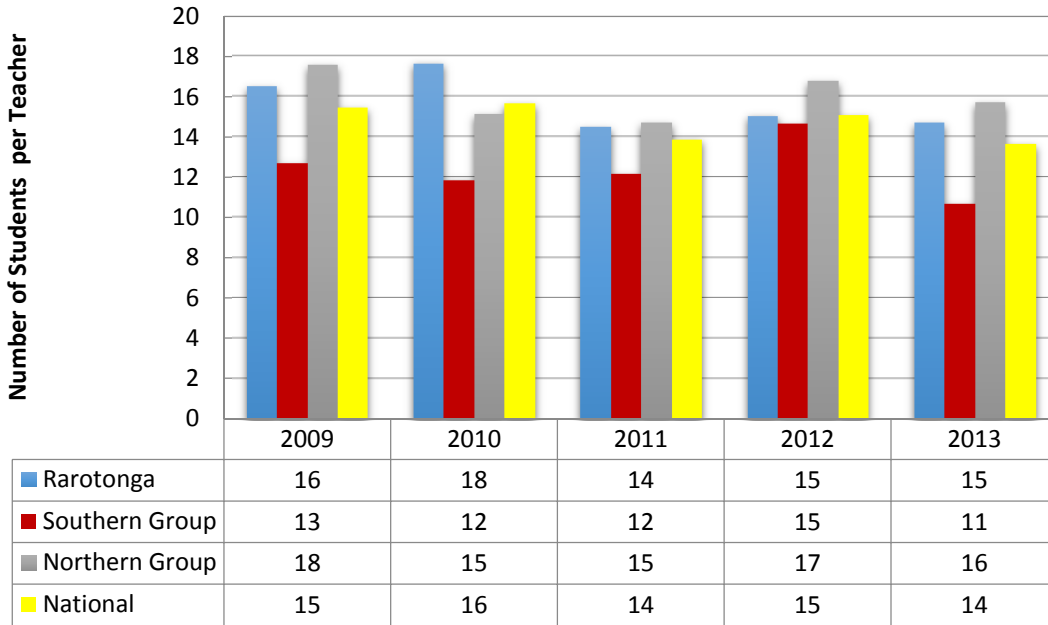
Net Enrolment Rate (%): Lower Secondary



Primary Education Student: Teacher Ratio 2000, 2005, 2009 - 2013 by Region

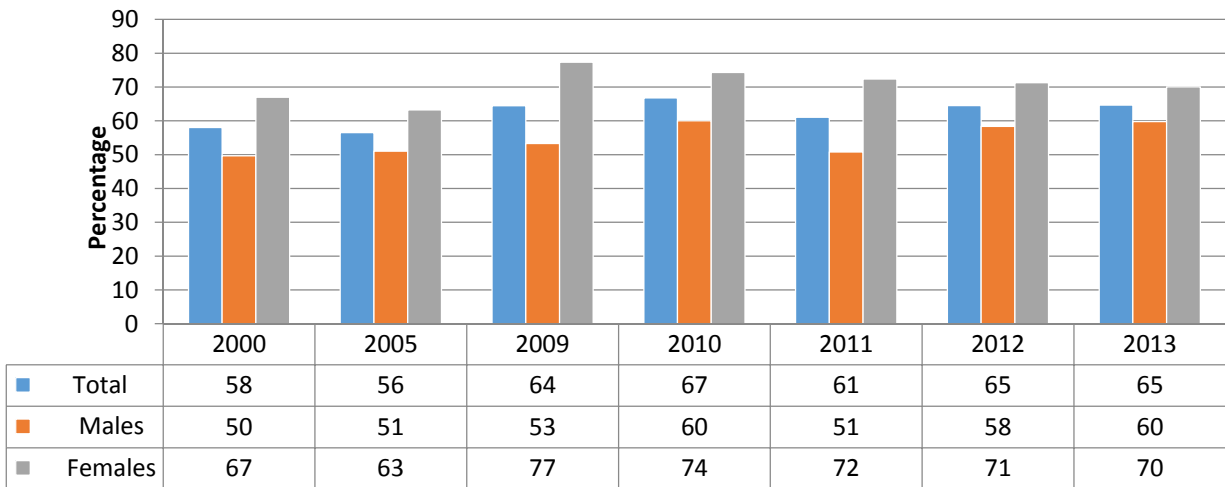


Secondary Education Student : Teacher Ratio 2009 - 2013

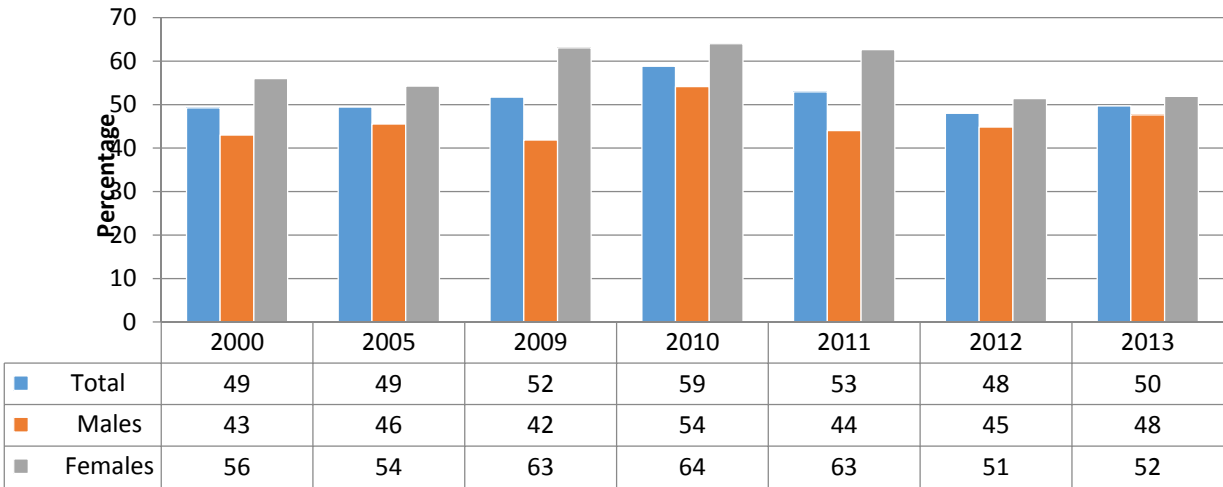


Goal 3: Meeting the needs of Youths and Adults

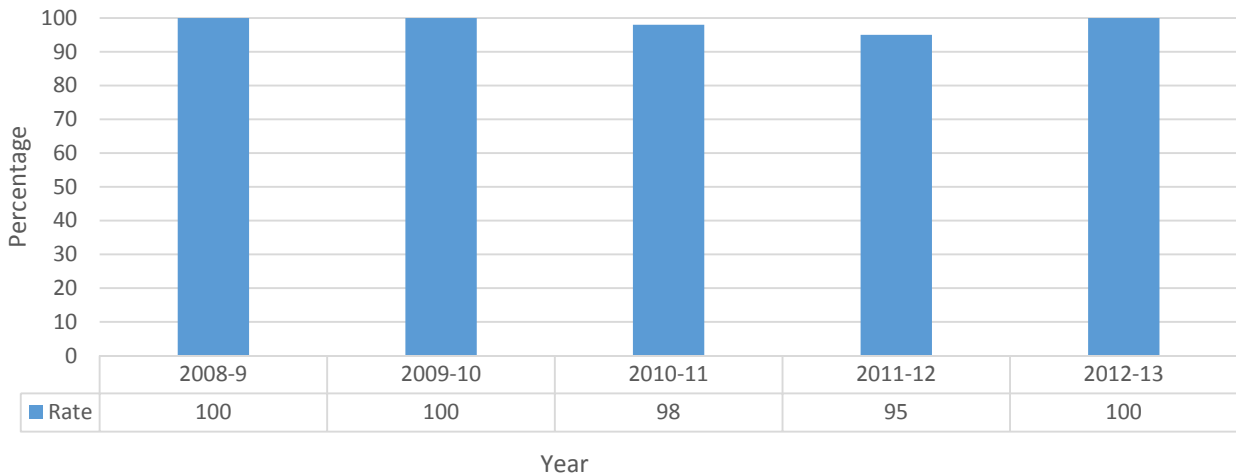
Gross Enrolment Rate (%): Senior Secondary School

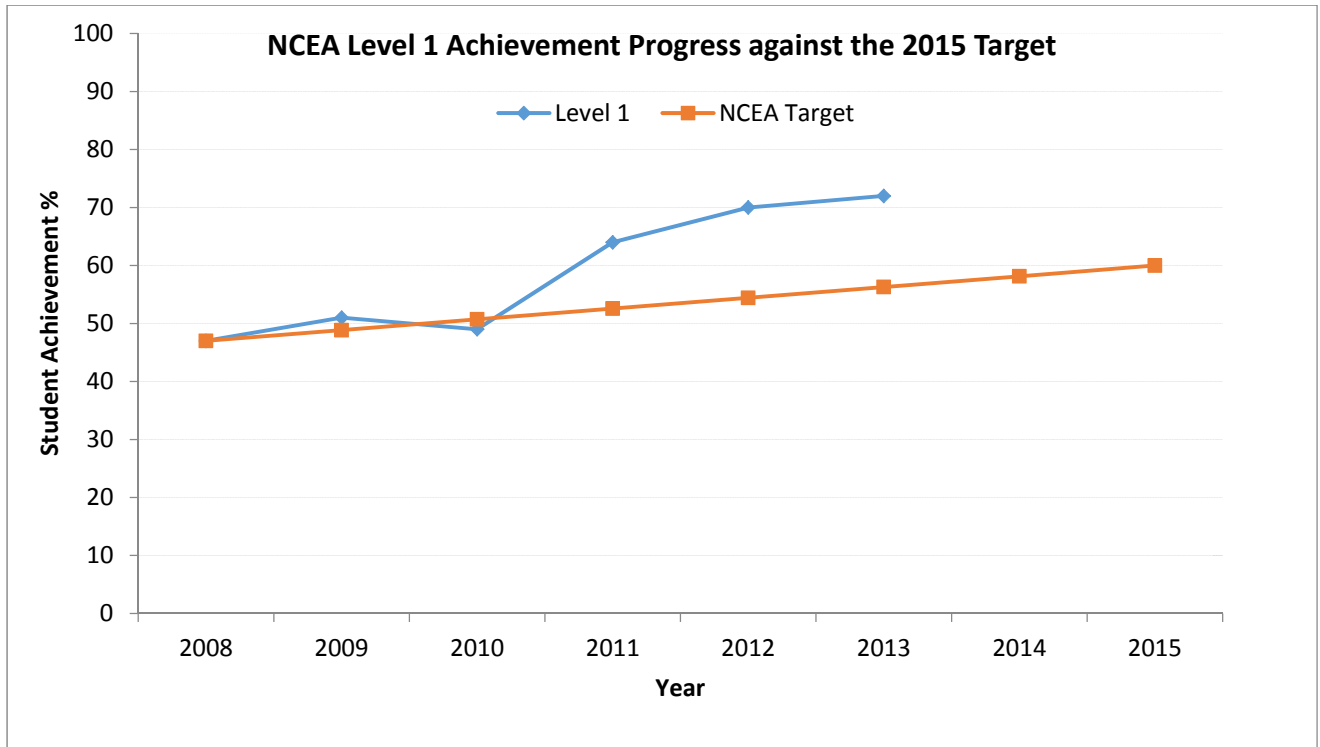


Net Enrolment Rate (%): Senior Secondary School



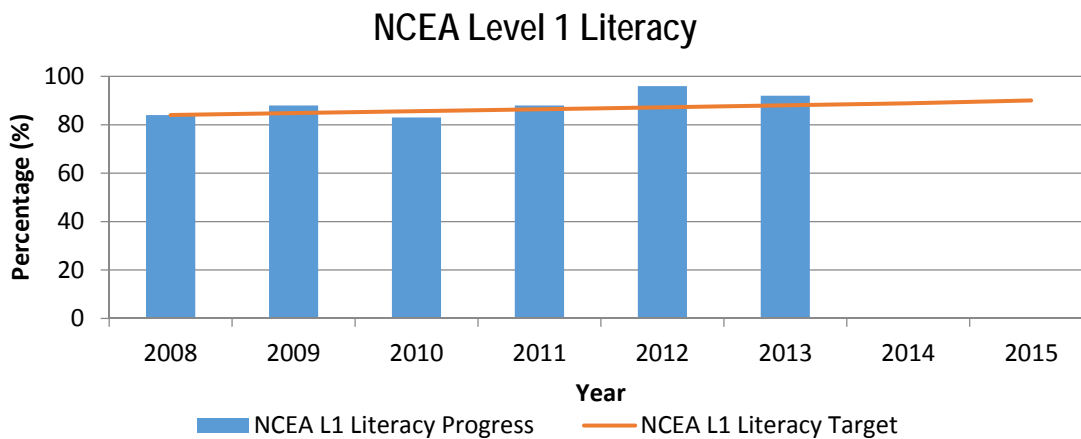
Transition Rate from Lower to Upper Secondary





Nb NCEA Level 1 is the first level of school qualification in the Cook Islands. It is by both external examination and internal assessment at the end of the first year of senior secondary school.

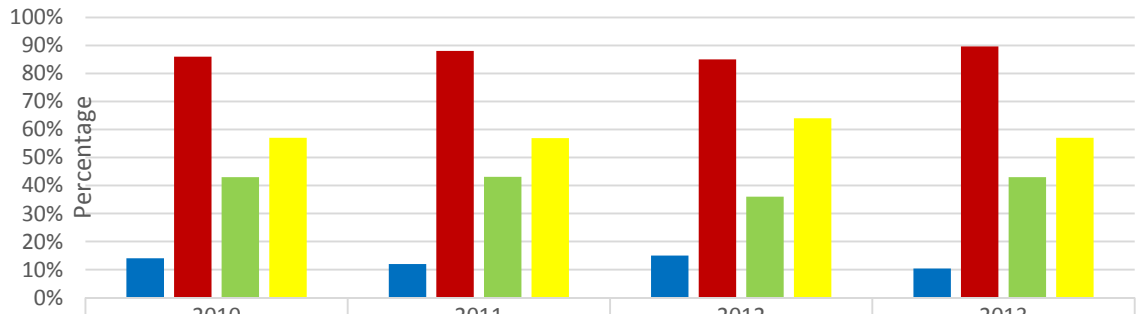
Goal 4: Improving Adult Literacy Level.



Goal 5: Gender Parity and Equality in Education

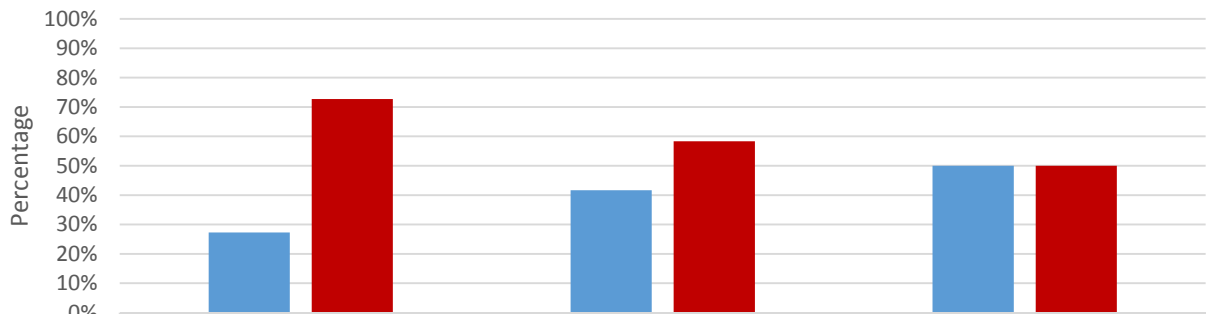
The majority of data is gender disaggregated in other goals.

Teachers by Level and Gender



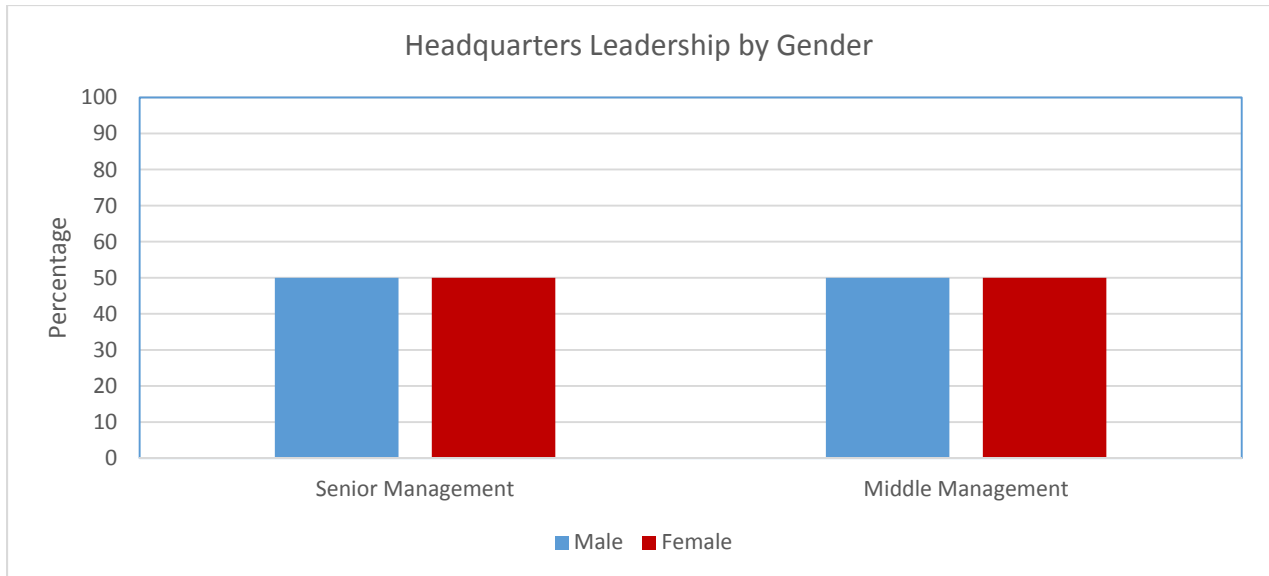
| | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 |
|-----------|------|------|------|------|
| Primary | 14% | 12% | 15% | 10% |
| Primary | 86% | 88% | 85% | 90% |
| Secondary | 43% | 43% | 36% | 43% |
| Secondary | 57% | 57% | 64% | 57% |

School Leadership by Gender



| | ECE/Primary | Area | Secondary |
|--------|-------------|------|-----------|
| Male | 27% | 42% | 50% |
| Female | 73% | 58% | 50% |

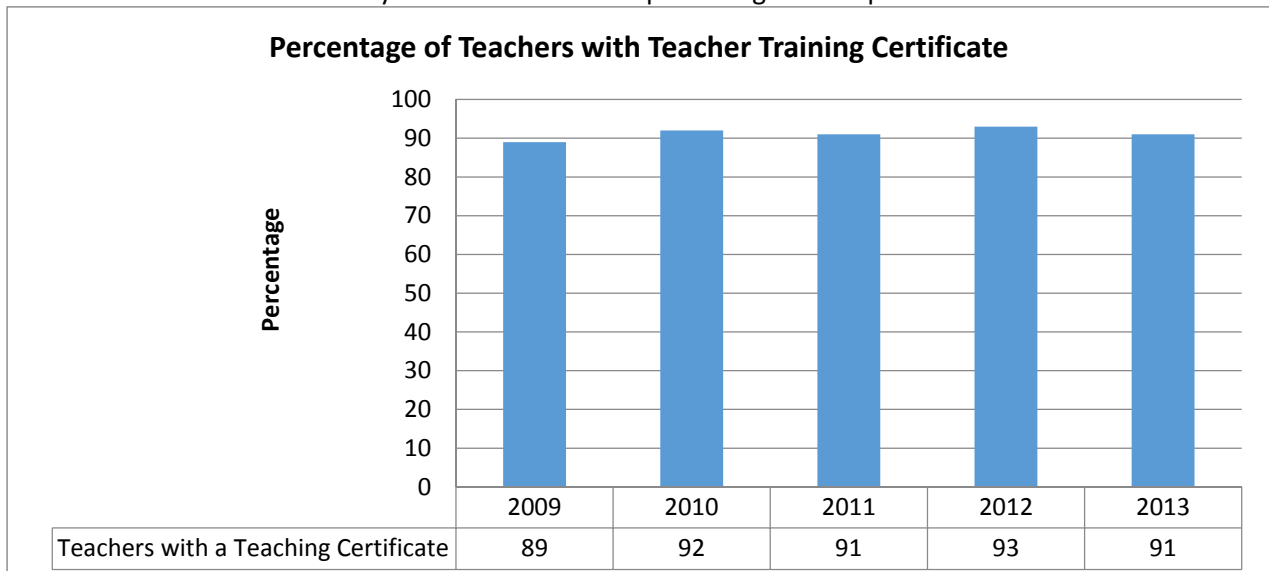
School Type



Goal 6: Quality of Education

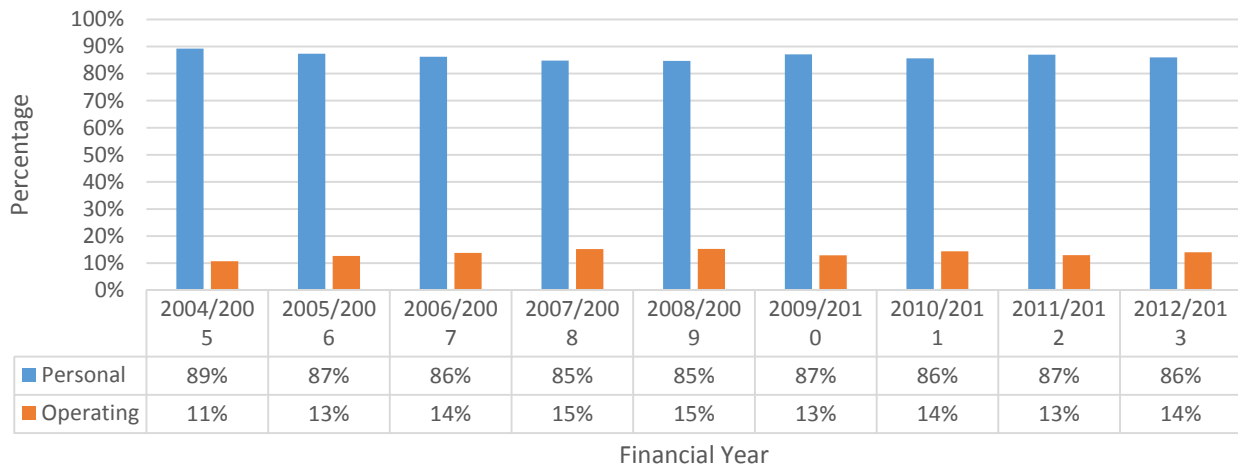
Student: Teacher ratio data is provided in other goals.

Schools are provided with an operating budget. This is calculated based on the size and level of the school with additional funding for isolated schools to cover the cost of freight. Decisions on expenditure are school based so the Ministry does not dictate the percentage to be spent on textbooks etc.



| Year | 2008/2009 | 2009/2010 | 2010/2011 | 2011/2012 | 2012/2013 |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Government Appropriation to Ministry of Education | \$ 11,726,696 | \$ 11,548,164 | \$ 11,789,519 | \$ 11,766,984 | \$ 12,847,333 |
| Nominal GDP | \$ 321,132,353 | \$ 331,302,425 | \$ 336,934,566 | \$ 346,743,040 | \$ 393,200,000 |
| % | 3.7 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.4 | 3.3 |

Education Budget: Percentage Personnel and Operating



Appendix 2

Matrix of indicators of national Education Master Plan, EFA, regional Pacific Education Development Framework and donor (NZ Aid Programme) Education for Sustainable Development Action Plan.

| EMP / M&E Framework | Education For All (EFA) Report | Pacific Education Development (PEDF) | ESDAP |
|--|--|---|--|
| <p>1. Taku Ipukarea Kia Rangatira</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grade 4 Literacy (% at national standard) Research Publication | <p>Specific Relevant Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Literacy Rate (Goal 3/4) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part of Sub Sector 2 and Cross Cutting theme 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students achieving agreed standards in reading and maths for their age/grade. Teaching reflects the curriculum and success is reflected in increasing classroom engagement and achievement outcomes for students. |
| <p>2. Learning and Teaching</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retention Rate (beyond minimum leaving age) Primary School completion rate Pupil : Teacher Ratio % Teacher Aide % Special needs students Outer Island study award NCEA Results (Literacy and Numeracy) Literacy and Numeracy at Primary Level (Maori, English and Best – percentage at national standard) | <p>Specific Relevant Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GER/NER for ECCE (G1) and Primary (G2) All enrolment by gender (G5) Primary Survival (G2) Public/private enrolment (G1/2) Secondary net enrolment (G3) Secondary retention(G3) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part of Sub Sector 2 Part of Sub Sector 2 Part of Sub Sector 2 and Cross Cutting Theme 2 Part of Sub Sector 2 and Cross Cutting Theme 2 Part of Sub Sector 2 Part of Sub | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% of children in school. Increased number of children completing primary and secondary within the minimum time. Students achieving agreed standards in reading and maths for their age/grade. Teaching reflects the curriculum and success is reflected in increasing classroom engagement |

| | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of alternative courses (incl Dual Pathways) • TVET - Number of Courses Offered • Accredited Institutions • Tertiary Enrolment • GER ECE • ECE Teachers • % ECE Teachers with ECE Qualification • GER Primary and Secondary • NER Primary and Secondary (NER/GER show enrolment rates) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition to secondary(G3) • Student: Teacher ratios (G1-3) • Youth literacy (G3/4) <p>Nb Cook Islands has policy of social promotion. TVET courses and completion (G3)</p> | <p>Sector 2 and Cross Cutting theme 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part of Sub Sector 3 • Part of Sub Sector 1 • Part of Sub Sector 1 • Part of Sub Sector 1 • Part of Sub Sector 2 • Part of Sub Sector 2 | <p>and achievement outcomes for students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of training and support opportunities are available that enable more young people to join the formal labour market or become self employed |
| <p>3. Learning and Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GER Primary and Secondary • NER Primary and Secondary • Roll of community courses • Roll of life skills courses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing Education programmes (no. and disaggregation – G4) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part of Sub Sector 2 • Part of Sub Sector 2 • Part of Sub Sector 4 • Part of Sub Sector 4 | |
| <p>4. Infrastructure and Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education expenditure as % of government expenditure • Number of School buildings with disability access and facilities • % Teachers with academic qualifications • Principal Training - % successful completion • % Certified Teachers by level • % completion of annual PDS cycle and PD register | <p>Specific relevant indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % trained and qualified teachers (G1-3) • Teacher disaggregation by gender (G5) • Current expenditure as % of GDP • Current expenditure as % of government spending (by level G1-3) • Private School enrolment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part of Sub Sector 6 • Part of Sub Sector 6 • Part of Sub Sector 2 • Part of Sub Sector 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principals have clarity regarding their roles and responsibilities and the tools and systems to manage their schools well. • All teachers are trained and qualified and have access to regular sustained in-service professional development. • Invest in improving data collection and quality so partner countries and donors have the necessary information to measure progress and analyse needs. • Use a monitoring framework to assess the (four) results areas ...noting baseline data and targets within timeframes. |