



National Evaluation of  
Education Provision in Tokelau →

**CONFIRMED REPORT**

**February 2014**



## Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Background to the Review .....                              | 1  |
| Scope of the Review .....                                   | 1  |
| Overview .....  | 2  |
| Review Findings .....                                       | 4  |
| Governance .....  | 4  |
| Leadership .....  | 5  |
| Curriculum Management and Implementation .....              | 6  |
| Bilingualism .....  | 8  |
| Assessment .....  | 9  |
| The Quality of Teaching .....                               | 11 |
| Education Provision and Outcomes in the Senior School ..... | 12 |
| Early Childhood Education Provision .....                   | 13 |
| Education Environments.....                                 | 14 |
| Conclusion.....   | 18 |
| Future Actions .....  | 19 |
| Recommendations.....  | 19 |

## Background to the Review

Tokelau is a non self-governing territory of New Zealand. In 2004, responsibility for the management of public services, including the governance, resourcing and management of education, was devolved to the Taupulega (village council) on each atoll.

Tokelauan children are New Zealand citizens. Most Tokelauans live in New Zealand. Tokelauan parents and families expect that their children have access to the same standard of education provided for children in New Zealand and are prepared for future success in education, training and qualifications pathways and employment.

There are three schools in Tokelau providing education from early childhood to Year 13 for an approximate roll of 400 students: Tialeniu School (Fakaofu); Matiti School (Nukunonu); and Matauala School (Atafu).

The Minister of Education, the Director of Education, the Deputy Director of Education and the Tokelau Department of Education are based on Atafu. The Department of Education's role is that of lead advisor to the Tokelauan Government. This role includes the setting of national standards; the establishment of monitoring systems to evaluate the achievement of these standards; national planning; the provision of policy advice and the coordination of policy implementation; and managing relationships with New Zealand and international organisations.

In September 2013 the Education Review Office (ERO) undertook a national evaluation of the early childhood education (ECE) and schooling provision in Tokelau at the invitation of the Director of Education and the General Fono (the national assembly of representatives from each atoll).

## Scope of the Review

The purpose of the evaluation was to investigate and determine how effective Tokelau's education system is in providing a high quality education for every learner: in early childhood, primary schooling and Years 9 to 11.

ERO investigated the overall effectiveness of education provision in achieving valued student outcomes with a particular focus on:

- the quality of curriculum management and implementation
- the quality of assessment and teaching
- the role of leadership and governance in supporting and promoting teaching and learning.

In carrying out the evaluation, members of the review team gathered information through:

- looking at documents related to ECE areas and schools
- interviews/discussions with the leaders of the ECE areas and schools

- interviews/discussions with teachers/educators/support staff in ECE areas and schools
- observing classroom practice and interactions
- discussions with parents, families, faipule, pulenuku and Taupulega of each atoll, and officials in Apia.

At the end of the on-site process on each atoll the review team discussed the findings with the principal and the Taupulega. The team also discussed the findings with Department of Education personnel. This report, outlining the findings of the evaluation, provides a baseline for the future development of Tokelau's education system.

## Overview

*Ko te tamaiti te pūtake o te kaupapa  
The child - the heart of the matter*

Throughout the review, Tokelauan parents and families clearly articulated their aspirations for education and its critical role in shaping future opportunities for Tokelauan children in Tokelau and/or in New Zealand. There is an expectation that education provision:

- aligns with, and is of the same standard as, provision in the New Zealand system
- enables students to achieve high standards so that they can transition to other education settings such as New Zealand and Australia
- effectively prepares students for future education, training and qualifications pathways and employment.

*Overall current education provision in Tokelau does not meet these aspirations or Tokelauan children's entitlement as New Zealand citizens to high quality education opportunities.*

Under existing arrangements Tokelau has one school that provides education of a satisfactory standard, while provision in the other two schools is poor.

Tialeniu School is developing many of the policies and practices that enable sustainable education improvement as a result of the proactive and effective leadership of the principal. This improvement is supported by strong relationships with the Taupulega and the Department of Education. Compared to a New Zealand school the quality of education provided at Tialeniu School is sound but needs further development.

*Education provision at Matiti School needs significant improvement. Provision at Matauala School needs significant and urgent improvement.*

Many of the challenges facing the Tokelau education system identified by ERO have been identified in Tokelau's national<sup>1</sup> and education sector<sup>2</sup> strategies. The *Joint Commitment for Development (2011)*<sup>3</sup> identifies education as a key sector where New Zealand will work with Tokelau to improve outcomes for the communities on each of Tokelau's three atolls, in particular, through strengthening the workforce, systems and operations.

ERO's findings point to the need for a coherent, action-focused education development strategy in Tokelau that builds capability and capacity and focuses on:

- professional leadership and management
- further curriculum development and implementation support
- assessment and evaluation
- sustained professional learning and development provision to improve curriculum content knowledge, assessment practice and pedagogy
- effective bilingual education
- increasing overall workforce quality and retention
- high quality Early Childhood Education
- effective governance.

In addition, the schools are not well resourced, limiting teachers' ability to teach the curriculum effectively and students' opportunities to learn. The physical environments of the three schools are inadequate. The construction of new school buildings on Fakaofu and Atafu should be completed as a priority. ERO further recommends that urgent consideration be given to replacing Matiti School on Nukunonu.

A sustained focus on building capability and capacity on each atoll and the supporting infrastructure is needed to improve the quality of education provision in Tokelau. Coherent leadership, management and coordination of improvement efforts at every level of the system, involving key education leaders, the Department of Education, the Taupulega and principals, is required.

Throughout the review key stakeholders discussed with ERO the importance of effective, atoll-based, knowledgeable expertise<sup>4</sup> that can draw on existing strengths, establish effective relationships and support improvement over the time required to bed in sustainable change. This is an area where New Zealand could work with Tokelau to provide high quality expertise and support.

New Zealand also needs to revisit its role in, and approach to, education provision in Tokelau to ensure that it meets the aspirations of the Tokelauan people and Tokelauan children's entitlement as New Zealand citizens to high quality education opportunities.

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<sup>1</sup> Tokelau National Strategic Plan 2010 – 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Tokelau Education Sector Strategic Plan 2008 – 2013

<sup>3</sup> Tokelau – New Zealand Joint Commitment for Development 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Timperley, H. (2008). *Teacher professional learning and development*. UNESCO Educational Practices Series.

# Review Findings

## Governance

The *Review of the 2004 Devolution of Public Services to the Villages* (2012) provides a comprehensive overview of the changes and developments needed in a range of areas to support the devolution of public services. These areas apply to education and include, for example, governance, overall management, human resources, financial management and communications.

Responsibility for the governance of education is devolved to the Taupulega in each village. Although the Taupulega have focused on governing Tokelau well since the devolution of public services, the training and support for effective governance provided in the devolution process has been insufficient.<sup>5</sup> The Taupulega on all three atolls view education as a priority but this priority is not always reflected in decision-making.

The devolved environment requires effective governance. A sustained development programme is necessary to build the capacity of the Taupulega to effectively carry out their governance role in education. The completion of school buildings and the improvement of school environments, the appointment of effective leaders and teachers, and adequate resourcing of schools to implement the curriculum would have a significant and positive impact on the quality of education provision.

There is a need to clarify the governance roles and responsibilities of the Taupulega. In some contexts the roles of the Taupulega, education committees and the Parent Teacher Association are blurred, contributing to unclear lines of decision-making and poor communication. Where there is a lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities, conflict of interest and inappropriate use of power and influence are a concern. For example, on Nukunonu and Atafu atolls, school staffing issues indicated that those making appointments need support to identify and select staff with the knowledge, expertise and language capability to achieve the shifts in performance needed. The Taupulega could make better use of the Department of Education, as a source of advice and guidance in governance decision-making about educational matters.

In 2010, the Department of Education worked with school leaders and Taupulega to develop village education plans. Fakaofu has very clear educational goals in its Village Development Plan. Tialeniu School's strategic plan is aligned with and builds on the village plan. The principal reports regularly to the Taupulega. The Taupulega has a strong commitment to improving the quality of education and positive relationships with the Department of Education. These practices should also be reflected in governance and management approaches on Nukunonu and Atafu.

Nukunonu and Atafu need significant support to improve governance. ERO found little evidence of a positive, effective governance relationship between the Taupulega and education committees and the schools, or communication focused on improving the quality of education. School leaders are not aware of the goals of the Village Development Plans and there is a consequent lack of alignment between school

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<sup>5</sup> Government of Tokelau (2012). *Review of the 2004 Devolution of Public Services to the Villages*.

planning and village plans. Formal, regular reporting processes about the quality of education provision and outcomes are not in place.

ERO's evaluation confirms the findings and supports the recommendations on Governance outlined in the *Review of the 2004 Devolution of Public Services to the Villages* (2012).

*Clear governance accountabilities and associated guidelines, and strengthened processes for strategic planning, regular review and reporting to support good decision-making, are a priority. An ongoing, atoll-based development programme focused on building governance capability and capacity is urgently required.*

## Leadership

*The effectiveness of the principal's leadership is a significant factor in the quality of education provision in each school.*

At Tialeniu School the principal provides effective leadership and has developed school-wide, sustainable management systems. The vision for the school is clearly articulated and a comprehensive strategic plan that aligns with education goals in the village plan has been developed. Clear guidelines, policies and procedures provide sound foundations for teaching and learning. Shared and agreed expectations and staff performance appraisal processes support professional practice. The principal monitors planning for teaching and learning and provides useful feedback to teachers. There is an emphasis on building positive relationships with parents and a well supported homework centre has been established. A positive school culture is evident at Tialeniu School and students are focused on their learning. The school has positive relationships with the Taupulega and the Department of Education.

*The leaders of Matiti School (recently appointed) and Matauala School do not demonstrate the necessary experience, expertise and professionalism to develop the school conditions that support effective teaching and learning and enable all students to achieve education success.*

Management systems and processes needed to support sustainable school improvement in Matiti School and Matauala School include:

- coherent systems and guidelines for all areas of school operation
- setting priorities for school development as part of ongoing planning and review
- better use of existing resources to support school priorities and teaching and learning
- setting and sharing of goals and expectations for teaching and learning
- the regular monitoring of curriculum implementation and student attendance
- the appraisal of teacher performance
- establishing an effective partnership with the Taupulega focused on education development.



*The Department of Education has identified the importance of leadership development and support. A sustained on-atoll, in-school educational leadership and management programme is required to lift the quality of education provision at Matiti School and Matauala School, and to provide support for ongoing leadership development at Tialeniu School. Current leadership is too dependent on the capacity of key individuals rather than sustainable school-wide leadership providing for succession and development at all levels.*

*The provision of targeted support working alongside the principal, such as that provided by a commissioner in the New Zealand context, should be considered for Matiti School and Matauala School. The Department of Education should take a more active role in the appointment of school leaders and their appraisal; the development of clear expectations and guidelines for school leaders; and improved school monitoring.*

## **Curriculum Management and Implementation**

The Tokelau National Curriculum Policy Framework<sup>6</sup> (2006-2010), developed in consultation with representatives from each village, provides the foundation for education provision. The purpose of the curriculum is to enable students “to develop the skills, knowledge, values and attitudes to maximise the opportunities that are available to them both locally and internationally” within an environment that values lifelong learning and sustainable development (p. 4). The national curriculum sets out the required standards of achievement for learners and affirms bilingualism in Tokelauan and English. The model for the curriculum was drawn from the New Zealand and Samoan curriculum frameworks and statements. Seven learning areas for primary schooling are identified, with additional learning areas (for example, business studies and technology) being available in secondary schooling.

*The Tokelau National Curriculum Policy Framework provides a sound basis for education provision in Tokelauan schools. However, further development of some curriculum statements and teacher resources to support curriculum implementation is needed.*

*Tokelau and the New Zealand Government should consider how additional support can be provided to support the Department of Education in the further development of the curriculum.*

Curriculum statements to support curriculum implementation are only available in some areas such as languages (English and Tokelau), mathematics, social sciences and science. While some curriculum statements have recently been revised (English and mathematics), curriculum statements have yet to be developed for health and physical education, visual and performing arts, technology and environmental science. Some curriculum statements could place more emphasis on the importance of using local knowledge and contexts for learning.

In some curriculum areas coherent steps and pathways to enable students to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful in senior secondary schooling and

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<sup>6</sup> Tokelau Department of Education (2006). *National Curriculum Policy Framework*.

manage the Year 12 to 13 University of South Pacific (USP) course material could be further developed.

Where there are frequent staff changes and/or teachers lack deep curriculum knowledge and teaching expertise, the availability of curriculum statements (which provide the detail about learning objectives, outcomes and teaching approaches) is important. Supporting teacher resources, as well as access to school-based specialist support so that teachers can unpack the curriculum and its implications for learning programmes, are also needed.

*There is wide variation in the quality of curriculum implementation across the three schools.*

At Tialeniu School curriculum implementation is aligned with the Tokelau National Curriculum Policy Framework. The principal has actively supported staff to understand and plan programmes that reflect the curriculum framework. Curriculum statements are being used throughout the school. Special education needs are recognised and teachers work with parents to develop Individual Education Plans. The principal has developed detailed statements of his expectations for teachers with indicators of good practices. Most teachers evaluate their teaching and learning programmes each week. The next step for this school is to continue to embed expectations in professional practice.

At Matiti School and Matauala School, ERO found little evidence that the school curriculum is aligned with the Tokelau National Curriculum Policy Framework. Some teachers are using the curriculum statements when planning but most teachers do not implement the curriculum well. Teachers do not have access to detailed statements of expectations about implementing the curriculum in the classroom with indicators of good practice. Matiti School has recently set up a curriculum committee to improve curriculum management and delivery.

There is no formal identification of students with special education needs, no guidelines for their support and no evidence of differentiated approaches to support their learning.

*In their governance role the Taupulega are accountable for the effective implementation of the Tokelau National Curriculum Policy Framework. The Taupulega could improve their support for schools by, for example, acknowledging and responding promptly to principals' reports about curriculum implementation and students' progress and achievement. These reports should also be used to inform decision-making about education improvement.*

*Teachers need access to well planned, ongoing, school-based opportunities to develop the expertise to use the curriculum to improve learning programmes for all students.*

## Bilingualism

*“The Tokelau Curriculum affirms bilingualism in Tokelauan and English as an important goal of education. To be bilingual is to be literate in both languages. The Tokelau Curriculum will ensure that all children are literate in Tokelauan and are able to use it for social, cultural and academic purposes. As well the Tokelau Curriculum will develop students’ levels of literacy and English necessary for learning and communication ” (p. 14).*

The Tokelau National Curriculum Policy Framework sets out specific guidelines related to curriculum, materials, teacher quality, assessment and monitoring and evaluation. A system level strategic approach is necessary to ensure that these guidelines are implemented and the goal for bilingualism can be realised.

Curriculum statements to support some of the learning areas are available only in English. As outlined in the later sections of this report, in two of the three schools, overall provision and use of materials to support curriculum implementation is poor. To achieve the goal of bilingualism, schools, teachers and students must have access to the curriculum materials and resources that support effective teaching and learning in English and Tokelauan.

The broad guidelines for the time allocation for language instruction are followed in Tialeniu School, but not in Matiti School and Matauala School.

The quality of language teaching is variable. Some teachers do not have the knowledge and expertise to teach Tokelauan. For example, at Matiti School most of the teachers are contract teachers and do not have the skills to teach Tokelauan. Similarly, some other teachers do not have the knowledge and expertise to teach English well. Parents emphasised the need for a greater focus on the teaching of English.

ERO observed a lack of teacher knowledge about, and expertise in, second language acquisition as well as effective literacy teaching. The lack of understanding about language acquisition is reflected in the placing of untrained teachers in ECE and junior classes – critical developmental periods for language learning and establishing the foundations for future success in schooling.

If students’ opportunities to learn their first language well are inadequate, their learning of a second language such as English will also be limited, as will their achievement at higher curriculum levels where the language demands are increasingly complex.

Schools currently do not formally monitor or report on how well the bilingual curriculum is being implemented.

At a system level language outcomes in Tokelauan and English are monitored through the Tokelau Achievement and Progress Assessments (TAPA) at Years 4 and 6. In 2012 the Year 4 levels of achievement in Tokelauan and English show that many

students are at risk of not achieving adequate reading and writing levels in either language.

The 2012 results show that at Year 4 the majority of students are performing at a basic level in Tokelauan.<sup>7</sup> The TAPA report itself notes that

*“if after four years at school [students’] achievement in their first language is basic, it will have serious consequences for further literacy and learning development in any language”* (p. 3).

The report also states that the achievement data over the three years 2010-2012

*“highlights a common issue of critical underachievement and basic levels of Tokelau language literacy across the three atolls”* (p. 3).

Urgent action is required to improve teaching and learning in Tokelauan. Failure to address the issues associated with students’ poor performance in Tokelauan will have long term consequences for the identity, language and culture of the Tokelauan people as well as their future outcomes.

*Tokelau and the New Zealand Government should consider how to provide the resourcing necessary to implement the languages and bilingualism policy effectively. Increased support in terms of teacher expertise, materials, school-based support and professional learning and development opportunities for teachers is needed.*

*A coherent, sustained languages and bilingualism strategy is required to improve the quality of language teaching across the curriculum areas and lift student outcomes.*

## **Assessment**

*Assessment is an area for significant development. ERO found little evidence of teachers using the approaches to assessment outlined in the Tokelau Curriculum Policy Framework.*

There is now a large body of international research showing that an over-emphasis on testing and ranking has negative effects on teaching and learning. In Tokelau, assessment is rarely used to adapt the curriculum to meet students’ learning needs. Summative testing and the ranking of students, as well as teaching to the test, is over emphasised.

Teachers lack knowledge about the value of formative assessment practices in accelerating student learning and achievement. Although class sizes are small students do not have individual learning goals and teachers do not give students sufficient feedback on what they are doing well and/or their next learning steps. The range of assessment tools available to teachers is limited. In curriculum areas where there are no curriculum statements, such as health and physical education and visual and performing arts, no assessment takes place. It is difficult to make judgements

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<sup>7</sup>Tokelau Department of Education. TAPA Results: Tokelau Language 2012.

about student achievement and progress over time where systems for measuring progress as students move through the year levels are not in place.

Tialeniu School has put in place clear expectations, practices and some school systems to guide assessment practice. Practices developed through recent external professional learning and development initiatives continue. For example, all teachers in Years 1 to 6 have carried out running records assessments in reading. School-wide collection of formal assessment results for Years 1 to 11 occurs and teachers have good assessment records. A small number of teachers at Tialeniu provide students with formative feedback and next steps for learning.

At Tialeniu School parents receive written reports twice yearly. These include scores for monthly tests, the half year score and ranking in class. Parent interviews are well attended. The quality of information reported to parents could be improved through a focus on showing what students can do, what they need to focus on next in their learning and how parents can support learning. The principal provides twice-yearly reports about student achievement to the Taupulega. However, ERO found no evidence of the acknowledgement or use of these reports.

School-wide expectations and guidelines for assessment do not exist at Matiti School and Matauala School. As a result, school-wide assessment information is not collected and there are limited teacher records of assessment. Very few teachers give students feedback about their achievement and the next steps for learning. The marking of student work is irregular. Although a small number of teachers adapt their programmes to support struggling learners, overall assessment is not used to support individual learning. Poor assessment practice means that teachers do not have good information about student achievement levels to plan programmes that meet their learning needs. Parents receive twice-yearly reports but these were not shared with ERO. Parent interviews are held.

In these schools ERO found little evidence that participation in previous professional learning and development about assessment continued to have an impact on practice. The Taupulega in Nukunonu does not receive written reports about the quality of education provision and outcomes. In Atafu, although the principal recently submitted a written report, the Taupulega did not receive it.

*The Department of Education needs to put in place a sustained, on-atoll programme of development and ongoing support for leaders and teachers in assessment and evaluation to realise the aspirations in the curriculum. Schools would benefit from having exemplars of what effective assessment practice in the classroom looks like.*

At a system level there is a need to review the use of the TAPA. The TAPA assess the competency of Year 4 and Year 6 students against the objectives and learning outcomes of the Tokelau curriculum for English, Tokelauan and mathematics. While the TAPA reports are carefully analysed by the Department of Education and provide detailed information about student achievement, the results do not appear to be well understood or used by teachers or most school leaders. On two atolls, the results have not been shared with the Taupulega. At a school, village and national level TAPA reports could be better used to improve the quality of teaching.

## The Quality of Teaching

*The overall quality of teaching does not enable all Tokelauan students to achieve the education standards outlined in the Tokelau National Curriculum Policy Framework. Although ERO identified some examples of very good teaching, particularly in Tialeniu School, examples of poor and very poor teaching were evident across all schools, and predominant in Matauala School.*

International and national research findings show that effective teaching is of central importance in improving student learning and outcomes.<sup>8</sup> A student learning with a high performing teacher can make significantly greater progress over three years, compared with a student learning with a low performing teacher.<sup>9</sup>

The small class sizes in the Tokelau schools provide the potential for students to participate in high quality differentiated learning programmes that respond to their individual learning strengths and needs. However, this opportunity is not being taken up by enough teachers.

Where ERO observed effective learning programmes, teachers:

- demonstrated strong subject knowledge and assessment and pedagogical knowledge and expertise
- followed the curriculum guidelines
- shared the purpose of learning with students
- planned programmes based on student's identified strengths and learning needs
- used the local environment and knowledge and cultural experiences as contexts for student learning
- used a range of strategies to engage students in learning
- provided one-to-one assistance for students who needed additional support
- used individual development plans to help students with special education needs
- provided students with feedback on their achievement and next steps for learning
- provided attractive and well organised classrooms that included references to the local community and showed students' learning.

Features of ineffective teaching included:

- very limited subject and pedagogical knowledge
- an overemphasis on teacher directed approaches with students copying information from the board
- little use of the local environment and knowledge and cultural experiences as contexts for student learning

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<sup>8</sup> Alton-Lee, A. (2003). *Quality teaching for diverse students: Best evidence synthesis*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

<sup>9</sup> Sanders, W., & Rivers, J. (1996). *Cumulative and residual effects of teachers on future student achievement*. Tennessee: University of Tennessee.

- the use of a limited range of teaching strategies
- poor assessment practice and little differentiation in teaching and learning approaches (even in composite classes) to respond to individual students
- inappropriate behaviour management strategies such as verbal humiliation and hitting of students and leaving classes unsupervised
- disengaged and poorly motivated students.

Significant issues undermine the development of a highly performing teaching profession in Tokelau.

These issues need to be addressed in a coherent way to improve the quality of teaching through:

- having effective professional leadership in each school
- developing clear expectations about the professional standards for all teachers
- reducing the high turnover of staff and numbers of untrained teachers
- lifting the quality of teacher recruitment, selection and appointment processes
- resolving the tensions, such as salary scale issues, between local and contract teachers
- ensuring all schools have robust appraisal systems and processes operating
- access to high quality, ongoing, in-school professional learning and development opportunities that improve professional practice.

Some strategies are in place to increase the number of trained teachers. These include the scholarship programme through Massey University in New Zealand and access for teachers to the USP teacher training courses. At Tialeniu School where the quality of teaching overall is significantly better, a higher proportion of teachers are qualified, staff changes are less frequent, staff performance is evaluated and monitored and the school is building professional capability and practice through effective leadership and external and internal professional learning and development opportunities.

## **Education Provision and Outcomes in the Senior School**

Tokelauan schools do not have the capacity to provide programmes at Years 12 to 13 without the support of USP. Very good provision is made for students at these levels. The contract teachers have specialist knowledge and expertise, student:teacher ratios are low and the quality of curriculum resourcing is good. Students have access to a much wider range of course options. ERO observed some high quality small group instruction and high levels of student participation at these levels. USP classrooms were better maintained and students had better access to ICT.

Nevertheless, the approach to education provision at Years 12 to 13, focusing on USP pathways and qualifications, does not support the stated aspirations of parents and the Taupulega who want their children to have access to qualifications that provide wider future opportunities. Parents and Village Council members also voiced concerns about the lack of opportunities provided for students to identify strengths, interests and career pathways early on in their schooling so that they receive individual support

to achieve their aspirations and goals. There are few alternative training opportunities, for example, agriculture or trades, for students who do not want to pursue an academic pathway or who have not achieved success at school.

Low numbers of students pass the year 11 examination. The Education Sector Report 2012<sup>10</sup> identifies that across the three schools in Tokelau: 27% of students passed mathematics; 37% of students passed Tokelauan; and 40% of students passed English. At Matauala School only two out of thirteen students passed the year 11 examination in 2012.

Overall, provision in Tokelau does not prepare students well to transition to other education settings such as New Zealand, or future education, training and qualifications pathways. The variable quality of teaching throughout schooling means many students have significant gaps in subject knowledge and low levels of English.

## Early Childhood Education Provision

*Early Childhood Education provision is underdeveloped across the three atolls.*

The Tokelau National Curriculum Policy Framework outlines the value of ECE, the broad principles that underpin curriculum development and implementation, and the importance of a flexible and responsive approach to children's learning. The framework for ECE provision draws on Te Whāriki (the New Zealand ECE curriculum) and the Early Years Curriculum.

Curriculum statements to guide teacher practice have yet to be developed for ECE.

ERO found little evidence of the principles of Te Whāriki or the Early Years Curriculum being implemented. In the absence of curriculum guidelines for ECE, the approach to planning learning programmes is strongly influenced by school approaches. This results in practices that do not support high quality ECE such as the use of school unit plans and work plans and formal approaches to teaching and learning.

The lack of appropriate ECE resources limits the breadth and richness of the programmes provided in ECE. Basic resources for a formal approach to literacy are available. However, areas are very poorly resourced for learning in other curriculum areas such as mathematics, science, art activities, music, exploratory and outdoor play. Existing resources lack relevance in terms of children's development and learning, experience and culture. Although ERO observed instances where meaningful local contexts were used to support children's interests and learning, much greater use could be made of the local environment and natural resources to provide opportunities for exploration and extending children's language and thinking.

Some teaching and learning approaches are developmentally inappropriate for an ECE context. Long group sessions that are teacher-led provide few learning opportunities that connect with, and extend, children's individual experiences and understandings.

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<sup>10</sup> Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit, February 2013.



ERO observed a limited range of teaching strategies that respond to children's interests and levels of development, or instances where teachers are actively involved in children's play using it as a springboard for learning.

No assessment linked to the planning of appropriate and responsive learning programmes is undertaken in ECE. ERO identified some inappropriate assessment activities such as the use of worksheets and summative assessment activities for testing literacy and numeracy skills. Approaches such as using individual learning stories that show children's learning over time have been introduced but not sustained, probably due to a lack of teacher understanding and commitment to the purpose and use of such approaches.

Teachers have few opportunities to participate in professional learning and development opportunities specific to ECE. The lack of a planned, focused approach to ECE limits improvement. Parents identified a lack of support for ECE by the Department of Education.

*Improving ECE provision requires a comprehensive and sustained approach. The Department of Education should develop and implement a five year strategic plan (2014 - 2018) that lifts the quality of ECE provision through developing Tokelau-based capacity and capability.*

Under the current model, such a plan would need to focus on:

- building professional leadership
- curriculum development
- adequate resourcing of the curriculum
- appropriate assessment
- the implementation of developmentally appropriate programmes
- bilingual education
- building capability through high quality teacher training and ongoing professional learning and development programmes.

An alternative approach could be to consider the development of a parent-led model such as Te Kohanga Reo or Playcentre in New Zealand. Such a model would enable parents to be more directly involved in supporting their children's language development and learning, while also building community capacity and understanding about education.

## **Education Environments**

### **School property and facilities**

*The physical environments of the three schools are inadequate.*

Long delays in the completion of new school buildings mean that many classes are operating in inadequate spaces in very poor condition. Students do not have access to science laboratories, technology areas with suitable equipment, or adequate sports equipment.

Access to computers is limited. Issues around Information and Communications Technology (ICT) connectivity mean that teachers and students do not have ready access to the internet. Investment in 21<sup>st</sup> century technologies and the capability to use them effectively has the potential to transform teaching and learning in Tokelau, making a significant difference to students' outcomes and opportunities for future success in a global environment.

*Tokelau and the New Zealand Government should consider how to provide 21<sup>st</sup> century learning environments in Tokelau and the infrastructure required to effectively support this provision.*

ERO found serious inadequacies in the provision of toilet facilities and their hygiene.

The very dilapidated buildings at Matiti School and Matauala School are a significant health and safety risk. At Matiti School there are cracks in the concrete pillars supporting the walls, uneven concrete floors, holes in the walls and broken windows. The roof leaks in many classrooms, the floors are wet and there are risks around electrics and water. Matauala School also has holes in the walls, broken windows and uneven concrete floors. Most of the teaching spaces are unsuitable. Disrespect for property and furniture is evident in some classrooms. A general lack of pride in the school environment is evident and aspects of the school surroundings are unhygienic.

The construction of a new school buildings on Fakaofu and Atafu has extended over four to five years. These building projects must be completed as a priority. ERO recommends that urgent consideration be given to replacing Matiti School on Nukunonu.

## **Teaching resources and materials**

Overall the schools are not well resourced. In curriculum areas such as science and technology where students need to learn through practical activities and hands-on engagement, teachers' ability to teach the curriculum effectively is severely limited. A significant investment in adequate resources in both Tokelauan and English is required to support the effective implementation of the bilingual policy.

Teaching resources, although inadequate, are well organised and accessible for teachers and students at Tialeniu School. At Matiti School and Matauala School text and book resources are poorly organised, often in poor condition and not well used. Some resources are yet to be taken out of the boxes in which they were delivered.

## **Other health and safety issues**

ERO identified several other issues related to students' health and safety. These included: risks associated with student movement around building sites; boat safety risk management and adult:child ratios on Fakaofu where students travel by boat each day to school; and ensuring there is an appropriate hazards management process and maintenance programme in place for playground structures on Atafu.

## Role of the Department of Education

Since the devolution of responsibility for the governance of education to the Taupulega in each village, the Department of Education in Tokelau has undertaken a programme of strategic policy development that provides a framework for education provision. This framework includes, for example, the Tokelau National Curriculum Policy Framework; national curriculum statements; the Year 11 external examinations system; the senior secondary programme for Years 12 and 13; the provision of teacher professional development at both a system and school-based level; and the Government of Tokelau's Scholarships Policy.

Many of the challenges facing the Tokelau education system identified in this report have been identified in Tokelau's national<sup>11</sup> and education sector<sup>12</sup> strategies.

During the review, parents and village community members identified the need for the Taupulega and the Department of Education to work together more effectively as well as the need for increased support from the Department. The location and organisation of the current education infrastructure creates challenges in terms of a coherent approach to system improvement. The Minister of Education, Director and Deputy Director of Education are permanently based in Atafu. Distance between the islands, difficulties with ICT connectivity and access, and a tendency for each island to work independently, contribute to difficulties in communication between key education leaders, the Department of Education, the Taupulega and principals.

Improving the quality of education provision in Tokelau requires a focus on the effective implementation of education policy - what it will take to build capability and capacity on each atoll and the supporting infrastructure needed. Throughout the review key stakeholders discussed with ERO the importance of effective, atoll-based, knowledgeable expertise<sup>13</sup> that can draw on existing strengths, establish effective relationships and support improvement over the time required to bed in sustainable change. This expertise would need to be appointed for a period of at least three years and up to five years to achieve the shifts in practice required.

Coherent leadership, management and coordination of improvement efforts at every level of the system are needed to realise the Department of Education's mission: "to raise educational achievement, promote equality of opportunity and outcomes for all students and improve the quality of education services delivery".<sup>14</sup>

*The Department of Education has a key role to play in the future improvement of education provision in Tokelau. Systems and processes to strengthen relationships between the Department and the Taupulega should be developed. A team of atoll-based experts should be established, with supporting infrastructure, to build leadership and teaching capability through the provision of ongoing professional learning and development and advisory support.*

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<sup>11</sup> Tokelau National Strategic Plan 2010 – 2015.

<sup>12</sup> Tokelau Education Sector Strategic Plan 2008 – 2013.

<sup>13</sup> Timperley, H. (2008). *Teacher professional learning and development*. UNESCO Educational Practices Series.

<sup>14</sup> Tokelau National Strategic Plan 2010 – 2015.

## New Zealand's Role

The *Joint Commitment for Development (2011)* identifies education as a key sector where New Zealand will work with Tokelau to improve outcomes for the communities on each of Tokelau's three atolls. New Zealand is committed to "improving the quality of education at all levels through strengthened workforce, systems and operations."<sup>15</sup>

During the review, parents and Village Council members emphasised the special nature of New Zealand's relationship with Tokelau and New Zealand's responsibility in ensuring that Tokelauan children and students have access to quality education provision as New Zealand citizens. Some considered that devolution had contributed to a decline in the quality of education provision and outcomes. On each atoll concerns were expressed about the lack of integration between the Tokelauan education system and the New Zealand system; the lack of access to well qualified, effective teachers; and the inadequacy of resources to support learning.

Most Tokelauans live in New Zealand. Many students currently attending school in Tokelau are likely to live in New Zealand at a later stage. Parents recognised a direct relationship between the quality of primary education, achievement in secondary schooling, ability to access or succeed in tertiary education, and employment opportunities. They were concerned that current poor quality education provision in Tokelau creates the potential for Tokelauans to become a disadvantaged group in New Zealand society.

New Zealand needs to do significantly more to support improvement in the quality of education provision in Tokelau.

ERO's evaluation identifies the need for significant improvement in most aspects of education provision investigated. A consistent finding relates to the importance of sustained, atoll-based capability and capacity building to improve the effectiveness of practice and outcomes. There are a number of areas for development identified in this report where New Zealand can provide resourcing and expertise, for example: governance training and support; additional curriculum development; and materials to support the effective implementation of the bilingualism policy.

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<sup>15</sup> Tokelau – New Zealand Joint Commitment for Development 2011.

## Conclusion

Significant and urgent action is necessary to improve the overall quality of education provision in Tokelau. Although provision is currently sound in one school, the quality of the principal's leadership is a significant factor in ongoing improvement. The overall education system in Tokelau is fragile.

The issues identified in this report indicate that education in Tokelau does not provide every learner with the learning opportunities that will enable them to achieve their potential and be successful in other education settings and beyond schooling. Recent approaches to capability and capacity building have not resulted in sustainable improvement across the education system.

The Department of Education's role and functions in ensuring and supporting quality education provision need to be reconsidered – the nature of its leadership and management responsibilities in ensuring the system is fit for purpose; its role in system capability and capacity building to support effective governance, leadership and teaching; its monitoring role in ensuring schools' accountability for achieving national curriculum outcomes; its intervention approach where students' education entitlement is at risk; and the kind of infrastructure needed to enable sustainable improvement. Consideration should be given to developing a regulatory framework for education that makes schools' accountabilities clear.

There is also a need to revisit New Zealand's role in, and approach to, education provision in Tokelau to ensure that it meets the aspirations of the Tokelauan people and Tokelauan children's entitlement as New Zealand citizens to high quality education opportunities.

This evaluation points to the need for a coherent, action-focused education development strategy that builds capability and capacity and focuses on:

- professional leadership and management
- further curriculum development and implementation support
- assessment and evaluation
- sustained professional learning and development provision to improve curriculum content knowledge, assessment practice and pedagogy
- effective bilingual education
- increasing overall workforce quality and retention
- quality Early Childhood Education
- effective governance.

Improving the quality of school environments is an immediate priority.

## Future Actions

This evaluation report presents ERO's findings about the effectiveness of Tokelau's education system to the General Fono and the Administrator of Tokelau. The report provides a baseline for the future development of Tokelau's education system.

ERO has sent letters to Tialeniu School, Matiti School and Matauala School and their village councils identifying what is going well and what immediate improvements are needed as discussed with the principal and the Taupulaga at the end of the on-site process (See Appendix 1).

ERO will also provide this report to Ministers in the New Zealand Government with an interest in education provision in Tokelau.

ERO thanks the Director of Education and the General Fono for the opportunity to provide this baseline evaluation of the quality of education in Tokelau. Depending on the actions taken by various parties as a result of this 2013 report, ERO would be receptive to an invitation to undertake follow-up evaluation services to support capability building in Tokelau with a further full evaluation in 2015-2016.

## Recommendations

ERO recommends that

1. Tokelau responds to the issues identified in this report that can be actioned immediately.
2. Tokelau works with New Zealand to develop coherent, a five year, action-focused Education Development Strategy that builds capability and capacity and addresses the issues raised in this report:
  - professional leadership and management
  - further curriculum development and implementation support
  - assessment and evaluation
  - sustained professional learning and development provision to improve curriculum content knowledge, assessment practice and pedagogy
  - effective bilingual education
  - increasing overall workforce quality and retention
  - high quality Early Childhood Education
  - effective governance.
3. The New Zealand Government and Tokelau consider how to ensure that Tokelauan students have access to 21st century learning environments.

# **Appendix 1**

6 November 2013

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Fakafetai ki te alofa o te Atua, kua feiloaki fiafia ki tatou.

Greetings and salutations to the Faipule, Pulenuku and members of the Taupulega in Atafu.

Thank you for the warm welcome and hospitality shown to members of the Education Review Office (ERO) team. All members of the team enjoyed the positive experiences they had meeting and talking to children and adults on your atoll.

The purpose of the ERO review was to evaluate the quality of education provision in Tokelau – to identify the strengths and challenges for education and provide a baseline for future development. The review focused on early childhood education (ECE), primary schooling, and early secondary schooling (Years 9 – 11). ERO looked closely at the quality of leadership, curriculum management, assessment and teaching at your school and the impact these had on student progress and achievement. Information was gathered through discussions and interviews with Taupulega, school principal and staff, education committee, PTA, parents and Department of Education members. It is intended that the findings are used to inform future policy development and educational improvements in Tokelau.

The ERO team and the Taupulega both emphasised the need for honest and frank feedback about Matauala School, and to keep “the child at the heart of the matter”. Given this important commitment, the team was impressed by the careful

consideration you gave to its findings and your stated intention to respond to issues identified.

This letter is a follow-up to the oral report that was given to the Taupulega by the ERO team leader at the end of the review work on your atoll. It makes clear the positive factors that were spoken about, as well as those aspects that need to improve, and which are noted here as immediate priorities for your action.

### **Key finding**

Significant and urgent improvements are needed in the quality of education at Matauala School to improve low levels of student achievement and progress.

### **Positive Developments**

Some good teaching was shown by a small number of teachers who: actively supported and affirmed students' learning ensured children were behaving well and interested in the lesson  
planned lessons to meet the needs of the students and provided one-to-one support  
had positive relationships with students and supported positive relationships between students.

### **Priorities for Development**

The Taupulega and the Education Committee, together with the principal and staff, need to urgently prepare an action plan to develop: agreed expectations, with the staff, for teaching practice policies and guidelines to support teaching practice in planning, delivering, assessing and evaluating teaching and learning programmes a positive behaviour management programme a responsive early childhood education programme The principal needs to report regularly to the Education Committee and the Taupulega about student learning and achievement, and progress against the action plan

The roles of the Education Committee and PTA need to be clarified so that everyone understands their responsibilities. Ensure students get maximum learning opportunities by giving attention to the number of days the school is open and hours of teaching provided, teachers' commitment to their classes, and the quality of the current classroom environments. Address the poor condition of the school buildings currently in use. Ensure the immediate completion of the new school and the establishment of an ongoing maintenance programme.

The Taupulega seek advice and guidance from the Department of Education about ways to address the issues facing the school.



### **Recommendation**

The Taupulega, Education Committee and Department of Education agree on the best way to organise the significant support needed to improve school leadership and the quality of education at Matauala School.

I hope that you find the summary above useful. This letter will be followed up by a formal report to the General Fono, and the Administrator, Jonathan Kings.

Thank you for the positive way you have engaged in the review process. ERO looks forward to continuing its support for the future of education in Tokelau.

Yours sincerely

[signed]

Stephanie Greaney  
**Acting National Manager Evaluation Services**

6 November 2013

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Fakafetai ki te alofa o te Atua, kua feiloaki fiafia ki tatou

Greetings and salutations to the Faipule, Pulenuke and members of the Taupulega in Fakaofu.

Thank you for the warm welcome and hospitality shown to members of the Education Review Office (ERO) team. All members of the team enjoyed the positive experiences they had meeting and talking to children and adults on your atoll.

The purpose of the ERO review was to evaluate the quality of education provision in Tokelau – to identify the strengths and challenges for education and provide a baseline for future development. The review focused on early childhood education (ECE), primary schooling, and early secondary schooling (Years 9 – 11). ERO looked closely at the quality of leadership, curriculum management, assessment and teaching at your school and the impact these had on student progress and achievement. Information was gathered through discussions and interviews with Taupulega, school principal and staff, education committee, PTA, parents and Department of Education members. It is intended that the findings are used to inform future policy development and educational improvements in Tokelau.

The ERO team and the Taupulega both emphasised the need for honest and frank feedback about Tialeniu school, and to keep “the child at the heart of the matter”. Given this important commitment, the team was impressed by the careful consideration you gave to its findings and your stated intention to respond to issues identified.

This letter is a follow-up to the oral report that was given to the Taupulega by the ERO team leader at the end of the review work on your atoll. It makes clear the

positive factors that were spoken about, as well as those aspects that need to improve, and which are noted here as immediate priorities for your action.

### **Key finding**

Education provision is sound but needs some improvement at Tialeniu School.

### **Positive Developments**

- The principal provides effective leadership - he has developed sound foundations for teaching and learning
- The Taupulega have a strong commitment to improving the quality of education and, together with the principal, have a positive relationship with the Department of Education
- The school has clear guidelines, policies and procedures for all aspects of its operation
- There are shared and agreed expectations for teaching practice
- Well established partnerships with parents are evident
- Staff performance appraisal is in place
- There is a positive school tone and students are settled, positive and respectful
- The school has positive relationships with the Taupulega
- Some very good teaching practices are evident where teachers:
  - follow curriculum guidelines
  - share the purpose of learning with students
  - plan according to student needs
  - provide one-to-one support for students
  - use individual education plans to help students with special needs
  - provide attractive and well organised classrooms which include references to the local community and show students' learning.

### **Priorities for Development**

- The Taupulega respond to the principal's reports about the quality of education and continue to support him
- The Taupulega share their vision and expectations for education with the principal and community, including an emphasis on a positive start through high quality early childhood education
- Complete the building of the new school as soon as possible.

### **Recommendation**

- The Taupulega, together with support from the Department of Education, continue to support the principal to improve the quality of education at Tialeniu School.

I hope that you find the summary above useful. This letter will be followed up by a formal report to the General Fono, and the Administrator, Jonathan Kings.

Thank you for the positive way you have engaged in the review process. ERO looks forward to continuing its support for the future of education in Tokelau.

Yours sincerely

[signed]

Stephanie Greaney  
**Acting National Manager Evaluation Services**

6 November 2013

General Manager  
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**TOKELAU**

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CC: Principal  
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Fakafetai ki te alofa o te Atua, kua feiloaki fiafia ki tatou

Greetings and salutations to the Faipule, Pulenuku and members of the Taupulega in Nukunonu.

Thank you for the warm welcome and hospitality shown to members of the Education Review Office (ERO) team. All members of the team enjoyed the positive experiences they had meeting and talking to children and adults on your atoll.

The purpose of the ERO review was to evaluate the quality of education provision in Tokelau – to identify the strengths and challenges for education and provide a baseline for future development. The review focused on early childhood education (ECE), primary schooling, and early secondary schooling (Years 9 – 11). ERO looked closely at the quality of leadership, curriculum management, assessment and teaching at your school and the impact these had on student progress and achievement. Information was gathered through discussions and interviews with Taupulega, school principal and staff, education committee, PTA, parents and Department of Education members. It is intended that the findings are used to inform future policy development and educational improvements in Tokelau.

The ERO team and the Taupulega both emphasised the need for honest and frank feedback about Matiti school, and to keep “the child at the heart of the matter”. Given this important commitment, the team was impressed by the careful consideration you gave to its findings and your stated intention to respond to issues identified.

This letter is a follow-up to the oral report that was given to the Taupulega by the ERO team leader at the end of the review work on your atoll. It makes clear the positive factors that were spoken about, as well as those aspects that need to improve, and which are noted here as immediate priorities for your action.

### **Key finding**

Significant improvements are needed in the quality of education at Matiti School to address low levels of student achievement and progress.

### **Positive Developments**

ERO saw examples of good teaching in some classrooms. In these classrooms:

- students are behaving well
- the purpose of learning is shared with students
- curriculum guidelines are followed
- one-to-one support is provided for students
- lesson planning meets the learning needs of students.

A curriculum committee has been recently formed.

### **Priorities for Development**

- The principal needs to urgently prepare a short-term action plan to develop:
  - agreed expectations, with the staff, for teaching practice
  - policies and guidelines to support teaching practice in planning, assessing and evaluating teaching and learning programmes
  - a responsive early childhood education programme
  - a clear reporting framework for Taupulega and the Education Committee
- The Taupulega seek advice and guidance from the Department of Education about ways to address the issues facing the school, including the current poor condition of the school buildings
- The roles and responsibilities of the PTA and Education Committee should be clarified.

### **Recommendation**

- The Taupulega, Education Committee and Department of Education agree on the best way to organise the significant support needed to improve school leadership and the quality of education at Matiti School.

I hope that you find the summary above useful. This letter will be followed up by a formal report to the General Fono, and the Administrator Jonathan Kings.

Thank you for the positive way you have engaged in the review process. ERO looks forward to continuing its support for the future of education in Tokelau.

Yours sincerely

[signed]

Stephanie Greaney

**Acting National Manager Evaluation Services**