



## **Tertiary Education Migration and Cook Islands' Development**

By

Lea Louisa Raymond

A thesis submitted to the Victoria University of Wellington

In fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Development Studies

Victoria University of Wellington

(2017)

# Abstract

---

In 2016, field research in the Cook Islands explored the correlation of migration, education and development in the Pacific by focussing on the impacts of tertiary education migration on the development of the Cook Islands. A total of 29 participants contributed to this research, most fitting into at least one of these three categories: a) returned tertiary education migrants b) non-returned education migrants, and c) Cook Islands Governmental officials.

Depopulation is one of the greatest challenges for the Cook Islands today. While striving for rapid development and for meaningful participation in an ever-changing global economy, obtaining overseas university degrees is seen as an attractive option for many young Cook Islanders. It is not only seen as a way to contribute to the development of their home country, but to also ensure that opportunities for personal growth are abundant. With many fearing that the departure of the 'brightest minds' to overseas universities results in brain drain, this research explores the drivers for the decision-making regarding migration. It further discusses the lived realities of tertiary education migrants who chose to return home after obtaining an overseas university degree and the implications of this movement for the Cook Islands Government.

This research found that the key drivers for the decision-making regarding tertiary education migration may not be reduced to the availability of quality university study, but that there is a variety of other factors that influence young Cook Islanders. Instead of preventing young promising Cook Islanders from leaving the country, this research suggests that the overseas diaspora could be a valuable resource to contribute to Cook Islands' development. Further, this research found that strictly applying the neo-classical approach to migratory processes does not seem sufficient to explain the perceived hurdles and enablers for returned graduates from the Cook Islands.

**Key words:** tertiary education; migration; development; Cook Islands

# Acknowledgements

---

Firstly, I would like to thank all participants of this research. I feel privileged to have been given an insight into the challenges of young Cook Islanders and what tertiary education migration means on an individual level. Further, I appreciate the time that the Cook Islands Governmental officials have taken to speak to me about this topic. It became clear immediately that all participants cared greatly about the future of this unique Pacific Islands country.

Secondly, my supervisor, John Overton, supported and motivated me continuously throughout the last two years. Whenever I felt that I came to a dead-end in my research, John pointed out alternative paths and reminded me of the importance of completing this work. I also appreciate John's understanding of my need for orderly preparedness and his willingness to not just tolerate, but also adjust to this. I also could not have finished this research without the support of my fellow students. Your positivity and drive inspired me to push on and I hope to stay in touch with all of you and find out where life takes you.

Additionally, the support from the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, both from the New Zealand High Commission in Rarotonga and the staff in Wellington meant that I was able to work and study simultaneously. Also, the staff at the High Commission took me in so warmly and supported my efforts to learn about and integrate into the local culture. I also want to mention the fantastic team at the Stroke Foundation of New Zealand, who enabled me to juggle work commitments and university assignments.

Further, I would like to thank my family. Both my parents and my brother encouraged me to return to study and continuously checked in on my progress. The interest you have shown in this research and the importance you laid on education throughout my life were crucial for the completion of this work. Also, I would like to thank my family-in-law. My sisters were the inspiration for this research topic and my parents opened their home and kitchen to me over the six months in Rarotonga. I could not have survived this time away from my home without your support, late night chats and delicious Sunday roasts.

Lastly, and most importantly, I would like to thank my husband. Without your understanding and your support it would have been impossible to complete my post-graduate studies. You ensured that my feet remained on the ground and that all possible perspectives were considered. Even though, I completed the assignments and attended the classes, it is safe to say that we went on this journey together and completed it as team Raymond.

# Table of Contents

---

Abstract .....	ii
Acknowledgements .....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Tables and Figures.....	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
Chapter 2: Methodology.....	4
2.1 Introduction .....	4
2.2 Conceptual Foundation.....	4
2.3 Epistemology .....	5
2.3.1 Methodology .....	5
2.4 Conclusion.....	16
Chapter 3: Literature Review .....	17
3.1 Introduction .....	17
3.2 Migration .....	17
3.2.1 Migration Theory .....	17
3.2.1 Migration and Development.....	20
3.3 Education .....	23
3.3.1 Education and Development .....	23
3.3.2 Education Migration and Development.....	25
3.4 Education and Migration .....	27
3.4.1 Tertiary Education Migration and Development .....	29
3.5 Conclusion.....	31
Chapter 4: Migration, Education and Development in the Cook Islands.....	33
4.1 Introduction .....	33
4.2 Migration .....	33
4.3 Education .....	37
4.4 Development in the Cook Islands .....	41
4.4.1 History of Aid in the Cook Islands .....	41
4.4.2 Challenges to Development in the Cook Islands.....	43

4.5 Conclusion .....	45
Chapter 5: Drivers for Decision-Making .....	47
5.1 Introduction.....	47
5.2 Leaving the Cook Islands for Study.....	47
5.2.1 Family and Society .....	48
5.2.2 Career Outlook .....	48
5.2.3 New Zealand Citizenship .....	49
5.2.4 Scholarships.....	50
5.2.5 Alternatives and USP .....	50
5.3 Returning after Graduation .....	55
5.3.1 Family and Society.....	56
5.3.2 Student Loans and Bonding.....	56
5.3.3 Giving back to the Cook Islands.....	58
5.3.4 Career .....	59
5.4 Remaining Overseas after Graduation .....	59
5.4.1 Career Outlook/Aspirations.....	59
5.4.2 Cultural Identity.....	60
5.5 Conclusion .....	61
Chapter 6: Enablers and Hurdles upon Return.....	63
6.1 Introduction.....	63
6.2 Hurdles .....	63
6.2.1 Social .....	63
6.2.2 Professional .....	66
6.3 Enablers.....	74
6.3.1 Social .....	74
6.3.2 Professional .....	76
6.4 Conclusion .....	80
Chapter 7: Conclusions.....	82
7.1 Introduction.....	82
7.2 Limitations and Further Research Possibilities.....	82
7.3 Causes for Tertiary Education Migration.....	83
7.4 The Role of the Diaspora .....	84

7.5 Hurdles and Enablers .....	85
7.6 Temporal Dimension.....	86
7.6 Theory and Cook Islands Context .....	93
7.8 Final Remarks.....	87
Bibliography .....	90
Appendix 1: Letter of Ethics Approval .....	104
Appendix 2: Cook Islands Research Permit.....	105
Appendix 3: Example of Participant Information Sheet .....	106
Appendix 4: Example of Consent Form.....	108
Appendix 5: Example of Questionnaire .....	109

## List of Tables and Figures

---

### Tables

Table 1: Annual Net Migration by Major Area, 1990-2000 and 2000-2010 (in millions).....	18
Table 2: Population Data 2001-2011 .....	35
Table 3: Arrivals and Departures Cook Islands (Years 2013-2015 are preliminary numbers) ....	36
Table 4: Te Kaveinga Nui: National Sustainable Development Plan 2016-2020 .....	44

### Figures

Figure 1: Population in the Cook Islands 1902 - 1991 .....	34
Figure 2: Schools in the Cooks Islands .....	38
Figure 3: New Zealand Aid Programme Scholarships 2017 .....	40

# Chapter 1: Introduction

---

In a world that seems to become smaller, thanks to improved means of transport and communication, migration appears to be easier than ever before. In the past, migrants risked their lives on long boat journeys and while some refugees sadly still have to take the same risks, many migrants today are moving with little danger to their lives or health. Those migrants moving between countries in pursuit of better tertiary education, may even be sipping their tomato juice and watching the latest television shows from their padded airplane seats while eagerly awaiting their arrival at their destination of choice. But while the journey may have become easier, the act of moving to a foreign country still requires an extraordinary level of bravery and drive to pursue a better life away from one's familiar surroundings. Migrants are often portrayed as a mass of people on the move, but every single migrant is an individual with a unique story and reason for moving away.

When considering different reasons for migrating, obtaining better education can be a driver for this life-changing step. For some the motivation comes from the absence of a local option for obtaining education, specifically higher education, which is not provided everywhere, and for others it can be the desire to study at a more reputable overseas institution. This applies also to primary, secondary and tertiary education levels and it is not uncommon for children to be sent to boarding schools overseas. This type of education migration does not only apply to international movements, but it can also be found in rural-urban flows within the same country.

But who benefits from education migration? The decision to migrate is often made on the individual level and so the most obvious benefits are to the migrant himself/herself and in many cases their families. However, it is less obvious whether the investment in education migration only provides benefits on an individual level or if it has wider benefits to the sending country. Such benefits can come in different forms, either as remittance flows back to the home country or by well-educated individuals returning home and contributing to the local economy by strengthening national human resources. However, these benefits go hand-in-hand with the risk of losing the young educated 'elite' of a country to other nations, as it smooths the transition from the sending country to the receiving country. So is the possible gain

from encouraging education migration worth the risk of brain drain? For small countries, like the Cook Islands, this is an important topic – especially because significant resources are invested into facilitating specifically tertiary education migration.

Being a migrant myself, having moved to New Zealand from Germany in order to pursue a university course that was not offered in my home country at that time, the topic of tertiary education migration also connects with my own story. Additionally, my family in-law is living in the Cook Islands and it was through visits and conversations with them that I realised that the limited options particularly for tertiary education on the islands had significant impacts on both individuals and the community. Therefore, I chose to explore the issue of education, migration and development, by focusing this research on the impacts of tertiary education migration on Cook Islands' development. For this research, tertiary education only focuses on university study, as other vocational tertiary courses pose a different set of challenges. This has led to the following research questions:

### **Main Question**

To what extent does tertiary education overseas affect different aspirations of development?

### **Sub Questions**

1. What are the opportunities for returning migrants in the Cook Islands?
2. What are the challenges for returning migrants?
3. Why do some education migrants choose not to return?

In order to answer these questions, this thesis is structured in seven chapters, the first chapter being this introduction. In Chapter 2, the methodology for this research will be introduced and suitable research methods discussed. Due to my own European ethnicity, I have chosen postcolonialism as conceptual framework and have applied a Pacific methodology to this research.

In Chapter 3, the literature review will show that although the connection between migration and development, as well as between education and development, have been well explored, there has been little research on how these three aspects



correlate. Through focusing my research on tertiary education in particular, I hope to take a closer look at the topic of brain drain and issues for education migrants returning home. As Chapter 4 will show, the Cook Islands is a good case study, due to high rates of migration and a strong bond with New Zealand.

Chapter 5, the first of two results chapters, will present the findings of this research with regard to the decision-making process for young Cook Islanders. Firstly, it will look at the factors contributing to the decision to leave the Cook Islands in order to obtain tertiary education. Secondly, the influences on the decision whether to return home after completing university study will be assessed.

In Chapter 6, the focus will be on the lived realities of university graduates returning home to the Cook Islands. Both perceived and actual enablers and hurdles will be presented. Before the field work commenced, I expected to find that tertiary migrants are facing major financial and cultural challenges when returning to the Cook Islands and that many struggle to find employment where the newly learned skills find appropriate use, which ultimately impacts the development of the country. This assumption was, however, partially disproven by the results of this field research.

In Chapter 7, the findings will be discussed and assessed against the research questions and conclusions on the impacts of tertiary education migration on different aspirations for Cook Islands' development will be drawn.

# Chapter 2: Methodology

---

## 2.1 Introduction

Over the last two years, I conducted research on the correlation of education, migration and development in the context of the Cook Islands. In order to collect the data, I spent four weeks devoted to research on Rarotonga analysing policy documents and meeting with a variety of participants. Upon completion of that time, I was employed on Rarotonga and spent a total of six months working on the island, which enabled me to hold informal conversations and generally learning more about the Cook Islands. In order to ensure that this research was conducted appropriately, I took significant care to choose a suitable methodology and methods. This chapter begins by choosing a fitting conceptual foundation for this research on tertiary education migration. Subsequently, the most suitable methodology for this research project will be established and then applied to the methods and other aspects of research in the Cook Islands.

## 2.2 Conceptual Foundation

In order to unpack the issue of migration, education and development, postcolonialism was chosen as the conceptual foundation, helping to shape the overarching conceptual framework. Due to the heterogeneity of postcolonial definitions (Goss, 1996, p. 242), the characterisation used by Cheryl McEwan (2014) was selected. McEwan explains that 'postcolonialism challenges the very meaning of development as rooted in colonial discourse' (2014, p. 138) and that postcolonialism questions whether the indigenous ambitions of equity and communalism are superior concepts over the Western idea of individualism and the pursuit of capitalism (2014, p. 138). Being European myself, this conceptual foundation helped to confront my own positionality, as described later in this chapter, and to challenge power relations that could impact this research. For example, instead of utilising a pre-defined definition of 'development', all participants were asked to define 'development' during interviews (see Chapter 4.4 Development in the Cook Islands).

## **2.3 Epistemology**

When applying the conceptual foundation of postcolonialism to the topic of tertiary education migration and the Cook Islands, it becomes obvious that Western methodologies, which are based on colonial discourse, are not appropriate. Instead the epistemological context of the Cook Islands has to be applied to the methodology and method for the research. Epistemology can be defined as being ‘concerned with who can be a knower, what can be known, what constitutes knowledge, sources of evidence for constructing knowledge, what constitutes truth, how truth is to be verified [...], the role of belief in evidence, and related issues’ (Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2001, p. 57). Western epistemology can recognise one source of information or one way of thinking as the truth, which is often based on data as evidence. It values Anglo-European knowledge over indigenous knowledge and encourages centralisation of leadership, which aligns with the concept of individualism (Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2002, p. 379). Anecdotally, the Cook Islands epistemology is grounded in concepts of knowledge as collective good, which is not only shared between family and community networks, but also places importance on relationships when assessing what knowledge is important or useful. Cook Islands epistemology is said to value indigenous knowledge, which incorporates not just the world we see, but also levels of spirituality – incorporating ancestors into the collective that holds knowledge and maintains leadership. When visiting the Cook Islands, it is notable that many properties have graves on their land, which re-enforces that those who have passed remain part of the community. Further, Cook Islands epistemology is also said to involve inter-generational views of well being that take a long time view at development, i.e. benefitting past, current and future generations.

### **2.3.1 Methodology**

The next step in the research project is the determination of the research methodology. Methodology can be defined as ‘a term describing the understanding or perspectives within which the research is conducted’ (Vallance, 2007, p. 3).

Historically, the collection of data, the creation of knowledge and the process of theorising in research about the Pacific has been conducted by outsiders. It is then the outside researcher who after collecting the stories from the Pacific re-tell them from their own perspective (Vaiioleti, 2006, p. 22). The researched communities often

feel exploited and colonialism is blamed for undermining the indigenous ways of knowing and doing (Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2001, p. 38). Hau'ofa (2008, p. 31) explained that western social sciences had misunderstood the Pacific as 'islands in a far sea', belittling the potential of the Pacific Islands and implying a restriction by geography and space. Hau'ofa then argued that from a Pacific insider perspective the same area is understood as a 'Sea of Islands', which enforces the richness and complexity of the region (Hau'ofa, 2008, p. 32). This example illustrates that the western or outsider approach will not lead to a well-rounded result, as the perspectives of the insiders are being ignored. Therefore, it was decided that a methodology that is based on Western epistemology and the Anglo-European concept of knowledge alone is not suitable for this research project on Cook Islands tertiary education migrants. However, a mixed methodology approach, recognising both Western epistemology and way of collecting data and a Pacific methodology incorporating the understanding that knowledge is created and held by the collective enables this research to create a holistic picture of the research topic.

Grounded in Pacific epistemologies, is a methodology, using the metaphor of 'talanoa', which in the Tongan context can be translated as talking, without speaking about anything in particular, and relating without a strict framework (Vaiotei, 2006, p. 23). It is a free flowing conversation that not only helps the researcher to establish a relationship with the participants, but it also 'holistically intermingles researcher's and participants' emotions, knowing and experiences' (Vaiotei, 2006, p. 24). The methodology, which is based on the talanoa approach, cannot be used if the nature of the research demands the researcher to take a neutral stance (Prescott, 2011, p. 131). The relationships that are established by the talanoa are expected to be on-going, as well as the talanoa itself being regarded as a continuing process without timeframe or conclusion (Prescott, 2011, p. 133). Applied as a methodology, talanoa is a process of 'storying and gathering of narratives' (Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014, p. 334). Although talanoa applied as methodology seems suitable for this research project on tertiary education migrants, with the concept being rooted in another Pacific Islands' cultures, I do not deem talanoa the ideal methodology for this research on the Cook Islands. To homogenise the cultures within the Pacific, would contradict the post-colonial conceptual foundation and would support the outside view of this diverse region.

For the Cook Islands context, Teremoana Hodges has developed a methodology, which is grounded on the metaphor *tivaevae*, which refers to the large quilts that are traditionally, made for special occasions by collectives of Cook Islands women. This methodology compares the quilt making to the research process where different materials, from different sources are stitched into a large collaborative project (Carter, Kelly, & Brailsford, 2012, p. 70). In the quilting process, one person has the design of the quilt and that person allocates different roles and responsibilities to other women in the group – each person is responsible for their own specific task (Te Pou o Te Whakaaro Nui, 2010, p. 17). This methodology is particularly useful when working in teams of researchers (New Zealand Ministry of Justice, 2003). Unfortunately, no official academic elaborations on the specifics of this methodology have been published, which made it very difficult to apply the *tivaevae* methodology to this research on migration, education and development. However, I will explore the use of this metaphor in this research.

Another Pacific metaphor, which informs a methodology is *kakala*, which is based on a Tongan term referring to ‘a collection of fragrant flowers, woven together as a garland for a special person or a special occasion’ (Thaman, 2007, p. 62). There are three pillars to this methodology: *toli*, *tui* and *luva*. *Toli* is the collection and ranking of flowers, which in the research context refers to recognising a problem or a gap, deciding on addressing this issue, choosing participants and collecting and analysing data (Thaman, 2007, p. 62). *Tui* is the making or weaving of a *kakala*, which in terms of research refers to the arranging and weaving of stories, spirits and emotions from talks with the research participants. And lastly, *luva* is the giving away or presenting of a *kakala*, which means that the research is conducted for the benefit of the community (Thaman, 2007, p. 63). Although the *kakala* metaphor is based on a Tongan term, the concept of weaving a flower garland is also rooted in the Cook Islands culture where a *kakala* is called an *ei* and this qualitative methodology therefore seems suitable for research in the Cook Islands (Thaman, 2007, p. 62). However, it has to be noted, that the garlands in the Cook Islands are predominantly made of tiare flowers, which means that the ranking of the different flowers traditionally did not occur in the Cook Islands culture (‘Ama et al., 2003, p. 56). Nevertheless, today Cook Islanders use all available flowers, or even money or lollies, for *eis* (Underhill-Sem, 2001, p. 26), therefore, *kakala*

as metaphor helping to articulate the methodology is a very suitable choice for this research on education, migration and development.

While the metaphor of kakala helps articulate the qualitative research methodology chosen for this research, it is important to acknowledge the value of collecting 'facts' by using a mixed methodology approach, which will help to create balanced results, supporting qualitative findings with quantitative basic statistics. Quantitative research methodology can also be called empirical-analytical science (Murray & Overton, 2003, p. 28) and it is often characterised as "objective, representative and most important, specified in number" (Overton & van Diermen, 2003, p. 38). For the context of the quantitative research, this is reflected in considering migration data, number of scholarships awarded to Cook Islands students, as well as the collection of demographic and background information of the participants through questionnaires.

## Toli

### *Literature Review*

One of the first steps when compiling a research project is the analysis of existing academic literature on the research topic. So how do Pacific epistemologies influence this section of this research project? As the indigenous researcher Ani Mikaere (2011, p. 30) describes, Western epistemologies have been the dominant approaches for academic research for a long time and the literature review can reinforce Western worldviews due to the dominance of sources coming from Western research. When basing one's research on literature that was written by Western researchers on the Cook Islands, the outsider view will be primarily represented which will dictate the direction of the research project from an early stage of the process (Mikaere, 2011, p. 30). However, it is also doubtful whether Western academic writings should be entirely excluded from the research, as important concepts and ideas may then not be taken into account and only a fraction of the whole picture will be revealed. Therefore, I incorporated as many Pacific writers as possible into the literature review and clearly outlined the Cook Islands context, without excluding theories, which are based on Western research. I cautiously ensured that Western academic writings did not receive more weight than those created in the Pacific.

## *Methods*

The next step is to select a method for the data collection. 'A method is a particular approach to collecting data and the 'method' applies to both the means of collecting the data and the type of data collected' (Vallance, 2007, p. 3). In the following two methods will be analysed on their suitability for this research.

One option for a research method is the above-mentioned tivaevae. However, as there has not been any official literature on the tivaevae as research concept, it is difficult to discuss the applicability of the tivaevae as a method for this research project. Nevertheless, I believe the sewing together of different pieces of work will be the main objective of the method. As mentioned above, it seems likely that tivaevae is a method that is suitable when a group of researchers are working on one large project, with one researcher being the head of the team (New Zealand Ministry of Justice, 2003). With only one researcher conducting this research on education, migration and development in the Cook Islands, the tivaevae method does not seem to be suitable for the research project. However, if viewing this metaphor differently and considering the patches of the quilt as the stories of all research participants, this method could be considered appropriate. In some way, the participants of this research can be considered co-researchers who play an integral part in the creation of the quilt or research.

Another Pacific method is the above-mentioned concept of talanoa. Talanoa as the means of communication is shared across most Pacific Islands, including the Cook Islands (Prescott, 2011, p. 133). When talanoa is used as a method, it is appropriate to translate the term into a concept that is familiar to the participants and fitting for the cultural context. Teremoana Hodges suggests (personal communication, October 12, 2015) that talanoa has some similarities to the Cook Islands Maori term komakoma, which means to 'chatter continually' (Buse, 1995, p. 187). Although the terms are not entirely aligned, I expected to use of the word komakoma when applying the talanoa method to ensure that the method was adjusted appropriately to the cultural context and therefore would put participants at ease and making the research process less daunting, which then leads to the collection of higher quality data. Therefore, the talanoa or komakoma method was chosen for the research on Cook Islands tertiary education migration.

During the first few meetings for talanoa, it became evident that not all participants spoke Cook Islands Maori and that for those who are fluent in the language my pronunciation of the word komakoma caused amusement. Also, participants seemed familiar with the term talanoa. Therefore, over the course of the field research, I reduced the use of the word komakoma and reverted to using the term talanoa to explain the chosen research method to the participants.

Further, quantitative questionnaires were given to all research participants in order to establish some basic demographics and education/employment history of the education migrant participants in a time and cost effective way (Creswell, 2014, p. 157). The results were meant to help underpin the findings from the talanoa. One example of the questionnaires can be found in Appendix 4. It should be noted that two issues arose from the questionnaires. Firstly, I asked which island of the Cook Islands tertiary education migrants lived before they left the Cook Islands. This was meant to capture any differences between Rarotongans and outer islands individuals. However, the main high school is located on Rarotonga, which means that almost everyone who would like to study needs to attend at least their last years in school on the island of Rarotonga. Therefore, it would have been more suitable to ask which island the participants grew up on. Secondly, I asked participants about their course of study and requested their job title and place of work. This was meant to show whether returned migrants work in their field of study. However, except for obvious linkages, such as law or teaching, often the position title did not disclose whether the alumna is using what they had studied at university. It would have been more accurate to ask participants to rate on a scale how much of their studies they are using in their job.

### *Participants*

For the research participants, all contacts in the Cook Islands were found due to connections and relationships. Prior to the commencement of the field research, contacts were given to me by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, which proved to be an effective way to start conversations. Once I arrived in the Cook Islands, I applied the advice from my Cook Islands family to explain my connection to the country, which led to many individuals becoming interested in meeting with me. One senior governmental official even initiated a meeting with me, because the topic was important to her and she wanted the research to be successful. She provided



many more names to me and allowed me to use her name as endorsement. This approach, which is based on relationships and the sharing of knowledge, aligns with a Pacific epistemology where collectively and family networks enable the sharing of knowledge.

As participants, I planned to find Cook Islanders that fitted into one of three categories. The first group of people were intended to be employees of the Cook Islands government representing Ministries that were expected to have contact with returned tertiary education migrants. I was aiming to find three participants for this group, but interest in this research was greater than expected and six government officials agreed to meet with me, of whom five agreed to be interviewed. Additionally, one representative of Rarotonga Air and one from the University of the South Pacific Cook Islands Campus agreed to contribute to the research. During the talanoa the lines between the personal opinions of the officials and the official stances of the respective Ministry/organisation became blurred, due to most people who work in the top layers of the ministries/organisations being tertiary education migrants themselves. Therefore, in the results chapter the officials are sometimes named to show their official statements and when personal opinions were voiced, I decided to anonymise their names. It was planned to hold a group talanoa for this group, however, the tight schedules of the governmental officials did not allow to find a time and date that suited all.

The second group was intended to consist of Cook Islanders who had completed their tertiary education overseas and who had returned to the Cook Islands at least six months prior to the talanoa. I aimed to find eight participants for this group, but once people heard about the research this number grew significantly and in the end a total of twenty participants for this group were spoken to. Due to the significant interest in contributing to the research, one group talanoa was held with nine participants and the other eleven participants were met one-on-one at different informal locations.

Lastly, I intended to meet with a group of participants in Wellington, who had completed their tertiary education in New Zealand and had not returned to the Cook Islands. It was initially intended to find four people for this group, but it was unexpectedly difficult to make contact with such people. The Cook Islands High

Commission in Wellington very helpfully arranged one of the meetings, while the other contact was made through Victoria University's Alumni Network. The main reason for the difficulty of locating possible participants for this group was the lack of a database. Neither the Cook Islands Government nor the New Zealand Government has a record of Cook Islands graduates who have remained in New Zealand after completing their studies. The people that do so are generally students who came to New Zealand as private students, which means that the scholarship programme does not record them. Also, as Cook Islanders are New Zealand citizens, there is no formal record of immigration in either the Cook Islands or New Zealand. Therefore, I met with only two participants in Wellington, who had completed their tertiary education in New Zealand and had not returned to the Cook Islands.

Overall, a total of 29 people agreed to contribute to this research. Of these 22 tertiary education migrants completed the questionnaire, which revealed the following statistics. All 22 participants confirmed either full or partial Cook Islands Maori ethnicity. Of these participants, twelve identified as female, nine as male and one as 'Akava'ine' (transgender). Further, ten of the 22 participants were between 20 and 29 years of age, six were between 30 and 39 years of age and the remaining six participants were almost equally spread across other age groups. Most participants had obtained their degree in Auckland (ten), and additional five had completed their studies in other New Zealand tertiary institutions, six had attended universities in Australia and two had studied in other countries. Out of the 22 tertiary education migrants who participated in the research, twelve gained an undergraduate degree and ten successfully completed a postgraduate degree. A significant seventeen of the 22 participants had been awarded a scholarship (either fully or partially funded) or a grant.

With regard to finding a position after returning to the Cook Islands, of the twenty participants that had returned after graduating, ten had found a job prior to arrival in the Cook Islands or found employment in less than a month after arrival. Another eight participants found employment between one and three months after arrival and one participant could not find suitable employment and therefore left the country again. Out of the twenty returned migrants, a total of twelve work for the

Government of the Cook Islands, three were working for the private sector, four were self-employed and one was working full-time for a civil society organisation.

### *Ethical Issues*

In order to minimise the potential of this research to harm participants or existing social structures, ethical issues have to be thoroughly assessed and mitigated as much as possible. The formal process of obtaining Ethical Approval from Victoria University was adhered to. I used the help of formal documents, such as an ethics form, a letter of information and an informed consent form (Hammett, Twyman, & Graham, 2015, p. 94) to mitigate ethical issues. Further, it was paramount to safeguard the confidentiality of the participants when researching. The Cook Islands, and particularly Rarotonga, are relatively small communities where it would be easy for readers to correctly attribute comments to individuals. Therefore, all personal information that could identify a participant has been removed. The letters A, B and C were used to distinguish the groups of participants and a number was added to the letters to distinguish between different individuals in each group. The letter A signals graduates who have not yet returned to the Cook Islands, the letter B stands for returned migrants and the letter C was applied to Cook Islands Governmental officials and other officials. To add another level of confidentiality, the gender of the participants was randomised. I did not find any difference in responses between the different genders, so this should not impact on the results. Any data collected is stored on a password secured device to prevent any unintended privacy breaches. Further, due to having family in the Cook Islands there is a potential to encounter conflicts of interest. At the beginning of each talanoa, I disclosed my family connections to ensure transparency and I did not disclose the identity of the research participants to my family. Also, while I was working for the New Zealand High Commission only informal discussions were held, but I was still careful to ensure that those involved in these discussions did not see me as a representative of the New Zealand Government, but as a university researcher instead. This was also crucial because it had to be clear that the New Zealand government has not access to the confidential information obtained.

Due to work commitments, I initially not plan to spend more than four weeks in the field. However, thanks to a job offer on Rarotonga, I spent a total of six months in the Cook Islands. Although the initially planned four week stay may seem like a short

period of time for field research, my existing relations to the Cook Islands and family-related frequent visits to the island of Rarotonga were expected to enable me to successfully create and maintain appropriate va/wah. The additional time I was able to spend on Rarotonga allowed me to continue informal conversations over a longer time and to better understand the cultural context.

### Tui

Once the data had been collected, it had to be analysed and the research paper had to be compiled, which is considered the second pillar, tui, under the kakala metaphor. Tui is the making or weaving of a kakala, which in terms of research refers to the arranging and weaving of stories, spirits and emotions from talks with the research participants (Thaman, 2003, p. 62). In practical terms, this meant that content analysis had to be applied, which consist of the inspection of textual materials, including interview transcripts (McMurray, 2004, p. 112). I used the computer programme NVivo to allocate quotes from transcripts to certain themes, but then reverted to the more traditional approach of printing off these thematic collections of quotes, physically cutting them up and re-arranging them. This allowed me to weave the quotes that would allow me to intertwine stories from different participants into one single piece of fabric.

At that point it was crucial to acknowledge my own positionality and how it influences my interpretation of the data. Positionality describes the background or 'identity' of an individual or a group. Characteristics that can form one's positionality can be, but are not limited to, race, gender, nationality, age, and economic and social status (Sumner & Tribe, 2008, p. 4). I am 32 years old, female and of German ethnicity, visually fulfilling most German stereotypes with blonde hair, very fair skin and blue eyes. This meant that at first glance, I was clearly considered an 'outsider', which was further enforced by my distinct German accent. However, being an education migrant myself, married to a Cook Islander and living at my parents-in-law's house during the research, shifted me into a space between 'insider' and 'outsider'. The space between 'insider' and 'outsider' is not an uncommon position for researchers. Kylie Enoka conducted her Master's thesis in Development Studies at Victoria University of Wellington in 2013 on Voluntourism in the Cook Islands. In her thesis, she acknowledged her positionality as

a New Zealand born Cook Islander, which assigned to her both labels of 'insider' and 'outsider' at the same time (Enoka, 2013, p. 48).

While the positionality of an individual to some degree is assigned on the basis of age, race or gender, which are generally outside of the control of the individual (Desai & Potter, 2006, p. 6), lifestyle, attitudes and behaviour that are adopted in the field should be appropriate to the environment (Desai & Potter, 2006, p. 7). Accordingly, I chose conservative clothing (covering shoulders and knees), acknowledged the importance of food in the Cook Islands culture, by providing snacks during the talanoa and, when appropriate, by beginning the group session with a prayer.

However, to better address the issues of the positionality of the researcher, it is important to reflect openly about the ethical dilemmas that come from one's background. 'By taking the time to engage in reflexive practice, researchers have the opportunity to develop greater self-awareness and insight into how their values, beliefs, and assumptions affect the synthesis, dissemination, exchange, and application of research findings' (Alley, Jackson, & Shakya, 2015, p. 430). Another important point is the use of language. It is crucial to reflect on words we choose to use, as the effects will go beyond what we can control. One inevitably exercises representation and in turn our language is interpreted in a certain way by others (Dear, 1988, p. 266). Due to my own European ethnicity, and the oppressive history of my country of origin, it is important to me to acknowledge my own positionality and use of language. Therefore, a reflexive diary was used in order to focus on my own positionality within the research and to avoid that any biases unintentionally affected the results of the research.

### **Luva**

Once the research has been completed it is important to decide what will happen with the findings of the project. Reinforced by kakala's third pillar of luva, it is important that the research project on tertiary education migration gives back to the Cook Islands community that it involves (Thaman, 2003, p. 63). Upon completion of the write-up of the different talanoa sessions, I emailed summaries of the individual conversation to the participants who had requested to receive this. I have already submitted a policy brief to the New Zealand Aid Programme/Ministry of Foreign Affairs

and Trade, but will also submit a summary of the findings to the Cook Islands Government in order to contribute to policy decisions in the future. Further, I hope that this research project will help to fill the academic gap on the topic of education, migration and development in the Cook Islands and one copy of this thesis will be gifted to the National Library of the Cook Islands.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

In conclusion, it can be said that it is not only crucial to acknowledge Cook Islands epistemology throughout the research process on tertiary education migrants, but that there is a variety of existing Pacific methodologies and methods available that can be considered. By cautiously considering methodologies when analysing the existing academic literature for the literature review, adapting the kakala methodology, engaging in reflexive processes and by gifting the research results to the researched community, this research will align with the Cook Islands epistemology of considering knowledge as shared good.

# Chapter 3: Literature Review

---

## 3.1 Introduction

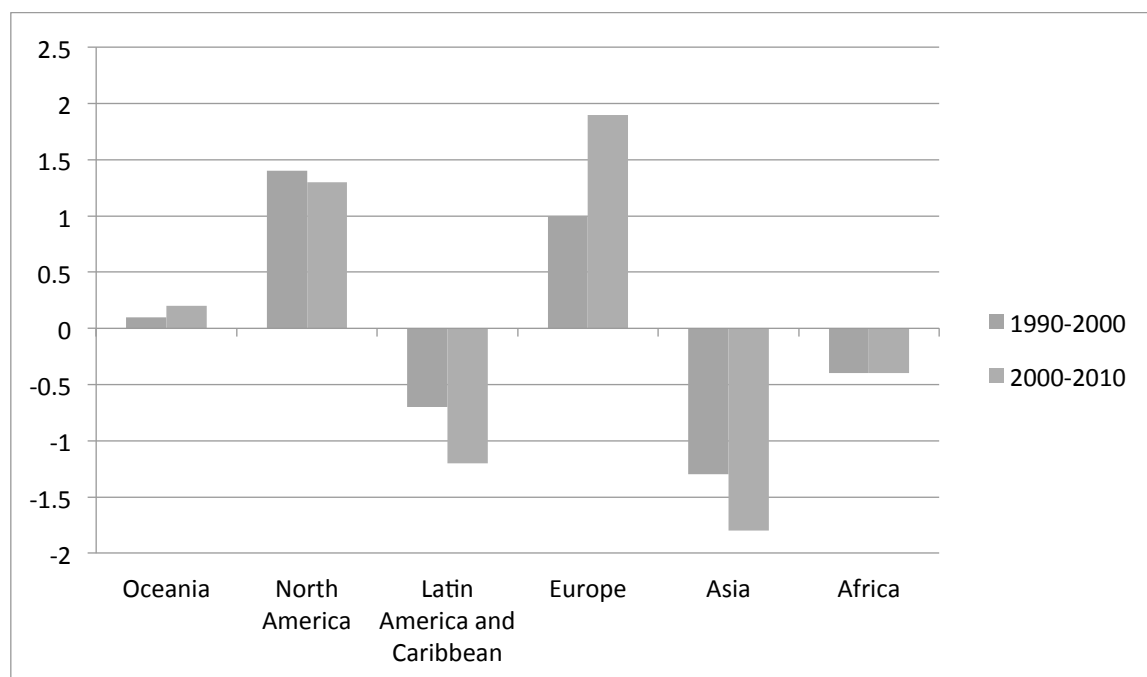
Globally, migration is an increasingly significant topic and, as this literature review will show, the impact of migration on development is widely discussed in academia. One of the reasons for migration is the pursuit of quality education. However, there is a gap in academic literature regarding the correlation of education, migration and development, and this is so also with regard to the Pacific region. In this chapter, literature on migration in the context of aid and development will be assessed. Thereafter, the correlation of education and development will be examined and applied to the notion of migration. Finally, focus will be given to the impact of tertiary education migration on both sending and receiving countries.

## 3.2 Migration

### 3.2.1 Migration Theory

Migration is an important aspect of human life, with the current number of international migrants reaching a staggering 232 million people worldwide (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2013). An international migrant can be defined as 'a person who is living in a country other than his or her country of birth' (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2016, p. 4). Between 1990 and 2013 the number of international migrants rose by 50%, with much of this increase occurring between 2000 and 2010 (United Nations, Department and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2013, p. 1). As Table 1 illustrates, North America and Europe were receiving the largest number of international migrants, while Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), Asia and Africa were experiencing more emigration than immigration.

**Table 1: Annual Net Migration by Major Area, 1990-2000 and 2000-2010 (in millions)**



(United Nations, Department and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2013, p. 11)

Since 2010, the annual growth rate of migration worldwide has slowed, dropping to just under 2% (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2016, p. 5). About 71% of all international migrants reside in high-income<sup>1</sup> countries and the remaining 29% of all migrants are hosted mainly by middle-income countries (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2016, p. 5). When examining the place of origin of international migrants, it is notable that the majority were born in middle-income countries (almost 65%) and only about 10% had migrated from low-income countries (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2016, p. 14).

In order to explain these numbers, there are different theories that can be applied. The prevailing paradigm in the study of migration is neoclassical theory, which explains the movement of people by basing their ideas on ‘push-pull’ economic theories. These theories assume that the reasons for movement are based on both circumstances in the home country (the push factors) and amenities in the receiving country (the pull factors). Neoclassical theory presumes that migrants have perfect

<sup>1</sup> The World Bank defines national income levels by Gross National Income index, with the following thresholds applied in 2015: ≤US\$1,025 low-income economies; ≤\$,12,475 middle-income; and >\$,12,475 high-income (The World Bank, n.d.).



information of financial opportunities in the receiving country and that their decisions to migrate are predominantly based on economic factors (Castles, 2009, p. 22). However, when specific migration experiences are examined, it becomes clear that individuals seldom have perfect information and migrants are very rarely able to freely choose their destination. Further, migration cannot be simplified into push and pull factors as this model does not explain comprehensively why individuals choose certain countries over others (e.g. Turkish citizens moving to Germany rather than the UK or France). Therefore, the neoclassical approach cannot explain all migration processes and it is not reliable to predict future developments (Castles, 2009, p. 23).

In the late 1980s the 'new economics of labour migration' approach arose which argued that the decision to migrate was not made on an individual level, but it was made by a social group (e.g. a household, a family or communities). Therefore, this theory focuses the migration research on collective groups and it uses methods from sociology and anthropology to understand and forecast the migration process (Castles, 2009, p. 24). It highlights aspects, especially the flows of remittances, which tie migrants to their wider social and cultural contexts. While the neoclassical approach can lead to the assumption that open borders and freedom of migration will lead ultimately to the equalisation of global income levels, the new economics of labour migration theory suggests that the best way to address migration is to help strengthen credit markets and to create more favourable investment opportunities in sending countries (Castles, 2009, p. 25). It becomes clear that the migration process is complex and ever changing in a globalising world and that theories which try to simplify this process are misleading and inadequate (Castles, 2009, pp. 25–26).

An alternative approach to explain migration was developed in the 1970s and 1980s. The 'historical-institutional approach' regarded migration as means of accessing cheap labour and it based the availability of workers on the persisting colonial ties and legacies of war and regional inequities within Europe (Castles, 2009, p. 26). The intellectual roots of this approach can be connected to dependency theory, which explained the underdevelopment of 'Third World' countries with the extraction of their resources through colonialism (Castles, 2009, p. 26; Frank, 1969). Another link can be made to world systems theory (Wallerstein, 1984, pp. 13–26), which describes how less developed regions are on the periphery of the global economy, while

capitalist nations are acting as the core of the system exploiting the resources, such as labour, of less developed regions – the role of migrant workers for ‘core’ economies further enforced this relationship (Castles, 2009, p. 26). However, the historical-institutional approach is not able to explain the breakdown of migration policies and neglects to comment on the shift from labour migration to permanent settlement (Castles, 2009, p. 27).

As all the theories discussed above cannot be classified as perfectly suitable for this research on tertiary education migration, the neoclassical approach will guide discussions initially by applying the terminology of ‘push-pull factors’ to enable a better understanding of factors influencing the decision to migrate with a caveat of cautiousness regarding the generalisation of statements.

### **3.2.1 Migration and Development**

Since the 1950s, the debate about the impacts of migration on development has been moving between optimism and pessimism (De Haas, 2010, p. 227). While migration optimists argue that the transfer of capital and knowledge by migrants will help developing countries, migration pessimists are concerned about brain drain and an increase of inequality in migrant sending communities (2010, p. 230). Brain drain has been defined as “the international transfer of resources in the form of human capital and mainly applies to the migration of relatively highly educated individuals from developing to developed countries” (Beine, Docquier, & Rapoport, 2008, p. 631). Connell (2005, p. 328) agrees that human resources or human capital are crucial for development of any country, but this is particularly true for smaller states. Additionally, Gamlen (2014, p. 593) discusses a current re-emergence of migration pessimists, who argue that migration has been inflated as a ‘buzz-word’ in development and that migration policy is strongly influenced by a hidden agenda, such as addressing unemployment rates in a migrant recipient country. Further, Geiger and Pécoud (2013, p. 372) point out that migration is strongly influenced by existing power structures, where receiving countries decide whom they receive. In general, in international discussions on migration and development, the conventional approach assumes ‘the migrant is objectified as an “agent of development” whose behaviour is determined largely by political-economic factors (Wright-Koteka, 2006, p. 35). However, Cortina and Ochoa Reza (2013, p. xvii) argue that the benefits of migration

clearly go beyond remittances and economic advantages and that the exchange of culture and ideas can be very beneficial for the development of a migrant sending country. Bastia (2014, p. 242) states that intersectionality should be at the centre of discussion about migration, as a tool to identify both privilege and disadvantage in the analysis, rather than just focusing on economic factors.

An alternative approach is the 'diaspora option' (Meyer et al., 1997, p. 287), which represents a shift in perspective on migration – fuelled by the globalisation process and by increasing technological advances. Allowing members of an overseas diaspora to contribute to the development of their home country without having to move back permanently is a valuable option for many countries that have struggled to attract migrants back. Both remittances and knowledge and skills transfer are valuable resources of the diaspora, which can benefit the home countries of the migrants (Gamlen, 2005, p. 21). This approach challenges territorial boundaries by proposing the establishment of “dense, multiple interconnections among the homeland and the various sites of the national diaspora” (Gamlen, 2005, p. 22). While diaspora engagement was traditionally seen as a way to facilitate access to financial and cultural capital by low-income countries, today it is recognised as a resource for middle-income countries who are thriving to move to a high-income status (Gamlen, 2005, p. 4). Gamlen (2005, p. 23) uses the term “diaspora engagement” to discuss ways that New Zealand connects with its diaspora. According to Gamlen, diaspora engagement consists of three components: i) diaspora networking (this includes commercial or scientific networks), ii) remittance capture (focussing expatriate remittances towards national goals) and iii) diaspora integration (enhancement of social cohesion between the home country and the expatriates). Gamlen noted that government and business sector led networking initiatives emerged in the 1990s and had become more prominent in the 2000s. These networks had varying success when trying to connect the New Zealand diaspora with the home country (Gamlen, 2005, p. 26) but it was noticed that there was a lack of and need for an overall strategy for the diaspora engagement in New Zealand (Gamlen, 2005, p. 30).

When focussing on the Pacific region, migration is an important factor on development. As Hau'ofa, Wadell and Naidu (1993, p. 10) explain, throughout history the people of the Pacific have shown great resilience to their changing circumstances

(such as climate change, population increase, etc.) and have migrated across the Pacific ocean where they adapted to the given conditions. Berkelmans and Pryke (2016, p. 14) suggest that by enabling just 1% of the population on Pacific Islands to work in Australia, these individuals will experience greater benefits than the current Australian aid budget can achieve. However, this model does not look at the impact on the sending countries.

To help explain migration and development in the Pacific, Bertram and Watters (1984, p. 133) designed the MIRAB model in 1984 (MI – migration, R – remittances, A – aid financed and B – bureaucracy) to describe small island states, which rely on aid and the remittances generated by migration, to sustain a large bureaucratic system (Bertram & Watters, 1984, p. 134). Bertram and Watters (1984, p. 129) recognised that family ties and remittances tied the Cook Islands closely to New Zealand, which is supported by sharing of citizenship, tariff regimes and currency. In 1983 remittance flows had reached over NZ\$4 million, including monetary transfers, equipment and vehicles. Even where whole families had migrated to New Zealand, remittances were still sent to distant relatives, which repaid the favour with food flowers or visits (Bertram & Watters, 1984, p. 133).

After some critique of the MIRAB model, Bertram (1999, p. 125) revisited the ideas twelve years later and particularly discussed the idea of ‘transnational corporations of kin’ (Pacific Island kin groups as transnational economic entities) and the failure to take harmonious family ties into account in his earlier publication. He noticed that while remittances funded about 20% of all imported goods and services, this number had shrunk to about 12% in the 1990s. In 2016, Bertram returned to the Cook Islands to investigate the implications of a potential graduation from eligibility for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) approved aid funding and discovered signs of large outward remittances of income (Bertram, 2016, p. 9). This is an interesting process of reverse flows of remittances, from source to destination countries, rather than the normal assumption of flows from destination back to the source. While he was unable to identify the sources or recipients of such remittances, the outflow of remittances would indicate a change in relationship between the Cook Islands and its overseas diasporas. It should be acknowledged, that

remittances are important factors for discussions on migration, however, for this research it was established that the focus should lie on other aspects.

When looking back at some of the migration changes that occurred over the last decades, Barcham, Sheyvens and Overton (2009, p. 325) explain that the 1950s saw an increased movement of Pacific Islanders moving to the industrialised countries in Oceania, USA, Australia and New Zealand. The new economic nationalism, which was the predominant economic strategy at the time, meant that particularly New Zealand needed to strengthen the workforce and the government turned to Polynesian labour to cover this demand (Barcham et al., 2009, p. 326). Further, the development of international air travel across the Pacific accelerated migration in the 1970s (Hugo, 2008, p. 9). It was only once neoliberal economic reforms took place in the 1980s and 1990s that the demand for low-skill labour decreased in the industrialised countries and, due to unemployment, many Pacific Islanders returned home. Further, due to the neoliberal reforms in donor countries, aid was restructured and recipient countries were forced to undergo restructuring themselves, which meant a decrease in funds for jobs in civil service (Barcham et al., 2009, p. 328).

In summary, migration can have both positive and negative effects on sending countries and there is no obvious conclusion to whether migration should be a concern or can act as a way of enhancing beneficial global networks. The diaspora option offers a promising approach to utilising those networks with the help of technology to enrich the sending country's available resources.

### **3.3 Education**

#### **3.3.1 Education and Development**

'It is an accepted truism that education and training contribute to human capital, which is seen as a prerequisite for sustained economic growth and development' (Daduidreketi & Lingam, 2014, p. 130). Some argue that education can be seen as a tool to increase human capital and to include communities through employment where they were previously on the economic periphery (Bonal, 2006, p. 650). However, this was not always the case, as after the end of the Second World War an investment into education was seen as something that was additional and not essential (Colclough, 2012, p. 135). It was only in the early 1960s that the potential of

investing in people was recognised (Schultz, 1961, p. 4). It was especially since the notion of structural adjustment policies (SAPs) gained momentum in the late 1980s, that education as development became the dominant approach (Tolley, 2008, p. 18).

Globalisation has also impacted on education policies, as some qualification structures have been changed to adapt to international requirements and remuneration of certain professions has been affected by world standards. Also, an increase in the demand for higher education can be noted, due to a strengthening middle-class searching for quality education (Bonal, 2006, p. 664). However, while skills development is believed to benefit the individual, the provision of education has to be embedded in a comprehensive national strategy to ensure that this gain translates into economic growth (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2012, p. 203). This is where Education for All (EFA), the EFA Targets and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) drew attention that greater emphasis should be given to basic education nationally and internationally and education was at that stage recognised as a universal human right (Tolley, 2008, p. 19).

The MDGs of 2000 underlined the importance of education for development on a national level. Governments were encouraged to focus on equal access to formal primary schooling, which 'has led to neglect of other types of education' (McCormick, 2014, p. 175). Following the end of the MDGs, the 'post-2015' United Nations Sustainable Development Goals were officially signed off and the signatories agreed that not only primary education, but also tertiary education should be accessible to all (United Nations, 2015). While Goal 4 broadly commits to ensuring 'inclusive and equitable quality education and promot[ing] lifelong learning opportunities for all' (United Nations, 2015, para. 68), target 4.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals further specifies this to access to 'quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university' (United Nations, 2015, para. 73). It is then suggested in target 4.b to substantially increase the amount of scholarships available to developing countries (United Nations, 2015).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), together with the World Bank and other United Nations bodies organized the World Education Forum 2015 in Incheon, Republic of Korea. This forum adopted the Incheon

Declaration, which provides some concrete language on how SDG 4 can be achieved. This document also explains that the new vision for education under SDG 4:

*“understands education as inclusive and as crucial in promoting democracy and human rights and enhancing global citizenship, tolerance and civic engagement as well as sustainable development. Education facilitates intercultural dialogue and fosters respect for cultural, religious and linguistic diversity, which are vital for achieving social cohesion and justice.”* (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2015, p. 26)

Gamlen, Murray and Overton (2017, p. 5) explain that this is only one of the two mainstream approaches to education and development. This first view assumes that education broadens horizons, liberates and teaches students about the roots of poverty and it is seen as a transformational approach that considers education as a means to empower people and to give them the tools for emancipation. The other mainstream view on education and development focuses on the idea that by improving the quality of the labour force economic development is promoted (Gamlen et al., 2017, p. 5). This ‘human capital’ approach can be found in documents on the strategic direction of the New Zealand Aid Programme (NZAP), where it is recognised that education lies at the core of sustainable development. In the strategic document outlining the 12 investment priorities of the NZAP, the section on education reads that

*“access to basic education is a universal human right, and a powerful creator of national identity, wellbeing and economic development. Higher level knowledge and skills are fundamental to a country’s effective leadership, development and stability.”* (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2015, p. 28)

### **3.3.2 Education Migration and Development**

As Gamlen et al. (2017, p. 6) point out, there are two ways to view the correlation of education and migration. On the one hand, it can be argued that migration facilitates education, because the opportunity to move to other countries also increases the accessibility of educational facilities. It can also be argued that remittances, due to migration, enable children from low-income households to attend educational institutions (Bredl, 2011, p. 167). On the other hand, education may lead to migration

due to increasing the capability of the individual to obtain the necessary information to enable the move and due to the assumption that a higher educated individual earns a higher income which will increase the ease of relocating (Gamlen et al., 2017, p. 6).

In development, support for education is often described as capacity building. The OECD defines 'capacity' as "the ability of people, organisations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully. The definition is deliberately simple. It avoids any judgement on the objectives that people choose to pursue, or what should count as success in the management of their collective efforts." (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2006b, p. 8) In order to build this capacity, the members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC)<sup>2</sup> are providing scholarships for students to gain education abroad and collectively the members spent almost US\$3 billion per year between 2005 and 2009 on "imputed student costs" (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2012, p. 17). The intention is to develop the capacity of citizens of predominantly developing countries, which will enable them to contribute to their home countries' development. Nevertheless, it is recognised that scholarships pose a risk by potentially leading to a brain drain effect and efforts are made to ensure that scholarships are used as an effective tool for development. Some DAC members have reduced or even abolished scholarship schemes altogether and now provide in-country training instead (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2012, p. 17). Other DAC members, such as New Zealand, have refocused their scholarships to align with other donors in their region. Today, the NZAP provides scholarships to citizens of over 90 eligible developing countries and provides students with the opportunities to study at New Zealand and Pacific education institutions and to attend English language training in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2015, p. 28). Therefore, NZAP actively encourages education migration, at least within regions, demonstrating the value in obtaining quality education abroad.

However, it is not just the gain of quality education that can aid capacity building. According to Wild (2012, p. 13), "the opportunity to move away from traditional systems of family support offers opportunities to 'test' and develop one's

---

<sup>2</sup> Michael Roeskau, the former Director of the Development Co-operation Directorate, explained the DAC as "being the venue and voice of the world's major bilateral donors" (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2006a, p. 3).



resilience, to experience new types of intimacy, and to develop new support networks.” She further explained that experiencing the culture and value of another country seems to enhance reflexivity and support the formulation of personal and professional goals (Wild, 2012, p. 14).

### **3.4 Education and Migration**

When trying to explain education migration, it is important to examine what kind of education is the draw for a move overseas. It can be assumed that student outflows are lower in nations that have availability of tertiary education institutions (Kritz, 2015, p. 31). Kritz (2015, p. 43) found that countries were considerably less likely to have large numbers of their tertiary students abroad if they had a variety of tertiary institutions domestically, but that they were more likely to have relatively more students overseas if their populations were under 2 million.

According to Cummings (1984, p. 242), there are two approaches to understanding the framework of educational migration decisions: (a) the development approach and (b) the interdependence approach. The development approach considers education as means of national development, and it points at connections between variables, such as Gross National Product (GNP) or numbers of students enrolled in secondary education and the total demand for tertiary education. The development approach can be used to explain the increased number of students migrating overseas when a country becomes wealthier. The explanation for this correlation is that individuals require a certain level of funds in order to finance their education overseas and that entrance requirements from receiving universities often require students to have passed an internationally recognised test, which reflects on the level of secondary education in their home country (Cummings, 1984, pp. 242–243). The interdependence approach, on the other hand, views national education strategies as replications of mainly economic processes, both externally and internally. This approach emphasises the increasing economic interdependence of states and that many desirable jobs are multinational in nature – considering an overseas degree as initiation of this process (Cummings, 1984, p. 242). Both approaches are useful to some extent, as the interdependence approach explains the ‘pull factors’ of a globalised labour market and the development approach focuses on the ‘push factors’ of sending countries. However, both approaches neglect the influence of culture and

historical ties between countries (Cummings, 1984, p. 244), which plays a particularly important role in the Cook Islands context.

Education migration has increased significantly globally since the end of WW2 (Cummings, 1984, p. 241). It can be argued that one factor for this is globalisation. Kritz (2006, p. 4) explains that globalisation enhances the mobility of education and that it has led to worldwide competition amongst employing institutions as well as educational bodies. However, with the growing demand of education, which is caused by the desire of individuals to participate in this global trend, many countries struggle to meet this demand locally. This has resulted in growing numbers of students moving overseas in order to obtain higher education (Kritz, 2006, p. 4). Within this context, the term 'internationalisation' (Kritz, 2006, p. 5) of higher education has been used, which describes arrangements by educational institutions and governments between two or more states. However, the significance of this development is shown when other terms for the same phenomena were established. For example, the OECD utilises the phrase 'cross-border higher education (CBHE)' for the same notion and 'transnational education' is another term that is used to describe educational arrangements, which cross international borders.

Universities with overseas campuses or branches are an example for CBHE initiatives, where students can gain a reputable degree under the brand of a prestigious university while never having physically visited the country of origin of the foreign university. This concept addresses the concerns about the quality of education when delivered on a cross-border basis, as it can be assumed that a reputable university would not allow its name to be used for a sub-standard degree. If this was not monitored any low quality education would jeopardise the reputation of the university in the eyes of prospectus students and future employers (Kritz, 2006, pp. 9–10).

One example of this concept is the University of the South Pacific (USP), which was established in 1968. USP is jointly owned by twelve Pacific Islands nations. There are campuses in each of the member countries, with the main campus and administrative hub in Fiji, and overall the University is comprised of three faculties: the Faculty of Arts, Law and Education; the Faculty of Science, Technology and Environment; and the Faculty of Business and Economics. Additionally, there is the option for distance learning (The University of the South Pacific (USP), 2013).

Where overseas campuses and branches are not available, it is assumed that scholarships enable students to study abroad and allow nations to gain human capital and enable individuals to participate in the international economy (Kritz, 2015, p. 31). In theory, it is then assumed that the increase of human capital leads to national level economic benefits (Perna, Orosz, & Jumakulov, 2015, p. 86). However, empirical evidence behind the investment in international scholarships is ambiguous and one research even claims that it remains unproven that better educated individuals will lead to economic growth (Cuthbert, Smith, & Boey, 2008, p. 270). Concurrently, as Waibel et al. state, “there is no evidence that graduates with international experience in general transition into employment with more ease. If anything, there is evidence that individuals who spent an extended period abroad need more time to find a first job after graduation” (2017, p. 92). Another critique of scholarships schemes is that they contribute to a societal divide and create an ‘elite’ that is having trouble re-integrating into their home-society (Perna et al., 2015, p. 95). It should also be considered that difficulties in finding employment after graduating may stem from the graduates desire to find an exact match to their qualifications, interests and skills (Waibel et al., 2017, p. 92).

It has to be noted that the provision of scholarships is not only favourable for developing countries, but that these schemes can also be used as foreign policy tools by donor countries. It can be argued that returned scholars maintain a favourable image of the country of their studies and that their reports on their time overseas can impact the perception of that donor country of those who have remained at home. This means that by providing scholarships to developing countries, donor countries are able to increase their influence in these nations (Abimbola et al., 2016, p. 115).

#### **3.4.1 Tertiary Education Migration and development**

According to Gibson “brain drain has long been one of the most common concerns developing countries have about migration. This concern has been amplified in recent years by the rapid increase in skilled emigration, driven in large part by developed countries shifting to more skill-intensive immigration systems” (2009, p. 2). Some argue that brain drain is the clear outcome of migration, as the loss of skilled individuals will inevitably lead to a loss in economic power, which is reduced by the potential input of the migrated individual (Grubel, 1966, p. 269). Further, Beine, Docquier and Schiff (2008, p. 1) suggest that small states are more successful in

generating skilled individuals, but less likely to keep them on home ground. It has been found that three out of every seven individuals with tertiary education from small developing states reside away from their home country (Beine, Docquier, & Rapoport, 2008, p. 1). This rate is almost 3 times greater than the approximately 15% total migration rate. Beine et al. (2008, p.13) further explain that small states are particularly vulnerable to brain drain due to the increased sensitivity of skilled persons to the push factors of small states, due to the limited educational possibilities. Unfortunately, there are few suggestions on policy design to address the impacts of brain drain on the home economy of a sending country (Beine et al., 2008, p.13). “One option source countries might want to consider is the formation of cooperative arrangements with their principal destination countries, including agreements on return, and possibly circular migration”<sup>3</sup> (Beine et al., 2008, p.13).

However, in the discussion of tertiary education migration, a different perspective can be assumed. When approaching this topic on a national level, it can be argued that tertiary education migration does not necessarily lead to brain drain, but actually benefits the sending country – a ‘brain gain’. Docquier et al. (2006, p. 173) argue that if the potential increase of income due to education is higher overseas than at home, the prospect of migration increases if tertiary education is gained and thus improves domestic enrolment rates. Therefore, more individuals invest in human capital resulting from an increase in migration opportunities. This gain can lead to economic growth (Docquier et al., 2006, p. 174). The most obvious way brain gain can take place is when education migrants return home and apply the knowledge and skills which were gained overseas (Stark, Helmenstein, & Prskawetz, 1997, p. 233). Nevertheless, the pre-requisite for brain gain is that migrants return home. According to Gribble

*“by fostering a robust research and development sector, and by providing conditions and incentives that will encourage both transnational investment and entrepreneurship, sending countries may encourage students to return home once they have completed their studies, allowing*

---

<sup>3</sup> The International Organization for Migration defines Circular Migration as “the fluid movement of people between countries, including temporary or long-term movement which may be beneficial to all involved, if occurring voluntarily and linked to the labour needs of countries of origin and destination”. (International Organization for Migration, 2015)

*the sending countries to benefit from the skills, knowledge and networks the students may have acquired during their time abroad. “ (2008, p. 35)*

As this can be more challenging for small island developing countries, Gribble (2008, p. 35) suggests that small island nations can join their efforts and share resources where possible. It should be noted that not all countries are open to receiving returned migrants and as Connell (Connell, 2008, p. 1026) states “[return migrants are] often welcomed in theory but spurned in practice” due to the feeling of abandonment of those who stayed behind.

When approaching the topic of tertiary education on an individual level, it has been found that learning that is relevant to employment and life opportunities is particularly important to those who have national and global affinities (McCormick, 2014). Macpherson, Bedford and Spoonley (2000, p. 65) suggest that for some Pacific Islanders, the opportunity to further their children’s education overseas means that they will have opportunities that the parents themselves never had and higher education overseas is seen as something prestigious that benefits the entire family (Macpherson et al., 2000, p. 65). It can be argued that returning graduates combine the knowledge gained at the overseas university with local knowledge, education and expertise (Connell & Conway, 2000, p. 66). Therefore, the benefits of tertiary education are not just beneficial for the individual, their families and their communities, but also for national-level human resource development (Daduidreketi & Lingam, 2014, p. 130).

However, as Connell and Conway (2000, p. 65) explain, there may be issues with the application of skills accumulated overseas, as the local economy may not offer opportunities to productively use the new capabilities. Gibson (2009, p. 36) found that participants in a research on highly skilled migration in the Pacific rated that an increase in career opportunities would influence their decision to return home more significantly than marginal changes in income. This underlines the importance of personal and professional growth opportunities on the decision to return and remain home.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

This literature review has confirmed the strong linkages between migration and education. It has been shown that the (un)availability of education can lead to

migration and vice versa that migration can lead to (un)availability of education. The migration of the individuals with the highest capacity, i.e. tertiary education migration, puts the future of the sending country at risk, with small island states being particularly affected. While the individual seems to gain through education migration, the nation they are leaving may be set back in its development due to the phenomenon of 'brain drain'. One answer to this phenomenon is offered by the diaspora option, which considers migrants who remain overseas as a resource to the sending country.

Nevertheless, while it is not clear whether increased human capital will translate into macro-economic benefits, if education migrants return they are expected to contribute at a higher level to the development of their home nations, assuming they had obtained education that was not available to them in their home country. This gap in the literature reinforces the need for this research to assess the influence of tertiary education migration on Cook Islands' development. Further, it is important to note that returned migrants are likely to experience delays in finding suitable employment and that it is possible that scholarships that facilitate overseas university study may contribute towards a societal divide. Therefore, this research aims to examine the lived realities of returned tertiary education migrants in the Cook Islands to assess how these theoretical assumptions apply in this context and to examine the hurdles and enablers of returned tertiary education migrants.

# Chapter 4: Migration, Education and Development in the Cook Islands

---

## 4.1 Introduction

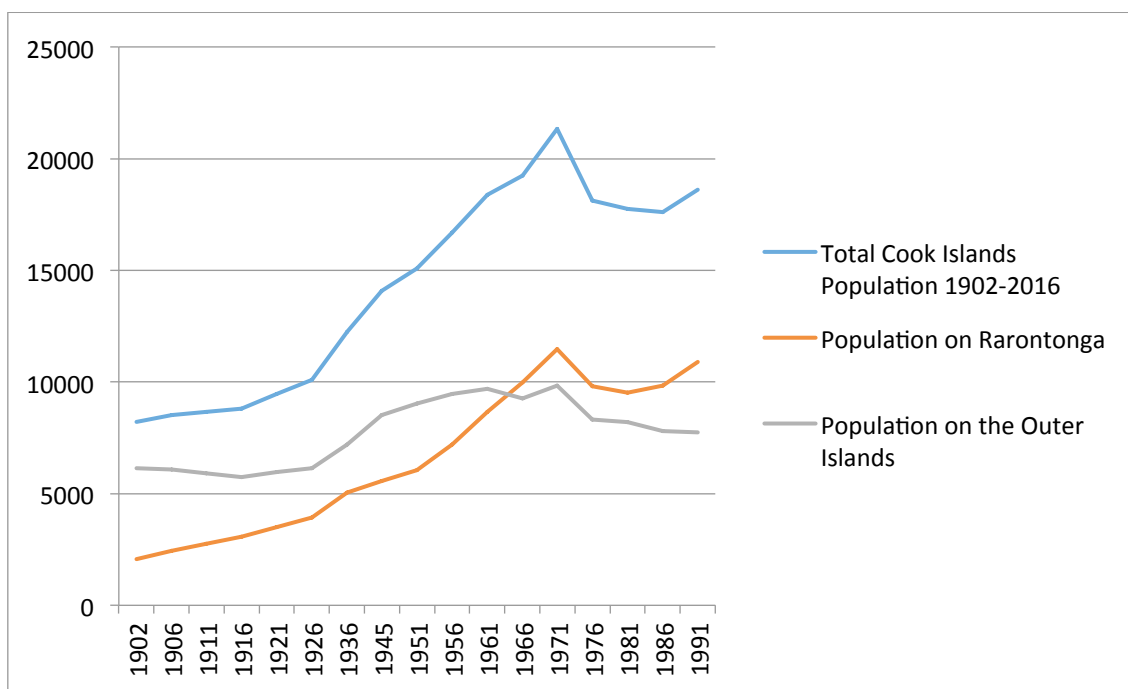
In order to understand the scope of the issue regarding tertiary education migration, it is important to frame the local context. The fifteen islands of the Cook Islands are scattered over a vast two million square kilometres, but more than half of the population reside on the main island, Rarotonga (Stalker, 2010; Warren, 2012, p. 36). Depopulation is seen as one of the major challenges for the Cook Islands' small population and the availability of scholarships and the easy access to New Zealand's education system accelerate this issue. In this chapter, the scale and background of migration in the Cook Islands will be explored before an outline is presented of the state of the education sector and options for Cook Islanders to obtain tertiary education within and outside of the Cook Islands. Finally, a closer look at the history of aid and an overview of current development issues will tie together the triangle of migration, education and development.

## 4.2 Migration

The Cook Islands is a country which is particularly interesting in the discussion regarding migration, as there are more Cook Islanders living overseas than in the Cook Islands (Hooker & Varcoe, 1999, p. 93). However, this was not always the case. Some argue that migration in pre-independence times was growing due to soldiers returning from their service in both World Wars and telling of the difference in living standards in other parts of the world (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade & Cook Islands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration, 2015, p. 8). In the 1950s Beaglehole (1957, p. 137) researched migration in the Cook Islands and found that there was relatively little outmigration from the islands but that the flow had increased in recent times. It was noted that in 1936 a total of 103 Cook Islanders lived in New Zealand and by 1951 the number had increased to 1000 (Beaglehole, 1957, p. 138). During the time of Beaglehole's research, it was believed that the migration from Rarotonga to New Zealand relieved the pressure of people from the outer islands of the Cook Islands moving to Rarotonga (1957, p. 139).

However, in 1974, the international airport of Rarotonga opened its doors for the first time, which led to drastic changes in migration patterns. Although the airport allowed foreign tourists to come to the Cook Islands and therefore boosted the tourism industry, it also opened the possibility for Cook Islanders to migrate out of the Cook Islands in a convenient and affordable way (Connell, 2005, p. 333). Additionally, the Citizenship Act 1977 provided Cook Islands residents access to New Zealand for education, employment and residency (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade & Cook Islands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration, 2015, p. 14), which made outmigration to New Zealand seamless. After emigration peaked in the early 1970s due to the opening of the airport, levels of movement stayed relatively stable until economic changes in the 1990s led to the next wave of migration. Figure 1 shows the population numbers from 1902 till 1991.

**Figure 1: Population in the Cook Islands 1902 - 1991**



(Cook Islands Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, n.d.)

While in the first half of the 1990s the Cook Islands experienced an increase in gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, the second half of that decade saw issues in the tourism sector and cuts in the government sector steer the country into an economic crisis (Connell, 2005, p. 331). In response to the pressure by international creditors and aid donors due to debts and the economic crisis, the Cook Islands underwent economic reform in 1996 and about 50% of public service jobs were lost



(Wright-Koteka, 2006, p. 58). This led to a steady decline of the population in the Cook Islands, as migration to New Zealand and Australia rose (Wright-Koteka, 2006, p. 8). As shown in Table 2 the total population and resident population has fluctuated, but more notably it illustrates that despite the fairly stable resident population, the population in working age is steadily declining.

**Table 2: Population Data 2001-2011**

	<b>2001</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2011</b>
<b>Total Population</b>	18027	19342	17794
<b>Resident Population (excluding visitors)</b>	15017	15324	14974
<b>Population aged 15-59</b>	8380	8910	8720
<b>% of resident population aged 15-59</b>	55.9	53.5	52.3

(Cook Islands Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, 2003, 2007, 2012)

In September 2016, Statistics Cook Islands suggested an estimated Cook Islands resident population of 11,700 (Cook Islands Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, 2016c, p. 1), while the New Zealand census of 2013 listed that 61,839 people identified as Cook Islands Maori in New Zealand, with about 22% of those born overseas (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). While these numbers are an indication of the scope of the issue, there are several flaws with this comparison. The above stated resident population of 11,700 is a mere estimate, which has been calculated based on the 2011 Cook Islands census - taking births, deaths, net migration and tourism numbers into account (Cook Islands Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, 2016c, p. 2). It is not unusual for Cook Islanders to temporarily reside in New Zealand due to health reasons and so a large percentage of births and deaths may occur outside of the Cook Islands and are therefore not taken into account in the estimate. Further, this number does not show the ethnic make-up of the population, leaving to speculation how many of the current residents in the country are of Cook Islands

descent. Also, the number of Cook Islanders living in New Zealand does not distinguish between first generation and, say, a fifth generation Cook Islander, which is crucial when using this number to support depopulation claims. Nevertheless, the resident population in September 2016 compared with Table 2 indicates a substantial depopulation trend.

As the 2016 census data has not yet been compiled, Table 3 shows the estimated migration numbers since 2011. It is noticeable that in 2012 and 2013 the difference between arrivals and departures is changing significantly, but there seems to be no apparent reason for this. Table 3 implies that since 2012 the resident population has continuously migrated from the Cook Islands. Combining the information from Table 2 and Table 3, it could be suggested that the numbers of economically inactive individuals, such as children and the elderly, are increasing while Cook Islanders of working age (i.e. population aged 15-59) leave the country.

**Table 3: Arrivals and Departures Cook Islands (Years 2013-2015 are preliminary numbers)**

TOTAL				VISITORS			RESIDENTS		
Year	Arr.	Dep.	Excess	Arr.	Dep.	Excess	Arr.	Dep.	Excess
2011	124,954	125,062	-108	113,129	112,311	818	11,825	12,751	-926
2012	133,642	133,187	455	122,230	121,203	1,027	11,412	11,984	-572
2013	132,213	132,363	-150	120,774	120,634	140	11,439	11,729	-290
2014	132,569	132,985	-416	121,458	121,065	393	11,111	11,920	-809
2015	137,204	136,447	757	125,130	123,707	1,423	12,074	12,740	-666

(Cook Islands Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, 2016b, p. 2)

Although Table 3 clearly shows that Cook Islands residents are continuously leaving the islands, in 2015 Cook Islands Prime Minister Henry Puna denied that the Cook Islands has an issue with depopulation trends (Radio New Zealand, 2015). While Table 2 illustrates that the total population remained relatively even between 2001 and 2011, it also indicates that the percentage of people in working age is continuously declining. Without the governmental recognition of the depopulation issue, it is unclear how this

nation can prepare to sustain a reasonable standard of living for its continuously decreasing population.

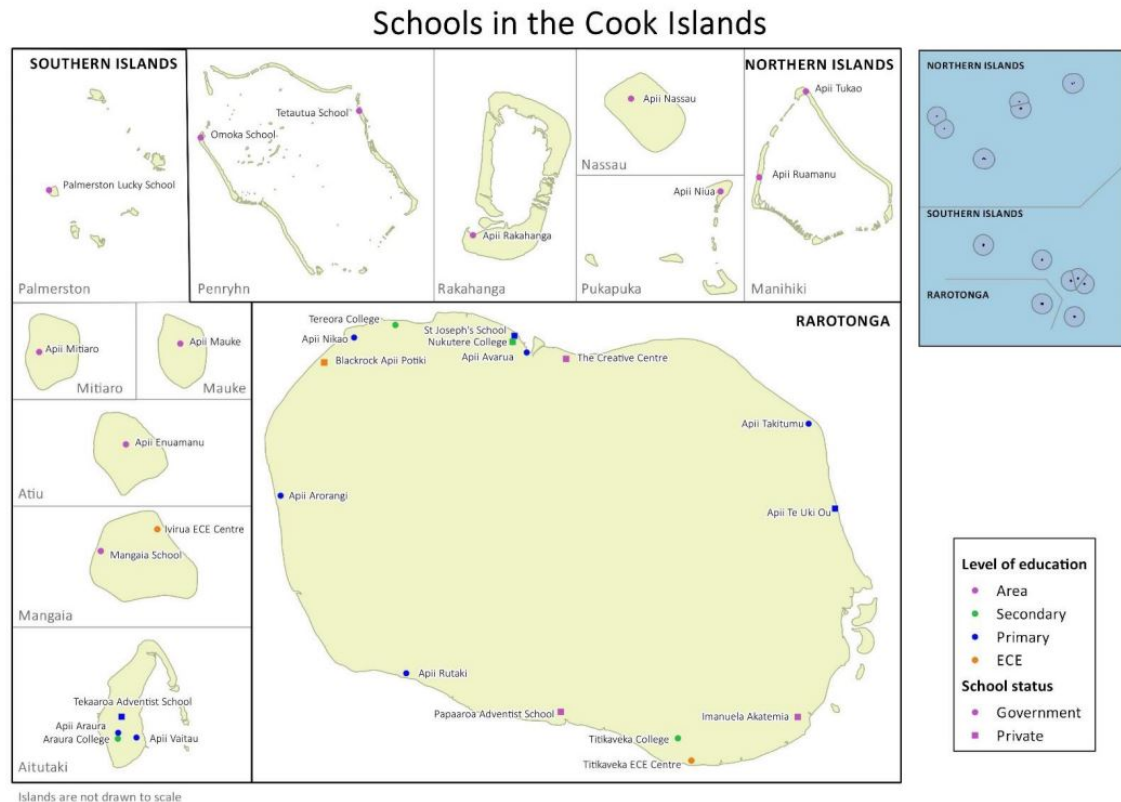
Wright-Koteka (2006, p. 118) found that the reasons for migration from the Cook Islands are manifold, but many of the participants of her study saw a difference of social and economic environments as a driving factor for their move (Wright-Koteka, 2006, p. 119). While the MIRAB model suggests that people on small island states live lives driven primarily by economic decisions, Marsters, Lewis & Friesen (2006, p. 31) support Wright-Koteka's (2006, p. 119) findings and argue that Cook Islanders 'live in rich networks of flows of goods, people, labour and meaning'.

### **4.3 Education**

Education and training are important factors for Cook Islands migration (Hooker & Varcoe, 1999, p. 95). In 2008, the Cook Islands Education Masterplan (EMP) was formulated in order to help direct education in the Cook Islands over the following 15 years. The EMP is based on the Education Sector Policy Framework and connects to the National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP), as well as the Cook Islands Millennium Development Plan and previous reviews of the educational sector in the Cook Islands (Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 2). 'In essence, EMP embraces learning for life with a commitment to the provision of quality learning opportunities for all people in the Cook Islands from birth' (Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 2).

Educational institutions in the Cook Islands are generally funded by the government. In 2016 the Cook Islands Ministry of Education recorded a total of 31 schools with 264 teachers nationwide. The total number of student enrolments was 4071 that year (Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 4). Figure 2 shows the locations of all 31 schools and illustrates the difficulty of providing equal access to quality education throughout the widely scattered country.

Figure 2: Schools in the Cooks Islands



(Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 6)

*This map was created by the Cook Islands Ministry of Education with assistance from the Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) Facility of The Pacific Community (SPC).*

At secondary level, some locations are particularly difficult to reach due to their remoteness and the Ministry of Education has therefore put an online learning scheme in place, called Te Kura Uira. In 2016, there were secondary cohorts in Penrhyn, Manihiki and Mititaro, providing education to those on the difficult to reach outer islands (Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 17). As a national qualification framework, the Cook Islands uses the New Zealand National Certificate of Education Achievement (NCEA) and in 2015, approximately 40% of all students who were candidates for NCEA qualifications achieved University Entrance Level qualifications (Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 21). This number compares quite well to rates in New Zealand where in the same year approximately 48% of all candidates achieved University Entrance Level qualifications (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2016, p. 7).

For those who do not wish or qualify to proceed to university, the Cook Islands Tertiary Training Institute (CITTI) offers vocational programmes and community education sessions in Rarotonga and the Pa Enua (outer islands) since the institute's

foundation in 2013 (Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 6). In the first year, the institute saw 16 enrolments in tertiary study, while in 2015 a total of 83 enrolments were recorded (Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 28). This clearly illustrates a demand for local vocational training.

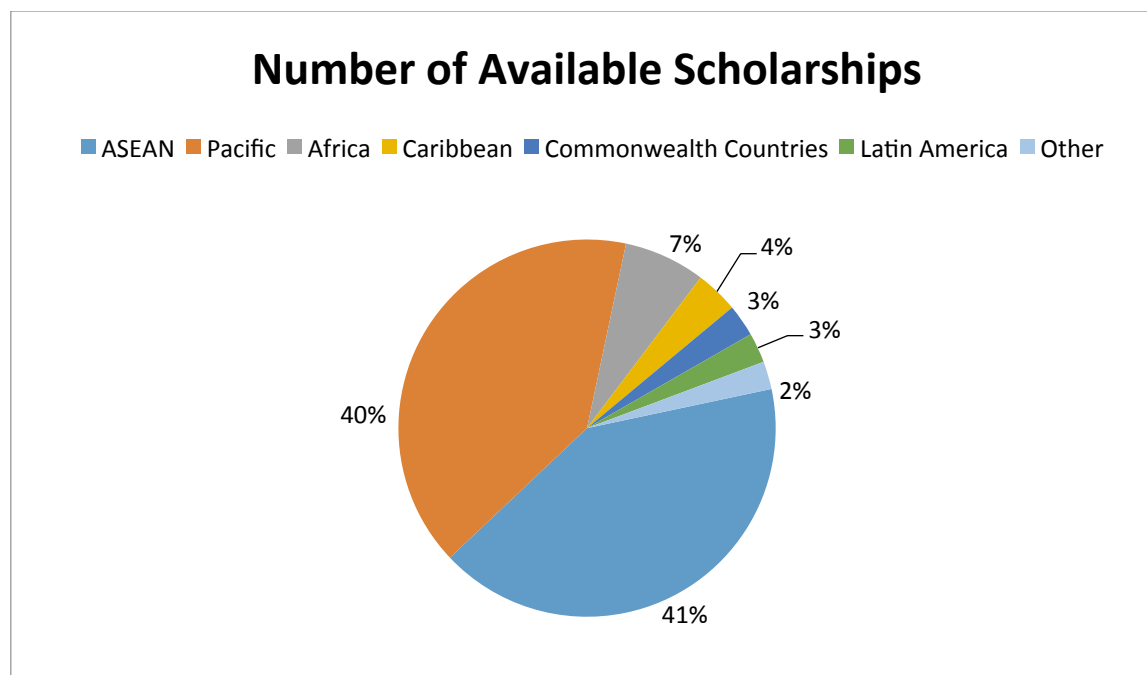
For those Cook Islanders who wish to obtain a university degree, there are several options. Locally, there is the University of the South Pacific (USP) Cook Islands Campus, which provides the opportunity for part-time study in Information Systems, Economics, Project Management and Business Administration (University of the South Pacific, 2014). This study option is suitable for people who are working full time and cannot commit to full-time study or are not able to leave the country due to other commitments. Alternatively, students are able to sign up to distance learning courses, through overseas universities such as Massey University in New Zealand (Massey University New Zealand, n.d.), where the students' New Zealand citizenship means that only domestic fees apply. This latter option is particularly appealing to those who are able to travel to New Zealand for block courses and who would like to study full-time while generally residing in the Cook Islands.

For Cook Islanders who are able and willing to relocate in order to obtain a university degree, there is a range of options. USP offer a variety of courses at their main campus in Fiji, while the USP Law School is located in Vanuatu (University of the South Pacific, 2013) and the campus in Samoa specialises on Agriculture (University of the South Pacific, 2016a). Other frequently used options are enrolments for universities in New Zealand or Australia. Cook Islanders can finance their studies privately by paying their own fees or they can take out student loans in New Zealand, as they are New Zealand citizens (StudyLink, 2014). According to Anna Roi, the Cook Islands Ministry of Education (MoE) estimates that there is an average of 10 Cook Islands students who opt to finance their overseas studies privately each year (personal communication, June 12, 2016).

However, there are also several scholarships on offer. Alongside the general scholarships that are open to all students, such as the Fulbright Scholarships to universities in the United States of America, Cook Islanders have the option to apply for scholarships that are specifically made available to them by the New Zealand Aid Programme (NZAP) and the Cook Islands Government. The NZAP explains that the

purpose of scholarships is to “foster and build potential leaders, as well as equipping individuals with skills and knowledge to benefit their home country” (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, n.d.). Figure 3 illustrates the reach of the NZAP scholarships globally.

**Figure 3: New Zealand Aid Programme Scholarships 2017**



(New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, n.d.)

At the time of this research, New Zealand funded eight scholarships for Cook Islanders to New Zealand (of which two are specifically for postgraduate study) and three to other Pacific Islands. Until recently, these scholarships were administered by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and final decisions lay with MFAT regarding who to award the scholarships to and which criteria would apply to the scholars, with the Cook Islands Government acting only in an advisory role. New Zealand had put in place a bond arrangement, which was tied to the scholarship scheme, where graduates had to return home for at least two years in order to fulfil the scholarship criteria. Since 2016, these scholarships have been administered by the Cook Islands Government, as well as a small number of governmental scholarships that have been available for some years and the Ministry of Education is currently in the process of redesigning the Terms of Reference for the scheme (Cook Islands

Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 27). It is not yet clear how the new arrangements will be set up, but the Cook Islands government will have the same funding available from the New Zealand Aid Programme as in previous years, which means that students from the Cook Islands will continue to study overseas.

Although New Zealand is one of the main destinations for education, the growing facilities at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji and scholarships for universities of other countries have been a driving force for young, skilled Cook Islanders to migrate overseas (Hooker & Varcoe, 1999, p. 95).

## **4.4 Development in the Cook Islands**

It has been argued that Cook Islands education migration leads young people to settle overseas (Connell, 1983), while others argue that they return home and benefit the local development (Hooker & Varcoe, 1999, p. 96). But what is 'development' from a Cook Islands perspective? All research participants in this study were asked what they believe a 'developed Cook Islands' would look like. The answers varied greatly from participant to participant with participant B5 going as far as saying that the Cook Islands "are a developed country". However, some themes emerged across the answers. Most participants used monetary terms, such as "higher income" or "economically sound" and many compared their home country to New Zealand. C3 said "Cook Islanders want what New Zealanders have". At the same time, many participants pointed out that the Cook Islands identity and culture should not be sacrificed for the goal of development and that whatever development occurs should be suitable to the aspirations of Cook Islanders. Participant C4 said eloquently: "a developed Cook Islands is a sustainable, self-governing, contributing member of regional and global society. However, it remains true to values and aspirations of Cook Islanders".

### **4.4.1 History of Aid in the Cook Islands**

Development in the Cook Islands, as in many other places, is a complex issue. With the population spread over the 13 inhabited islands, the consistent and equal delivery of services is challenging (Connell, 2005, p. 328) and Official Development Assistance (ODA) is still an integral part of the Cook Islands Budget (Cook Islands Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, 2016a, p. 14). Since independence in 1965, the Cook Islands are self-governing in free association with New Zealand. This status makes

all Cook Islanders New Zealand citizens (Warren, 2012, p. 36) and it is the basis for strong ties between the two countries. When the Cook Islands was a colony of New Zealand, the New Zealand Government provided significant assistance to the Cook Islands, including administrative support of the local authorities. Almost all Cook Islands' imports and exports were transacted with New Zealand (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade & Cook Islands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration, 2015, p. 10) and it was therefore in the interest of the New Zealand Government to support the local economy.

When the Cook Islands became self-governing in 1965, financial assistance from New Zealand was paid directly into the Treasury of the Cook Islands and the total amount of assistance in that year came to NZ\$1.8 million. From 1985, a more strategic approach was applied to the funding that New Zealand gave to the Cook Islands and a plan for economic development was created, which can be seen as the foundation of the future National Sustainable Development Plans (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade & Cook Islands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration, 2015, p. 26). Over the next decade, the Cook Islands gained more international recognition as a nation and therefore attracted development assistance from other sources. However, New Zealand remained the largest source of assistance with contributing over 75% of the total support received in the early 1990s (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade & Cook Islands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration, 2015, p. 26).

In 2004, New Zealand, Australia and the Cook Islands agreed to join New Zealand's and Australia's aid programme in the Pacific in order to reduce administration costs, putting New Zealand in the position of lead donor. This approach aligned with the principle of 'Harmonisation' in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, which was agreed upon by OECD member states in 2005 (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2005, p. 6). In further alignment with the Paris Declaration, the first Joint Commitment for Development was signed by the Cook Islands and New Zealand governments in 2009, which is reviewed every three years and sets out the direction of New Zealand's development assistance in the Cook Islands (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade & Cook Islands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration, 2015, p. 40).



#### 4.4.2 Challenges to Development in the Cook Islands

While the way aid is provided to the Cook Islands has changed over time, the dependency on ODA is deeply rooted in local systems. In 2014, GDP per capita was at NZ\$20,583 (Cook Islands Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, 2016d), which surpasses most other Pacific Islands states. It is expected that the Cook Islands will graduate from the OECD-DAC list of ODA eligible countries in 2017 (Adam Smith International, 2015, p. 11). It is still unclear how this will influence the current NZ\$60,660,588 of ODA that the Cook Islands is forecast to receive in the 2016/2017 financial year (Cook Islands Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, 2016a, p. 160), but a recent report by Bertram (2016, p. 58) predicts that the implications will be minimal as long as the main donor, New Zealand, maintains its support. Within the Pacific Islands region, the Cook Islands have a fairly high standard of living, but as was noted by the Cook Islands Ministry of Internal Affairs 'the general public compares their expectations of income, public services and opportunities to those on offer in Australia and New Zealand, due to the use of the New Zealand passports by Cook Islanders' (2015, p. 6).

The Cook Islands economy heavily relies on a strong tourism sector contributing more than 50 % of the country's GDP (Adam Smith International, 2015, p. 60), and which has led to rapid economic growth. However, the dependency on one sector and limitations of the economies of scale raise questions about the sustainability and vulnerability of economic development. With a limit to the accommodation capacity, deteriorating sanitation infrastructure, inadequate waste management capabilities, a lack of transport to the outer islands, an aging population and increasing requests for public services, the stability of the economy is more than questionable (Cook Islands Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2015, p. 6).

One concern with the stability of the Cook Islands is the growing cost of maintaining the expanding public sector. The cost of running the government has risen to a similar level to the time prior to the financial crisis in 1996 and debt levels are rising due to high investments in infrastructure (Cook Islands Office of the Public Service Commissioner, 2016, p. 8). A large percentage of the resident population is employed by the government (approximately 16%) (Cook Islands Office of the Public Service Commissioner, 2016, p. 20), but agencies still claim that they are under-resourced. 'However, whilst funding shortages are undoubtedly holding back the

potential of some agencies, capability gaps, structural inefficiencies, system and process inadequacies, and poor practices are at the core of many performance problems’ (Cook Islands Office of the Public Service Commissioner, 2016, p. 8). The government has recognised the need for a rationalisation exercise (Cook Islands Office of the Public Service Commissioner, 2016, p. 14), but in a country with tightly-knit community and family networks, where small changes in voter allegiance can have a substantial impact, any threat to employment has to be treated very carefully and it is unclear when or if any significant changes will be made. If a rationalisation of the public sector was to occur, the impact would be significant and it almost certainly would impact migration numbers, as seen in 1996.

In order to address the most important development issues, the Cook Islands recently published the 16 National Sustainable Development Goals, which show some similarities to the United Nations Global Goals (Cook Islands Office of the Prime Minister, 2016; United Nations, 2015, p. 14). As shown in Table 4, while Goal 2 (Cook Islands Office of the Prime Minister, 2016, p. 23) shows the desire for a diversification of the economy, the focus still seems to be on the growing tourism sector. Goal 15 (Cook Islands Office of the Prime Minister, 2016, p. 49) aims to ensure a sustainable population, by measuring the number of Cook Islanders living in the Cook Islands<sup>4</sup>.

**Table 4: Te Kaveinga Nui: National Sustainable Development Plan 2016-2020**

1.	Improve welfare, reduce inequality and economic hardship
2.	Expand economic opportunities, improve economic resilience and productive employment to ensure decent work for all
3.	Promote sustainable practices and effectively manage solid and hazardous waste
4.	Sustainable management of water and sanitation
5.	Build resilient infrastructure and ICT [Information and Communications Technology] to improve our standard of living
6.	Improve access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, modern energy and transport

<sup>4</sup> The methodology for measuring the success of this goal is showing some weaknesses. While the Border Management System can be used to subtract foreign passport holders from the population number as measured at the census, it cannot distinguish between Cook Islanders and New Zealanders, due to both holding the same passport. It will therefore have to be subtracted the number of ‘foreign workers on New Zealand passports’ (Cook Islands Office of the Prime Minister, 2016, p. 61), which will only count those who are on a work permit, rather than also capturing permanent residents and retirees.

7.	Improve health and promote healthy lifestyles
8.	Inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities
9.	Accelerate gender equality, empower all women and girls, and advance the rights of youth, the elderly and disabled
10.	Achieve food security and improved nutrition, and increase sustainable agriculture
11.	Promote sustainable land use, management of terrestrial ecosystems, and protect biodiversity
12.	Sustainable management of oceans, lagoons and marine resources
13.	Strengthen resilience to combat the impacts of climate change and natural disasters
14.	Preserve our heritage and history, protect our traditional knowledge, and develop our language, creative and cultural endeavours
15.	Ensure a sustainable population, engaged in development for Cook Islanders by Cook Islanders
16.	Promote a peaceful and just society and practice good governance with transparency and accountability

(Cook Islands Office of the Prime Minister, 2016, p. 13)

Other areas that are being addressed in the NSDP are infrastructure, health and education, but there are issues around the specific way that these goals will be measured. For example, efforts on the improvement of infrastructure almost solely focused on increased internet connectivity and the sectors of health and education will meet their targets simply by receiving larger budgets, rather than setting actual achievable outcomes (Cook Islands Office of the Prime Minister, 2016). Therefore, while the NSDP show some direction of the development efforts of the Cook Islands government, the chosen indicators are hardly a reliable measure for the progress on this path.

## 4.5 Conclusion

Depopulation is a pressing topic for the Cook Islands and the local resident population has been mostly decreasing since the 1970s. Because Cook Islanders hold New Zealand

passports, the movement between the Cook Islands and New Zealand is particularly easy and a financial crisis in the 1990s gave further momentum to this movement. One of the many reasons Cook Islanders leave the country is the pursuit of higher education. Although education in the Cook Islands is of a comparatively high standard, there are several convenient options for those who wish to obtain a university degree overseas. While private students can be tied to New Zealand due to sizeable student loans, scholarships require scholars to serve a bond in the Cook Islands after completing their degree so that their education can benefit the development of their home country. The Cook Islands has been receiving aid, particularly from New Zealand, for decades and the prospect that this financial support may decrease once the country has graduated from the DAC list for ODA eligibility may cause some changes in the approach to development in the future. Attempts to self-measure development through the National Sustainable Development Goals are a first step towards taking the lead of national development. However, flaws in the measures will lead to an incomplete picture of progress and reflects that the Cook Islands have some way to go to master this tool.

This framing of the Cook Islands context reinforces the need to assess the influence of tertiary education migration on Cook Islands' development, especially when considering the decreasing population in light of the possible changes in aid eligibility ahead for this small island country. Additionally to the previously noted need to examine the lived realities of returned migrants, this understanding of the educational landscape and the (un)availability of university courses in the Cook Islands further focuses the research questions on the decision making process for young Cook Islanders and whether stopping them from leaving their home in order to obtain a university degree would address concerns about brain drain appropriately. Having examined the Cook Islands context, we now turn to the findings of the field research.

# Chapter 5: Drivers for Decision-Making

---

## 5.1 Introduction

For young people growing up in the Cook Islands, opportunities for higher education are often located outside their home country. The small population and the limited government funding for continued education, leave few options for tertiary education in-country. In this chapter, the decisions that the participants of this research have faced will be presented. Firstly, the factors behind the decision to leave the Cook Islands for university study will be assessed and then the reasons for and against returning to the Cook Islands after graduating from university will be closely examined. This will highlight the push and pull factors of the research participants during their decision-making, but it will also address how cultural identity is impacted by a life overseas.

## 5.2 Leaving the Cook Islands for Study

It is not unusual for Cook Islanders to leave the country in order to obtain education overseas. This often starts early, when children are sent off to boarding schools in New Zealand in order to gain more prestigious high school qualifications. The Secretary of Education, Gail Townend, confirmed that some people attend secondary school overseas, due to their belief that schools in the Cook Islands are not as good as schools abroad. But she also pointed out that the NCEA (National Certificate of Education Achievement) levels in the Cook Islands are very good, which in her opinion proves that this perception of lower quality is not correct. However, C3 said that if one is able to gain access to the best available education and one is willing to invest money into this, one would leave the Cook Islands to pursue the best possible option. She herself has decided to send her daughter to boarding school in New Zealand, so he can benefit from better education. Similarly, B5 went overseas when she was 12 years old to attend boarding school from year eight to year twelve. For C3, education was at the root of tertiary education migration: “those who learn here are more likely to stay here”. Gail Townend had a different approach and said, “It is fine they go, but I’d prefer they come back”.

### 5.2.1 Family and Society

When deciding whether to leave the Cook Islands in order to obtain a university degree an important factor that influenced the students' decisions are their families and the society they live in. A1 and her sister decided to move to New Zealand to attend high school, which they not only saw as an opportunity to gain education, but also as an opportunity to live with their grandparents who were unwell at the time. Her grandparents are Cook Islanders, but they had moved to New Zealand to work and for health reasons. A1's grandparents were instrumental in the decision to continue to university level in New Zealand and A1 ultimately based her decision to study in Wellington on her aunt's recommendation of Victoria University of Wellington (VUW). Similarly, B3 had moved to New Zealand as a child with her family.

B8 always wanted "to get off the island" and when she was a teenager considered Rarotonga as "boring". There was always a yearning to go away and see the world; she always wondered what was beyond the horizon. B8 believed that her parents, who were well educated, influenced this attitude and they always pushed her to gain education, as this meant that "the world would be [her] oyster". For B7 it was his grandmother who pressured him to study and he mainly agreed to university study in order to make her happy. But family is not only a push factor; it can also be a pull factor. B2 went to high school in Rarotonga, but then he and his spouse decided to move to Australia to join their family, who was living there.

On the other hand, B8 talked about her recent visit to a class of final year students in a high school on Rarotonga. She had asked, "who here would like to go to New Zealand to live?" and nobody had put his or her hands up. When she then asked why they did not want to join their families in South Auckland, they had said: "have you seen how they live there? They all live in garages and there is no heating. Their lives are worse than our lives here. Here is Paradise." This story could indicate a shift in the mind-set of young people, who may start to see the prospect of living in New Zealand less desirable and with the accessibility of information increasing the expectations may become closer to reality and will be less idealistic.

### 5.2.2 Career Outlook

Another reason for deciding to leave the Cook Islands in search for tertiary education can be career outlook. A2 went to Tereora College (the main high school on

Rarotonga) in the 1970s and when she finished her fifth form year (year 11), she moved to New Zealand on a government scholarship to complete high school. This was one of two possible scholarship options at that time and it was called an Academic Scholarship. This scholarship was meant to prepare her for university study in New Zealand, which would enable her to access better paid jobs later on. Similarly, B19 said, “getting a degree would get [him] a good paying job and a comfortable lifestyle”. Another interesting perspective was offered by C5, who believed that young people should be encouraged to study overseas, because “we have to distinguish between benefits for the Cook Islands and benefits for Cook Islanders”. C5 expressed that it would be narrow minded to stop young people from leaving:

*“you are smart enough to be an accountant, but we don’t want you to go to Auckland to become a qualified accountant, because you might stay there’. No parent would say that to their child, but everyone seems to say ‘no, but you should have your child stay behind, while mine goes overseas to learn’”.*

C5 thinks that young people should be encouraged to go overseas, collect experiences, save money and then – if possible - bring all that back. This is a good example of how complex the decision is to leave the Cook Islands in order to pursue a university degree. While many make this decision based on their own individual search for a better career and a better future, it is expected of young people to think of the collective good for their country. While families only want the best for their own children, it is expected of other children to look after the country and sacrifice their own individual gain for this reason.

### **5.2.3 New Zealand Citizenship**

An important factor in the decision-making process for any Cook Islands migrant is the fact that Cook Islanders hold New Zealand citizenship, which gives them not only the option to travel easily, but it also provides them with the same rights to (and costs of) education in New Zealand as those who are New Zealanders. B1 confirmed that the ease of moving to New Zealand or Australia because of the New Zealand citizenship is an important factor for many. C3 felt similarly and said “Cook Islanders hold quite dearly the ability to be mobile and transient over their lifetime.” B2, for example, had studied in Australia, gaining both an undergraduate and a postgraduate degree, and

because she is a New Zealand citizen, she was able to study for free (this was in the 1980s). C6 stated that many move to New Zealand for tertiary education, as this is not a big step, especially when they have families there who will help them get established. But New Zealand citizenship also creates expectations and, as C3 noted, “Cook Islanders want what New Zealanders have”. Similar to the discussion on career outlook, New Zealand citizenship is very beneficial to the individual migrants, as it makes the move to New Zealand (and Australia) much easier. However, this also increases the risk of brain drain, so within the migration discussion New Zealand Citizenship could have a negative impact on the Cook Islands. Again, we see a distinction between individual gain and potential national loss.

#### **5.2.4 Scholarships**

Even if their passports allow young Cook Islanders to study in New Zealand, not everyone can afford to move overseas. Scholarships enable many to make that move and therefore these funding schemes are central to the discussion regarding tertiary education migration. A2 said: “Back in the early 70s, when someone got a scholarship, it was a big deal. It was announced publicly, and they were admired for receiving this honour, especially, if you were from a family which wasn’t so well off.” C3 even stated that she did not expect many to go overseas for university study privately, because they “would think twice about leaving, because it is so expensive and they have to be sure that this is what they want to do”.

At the time of the field research, the MoE was reviewing the scholarships policy and one consideration was to change the name from scholarships to something that captures the notions of access and opportunity. When speaking to the Secretary of Education, Gail Townend admitted that the MoE could have been better at tracking those who left the country for education, but were not on formal scholarships. She further pointed out that the MoE could have been better at advertising financial support outside of scholarships.

#### **5.2.5 Alternatives and USP**

There are alternative options to gaining a degree overseas, as the University of the South Pacific (USP) has a Cook Islands campus on Rarotonga and Internet connections are good enough to study by distance. However, B1 was one of many who had her doubts about these alternatives and she said that she knew in high school that she would move overseas for her studies, because options in the Cook Islands are limited.



When asked about alternatives, C3 explained that the local campus of USP is available for part-time learning only. B3 had used a distance learning option, as he finished his New Zealand post-graduate studies while living in the Cook Islands, with two-week intensive block courses in New Zealand. This was arranged through UniTec and he believed that many studied this way today.

Not many of the research participants spoke favourably about USP and some simply did not know much about what was on offer on the local campus. B4 explained that at the time she wanted to study, she did not know whether USP offered the course and just had New Zealand in her head so she did not look into that option. B7 also said that he did not know much about USP at the time he was looking to study, but he knew about the good international reputation of Auckland University. Also, his high school friends went to Auckland University, so he wanted to be in the “same boat” as them. Additionally, even though one of his family members used to teach at USP, they did not specifically encourage him to study there and he rather felt that they wanted him to study in Auckland. Today, B7 would consider studying at USP, as he sees the courses on offer in the newspaper and finds them interesting. If he chooses to add another undergraduate degree or a postgraduate degree, he may study at USP or, alternatively, enrol at Massey University for a distance learning course.

C3 believed that there is still a perception that the quality of tertiary education that is provided in the Cook Islands is questionable. This was echoed by B9 who also pointed out that there is a perception that the courses at USP are not as good as what are on offer overseas. Similarly, in the opinion of Rod Dixon, the former Campus Director of USP – Cook Islands Campus, regional education is not considered equivalent by those families who send their children overseas, but he believed that this is not true. He expressed that these families think that metropolitan education is more valuable than regional, but that this perhaps needs to be seen the other way around. Dixon explained that students often decline the scholarships to USP if they are from Rarotonga, but people from the outer islands are more inclined to accept. Previously, there were thirty Cook Islands students studying at USP Fiji, but now there are only two or three. B5 believed that if a qualification from USP is obtained, an additional paper has to be taken in New Zealand to get this qualification recognised overseas. According to the USP Website, eighteen programmes offered at USP have

received international accreditation and four have received recognition. Of those four, only the Diploma in Information Technology is considered comparable to the equivalent New Zealand qualification, with the other three programmes being partially recognised to enable students to finish their studies in New Zealand (University of the South Pacific, 2016b). B3 even said that she did not want to study at USP for her post-graduate degree, because USP did not offer anything that would have benefited her. She thought that the quality of the programs at USP was not good and that USP had not been keeping up with the trends and tutors and lecturers were not of high quality. B3 was unsure whether additional investment into USP could fix the reputational issues. B2 felt that at his work place, people who had graduated from USP struggled to put their studies into practice. He said “there is a disconnect between theory and implementation” and that employers in the Cook Islands would prefer someone who has studied overseas. B16 said that it is definitely valuable to go overseas for studies. She said

*“we don’t seem to develop critical thinking with the lack of quality ... lecturers. Here we just have tutorials ... and then sort of intensive crash course cohorts that happen for two weeks, maybe three, but that’s like really intense four hours after work type of thing ... my personal opinion, I’ve doubted the ability to create critical thinkers out of those cohorts because it is just cramming for four hours and then expect to go home and do some homework and come back for another shift of four hours ... the ability to get away from work, from family and just focus on actually studying, I think that is an advantage, so it’s definitely good that we get this opportunity to go overseas and just focus on academia.”*

When asked about USP, B1 said that the study options at USP are limited and she further noted

*“USP is good, but the problem is that qualifications aren’t recognised everywhere in the world. There is a perception that New Zealand and Australian degrees are more prestigious and that mind-set would be difficult to change.”*

C5 agreed and explained that USP does not have such a great reputation in the Pacific. He had heard that the Fijian Government delisted some courses recently and

that this was due to these courses not meeting Fiji's education standards, which are arguably laxer than New Zealand's standards. For C5 it was clear that if he went back to university, he would rather study by distance than at USP, which he admitted was purely based on perception. C4 offered a different perspective and noted that younger people might find USP less attractive due to the lack of a "critical mass". He felt that young students want to be with peers and it is not just about learning, but also about the experience. C4 said "People want that experience of a lecture hall with 200 people and the university café". He further explained that he believed that even if there were a fully functioning university on the Cook Islands, students would not be able to get this experience. It is rather the older generation that takes up study at USP – Cook Islands Campus, as it is difficult for them to leave the country and also part-time study suits their lives better.

Another point C4 made was that young people do not seem to want to live in Fiji. B9 had been offered a full scholarship to study in Vanuatu and Fiji, but his father did not allow her to accept the scholarship, as there are no direct flights in case of an emergency to either location. Instead, her father paid for her first and second year at a New Zealand university and she then qualified for a different scholarship, which allowed her to finish the studies in New Zealand. Similarly, A2 had initially been offered a scholarship to study medicine in Fiji, but she chose not to accept the scholarship, as she did not want to move there. She felt that there was a difference in quality between a degree from New Zealand and a degree from Fiji and she thought that she would have to add on some extra New Zealand qualifications to the degree from Fiji in order to practice medicine in New Zealand. A2 said "I didn't want to go to Fiji - that felt like going a step backwards". Anna Roi, from the Ministry of Education, also explained "not many people want to go to the region, even though it is safe and closer. Most students who study in Fiji are mature and they were already studying at USP [Cook Islands Campus] and just want to fast-track their studies."

Rod Dixon, the Campus Director of USP – Cook Islands Campus at the time of the field research, stated that people studying overseas consider themselves as somewhat above other Cook Islanders. Historically they often used the power of their families or political connections to get scholarships and at the time of the interview, he felt that only a small number of students at Tereora College had access to tertiary scholarships.

USP has cohorts of 20 -30 students who start together, which fits with the collective approach of the Cook Islands. Dixon said that this structure is very successful, as students help each other get through the studies together, which involves very collectivist thinking and not the western individualistic approach. Dixon believed that the Cook Islands have a collectivistic economy, but overseas people do not understand this and many overseas students return with an individualistic mind-set. There is a need for regionally-trained scholars to develop their own understandings of local economy, society and culture and develop policies appropriate to these islands rather than “importing holus bolus ideas learned overseas”. Therefore, in Dixon’s view this approach is more appropriate for the Cook Islands.

B8 said that there is a role for places such as USP, but that they would need to be more innovative in the courses they deliver. According to the Secretary of Education, a Training Needs Assessment will be shared with USP once the results are available.

Even though many had voiced concerns over the perception of the quality of USP courses, others pointed out that there was a place for USP. B20 said that USP is very good for those who want to stay in the Cook Islands; particularly suitable for people wanting to take postgraduate courses, as these people are older and may have families and good jobs they do not want to leave. She said,

*“I gained my post-grad degree at USP and I wasn’t interested in finding a job in New Zealand or Australia, but it was rather about the personal development, so that I could contribute better to this country. Also, the Cook Islands Government uses USP to develop managers professionally.”*

Dixon explained that all classes at USP are provided in the evenings, so students do not have to take off work to attend. He further said “people choose to stay in the Cook Islands for their studies, because they have commitments, such as car loans, house loans, social commitments, church commitments, family commitments. The typical USP student is female, in her thirties and employed.” Dixon noted also that USP trains its students in-country and therefore the students remain embedded members of local society in the Cook Islands. USP offers to complete an MBA in two years without leaving the country and this is very appealing for people with families. It is also possible to complete full degrees in four or five years in-country.

On another point, Dixon pointed out that it costs the same to graduate one scholar in New Zealand as it costs to graduate around ten scholars in the Cook Islands. He also mentioned that 400-500 people have graduated with degrees over the past 12 years at USP Cook Islands and half of those gained post-graduate degrees. Dixon believed that the number of people going overseas for their education has declined, because of the USP – Cook Islands Campus being available to them. Dixon further argued that if the Cook Islands put more money into USP, more people might get involved and people would stay here which will mean that the education is appropriate for the local, social, cultural and economic context. Dixon therefore believed that the Cook Islands should develop USP and keep people there, but he also believed that more extensive strategic planning by the Cook Islands Government is necessary to permit accurate human resource planning that can inform USP as to what courses to provide in-country. Similarly, when the MoE conducted a survey to help them shape the new scholarships, the most interesting aspect was the high percentage of people thinking that more funds should be spend on study at home. Gail Townend explained that a lot of people who took part in the MoE survey thought the funds should be allocated 50/50 between study locally and study overseas. This was a surprising finding for the MoE and this will help shape how the new scholarships are structured.

### **5.3 Returning after Graduation**

Once the decision to leave has been made and Cook Islanders have completed their university degree overseas, it is time to decide whether to return to the Cook Islands. So what are some of the reasons why tertiary education migrants choose to return home? For some people it is an easy decision, such as B1 who always knew she would come home, but she simply was not sure when she would do so. B6 agreed and said “those who leave to get education have the desire to come back”. Similarly, even though A2 had not yet returned to the Cook Islands she had been thinking about moving back home, especially because she feels that it is time to build on her land and because this is something that is done when people are older. B3 expressed that the decision to move back depended on the individual stage in life and that he had not seen many who had come back after working overseas for a while and that it is rather recent graduates who move home.

### 5.3.1 Family and Society

One of the reasons for people to return is their families and the Cook Islands community. B6 explained that those who go to Australia and New Zealand do not come back; however, if migrants move to Hawaii, they will come back. B6 explained this by saying “if they go to a place where there is no Cook Islands community, they are more likely to come back”. This shows how important community networks are for Cook Islanders. B19 said “I had to return home for family reasons. I had mixed feelings coming back – I was happy to be back with family and familiar surroundings, but sad to forego the opportunity of doing a master’s [degree].” He went on to say

*“if it weren’t for my grandmother and my family’s dependence on me, I would’ve stayed in NZ to do a master’s degree ... and eventually work there”.*

B2 also moved back to the Cook Islands to look after his mother, but he was only able to do so because he had split from his spouse in Australia. C3 also moved to the Cook Islands for family reasons, but in her case the driver was her desire to bring up her daughter in the Cook Islands culture. B3 also saw the community as an important part for her return and he worked very hard to be accepted back into the local society. C5 went further and explained that he expects the generational swing to be much more prominent in the Cook Islands than in New Zealand or Australia, because the newer generation has more of a worldly view. C5 offered an interesting perspective and explained that once the generational change happens, more overseas Cook Islanders will return, because they can see the changes in society, which will become more vibrant. He also believes that the deep-sea Internet cable, which is currently being built, will help also, as the more amenities that are available in New Zealand and Australia become available in the Cook Islands, the more likely it is that people will consider coming back. C5 said

*“the older generation wants to freeze the country as it was previously, but they want it to develop at the same time. This doesn’t work. The Cook Islands will change.”*

### 5.3.2 Student Loans and Bonding

Another reason why tertiary education migrants chose to return home is the bond agreement that is attached to the New Zealand Aid Programme Scholarships and Cook

Islands Government Scholarships. As explained in Chapter 4.3, graduates have to return home right after completing their degree to serve a two-year bond period working in their home country. A2, who had received a scholarship in the 1970s, chose not to return home. She explained that before she started studying, she had a practical placement and worked for the New Zealand Ministry of Justice. She wanted to work there for three years and then go to university. However, before she could start her studies, she received a call from the Cook Islands Government asking her to return home and “pay back [her] dues”. However, she “hadn’t yet done what [she] came to New Zealand to do” – gain a university degree. Nevertheless, the government had funded the scholarship and said it was time to go back. She decided not to go back and she was one of many at that time who made this decision. Because she did not return, at first the Cook Islands Government said that she had to pay back the scholarship bond, but then they changed their approach and instead she lost her job at the Ministry of Justice, which was a placement as part of her scholarship. A2 explained that this had little impact on her, as she immediately found another job at the same department.

Anna Roi, the Scholarships Officer at the Ministry of Education, explained that before 2012, students did not come back to the Cook Islands after completing their studies, so AUSAid, the Australian aid programme, cut their scholarships for Cook Islanders and New Zealand MFAT changed the structure of their scholarships. Between 2012 and 2016, scholars from the Cook Islands had to take out student loans in New Zealand as part of the scholarship and would only get their student loans wiped once they have “served the bond”. This proved a successful change. B3 explained that tertiary education migration is no longer a big issue for the Cook Islands due to the bond arrangement for scholarships. However, he felt that the bond arrangement was not as strictly enforced at the moment as it could be. B1 received a scholarship at the end of her studies, so she had to come home straight away due to the bond arrangement. B20 also admitted that she did not intend to return to the Cook Islands straight away, but received a scholarship and therefore returned after the completion of her studies.

The Secretary of Education, Gail Townend, explained that, at the time of the interviews, scholarship students have to get a student loan and once they come back

their student loan will be paid off. If they do not return, the student loan is theirs to pay back. However, not everyone is able to receive a scholarship and so student loans are an issue for some. B3 and B1 admitted that the student loan is a hurdle for those who wish to return. B7 also agreed and said that his student loan is an issue for him. He has not been able to pay anything off because he first had to establish a base in the Cook Islands, but now he will start putting money aside to pay the loan off. B7 further said that the international media attention about the Cook Islander who got arrested at the airport for not paying off his student loan certainly brought it to the front of his mind<sup>5</sup>. B9 even suggested that the CIG should pay off student loans as incentives for people to return. And C3 clearly stated, “student loans are disincentives for people to come back”. In C3’s final high school year, seventeen students completed the class with a university entrance qualification. Four of those received a scholarship and three self-funded their studies overseas. Of the three private students all stayed in New Zealand after graduating, so C3 suggested alleviating the barrier of the student loan in order to attract people back to the Cook Islands. B3 felt differently and suggested that those who study overseas privately do so for a specific reason and he expected them to return, for example, to work in their family business. A1, who is currently still in New Zealand, also did not believe that a student loan would hold her back from returning to the Cook Islands, as she would make sure to make payments towards the loan from the Cook Islands.

### 5.3.3 Giving back to the Cook Islands

Another reason to return that many touched on but only few clearly articulated was the notion of ‘giving back’ to their home country. B5 explicitly said that her decision to return home was based on the idea of “giving back”. B9 also said that she did not consider staying in New Zealand after graduating, because of her family and because she feels that she has an “obligation to [her] country”. B7 said

*“I guess I would encourage any Cook Islanders with tertiary qualifications to come back and live here just to contribute to our nation, not just the economy, but also our culture.”*

---

<sup>5</sup> In 2016, Ngatokatoru Puna was arrested in New Zealand at the airport due to his over \$130,000 student loan debt. Puna had been given a \$40,000 student loan about twenty years ago, which grew significantly due to interest, and had not reacted to Inland Revenue’s attempts to contact him regarding his loan. Puna had to appear in court and was only allowed to leave New Zealand once he had made a repayment of \$5,000 (Kidd & Tait, 2016).



#### **5.3.4 Career**

Also mentioned, as positively influencing the decision to return home, is the availability of career options in the Cook Islands. B1, for example, said that she always knew that there are job opportunities for her, even before she returned home. A1, who is still in New Zealand, believed that people with university degrees should not have any issues finding something in the Cook Islands as long as they remain flexible.

### **5.4 Remaining Overseas after Graduation**

There are several reasons why people choose to stay overseas after completing their university degree. A2 expressed his view clearly by saying “I felt like [New Zealand] was where my future would be, education wise, job wise and so on.” B6 believed that “most Cook Islanders overseas still want to return”, but he also felt that the Cook Islands Government had to make some changes to bring those that are ready to return back home. While A1 still resided in New Zealand at the time of the interview, she believed that it would be difficult for her to adapt to the current political framework in the Cook Islands. She said, “it seems that the Cook Islands are stuck in their own ways. This can be good sometimes, but sometimes you have to adjust to changes – such as environmental and political developments”. This shows that some individuals are waiting for changes to occur in the Cook Islands before the move back can be considered.

#### **5.4.1 Career Outlook/Aspirations**

One reason for graduates to remain overseas is their aspirations for professional development and personal advancement. A2, who has not yet returned to the Cook Islands, spoke of a time when there were some incentives for overseas Cook Islanders to return home. At that time, she had applied for a job in the Cook Islands, but she received a rejection letter to her application within hours of sending it. This really disappointed her and it delayed her return home significantly. A1 also explained that she thinks there are job opportunities in the Cook Islands, but she was not sure whether there would be anything that would appeal to her. When A1 graduated, she had quite a few smaller paid opportunities in New Zealand, which she wanted to see through, and after one year she landed a permanent job in Wellington. Because A1 had left the Cook Islands while still in high school, she has only been able to experience the opportunities available in New Zealand, while she never had the chance to explore

the job market in the Cook Islands. B8 also did not return to the Cook Islands straight away, but decided to stay in Australia to work for three years and gain experience. B5 even said that she never considered moving back permanently, but only ever stayed for a couple of years at a time. She said that the reason for this was that she did not want “to get stuck”, like some of her friends. B6 felt that the issue was obvious, and explained that if people return home after studying overseas and find a job they will tell everyone. However, because they are experiencing issues settling back in, they tell others, who then will not bother returning.

#### 5.4.2 Cultural Identity

While it does not appear to be a big factor for the decision-making on whether to return to the Cook Islands after graduating, cultural identity certainly has an important role in the discussion on tertiary education migration. B16 said

*“if you are a Cook Islander and you identify as a Cook Islander and you let people know that you are a Cook Islander, uhm, its part of Cook Islands development because you are an ambassador for us, so even if you are overseas and achieving great things over there and not here, I think it’s still a reflection on all of us.”*

Similarly B15 said

*“I also think [migration] reinforces national identity. I mean if you grow up here, you pretty much grow up and you represent your island or your village or like your kind of club or community. When you go overseas you are a minority and so you identify yourself, also by your island, because you find other Atiuans or Aitutakians<sup>6</sup>, but mainly as a Cook Islander.”*

Others find ways to stay in touch with their home even while overseas. B7 for example chose the Cook Islands as a subject for most of his assignments at university and felt he stayed in touch with his home that way. A1 was also looking for a connection to home when she started studying in New Zealand. She said that there used to be a Cook Islands Student Association at Victoria University, which was closely knit. However, when she came to university, this was disestablished because “there wasn’t a strong Cook Islands’ essence”. In A1’s view the reason for this may be that the university used

---

<sup>6</sup> Atiu and Aitutaki are islands of the Cook Islands.

to be one of the two New Zealand universities where people could study Cook Islands Maori. According to A1, in about 1981, VUW disestablished that course, so Cook Islanders were no longer drawn to this university as much. A1 also spoke about her own cultural identity and said, “some people are only Cook Islanders out of convenience – when it suits them – rather than all the time.” A1 however described herself as a proud Cook Islander and considers her own Cook Island identity as strong. A2 felt that her work for the Cook Islands community in Wellington was her way of giving back to the Cook Islands.

While cultural identity may not be a reason to remain overseas after graduating, it certainly is an important topic for those who no longer live in their home country. During the group talanoa it was discussed whether cultural university groups could be a suitable platform to help reach people who otherwise may not wish to return home. If individuals have the opportunity to remain a part of the Cook Islands community (even if they are not physically present), this may be the required tie that will keep them in touch with the Cook Islands and ultimately may bring them back home.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

The above results have shown that the decisions involved in the topic of tertiary education migration are influenced by many factors. While families can encourage individuals to move overseas in search of better opportunities, they can equally be the reason for graduates to return home after completing their degrees. Another interesting discussion regards the role of USP. In the Cook Islands, this university has an important role to play, catering for those who are unable to leave the islands. However, it becomes clear that those who have the option to obtain a university degree overseas will take this opportunity. Even if more resources were invested into USP in the Cook Islands, this research indicates that this would not satisfy the desire of young people to explore places outside of this small island state. Rod Dixon’s opinion indicated the existence of somewhat of an animosity towards those who decide against the local option and instead leave the Cook Islands in pursuit of their individual gain. This should be treated with care, as a societal expulsion of any kind may lead to the acceleration of outmigration.

Once graduated, migrants are faced with the big decision of returning or remaining overseas. This research shows that the bond arrangement associated with scholarship schemes seems to be successful in bringing home people who otherwise would not have decided to return. The decision of the MoE to extend the number of people who gain scholarships and therefore become bonded, indicates that this has been recognised by the Cook Islands Government.

Those who chose to remain overseas interestingly brought up their own cultural identity and their strong connection to the Cook Islands. Both interviewees showed confidence that they would return but were not sure when this would be, but they also had concerns about the availability of jobs. Having examined the reasons why Cook Islanders decide to move overseas for education, we now turn in the following chapter to analyse the barriers and enabling factors regarding their return home.

# Chapter 6: Enablers and Hurdles upon Return

---

## 6.1 Introduction

Once the decision to return is made, graduates face a variety of factors that make their return easier or harder. Whether these factors are perceived or real is not imperative in this discussion, as they create the reality that returned graduates live in and base their decisions whether to remain in the Cook Islands on. Many education migrants explained they had expected to be welcomed back with open arms and that settling back into life at home would be easy. B2 said, “these are our own people and they should be treated well, because they want to come back and want to serve their own people”. In this chapter, the lived realities of those participants who returned after obtaining a tertiary degree overseas are recorded. Firstly, the perceived hurdles for returning education migrants are presented. These include both social and professional factors. Secondly, the enablers for successful re-settlement after returning home will be discussed, which will also be split into social and professional contributors.

## 6.2 Hurdles

In this research, returned tertiary education migrants felt that they had to overcome both social and professional hurdles when re-establishing in their home country. B2 explained that a few years ago there was a scheme to attract Cook Islanders to return from overseas. However, the scheme collapsed, as the returnees did not find what they expected and they weren’t looked after, because they were Cook Islanders and were just expected to know what to do in their own country. Unfortunately, it was not possible to obtain official information on this scheme, but the lack of support for those who decide to return was a theme that weaved through many interviews.

### 6.2.1 Social

As many research participants based their decision to return on factors outside their professional lives, it was interesting to find that most interviewed returned education migrants experienced hurdles when re-integrating into the community. Many mentioned a divide between those who had stayed and those who went overseas. For

B3, this divide is rather an issue when people live outside the Cook Islands for a long time. He himself had been away for quite some time and he had to work very hard and prove himself, in order to be accepted back into the community. While C6 explained that once tertiary education migrants return to the Cook Islands, they often have an elevated opinion of themselves, which leads to a struggle to find a role in society. C5, on the other hand, felt that the people in parliament and the people who write the newspaper are the Cook Islanders who have stayed, suggesting that returned migrants have no voice. Does this mean that tertiary education migration has split this small Pacific nation?

### **Society**

When discussing re-integrating into Cook Islands society, it is important to understand the scale of the population. As outlined in Chapter 4, there are fewer than 9,000 people living in the Cook Islands between the ages 15 and 59 (assuming that this is the age group that returned tertiary education migrants mainly associate with). With such a small-scale community, returnees find a closely-knit social structure that can be difficult to break into. B6 noticed the change in the way people in the Cook Islands were interacting with him when coming back for holidays during the time he was living overseas. He suddenly felt a divide between “us and you” and he realised that “an invisible wall between Cook Islanders living in the Cook Islands and Cook Islanders living overseas had been build”. As an example of this, B6 described the scene at the airport, where at the departure area everyone is treated the same. However, at the arrival areas tourists have cars waiting for them, but local cars are being chased away. To him this indicates that “we want you to leave, and we don’t want you to come back”. When B20 returned to the Cook Islands, she also found that there are some undertones of “you have chosen to live in New Zealand, so now you cannot come back”. Similarly, C5 noticed a divide, where people seemed to think “we stayed, while you abandoned the country for your own good”. These statements expressed a level of disappointment with the way tertiary education migrants were treated in their own communities when returning home. As outlined in the previous chapter (Chapter 5), education migrants chose to return due to their desire to give back, so it is understandable that they were surprised to see that their communities were not longing for their return and there was resistance to ‘receive’ what the migrants had to give. Hence, a conflict is created within the returned education migrant, as they come

home to 'give back' to their home country, yet they do not feel their presence is valued. This inevitably leads to frustration, because the returned migrants may feel like they have given something up (e.g. better pay or a better career outlook) for a nation that seems to show little sign of appreciation.

## Land

Another factor that had impact on returnees was the availability of land. On the one hand, B6 pointed out that Cook Islands society is shifting to individualism in the name of development, which means that Cook Islanders now look at land in a western way. He said

*"Family to our ancestors means those who have passed way, those who are living and those who have yet to be born. So when ancestors say, this land belongs to our family, they mean all of the above. Therefore, the term 'absentee landholder' does not exist in their vocabulary".*

Furthermore those who are absent should have equal rights to everyone else in the family. For B6, land is the root of the divide between Cook Islanders in the Cook Islands and those living overseas. C5 also sees land as an issue for those returning from overseas, as they may not have the required closeness to their wider family, which is required when trying to secure a piece of land. Other participants thought that land only becomes an issue if Cook Islanders decide to live overseas for a long time. B18 spoke of

*"a lady who has been away all these years, she is a Cook Islander, she has been away all these years, came back and is actually finding it hard to get some land and she does have people around her saying 'who are you to come back now and trying to get land'?"*

B17 felt that this was not related to having obtained tertiary education overseas, but that this is dependent on the individual.

There were also participants who feel that land should not be part of this discussion at all, because as B16 said "...usually it is your parents or grand-parents that have already fought the battle for you and secured your land and most families, they pretty much honour that agreement". As B15 said, "... it may just come down to the

family” and as long as those overseas pay somebody to clean their piece, some families will hold land for those who live overseas.

Land is a very sensitive topic in the Cook Islands, and some individuals find it difficult to gain access to a piece, especially on Rarotonga. Land can cause conflict for some families, while others have enough land and influence to ensure their children and children’s children will easily gain the rights to a desirable piece of land. Therefore, a consensus on this issue was not expected and not found in this research. Also, a possible conflict within a family would be elevated if an individual had lived overseas for longer periods of time. Therefore, while land cannot be applied as a hurdle for all tertiary education migrants, it certainly can be a figurative mountain to climb for some.

### 6.2.2 Professional

With challenges to the professional development at the core of the uncertainties about returning home, many of the participants found that the prospects for their professional growth are as limited as they had expected. It seems that the social divide also translates into the professional environment. B15 said

*“it’s like Cook Islanders that have ... graduated, they’ve got their experience and they are coming back home and they are finding it difficult finding a job because they are actually quite ... overqualified for the role. And it is not just in terms of their degrees; it is also the work experience and the range of experiences that they have. So there are people in roles that, you know, ‘who are you to come back here? You’re not a real Cook Islander’ ... You have to kind of earn your time as a resident and then you gradually get in – maybe”.*

Others pointed at the government and its responsibility to enable returning graduates to find an easy way into the work force. B6 said,

*“There is no future planning in this country. There is a five-year plan, but this is not long term planning. This is just the term of the politicians. The world is moving so fast; you should be talking about the next fifty years, not five years. If they thought long term, they would educate Cook Islanders in the right direction and they would plan for the right people*



*ahead. What sort of Cook Islands do we want in 50 years from now? The planning is only geared at the next elections.”*

Similar to the social challenges for returned tertiary education migrants, challenges to the professional re-integration are elevated when individuals stay away for long periods of time.

### **Finding a job**

The first step to settling into a career in the Cook Islands is to secure a job, which ideally aligns with the future career goals of the returnee. However, many returned tertiary education migrants have found it difficult to find a job when returning. B6 believed that many Cook Islanders educate themselves in things that are not useful for coming back – “we don’t need ten to twelve anthropologists”. He then explained that there are only two people with doctoral degrees (PhDs) on the Cook Islands and that he knows that both had a very hard time to find a job and that other people with PhDs, who have tried to come back to the Cook Islands, could not find a job and left again. C3 pointed out that the politics of a small place, families, political pressures, and so on, can play a role when determining who to offer a job to.

B15 felt that many jobs go to foreign contractors, “because they have that breadth of experience” and because there is no organisation that could take on board a group of graduates to guide them through the process of such a contract and “to build their capacity and their capability” to build them up to take such roles in the future. B3 also believes that many prefer to hire a foreigner over a Cook Islanders. B6 said,

*“If they are hiring someone from overseas, you would think they would prefer the overseas educated Cook Islander, but you don’t have an advantage over the foreigner. They don’t look at that”.*

Another hurdle for returning graduates is the lack of experience if they return right after completing their studies. B16 told of a cohort of graduates who kept getting refused for jobs “because they don’t have the experience, but they say ‘we can’t get the experience if we don’t get the job’. It’s that Catch 22.” B18 supported this concern and said:

*“we come back qualified, but we don’t come back experienced. That’s where we lack getting the positions that we have studied for. Because we come back and ‘I want to be this senior manager for marketing’, but you have no experience and they require you to have experience for that and that is where the people from overseas that have that experience end up coming in ... I think there is a gap in our development. Straight out of university, we’re coming with the qualifications but there is nothing here to fill that gap to get us into the positions that we’ve studied for and the pay.”*

B16 confirmed this view by saying “so only come back if you have two or five years of [experience]. These are the same people who are complaining that there is a, you know, shortage in the Cook Islands – out migration ... ”

This was confirmed by the Secretary of Internal Affairs, Bredina Drollett, who said that graduates believe they have a lot of skills, and that there aren’t that many graduates in the Cook Islands, so they should easily find a job. However, she added, there are people who have experience on the job who do not have a degree and so graduates may struggle to find a job.

Participant B17 suggested that if there was a budget, a graduate programme could fill this gap. She had chosen her employer because they offered a graduate programme where she could try out different areas within her workplace and then specialise on what suited her best. She found this an effective way to gain experience and prove herself in the workplace and she thinks this would be a good scheme for both public and private sector.

Many participants in this research pointed to the Cook Islands government for responsibility of enabling returning graduates to find a place in the workforce. This may be partially due to the government’s status as largest employer in the Cook Islands. B3 considered that the government “doesn’t know what to do with the kind of degree that young people obtain now”, such as social media. B2 looked at the topic more generally and believed that the government does not prepare an avenue for returning Cook Islanders: “there is no efforts to integrate their skills and experiences”. He further elaborated that there is no support or assistance from the government for returning graduates and that the government is not looking ahead. “They don’t carry

returning Cook Islanders through a process, so that graduates are sure to find something when they return". B16 supported this argument and said

*"I guess there is no forward planning. 'Oh look; there is this undergrad that is going to graduate in three years' time. Let's put in the budget now for a position' [...]. But none of that happens".*

Participant B15 explained that he utilised the requirement of work experience as part of his university studies to come back home and gain this experience in the Cook Islands. When B15 graduated, he was already known to the employer where he wanted to find work and so they took him on when a position came up. But C3 pointed out that there are not many internship opportunities in the Cook Islands, only a couple of Ministries currently offer this, so for employers there is not a possibility to test out a graduate to see how they will perform in the job. B2 supported this thought by pointing out that there are financial restrictions to the budgets of each Ministry, which do not allow for paid internships or mentoring programmes and that unpaid internships are not an option because graduates want and need to earn good money.

The hurdles described above are partially similar to the issues discussed among university graduates in New Zealand, as personally witnessed through personal contacts. However, graduates in the Cook Islands have fewer choices and if there are currently no jobs in their field of choice, there may not be any suitable vacancies for years. Therefore, some returned migrants wanted the government to step up and help graduates to find employment in their desired field. Whether this is the responsibility of the government is debatable, but it very much aligns with the fact that the government is the largest employer in the Cook Islands (see Chapter 4) and that most graduates expect to find a job in the public sector rather than in the private sector. Clearly the government has heard the voices of the graduates, as the new graduate rotation scheme and leadership programmes have been introduced by the Cook Islands Office of the Public Service Commissioner (OPSC). However, without the uptake from all ministries, these promising schemes will have little impact and leave graduates with the same dilemma they are in around the world: no experience, no job – no job, no experience.

## Career

Once graduates have found a job, there may still be hurdles if the career is not progressing as they had envisaged or as they see their friends in other countries succeed through linear career paths. Anna Roi from the Ministry of Education confirmed that most of the scholars who return after graduating stay on after completing their scholarship bond period. However, she admitted that many leave after four or five years. B3 attributes this to Cook Islands employers competing with Pacific regional bodies, as he believed that young graduates move to the Cook Islands and gain experience and are then getting 'snapped up' by regional organisations. James Webb from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management explained that opportunities to use tertiary degrees are limited in the Cook Islands, because there is a lack of depth in the labour market to support graduates for their entire career. In his opinion, it is for that reason that people come back to the Cook Islands for four to five years, but once they want to move into more senior positions they leave the country and move elsewhere.

B2 offered an explanation for the departure of graduates. He said that he believes that graduates are put into the wrong jobs – into positions that they were not trained for. Further, B2 confirmed that graduates can only climb the career ladder to a certain step and that they then hit a glass ceiling and cannot proceed further. B3 believes that this is due to graduates starting their careers at such a low level that it takes them too long to climb up the career ladder and that they leave the country again out of frustration. Anna Roi pointed out that the Ministry of Education encourages employers to keep graduates in the right salary band, but ultimately this decision lies with the respective employer, not with the Ministry of Education. The Secretary of Education, Gail Townend, explained that the point that graduates may feel that they hit a glass ceiling when progressing their careers has to do with the size of the public sector and with a lack of performance management. While the OPSC is developing policies that will be helping graduates, according to Gail, they will also have to give the agencies the resources to implement the suggested changes, which in her opinion was not the case at the time of the interview.

C3 also reflected on the graduates' parts in the development of their careers. She believes that the current generation ("Generation Y. Why not me.") feels that they

should move up the career ladder quickly because they went to university. In her opinion, there is a sense of entitlement for top-paid jobs due to their education – especially when they see what their friends can earn in New Zealand – but having a university degree is not the same as it was thirty years ago when that meant a guaranteed job.

However, Bredina Drollett from the Ministry of Internal Affairs admits that there is not a large supply of highly valued, paid and skilled jobs, so there might not be that many opportunities. She also said “jobs are sticky”. Many echoed Bredina Drollett’s last point. B13 said:

*“I mean everybody would know of someone who has been in their role for ever, and ever, and ever, and ever [sic] and one day”.*

B17 tried to explain: “I think people get intrinsically connected to their role ... and their organisations. And honestly, you walk away from your organisation and the community always aligns you with [it].” For B16 this had to do with the Public Sector Reform in 1996 (see Chapter 4) and she felt that the people who kept their jobs:

*“... had to quickly produce those outputs or their jobs would be lost as all. So during that era it was like a ‘do or die’ mentality. So for that decade, or whatever, I think a lot of people felt like they had earned their right to be in that job ... They feel that position is theirs. But unfortunately, complacency is sort of seeped in over the decades and now instead of the eye on the vision it’s on retirement, you know, ‘yep, another five or ten years and I’m out of here’ ”.*

However, it is unclear whether this only applies to the public sector. B16 said, “I think you cannot really get away with being complacent in the private sector as well since it is performance driven”. B13 also agreed that in the hospitality sector, some individuals have risen up to senior positions quickly, so there may be a different mentality outside the public sector.

When discussing what would need to be done to change this attitude, B16 thought that pay and promotions should be based on performance and not on the length of time someone has worked in a position. She said:

*“... weak HR culture in the public sector and I think this partly because of the HOMs (Heads of Ministries) or high level managers have been promoted in terms of technical capabilities ... There is a lot of directors and HOMs that – what is that? – that lazy style? Management style. Laissez-faire.”*

B8 added that there is a mentality, which is in her opinion dying out, where you should not teach anybody your skills, because this makes you dispensable. For B8 this meant that there are people who do not want to see other people succeed. B16 agreed that there is a divide between more senior employees and young graduates and B16 assumed that the more senior staff feel threatened and therefore do not wish to share the knowledge that they have accumulated over the years. B15 also admitted that some of the more senior staff has work experience that is equal or above the educational experience he has. But he was concerned that those staff are lacking leadership capability. B17 also brought up the possibility that more senior staff feel threatened by young graduates. She said, “I suppose it is part of our human nature to want to protect something that we currently have”. But she thinks that senior staff and leaders should rather see graduates as their exit strategy “they [shouldn’t] see new blood as a threat, but as an opportunity”. B15 sees the same attitude in other areas and said:

*“some ministries receive little short workshops or training programs they can kind of disseminate to certain staff to up skill them. And, like, they might not pass it on or they are too busy or it’s something that is not a priority because they have other things to work on.”*

B13 believes that “perhaps we need to manage up instead of just expecting it to come all the way down. ‘Ok, so how can I work with this person to encourage me to learn from them, to then get their support?’” B3 thought about the implications for the future and that if the more senior staff does leave, the young graduates would not have the experience needed for the job.

The career prospects for young Cook Islanders seem to be the single most important issue in the discussion regarding the impacts of tertiary education migration on Cook Islands’ development. If young graduates return after they have completed their studies but they are unable to apply what they have learned in a meaningful way,

the gain for the Cook Islands from the overseas studies will remain minimal. While it is usual that university graduates have to start in an entry level position, it is the perceived glass ceiling that will drive the promising young talents away from the islands to another place where they feel that they are valued, supported and see a clear path for their careers. This will further increase the current gap between the generations, with graduates returning home right after their studies due to bond commitments, then leaving again in their early thirties to only return in their more mature years. This means that there will always be a very senior layer of experienced Cook Islanders working with a very junior layer of recently educated Cook Islanders – lacking a middle layer of those gaining and sharing knowledge and experience to those above and below.

### Income

Some participants brought up the topic of income as a hurdle to establishing their lives permanently in the Cook Islands. B1 reported that one of the biggest challenges of returning to the Cook Islands was the difference in pay as she, and many others, is not able to earn as much as they can earn overseas. B3 also pointed out that pay parity is the big issue when people return to the Cook Islands and that pay packages were nowhere near comparative to jobs overseas. B6 said,

*“I believe most people who leave, leave because they cannot afford to stay. The wage that they receive at the end of the week cannot pay for all they need and for their food and that also contributes to high levels of consumption of alcohol. We drink a lot of alcohol on these islands and therefore we have a lot of accidents – particularly motorbikes. ‘Wear helmets’ is not the solution when alcohol and jobs are the problem. When people complained that they didn’t have enough money to feed their family the [Prime Minister] suggested to get another job. That is not the solution. Therefore, the few high paying jobs that Cook Islanders could fill, are not filled by Cook Islanders ... I am convinced there are Cook Islanders in New Zealand or Australia who could do that job.”*

When comparing the pay rate between New Zealand and the Cook Islands, it becomes apparent that there is a large gap between the amounts that graduates can earn overseas and at home. As the previous Chapter (Chapter 5) shows, it is one of the

considerations of students when deciding whether to return to the Cook Islands. However, it is a very real issue for many when returning home to the Cook Islands, especially when there is little prospect to climb the career ladder fast. The bigger pay packages will always draw some individuals overseas and other than increasing everyone's salaries, there is little the Cook Islands Government can do about this.

## **6.3 Enablers**

Despite the many hurdles noted above, many participants in this research felt that there were a variety of enablers that ensured an easier re-integration into life on the Cook Islands. B5 felt that his home country was an important resource to him on which he could draw upon to get ahead internationally. As outlined in the Public Sector Strategy (Cook Islands Office of the Public Service Commissioner, 2016, p. 17), the Cook Islands Government recognises the need to smooth the way for young graduates to return and contribute to the country. At the time of the field research, the Office of the Public Service Commissioner was working on incentives for Cook Islanders to return, such as a Human Resource Management Framework, which includes a leadership programme and a graduate recruitment programme (Cook Islands Office of the Public Service Commissioner, 2016, p. 22). It was unclear, however, when the programmes would be effectively implemented. This aligns with the common perception that life is not black or white. While many participants had concerns about some aspects of their lives in the Cook Islands, all participants seemed predominantly happy with their lives in the Cook Islands. None of the participants openly admitted that they were unhappy or had firm plans about leaving the islands in the near future.

### **6.3.1 Social**

Because many overseas-educated graduates based their decisions to return on social factors, it is important to assess if they found what they had expected. While many mentioned a divide between those who had stayed and those who went overseas, participant B8 did not find it difficult to return and even explained that she thinks the divide that returned migrants were feeling is only in their heads and did not exist in reality. She thought that is up to the individual to fight their way back into the community.



## Family

In the Cook Islands context, as is common in many Pacific Islands, family connections are very important. Therefore, it is unsurprising that some returned migrants found that having family to come back to made all the difference for their re-integration into society. B7 had his family's support upon return and immediately had a house and car available so that he could "get back on his feet" before having to worry about rent or saving for transport. Participant B4 felt that her family was waiting to see whether she would "stick it out", but having their support upon return made the pay cut he took when returning an easy pill to swallow. It would have been difficult for Cook Islands students to live away from their security net of their families (even if extended family looked after them for a while) and they will have therefore perceived their return as having been made easier by the support of their families.

## Cultural Identity

Another factor that those who returned found appealing about life in the Cook Islands was that they felt they were strengthening their cultural identity. C3 pointed out that the biggest selling point for people to return to the Cook Islands is the lifestyle and the cultural identity. She admitted that this was perhaps not used enough to attract Cook Islanders back. Participant B7 clearly stated that cultural identity was a draw card for him to return: "I am fascinated about the Cook Islands culture and our way of life". B7 never felt right to live in New Zealand, where New Zealand Maori are the 'tangata whenua'. He wanted to return to the country where he was part of the 'people of the land'. B7 explained that he actively tries to keep the Cook Islands culture alive and raises his family there in that way. He could not imagine doing this in New Zealand. Another participant felt that being in the Cook Islands was contributing to the strengthening of the Cook Islands cultural identity. B6 said that Cook Islands population is being replaced and that being a Cook Islander will soon be a minority – similar to Hawaii. He said, "If you want to study Hawaii 80 years ago, come to the Cook Islands". B6 further explained that Cook Islanders in New Zealand ask him to come to teach Cook Islands cultural practice, but that the people in the Cook Islands do not ask him to do so. He is worried that the resource pool of those knowledgeable in Cook Islands cultural practice is diminishing. Similarly, B6 believes that the Cook Islands government should put greater emphasis on Cook Islands Maori language and to

compel foreigners working in the Cook Islands to learn Cook Islands Maori to ensure its continued existence.

It is not surprising that cultural identity is a theme that occurred in discussions of migration, as having the opportunity to contrast a foreign culture to your own cultural values and practices can bring out more nuances of your own cultural identity. In the Cook Islands, cultural identity is a particularly important topic, due to the declining population (see Chapter 4), which is frequently replenished with foreigners. As in many places in the world, large numbers of foreigners from one country or region can lead to worries over the preservation of the indigenous culture. Therefore, increasing the numbers of Cook Islands Maori can seem critical to the protection of Cook Islands culture.

### **6.3.2 Professional**

It was unexpected to find that while few of the research participants decided to return to the Cook Islands for their professional development opportunities, many reported that they have found the Cook Islands provide many opportunities for professional development. B2 said that while those who are particularly specialised may be limited, for most people there is an abundance of opportunities, which is even being tapped into by foreigners. So how can professional development act as both a hurdle and an enabler? The following will show that the key to success in the Cook Islands seems to be versatility.

#### **Finding a job**

As Anna Roi from the Ministry of Education explained, all returned graduates who have studied and returned under the scholarships scheme are employed to date. Further, according to her, the Ministry helps connect graduates with the public sector so that they find it easier to get into the job market. This aligned with the stories of many participants. For example, B4's experience when returning was similar to many others as she was offered a position upon arrival in the Cook Islands. B1 also reported that she had no trouble finding employment, as she always knew that there are job opportunities for her, even before she returned. B19 similarly explained that he had a couple of job offers within a month of arriving back in the Cook Islands, so finding a job was not difficult at all for him. This was also echoed by people who returned some years ago, such as B2 who also had no issues finding a job as at the time of her return

there were not many Cook Islanders with master's degrees, so she was competing with very few.

B13 tried to explain that while some are having trouble finding jobs, there are still skill shortages, as jobs require graduates to be very adaptable. This was confirmed by the Secretary of Internal Affairs, Bredina Drollett, who pointed out that at the time of the interview she was struggling to recruit and hire skilled candidates, particularly at the director level. She suggested that there may be instances where Ministries hire people for vacant positions, even though the candidates do not have the relevant skills, simply because there are difficulties finding the right persons for the roles. Gail Townend, the Secretary of the Ministry of Education, similarly pointed out that returning graduates always find a job, if they make themselves available. She said that they have to be flexible to get themselves in the door so that they can gather experience. She admitted that the small population in the Cook Islands means there are a small number of jobs, so graduates have to adapt to what is available. Further, Gail explained that some graduates come back with unrealistic expectations of what kind of job and salary will be available to them and some seem to think that their degrees should get them ahead of people with more experience, but without degree. B17 supported this idea and said

*"is it difficult to get a [job]? I suppose it is – if you are after a particular thing. Over here, I just think, if you are in the job market, you need to remain open minded and flexible ... it is more 'could I do this?' 'Do I have the skills to do that?' ... Rather than 'I have all the skills and where is the job that matches this?' You sort of just got to figure it out, because most of the time ... when you get there ... a lot of things are new anyway ... I think that is it as well, being a graduate just keep your expectations a bit fluid."*

B14 agreed with this opinion and said, "It's not hard to find a job here, it is just hard to find a job that is going where you want it to go." Adding to the notion of expectation management, B8 said that when the voluntary retirement at the age of 55 and a mandatory retirement at the age of 60 were announced, most of the senior public servants wanted to exit and do something entirely different, like planting. This opened opportunities for people in their 30s and 40s and then in turn this opened up

opportunities for new graduates. However, the new graduates were rather interested in middle-management level positions, which was unlikely to be available to them due to their lack of experience. B8 further elaborated, “being educated with a degree of sorts is one thing, but you’ve got to have that experience. Without that experience – hopeless - because not everything in the textbook is true.” B6 echoed this by saying that part of the problem with tertiary education migration is the expectations of returned Cook Islanders. He explained that graduates expect to be “the boss” when they return and forget all about what older Cook Islanders have accumulated: the experience and knowledge. She believes that young graduates should learn from the people who have institutional knowledge for a few years before they progress their careers.

Some participants found that their family connections gave them an advantage when looking for a job. B17 pointed out that her parents could not give her a job, but that they had been “paving the way” and that they had the right connections. Similarly, B13 said:

*“ ‘Oh she is a [Smith [name has been changed]], she must be bright, hire her.’ ... But then there is the weight of that exp [sic] – performing to that expectation as well as the reputation.”*

B4 did not have a job lined up when moving to the Cook Islands, but his uncle found him a position he could start at.

The rate of employment of returned graduates is a simple way to measure the availability of professional opportunities in the Cook Islands. However, this does not reflect what kind of employment returned tertiary migrants occupy. While some may find it frustrating to be working in a different field than what they had studied, others see this as an opportunity to explore their talents and widen their skills. Entry-level jobs can be repetitive and careful career planning has to be executed so that young graduates do not get locked in a dead-end path. Through the research interviews it became clear that if graduates stay in the Cook Islands, they should continue to find other vacancies as long as they remain flexible to the breadth of opportunities.

## Career Progression

Once graduates have found a job, many have expressed frustration with the progress of their careers. However, others have explained that their careers have developed in a fast-tracked way once they had found a suitable position. C3 said that those who have come back after gaining a university degree have moved up the system quicker. There used to be a strict patriarchal system, but now the culture is changing and with more women in higher positions the promotions and recruitment seems to be more merit based. Experience at university teaches students essential skills, such as how to negotiate, meet deadlines, balance workloads, how to do a project, set objectives, etc. C3 further went on to say that because university graduates have these skills, they move quickly to senior roles. However, roles do not become available easily, so those who moved up quickly only did so because people retired or because there was a restructure due to a change in government. B8 believed that there was even no glass ceiling for young Cook Islanders, as there are always opportunities sideways. This was also mentioned by B13 who said,

*“Sometimes we need a jack-of-all-trades rather than just a specific skills set. Uhm, you find that we have to be IT people as much as we, you know, how to use certain programs as much as being statisticians, you know, how to build an excel spread sheet for something as well as analyse it and do the data programming.”*

B4 agreed and said that young Cook Islanders can be successful but have to be more broadly engaged, as they cannot specialise too much – “You have to be an all-rounder”. B1 had recognised a possible path to success and particularly chose to work for the public sector, despite job offers from the private sector, because she felt that working for the government comes with a lot of perks, such as availability of professional development opportunities and overseas travel. B7 also reported a success story and said that due to his university degree, he feels that he can enrich the Cook Islands society. The work he was doing at the time of the interview and the projects he had been involved in have been significant and his current job really complements what he had studied.

While careers may not be linear in the Cook Islands, it is remarkable that all graduates mentioned that they feel that they are contributing to the development of

the Cook Islands. Although jobs are 'sticky', when there is an opening, graduates can advance their careers more significantly than it would be possible for them in New Zealand or Australia. Due to the small community, it is also likely that higher-level jobs are offered to a well-performing graduate as other ministries have seen them work well. This is an option that not many graduates around the world would have.

### **Income vs. expenses**

As feared by many interviewees before returning, low wages were a reality that many had to face upon re-settlement to the Cook Islands. However, B7 said that he is earning over double the amount that he used to get paid before gaining his degree overseas. Nevertheless, he admitted that he did not know how much money he could have earned in New Zealand, but that he also did not know what the cost of living would be for a family in Auckland. B7 said that in the Cook Islands, his family is living well off his wage and that he is even able to save a little each pay. In his opinion, the abundance of fruit and vegetables allows him to buy local or plant his own produce, so his family does not spend a lot of money on food. Similarly, C5 explained that he is saving more money in the Cook Islands than when living in New Zealand. While he does not get paid as much as in New Zealand, he also does not spend as much money on things such as the cost of commuting, fruit and vegetables and there are generally not many things in the Cook Islands that he would spend a lot of money on. He said, "You just have to adapt to the local way of living".

The income is another example of how there are two sides to the coin of returning to the Cook Islands. Many Cook Islanders, who are living overseas for a long time, come to visit their family in the Cook Islands for a holiday and see the high prices in the supermarkets and they see how much one can earn and assume that they would make a loss moving away from the country that is paying them well. However, the money that is saved by planting vegetables and riding scooters to work is perhaps not as visible to those visitors. This could be an effective way to advertise for Cook Islanders to return.

## **6.4 Conclusion**

While the participants in this research have outlined some of the hurdles they experienced while re-establishing their lives in the Cook Islands after returning home,

they have also highlighted that there is more to the story. While the re-integration into Cook Islands' society is one of the main reasons for people to return to their home country, it can also be very difficult to find one's place in the closely-knit community. Returned migrants reported of an invisible wall between those who have remained and those who have left in search of personal success. This research did not sufficiently include the voices of those who have remained overseas to confirm this perception for them. Therefore, it would be advisable for future research to compare the perceptions of migrants with those who have stayed in the Cook Islands. It is also not clear whether this invisible wall is just between those who have remained and those who have left, or if this is a symptom of a generational divide.

It has been shown, however, that the research participants feel that their professional scope and skills are being repressed by those holding senior positions and that while the Cook Islands Government is putting efforts into developing young people's careers in the public sector, only few opportunities for growth reached those who were interviewed. While many acknowledged that the Cook Islands were a resource to their career advancement, at the same time most participants seemed frustrated with their career outlook. It seems that while there is an array of opportunities in the Cook Islands, these will only be accessible if the individual remains flexible regarding their field of work. Linear careers, as Cook Islands graduates will see their overseas peers pursue, seem an unrealistic expectation in the Cook Islands context.

# Chapter 7: Conclusions

---

## 7.1 Introduction

In 2016, I spent a period of time in Rarotonga conducting field research speaking to Cook Islands people about the issue of tertiary education migration. The results of this research have been presented in this thesis by applying a post-colonial lens and Pacific methodology. The first part of this thesis (Chapters One and Two) introduced the methodology and conceptual framework and described how reflexivity was implemented throughout the research process. The second part (Chapters Three and Four) was used to frame the issue by discussing existing literature and defining the Cook Islands context. In the third part (Chapters Five and Six), the results of the interviews with both governmental officials and tertiary education migrants were presented. The drivers for decision-making were described, focussing on the decisions to leave the Cook Islands in order to attend university and the decisions whether to return home after graduating. This was followed by the results of discussions on the lived realities of returned education migrants and what aspects the research participants found to be enablers for the re-settlement and what factors were perceived as hurdles. In this final chapter, the research results will be discussed by initially looking at the drivers for decision-making and then later considering the lived realities of returned migrants. Further, the results will also be tied into the existing literature and help to address the academic gap regarding the impacts of tertiary education migration on Cook Islands' development.

## 7.2 Limitations and Further Research Possibilities

This research is limited by the scope of the project, as only a small part of the broad issue of migration has been covered. Further research should look at the implications of foreign-educated Cook Islanders on the preservation of culture and language and it should consider the perception of those who have not had the opportunity to study overseas. It should also be examined whether the students who serve their scholarship bond in the Cook Islands remain on the islands once their student loan has been paid off. This would be an important piece of information for the development of the



scholarship terms of reference and it might show whether the bond arrangement is effective in the long-term.

Another limitation was the ambiguity of the role of some of the research participants, as many governmental officials who were interviewed were also tertiary education migrants. Therefore, it was not always easy to divide the answers between personal opinion and official opinion of the government. However, all governmental participants agreed to have their statements connected to their names and positions, so this should not have invalidated any of the data collected, but it should merely be taken into account.

As mentioned before, it is near impossible to trace Cook Islanders who have gone abroad without a scholarship, as statistically they are considered New Zealanders due to their New Zealand passports once they have left the Cook Islands. The recent elimination of the departure cards at Rarotonga airport has enhanced this issue as passports are merely scanned when leaving the country and there is no way for border officials to capture the reasons for leaving the Cook Islands or whether the traveller is New Zealand or Cook Islands resident. The next census, which was held in December 2016 and results are expected later this year, will shed light on the up-to-date population numbers and the ethnic make-up of the population.

Since 2016, the New Zealand funded scholarships are administered by the Cook Islands Government and the Ministry of Education has only recently redesigned the Terms of Reference for the scheme. It has yet to be seen how the changes will affect the depopulation rate.

### **7.3 Causes for Tertiary Education Migration**

As shown in this research, there is a variety of drivers for Cook Islanders to leave the islands in order to obtain university degrees overseas. While there are some options for study on Rarotonga, they are mostly used by those who have no choice to leave (e.g. due to family commitments). Before commencing the field work component of this research, I assumed that there was a good argument for investing heavily into the infrastructure of USP – Cook Islands Campus in order to make this option more attractive and lessen the pull factor from overseas universities. This thinking was heavily based on the neoclassical approach to migration (Castles, 2009, p. 22) and I

assumed that the decision to move for education was based purely on economic factors. However, it became apparent the pull factor could not be simplified to the quality and availability of tertiary education, but that it was also the university experience that drew people away. The decision to move did not seem to be solely based on economic factors, but also on emotional and cultural influences. Aligning with the transformational approach to education and development, which assumes that education broadens horizons and therefore liberates and teaches students about the roots of poverty (Gamlen et al., 2017, p. 5), young people intrinsically seem to understand that their overseas tertiary education enables them to contribute to the development of their home country. Therefore, I believe that there is little that can (and should) be done to stop young Cook Islanders from gaining that experience overseas. However, the Cook Islands Government could ensure that scholars are sent off from home with the message that they are welcome to return home after graduating and that there will be efforts made to find suitable employment for them and that it is advisable to stay in touch with the Cook Islands while away. This would mean that Gamlen's diaspora engagement strategy (2005, p. 23) is applied from the day that scholars leave their home country in order to attend university. It should also be noted that while forms of resentment towards those who decide to leave their home country in pursuit of a broadening of their horizons and then return home is not unique to the Cook Islands (Connell, 2008, p. 1026) this approach should be avoided. A societal expulsion of any kind may lead to reluctance to return and may prevent the growth of national human capacity, which has been shown to be pivotal to the development of smaller states (Connell, 2005, p. 328).

## **7.4 The Role of the Diaspora**

This research has shown that the research participants who have not yet returned back to their home country maintain a strong relationship to the Cook Islands. When applying the 'diaspora option' (Meyer et al., 1997, p. 287), allowing members of an overseas diaspora to contribute to the development of their home country, it becomes clear that this approach would be very suitable for the Cook Islands context. Applying Gamlen's (Gamlen, 2005, p. 23) three components of diaspora engagement (diaspora networking, remittance capture and diaspora integration) it becomes clear that the Cook Islands have potential to leverage the diaspora as a resource. As this research

indicates, the diaspora already seems to share social and cultural bonds with the home country. Those participants who remained overseas after graduation had a particularly strong sense of their own cultural identity, which further fosters the relationship between the diaspora and the Cook Islands. If the government or the private sector was to invest in creating a network that could connect the Cook Islands to its diaspora, it might be possible to channel the currently untracked remittances towards the shared national development goals. With more than 60,000 Cook Islanders (Statistics New Zealand, 2013) living in New Zealand, the Cook Islands has a substantial pool of human capital available, if the government and private sector find a way to access this resource. Learning from Gamlen's observation of the New Zealand diaspora engagement (Gamlen, 2005, p. 26), it seems therefore advisable to develop a comprehensive engagement strategy that will collectively leverage the diaspora as resource.

## **7.5 Hurdles and Enablers**

When writing about the perceived hurdles and enablers for the returned graduates who participated in this research, it becomes apparent that many of the themes appeared under both categories. For example, finding a job after returning home can be both a hurdle and an enabler. Many of the participants criticised the small number of positions available, but simultaneously most admitted to finding a position right after (or even before) returning to Rarotonga. This can be partially based on the assumption that returned tertiary education migrants have higher expectations of finding a job that is an exact match to their qualifications and skills (Waibel et al., 2017, p. 92). Testing the neoclassical approach to migration, which is based on 'push-pull' economic theories (Castles, 2009, p. 22), the ambiguity discovered in this research exemplifies that this theory is not ideal for explaining the migration processes in the Cook Islands. Under the neoclassical approach the outlook on career progression can be a pull factor from other countries, such as New Zealand or Australia, and a push factor for the Cook Islands due to the perception of a lack of opportunities. At the same time, opportunities exist and graduates seem to be able to access them – possibly beyond what would have been available elsewhere, so it can also be considered a pull factor from the Cook Islands. This observation aligns with Castles' (2009, p. 26) statement that theories which try to simplify the migration process are

misleading and inadequate. Nevertheless, the question is how the pull factors for the Cook Islands can be better communicated to expatriates, as many research participants felt that all it took to attract migrants back was the dissemination of information about the opportunities in the Cook Islands. Aligning with Gribble's suggestion (2008, p. 35) one way to achieve the return of education migrants is to join efforts and resources of small island nations to achieve this goal.

## **7.6 Temporal Dimension**

When speaking to the research participants, a temporal dimension emerged. Firstly, this is reflected in the positive experience of finding a job upon return, but at the same time having doubts about prospects for a successful career progression and future in the Cook Islands. As discussed previously, it would be important to extend this research in order to find out what graduates choose to do once their bond arrangement under their scholarships scheme has concluded. Secondly, aligning with Connell's statement (2008, p. 1026) that returned migrants are "welcomed in theory but spurned in practice" challenges in the career progression were attributed towards a division between education migrants and those who had obtained education at home. This may be further based on the societal divide which is based on the awarding of scholarships to an 'elite' (Perna et al., 2015, p. 95). Yet, there seems to be an underlying generational division, either instead or additional to the mentioned exclusion of returned migrants. Reflected in statements from C3, "Generation Y. Why not me" and C4's point that it is rather the older generation that takes up study at USP – Cook Islands Campus, as it is difficult for them to leave the country. Also, C5 further supports this point, as he expects the generational swing to be much more prominent in the Cook Islands than in New Zealand or Australia, because the newer generation having a different view. While a generational division has existed throughout time, with younger generations challenging the accepted status quo of the older generation, the generational division in the Cook Islands seems to be a contributor to the phenomenon of depopulation. Drawing back on the Cook Islands epistemology referred to previously, long-term relationships between generations are engrained in the understanding of who Cook Islanders are. The perception of a generational divide is likely to be short-term and will be outlived by the connectedness of all generations through a combined effort towards improving the well being of Cook Islanders.

## **7.7 Theory and Cook Islands Context**

As mentioned previously, the neoclassical 'push-pull' hypothesis (Castles, 2009, p. 22) was applied throughout this research and it was found that this model is too linear for the Cook Islands context. When speaking to the participants for this research it became clear that push and pull factors can be felt from and to the sending country as well as the receiving country. This illustrates that this theory is too simple for the complex factors that Cook Islands tertiary education migrants face when having to decide whether to move. The new economics of labour migration approach (Castles, 2009, p. 24), discussed in Chapter three, seems to have some relevance as it takes into consideration the influence of collective groups on the decision making process of individuals. This theory allows taking into account Cook Islands epistemology and the influence of society as well as the special relationship to New Zealand. Nevertheless, the suggestion under this approach to strengthen credit markets and to create more favourable investment opportunities in sending countries cannot address the gaps some of the pressing issues associated with outmigration in the Cook Islands.

Drawing on the Pacific methodology applied in this research, it is important to acknowledge that while general academic theory is valuable when assessing migratory processes, the local context has to be taken into account to make each theory appropriate. It is important to fully understand how Cook Islanders see the world and what aspirations they hold for their country to ensure that findings on migration are relevant and meaningful. Therefore, I have attempted to carefully weave the stories of all participants into this research in order to acknowledge the Cook Islands way of knowing and sharing knowledge. This leads to the assumption that outmigration in the Cook Islands is not only an economic problem that can be addressed by economic solutions, but rather presents a threat to the preservation of cultural identity and solutions therefore have to be broader and context specific.

## **7.8 Final Remarks**

Based on the diaspora option, I suggest regarding the issue of migration not as a problem and more as a natural process, which has both positive and negative implications. One way to apply a positive view on the topic is by viewing the large number of Cook Islanders living overseas as an available resource. In an age of

globalisation and with a fairly reliable Internet connection, it might be time to challenge the spatial concept of the Cook Islands. Based on Gamlen's diaspora engagement theory (Gamlen, 2005, p. 23) I recommend the establishment of an online international network of professional Cook Islanders. New Zealand has already established some networks with its diaspora that could be used as models, such as Australia, New Zealand, America Technology Network (ANZA), the Kiwi Expatriate Association (KEA) or the Global Network of Kiwis (GNOK) (Gamlen, 2005, p. 26). With such a network, the Cook Islands government could easily source expertise from Cook Islanders living overseas without impacting on the preservation of Cook Islands values and culture and if all technical assistance were firstly sourced from this platform, the community would take greater ownership of projects. Aligning with Participant C4's definition of development, which was that "a developed Cook Islands is a sustainable, self-governing, contributing member of regional and global society. However, it remains true to values and aspirations of Cook Islanders", this approach would be suitable for the Cook Islands context. Also, most research participants had mentioned a desire 'to give back' to their home country and this tool would provide Cook Islanders who have not returned home the opportunity to contribute to the development of their home country without having to move back permanently.

It would be important to connect young Cook Islanders before they leave the islands, as this platform could also be used to help migrants stay in touch with what is happening at home and what kind of skills and qualifications are required at the time. This network may also be appealing to multi-generational Cook Islanders who have never lived in the Cook Islands, but still feel a strong connection to their country of descent. Additionally, this platform would allow the government to communicate with the diaspora creating a channel to request alignment of remittances towards national development aspirations, as suggested by Gamlen (2005, p. 26). This network would also provide a way for the collective to benefit from the individual gain of education. Rather than excluding those who choose to follow their own individual aspirations, it would give migrants a pathway back into the collective of Cook Islanders. This also aligns with the Cook Islands methodology of *tivaevae* (New Zealand Ministry of Justice, 2003), if considering that each Cook Islander is an important patch in the Cook Islands quilt, providing a different kind of fabric to make the *tivaevae* a unique and cultural appropriate piece. If following Gribble's suggestion (2008, p. 35), it might be possible

to establish a shared platform with other small island countries facing similar issues, such as Niue (Connell, 2008), but it would be important to clearly distinguish between the human resource pools so that a strong connection between each diaspora and its home country can be created and maintained.

# Bibliography

---

- Abimbola, S., Amazan, R., Vizintin, P., Howie, L., Cumming, R., & Negin, J. (2016). Australian higher education scholarships as tools for international development and diplomacy in Africa. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 70(2), 105–120.
- Adam Smith International. (2015). *Evaluation of the Cook Islands Country Programme*. New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.
- Alley, S., Jackson, S. F., & Shakya, Y. B. (2015). Reflexivity: A methodological tool in the knowledge translation process? *Health Promotion Practice*, 16(3), 426–431.
- Barcham, M., Scheyvens, R., & Overton, J. (2009). New Polynesian Triangle: Rethinking Polynesian migration and development in the Pacific. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, 50(3), 322–337.
- Bastia, T. (2014). Intersectionality, migration and development. *Progress in Development Studies*, 14(3), 237–248.
- Beaglehole, E. (1957). *Social Change in the South Pacific: Rarotonga and Aitutaki*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Beine, M., Docquier, F., & Rapoport, H. (2008). Brain drain and Human Capital Formation in developing countries: Winners and losers. *Economic Journal*, 118(528), 631–652.
- Beine, M., Docquier, F., & Schiff, M. (2008). Brain Drain and its Determinants: A Major Issue for Small States. *IDEAS Working Paper Series*, No. 3398, 1-25. Bonn: Institute for the Study of Labour.
- Berkelmans, L., & Pryke, J. (2016). The development benefits of expanding Pacific access to Australia's labour market. Retrieved from <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/development-benefits-expanding-pacific-access-australias-labour-market>
- Bertram, G. (1999). The MIRAB Model Twelve Years On. *The Contemporary Pacific*, 11(1), 105–138.



- Bertram, G. (2016). *Implications of the Cook Islands' Graduation from Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Eligibility* (Technical Report). Report for MFAT and Cook Islands Government. Retrieved from <http://www.geoffbertram.com/fileadmin/publications/Final%208%20December.pdf>
- Bertram, G., & Watters, R (1984). *New Zealand and its Small Island Neighbours: A Review of New Zealand Policy Toward the Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau, Kiribati and Tuvalu*. Wellington: School of Government, Victoria University of Wellington.
- Bonal, X. (2006). Is the World Bank education policy adequate for fighting poverty? Some evidence from Latin America. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 24(6), 649–666.
- Bredl, S. (2011). Migration, remittances and educational outcomes: The case of Haiti. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 31(2), 162–168.
- Buse, J. (1995). *Cook Islands Maori Dictionary*. Rarotonga: Ministry of Education, Government of the Cook Islands.
- Carter, S., Kelly, F., & Brailsford, I. (2012). *Structuring Your Research Thesis*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Castles, S. (2009). *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World* (4th ed.). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Colclough, C. (2012). Education, poverty and development – mapping their interconnections. *Comparative Education*, 48(2), 135–148.
- Connell, J. (1983). *Migration, Employment and Development in the South Pacific : Cook Islands*. Geneva: South Pacific Commission.
- Connell, J. (2005). A nation in decline? Migration and emigration from the Cook Islands. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal : APMJ*, 14(3), 327–350.
- Connell, J. (2008). Niue: Embracing a culture of migration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 34(6), 1021–1040.

- Connell, J., & Conway, D. (2000). Migration and remittances in island microstates: A comparative perspective on the South Pacific and the Caribbean. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 24(1), 52–78.
- Cook Islands Ministry of Education. (2007). *Learning for life - Cook Islands Education Master Plan 2008 - 2023*. Rarotonga: Ministry of Education, Government of the Cook Islands. Retrieved from <http://www.education.gov.ck/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Education-Master-Plan.pdf>
- Cook Islands Ministry of Education. (2016). *Statistics report*. Rarotonga: Ministry of Education, Government of the Cook Islands. Retrieved from <http://www.education.gov.ck/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/2016-Education-Statistics-Report.pdf>
- Cook Islands Ministry of Finance and Economic Management. (2003). *Cook Islands 2001 census of population and dwellings*. Rarotonga: Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, Government of the Cook Islands. Retrieved from [http://mfem.gov.ck/images/documents/Statistics\\_Docs/5.Census-Surveys/4.Census-Report/1.2001\\_COK-population-and-dwelling-census-report.pdf](http://mfem.gov.ck/images/documents/Statistics_Docs/5.Census-Surveys/4.Census-Report/1.2001_COK-population-and-dwelling-census-report.pdf)
- Cook Islands Ministry of Finance and Economic Management. (2007). *Cook Islands 2006 census of population and dwellings*. Rarotonga: Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, Government of the Cook Islands. Retrieved from [http://mfem.gov.ck/images/documents/Statistics\\_Docs/5.Census-Surveys/4.Census-Report/2.2006\\_COK-population-and-dwelling-census-report.pdf](http://mfem.gov.ck/images/documents/Statistics_Docs/5.Census-Surveys/4.Census-Report/2.2006_COK-population-and-dwelling-census-report.pdf)
- Cook Islands Ministry of Finance and Economic Management. (2012). *Cook Islands 2011 census of population and dwellings*. Rarotonga: Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, Government of the Cook Islands. Retrieved from [http://mfem.gov.ck/images/documents/Statistics\\_Docs/5.Census-Surveys/4.Census-Report/2011\\_Cook\\_Islands\\_Population\\_Census\\_Report.pdf](http://mfem.gov.ck/images/documents/Statistics_Docs/5.Census-Surveys/4.Census-Report/2011_Cook_Islands_Population_Census_Report.pdf)
- Cook Islands Ministry of Finance and Economic Management. (2016a). *Budget estimates 2016/2017: Book 1 - Appropriation Bill*. Rarotonga: Ministry of Finance and Economic

Management, Government of the Cook Islands. Retrieved from [http://www.mfem.gov.ck/images/MFEM\\_Documents/Treasury\\_Docs/Budget\\_Documents/2016-17\\_Cook-Islands\\_Budget-Book-1\\_Appropriation-Bill-and-Commentary.pdf](http://www.mfem.gov.ck/images/MFEM_Documents/Treasury_Docs/Budget_Documents/2016-17_Cook-Islands_Budget-Book-1_Appropriation-Bill-and-Commentary.pdf)

Cook Islands Ministry of Finance and Economic Management. (2016b). *Migration Statistics: August 2016*. Rarotonga: Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, Government of the Cook Islands. Retrieved from [http://www.mfem.gov.ck/images/documents/Statistics\\_Docs/4.Tourism/2016/August/Mig\\_Statistics\\_Report\\_201608.pdf](http://www.mfem.gov.ck/images/documents/Statistics_Docs/4.Tourism/2016/August/Mig_Statistics_Report_201608.pdf)

Cook Islands Ministry of Finance and Economic Management. (2016c). *Vital statistics and population estimates: September Quarter 2016*. Rarotonga: Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, Government of the Cook Islands. Retrieved from [http://www.mfem.gov.ck/images/documents/Statistics\\_Docs/2.Social/Population\\_Estimates\\_\\_Vital\\_Statistics/2016/BDM\\_Statistics\\_Report\\_201603.pdf](http://www.mfem.gov.ck/images/documents/Statistics_Docs/2.Social/Population_Estimates__Vital_Statistics/2016/BDM_Statistics_Report_201603.pdf)

Cook Islands Ministry of Finance and Economic Management. (2016d, May 16). *Labour market indicators*. Rarotonga: Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, Government of the Cook Islands. Retrieved from <http://www.mfem.gov.ck/statistics/economic-statistics/labour-market-indicators>

Cook Islands Ministry of Finance and Economic Management. (2017). *Census 2016*. Rarotonga: Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, Government of the Cook Islands. Retrieved July 19, 2017, from <http://mfem.gov.ck/census>

Cook Islands Ministry of Internal Affairs. (2015). *Report on the 2015 minimum wage rate review for the Cook Islands*. Rarotonga: Ministry of Internal Affairs, Government of the Cook Islands. Retrieved from <http://www.intaff.gov.ck/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/2015-Minimum-Wage-Review-ReportFINAL.pdf>

Cook Islands Office of the Prime Minister. (2016). *Te Kaveinga Nui. National Sustainable Development Plan 2016-2020*. Rarotonga: Office of the Prime Minister, Government of

the Cook Islands. Retrieved from <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/linked-documents/cobp-coo-2017-2019-ld-01.pdf>

Cook Islands Office of the Public Service Commissioner. (2016). *Cook Islands Government Public Sector Strategy 2016-2025*. Office of the Prime Minister, Government of the Cook Islands. Retrieved from <http://www.psc.gov.ck/wp/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/CIGOVPublicSectorStrategy-Full-Version-Online.pdf>

Cortina, J., & Ochoa Reza, E. (2013). *New Perspectives on International Migration and Development*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Creswell, J. (2014). *Research Design : Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (4th ed..). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Cummings, W. K. (1984). Going overseas for higher education: The Asian experience. *Comparative Education Review*, 28(2), 241–257.

Cuthbert, D., Smith, W., & Boey, J. (2008). What do we really know about the outcomes of Australian international education? A critical review and prospectus for future research. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 12(3), 255–275.

Daduidreketi, M. R., & Lingam, G. I. (2014). *Higher Education and Community Engagement in the Pacific : Development and Policy Issues*. Suva, Fiji: University of the South Pacific Press.

De Haas, H. (2010). Migration and development: A theoretical perspective 1. *International Migration Review*, 44(1), 227–264.

Dear, M. (1988). The postmodern challenge: Reconstructing human geography. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 13(3), 262–274.

Desai, V., & Potter, R. (2006). Working in different cultures: Issues of race, ethnicity and identity. In *Doing Development Research*, pp. 34–43. London: SAGE Publications, Ltd.

Docquier, F., Marfouk, A., & others. (2006). International migration by educational attainment, 1990-2000. In *International migration, remittances, and brain drain*, pp. 151-199. Washington D.C.: World Bank.

- Enoka, K. (2013). *Development, power and culture : Volunteer tourism in the Cook Islands*.  
(Unpublished master's thesis). Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.
- Frank, A. G. (1969). *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America: Historical Studies of Chile and Brazil* (Rev. ed..). New York ; London: Monthly Review Press.
- Gamlen, A. (2005). *The Brain Drain is Dead, Long Long Live the New Zealand Diaspora*. Centre on Migration, Policy and Society Working Paper, (10). Oxford: Centre on Migration, Policy and Society.
- Gamlen, A. (2014). The new migration-and-development pessimism. *Progress in Human Geography*, 38(4), 581–597.
- Gamlen, A., Murray, W. E., & Overton, J. (2017). Investigating education, migration and development – Moving triangles in the Pacific. *New Zealand Geographer*, 73(1), 3–14.
- Gegeo, D. W., & Watson-Gegeo, K. A. (2001). “How we know”: Kwara’ae rural villagers doing indigenous epistemology. *The Contemporary Pacific*, 13(1), 55–88.
- Gegeo, D. W., & Watson-Gegeo, K. A. (2002). Whose knowledge? Epistemological collisions in Solomon Islands community development. *The Contemporary Pacific*, 14(2), 377–409.
- Geiger, M., & Pécoud, A. (2013). Migration, development and the “Migration and Development Nexus.” *Population, Space and Place*, 19(4), 369–374.
- Gibson, J. (2009). *The Microeconomic Determinants of Emigration and Return Migration of the Best and Brightest: Evidence From the Pacific*. Washington D.C.: World Bank. Retrieved from  
<http://helicon.vuw.ac.nz/login?url=http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/book/10.1596/1813-9450-4965>
- Goss, J. (1996). Postcolonialism: Subverting whose empire? *Third World Quarterly*, 17(2), 239–250.
- Gribble, C. (2008). Policy options for managing international student migration: the sending country’s perspective. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 30(1), 25–39.

- Grubel, H. B. (1966). The international flow of human capital. *The American Economic Review*, 56(2), 268–274.
- Hammett, D., Twyman, C., & Graham, M. (2015). *Research and Fieldwork in Development*. New York: Routledge.
- Hau'ofa, E. (2008). *We are the Ocean: Selected Works*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Hau'ofa, E., Waddell, E., Naidu, V., & University of the South Pacific. School of Social and Economic Development. (1993). *A New Oceania : Rediscovering our Sea of Islands*. Suva, Fiji: School of Social and Economic Development, The University of the South Pacific in association with Beake House.
- Hooker, K., & Varcoe, J. (1999). Migration and the Cook Islands. In J. Overton & R. Sheyvens, *Strategies for Sustainable Development: Experiences from the Pacific*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press.
- Hugo, G. (2008). International Migration in a Sea of Islands: Challenges and Opportunities for Insular Pacific Spaces. University of Waikato, Population Studies Centre.
- 'Ama, 'Aka'iti Tamarua, Crocombe, R. G., Crocombe, M. T., University of the South Pacific. Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific. Cook Islands Extension Centre, Cook Islands Cultural and Historical Places Trust, & Cook Islands. Ministry of Cultural Development. (2003). *Akono'anga Maori = Cook Islands culture*. Suva, Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies ; in association with the Cook Islands Extension Centre, University of the South Pacific.
- International Organization for Migration. (2015). Key Migration Terms. Retrieved from <https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms>
- Kidd, R. & Tait, M. (2016, January 22). Man arrested at airport over student loan debt is Cook Island Prime Minister's nephew. *The New Zealand Herald*. Retrieved from [http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1&objectid=11577974](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11577974)
- Kritz, M. M. (2006). Globalisation and internationalisation of tertiary education. *International Symposium on International Migration and Development*. Turin: United Nations

- Population Division. Retrieved from  
[http://www.un.org/esa/population/migration/turin/Symposium\\_Turin\\_files/P02\\_KRITZ\\_Rev3\\_Augst21.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/population/migration/turin/Symposium_Turin_files/P02_KRITZ_Rev3_Augst21.pdf)
- Kritz, M. M. (2015). International student mobility and tertiary education capacity in Africa. *International Migration*, 53(1), 29–49.
- Macpherson, C., Bedford, R., & Spoonley, P. (2000). Fact or fable? The consequences of migration for educational achievement and labor market participation. *The Contemporary Pacific*, 12(1), 57–82.
- Marsters, E., Lewis, N., & Friesen, W. (2006). Pacific flows: The fluidity of remittances in the Cook Islands. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, 47(1), 31–44.
- Massey University New Zealand. (2017). What does distance learning involve? Retrieved from [http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/learning/distance-learning/intro/how\\_work/how\\_work\\_home.cfm](http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/learning/distance-learning/intro/how_work/how_work_home.cfm)
- Mccormick, A. (2014). Who are the custodians of Pacific “post-2015” education futures? Policy discourses, education for all and the millennium development goals. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 39, 163.
- McEwan, C. (2014). Postcolonialism. In Vandana Desai editor of compilation, Robert B. Potter editor of compilation, & Ebooks Corporation (Eds.), *The companion to development studies* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.), pp. 137–141. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- McMurray, A. (2004). *A Commonsense Approach*. London: Cengage Learning Australia.
- Meyer, J.-B., Charum, J., Bernal, D., Gaillard, J., Granés, J., Leon, J., Montenegro, A., Morales, A., Murcia, C., Narvaez-Berthelemot, N., Parrado, L., Schlemmer, B. (1997). Turning brain drain into brain gain: The Colombian experience of the diaspora option. *Science, Technology and Society*, 2(2), 285–315.
- Mikaere, A. (2011). From Kaupapa Maori research to re-searching Kaupapa Maori: Making our contribution to Maori survival. In J. Hutchigs, H. Potter, & K. Taupo (Eds.), *Kei Tua o Te Pae Hui Proceedings (Pipitea Marae, Wellington, 5-6 May, 2011)*.

- Murray, W. E., & Overton, J. (2003). Designing development research. *Development Fieldwork*, pp. 18–35. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. (2015). *New Zealand Aid Programme investment priorities 2015-2019*. Wellington: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Government of New Zealand. Retrieved from <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/assets/Aid-Prog-docs/Policy/NZ-Aid-Investment-Priorities-2016-19.pdf>
- New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. (n.d.). *New Zealand scholarships*. Wellington: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Government of New Zealand. Retrieved from <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/aid-and-development/scholarships/>
- New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, & Cook Islands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration. (2015). *Voyage to Statehood: 50 years in the Cook Islands-New Zealand Relationship*. Wellington: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Government of New Zealand & Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration, Government of Cook Islands.
- New Zealand Ministry of Justice. (2003). *Design and Methodology*. Wellington: Ministry of Justice, Government of New Zealand. Retrieved from <http://www.justice.govt.nz/publications/publications-archived/2003/the-needs-of-pacific-peoples-when-they-are-victims-of-crime-may-2003/2.-design-and-methodology>
- New Zealand Qualifications Authority. (2016). *Annual report on NCEA and New Zealand scholarship data and statistics (2015)*. Wellington: New Zealand Qualifications Authority.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2005). *Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/content/book/9789264098084-en>
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2006a). *DAC in dates. The history of OECD's Development Assistance Committee*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/dac/1896808.pdf>



- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2006b). The challenge of capacity development. *OECD Papers*, 6(1), 1–37.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2012). *Supporting partners to develop their capacity*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/content/book/9789264174306-en>
- Overton, J., & van Diermen, P. (2003). Using quantitative techniques. In R. Scheyvens & D. Storey (Eds.), *Development Fieldwork: A Practical Guide*, pp. 37–56.
- Perna, L. W., Orosz, K., & Jumakulov, Z. (2015). Understanding the human capital benefits of a government-funded international scholarship program: An exploration of Kazakhstan's Bolashak program. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 40, 85–97.
- Prescott, S. M. (2011). Using talanoa in Pacific business research in New Zealand: Experiences with Tongan entrepreneurs. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 4(1). Retrieved from <http://www.content.alternative.ac.nz/index.php/alternative/article/view/72>
- Radio New Zealand. (2015, August 20). Cook Islands PM denies depopulation issue. Retrieved October 3, 2016, from <http://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/281941/cook-islands-pm-denies-depopulation-issue>
- Schultz, T. W. (1961). Investment in human capital. *The American Economic Review*, 51(1), 1–17.
- Stalker, P. (2010). *A Guide to Countries of the World*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.
- Stark, O., Helmenstein, C., & Prskawetz, A. (1997). A brain gain with a brain drain. *Economics Letters*, (55), 227–34.
- Statistics New Zealand. (2013). *2013 Census ethnic group profiles: Cook Islands Maori*. Retrieved from [http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/ethnic-profiles.aspx?request\\_value=24709&parent\\_id=24706&tabname=#](http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/ethnic-profiles.aspx?request_value=24709&parent_id=24706&tabname=#)

- StudyLink. (2014). *Residency status or type*. Retrieved from <http://www.studylink.govt.nz/about-studylink/glossary/residency-status-or-type.html>
- Suaalii-Sauni, T., & Fulu-Aiolupotea, S. M. (2014). Decolonising Pacific research, building Pacific research communities and developing Pacific research tools: The case of the talanoa and the faafaletui in Samoa. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, 55(3), 331–344.
- Sumner, A., & Tribe, M. A. (2008). *International Development Studies: Theories and Methods in Research and Practice*. London: SAGE.
- Te Pou o Te Whakaaro Nui. (2010). *Talking therapies for Pasifika peoples: Best and promising practice guide for mental health and addiction services*. Auckland: Te Pou o Te Whakaaro Nui. Retrieved from <http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/assets/ResourceFinder/Talking-Therapies-for-Pasifika-Peoples.pdf>
- Thaman, K. H. (2003). Decolonizing pacific studies: Indigenous perspectives, knowledge, and wisdom in higher education. *Contemporary Pacific*, 15(1), 1–17.
- Thaman, K. H. (2007). Partnerships for progressing cultural democracy. In T. Townsend & R. Bates (eds.), *Handbook of Teacher Education*. Springer Netherlands: Dordrecht.
- The University of the South Pacific (USP). (2013). *USP: USP - An introduction*. Retrieved from [https://www.usp.ac.fj/index.php?id=usp\\_introduction](https://www.usp.ac.fj/index.php?id=usp_introduction)
- The World Bank. (n.d.). *World Bank country and lending groups – World Bank data help desk*. New York: World Bank. Retrieved from <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups>
- Tolley, H. C. (2008). The rise of basic education: A local issue or a construct of the global agenda? A review of education priorities of key donors in the Pacific region. *International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives*, 9(2), 18–30.
- Underhill-Sem. (2001). Flowering identities in Samoa and the Cook Islands: Population mobility and environmental transformation in the Eastern Pacific. In R. Bedford, Y. J. Underhill-

Sem, & R. Longhurst (Eds.), *Flowers, fale, fanua [i.e. fanau] and fa'a Polynesia*, pp. 26–33. Wollongong: APMRN Secretariat, Centre for Asia Pacific Social Transformation Studies, University of Wollongong.

United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Sustainable development knowledge platform. Retrieved from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2013). *Population facts*. Retrieved from [http://esa.un.org/unmigration/documents/The\\_number\\_of\\_international\\_migrants.pdf](http://esa.un.org/unmigration/documents/The_number_of_international_migrants.pdf)

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. (2016). *International migration report 2015: Highlights*. New York: United Nations. Retrieved from [http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/migration/migrationreport2013/Full\\_Document\\_final.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/migration/migrationreport2013/Full_Document_final.pdf)

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2012). *Youth and skills: putting education to work*. Paris: UNESCO. Retrieved from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002180/218003e.pdf>

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2015). *Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4*. Retrieved from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002456/245656E.pdf>

United Nations, Department and Social Affairs, Population Division. (2013). *International migration report 2013*. New York: United Nations. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/migration/migration-report-2013.shtml>

- University of the South Pacific. (2013). *School of Law*. Retrieved from <http://www.usp.ac.fj/index.php?id=518>
- University of the South Pacific. (2014). *Development in Cook Islands*. Retrieved from <http://www.usp.ac.fj/index.php?id=16047>
- University of the South Pacific. (2016a). *Alafua Campus*. Retrieved from <http://www.usp.ac.fj/index.php?id=4697>
- University of the South Pacific. (2016b). *International Accreditations & Recognition*. Retrieved from <https://www.usp.ac.fj/index.php?id=19954>
- Vaiolleti, T. M. (2006). Talanoa research methodology: a developing position on pacific research. Retrieved from <http://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/handle/10289/6199>
- Vallance, R. J. (2007). Is there a Melanesian Research Methodology? *Contemporary PNG Studies*, 7, 1–15.
- Waibel, S., Rüger, H., Ette, A., & Sauer, L. (2017). Career consequences of transnational educational mobility: A systematic literature review. *Educational Research Review*, 20, 81–98.
- Wallerstein, I. (1984). *The Politics of the World-Economy: The States, the Movements, and the Civilizations*. Paris: Cambridge University Press.
- Warren, M. (2012). Cook Islands. *New Internationalist*, (453), 36.
- Wild, K. (2012). *Aid, Education and Adventure: Thai Women's Participation in a Development Scholarship Scheme*. Palmerston North, New Zealand: Institute of Development Studies, Massey University. Retrieved from <http://muir.massey.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10179/3954/Wild%20Scheyvens%20IDS%20Working%20Paper%20edited%20for%20publication%20final%20final.pdf?sequence=3>
- Wright-Koteka, E. (2006). *"Te uu no te akau roa" : migration and the Cook Islands*. (Master's thesis, Massey University, Auckland, New Zealand). Retrieved from

<http://www.devnet.org.nz/content/te-uu-no-te-akau-roa-migration-and-cook-islands-thesis-presented-partial-fulfilment-requirem>

# Appendix 1: Letter of Ethics Approval

---



Phone 04-463 5480  
Email [susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz)

## MEMORANDUM

TO	Lea Raymond
COPY TO	
FROM	AProf Susan Corbett, Convener, Human Ethics Committee
DATE	18 May 2016
PAGES	1
SUBJECT	<b>Ethics Approval: 22756</b> The Impacts of Tertiary Education Migration on Cook Islands' "Development"

Thank you for your application for ethical approval, which has now been considered by the Standing Committee of the Human Ethics Committee.

Your application has been approved from the above date and this approval continues until 3 March 2017. If your data collection is not completed by this date you should apply to the Human Ethics Committee for an extension to this approval.

Best wishes with the research.

Kind regards



Susan Corbett  
Convener, Victoria University Human Ethics Committee

# Appendix 2: Cook Islands Research Permit

---

## PERMIT TO UNDERTAKE

### **Research in the Cook Islands**

This is to certify that: Mrs Lea Louisa Raymond

Has permission from the Foundation for National Research to do a research in the Cook Islands from: 03 June 2016 to 02 July 2016

On the island(s) of: Rarotonga

The topic of the research is: The Impacts of Tertiary Education Migration on Cook Islands' Development

The Cook Islands Associate Researcher is: None

The following special conditions apply to this research:

- The researcher complies with the Cook Islands Immigration
- The researcher provides a preliminary report to the Office of the Prime Minister at the earliest
- The researcher provides three (3) hard copies + one (1) e-copy of the final output generated from this research to the Office of the Prime Minister by April 2017.

Permit Issued on: 19 May 2016

Issued by: Elizabeth Koteka

CHAIRPERSON

Receipt Number: 18174

Reference Number: 08-16

Signed:

For enquiries concerning this permit, please quote the Name of the Researcher and the Reference Number to the Chairperson, Foundation for National Research, and Office of the Prime Minister, Rarotonga, and COOK ISLANDS. Phone (682) 29 300, Fax (682) 20 856, or Email: [elizabeth.wright@cookislands.gov.ck](mailto:elizabeth.wright@cookislands.gov.ck) Website: [www.pmooffice.gov.ck](http://www.pmooffice.gov.ck)

# Appendix 3: Example of Participant Information Sheet

---



## **The Impacts of Tertiary Education Migration on Cook Islands’ “Development”**

### **INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS** (Representatives of the Government and other organisations)

Thank you for your interest in this project. Please read this information before deciding whether or not to take part. If you decide to participate, thank you. If you decide not to take part, thank you for considering my request.

#### **Who am I?**

My name is Lea Raymond and I am a Masters student in Development Studies at Victoria University of Wellington. This research project is work towards my thesis.

#### **What is the aim of the project?**

This project will shed light on the relationship between education, migration and development and the lived realities of tertiary migrants upon the completion of their degree. This research has been approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee (Approval Number: 22756).

#### **How can you help?**

If you agree to take part we will talanoa (talk freely) in a quiet space. I will ask you to speak about your experience with issues for returning education migrants. The talanoa will be arranged for a duration of two hours, but we will let the conversation run its course without strict time limits. I will record the talanoa and write it up later. You can leave the talanoa at any time, without giving a reason. You can withdraw from the study up to three weeks after the talanoa. If you withdraw, the information you provided will be destroyed or returned to you.

#### **What will happen to the information you give?**

You will not be identified in my report unless you give your consent to this. Please be aware that even if you are not being named in the final report your organisation may be named (and you have the authority to agree to this on behalf of the organisation).



**What will the project produce?**

The information from my research will be used in my Masters thesis. I may also use the results of my research for conference presentations, and academic reports.

**If you accept this invitation, what are your rights as a research participant?**

You do not have to accept this invitation if you don't want to. If you do decide to participate, you have the right to:

- choose not to answer any question;
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the talanoa;
- withdraw from the study up until three weeks after the talanoa;
- ask any questions about the study at any time;
- receive a copy of the talanoa recording (if it is recorded);
- agree on another name for me to use rather than your real name;
- be able to read any reports of this research by emailing the researcher to request a copy.

**If you have any questions or problems, who can you contact?**

If you have any questions, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:

**Student:**

Name: Lea Raymond  
University email address:  
Lea.Raymond@vuw.ac.nz

**Supervisor:**

Name: John Overton  
Role: Professor  
School: School of Geography, Environment  
and Earth Sciences  
Phone: +64 (0)4 463 5281  
John.Overton@vuw.ac.nz

**Human Ethics Committee information**

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Victoria University HEC Convener: Associate Professor Susan Corbett. Email susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz or telephone +64-4-463 5480.

# Appendix 4: Example of Consent Form

---



## **The Impacts of Tertiary Education Migration on Cook Islands’ “Development”**

### **CONSENT TO TALANOA** (Tertiary Education Migrants)

This consent form will be held for 5 years.

Researcher: Lea Raymond, School of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences, Victoria University of Wellington

- I have read the Information Sheet and the project has been explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can ask further questions at any time.
- I agree to take part in an audio recorded interview.

I understand that:

- I may withdraw from this study up to three weeks after the interview, and any information that I have provided will be returned to me or destroyed.
- The information I have provided will be destroyed 5 years after the research is finished.
- Any information I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and the supervisor. I understand that the results will be used for a Masters report and a summary of the results may be used in academic reports and/or presented at conferences.
- My name will not be used in reports, nor will any information that would identify me.
- I would like a summary of my interview: Yes ☐ No ☐
- I would like to receive a summary of the final research report and have added my email address below. Yes ☐ No ☐

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact details: \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix 5: Example of Questionnaire



## The Impacts of Tertiary Education Migration on Cook Islands’ “Development”

### QUESTIONNAIRE

(Returned Tertiary Education Migrants)

#### A. General Demographics

1. Age: *(please tick one)*

20 - 29 years ☐

30 - 39 years ☐

40 - 49 years ☐

.....

50 - 59 years ☐

60 - 69 years ☐

2. Gender: *(please tick one)*

Female ☐

Male ☐

Other ☐

3. Ethnicity: *(please name one or more)*

.....

4. Which Island were you living on before your move overseas? *(please tick one or more)*

Aitutaki ☐

Atiu ☐

Mangaia ☐

Manihiki ☐

Manuae ☐

Mauke ☐

Mitiaro ☐

Other ☐ .....

Nassau ☐

Palmerton ☐

Penryn ☐

Pukapuka ☐

Rakahanga ☐

Rarotonga ☐

Suvarrow ☐

#### B. University Background

4. Where did you complete your university programme?

..... (City)

(Country)

.....

5. What did you study?

..... (Programme) .....  
(Degree)

6. When did you complete your degree?

..... (Approximate Date)

7. How were your studies funded? (please tick one or more)

Full Scholarship ☐

Partial Scholarship ☐

Self funded ☐

Other ☐

.....

### **C. Life in New Zealand**

8. When did you return to live in the Cook Islands?

..... (Approximate Date)

9. How long did it take you to find a job where your degree was applicable?

..... (Months) OR .....  
(Years)

10. What is your current professional position?

..... (Position) .....  
(Employer)