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Sector wide approaches from a
complexity perspective:

Insights for development from
Solomon Islands and Tonga

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Abstract

This study explores the central tenets of Complexity Thinking and applies them to an analysis of international aid interventions for development (or transformative change). Examining the post-war emergence of orthodox models of international development and aid modalities, with particular reference to the evolution of sector wide approaches (SWAs), it argues that established models inadequately understand how ‘development’ occurs. It is maintained that, in applying linear management approaches, orthodox models assume causality in achieving social and behavioural change at system level and, more implicitly, change to deeply embedded political structures (Girdwood, 2012). Conversely, a complexity perspective examines development as a complex adaptive system of dynamic, self-organising agents that co-evolve and allow certain behaviours to emerge over others, dependent on initial conditions and the stability of the system.

The focus of the thesis is two-fold. First, drawing on data from a historical study of international development and two Pacific Island case studies (Solomon Islands and Tonga), it investigates the extent to which the international aid agenda has shaped education development in each country. In particular, it shows how New Zealand’s convergence with the ‘better’ aid agenda and its move to SWAs has driven its relations with the respective governments. Secondly, a complexity-focused analytical framework is applied to both case studies to examine how the SWA has evolved in each country. Examining each case study as a continuous, dynamic ‘whole’ system, comprising networks of agents that act and react within loose boundaries and in response to their initial ‘state’ has revealed that the nature and extent of change cannot be assumed. Instead it highlights how change is dominated by agents self-organising and co-evolving in relation to associated systems and networks, which themselves are continuously adapting to their environments.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ASRH	Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health
ACP	The African, Caribbean and Pacific group of states
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AJR	Annual Joint Review
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
AWP	Annual Work Programme/Plan
CBD	Central Business District
CDP	Coordinating Donor Partner
CDU	Curriculum Development Unit (Tonga)
CEA	Church Education Authority
CF	Consent Form
CFSF	Community Funding for School Funding (Solomon Islands)
CHS	Community High School
CRP	Curriculum Reform Project (Tonga)
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DEV	Development Cooperation Division within NZ Ministry of External Relations and Trade
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DFL	Distance Flexible Learning
DOE	Department of Education (New Zealand)
DP	Development Plan (Tonga)
DPHP	Development Partner Harmonisation Protocol
DPFI	Democratic Party of the Friendly Islands (Tonga)
EA	Education Authorities
EC	European Commission
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EEC	European Economic Community
EFA	Education for All

EMIS	Education management information systems
EO	Education Officers
EPSRP	Economic and Public Sector Reform Program (Tonga)
ESF	Education Sector Framework (Solomon Islands)
ESIRP	Education Sector Investment Reform Programme (Solomon Islands)
ESP	Education Strategic Plan (Solomon Islands)
EU	European Union
FFE	Fee-Free Education (Solomon Islands)
FWC	Free Wesleyan Church (Tonga)
G-77	Group of 77
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GOT	Government of Tonga
GPG	Global Public Good
HDI	Human Development Index
HRD	Human Resource Development
IDA	International Development Assistance
IDRF	International Development Research Grant (New Zealand)
IDT	International Development Targets
IFI	International Funding Institution
IMF	The International Monetary Fund
IRD	Integrated Rural Development
LDS	Latter Day Saints
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MDPAC	Ministry of Development Planning and Aid Coordination (Solomon Islands)
MEA	Malaita Education Authority (Solomon Islands)
MEF	Malaita Eagle Force (Solomon Islands)
MEHRD	Ministry of Education & Human Resource Development (Solomon Islands)
MEWAC	Ministry of Education, Women and Culture (Tonga)
MFAT	Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade (New Zealand)

MOE	Ministry of Education
MOFT	Ministry of Finance and Treasury (Solomon Islands)
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPS	Ministry of Public Service (Solomon Islands)
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
NC	National Consultants (Tonga)
NCPR	National Committee for Political Reform (Tonga)
NEAP	National Education Action Plan (Solomon Islands)
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
NGO	Non Government Organisation
NIEO	New International Economic Order
NOPE	Network of Pacific Educationalists
NPM	New Public Management (New Zealand)
NSS	National Secondary School (Solomon Islands)
NTU	National Training Unit (Solomon Islands)
NZAID	New Zealand Agency for International Development
NZAP	New Zealand Aid Programme
NZODA	New Zealand Official Development Assistance
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAD	Project Appraisal Document
PEA	Provincial Education Authority (Solomon Islands)
PEAP	Provincial Education Action Plan (Solomon Islands)
PD	Paris Declaration
PIF/PIFS	Pacific Islands Forum/Secretariat
PIU	Programme Implementation Unit
PIS	Participant Information Sheet
PM	Prime Minister
PRC	People's Republic of China

PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PS	Permanent Secretary
PSS	Provincial Secondary School (Solomon Islands)
PSSC	Pacific Senior Secondary Certificate
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands
RBM	Results Based Management
RCDF	Rural Constituency Development Fund (Solomon Islands)
ROC	Republic of China (Taiwan)
RVTC	Rural Vocational Training Centres (Solomon Islands)
SAL	Structural Adjustment Loan
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SBD	Solomon Islands Dollar
SCET	Second Chance Education and Training
SDA	Seventh Day Adventist
SDP 8	Strategic Development Plan (Tonga) Eight, 2006/7-2008/9
SED	Sustainable Economic Development
SEE	Secondary Entrance Exam (Tonga)
SIG	Solomon Islands Government
SI	Solomon Islands
SICHE	Solomon Islands College of Higher Education
SIF3	Solomon Islands Form 3 Examinations
SIP	Solomon Islands Pijin
SISC	Solomon Islands School Certificate (Form 5)
SISEE	Solomon Islands Secondary Entrance Examination (Std 6)
SPBEA	South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment
SSEC	South Sea Evangelical Church
SSS	Senior Secondary School
SWAp	Sector Wide Approach
TA	Technical Advisor

TESP	Tonga Education Sector Program
TIT	Teacher in Training
TSC	Tonga School Certificate
TSGP	Tonga School Grants Programme
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
TWG	Technical Working Group
UBE	Universal Basic Education
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHDR	United Nations Human Development Report
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UOAHPEC	University of Auckland Human Participant Ethics Committee
UPE	Universal Primary Education
US	United States
USP	University of the South Pacific
WB	The World Bank
WSDP	Whole School Development Plan (Solomon Islands)
WWII	World War Two

INTRODUCTION

This thesis has a twofold focus. First, it examines the post-war emergence of orthodox models of ‘international development’¹ and specific modalities for delivering development through international aid, with particular reference to the evolution of sector wide approaches in education across the Pacific. I argue that current and past discourses provide an inadequate understanding of how ‘development’ actually occurs. Practices and policies that treat social development as a linear management project assume governance of causal laws (Stacey, 2010) and ignore - explicitly and/or implicitly - the unpredictable nature of human social interactions. In other words, orthodox approaches tend to assume that development interventions will behave ‘lawfully’, according to linear causal rules, where the effect(s) of a particular ‘cause’ can be predetermined, and that various inputs and activities will logically lead to specific outputs, outcomes and impact; a so-called ‘results chain’. This ignores the unpredictability of human nature to self-organise and co-evolve in reaction to each other and their environment, and to create communication networks (connectedness) within which decisions are made, actions take place and changes emerge. In tracing orthodox development discourses within the broader geopolitical arena, the congruence between the ideologies underlying these discourses reveals their translation and integration into bilateral, regional and national development policies in the Pacific. Using a case study approach, the thesis will explore New Zealand’s international aid programme and the education systems in Tonga and Solomon Islands where, as a bilateral donor, New Zealand has long had considerable involvement.

Second, it explores how the sector wide approach (SWAp) has been translated within each country context. It explores the interconnectivity and inter-relatedness of the various relationships that have evolved over the life of the SWAp and considers how insight into these areas might facilitate change. The exploratory approach I have employed questions whether casting a lens of complexity provides a different perspective on the policies and practices of specific development processes in different country contexts. In other words, *does a complexity perspective expose aspects that are not usually seen or attended to?*

¹ Orthodox models of development refer to the dominant ‘western’ discourses of development theory and practice that have prevailed among the multilateral and bilateral institutions since the end of WWII. These models provide the justification and the frameworks for the provision of financial assistance to the developing world. An in-depth study of the evolution of orthodox development discourse forms the first case study in Part Two.

Part One will highlight that complexity thinking and theories of emergence are increasingly infiltrating development literature (Mowles, Stacey, & Griffin, 2008). It is my intention to contribute to this literature through an exploration of complexity thinking and consideration of the implications such an approach might bring to the particular case studies. In doing this, I challenge current development management and review processes (in education) in the two study countries and within the wider donor community. The aim of the challenge is to provide a means of provoking and “improving taken for granted ways of managing” (Mowles, et al., 2008: 805), and, more importantly, to contribute to more effective policies and practices.

Mowles et al. (2008) and Stacey (2010) argue that modern management theory and the ideology of efficiency, with its measurable targets and improved managerial control, have become the taken-for-granted models for international development to such an extent that it has become hard to argue against this mode of governance. Indeed, “any alternative way of thinking is not immediately apparent ... After all, who can be against improvement and efficiency?” (Stacey, 2010: 207). That these discourses have become ubiquitous and isomorphic across all sectors of the international aid world² begs a need to critically reflect on these ways of thinking about development, and to explore the implications of alternative viewpoints. Isomorphism impedes emergence of difference and thus dampens the opportunity for change to emerge (Mowles, et al., 2008).

The moral mission statements common in mainstream development industry literature – such as calls for “working for a world free of poverty and the achievement of the millennium development goals” (World Bank, 2012) or the imperative “to help developing member countries reduce poverty and improve living conditions and quality of life” (ADB, 2008) – rely on assumptions that “definitive causality” can be established which “attribute[s] observed changes in welfare to the program” (World Bank, 2011). Rational and linear planning leading to indicator and target setting and accountability measures have become integral in the so-called ‘aid effectiveness

² It is acknowledged that alternative development paradigms that reject western neoliberal, pro-growth capitalist approaches exist, particularly in Latin America, building on previous paradigms such as dependency and world systems theory. This is referred to again on page 59. One current example is “the counter hegemonic globalisation project centred on the idea of ‘21st century socialism’ [and expressed] in the Bolivarian Alternative for the peoples of our America (ALBA)” (Muhr, 2008: 1). ALBA aims for regional economic integration based on social welfare, bartering and mutual economic aid, as opposed to trade liberalisation and free trade agreements. See <http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/int-bapa.html> for more details.

agenda', spearheaded among donors at the end of the twentieth century, and a central tenet to a succession of global summits reviewing internationally agreed development goals, most notably the Millennium Development Goals (MDG)³. Later, a set of principles and techniques, coined the 'Paris Principles'⁴, emerged from further high level debates, this time on aid harmonisation in Rome (2003), Paris (2005), Accra (2008) and most recently Busan (2011). They are aimed at assessing aid effectiveness in order to accelerate achievement of the MDGs and enhance the quality of developmental intervention.

A detailed critique of the evolution of the aid effectiveness agenda is presented in Part Two; suffice to note here is the assumption that "social interventions are understood to culminate in an end point of transformation which can be planned for backwards in logical, rational and causal steps" (Mowles, et al., 2008: 806). Stacey (2010) contends that such calculating rationality was popularised in the 1980s as 'the way to do development', and that the rhetoric of improvement and modernisation - represented in target setting and procedures for monitoring performance - is now beyond question.

This, however, is the very notion that complexity thinking challenges. Complexity scholars Zimmerman Lindberg & Plsek (1998) draw attention to the 'mechanalistic' thinking engrained in many everyday conceptions of organisations, couched in the 'rational' environment of 'performance management', whereby targets are set and partners are 'held accountable' for progress towards them. Deficiencies in staff behaviour, attitude or aptitude are often target areas with some form of 'transformation' promised within a specific timeframe. For a complexity theorist, predicting specific change in this manner is far from 'rational'.

Professor Ralph Stacey⁵ has long been a proponent for exploring how the complexity 'sciences' (understanding complex adaptive systems within the natural sciences) might provide an alternative way to understand stability and change in organisations, and the responsive processes of human relations. He argues that viewing the behaviour of governments or education and health services (or any public

³ These issues, both in the wider and local context, will be explored in depth in Part Two.

⁴ The 'Paris Principles' are a set of principles developed after the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in 2005 and which undergo periodic revision.

⁵ Ralph Stacey is Professor of Management and Director of the Complexity and Management Centre at the Business School of the University of Hertfordshire in the UK.

sector organisations) as determinable, self-regulating, stable systems is a “particularly naïve form of systems thinking [that] has become the fundamental underlying public sector governance today” (Stacey, 2010). For him, a complexity approach, which views public sector organisations more as collections of “social objects” (p.211) acting within a myriad of local patterns of interaction, is more effective for understanding how change might actually occur. From this perspective, although a service might continue to be delivered and “apparently compl[y] with the targets” (pp.211-12), what becomes important is how the agents within the system react and relate to each other. That is, how they articulate, adapt, transform or resist global, national or local pressures or directives within their local context.

It is common to read that causes of failure in a development initiative are more likely to be assigned to the implementation techniques employed, rather than the management of relationships inherent within the intervention (Pritchett, Woolcock, & Andrews, 2010). Stacey (2010) points out, however, that if there is incompatibility between the theory and the actual setting, such that the techniques contradict the practice of the organisation, “the result is hypocrisy which in turn breeds the destructive force of cynicism. This cynicism is exacerbated by the frequency with which the techniques are changed” (2010: 209). Responses to failure typically call for identification and application of ‘best practice’; however, a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach is likely to be ineffectual. As Lozeau, Langley and Denis (2002: 539) point out, when there are gaps “... between the assumptions underlying a technique and the context in which it is applied, the [public service] organization will tend to ‘corrupt’ the technique rather than allowing it to transform the organization”. This is a common result when employed techniques are ill-fitted to the existing power distribution within a complex, pluralistic institution (or system). Thus, instead of precipitating change, the initiative can become captured by the very dynamic that it intended to change. This foregrounds the need for development management techniques that make sense of, and make sense in, the context in which they are expected to function, and for them to be sufficiently flexible to recognise and build on incidences of alternative ‘good governance’. Lozeau et al (2002: 558) go on to point out that the deliberate attempt to shape change by altering interactions or behaviour patterns - the mainstay of development theory – “is always socially (re)constructed by the people who take part in it” and “structured by existing power relations, interest and values”

from both within and outside the organisation. With this in mind, while a programme's impact (measurable changes in state such as reduced conflict or greater school enrolment) is important it is not necessarily indicative of a 'successful' development programme. Focusing more on how behaviours, relationships, networks or actions changed within the people, groups or organisations involved in the development programme (Earl, Carden, & Smulylo, 2001) gives greater insight into how impact was effected and, thus, the likelihood of such changes being sustained and built upon.

In this thesis I draw on perspectives espousing that any form of development is a complex interaction of people relating to each other and their environment (Earl, et al., 2001); that social change is not linear, uni-directional, mechanistic or predictable. I advocate that the rationalist understandings and 'evidence based' approaches commonly demanded from development agents confound reality in attempting to make things predictable and controllable. This thesis agrees with Brenda Zimmerman's view that "the simplistic and unrealistic demands for accountability" seem to make the people making these demands "ignore what they know about the real world, about their own lives or about biological or ecological systems" (quoted in Patton, 2011: 83). I place myself among others who argue that human behavioural change is complex – it cannot be broken down into its constituents and then rebuilt or repaired; it evolves in its own way as a result of where it is, who the players are, and how they react with each other and the environment/situation they find themselves in. Change – and hence development - is dynamic and flexible, ever reacting to its components and environment, which in turn are influenced by their history and their circumstances.

The question arises that, if development – as a system – is so complex, self evolutionary and unpredictable, why do we bother with development aid and intervention? Inevitably, the answer to this question is complex, multi-faceted and much debated (for contrasting views see, Moyo, 2009; J. Sachs, 2005). Altruism, the geopolitics of security, self interest and capitalism, along with humanitarianism and morality, are all parts of this debate and the various discourses of development they produce will be covered in greater detail in Part Two. The 'whys' of development are not, however, the central focus of this thesis. Rather, I use complexity thinking to

shape a perspective of development in general, and to analyse how education sector wide approaches (SWAp) in the Pacific, in particular, have co-evolved within institutions in two geographic settings. The thesis will draw upon concepts of self-organisation, dynamism and interconnectivity (Kuhn, 2009; Ramalingam, 2008) to explore how change has occurred. In so doing, it will investigate the extent to which a complexity lens is useful for developing a more heuristic⁶ framework for analysing change in development, highlighting how/where positive transformative change can take place to better the lives of those in the ‘less developed’ countries of the world.

The Aims of the Research

Using a complexity-informed analytical framework, this study aims to develop a thorough understanding of sector wide approaches on several levels – globally, bilaterally and nationally. Through a multi-level approach it analyses how sector wide approaches are understood, and examines the linkages within and between the various layers. Such a multi-level approach has been variously referred to as a “vertical case study” (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2006) or a “nested case study” (Patton, 2002) and, as a methodological approach, will be explored further in Part One. A complexity approach lends itself well to case study methodology (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009), being seen as a way of describing an uncertain and contingent world arising from self-organising, dynamic and emergent entities (Kuhn, 2009) within a set of boundaries. Taking a ‘nested’ or ‘vertical’ case study approach embedded within a complexity perspective means that examined boundaries⁷ can be rethought for a better understanding of the inter-relatedness and connectivity between actors within institutions and systems, as well as interactions between systems, such as those between donors and recipients and donors/recipients and their peers. This study will show how complex global, bilateral and local relationships co-evolve within country-specific conditions. Through analyses of the emergent change, it illustrates how it might be possible to learn how to influence future emergences (Kuhn, 2009). This nuanced understanding provides the basis of an alternative lens for approaching, analysing and assessing development interventions.

⁶ Heuristics pertain to the process of gaining knowledge or some desired result by intelligent guesswork rather than by following some pre established formula or algorithm.

⁷ In terms of what is made explicit or paid attention to.

At the national level, contextual analysis shows how key stakeholders and partners view the relevance, quality and impact of a sector wide approach as an instrument of development aid. From a bilateral perspective, it will explore the extent to which the global aid–development discourse (concerning SWAs in particular) has been negotiated and legitimised to form a regional approach to education aid. At the global level, it will examine how the consensus of the ‘better aid agenda’ evolved and emerged as the dominant discourse. This multi-level approach will take us from a global mechanistic conception, generalised by the Paris Declaration of Aid Effectiveness and the rise of the so-called ‘new aid era’, to see a more complex reality in the education sectors of the two specific Pacific Island states.

The Research Question

The overarching research question guiding this thesis is: By exploring the *processes* of change over the *products* of change, to what extent does a complexity approach provide a useful framework for analysing the ‘successes’ of development initiatives?⁸ This thesis explores the nature of power relations within each context and analyses the extent they are acknowledged and the effect they have on the implementation of sector wide approaches in Tonga’s and Solomon Islands’ education sector.

Importance of the Research Topic

This thesis provides an in-depth exploration of the emergence, meaning and implications of a ‘sector wide approach’ in global, bilateral and national contexts. In taking a complexity perspective it will suggest an alternative framework from which to analyse development approaches, one based more on paying attention to the interconnections between agents and networks within complex systems and the emergence of change, than on a reductionist ‘managing for results’ approach.

To date, very little empirical academic research has been documented in regards to SWAs initiated in Pacific Island states. Joel Negin, however, has recently written on issues related to the SWAs for health in the Pacific region, drawing on examples from Samoa and Solomon Islands (Negin, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c). This

⁸I have written the word ‘successes’ in inverted commas to highlight that success depends on whose perspective is being considered.

thesis proposes to make a significant contribution to the international literature on SWApS in small island states as well as make a conceptual contribution to the academic debate on aid effectiveness analyses.

The Emergence of this Research

The direction and focus of this doctoral study transpired from my background in ecology and biological science, my teaching experience in many developing countries, my post-graduate programme in Development Studies and my participation in two recent research activities concerning Tonga and Solomon Islands. One was a wider research project⁹ to assess the progress made in achieving the five key components of a sector wide approach (SWAp)¹⁰ in Solomon Islands' and Tonga's education sector; the other was a NZAID commissioned review of Tonga's SWAp, bounded by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) guidelines and criteria¹¹. Attempting to analyse these initiatives from these pre-determined, prescriptive and largely managerial perspectives led me to realise that the quality of the interactions between the people trying to implement the initiative was critical to how 'successful' the approach was deemed to be. The prescribed guidelines for the assignments, however, afforded scant space for recognition of these crucial relationships. This realisation along with my long-time unease with the traditional log-frame 'if we do this, therefore...' approach¹² to donor initiatives in developing countries, led me to search for an alternative lens to assess the 'success' of a SWAp as a development approach. This doctoral study is, therefore, a re-analysis of data within a complexity-informed theoretical model (it does not contend that this is the *only* way of explaining the data). It steps beyond the original research projects by considering whether a complexity analysis can reveal aspects of the donor– government partnership that are often unseen (or ignored or unreported), but are critical to the 'success' of a sector wide approach and, therefore, need to be exposed and deliberated.

⁹ This research project was funded by a grant from the NZAID International Development Research Fund (IDRF) and will be explained in more detail in Part One.

¹⁰ These components of a SWAp will be fully explained in Part Two.

¹¹ The DAC guidelines will be discussed in Part Two.

¹² The Logical Framework Approach, LFA or 'log-frame' was adopted by most development agencies in the 1980s and 90s as standard project planning and management. The 16 field matrix presents the core elements of a project in a simplified overview based on a linear causal chain on four levels: Activities→Outputs→Outcome→Goal (Roduner, Schläppi, & Egli, 2008).

Thesis structure

Following this introduction, the thesis takes the form of three parts. Part One sets out the conceptual and methodological underpinnings that shape and inform the analyses. Part Two provides three in-depth case study analyses. First is an examination of the evolution of orthodox development discourse and emergence of sector wide approaches. Dove-tailed within this is explanation of how New Zealand bilateral aid policy has developed within the orthodox discourse. The remaining case studies provide rich contextual data on Solomon Islands and Tonga, tracing, in particular, respective education sector developments and implementation of the sector wide approach. In each case, New Zealand's role as a bilateral donor to education will be made clear, along with the roles played by other significant donors in each context. Part Three draws heavily on my fieldwork data and applies the concepts of complexity, as presented in Part One, to my analyses of the changes that occurred under the SWAp in each context. The analyses are presented under three headings: complex networks, complex behaviours and complex change. Each section draws on specific tenets of complexity to help explain the data but, true to the nature of complexity, many concepts permeate all sections and others are hard to isolate as specific examples. The final section of Part Three draws conclusions from the analyses and discusses the broader implications of this analytical perspective. The thesis concludes by responding to the overarching research question and considers the implications of the findings for ways to think differently about development intervention review and evaluation.

PART ONE

Conceptual Framework and Research Methodology

Complexity is not a methodology or a set of tools (although it does provide both). It certainly is not a 'management fad'. The theories of **complexity** provide a conceptual framework, **a way of thinking**, and **a way of seeing the world** (Mitleton-Kelly, 2003:4, emphasis in original).

Introducing Part One

Part One is divided into two sections. The first provides a theoretical understanding of complexity as a way of thinking and links the concepts to establish a conceptual framework from which to interrogate the research question. A preliminary analytical model will be proposed. The second section discusses the research methodology to be applied and makes plain the specifics of the research design and the methods employed. Limitations and other data issues are discussed. The final analytical model will be presented in Part Three.

A. Conceptual and Analytical Framework

The use of the term complexity *thinking* as opposed to complexity *theory* is a conscious decision. It acknowledges the rejection of a single theory of complexity in favour of merged elements of several theories originating from natural science, particularly biology, ecology, mathematics and cybernetics and the social sciences. The broad collection of concepts drawn together by complexity thinking can form the methodological foundations for uncovering the ‘sets of rules’ idiosyncratic to every social organisation (Warner, 2001).

Why Complexity Thinking?

While motives for giving and receiving development assistance vary from country to country and from actor to actor¹³ and over time, the notion of ‘development’ and development aid arguably stems from western need to facilitate change to improve the social, economic and structural livelihoods of those in the developing world¹⁴. Many mainstream donor organisations and development practitioners frame development in a linear, reductionist fashion (Davis & Sumara, 2006), that assumes people are “rational” and social processes are “... linear and can be broken down and understood in parts...” such that “...social change is amenable to the hierarchy of objectives in a log-frame¹⁵ model” (Ramalingam in Panos London,

¹³ Development actors include country governments, multi- and bilateral donors, NGOs, UN organisations, individuals etc.

¹⁴ This thesis refers to development as the mainstream, orthodox ‘western’ view of development that stems from a modernisation approach. The notion of development will be discussed in greater detail in Part Two.

¹⁵ A logical framework, or log-frame, is a tool used by a range of multi-and bilateral donors based on a systematic analysis of the development situation for improving the planning implementation, management, monitoring and evaluation of a project and highlighting the logical linkages between them.

2009:3). More simply, development is often seen as a series of problems/difficulties for which solutions can be sought, found and applied to achieve desired ends. This approach makes the assumption that change within the world and its social structures can be carefully planned and pursued in a pre-determined way (Ramalingam, Jones, with Young, & Reba, 2008).

Complexity thinking builds on the premise that the world is *not* predictable, orderly or linear. As such, it offers a powerful alternative to deductive and inductive thinking about the world, one more in line with abductive and retroductive reasoning. Abductive reasoning is based more on inference – it adopts a hypothesis suggested by the data and it provides an argument that best explains the situation and the information to hand. Retroductive strategies, on the other hand, involve building hypothetical models based on what has happened previously as a way of attempting to establish the existence of underlying structures or causal mechanisms. Thus, rather than viewing social systems, and change in particular, as solvable problems or puzzles it sees them as complex and “messy” situations (Ackoff, 1974: 21). That is, disorderly and non-linear, unpredictable and unknowable, and without specific seekable solutions (ibid.). Complexity philosophers David Byrne (1998) and Paul Cilliers (1998) interpret complexity from opposite ends of the philosophical spectrum. Byrne argues that complexity theory constitutes a defence of realism whereby outcomes in complex systems are determined by multiple causes which interact non-additively (factors reinforce or cancel each other out in non-linear and unpredictable ways). Cilliers (1998), on the other hand, sees systems as both real and the products of scientific construction and complexity theory as a defence of postmodernism and the unknowability of the world. As Walby points out (2004: 15), however, “any polarisation of view between realism and postmodernism is now misplaced. Rather, complexity theory allows us to transcend these old divisions. The world may be considered to be both determined and to some extent unknowable”. Morcol (2001) concurs, and draws attention to complexity theorists such as Prigogine & Stengers (1984) who acknowledge that determinism and indeterminism co-exist in the universe. Walby goes on to assert that complexity thinking more adequately addresses issues of diversity by virtue of not giving up on explanation and analysis of causation.

The Origins of Complexity Thinking

Complexity thinking emerged from the physical sciences in the latter half of the twentieth century. With the discovery of quantum physics in the 1930s, a new way of understanding the physical world became apparent and proved that the Newtonian theories of simple linear causality and the behaviour of matter do not always hold true. The implications that matter can behave unpredictably and new patterns can emerge without external cause were soon applied to understanding the behaviour of all complex systems, not least to understanding the dynamics of change in natural systems. These ideas embraced notions from evolutionary theory, chaos theory, cybernetics, complex adaptive systems, critical realism, postmodernism and systems thinking (Eppel, 2009; ODI, 2008).

The combination of ideas from these theoretical standpoints has led to a re-thinking of the concept of ‘system’ with Ilya Prigogine’s work (see *The End of Certainty* (1997)) forming a cornerstone¹⁶. His ‘new’ view of physics rejects determinism and the tradition of system equilibrium and instead favours analysis of non-equilibrium dynamism as critical for explaining and describing system changes. Prigogine’s notion of a ‘bifurcation point’¹⁷ provides a key concept to understanding how the overall macro-appearance of physical and natural systems *appear* stable, yet internally significant and unpredictable change is taking place.

If the world were formed by stable dynamical systems, it would be radically different from the one we observe around us. It would be a static, predictable world, but we would not be here to make the predictions. In our world, we discover fluctuations, bifurcations, and instabilities at all levels. Stable systems leading to certitude correspond only to idealizations, or approximations (Prigogine, 1997: 55).

Despite being dynamic and far from equilibrium, developing (living) systems maintain their appearance of stability through the occurrence of many micro-dynamic changes behaving according to a certain pattern (an ‘attractor’). Under certain conditions, or at some critical point, however, the stable macro patterns can suddenly, and unpredictably, undergo change. At this ‘bifurcation point’ the system might

¹⁶ Prigogine, a leader in the fields of nonlinear chemistry and physics, was awarded the Noble Prize in Chemistry in 1977 “for his contributions to non-equilibrium thermodynamics, particularly the theories of dissipative structures” (http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/chemistry/laureates/1977/). His research helped create a greater understanding of the role of time in the physical sciences and biology, and contributed significantly to scientists’ ability to analyse dynamic processes in complex systems.

¹⁷ Bifurcation is the tendency of a system to split unpredictably into one of several possible solutions to achieve stability.

disintegrate towards chaos (to a form where no pattern can be detected), or transform to a new ordered pattern (determined by another attractor). The notion of *phase space* creates a visual interpretation of this movement of a complex dynamic entity over time. In mapping regions of stability and instability it is possible to trace an entity's entire evolution (Kuhn, 2009). The 'shape' of the phase space can be used to uncover, examine and identify patterns within the system that might not otherwise be obvious. In other words, by tracking the changes of particular dimensions over time – the phase space – it is possible to characterise how an organisational system changes in response to internal and external interactions. An 'organisational system' in this sense is a system within which individuals or groups act according to a set of guiding structures; such structures may be at a macro (strategic), meso (power and culture) or micro (individual, associatory) level.

Cohen and Stewart (1994: 415) coined the phrase "space of the possible" to describe the notion that, although there are many possibilities that a system could adopt, system parameters (or rules) retain the entity within certain boundaries which maintain the external appearance yet provide space for internal dynamism and unpredictability (Ramalingam, et al., 2008).

Viewing societies, economies and ecosystems as complex adaptive systems allows for the unpredictable nature of emergent human / animal behaviours and conditions. Within a self-organised complex adaptive system a dynamic network of communication exists between actors who act according to a set of mutually acceptable rules, but with a certain degree of freedom. Therefore, although communication linkages and actors' actions are constantly changing and evolving, order emerges; self-organised complexity is thus distinct from either chaos or order. While the overall nature of the system appears stable on the surface, at times small inputs can cause dramatic changes within the overall system. Similarly, small differences in the initial conditions can lead to very large differences in the outcomes (Woodhill, 2009) in two seemingly similar systems. A physical example of this can be observed by adding a few extra grains to a seemingly stable sand pile. The extra grains can cause a sudden disruption which results in an avalanche, ultimately restructuring and changing the appearance of the original pile. "Such nonlinear, disproportionate and unpredictable response to environmental change is the hallmark

of complex systems” (Eppel, 2009: 12). As Nordtveit (2007:22) explains, dynamic adaptive systems need “a certain level of complexity (or critical mass) ... to overcome the inertia of the status quo, creating an autocatalytic state”¹⁸. In the example above, such change-initiating ‘critical mass’ (the few extra sand grains added to the pile) is influenced by the level and quality of the interactions between agents within the original system (the condition of the original sand pile).

Morgan (2006) elucidates on the intertwining of structure, function and behaviour in determining the internal features of living systems or (human) organisations. That is, structures, hierarchies and rules control culture, defensive routines and power relations and act as forces locking an organisation into a particular ‘attractor’ pattern. In many circumstances, even though the organisation is dynamic and far-from equilibrium, these patterns are very stable and resistant to change, held in place by negative, change-resistant, feedback loops. However, such an organisation can also undergo rapid, even chaotic change in response to relatively small disruptions before it settles into a new ‘attractor’ pattern (and exhibits change). Such ‘bifurcation points’ occur at the edge of chaos where the apparent order of the system alters relatively quickly and unpredictably, reorganising itself around another ‘attractor’ (Eppel, 2009). With this in mind, Morgan advocates for analysis and understanding of a system’s past and its current ‘attractor’ patterns, along with the identification of potential triggers that, in some cases, might stimulate small shifts that could have large impacts. Questions such as ‘what are the significant feedback loops and how can we learn to ‘nudge’ key aspects?’ become pertinent and useful.

As previously noted the study of complexity and complex phenomena has not yet earned the status of a discrete discipline. It is, however, recognised as a *network* of connected ideas and principles and ways of interpreting the world (Eyben, 2008; Fowler, 2007) and offers new developments in the conceptualisation and theorisation of systems (Walby, 2004), drawing us towards an understanding that complex systems cannot be deconstructed into their causal components (Ramalingam, et al., 2008). Due to the immensity and unpredictability of the interconnections and interdependences within and between the systems involved, complexity thinking argues that interventions based on understanding and deconstruction of any system’s

¹⁸ A system is in an autocatalytic state when it can maintain its own momentum in a particular direction (Mason 2007, cited in Nordtveit 2007: 22).

parts will not necessarily result in specific, predictable outcomes and, as Ramalingam et al explain, “soon leads to diminishing returns” (pp. 60-61).

The notion of complexity thinking offers a way of envisaging and working with complex phenomenon (Alhadeff-Jones, 2008; Kuhn, 2008a). In this thesis, I concur with Lesley Kuhn who takes the view that complexity constitutes a paradigmatic orientation presenting “particular habits of thought about the nature of the organisation of the world” (Kuhn, 2008a: 182). Moreover, the heterogeneity implied by the term ‘complexity’ is intentional in order to maintain a nuanced approach and to avoid oversimplifying the concept. Complexity cannot be reduced to a single form, or a defined set of knowledge.

Complexity Thinking in Social Science

Prigogine’s work, focused on reframing within physical science to take account of the implications of non-linearity and unknowability, has received the legitimacy of a Nobel Prize. The reframing of social systems and social change as an anti-reductionist analytic strategy focusing on non-linear, emergent and unpredictable inter-relationships is still nascent among social scientists (see Byrne, 1998; Cilliers, 1998; Kuhn, 2009; Stacey, 1996). Complexity recognises that properties and behaviours in human systems emerge not only in relation to the nature of the actors involved and the connections between them, but also under the influence of “conscious agents, and hence the notions of strategy and expectations” (Mason, 2009: 119). This shift in focus, “from a concern with decontextualised and universalised essence to a concern with contextualised and contingent complex whole” (Mason, 2008a: 39-40) seeks to draw on the “levers of history, the sources and reasons for change” (Mason, 2008a: 38). Elias (1939, cited in Mowles, et al., 2008) has long argued that most significant change is unplanned and unforeseen and is the result of a web of interactive actions informed by past actions. His ideas of continuous but interrelated change come very close to the notions of complexity discussed above. A key point, however, is that “no matter how precise a picture you have of the current ‘state of play’, nonlinearity leads to ‘failure of prediction’ ” (H. Jones, 2008: 3). Complexity makes no claim to *predict* the essentials to effect change, or the direction change may occur. Sensitivity to past conditions or events, however, provides insight into what paths may be available within the ‘space of the possible’.

International development practice and policies as a social system and instigator of social change is no exception; futures are not foreclosed, inevitable or predictable, and historical context and legacy, power and chance play key roles. Thus, trying to predict what will happen over the course of a particular intervention that will run for several years may well be unrealistic, possibly ineffective, or even counter-productive (Ramalingam, et al., 2008). In shifting analysis from individual parts of a political system to the system *as a whole*, a complexity approach sees a network of interacting agents from within which particular behaviours emerge rather than predicting linear results from the actions of individual parts (Cairney, 2010). By exploring the mechanisms through which unpredictable, unknowable change happens, complexity thinking can facilitate reinterpretation of existing systems and their associated ‘problems’. Understanding the ‘basic rules’ that govern the system, how sensitive it is and where small shifts in the rules could produce profound (non-incremental) change across the system (Cairney, 2010) provides a more insightful starting point for developing flexible practices or interventions capable of co-evolving within the environment in which the organisation operates.

Applied philosopher and complexity theorist, Lesley Kuhn (2008a), rightfully highlights two frequently made objections to utilising complexity in social research. The first relates to the inappropriateness of complexity language in regards its application of quasi-mathematical or scientific images and metaphors in human orientated domains. In rebuttal, Kuhn concludes that this opinion “believes a rather linearly organised, compartmentalised worldview” (p. 183): one that assumes mathematics and physical science have clear separation from humanities, social science or sociology and therefore disregards the complex interrelated nature of human society and, not least, the influences human society has on scientific research and vice versa.

The second objection remonstrates complexity as redundant since “many other discourses in the social sciences provide adequate, equivalent or superior means of addressing similar ideas or insights claimed by complexity” (Kuhn, 2008a: 183). In response, Kuhn contests that a complexity perspective does not claim to supersede other discourses or assert superiority; rather, complexity perspectives help reveal even deeper discourse dimensions. Indeed, Reed and Harvey (1992) expertly illustrate how

the scientific ontology of dissipative systems theory is compatible with the philosophy of critical realism, primarily associated with Bhaskar (1978). Reed and Harvey see complexity as drawing together concentric ontologies which ground Bhaskar's philosophical social ontology within a world view. Their "new science" suggests that "the realistic anchoring of these new ontologies might provide hermeneutics a way out of its current imprisonment in discourse analysis and political conformism" (Reed & Harvey, 1992: 373). Lesley Kuhn appears to draw on this in explaining,

Language is not neutral, but emerges out of different 'language games' (Wittgenstein, 1953). The images and metaphors we construct are tied to our worldview and this to our languaging practices. Similarly, it is through our use of language that we construct paradigmatic orientations through which we organise our strategic and adaptive responses to the world of our experience. In this analysis, to use different language is to construct different meaning. This argument rebuts the objection that complexity is redundant (Kuhn, 2008a: 185).

Importantly, Kuhn (2008) introduces the notion of *phrase space* to complement the concept of phase space. Language, she postulates, can also be viewed as a self-organising system in which its origin and causality are internal to the social systems that created it. As she explains, "[w]ithin phrase space we exercise agency in our languaging of our world to ourselves and others ... as we determine to whom and how we communicate" (2008a: 179). While the world has a direct influence on the meaning of words it does not determine meaning; meaning flows from a complex process of interaction between information and a web of existing relationships built up through previous interactions (Eppel, 2009). In a similar manner to the concept of 'phase space', 'phrase space' takes this concept and applies it to human beings to describe the way our ideas and, consequently, our ways of living are mediated through language (Kuhn, 2009). That is, the "'space' we each live within is strongly influenced by the communities we are a part [of]. ... Our group allegiance or social coupling reveals and shapes understanding" (Kuhn, 2009: 49). Thus "communication, learning, common purpose or *alignment*, and continuous adaptation and improvement are essential features of complex human systems" (Blackman, 2001: n.p).

'Phrase space' is important in that it provides not only a source of revelation but also a means of description.

It is a revelation in that it reveals multiple processes of self-organisation, dynamics and emergence in social situations, such as those constituted within

organisational processes and activities. Complex systems are by nature complex and therefore difficult to describe. Phrase space is an effective means of describing complex system to an observer (Kuhn, 2009: 52).

Kuhn goes on to explain that paying attention to phrase space not only reveals potentially limited ways of knowing and doing, but also reveals important information about attitudes, aspirations, criticisms and knowledge of participants. It also provides a framework for recognising the importance of presenting the qualities of relationships. “In all that we do, our relationships with other people really matter and are dependent upon the nature and quality of our communication with one another” (Kuhn, 2009: 53).

Tenets of Complexity Thinking

Complexity is a theory of change, evolution and adaptation where *relations* within interconnected networks are favoured over reductionist, cause-and-effect models which assume linear predictability (Morrison, 2006). Drawing on theories from a variety of disciplines in the natural and social sciences makes identification of key tenets of complexity difficult. Cilliers (1998: 3-5), however, identifies a number of key assumptions for how complex systems behave which create a basis for studying them. While most are neither new, nor particularly startling, drawing them together into a concerted approach, Morrison suggests, is what gives complexity its impetus and attraction (Morrison, 2006). A summary of Cilliers’ central ‘complexity’ tenets follows:

- Complex systems are typically open – they interact with a wider environment - and boundaries are usually framed by the description or purpose of the system of interest;
- Complex systems consist of a large number of (human) elements which dynamically interact through constant exchange of information and patterns of interconnection. Behaviours and patterns emerge as a result of the patterns of relationships between the elements and individuals constantly influence and adapt to each other and either directly or indirectly (*co-evolving adaptive agents*);
- The behaviour of complex systems is difficult to predict. Interactions are non-linear and asymmetrical, small events can have disproportionately large effects and vice versa (*non-linear interactions*);
- Interactions tend to have a short range of influence, usually confined to near neighbours. The richness of the connections affects communication speed and modification (*connectivity*);
- There is recurrency (Fowler, 2008b); i.e. negative (dampening) or positive (amplifying) feedback between elements affects the way agents behave in the future (*feedback*);

- Complex systems operate under conditions far from equilibrium and close to chaos needing a constant flow of energy to change, evolve and survive¹⁹. A defining feature is the asymmetry within and between elements: e.g. power and exploitation can skew interactions (*'space of the possible', attractors and the edge of chaos*);
- Complex systems have a history which cannot be ignored: “the past is co-responsible for present behaviour” (Fowler, 2008b: 22) (*sensitivity to initial conditions*); and
- Each element in the system is ignorant of the behaviour of the system as a whole, each responds only to the information available to it locally. The whole is more than the sum of its parts; its structure emerges from the complex dynamical patterns of interaction between the elements (*emergence*).

Before showing how I propose to use a complexity approach to more adequately understand the processes encountered in this research, it is necessary to describe more fully these now generally accepted²⁰ organising principles and to clarify how a complexity perspective offers different habits of thought and a new vocabulary to grasp issues of change (Kuhn, 2009). In their extensive study of complexity, Ramalingam and his co-authors (2008)²¹ examine its implications for, and application to, international development and humanitarian aid. In so doing, they illustrated how Cilliers’ concepts help to explain features of complex systems, the dynamics of change and the behaviour of agents (see Figure 1). I will draw on this approach in the development of my own analysis framework presented in Part Three.

Figure 1: Ramalingam et al.’s (2008) Summary of Complexity Concepts

Features of complex systems	The dynamics of change	Complexity and agency (behaviour of agents within complex systems)
connectivity - elements are interconnected and interdependent	non-linear relationships	adaptive agents (dynamic)
feedback processes - promote or inhibit change	sensitivity to initial conditions	self organisation
emergence - characteristics and behaviour of the system emerge from simple rules of interaction	phase space - space of the possible	co-evolution
	Attractors, chaos and the edge of chaos	

(Adapted from Ramalingam, 2008; Ramalingam, et al., 2008) .

¹⁹ As Fowler (2008b: 22) puts it, in terms of survival of a complex system “equilibrium is another word for death”.

²⁰ With a growing community of scholars (e.g. Fowler, 2008b; Mitleton-Kelly, 2003; Ramalingam, et al., 2008; Stacey, 2010; Waldrop, 1993) sharing this common set of principles / concepts Lesley Kuhn postulates that complexity thinking could now be termed a paradigm.

²¹ Ramalingam et al.’s (2008) Working Paper for the Overseas Development Institute, “*Exploring the science of complexity. Ideas and implications for development and humanitarian efforts*” is an exhaustive survey and analysis of complexity literature and has been drawn on heavily in this section.

A complexity framework fundamentally builds on and enriches systems theory “by articulating additional characteristics of complex systems and by emphasising their inter-relationship and interdependence” (Mitleton-Kelly, 2003: 3). In viewing the world as self-organising, dynamic (adaptable) and emergent, complexity builds an inter-related picture of a complex social system wherein dynamic adaptive agents determine the energy to instigate, interactively respond and react to stimuli autopoietically - independently but within broad boundaries (or within a widely accepted set of loose rules) – leading to the emergence of unpredictable and unknowable outcomes. Rather than isolating one principle from another, a deeper understanding of complex systems requires building a rich inter-related picture. While Haynes (2008) describes complexity’s philosophical use of selected methods as a methodology rather than a method, Mitleton-Kelly (2003: 4)²² contends that, rather than a methodology, the principles of complexity form a conceptual basis for framing, thinking and seeing the world.

Connectivity and Interdependence

Determining the degree of connectivity and interdependence between agents in a system provides insight into the effect a decision or action by one agent has on related individuals and systems. While interdependence determines the field of influence (the reach of ripples of disturbance), connectivity applies to the inter-relatedness of agents within a system, as well as between systems. Moreover, at any one time all related individuals harbour a specific ‘state’, which embraces their history, constitution, culture etc. and affects their engagement and influence. In situations where there are high degrees of connectivity and interdependence, changes in one element or dimension of the system can spread rapidly through the system with dramatic and unpredictable effects, often resulting in gains in some aspects and losses in other parts of the same system. Loosely coupled systems, on the other hand, are often more resilient to dramatic or institutional change owing to their lack of connectivity enabling them to maintain an equilibrium that can ride a sea of change. Thus, the degree of connectivity/ interdependency between agents can give insight into how central changes may take effect within a given context (Ramalingam, et al., 2008).

²² See the quotation on Part One title page (p.11)

Co-evolution and Emergence

The concept of co-evolution stems from understandings of ecology and ecosystems, wherein each element of an ecosystem influences, and is in turn influenced by, all other related elements in the system (Mitleton-Kelly, 2003). In human systems, the social ecosystem (which includes social, cultural, technical, geographic and economic dimensions) shapes institutional forms; i.e., the relationships and the interactions between co-evolving entities (Mitleton-Kelly, 2003). In terms of change, therefore, *co-evolution of change* is different from *adaptation to change*. Strategies for adapting to change (e.g. in response to a changing environment) are different from those that aim to embrace changes that evolve within a social system. Co-evolution invites longer-term notions of empowerment – and responsibility - as all actions and decisions reverberate through a web of inter-relationships affecting the whole, as well as the agents within it, propagated by the degree of connectivity and interdependence within the system. As Mitleton-Kelly²³ (2003) points out,

This notion [co-evolution] is not the same as proactive or re-active response. It is a subtler ‘sensitivity’ and awareness of both changes in the environment and the possible consequences of actions. It argues for a deeper understanding of reciprocal change and the way it affects the totality.

Work in biology on ‘fitness landscapes’ relates to competitive co-evolution wherein the fitness of an organism is dependent on its intrinsic characteristics *and* its interaction with its environment (Kauffman, 1995). In social science, ‘fitness’ can be applied in terms of learning: the transfer of information and knowledge and the relative ‘fitness’ of behavioural strategies determine success over time. Fitness landscapes can be a powerful metaphor to guide thinking about co-evolution and illustrate how certain approaches may undermine the ‘natural’ flow of events (Ramalingam, et al., 2008). For example, target-setting distorts measurement by introducing consequences and incentives not previously associated with the original measure. This causes the system and agents to evolve together in such a manner as to

²³ Professor Eve Mitleton-Kelly of the London School of Economics has developed a theory of complex social systems and a methodology to address complex social problems. Publications and the work of the LSE Complexity Group can be found at: www.lse.ac.uk/complexity.

maintain the status quo. In consequence, and as oft noted, “once a measure becomes a target it ceases to become a measure”²⁴ (Ramalingam, et al., 2008).

Understanding the tendency of adaptive agents to co-evolve in response to opportunities and constraints can highlight drawbacks in certain kinds of development interventions. Conflicting or overlapping policies of donors, for example, may not only lead to ineffectual ‘solutions’ but also the generation of new (albeit unintended) ‘problems’ (Ramalingam, et al., 2008). Similarly, finding a ‘common narrative’ between development partners may result in a “mutual ‘construction’” (Darcy & Hofmann, 2003: 47) which suits each party’s ends, rather than reflecting actual needs. As Darcy and Hoffman point out,

Given the tendency of contract-based relationships to be evaluated against contracted input and output rather than actual outcomes, there is a danger of circularity – problems are “constructed” and “solved” in ways that may bear little relation to actual needs (ibid.).

Phase & Phrase Space, Strange Attractors and the Edge of Chaos,

As previously noted, Prigogine’s dissipative structure theory with its bifurcation points (from which a new state emerges by chance from a set of possible alternatives) has formed a cornerstone to complexity thinking. In the social context, individuals constantly make critical decisions from several possible alternatives (determined by the individual’s current state and ‘fitness’ landscape) which then determine the particular –but unpredictable – life path taken by that individual. Thus, individual behaviour is not so much a matter of chance, but more a result of a person’s contextual selections – historical, cultural, biological etc – the results of which will influence future decisions (Mitleton-Kelly, 2003).

Phase Space, or the ‘space of the possible’, refers to “a space comprising all of the possible states of a complex entity” (Kuhn, 2008a: 179); in other words, all the possible alternatives that might arise from a particular situation. Although it is not possible to explore all future possibilities, considering change one step away from what already exists facilitates an understanding of how specific systems move and evolve over time; in particular, the interconnectedness and interdependency of the

²⁴ This phenomenon has become known as Goodhart’s Law and states that once a social or economic indicator is made a target for the purpose of guiding policy, then it will lose the information content that originally made it useful. In 1975, Goodhart (a former advisor to the Bank of England and emeritus professor at the London School of Economics) noted that “any observed statistical regularity will tend to collapse once pressure is placed upon it for control purposes” (Goodhart, 1975 cited in Chrystal & Mizen, 2001: 4).

elements involved and their potential to constrain change. Any strategy can only be optimal in certain conditions, and creating new conditions needs to take into consideration micro-strategies that may facilitate or hinder a new idea and be sensitive to co-evolution within a changing ecosystem (Mitleton-Kelly, 2003). For example, while education systems for many years may appear relatively stable in terms of enrolment, exam systems and the number of institutions, a new government directive - such as fee-free education - can cause sudden and dramatic change. The new regulations create knock-on effects such as the need for more classrooms, more infrastructure and increased numbers of staff. How the system reacts to these changes – within bounds of possibility - constitutes a phase transition or bifurcation point and gives an indication of the system's flexibility. With sufficient data, a phase diagram can be used as an approximate representation of the past and current situation, possibly uncovering otherwise obscured patterns of, for example, excluded children (Ramalingam, et al., 2008). Understanding the notion of phase space contextualises how interventions might change the status quo, both in terms of existing values and the effects specific interventions might make over time. Such understanding can help to shape how development programmes are conceived, planned and executed (ibid.).

As previously mentioned (p.19), Lesley Kuhn's adaptation to *phrase space* concentrates on a relational nature of language and dialogue within complex systems, emphasising and depicting adaptive responses in time and space. The self-organising and co-evolutionary nature of complex phenomena, where previous experience influences future occurrences²⁵, underlies the notion of phrase space. The particular time and place in which conversations or dialogues occur is critical to how agents construe and subsequently act upon their interpretations. In contrast to conventional discourse analysis, which analyses repeatability, constancy and permanence of language use and emphasises generalisability, phrase space helps to examine and identify the nature of key habits of thought, interpretational shifts and understanding modifications resulting from particular relationships, lines of communication and the degree of connectivity between agents within the system (L. Kuhn, personal

²⁵ This is known in complexity as being 'sensitive to initial conditions' and explained in greater detail in the next section.

communication, January 27, 2012)²⁶. As Cohen and Stewart (1994: 354) similarly point out,

The meaning in a language does not reside in the code, the words, the grammar, the symbols. It stems from the shared interpretation of those symbols in the mind of sender and receiver. This in turn stems from the existence of a shared context. For language, the context is the culture shared by those who speak the language.

In tracking changes over time, phrase space can illuminate the dynamic, cyclical, co-evolutionary nature of linguistic interpretation-adaption, giving insight into how understandings and perceptions shift in relation to specific internal and external events influencing the system at particular times.

Complex system behaviour is not random or chaotic, but it is unpredictable. Underlying order - in the form of basic sets of rules, values or boundaries (themselves capable of adapting and evolving) – and constantly occurring nonlinear change generate a balance that shapes the system but it is hard to predict the outcome of a given input or the feedback loops created (Ramalingam, et al., 2008). The internally generated ‘boundaries’ which maintain the pattern of complex system are known as ‘strange attractors’²⁷. As previously explained, complexity describes an *abrupt* change in the long-term behaviour of a system as a bifurcation. In terms of strange attractors, a bifurcation is the point at which the system teeters at the ‘edge of chaos’²⁸ and then, amplified by positive feedback, ‘jumps’ to a new attractor (e.g. a new set of rules or values), thus undergoing a phase transition.

For some complexity thinkers, the ‘edge of chaos’ is a place of maximum innovation²⁹, the space where the creation of new contexts can break the hold of a dominant attractor in favour of new ones. For development interventions wanting to create deliberate change (such as system reform strategies) understanding the need for agents to have space to explore the possible and creating enabling infrastructures which take account of individuals’ self-organising abilities, network connectivity, and the interdependence and inter-relatedness between agents and other systems are

²⁶ The author is extremely grateful to the explanation provided by Professor Kuhn which differentiated between phrase space and discourse analysis.

²⁷ This term is derived from the Lorenz attractor, to describe the long-term behaviour of the Lorenz oscillator and was first introduced by Lorenz in 1963. They are also sometimes referred to as butterfly attractors, as the trajectory plot of the Lorenz system resembles two butterfly wings.

²⁸ This term was originally coined by Farmer and Langton (1990) to describe transition phenomena.

²⁹ The space where ideas, novel approaches or ‘hunches’ can explore the ‘space of possibility’ and tip a system towards one phase over another. Gladwell (2001) terms such developments ‘sticky’ ideas, creating a ‘tipping point’.

crucial to facilitate the emergence of new patterns of behaviour (Mitleton-Kelly, 2003). In terms of emergence, however, over-controlling approaches are unfavourable, tending to stifle rather than encourage space for innovation. When an old context is particularly powerful, little or no significant change is possible because the organisation ends up trying to do new things in old ways (Morgan 1986, cited in Ramalingam, et al., 2008). In terms of international development Ramalingam et al (2008: 41-2) point out that,

Accepting the notion of chaos and strange attractors encourages an acknowledgment of the continual change in social systems, which by extension requires the acceptance of 'the inevitability of change' in many systems that aid agencies operate within and around. Such change should not be viewed as ... necessarily negative ... equally, equilibrium and stability should not be viewed as default or ideal states for a particular system ... Incorporating this insight into the way problems are approached in the development sector points towards a shift in thinking.

The ability, therefore, to identify and change the 'basic rules' which reinforce existing (static) attractor patterns to allow new actions to emerge can become powerful tools to catalyse change.

Feedback

Feedback is generally understood as having a positive (amplifying) or a negative (dampening) effect. In complex systems, however, it is the *consequence* of feedback processes on non-linear, random change that becomes important (Byrne, 1998). As pointed out above, maintaining the status quo through negative feedback loops lessens the opportunity for change. Positive feedback processes, on the other hand, amplify change opportunities by creating a possibility for the whole system to shift and reorganise itself around another stabilising point (aligning itself at a new, so-called, 'strange attractor'). From a complexity standpoint it is important, therefore, to distinguish between feedback *processes* and feedback *loops*. While negative feedback loops self-regulate a system and ultimately lock it into a constant routine through continual adjustment, positive feedback processes drive small changes in a system onwards and, by affecting other elements, the system develops new patterns of behaviour and structure which may enable it to be better suited to current conditions. The strength of feedback processes is often intertwined with the degree of agents' connectivity. As Ramalingam et al (2008) point out, change is multi-faceted with many contributing factors and relationships. Change in one dimension creates an

effect which may amplify or suppress change in others. Recognising feedback effects of interventions, identifying the winners and losers, and analysing instances where change is rapid or persistently obstinate, demands open and frank channels of communication. In some cases feedback is not recognised, is masked by the sheer size of system, or is disregarded by key personnel, most often for political reasons. Honest feedback analysis - that acknowledges the bad with the good - is a crucial aspect to understanding how and what change occurs, and may, for example, prevent donor organisations adding to or even creating more problems for the countries they aim to assist. Determining one's perspective of feedback analyses is also important, as the outcomes that might excite some may be abhorrent to others.

Sensitivity to Initial Conditions and Path Dependence

As explained earlier, development in complex systems embraces the 'space of the possible' where, at certain points in time, there may be several possible paths or patterns that a system may follow. The existence of alternative pathways explains why the precise behaviour of a complex system may be very difficult to predict, even while keeping the system within certain bounds (Mitleton-Kelly, 2003). However, the behaviours of complex systems are sensitive to their initial conditions. In other words, past history affects future development; the non-linear relationships that shape that history affect a system's irreversible responses as it moves from one phase space to the next, self-organising and co-evolving and exploring the 'space of the possible'.

If complex systems are sensitive to their initial conditions and no two contexts are the same, then the generalisation of 'best practice' is seriously drawn into question. Furthermore, given the non-linearity of internal behaviours, the myriad of inter-relatedness between agents and elements, and the unique mechanisms of self-organisation, it becomes obvious that identifying individual contributions to the overall complex behaviour (and hence determining best practice) is extremely difficult. Ramalingam et al. (2008: 28) consider this problem and suggest that understanding "*what can be forecast* in complex systems to what level of certainty as well as *what is comparable* across complex systems" (emphasis in original) is important. While "no single perspective can capture all there is to know about a system, ... it may be wise to look in detail at how appropriate our solution to a problem is, and that it may be better to work with inevitable uncertainty rather than a

plan based on flimsy or hopeful predictions” (ibid.). In terms of predictability, therefore, determining the position a country took in the past and understanding how small historical advantages led it to bigger advantages (or disadvantages) may give insight and understanding of its current position (Ramalingam, et al., 2008) and how – or what – might be likely to influence it in future.

The current penchant for development assistance to be held accountable for achieving valuable social outcomes based on planned inputs delivering a series of clear, specific, measurable outputs remains similarly unachievable from a complexity standpoint and highlights how ‘aspiration’ has become confused with what is ‘achievable’ (Eyben in Guijt, 2008). However, exploring notions of sensitivity to initial conditions, the space of the possible, strange attractors and path dependence to decipher which pathways become irreversibly ‘locked in’ by particular feedback mechanisms reveals value in what Snowden terms “sensemaking” (Snowden, 2009).

Thus, rather than a traditionally inflexible approach to mainstream international development, with practitioners, as agents of change, using positions of overt power to steer change, a complexity approach allows change agents to act more as sensemakers who recognise and attempt to influence change (Termeer, 2009). Recognition of the opportunities, or attractors, that create change, and interpreting the weak signals that precede change, becomes a form of harnessing complexity. Understanding how leverage in particular circumstances (sometimes the smallest details of context) might evoke more directional change demonstrates how complexity thinking can make a difference. The critical insight of this is that while complex systems cannot be controlled, the *direction in which they evolve can be influenced* (Woodhill, 2009). In other words, strengthening key actors’ strategic competence to recognise weak signals indicative of forthcoming change can equip leaders to take more contextualised and influential decisions, taking them beyond a ‘how-to’ approach towards a ‘what have we got and how can we better influence it’ approach to interventions. As Jacobs argues, it encourages an approach that creates values that make people feel empowered, and is flexible enough to recognise the unexpected and to take advantage of the opportunity (Jacobs, 2009).

The Application of Complexity to Development and the International Aid

Arena

The phenomenon of ‘international aid’ resides amid a dense and globalised web of actors, forces and trends with connections and relationships between individuals, communities, global and local institutions, nations and groups of nations (Ramalingam, 2008). Traditionally, international aid for development initiatives largely focus on facilitating social change (within the paradigm of the day), through the introduction of new products, the construction of new infrastructure (such as new roads, health centres or water supplies) or reformation of political or delivery systems involving capacity building. In general, models are explicit and articulated, with planned inputs and expected outputs dominating design and implementation. At best, attention to agents’ ways of thinking, attitudes and likely response to the proposed change initiatives is implicit, at worst it is ignored. In this sense, analogies have been drawn between development efforts and icebergs: things look clear and straight forward on the surface, but below the surface, and unseen, are the tacit realities, often huge and unpredictable (Ramalingam, 2008). Shifting towards a dialogue with complexity enables an articulation of the oft unappreciated phenomena in social change and provides a legitimacy to areas what were previously seen as ‘messy realities’ (Ramalingam, et al., 2008).

The strong message that emerges among complexity theorists is that ‘complexity’ provides the *space* for new thinking by providing a critical and reflective discourse on change which can be applied to the nature and conceptual framework of development assistance. As Ramalingam et al. (2008) contend:

...complexity concepts ... suggest new ways to think about problems and new questions that should be posed and answered... Addressing questions of ‘how’ international aid work should be undertaken... The most important implication of complexity science [is] that it provides ways for practitioners, policy makers, leaders, managers [and] researchers [to] collectively reflect on how we are thinking about trying to solve aid problems. Are we using inappropriate mental models and frameworks? Are we continuing to act in inflexible, top-down ways? Are we using too many off-the-peg approaches? Are we driven by naive expectations of impact? Do we simplify complexities for the sake of convenience?

These questions – many of which are familiar – are challenging, highly necessary, and can be sharpened and honed using ideas of complexity science (Ramalingam, et al., 2008: 65)

Thus, the value of complexity concepts lies in enabling a rethinking of the kind of questions that should be asked, rather than providing the specific steps that should be taken to gain a specific result. Social change seen through a complexity lens provokes “more comprehensive insights about development in a non-moralistic ... way. In doing so it avoids privileging states and markets over citizens” (Fowler, 2008a: 13) and brings critical issues of politics and power into the framework, areas which - perhaps conveniently - are often neglected. It acknowledges that structures created by intelligent actors will inevitably favour some relationships over others (Fowler, 2007) by identifying whose interests have been served *and* whose interests have been neglected or diminished.

Development scholars (see for example, Chambers, 1997; Eyben, 2006; Hinton & Groves, 2005; Mowles, et al., 2008; Nordtveit, 2007; Rihani, 2002; Westley, Zimmerman, & Patton, 2007) are increasingly drawing on how notions of complexity thinking can be harnessed and accommodated within the existing aid effectiveness agenda³⁰. In highlighting the need to *appreciate* the non-linearity, unpredictability and interconnectiveness of human systems, complexity thinking encourages a greater tolerance of ambiguity, paradox and the power of relationships within the discourse of development. Amartya Sen’s (1999) capabilities approach has long argued for better appreciation of the complexity of poverty with its myriad of interconnections to health, education, freedom, social exclusion, employment, dignity and human rights. In appreciating that any external intervention will affect complex system dimensions in unpredictable ways (which may turn out to be intended or unexpected and/or unintended) underlines how reductionist evaluation strategies assessing specific interventions, which concentrate largely on predefined inputs and outputs, become unrealistic (Hendrick, 2009).

In many ways, complexity thinking provides a conceptual toolkit for clarifying development problems and suggesting solutions. It is a lens to guide context-dependent thinking and, therefore, action.

³⁰ This will be discussed in Part Two

Complementing Complexity

Callaghan (2008) argues that although complexity has the potential to bring important insights into reframing the role and practice of evaluation in social systems, integrating it with other theoretical frameworks provides a more powerful approach, a tactic employed by Barnes, Matka and Sullivan (2003). With this in mind, other theoretical approaches have been examined to assist in the development of specific research questions. Callaghan (2008) argues that the concept of ‘negotiated order’ assists understanding both the dynamics of system change over time and explains how this occurs through the meaningful action of individuals in the local setting. Drawing also on Fowler’s work (2007, 2008a, 2008b), it assists in identifying whose interests have been served *and* whose have suffered, and how this changes over time.

Negotiated Order

Strauss (1963, cited in Callaghan, 2008: 405) argues that within systems order is an ongoing negotiation between the actors involved. In his words, “[t]he negotiated order on any given day could be conceived of as the sum total of the organization’s rules and policies, along with whatever agreements, understandings, pacts, contracts, and other working arrangements currently obtained” (Strauss, 1978: 5-6). For Strauss, understanding the positions from which individuals negotiate is important, the products of which are historical and temporally-shaped, and always open to review and revision. This notion resonates with Kuhn’s concept of phrase space wherein individuals’ interpretations of ideas are continuously under review, adapting to the different dialogues and conversations taking place and influencing the daily decisions of the actors. Similarly, Forster’s (2000) work on the European Union (EU) argues that a negotiated order approach sheds light on organisations’ motivations in establishing contact with other organisations; it challenges the conceptualisation of organisations as monolithic political systems; and highlights the importance of the geo-strategic environment in shaping and reshaping the interests of organisations. He draws on Smith’s (1998) conceptualisation of “‘three worlds’ in the global arena comprising boundaries, layers and networks” (Forster, 2000: 788).

This relates to the view of complexity in development taken here. That is, the inter-related global, bilateral and national processes of change and development

within dynamic political, economic and cultural contexts. The layering of institutions and policy-making contexts influence linkages and coordination and highlight the ambiguous position of state and territorial politics in relation to regional and global influences (M. Smith, 1998)³¹.

In development terms, some form of organisational, structural or behavioural transformation generally underlies the ‘problem’ under consideration. Focusing on the *process* of decision-making rather than the decision itself evolves into an interactive and iterative decision-making model appropriate for complex situations where the effectiveness of decision choices poses significant uncertainty (Gockerman, 2007). The concept of negotiated order has “been identified as a key part of organisational effectiveness, leadership and ‘skilful process’” (Gockerman, 2007 #1358: 10}. For Callaghan, one of the main implications of complexity theory for evaluation studies is understanding that transferable knowledge cannot be based on extracting factors from context; of much greater value is the context-rich explanation that can be derived (Callaghan, 2008: 404).

As previously highlighted, Warner (2001: 17) concurs with this view and notes that what complexity theory

... seems to support is not an analytical framework for finding a set of golden generic rules, but a methodology that establishes ‘sets of rules’, idiosyncratic to each social organisation.

Warner warns, however, that the ‘characteristics’ of adaptive social systems should not be confused with the identification of ‘rules’. In a similar fashion to the concepts of phase space and attractors, Warner suggests looking for ‘patterns’ of effectiveness within the complexity of a system and the simple ‘rules’ that hold them in place (Warner, 2001: 15).

Research Framework

In terms of research, Kuhn (2008) properly warns that complexity can only be regarded as catalytic – an *enabling* rather than a *determining* research process. It does

³¹ Smith hypothesises that each ‘world’ gives rise to a characteristic form of negotiation: at the boundary level, negotiation is competitive; negotiation within layers emphasises coalition –building, management and positioning; and negotiation between networks stresses the roles of public and private actors in addressing problems (Forster, 2000).

not provide tested research recipes or notions of ‘best practice’. Instead, it fosters reflection and thoughtfulness, and offers “a space for thinking otherwise [allowing] researchers [to] evolve appropriate complexity-inspired or complexity-informed research approaches and strategies” (Kuhn, 2008a: 185).

With this in mind, and drawing on the concepts of complexity and negotiated order, the data analyses undertaken in this study will take a deductive approach within a *hermeneutic circle* as a process for formally engaging interpretation (Patton, 2002: 497-8). That is, the analytical process will emphasise the interdependencies of interpretations as layers or parts of a whole, based on a developed interrogative framework with emphasis on meaning being derived within the cultural, historical, and literary context of the entire system; hence it is a circle.

B. Research Methodology

Drawing on the complexity perspective presented in the previous section, this section re-articulates the central research question, builds and refines the aims of the study and depicts the key methodological assumptions that will inform the analyses. Specifics of the analytical framework will be presented at the beginning of Part Three prior to the presentation of the analyses and findings.

Reviewing the Research Question

As discussed in the Introduction, the overarching research question this thesis addresses is to determine the extent to which a complexity perspective provides new insights for analysing the ‘successes’ of development initiatives, by paying attention to the *processes* of change over the *products* of change. This question is important for international aid and development. Being able to recognise, understand and respect the changes that occur within the multi-level power relations at play within any social context is crucial if the design and planning of development interventions are to facilitate rather than constrain change. Acknowledging and working within existing boundaries and limitations, and creating space for new ideas or activities to emerge from the self-organisation of the system as a whole and the co-evolution of the agents within it, is, I believe, more likely to foster ownership and incentives for stakeholder action to support change.

As Section A has shown, a complexity lens pays attention to the implicit changes in behaviour, attitude and action of agents co-evolving as networks of related elements (or subsystems). These networks interact with their environment and create their own perceptions and expectations (in terms of “what they want and how to behave in the landscape they are in” (Teisman & Klijn, 2008: 289)); thus, the overall systemic behaviour produced cannot be broken down into the actions of its constituent parts. It accepts that human behaviour and reactions cannot be pre-determined and, thus, the resulting path taken cannot be predicted. It looks for areas of change and attempts to understand how they came about by heeding the preceding conditions within the system, and trying to understand the space and time that influences change (phase space). In calling for flexibility, it accepts the dynamic nature of complex systems and looks to recognise opportunities and positive feedback events that might

topple the system into another phase, so stimulating significant change in behaviour/ attitude. Such ‘sensemaking’ (Snowden, 2009) encourages an understanding of change as being self-generated within a complex system, rather than the more traditional attitude towards mainstream international development that sees practitioners as the key agents of change, governed by a wholly rational and technocratic processes embedded within rigid timeframes amid calls for ever more stringent and transparent standards of public management and accountability (Copestake & Williams, 2012).

Methodological Considerations and Perspectives

Qualitative research is itself a complex and evolving field of inquiry that embraces a wide array of approaches, methods and techniques (Agostinho, 2005). As Denzin and Lincoln (2000: 18) point out, “[t]here have never been so many paradigms, strategies of inquiry, or methods of analysis for researchers to draw upon and utilize”. The very nature of qualitative research will, however, continue to be open to interpretation and “generate new ways of looking, interpreting, arguing and writing about qualitative data” (ibid.). Predominately, ‘qualitative research’ is used as an umbrella term covering research undertaken to investigate a social or human situation usually within a natural setting. Various approaches such as ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, naturalistic inquiry, narrative inquiry and, most commonly, case study are often used synonymously with qualitative inquiry (Stake, 1995).

In order to ascertain the value of complexity, a methodological approach and research design needs to be capable of exposing phenomena associated with complex social systems. It needs to pay attention to interlinkages and interdependencies (between mainstream development discourse, bilateral donor agendas and in-country systems, policies and processes) to reveal the dynamic “patterns of influence” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 151) and their adaptation and evolution in time and space. It is recognition of these patterns that is key to improving the strategic competence of those trying to stimulate change.

The exploratory, descriptive and explanatory nature of a case study approach provides a strategy for studying integrated systems. As complexity thinking fosters

an attitude of attention to emerging patterns, dynamism and interconnections, and suggests that the keys to understanding the system are contained in the patterns of relationships and interactions among the system's agents, it sits well with case study as a place to begin (Anderson, Crabtree, Steele, & McDaniel, 2005).

Case Study

Case study may take many forms but its essence, as defined by Stake (1995: xi), is “the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances”. For many this particularity is problematic. Lancy (1993) for example, argues that in offering no grounds for establishing generality of findings or ‘external validity’, case study is more “a form of writing or presentation for reporting the results of a naturalistic inquiry” (p. 142), than a ‘method of inquiry’³². This attitude supports the assumption that theory is essentially about generalisation and a search for regularity; that the unique is not susceptible to theoretical explanation (Lotz-Sisitka & Raven, 2004). Denzin and Lincoln (2000: 22), on the other hand, maintain that case study does provide a strategy of inquiry that “bundles skills, assumptions and practices that allow the researcher to move from paradigm to empirical”. Flyberg concurs, refuting the logic of generalisation by saying,

That knowledge cannot be formally generalized does not mean that it cannot enter into the collective process of knowledge accumulation in a given field or in a society. A purely descriptive, phenomenological case study without any attempt to generalize can certainly be of value in this process and has often helped cut a path toward scientific innovation (Flyvbjerg, 2006: 227).

Flyberg also argues for reflexive analysis of values, interests and power relationships in social contexts as a prerequisite for social change. Methodologically, this calls for research design that allows “narrations of practice (narrative methodologies) and contextual exploration, or case-specific knowledge” (Lotz-Sisitka & Raven, 2004: 72). For Crossley (1984: 198), however, the main strength of case-study techniques as a research methodology “lies in their maximisation of the ecological validity of the data”, referring to the extent to which “behaviour observed

³² Naturalist inquiry is considered to confront the positivism of scientific inquiry that asserts that all questions can only be answered by employing empirical, testable, replicable research techniques. For the naturalistic paradigm, theory is grounded in the data, and for many this is seen as a form of weakness. "The naturalistic inquirer soon becomes accustomed to hearing charges that naturalistic studies are undisciplined; that he or she is guilty of 'sloppy' research, engaging in 'merely subjective' observations, responding indiscriminately to the 'loudest bangs or brightest lights' " (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 289).

in one context is generalisable to another”. Through the collection of rich and heavily contextually-dependent data, exploration of non-linear, multi-directional interactions between agents over time helps determine collective behaviours that can be transferred to other contexts, thus giving case study data validity.

Case study is, I contend, an appropriate research methodology for ‘theory-testing’ complexity research such as this. It captures “complexity, specificity and the need to locate individual acts within multiple contexts and environments” (Morrison, 2006: 3). Case study allows the researcher to identify circumstances of change and patterns of activity that go beyond a single level analysis, highlighting the importance of examining how cultural, economic, historical and political forces interact within a given situation, yet accepting that what can be known in one context cannot be assumed to be true in another.

Drawing on critical realist framings, Sayer (2000: 137) states that contextualising and theorising should “... not be seen as competing, but as extremes of the same continuum”, noting further that all empirical social science research should “not only be theoretically informed, but *theoretically informative or creative*” (emphasis in original). Case study is especially helpful in the analysis of new situations with limited secondary data sources. While Flyvbjerg (2006: 242) concludes, “good social science research is problem driven and not methodology driven,” for Bhola (1990) value lies in listening to case study description. She notes, “people will be able to hear in the descriptions echoes of their own reality, and be able to receive not instruction but useful insights - generalizations rich with particulars” (p.162).

Vertical Case Method

Comparative studies embrace a case study research approach but, as Bray and Thomas (1995) explain, in comparative and international education, historically this has tended to be confined to single-level analysis across geographic, demographic or societal divisions, which “yield incomplete and unbalanced perspectives” (p.472). Bray and Thomas proposed a multi-level analytical approach combining these three dimensions inspired Vavrus and Bartlett’s (2006) vertical case study approach. The Vavrus and Bartlett approach, however, departs from Bray and Thomas’ in that it combines micro-level understanding and macro level analysis, thus situating local

action and interpretation within a broader cultural, historical and political investigation. Although this approach does not preclude, for example, cross-national comparison, its primary purpose is to promote analysis among levels grounded in a principal site, rather than across states.

This approach lends itself well to the interconnected and overlapping worlds that will be distinguished in this research by attending “to the ways in which historical trends, social structures and national and international forces shape local processes” (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2006: 96). This acknowledges that the micro context is shaped and influenced by the wider world and cannot be regarded as a geographically, demographically or economically bounded entity. The vertical case study provides space for understanding local meaning within the politics of globalised, regional or national forces. Vavrus and Bartlett maintain that,

Vertical case study research has the potential to place local knowledge on a more equal footing with official authoritative knowledge by analyzing what ‘ought to be’ based on policy pronouncements and cross national comparisons as well as what ‘is happening’ as recounted by local actors (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2006: 98).

They go on to propose that vertical case study design can be particularly useful for designers of (development) interventions. Not only does it expose whether a designer’s knowledge of a region is sufficient for them to meaningfully design the task specified by the funding agency, but it also demonstrates whether there is sufficient understanding of the particular parameters of the project environment to promote the desired change. Importantly, vertical case study places local knowledge of what ‘is happening’ on a more equal footing with the more authoritative ‘ought to be’ knowledge held by donors or development ‘experts’.

Applying such multi-level analyses allows greater understanding of how a nation state operates within the myriad of global influences that make up today’s world. This research will examine the various connections that form a vertical case study; that is, the national-global relationship, bilateral-national influence, as well as bilateral-global connections. In relating NZAID’s international development policy designs to global influences and to their effects at national level allows the questioning of whether the application of ‘globalised’ criteria, centred most recently on the ‘aid effectiveness’ consensus, is more a reproduction of dominant power relations than a reflection of the depth of engagement at the local level.

In terms of education, Vavrus and Bartlett (2006) maintain that vertical case study can be particularly useful in analysing the relationship of global agencies and national education sectors by providing a means of investigating how national governance sits within the “new geo-political-educational structures of power in the globalizing world” (Marginson & Mollis, 2001: 601). While national-global relationships are important in terms of how national policies sit within the global agenda, local-global connections, in terms of locally diverse interpretations of global mandates, are of equal importance.

Extended Case Method

Burawoy's (1998) extended case method complements the vertical case study approach in helping to locate local actions within global and national political economies. He contends that in applying reflexive understanding to ethnography, the general can be extracted from the unique - “moving from the ‘micro’ to the ‘macro’ and connecting the present to the past, in anticipation of the future” (1998: 5). More importantly from the point of view of this research, he dares to draw together the realms of physical and social science creating an “alternative explanatory and interpretive practice” that he refers to as “reflexive science” (p.6). Burawoy claims that reflexive science enables “the exploration of broad historic patterns and macrostructures *without* relinquishing either ethnography or science” (ibid.; emphasis in original)³³. Burawoy combines context and dialogue as the basis for his alternative science, thus unavoidably bringing the effects of power to the fore. In so doing, he rebukes postmodernism's total rejection of science; a decision he defends in the following manner:

Choosing to remain on the side of science, we have to live with its self-determined limitations, whether they be the context effects of positive science or the power effects of reflexive science. Given that the world is neither without context nor without power, both sciences are flawed. But we do have a choice (p.7).

Reflexivity, through a complexity lens, aligns with the notion of feedback; determining the feedback mechanisms that maintain the system's equilibrium or change it. A key issue becomes whether and how the results of reflexive activities (either as evaluative activities embedded within an institution or instigated from

³³ Burawoy (1998: 6) states that “[b]y ethnography I mean writing about the world from the standpoint of participant observation; by science I mean falsifiable and generalizable explanations of empirical phenomena.”

outside), can be ‘managed’ or learned from, such that adaptation rather than lock-in is encouraged.

Case study, and the vertical and extended case methods (Burawoy, 1998; Vavrus & Bartlett, 2006) in particular, challenge social science’s positivist analytic induction approach to fieldwork, namely Katz’s (1983: 127-128) “four Rs”. The four Rs being: *representativeness* (can we generalise from the study?); *reactivity* (does the researcher’s presence influence what happens in the field?); *reliability* (can we trust the data?); and *replicability* (could others repeat the study?). Indeed, Burawoy claims that the extended case study approach “violates the 4Rs” (p.10), and questions whether, in fact, any social science technique involving human interaction can ever claim such positivist principles, since it demands a denial of context effects. Rather than calling for an abandonment of science, Burawoy exhorts the value of dialogue and conversation in creating ‘thick description’ ethnography, in the “excavation of local knowledge” and in the seeking of “networks of ‘situated knowledge’” (p.13). His notion of ‘reflexive science’, where “context is the point of departure but not the point of conclusion” (ibid.), joins what positive science separates: it *joins* the participant to the observer. One affects the other. As Burawoy points out, “Reflexive science commands the observer to unpack the situational experiences by moving the participant through their space and time ...” (p.14). The philosophy of tracking situational experiences of participants through space and time resonates with complexity’s notions of phase and phase space in providing a picture of what was happening at the time and what, from the past, might have influenced a particular pathway or pattern.

Research Approach

Case study, as a research strategy, focuses on understanding the dynamics within a particular setting “to catch the complexity of a single case” (Stake, 1995: xi). In this respect, it readily lends itself to addressing notions of complexity and holistic, in-depth investigations of complex systems (Morrison, 2008). By embracing vertical and extended techniques, this study allows for investigation across multiple levels revealing sources of influence and levels of power within each situation as well as revealing any “common patterns among diverse cases” (Burawoy, 1998: 19). In addition, by incorporating Burawoy’s extended case study approach a further level of

comparison becomes possible; that of “tracing the source of small difference to external forces” (p.19) both horizontally and vertically, thus linking macro-processes and development theory to the ‘micro’ country case study (Muhr, 2008). Thus, instead of reducing cases to instances of general repeatable law, each case is shown to be connected through a myriad of capricious interactions and forces. Such a combined approach, I believe, provides the grounding for explorative, explanatory and/or descriptive investigation of complex environments (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). As Yin (2003) describes, this multi-perspective approach *explores* complex links in real-life interventions, not only in terms of the voice and perspective of the actors, but also in terms of the linkages between and within individuals and groups of actors.

Incorporating Burawoy’s extended case study and notions of reflexive science goes some way to appeasing complexity critics’ disquiet with the use of “non-socio-scientific language that evokes the idea of an – actual or unreal- conceptual incoherence of the concept of complexity ...and the feeling that complexity is not relevant to the social sciences” (Geller, 2011: 67). Burawoy’s critique of the social science paradigm that emphasises replication of results among researchers is particularly pertinent to a complexity approach. In contrast to the four Rs, his deconstruction, rejection and reconstruction of theory, based on his conception of the complexities of the studied circumstance, not only reveal different realities for different agents, but also acknowledges that the very presence of the research creates its own effect. As Burawoy (1998: 22) describes, “in the reflexive mode social theory intervenes in the world it seeks to grasp, destabilising its own analysis”. From a historical perspective, instead of searching for a particular explanation of an event, a reflexive research approach shows more how the movement of world history sets off different processes eventuating in the event. Applying a complexity lens to such an approach provides a framework for seeking where to look, not for a definitive truth about the world, but for a better understanding of how it came about and thus “the continual improvement of existing theory” (Burawoy, 1998: 28).

Specifics of Research Design

This section presents a broad outline of the research design giving background to the wider, NZAID funded research project within which this PhD research was undertaken. It will explain specific data collection methods and how they are

employed to inform Part Two (the wider contexts) and Part Three, the complexity-framed analyses. Finally, ethical issues and data limitations will be discussed.

Background to study

The focus and direction of this doctoral study emerged from my participation in a wider study investigating the effectiveness of sector wide approaches (SWAs) as an aid delivery mechanism to education in Solomon Islands and Tonga. The project was funded by an NZAID international development research fund (IRDF) grant spanning 2008 to 2010 and undertaken by a small research team of four. The team comprised Associate Professor Coxon, as Principal Investigator, two senior Pacific researchers, Assoc. Prof. Nabobo-Baba and Dr Johannsen Fua³⁴, and me. The aims of the IDRF research were essentially evaluative, exploring the extent to which each country SWAp pertained to the ‘better aid’ agenda and progressed in the key SWAp components (Coxon, & Tolley, with Fua, & Nabobo-Baba, 2011); namely, country ownership, a single programme and budget framework, harmonisation, alignment with local systems, and institutional capacity. My doctoral research question was deliberately formulated to sit outside these parameters and, although this research has elements of an evaluative study, these are not there to judge the worth of the either country’s programme; rather to elucidate participants’ meanings made in respective contexts. It was important, particularly from a methodological standpoint, to distinguish the approach and analysis framework clearly from that of the wider project in order to re-examine data that had been collected as part of the team. I have been diligent in my attempt to maintain ‘separatism’ between the PhD and the wider project by deliberately focussing on a conceptual viewpoint that is relatively new to the field – both from a development perspective and the geographic region.

Exploring the worth of a complexity lens as an analytical approach to understanding development interventions and power relations between development partners differentiates this thesis from the main IDRF study, despite relying in part on data collected under the auspices of the main project. In this respect, this doctoral research aims to contribute to the relatively recent attention to how complexity

³⁴ Associate Professor Eve Coxon is renowned for her extensive experience of Pacific education issues and research in education and development across the region and internationally. A/P Coxon is also my main doctoral supervisor. A/P Unaisi Nabobo-Baba lived for many years in Solomon Islands and through her extensive work throughout the region she has many friends and contacts in both Solomon Islands and Tonga. The fourth member of the team was Dr Seu’ula Johannsen-Fua, now Director of the Institute of Education based on the USP campus in Tonga.

concepts can be applied by researchers and practitioners to issues within international development and education in particular (see Mason, 2008a; Mason, 2008b, 2009; Morrison, 2005, 2008; Nordtveit, 2007; Ramalingam, et al., 2008). To date, no research has been located that employs complexity theory in exploring specific examples of ‘education in development’ or as means to analysing particular aid modalities, such as a sector wide approach, to understand where and how change has occurred. It is anticipated, therefore, that this research study will make a significant and original contribution to the international aid and development debate.

Research Methods, Ethics and Limitations

As this doctoral study emerged from my participation in a wider study, concern that the research was culturally appropriate in its approaches and methods was addressed in the original project design. Central to this success was the early involvement Assoc.Prof. Nabobo-Baba and Dr. Fua, both having excellent reputations as ‘insider’ researchers, dominant in the field of ‘education for development’, and knowledgeable about and skilled in Pacific research discourses, such as *talanoa*³⁵ where two or more people talk together to learn about a story (Nabobo-Baba, 2006: 27). Although not all *talanoa* protocols were observed³⁶, this approach centres on the establishment of good interpersonal relationships and rapport with participants. Local protocols guiding the appropriateness of whom and how to approach people to seek information, along with how to frame the questions, were followed (ibid.: 28). Such an approach lends itself well to semi-structured and focus group interviews which formed the basis of all empirical data collected for this research. Participants were selected on account of their professional role or on recommendation from key informants as people able and willing to provide useful data.

As a part of the IDRF team I undertook two field trips to Tonga, three to Solomon Islands and two to NZAID’s head office in Wellington (New Zealand) between November 2008 and December 2010. During this time, I attended 44 semi-structured interviews or focus group sessions, with or without other members of the

³⁵ The *talanoa* approach originates from Tongan and other ethnic Pacific cultures of oratory and verbal negotiation where *tala* means to inform, tell, relate, command, ask; and *noa* means any kind, ordinary. Thus *talanoa* means face to face conversation that can be formal or informal (Otsuka, 2005).

³⁶ Often *talanoa* is accompanied by traditional ceremonies such as *yaqona* sessions where the kava drink is shared between gathered participants. These protocols were not necessary as discussions were most often confined to the workplace.

team present. All interviews were conducted in English, although some focus groups involving school staff members required some translation by other participants for clarification. Each session lasted approximately one hour and took place at the participant's place of work. Interviewees included officials from NZAID (at home and abroad), AusAID (at post officials) and the NZ High Commission staff in both countries; Ministry of Education representatives in both countries; national and international consultants; and (where possible) representatives of key non-government bodies and some school principals. During my second trip to Tonga (August 2010), I travelled to the outer island group of Vava'u and interviewed several head teachers, school principals and provincial education officers as well as heads of schools in and around Nuku'alofa³⁷. In Solomon Islands in March 2010 I accompanied Solomon Islands' Ministry staff on a 10-day monitoring tour of ten schools in Malaita where I was able to meet and talk with head teachers and principals, staff and members of the community. Data from these less formal meetings was recorded as field notes. In Honiara³⁸ in November 2008 and November 2010, as part of the IDRF team, I attended the day-long annual Education Sector Coordination Committee (ESCC) meeting where MEHRD's annual activity was presented and discussed by a wide range of participants. Data from these meetings comprised official handouts and personal field notes of events. In total, 53 different people took part in the research, several of whom were interviewed more than once.

All interviews were transcribed in full by me and once the original IDRF research study had finished with the data, I coded each script to identify text segments that contain meaning in accordance to the analysis framework I had devised for this doctoral study (see below) at the upper level, and noted any other specific categories that arose from close examination of the text. The range of interviewees created diverse content and views and this multi-perspective approach enabled verifying triangulation (of content) to take place. Overall, the coding exercise provided critical insight into the underlying interdependencies between the different levels (global, bilateral, national) as well as and within the various levels over time, disclosing the emergence of change within specific contexts, a key aspect of complexity thinking.

³⁷ Nuku'alofa is the capital of Tonga, located on the main island of Tongatapu.

³⁸ Honiara is the capital of Solomon Islands, located on Guadalcanal.

The overarching IDRF research project had started before I formally embarked on my doctoral study (March 1st 2009) and, therefore, mention of my research study was not made in the initial IDRF application to the University of Auckland's Human Participants Ethics Committee (UOAHPEC) for ethical approval in 2008 (Ref 2008 / 028). In 2009, however, the Principal Investigator (my supervisor) and I submitted application to the Committee for an amendment to the original approval, along with amended Participant Information Sheets (PIS) and Consent Forms (CF) explaining that the use of data would be extended to include my PhD. These changes were approved by the UOAHPEC in February 2010.

All interviewees interviewed prior to the amended ethical approval were informed of the subsequent inclusion of my PhD research and expanded use of collected data. None registered any objections to this development. This, together with the fact that all interviewees were selected and interviewed in their professional capacity, was deemed sufficient to justify inclusion of earlier data in this study and did not constitute an ethical dilemma.

From an academic perspective, although the empirical data collected throughout the study has served two purposes (to inform the original IDRF SWAp study and this doctoral thesis) I do not believe its integrity has been compromised. This is defended on three counts. First, the central purpose of this thesis is a philosophical discussion of the merits of applying a complexity perspective to the analysis of development intervention data in general and utilises education SWAps in the Pacific as a case in point. In so doing, it hopes to emphasise an alternative approach to data analysis, one that focuses on what change has occurred (and may be likely to occur) rather than the more traditional focus on inputs and outputs. Second, it could be argued that this research has been limited by the nature of the data collected in that it was constrained by the parameters of the original IDRF SWAp project. But equally it can be argued that by focusing interviews more towards a complexity perspective might have proved to have been detrimental. Complexity language remains largely outside common usage, requiring a certain level of understanding to be fully comprehended, therefore couching questions to interrogate these areas more overtly may have led to confusion and misunderstanding. Confining interviews to areas of common interest and understanding while probing complexity

issues more obliquely (especially in later interviews) had, in my opinion, provided a rich source of data. Thirdly, although some interviews involved various members of the IDRF study team, I personally collected and transcribed all interview data used in this thesis. Finally, as time progressed and the doctoral ideas developed I carried out an increasing amount of fieldwork alone. This allowed me to develop the interview structure to delve more towards a complexity perspective while not interfering with the quality of the data required for the IDRF project.

A further point to note is that, due to the nature of small island communities and my commitment to confidentiality, every effort has been made to protect the identity of the informants quoted in this study. No list of interviewee names is provided and no one has been identified beyond the very broadest reference to official position (and only where this knowledge enhances reader understanding). All direct quotations are identified only by a country identifier (T for Tonga or S for Solomon Islands) and a reference number. Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that in some cases certain individuals might be recognisable to those familiar with the setting.

Data informing the majority of Part Two (the contextual analyses) takes the form of an extensive review of the critical literature addressing the evolution of the current orthodox development agenda along with the in-depth studies of Solomon Islands and Tonga. In tracing the trajectories of international and country specific development discourse it locates New Zealand's response to shifting international agenda and its engagement within each country over time. In addition to historical, academic literature, Part Two is informed by official donor documents and working materials, national development and education sector policy and strategy documents, and education statistics from Tonga and Solomon Islands.

I refer to each of the three sections in Part Two - 'Mainstream Development and International Aid', 'Solomon Islands' and 'Tonga' – as a 'case study'. While the latter two draw both on vertical and extended methodology and are clearly grounded in a principal site, the first, is more a reflexive exploration of broad historic patterns into which New Zealand's context and 'dialogue' with the orthodox consensus is woven. This extended case study is crucial in explaining the wider political processes which culminated sector wide approaches being located in the Pacific.

This research has also drawn on personal experience and my growing repertoire of research in the Pacific. Recent relevant work includes joint authoring of the 2007 UNESCO Strategy for Education in Solomon Islands³⁹; preparation of a concept paper for NZAID on school grant policies in 2008; co-authoring the Tongan Education Support Programme (TESP) Review 2005-2010 for NZAID (Coxon & Tolley, 2010); and co-authoring a World Bank desk study on Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health (ASRH) and Second Chance Education and Training (SCET) Services in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu (Monroe & Tolley, 2011).

Framing the Analyses

The need to analyse the empirical data within both a combined vertical and extended case study methodology and a complexity construct, led me to develop a framework to guide the central analysis presented in Part Three of this thesis. The development of this framework will be explained at the beginning of Part Three. As mentioned earlier in Section A, my framework was inspired by Ramalingam et al.'s (2008) idea of categorising complexity concepts (see p.21) as a way of guiding the analysis. I have, however, conceptualised my analyses more as flowing through three levels - from global networks, through evolving behaviours to complex local change. The very nature of complexity thinking makes it impossible to assign concepts exclusively to particular levels, thus the framework has itself been a dynamic, evolving entity. Fluidity and overlap are integral but the framework has provided a starting point as an analytical tool and enabled me to order my analyses into three main sections, namely, Complex Networks, Complex Behaviours and Complex Change. 'Complex Networks' will concentrate on the interpretation of contemporary global paradigms and the resultant inter-relationship and inter-connectivity between the donor and individual recipient governments. 'Complex Behaviours' will analyse how capacity develops and emerges within the space of the possible; it will draw mainly on concepts of self-organisation and co-evolution and the interpretation of ideas and narratives in phase and phrase space within each context. Finally, 'Complex Change' will focus on how changes are sensitive to initial conditions within each context and shaped by the connectivity between agents.

³⁹ See: http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=55717&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

Concluding Part One

Part One has provided a journey through the main ideas underpinning complexity thinking and has shown, in broad terms, how these notions bring an alternative way of thinking about international aid and development, in terms of how behaviour change evolves in complex social systems. The research question suggests the methodological approaches that will frame the rest of this thesis. The use of vertical and extended case study is shown to be complementary and reinforce a complexity approach and have contributed to the formulation of the analysis framework that will be presented and applied in Part Three. The specific methods employed to collect the various forms of data have been presented and ethical considerations and data limitations have been discussed.

Part Two will establish how various 'aid and development' paradigms have emerged globally over time, New Zealand's evolving position within these paradigms and how its contemporary focus with regards its adoption of sector wide approaches has been applied in each of the two study countries.

PART TWO

Locating the Story

“...we cannot do without context, we absolutely need it in any kind of analysis”
(Blommaert, 2005: 40)

Introducing Part Two

With Part One establishing the aim and the conceptual / analytical and methodological framing of this thesis, Part Two provides the philosophic, geographic and historic context that Part Three's analyses draw on. It takes the form of an extensive review of the critical literature addressing the evolution of the current orthodox development agenda along with in-depth studies of the two Pacific countries from which empirical data were collected. In tracing the trajectories of international and country specific development discourse it locates New Zealand's response to shifting international agenda and its engagement within each country over time. In addition to historical, academic literature, Part Two is informed by official donor documents and working materials, national development and education sector policy and strategy documents, and education statistics from Tonga and Solomon Islands.

This Part is divided in three sections (A-C) each contextualising a key research area that the analyses in Part Three will draw on. The first case study explores the evolution of western orthodox development discourse from the end of the Second World War (WWII) to the emergence of sector wide approaches. This study provides the global backdrop in which to situate New Zealand's development policy, as a significant bilateral donor to education in the Pacific. Sections B and C provide in-depth studies of Solomon Islands and Tonga as exemplars of Pacific countries that have implemented a sector wide approach in education in partnership with New Zealand as the main donor. Each case study provides the reader with a geographic, demographic and socio-economic picture that, in interaction with the cultural, historical and political circumstances, provides important nuance to country-donor interactions, with particular reference to education. In describing the evolutionary path of the education system in each country and their historical engagement with New Zealand as a source of aid, it explores donor-government interactions and relationships as they work towards developing and implementing a sector wide approach to educational planning and donor support

Establishing New Zealand's response to mainstream international development consensus, its interpretation of the mandates through its own development policies, and their translation and transformation locally in the case study countries constitute an overarching complex system of 'development' which is

fundamental to this thesis. As Blommaert (2005: 57) points out, narrating and interpreting these stories involves multi-level complex contextualisation that situates understanding of “communication events” against the background of globalisation and within the structural inequalities that exist at every level from the local to the global.

Cilliers (1998) draws attention to the importance of understanding the historical background of complex systems to help explain, for example, how small changes in past circumstances can lead to large deviations in later times. Understanding external and internal influences within and between the elements of the system give insight into how particular trajectories or decisions were taken; why particular behaviours might have evolved; and how agents adapted, or not, to altered circumstances. It is these systemic interactional patterns (Blommaert, 2005) that this research traces and seeks to understand in relation to the unique development trajectory of sector wide approaches in Solomon Islands and Tonga.

Contextualising various levels over time enables Burawoy’s (1998) reflexive approach and highlights how certain influences can produce long-term powerful consequences that shape a country’s future directions by stimulating or stifling change, while others may have little or no long-term effect. It also provides insight into how paradigm shifts in mainstream development theory have filtered through multilateral and bilateral donor practice to pressure country- specific institutions to redefine policy and procedures. Similarly it reveals when resistance manifests and provides grounds for understanding what fuelled such resistance.

It is acknowledged that the contextualising case studies presented here are the result of my subjective, ‘outsider’ analysis of the literature. It is, however, hoped that the breadth of data drawn upon reduces my subjectivity to a minimum. The largely textual data that informs this Part was drawn from an extensive review of academic literature, government documentation and policy documents, development institutions’ and government official websites, development forum websites and various media outlets. My own research experience in the Pacific and discussions with scholars of the Pacific have assisted my general understanding of the Pacific region and the specific countries.

A. Mainstream Development and International Aid

The strength of 'development' discourse lies in its power to seduce, in every sense of the term: to charm, to please, to fascinate, to set dreaming, but also to abuse, to turn away from the truth, to deceive. How could one possibly resist the idea that there is a way of eliminating the poverty by which one is so troubled? How dare one think, at the same time, that the cure might worsen the ill which one wishes to combat? (Rist, 2008: 1).

Standing back and looking across the whole context of development reveals that all development activity operates on a theory of change (Pritchett, et al., 2010). From its earliest notions, established in the mid-eighteenth century during the age of Enlightenment and coinciding with the start of the industrial revolution and wider modernisation process, the basic structure of west European development thinking has been focused on the causes and consequences of progress (as opposed to providence), where social change and economic development are closely related to technical innovation and the construction of manufacturing economies. International development policy, the notion of 'aid', and development studies as an applied academic field, however, are much younger (Haddad, Hossain, Allister McGregor, & Mehta, 2011), emerging in the 1940s amid the reconstruction following the end of the Second World War (WWII). Theories of imperialism and colonialism formed the foundations for western development discourse, both as a development promoter – in its capitalist form⁴⁰ – and as a creator of 'underdevelopment' (Hettne, 2009).

The deep economic and social crises of post-war Europe together with rising nationalist movements in many colonies led colonial powers to realise that some form of self-rule for the colonies would be inevitable and imminent. Maintaining direct development influence over, and securing loyalty from, the decolonising nations⁴¹ was seen as critical to European security – both militarily in halting the spread of communism and in terms of maintaining supplies of resources.

Wolfgang Sachs (1992/1999: 1) contends that "... the lighthouse of development was erected" by the United States' President Truman. In his 1949

⁴⁰Since the eighteenth century imperialists 'developed' their colonies largely as sources of cheap raw materials and as highly populous markets for the absorption of their manufactured goods, with scant regard for human rights, cultural traditions or boundaries. They set up European governments to control this process, often supported by missionaries, merchants and scholars "to better the lives of people ... by making them more like Europeans" (Silloway Smith, 2010b: 11). Some would argue that many of these imperialist attitudes, the 'white man's burden' still persist; not least the notion that it is the obligation of the West to develop non-western economies.

⁴¹Nowadays this would be considered 'winning hearts and minds' to ensure nations didn't drift towards communism, or more recently Islamic Fundamentalism.

inaugural speech, Truman described how countries in the southern hemisphere lacked what had been achieved by ‘advanced’ countries of the North. Thus, in an instant, he effectively declared two billion people “underdeveloped”, an undignified “third world” condition from which ‘development’ would be their only escape. In resolution, Truman envisaged a programme of development based on the technical transfer of scientific and industrial skills,

... for improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas. The old imperialism - exploitation for foreign profit - has no place in our plans. What we envisage is a program of development based on the concept of democratic fair dealing (Truman, 1949, cited in Esteva, 1992: 6).

This vision sat well with the Marshall Plan⁴² and the newly established post-war multilateral institutions, the United Nations (UN) and two international financial institutions - the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB). This meant that, not only could humanitarian goals be combined with the (profitable) provision of loans, grants and technical assistance to newly independent nations, but it also created a valuable political and economic European bloc allied to the US. The concurrent formation of a Soviet aid programme (the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance), however, meant that the two emerging superpowers increasingly used the ‘third world’ development arena as a political battleground. While Wolfgang Sachs claims that, from the outset, “... development’s hidden agenda was nothing else than the Westernization of the world” (W. Sachs, 1992/1999: 3-4), Esteva (1992: 6) saw Truman’s use of the word ‘development’ as an “... emblem, a euphemism, used ever since to allude either discretely or inadvertently to the era of American hegemony”. Consequently “development became a weapon in the competition between political systems” (W. Sachs, 1992/1999: 2).

Although alternative modalities of implementing change have variously come into and gone out of vogue⁴³, “in the last four decades a fundamental paradox has emerged at the heart of development theory and practice. The paradox is: *“everyone still believes in modernization and no one still believes in modernization”* (Pritchett, et al., 2010: 3, emphasis in original). As Pritchett et al. explain,

⁴² The Marshall Plan (officially the European Recovery Programme) was a large scale reconstruction programme for Europe following the end of WWII, funded by the United States, to combat the spread of communism. It began in April 1948 and operated for four years.

⁴³ These will be explored later.

When people speak of the ‘development of societies’ most people refer, implicitly or explicitly, to a cumulative historical process whereby economies grow through enhanced productivity, prevailing political systems represent the aggregate preferences of citizens, rights and opportunities are extended to all social groups, and organisations function according to meritocratic standards (thereby becoming capable of administering larger numbers of more complex tasks). When in everyday speech people say that France is more developed than Congo ... they mean that *inter alia* France has undergone more of this four-fold functional transformation than the Congo.

... The central premise of the development enterprise is that today’s ‘less’ developed countries can, should and eventually will undergo a four-fold transformation of their own and become ‘more’ developed. The task for development agencies (domestic and foreign) is to accelerate this transformation, to speed up a process that left to its own devices would occur too slowly. ... The common, if completely hidden, foundation to development agents, agencies and agendas is modernisation, which, for lack of anything else, everyone still relies on as bedrock (pp.3-4).

While Pritchett et al. argue that modern development discourse seemingly rejects the imperialist modernisation *theory* of earlier decades (they point out the litany of anti-modernisation sentiments littering current development-speak⁴⁴), they also contend that current theory of change can be characterised as “accelerated modernization via transplanted best practices... [That is, seeking] to modernize institutions via the importing of methods and designs deemed effective elsewhere” (p.6). For the delivery of key public services such as education and health, however, which involve a myriad of negotiations and complex human interactions, Pritchett et al. suggest that “reform via cut-and-paste from a foreign setting is not reform at all” (p.6).

While Pritchett et al. acknowledge ‘accelerated modernisation’⁴⁵ as the modus operandi of the current dominant development paradigm, to counter yet another ‘failure of aid’ scenario, they suggest much more attention should be given to aspects of implementation and instances of implementation failure. Development efforts, they argue, should pay more attention to the messier tasks of working with the people affected by the formalisation of procedures or replacement of policies and the ways this might challenge prevailing power relations, alter social identities and raise expectation (Pritchett, et al., 2010). Reaching core government responsibilities and objectives requires not just ‘good governance’ and ‘good policy’ but also “transaction

⁴⁴For example, ‘empowerment’; ‘putting the country in the driving seat’; ‘partnership’; ‘one size doesn’t fit all’; ‘no silver bullets’; ‘context matters’; ‘cultural diversity’; etc.

⁴⁵ The four-fold modernisation process is described as addressing: 1. Economy- enhanced productivity; 2. Polity – accurate preference aggregation; 3. Society – equal social rights and opportunities; and 4. Administration – rational professional organisations (Pritchett, et al., 2010).

intensive policy *implementation* [which, in the case of education, ultimately] requires millions of effective learner-teacher experiences every day” (p.9).

The crux of their insightful paper offers an explanation for how so many developing countries seemingly fail to develop what development agents promote – the expansion of state capability. They see this as not due to a poverty trap but to a “capability trap” (p.10). The relentless push to develop ‘modern’ institutional forms and effective organisations causes enormous stresses on the organisational goal and capabilities of personnel, often because “too much [is asked] of too little too soon too often” (p.37). If these challenges are not acknowledged and managed, the functioning of the organisation is doomed to fail.

Although there appears to be plenty of recourse to implementation failure in current discourse, underlying assumptions may, in fact, inflate rather than alleviate the issue. For example, if deficiency in policy is assumed to be the problem, the adoption and implementation of ‘better’ policy may not be the solution. Instead it may induce greater organisational stress than a previously ‘poor’ policy, and ultimately achieve little. Assuming the problem to be the result of individual agents’ ability often prompts a capacity building regime; but, if an inappropriate policy is being implemented, existing capacity may not be recognised or utilised (for political or cultural reasons), or achievable capacity increments may focus on inappropriate or unrealistic areas. A third reaction to implementation failure might be to create parallel systems to bypass government procedures; this can often lead to lack of coherent planning, often cumbersome procedures for agents involved, and little overall sector improvement (Pritchett, et al., 2010).

How current mainstream development theory evolved from the western perspective and how this relates to New Zealand’s bilateral aid development policies, in education in particular, and its interaction with its Pacific neighbours are examined in the following pages. This section spends more time on aid and development issues than on education largely because I found that I could not sensibly situate the education issues without first examining the aid and development debates and their broader implications.

From Truman to the New Aid Architecture

(i) The 1940s to the 1970s

Truman's call for nations to move along the same development path and aspire to the same goals as the United States (US) was enacted largely according to Rostow's modernisation theory presented during the 1950s (and his later book *The Stages of Economic Growth*, 1960 cited in Rist, 2008: 93). Rostow presented five successive, linear stages of economic growth⁴⁶, based largely on his historical interpretation of the evolution of 'advanced' industrial societies, and designed to lead to the panacea of 'modernity' - sustained growth, mass consumption and democracy. Theorising that developing nations – like traditional societies - were caught in a trap of low savings and investment, especially in technological investment, Rostow and others determined that in order for them to reach the preconditions for 'take-off' some form of external intervention was necessary. Pre-occupation with increasing economic growth, and the belief that that increasing levels of agricultural, industrial production and exploitation of natural resources would generate economic growth, and the benefits would trickle down to the poor, alleviate poverty and transform agrarian societies (Nordtveit, 2007; Robb, 2005) dominated development thinking and thus aid agency actions through until the late sixties.

From a western aid point of view, the most significant changes during this period included the fact that the World Bank (established in 1944) began offering long-term concessional loans to poorer countries. Funds were largely aimed at externally driven, context-free, top-down projects where technology was transferred from the North and fed into large infrastructure developments in view of opening up markets for domestic companies. Grand, national plans, seen as symbols of sovereignty and modernity, were drawn up (often drafted by aid agencies) as the platform for economic development to 'take-off' in the newly independent nations. Often, however, little consideration was made of local administrative processes or capacity (Robb, 2005). As Robb (p.23) concludes, this era saw,

... [the] institutional foundations and relations ... laid for an aid system that focused more on Northern governments' foreign policies than reducing poverty. The Cold War produced overt and covert agendas that created an aid system that was primarily concerned with Northern governments'

⁴⁶ Rostow's five stages of economic growth: (1) the traditional society; (2) the preconditions for take-off, (3) the take-off; (4) the drive to maturity; (5) and the age of high mass-consumption (Rist, 2008).

agendas and their national politics. In spite of the demise of colonialism and the rise of the nation state, Southern governments had limited power to control aid allocations. The ground was now set for the gradual emergence of a deep legacy of patronage and perverse self-serving aid agency practices that generated recipient government dependency.

In 1961 the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) was established which reflected the shift from European recovery to collective western international development and, following the precedent set out above, it made state-building and economic growth the keystones of its aid and assistance policy (Silloway Smith, 2010b). The OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC)⁴⁷ was established in 1963 as a forum for western discussion and debate on aid and has since become a major platform for all western aid flows; it has determined a formal definition for official development assistance (ODA), set guidelines for reporting and monitoring aid flows, and compares countries' individual aid efforts (Silloway Smith, 2010b). During the sixties, the UN also enjoyed a pivotal role, not least when the 1970 General Assembly adopted the Resolution that, "each economically advanced country will progressively increase its official development assistance to the developing countries ... to reach a minimum net amount of 0.7% of its gross national product at market prices by the middle of the Decade" (OECD, 2003: III-9)⁴⁸. Although this target gained acceptance and has been repeatedly re-endorsed at international conferences to the present day, few countries have ever succeeded in reaching this level⁴⁹.

Unequal and deteriorating terms of trade for the South, and little evidence of poverty reduction through economic development, led to mounting criticism of Rostow's idealised, universal and paternalistic paradigm, which was attacked for its naïvety and lack of appreciation for the "myriad of interactive factors that affect poverty and economic growth" (Klees, 2010: 7). Alternative 'dependency' theorists argued that European imperialism and capitalism were in fact the cause of developing

⁴⁷ The DAC is one of the OECD's oldest committees. Formed in 1961 it was founded to guide, promote and enhance co-operation with developing countries. It currently has 23 members and was the producer of The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

⁴⁸ "International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade", UN General Assembly Resolution 2626 (XXV), 24 October 1970, paragraph 43. The decade in question was the 1970s.

⁴⁹ Sweden became the first country to meet the target in 1974. The Netherlands reached it in 1975, followed by Norway and Denmark in 1976 and 1978 respectively; each of these countries has maintained this level. In 1991 Finland achieved for that year only; and Luxembourg reached it in 2000 and continues to do so. No other DAC country has met the target, and the weighted average of DAC members' ODA has never exceeded 0.4% of GNP. In 1993 the term GNP was discontinued and replaced with an equivalent concept, 'gross national income' (OECD, 2003).

country problems with foreign aid serving merely as a form of neo-colonialism (Frank 1967, cited in Klees, 2010:8), and a weapon to thwart communistic designs. During the seventies, ‘dependency theory’ gained ground as a counterpoise, viewing ‘underdevelopment’ as a created condition and not an original state, as implied by Truman (Amin, 1974). Similarly, in line with arguments by Andre Frank (1969 cited in Hettne, 2009: 82), poverty was viewed as a structure, rather than a stage (‘backwardness’) of modernisation. During this time, numerous Latin America countries, in particular, attempted to de-link from the capitalist system of world trade and aid to pursue self-reliant internal growth (Frank 1967, cited in Klees, 2010:8) by protecting their industries and introducing high tariff barriers (Robb, 2005).

While Samir Amin⁵⁰, a consistent voice for delinking, argued more for a reduction of trade and aid rather than its elimination altogether (Amin, 1974, 1990), Wallerstein’s neo-Marxist ‘world systems analysis’ rejected the notion of de-linking as unrealistic. Instead, he built upon notions of dependency theory and rebuked the “distortions of ahistorical models of social change ... to which the concept of stages give rise” (Wallerstein, 1974: 388). Rather than a collection of separate national economies, Wallenstein’s world systems theory saw “a single economic system that operates to transfer money from the poor to the rich countries ... [a capitalist world economy that] ... *runs* on inequality” (Lummis, 1992: 46 italics in original). Overall, Wallenstein contended that the world capitalist system, rather than bringing about prosperity for all, instead *created* skewed development with increased economic and social disparity between sections of the world economy.

The oil crisis in the mid seventies had a significant impact on aid. Not only did it lead to less concessionary lending and more grant support from donors, it also exposed the ‘exploitative’ nature of western aid, in propelling its economic and political self interest. The early 1970s saw the G-77⁵¹ countries demanding a New International Economic Order (NIEO) and calling for ‘trade not aid’ (Robb, 2005). In

⁵⁰ Samir Amin is an Egyptian economist and a leading Islamic dependency theorist.

⁵¹ Established in 1964, the Group of 77 (G-77) is the largest intergovernmental organisation of developing countries in the United Nations. It provides the means for the countries of the South to articulate and promote their collective economic interests and enhance their joint negotiating capacity on all major international economic issues within the United Nations system, and promote South-South cooperation for development. Although the members of the G-77 have now increased to 131 countries, the original name was retained due to its historic significance (<http://www.g77.org/doc/>; retrieved on 17 June 2011).

1974, a United Nations Charter, the Declaration of Cocoyoc⁵², was launched in an effort to establish a new international order. The Declaration emphasised that,

... the purpose of development 'should not be to develop things, but to develop man'. Any process of growth, it added, 'that does not lead to the fulfilment [of basic needs] – or even worse, disrupts them – is a travesty of the idea of development' (Esteva, 1992: 15).

This led to calls by the UN for a reorientation of ODA to one more focused on addressing immediate individual needs (Silloway Smith, 2010b); a more “integrated development: ‘a total, multi –relational process that includes all aspects of the life of a collectivity of its relations with the outside world and its own consciousness’ ” (Esteva, 1992: 15). Although the UN was eager to shift the focus for aid, firm believers in neo-classical economics needed more convincing, especially the US which began to distance itself from the UN’s approach.

That growth alone was not adequate to reduce poverty gradually became generally accepted and the donor agencies began focussing on a ‘basic needs’ approach involving rural development, education, health and women. This led the World Bank to declare that poverty reduction was now the overarching objective of the Bank. This shifted the aid agenda significantly and integrated rural development (IRD) initiatives became the *new grand plan*. However, national governments continued to have limited influence on how the aid was delivered and projects remained supply driven and top down, putting high demands on limited government capacity with little understanding of the extant complexities of rural development (Robb, 2005). The mechanistic project cycle methodology, borrowed from large infrastructure projects (such as water sanitation plants, road construction etc), was imposed on these social development projects; an approach that allowed little real space for listening to rural people and understanding their lives. With few projects showing long-term survival or lasting effects on empowering the poor, many would argue that the so-called ‘basic needs’ approach was a failure. Indeed, with most aid projects being measured and evaluated against their contribution to economic growth, rather than welfare improvements, it is easy to infer that the focus of most funding agencies had in fact remained on economic growth (Nordtveit, 2007).

⁵²Cocoyoc is a city in the Mexican state of Morelos.

From the 1950s until well into the 1970s the United Nations Education and Science Organisation (UNESCO) was a major influence in developing peripheral education. With the rise in decolonisation and the localisation of many government posts it encouraged many developing governments and donor agencies to make massive financial commitments to secondary and post-secondary education to fuel the demand for productive workers and civil servants (Sifuna, 2000). UNESCO's success in focussing people's attention on lifelong education, however, was short-lived and in the late 1970s severe criticism surrounding its constitutional foundation, basic design and its structural capacity to contribute to educational development surfaced (A. Jones, 1999; Watson, 1999) and a gradual decline in country membership ensued. Prior to 1960, the World Bank looked upon general education as an econometric consumption good and, as such, the responsibility of the nation state. Any educational components of funded projects required economic justifications on the basis of manpower skills production (Heyneman, 2003). During the 1970s, however, a subtle policy shift took place that transferred items such as textbooks and reading materials from being categorised as a 'recurrent expense' (and therefore ineligible for funding) to an 'infrastructure', conforming to the Bank's lending objectives. This policy shift together with UNESCO's reduced influence paved the way for the World Bank to enter the educational arena, despite its paltry experience or expertise in the sector (Tolley, 2003).

What was happening in New Zealand

Prior to WWII New Zealand's engagement with its Pacific neighbours centred largely on its colonial dependencies firstly in the Cook Islands and Niue (1901) and later in Western Samoa (1919) and Tokelau (1925), as well as in Fiji, Tonga and the Gilbert and Ellice Islands (now Kiribati and Tuvalu) as proxy for Britain's colonial administration (Coxon, 2002). It was not, however, until after WWII that the extent of New Zealand's "... shock[ing] neglectful[ness] of its Pacific dependencies" (Fraser, cited in Beeby, 1992:211) was exposed. Amid the dawning of 'under development' and changing world order, New Zealand strived to define itself a role as an assertive strategic player in the Pacific and early development plans focused largely on supporting its administration and increasingly after 1945 in upgrading basic health education and infrastructure as part of its responsibilities as a colonial power (Overton, 2009). Up until then, any basic provision of education was solely the

domain of Christian church missions, which by then had become prolific across the region. To this day, the Church plays a crucial role in education delivery in all Pacific Island countries (PIC). With New Zealand's Prime Minister, Peter Fraser (1940-1949), active in the post-war establishment of the IMF and the World Bank, New Zealand played a significant part in determining the international structure for decolonisation (Coxon, 2002). As alluded to earlier, the economic, social and political 'development' framework proposed fostered stable states who were "well disposed to their colonial neighbours" (Wesley-Smith, 1994: 197), thus suiting the strategic interests of the colonisers over addressing the interests of the colonised. Notwithstanding, New Zealand's policy for the Pacific became centred on preparation for self-government, with education as a cornerstone – seeing investment in human capital as the key to economic growth and modernisation. New Zealand's approach to education development⁵³, under C E Beeby⁵⁴, echoed Rostow's stages of modernisation, and aspired to achieve in a decade what industrialised countries had taken generations to achieve (Renwick, 1998). New Zealand's first educational aid programme (1960) aimed primarily at facilitating the provision of qualified indigenous personnel for public service positions and the development of a workforce with the 'modern' skills and attitudes deemed necessary for economic development (Coxon, 2002). Under an 'Islands' Division within the New Zealand Department of Education (DOE)⁵⁵, activities were coordinated to introduce New Zealand syllabi, supply contract teachers, and administer scholarships to educate the most able (and elites) in New Zealand (Coxon, 2002).

By the end of the seventies self-government in its former territories and independence in other island nations was gaining ground. The 'catch-up' educational approach, fundamental to the modernisation project, was applied in more and more countries and gradually the need for more senior secondary and vocational schooling became critical, along with the need for the development of localised tertiary education. To these ends, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand were

⁵³ At this stage development activity was centred on the Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau and Western Samoa.

⁵⁴ Clarence Edward Beeby was New Zealand's Director-General of Education from 1940 and chief education advisor to the government until 1960. As Renwick points out, "the combination of Fraser's political vision and Beeby's professional leadership was unique in New Zealand's educational history. Without Fraser's commitment to the removal of educational inequality, there would have been no political backing for the educational reconstruction that Beeby superintended" (Renwick, 1998: 3).

⁵⁵ This division became known as 'Pacific Education' and remained located within the International Division of the Department of Education until the late 1980s.

instrumental in establishing the University of the South Pacific (USP) in 1968 to provide tertiary education to the eleven countries formerly under their administration (Coxon, 2002, 2003)⁵⁶.

(ii) The 1980s to 2000

The 1980s (sometimes termed the ‘lost decade’) became known for the dramatic theoretical sea change in aid thinking that took place. From being influenced by dependency theory and neo-nationalism ideologies, which encouraged state intervention and expansion (Robb, 2005), there was a definitive move towards a strongly neo-liberal framework and severe policy reforms aimed at curbing developing countries’ rising debt. A major new instrument, structural adjustment loans (SALs), and the policy reforms they demanded (structural adjustment programmes, SAPs), dramatically reduced the role of the state by downsizing public sector, reducing barriers to trade, cutting education and health budgets, and promoting privatisation (Hettne, 2009). Free market economists, such as Peter Bauer and Martin Wolf, became influential contending that governments must step back and allow the market do its work. Orchestrated by the World Bank and IMF, the neoliberal backlash in development economics gained momentum with “globalism entering development discourse as immanent and inevitable progress: the modernisation paradigm globalised and simplified” (Hettne, 2009: 91). Thus, the beginnings of *globalisation as a development theory* emerged – structural reforms followed by integration into the global economy (Hettne, 2009). With more and more donors making economic development through structural adjustment the objective of their aid, large swathes of the developing world were introduced to free market economics (Silloway Smith, 2010b). Unequal international relations, as perpetrators of development problems, were put aside in favour of the imposition of conditionalities to promote internal solutions to individual developing nation problems; such solutions were seen to lie in ‘good’ governance, democracy and human rights (Hettne, 2009).

The neo-liberal development ideology influenced an increasing number of multilateral donors with varying knock-on effects. For example, under the Yaoundé (1959-74) and Lomé (1976-00) conventions the European Union’s development

⁵⁶ USP is jointly now owned by the governments of 12 member countries: Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Samoa.

policy for the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries was rooted in colonial and neo-colonial relations, promoting ‘associationism’ and selectively favourable trading arrangements. Coming under increasing pressure from the US and World Trade Organisation (WTO) trading privileges between the ACP countries and Europe were abandoned under the 2000 Cotonou Agreement⁵⁷. As the so-called ‘pyramid of privilege’ shifted to benefit countries ‘near abroad’ of Europe, the ACP countries have become increasingly marginalised (Hettne, 2009).

Alongside neo-liberal initiatives at government level, the eighties also saw a significant rise in activity by non-government organisations (NGOs)⁵⁸ as a means of distributing ODA and private philanthropy. Increasingly, NGOs sought to intervene on global health and education issues, and promoted the view that through civil society engagement countries could be empowered to help themselves (Silloway Smith, 2010b). Increased activity and lobbying by NGOs, both locally and internationally, drew attention to the negative impacts of adjustment loans, in particular the soaring debt levels and the detrimental social impacts of the general deterioration of public services in health and education. The realisation that ‘development’ was far too complex for ‘economic growth’ to be the sole solution led to the conclusion that, rather than promoting growth and poverty reduction, many aid flows were making countries more vulnerable and indeed contributed to the debt crisis (Robb, 2005). The discovery of links between development and economic, political and social indicators, and in particular associations between educated populations, higher life expectancy, lower fertility and an enhanced growth rate (Barro, 1996) inspired many aid agencies to start to rethink and refocus the direction of their aid and assistance.

Events ending the Cold War largely dominated the nineties and brought with them a dramatic redistribution of global power which significantly favoured the West due to the collapse of the Soviet bloc. Notwithstanding, the growing economic and

⁵⁷ The ‘Cotonou Agreement’ or ‘ACP-EC Partnership Agreement’ signed on 23 June 2000 in Bénin was colluded for a twenty-year period from March 2000 to February 2020, and entered into force in April 2003. It forms the framework for the EU's relations with 79 countries from the ACP and, compared to preceding agreements and conventions, it “represents further progress in a number of aspects. It is designed to establish a comprehensive partnership, based on three complementary pillars: development cooperation; economic and trade cooperation; and the political dimension” (http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/acp/overview/cotonou-agreement/index_en.htm).

⁵⁸ Between 1970 and 1990 global transfers to NGOs rose from US\$200m to US\$7.2billion (Hefferan et al., 2009, cited in Silloway Smith, 2010: 15).

social gaps occurring around the world were thought to have fuelled further conflicts, genocide and increased terrorism (Hettne, 2009; Robb, 2005). In reaction, policy and system reform were identified as key to improving health and education. Project-based initiatives, however, were seen as too limited (in both reach and time) for donors to influence policy (Hill, 2002). To address this gap, a mechanistic, linear ‘logical framework’ (or ‘logframe’) approach was designed to expound donors’ sights for improved economic, governance, health or education policies by clarifying their activities and their outcomes for poverty reduction. Some would argue, however, that what emerged was yet another ideal one-size-fits-all instrument of donor control (Robb, 2005).

In support of the social aspect of development, the 1990s was punctuated by a plethora of the United Nations sponsored summits, conferences and meetings⁵⁹ which resulted in new definitions of poverty, rubrics by which to measure it, and a flood of international declarations and resolutions focused on raising social wellbeing: Education for All (EFA) was a case in point. In addition, World Bank lending to social projects increased with its concurrent Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) initiative, a debt reduction strategy aimed at poor countries considered to have ‘sound’ economic policies. Within the parameters of the scheme these countries became ‘eligible’ to have their debts significantly reduced (Robb, 2005).

Amid growing recognition of the links between poverty, social development and conflict a new discourse of intervention – humanitarian intervention – emerged as an extension to international development assistance (Hettne, 2009). Dubbed ‘humanitarian emergency’ and couched as promoting democracy and ‘good governance’, punishing human rights abuses and preventing anarchy, the legitimised development discourse of forging ‘human security’ gave external powers’ involvement in domestic crises and challenged established principals of territorial sovereignty (Hettne, 2009). In some case, it legitimised “military intervention in the service of human rights” (Hettne, 2009: 99), a scenario that played out in Solomon

⁵⁹ These included the 1990 UN Conference on Least Developed Nations; the 1990 World Conference on Education for All, Jomtien, Thailand; the 1992 Rio Earth Summit; the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna; the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995; the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995, which laid the foundations for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); and the 1995 Commission on Sustainable Development.

Islands following civil unrest there from 1998-2003 (this will be expanded in Part Two, Section B).

With greater attention being paid in development to ‘human’ social issues during the 1990s, the World Bank and other major agencies recognised that institutional and organisational changes were needed in order to achieve significant policy implementation shifts. Although local actor involvement (or ‘participation’) was becoming vogue at project level, through approaches such as participatory rural assessment (PRA) (Chambers, 1997), the Bank’s vision was to engage the poor in situational analysis under the guise of *participatory poverty assessment* (PPA), an approach endorsed in 1996. This became the precursor to the Bank’s Comprehensive Development Frameworks (CDF) and finally Poverty Reduction Strategy Plans (PRSPs) which developed towards the turn of the century⁶⁰.

Despite greater attention being paid to the lives of the poor and more explicit quantifications of poverty becoming available for donors to better tailor and monitor their aid, during the 1990s dissatisfaction with the aid system (at both project implementation and policy lending levels) and its ability to reduce poverty was growing (Robb, 2005). With the new millennium looming and growing turmoil in the global markets, the end of the twentieth century was marked by mass demonstrations against globalisation and a growing opinion that the last forty years of aid had failed. Easterly’s (2001: 13) opinion that “the Dollars 1,000bn spent on aid since the 1960s, with the efforts of advisers, foreign aid givers, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, have all failed to attain the desired results” is well cited, threatening that the end of the century might also mark the end of ‘development’. Realistically, however, this was unlikely to happen as ‘development’ (as an organisational phenomenon) was now a sector of economic activity involving a multitude of workers with far too many interests at stake for the industry simply to disintegrate (Rist, 2008).

⁶⁰ The notion of the PRSP initiative requires recipient governments to develop a national development plan focusing on growth and poverty reduction, formally integrating social policy with plans for macro-economic stability, liberalisation and debt repayments within a medium term expenditure framework (MTEF) (Mundy, 2006). Using participatory methodology, a PRSP requires governments to fully identify the incidence and causes of poverty and develop a national programme of targeting expenditure on measures to reduce it. Ideally this approach should encourage national ‘ownership’ of development planning and accountability. Critics argue, however, that this approach can lead to forced consensus – or no consensus- to adopt contextually inappropriate initiatives which favour stability and liberalisation over social development. It is also argued, however, that the PRSP process has had the specific effect of bringing about much tighter integration of educational development planning into development expenditure planning, often favouring the reallocation of resources towards primary or basic education (Mundy, 2006).

Rather, another development rethink for aid and practice was sparked. Thus, the turn of the century marked the emergence of a ‘new aid architecture’ focused on governance, country policies, global targets, partnership and harmonisation.

In terms of education, 1980 saw the publication of the World Bank’s Education Sector Policy Paper that marked the point at which the education sector officially became a Bank priority lending area and confirmed that all parts of the education system, from elementary to tertiary, were legitimate objects for Bank assistance (Tolley, 2003). In 1995 an education sector review “Priorities and Strategies for Education” (World Bank, 1995) further established what the Bank saw as its main educational role: to “provid[e] advice designed to help governments develop their own education policies suitable for the circumstances of their own countries” (ibid.: 14). Copious references were made to its interpretation of the issues arising from the World Education Conference (Jomtien 1990) and the education priorities set out in the International Development Targets⁶¹. In 1999, the first major policy review of the 1980 Education Sector policy was published. Criticised for its emotive language and its “laundry list of altruistic platitudes” (Heyneman, 2003: 330), the Bank’s apparent focus on poverty alleviation masked its ultimate quest for stability and macro-economic growth, and its need to demonstrate cost effectiveness, efficiency and good rates of return (Tolley, 2003).

What was happening in New Zealand

Localisation formed the major thrust in New Zealand’s education development for the Pacific Islands region throughout the 1980s, mainly in the primary sector at national level and in tertiary sector at regional level. Amid concerns that ‘education’ had failed to deliver the promised economic growth, the New Zealand curriculum offered in its dependencies⁶² and the western academic education model espoused by the Church in other countries was increasingly seen as irrelevant. Increasing calls were made for the development of more ‘relevant’ national curricula and local assessment systems, with the effect that national teacher training institutes and curriculum development units were set up to develop and deliver local programmes

⁶¹ These later become known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

⁶² New Zealand has legal commitment to maintain the apparatus of government and service delivery in its dependent countries; namely Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau. Western Samoa (now Samoa), was governed by New Zealand from 1920-62 under a mandate of the League of Nations and is considered a fourth dependency.

reflective of individual countries' socio-cultural context, funded by multi- and bilateral donors.

These moves towards localisation are significant in that they indicate a preparedness among donors (and New Zealand in particular) to listen to the collective 'voice' of Pacific educators, made louder by the rise of regional cooperation under the auspices of workshops, seminars and conferences bringing regional educators together to work on solutions to the region's education challenges (Coxon, 2002). New Zealand's willingness to engage in these debates, to include regional academics/educators in its activities around the region, and its responsiveness to the needs expressed in these dialogues endeared it to many Pacific nations, earning the description of exhibiting "benevolent humanitarianism" by a prominent Fijian educationalist (Baba, 1987, quoted in Coxon, 2002: 64).

The global economic crises of the 1980s, however, began to impact on the Pacific during the 1990s with donor development policy in the region coming under increased scrutiny from the global watchdogs, such as the international funding institutions (IFIs) and the OECD's DAC. At home, under a new Labour government, severe public sector restructuring⁶³ started from 1984 and quickly gathered speed. With the neo-liberal emphasis gradually impacting on policies for the Pacific significant shifts in procedures and practice became evident, particularly in its aid policy (Overton, 2009; Scheyvens & Overton, 1995). In 1991, the National Minister of Foreign Affairs called for "a 'more contemporary focus [because] an injection of realism is long overdue' " (Coxon, 2002: 65) which reflected New Zealand's desire to chart a "...new emphasis on New Zealand's policy in the region" (ibid.) and positioning of itself as an exemplar and instigator of neo-liberal adjustment policies across the region. Encouraging Pacific Island governments to emulate New Zealand by deregulating their economies, together with its explicit concerns to pursue its own economic interests, clearly affected its bilateral relationships with many Pacific states (Coxon, 2002; Coxon & Baba, 2003).

⁶³ Reform of New Zealand's economic and social institutions, starting from 1984, took place with considerable speed. Known as the New Public Management (NPM), the reforms moved New Zealand's ranking for 'economic freedom' from 34/54 countries in 1975 to 3/141 countries by 1995, with the biggest increase occurring from 85-95. Although the such neo-liberal economic attitude was often in tension with the Labour government's (1984-1990) social agenda, it sat well with the National government's consistently "neo-liberal" attitude to social and economic reforms over the next nine years (1990-1999) (Humpage, 2011).

A critical result of the restructuring of New Zealand's aid ⁶⁴ was the establishment of an educational services export industry which inextricably linked aid, trade and foreign policy (Coxon, 1996). This 'repositioning' of international education services within MFAT not only reflected a political shift in perspective but also caused a significant loss of New Zealand's institutional knowledge about the Pacific (both professional and personal) that had been built up across the region over the previous forty years. Later, Professor Tupeni Baba⁶⁵, highly critical of New Zealand's and Australia's (following the 1984 Jackson Report) new development attitudes in the Pacific, referred to this shift as a move towards "... 'profiteering and a more overt neo-colonialism'" (Baba, 1996, quoted in Coxon, 2002: 64).

The 1990s signified a fundamental shift as New Zealand attempted to apply to the Pacific the structural adjustment processes pushed by the large lending institutions in other parts of the world during the 1980s. This recontextualised New Zealand's attitude towards education for the Pacific, shifting it more towards one of human capital theory, concentrated on human resource development (HRD) delivered through higher and tertiary education scholarships to New Zealand (Coxon, 2002, 2010). This not only fuelled strategy for the marketisation of its educational services but also largely downplayed the importance of socio-cultural contexts in teaching and learning (Coxon, 2010; Coxon & Baba, 2003). The approach ticked all the neo-liberal boxes: it was lucrative for New Zealand's economy as ODA scholarship funds effectively 'boomeranged' back to New Zealand in Pacific students fees; provided an opportunity for New Zealand to raise its education and technical expertise profile overseas; and instilled within its scholars a "familiarity with and a favourable disposition towards New Zealand"⁶⁶. By the end of the millennium, the bulk of New Zealand's educational assistance focused on tertiary and vocational training. Funding to non-tertiary education amounted to just 1.7 percent of the ODA budget (Reality of Aid, 2000: 220, 257), despite around 40 percent of its overall assistance being allocated to education (NZAID, 2001).

⁶⁴ The government aid programme, now referred to as New Zealand Official Development Assistance (NZODA) was administered through the Development Cooperation Division (DEV) within the then Ministry of External Relations and Trade. As previously noted, the Pacific Education department within DOE was dissolved in 1984.

⁶⁵ Professor Tupeni Baba is a Fijian academic and parliamentarian. Relevant here is that he was a founding member of the Fiji Labour Party in the mid 1980s and was elected to Parliament in 1987. Following the Rabuka coup later in 1987 he returned to his academic career where he remained until 1999.

⁶⁶ It is interesting to note, however, the lack of appreciation New Zealand placed on education as two-way process. There is no acknowledgement of the benefit New Zealand's students and society might gain in broadening their perspectives from the presence and participation of international students (Overton, 2010)

(iii) The New Millennium and New Aid Architecture

With the rise of globalisation and general disillusion with past aid agenda, Rist (2008: 226-7) describes turn of the century attitudes as follows:

It is no longer a question of promising ‘development’: that is of ensuring that everyone has the same well-being as that enjoyed by the ‘developed’ regions of the world. Everyone has accepted that the hope was unrealizable: both because inequalities are not being reduced, and because the environment would anyway not endure it. In this sombre context, marked especially by a fall in ‘development’ aid, efforts must now centre on putting to an end to the most socially unacceptable aspects of the situation and re-establishing an international consensus.

The General Assembly of the United Nations fulfilled this role in 2000 when it proclaimed the Millennium Declaration, calling for a halving of poverty by 2015; a call that was readily adopted by all UN member states. Subscribing to ‘achieving the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)⁶⁷’ has subsequently become the new international consensus, and the various ‘pro-poor’ strategies that are purported to “stimulate a type of growth ‘favourable to the poor’” (Rist, 2008: 232) have become the new grand plan, largely elaborated under a good governance agenda.

Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals

The landmark 1990 international conference in Jomtein, Thailand, established the first global consensus in education, known as Education for All (EFA) which critically linked poverty reduction and education. Although diluted from its original conception⁶⁸, members of the EFA Conference pledged to achieve universal ‘basic’ education⁶⁹ by 2000 which led to significant shifts in financial and technical assistance towards support of primary education as a basic human right (Buchert, 1995). The failure of the world to reach the EFA goal by 2000 fed into the composition of the eight Millennium Development Goals, with Goal 2 calling for all children everywhere to complete a full course of primary schooling by 2015, and Goal 3 for gender equity in primary education by 2005, and at all levels by 2015.

⁶⁷ The MDGs developed from the International Development Targets (IDT) set by the OECD in 1996. Briefly, the 8 MDGs currently are: 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; 2. Achieve universal primary education; 3. Promote gender equality and empower women; 4. Reduce child mortality; 5. Improve maternal health; 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; 7. Ensure environmental sustainability; and 8. Develop a global partnership for development. For more details see <http://www.beta.undp.org/undp/en/home/mdgoverview.html>

⁶⁸ See Torres (1999) for an in-depth discussion of the dilution of the EFA project.

⁶⁹ Part of the dilution of the notion of EFA was the general donor interpretation of the term ‘basic education’ as only primary schooling.

Relating world-wide poverty reduction to more equitable distribution of social economic and technical progress categorises primary education as a *global* rather than a *national* public good (GPG) with important implications, as highlighted by Binger (2003). First, it suggests that to ensure that the public good is not undersupplied the global development community must work cooperatively to produce a desired level of quantity and quality in primary education; how such action should be implemented would be determined through collective financing. Second, that by making it “non-rivalry in consumption and non-excluda[ble]”⁷⁰ (Binger, 2003: 4), its universal benefits should extend to both current and future generations; and thirdly, in ensuring that education is provided as a GPG, international and inter-governmental organisations and other actors can legitimately intervene in regional, national and even local affairs (Binger, 2003). With these issues in mind, critics argue that the *global* approach might be more one of stabilising the political, economic and social conditions of poor populations rather than any benevolent change of heart (Ilon, 1996).

The EFA targets and the MDGs certainly raised support for ‘basic education’ and succeeded in reducing the ideological differences between the major groups of multilateral and bilateral agencies (Robertson et al., 2007). As such, it created unprecedented interest among international donors as a mechanism to harmonise their initiatives around a common framework of priorities and targets. Thus, the universal right to primary education, and the provision of publicly funded ‘basic education’, emerged as one of the key pillars of the new global development model, uncontested by all factions. Education had thus become thoroughly embedded in the anti-poverty development approach, satisfying those consumed with a focus on equity and human rights, as well as those who viewed development more as a conceptualisation of productivity (Mundy, 2006).

Although designed to correct the mistakes of the past, the MDGs display eerily familiar modernisation theorising: that a large scale, multi-dimensional assault (on poverty) will *launch* poor countries onto new economic tracks and into

⁷⁰In terms of public goods, ‘non-rivalry’ means that the consumption of the good by one individual does not reduce its availability for consumption by others. ‘Non-excludable’ means that no one can be excluded from using the good.

development. According to economist Jeffrey Sachs⁷¹, the MDGs provide the means for the full and concurrent assault needed to *pull* developing countries out of their debilitating poverty trap and, once free of the trap, allow them to *launch* themselves into self-sustainable growth (J. Sachs, 2005). To facilitate the attack, Sachs and others saw the role of donors' increased ODA as critical to fill the anticipated annual finance gap, arousing renewed calls for countries to increase their ODA to the previously accepted target of 0.7% GNI. The notion of ODA filling the financial gaps in poor countries again resonates back to the Rostow era, signalling the premise that "take off into development can be simply purchased" (Silloway Smith, 2010a: 33) and that a linear path of pro-poor initiatives *will* lead to self-sustaining growth.

With a dearth of evidence that significant progress had been made by 2005 towards achieving the MDGs, Sachs put forward an implementation plan asserting that the international community must advance all initiatives simultaneously if achievement of goals is to be successful by 2015. Although seeming to acknowledge the deeply complex notion of poverty, Sachs and his team, through what has become known as the 'Millennium Project', devised a plan of 449 interventions to meet the 54 indicators of the 18 targets to be achieved under the eight MDGs. The resulting strategy document comprised a 451 page report accompanied by 3,300 pages of technical annexes (Easterly, 2006).

Despite grand 'one-size-fits-all' approaches failing in the past, and unsubstantiated claims to support the need for more aid to reduce poverty (Easterly, 2006), the MDG global targets have been embraced as orthodox objectives. Donors and NGOs alike have realigned their programmes towards achieving them, giving rise to what has been dubbed the '*new aid architecture*'. A persuasive language of 'partnership' has developed, legitimised by the eighth MDG which calls specifically for 'global partnership' and collective responsibility, despite some arguing that it serves no-one. As Easterly (2006:2), Jeffrey Sach's intellectual rival, points out,

If anything goes wrong, you can blame the other aid donors, you can blame the other factors that affected whether the goals were achieved or not, or you could even just say, "The reason I didn't achieve that goal was that I was working on this other goal." ... That's what happens when you have multiple goals, collective responsibility, and goals depending on things besides what the aid agents themselves do ... In this great, grandiose campaign to end

⁷¹ Sachs was Special Advisor to UN Secretary General on the MDGs and later became Director of the Millennium Project.

world poverty and achieve the Millennium Development Goals, nobody is individually responsible for any one result.

The World Bank and IMF's response to the global poverty focus was to introduce 'whole of country' comprehensive development frameworks (CDFs) and poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) which, in a similar way to their predecessor the SALs, serve as prerequisites to its funding⁷². In brief, in order for the Bank to reward those countries that hope to enact 'good' policies, intention must be supplied in the form of a 'country-led' PRSP. That is, a 'home-grown' comprehensive development plan developed in consultation with stakeholders and designed to reduce poverty through economic development. What constitutes such 'good' policy, however, is depicted in a 1,246 page World Bank PRSP sourcebook (Easterly, 2006). Critics argue that, in practice, PRSPs are largely blueprints that under-represent or undermine local wishes and ultimately condemn developing countries to conform to what the donor believes to be best.

While the World Bank concentrated largely on issues of good governance, the OECD turned its attention to the possibility that aid's past failure was due to the lack of a unified purpose. In consequence, the DAC called for more coordinated donor and country activity focused on achieving the global goals and led many bilateral donor agencies to shift their policy from managing 'projects in the field' to interacting with - and influencing - 'officials in capital cities' and across the sector. The Netherlands was first to jump from a project to a sector approach in 1994 (DANIDA 1994, cited in Bermingham, Christensen, & Mahn, 2009) and associated experimentation with various aid modalities began. As the following section will explain, this policy adjustment became a key cornerstone to the development of principles drawn up in the 2005 Paris Declaration and subsequent rise in donor support for sectoral programmes as a means of raising the overall impact of aid by improving its quality and effectiveness.

With the MDGs cutting across many sectors, aid effectiveness debates dominated numerous international forums, including the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development (2002)⁷³, the Rome Declaration on Harmonisation

⁷² These have since been vilified by some as "as gross neo-colonialism" (e.g. Chambers, 2005: 39). A discussion on PRSPs is beyond the scope of this thesis.

⁷³ <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/monterrey/MonterreyConsensus.pdf>

(2003)⁷⁴, the Joint Marrakech Memorandum (2004)⁷⁵ and the Paris High Level Forum on aid effectiveness (2005). The outcome of these discussions was formalised in the publication of the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness⁷⁶, which established five principles for effective aid along with a set of monitorable targets for changes in donor, recipient and joint behaviour (Rogerson, 2005). The Paris Principles effectively legitimised a new set of persuasive development rhetoric including, ‘empowerment’, ‘ownership’, ‘partnership’, ‘accountability’ and ‘transparency’.

The Paris Declaration

As explained in previous sections, two main issues underlie the Paris Declaration (PD). First is the view that a greater volume of aid is needed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. Secondly, that all parties should utilise and coordinate aid more effectively, through improved management and greater donor support to ‘partner’ country efforts to strengthen governance and improve development performance. Within the second strand, the DAC developed five principles. These provide the core content of the aid effectiveness agenda (Dodd & Hill, 2007), frame the expected donor-recipient relationship, and legitimise a new language of development:

Figure 2: The Paris Principles

<p>Ownership - Developing country governments should take the lead in developing national policies and implementing development</p> <p>Harmonisation – Donors should streamline and harmonise their procedures to reduce transaction costs</p> <p>Alignment - Donors should support the national development strategies and priorities, institutions and procedures</p> <p>Mutual accountability - Both parties should jointly assess progress and both parties should be able to hold the other to account on performance and delivery</p> <p>Managing for results – All parties should improve monitoring decision making and resource management</p> <p>(Adapted from Eurodad, 2008; OECD, 2005)</p>
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⁷⁴ <http://www.amg.um.dk/NR/rdonlyres/434C8858-AD51-4D8D-81EC-93078637987A/0/RomeDeclaration.pdf>

⁷⁵ <http://www.mfdr.org/2ndRoundtable.html>

⁷⁶ 125 countries and 26 international organisations now formally adhere to the Paris Declaration (Glennie, 2008; OECD, 2009). Progress on implementing the principles of the Paris Declaration have been reviewed at the 3rd High Level Forum - The Accra Agenda for Action in 2008 - and the 4th High Level Forum in 2011 -The Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation.

Touted as a practical, action-orientated road map, centred strongly around ‘results’ and setting specific indicators of progress and targets of good practice for each tenet⁷⁷, the Paris and Rome Declarations “represent a conceptual shift in aid effectiveness thinking in that they are global level agreements to be implemented at country level” (Dodd & Hill, 2007: 3). Evaluating the implementation of the Principles is an integral part of the Declaration itself. Moreover, monitoring and evaluation is focused at both the aid-recipient country and the development agencies; the aim being that such mutual commitment to the agenda will strengthen the potential impact (OPM/IDL, 2008). History, however, has already shown that prescriptive, unilateral and generic donor approaches have had little effect on development goals. Moreover, the notion of ‘mutual accountability’⁷⁸, in particular, must be questioned, not only as collusion without penalties (Rogerson, 2005) but also for raising unrealistic expectations about what an aid effective agenda can achieve (Dodd & Hill, 2007).

At the supra-sector level, principles, guidelines and monitoring procedures based on the Rome and Paris Declarations have emanated from the DAC. Following the High Level Forum in Accra in September 2008 several further specifications were added to the architecture: namely, improved *predictability* of donor funding to partner countries; better use of *country systems* to deliver aid; shifts in *conditionality* from prescriptive donor conditions to conditions led by developing countries’ own development objectives. Finally, expectations are that donors will *untie and relax restrictions* that prevent developing countries from competitively buying the goods and services (OECD, 2008).

With the shift from standalone projects to sectoral approaches already in motion by the end of the 1990s, the concept of *the sector wide approach* (SWAp) gained ground especially among donors in public sectors, chiefly in education and health. Indeed, the conceptual appeal has been so strong that, for some, SWAps have become synonymous with better aid effectiveness. That is, accompanied by some form of donor sectoral support, a SWAp purports to encourage country ownership, strengthen coordination between donors, promote harmonisation and alignment, lower

⁷⁷ See http://www.oecd.org/document/15/0,2340,en_2649_3236398_35401554_1_1_1_1.00.html and <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/57/60/36080258.pdf>

⁷⁸ This will be further explored later in the thesis.

transaction costs for government, improve strategic agreement and priority setting, and improve results in terms of access and outcomes, (Dickinson, 2011; Dodd & Hill, 2007). Greater sectoral coherence is seen as a practical and legitimate way forward for both government and donors. Paradoxically, however, as King points out, “achieving this new ownership ambition seems to involve donors in a much more invasive engagement with all the ‘development actors’ than the much maligned project mode” (King, 2008: 10).

This is an important point in the light of how the September 11 2001 (9/11) events radically altered the geo-political and geo-strategic activities of the dominant western powers. The ensuing rush towards anti-terrorism led, from the point of view of development aid, to three main consequences (Robertson, et al., 2007). Driven by different understandings of the causes of conflict and insecurity, the first relates to the variety of responses - and interventions - the threat of terrorism and conflict provoked. Some argued that development policy can act as an instrument against terrorism; that is, if terrorism is intimately linked to failed states then concentrating development assistance on countries where terrorism originates will interlink security-enhancing and development-enhancing activities (Brzoska, 2008; Robertson, et al., 2007). For others, such approaches were seen to contravene the very essence of development discourse as anti-poverty policy, arguing that the two fields should be kept separate (Brzoska, 2008).

The second main effect of 9/11 was that it stimulated the DAC to debate the official definition of what constitutes ODA. Consequently, for the first time since its inception, an ‘aid budget’ was allowed to include certain aspects of military and security funding⁷⁹ (Brzoska, 2008). Although this move was welcomed by many OECD countries, New Zealand opposed it as inappropriate (Waring, 2005). Unlike Australia, New Zealand did not raise security as a priority for its ODA at that time. The third consequence of 9/11 led some nations, most notably the US, to want to be increasingly identified as contributing in the humanitarian and development field. This desire for individual recognition bypasses multilateral organisations performing similar activities, potentially reducing incentives to pool funds through multilateral

⁷⁹ These changes relate to: management of security expenditure, enhancing civil society’s role in the security system, child soldiers, security system reform, civilian peace building, conflict prevention and resolution, and small arms and light weapons. See <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/36/13/31724752.pdf> for details

institutions (Robertson, et al., 2007) or donor harmonising mechanisms such as sector wide approaches. Indeed, by late 2005 security was beginning to replace the MDGs as the focus of international aid policy, challenging conventional approaches to aid (investment and growth) and refocusing on notions of power and influence, thus highlighting the ambiguities in aid relationships (Eyben, 2006).

The Sector Wide Approach

As an embodiment of the ‘new aid architecture’, the (unarticulated) theory of change underlying sector wide approaches (SWAs) is strongly consistent with the ‘effective aid’ agenda that centres on the premise that robust, legitimate institutions are central to sustainable development, both economically and socially (McNee, 2012). Conceptually, SWAs are intended to facilitate the emergence and development of strong institutions with deeply embedded local, political and cultural processes allowing governments to lead their ‘own’ development process (McNee, 2012).

Conceived originally as a ‘way of working’ in large African and Asian countries where a multitude of multilateral and bilateral donors, NGOs and private bodies are involved in a single sector, SWAs provided a framework for integrating the various contributions to engender the holistic development of, for example, the national education or health system (Buchert, 2002). Hill (2002) makes the point, however, that although a willingness for donors to forgo traditional sovereignty-based aid is implied⁸⁰, SWAs are solely a donor construct and arguably stem more from donors’ desire for greater opportunity to influence policy (under the guise of local ownership) than the wish to relieve recipient governments of the duplication and fragmentation brought on by a project approach. Thus, increasing coordination and communication among donors is largely a secondary advantage (Tolley, 2011).

Many in the literature are keen to emphasise that SWAs constitute an *approach* - neither a dogma nor a blueprint (in part to avoid the stigma of past development eras), stressing that it is “a working method ... an organizing principle based on a reallocation of responsibilities...” (Sector Wide Approach Support Group, 2004). While this invites the inclusion of context-specific factors, it might also

⁸⁰ This comment tends to exclude the US which, since 9/11, has tended to increase its national profile in overseas aid initiatives.

suggest an ambivalence and uncertainty: a ‘cover all bases’ approach. Equally, it provides particular donors or individual consultants with the pretext to emphasise different elements framed within their own interpretations (Buse, 1999b cited in Hill, 2002).

There is no single definition of a SWAp. It is generally accepted, however, that in its ideal form SWAps can be described as,

... long term partnerships, involving government, civil society and donor agencies. Under the leadership of the national authorities, partners commit their resources to a collaborative program of work that includes the development of sectoral policies and strategies, institutional reform and capacity building. [In the case of education, t]he aim of these reforms is improvement in the quality and accessibility [of education]. These activities are underpinned by the preparation of mid-term resource projections and expenditure plans, and the establishment of management and financial systems (by both partner governments and donor agencies) for procurement, and the disbursement and accounting of funds. Implicit in the collaboration is the development of processes for partners to negotiate strategic and management issues, and monitoring and evaluation of progress against agreed criteria (Cassels, 1997; Foster, 2000; Brown et al., 2001 cited in Hill, 2002: 1728).

Drawn from three seminal works, Hill draws out the main elements of SWAps and introduces emerging ‘effective aid’ lexicon, wherein aid givers have become ‘development partners’ and aid recipients ‘partner governments’. Hill draws attention to the use of “vocabulary with moral overtones” (p. 1729), where ‘partnership’ and ‘ownership’, ‘efficiency’ and ‘empowerment’ implicitly de-emphasise the asymmetry of power. Within this rhetoric, *assistance* becomes ‘influence’ and *conditionality* ‘mutual responsibility’. Moreover, in a world of partnership (with everyone involved) shared risk hopes for greater impact, but also conveniently diffuses the blame when things go wrong (Hill, 2002; Klees, 2002).

As Smith (2005) and Riddell (2007a) reflect, ‘government’ is central to SWAp rhetoric. While some see this as a response to criticism of the donor-led project approach, which often undermined governments’ priorities and processes (H. Smith, 2005), others argue its potential to diminish participation of non-government and civil society organisations in sector dialogue or policy decision making. Such exclusion, or neglect, is signalled in the generally accepted UK definition: a “SWAp should *ideally* involve stakeholder consultation in the design” (DFID, 2001). In many countries, including those in the Pacific, non-government, faith based or private providers are

crucial stakeholders, especially in education or health delivery; it is critical that their voices be heard for realistic policy planning and effective sector development.

Figure 3 summarises the key components of a SWAp. Interestingly, it has become a moot point as to whether these are regarded as pre-requisites or outcomes of the approach. The original conceptualisation drew on the premise that more aid to better-governed countries maximised the impact of aid. Thus, the Figure 3 components were considered pre-requisites⁸¹. As the approach spread, a second conceptualisation emerged, that of using a sector wide approach to *generate* good governance. In such cases, the components in Figure 3 become more a list of (ideal) outcomes. Therein lies a quandary. As previous experience has shown, few of the possible strategies for building good governance (technical assistance, conditionality, strengthening civil society etc.) have proved particularly effective in the past (McNee, 2012) so why should they work under a SWAp?

Figure 3: Key components of a SWAp

<p>A clear, nationally-owned sector policy and strategy;</p> <p>A medium-term expenditure programme that reflects the sector strategy;</p> <p>Systematic arrangements for programming the resources that support the sector;</p> <p>A performance monitoring system that measures progress and strengthens accountability;</p> <p>Broad consultation mechanisms that involve all significant stakeholders; and</p> <p>Formalised, government-led processes for aid co-ordination and dialogue at the sector level.</p> <p>(DAC, 2006: 38)</p>

The emphasis on relying on government procedures is a key element of a SWAp. This, however, tends to mask the considerable behavioural change required of both donors and aid-dependent governments. For recipient governments, this means developing cooperative working relationships between different directorates within, for example, Ministries of Education, as well as between ministries. For the funding agencies, it means learning to work together to coordinate support across multiple agencies, and to put more trust in government systems. Moreover, SWAps also require a different approach to planning. As noted above, it should *include* civil society in policy dialogue, transparent financial management procedures and mutual

⁸¹The expectation was that governments initially carry out extensive country assessments and develop 'credible' sector strategies detailing priorities, and subsequently develop an appropriate, costed, action plan.

accountability, as well as government-led coordination of funding agencies (Riddell, 2007a). In education systems where private and /or voluntary sectors play major roles, creating a single expenditure programme without some form of regulatory framework to embrace civil society organisations can be problematic (ibid.).

From the donor perspective, a sector approach essentially offers two development tools. One embraces management (the operation), the other the financial support mechanism. In terms of budget support, SWAps allow for funding experimentation to support recurrent costs as well as development expenditure; various forms⁸² have developed which can broadly be categorised as either sectoral budget support (SBS) or general budget support (GBS) (Riddell, 2007b). Thus, donor efforts are harmonised with economy of effort and all resources are channelled into implementation of the country strategy. From the country perspective, local stakeholders (e.g. Ministries of Education or Finance) are expected to take responsibility for the allocation of the centralised, pooled funds to previously identified sector priorities, and to monitor progress towards predetermined outcomes such that one set of common reports can then be issued to all stakeholders (King & McGrath, 2002; Ward, 2002).

It is easy to see the conceptual appeal of SWAps; however, from experiences from countries with more ‘mature’ sector programmes, their application in practice has been problematic (Dodd & Hill, 2007; Hutton, 2004). In its ideal form, a SWAp is conceived as ideal governance supported by external development partners. As Riddell (2007b: 6) points out, “This is what makes it so difficult to criticize a SWAp [so] many of the stages ... are worthwhile ... to speak against the vision of a SWAp would be like decrying ‘mother’s milk’”. Evidence of SWAps providing the support required to bring about sustainable, large-scale education sector reform, in particular, is only starting to be examined (H. Smith, 2005). To date, the majority of studies and evaluations emanate from a relatively small set of large African or East Asian countries, with multi-million populations and involvement by numerous donors. Very few studies have been found from small or geographically isolated island states. Of the 14 articles (1999-2007) looked at by Dodd and Hill (2007) concerning donor co-

⁸² In terms of funding, a central single repository (a ‘pool’ or ‘basket’) might be created into which donors place funds in support of a national policy programme; alternatively, parallel or earmarked funding may be supplied to certain initiatives identified in the strategic plan.

ordination and SWAps at country level, nearly half focussed on Bangladesh or Uganda, and many highlighted difficulties with implementation. One of the most common criticisms Dodd and Hill reported was donors failing to understand the politics of reform, focussing more on technical issues than political relationships between those involved. Pushing reforms without appreciating and working with those whose interests are served and whose are diminished by the intervention will inevitably led to unsustainable reform.

New Zealand's changing attitude to aid in the Pacific

By the end of the 1990s New Zealand began to catch up with the international trends (Overton, 2009) as considerable disillusionment built up among non-government organisations (NGOs) working across the region under the National government's⁸³ 'aid-trade' approach to development administered through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) (Davenport & Low, 1999). A less than impressive OECD peer review of New Zealand's aid profile (OECD, 2000) clearly signalled a need for the new Labour government (1999-2008) to undertake an urgent, independent, consultative ministerial review of its ODA programme. Among its findings, the Ministerial Review Team (2001) noted that the Development Division of MFAT lacked a clear mission; had no stated goals, defined objectives or established priorities; and exercised unpredictable, short term non-specialist staffing procedures. Overall, "a serious confusion of purpose" was identified and it was recommended that a "a new autonomous institution to support a staff of development professionals dedicated to the achievement of one clear goal: poverty elimination" was established (Ministerial Review Team, 2001: 4,6).

New Zealand's increasing engagement with the international debates surrounding Education for All (EFA), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the better aid effectiveness agenda signalled a sea change in New Zealand's attitude towards its development policies. A new *semi-autonomous* aid agency, named NZAID⁸⁴, was created in July 2002. Identifying closely with the 'new aid era' emerging internationally (Glennie, 2008: 21), poverty alleviation became the focus of the agency's mission statement and achieving the Millennium Development Goals

⁸³ The conservative National government held power in New Zealand from 1990-1999.

⁸⁴ New Zealand Agency for International Development.

(MDGs) its objective (Overton, 2009)⁸⁵. In response to calls from the Financing for Development conference in Monterrey, the ODA budget was increased by 81% (although it still only reached 0.3% of GNI). In 2003, NZAID heeded calls for greater donor collaboration and closer alignment with national strategic plans and became instrumental in introducing the notion of a sector wide approach to education development in the Pacific. In 2005, it joined over 120 countries and institutions and embraced the Paris Declaration's (PD) Principles for Better Aid Effectiveness. In 2008, it reaffirmed its commitment for addressing the global agenda for combating poverty on multiple fronts as detailed in the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA). Over time, it developed its strategic priorities into three distinct goals: the protection of human rights; building sustainable livelihoods; and the development of safe, just and inclusive societies, which, as Banks et al (2011) point out, "mov[ed] the agency further away from the neoliberal focus of the previous decade" (Banks, Murray, Overton, & Scheyvens, 2011: 11) and towards social consciousness.

The new poverty focus questioned New Zealand's distribution of aid across the Pacific. Under the UN's Human Development Index poverty indicators, poverty was identified to be more prevalent in the larger Melanesian countries (e.g. Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands), which historically received less per capita aid from New Zealand than some Polynesian countries that had benefited from major long-term support (as realm states), or had strong social investment benefits and high migration opportunities (e.g. Fiji and Tonga) (Overton, 2009). The refocus on Melanesia was to positive effect but a blanket adoption of the MDGs and applying a general strategy for education across the region to align with global targets of achieving universal primary access and gender equity risked overshadowing the vast diversity of the region. For example, although Tonga has long enjoyed near 100 percent primary attendance while the proportion of children completing a six-year cycle in Solomon Islands is around 30 and 40 percent (Coxon, 2010), access to education of equitable quality and issues of relevance are pertinent to both (see Coxon & Tolley, 2010).

⁸⁵ The creation of NZAID, and the consequent separation of aid policy goals and non-aid policy goals, was not without its critics, as noted in the 2005 Review of NZAID (Waring, 2005). An MFAT briefing for the Review noted that "the concentration on poverty elimination has seen some conflict between NZAID and MFAT on issues of trade and development, particularly as it relates to access to markets and WTO negotiations in respect to developing countries in the Pacific" (p.9).

The rising security focus following 9/11 and revisions to the definition of ODA⁸⁶, further supported calls for significant geopolitical shifts in aid. With the collapse of the ANZUS security treaty in 1984⁸⁷ and the United States' subsequent pullout from the Pacific following the end of the Cold War, Australia and New Zealand were left to assume a general 'responsibility' for the Pacific. Following 9/11 however, Australia, under PM John Howard (1996-2007), joined the US-led coalition on the 'war on terror' and assumed the so-called role of Washington's "sheriff" in the South Pacific (Ratuva, 2011). Regarding the Pacific as a buffer for its own national security and to counter any potential breeding grounds for terrorists (Ratuva, 2011), Australia saw its mission as "[taking] charge of the 'failed states' that make up what Washington calls an 'arc of instability' in the Pacific region" (Pilger, 2004)⁸⁸.

The unrest in Solomon Islands (1998-2003) became a test case for regional security (Wainwright, 2003). Fearing the country would collapse into a 'failed state' and thus become a potential harbour for terrorism, or a source of mass out-migration to Australia, Australia proposed a regional intervention. In June 2003, Solomon Islands Government accepted this offer and the Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) was deployed from July. RAMSI troops took over policing the country, under the mandate to restore law and order, and (mainly) Australian advisors were placed in key government posts to address corruption and poor governance issues and re-establish an economy (Kabutaulaka, 2004)⁸⁹ and many RAMSI personnel remain entrenched in Solomon Islands today. Due largely to New Zealand's support for RAMSI, aid to Solomon Islands increased from NZD5.8m in 2000 to NZD22.1m in 2006. Support to Papua New Guinea and Indonesia also increased significantly, topping the allocations, representing a complete reversal from earlier trends (Overton, 2009: 6)⁹⁰.

⁸⁶ See p.76.

⁸⁷ Set up in 1951, the Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty (ANZUS) was a military alliance set to foster defence cooperation in the Pacific Ocean area. The tripartite agreement survived until 1984 when New Zealand, under its anti-nuclear policies, refused to allow US nuclear warships to enter its waters thus making the relationship untenable. The Australia-US alliance remained in full force.

⁸⁸ This alarmist spin is emphasised by highlighting that five of the World Bank's 35 'fragile states' (14%), fall within the Pacific region, constituting the "highest concentration in the world" (Ellis, 2010). The Pacific's 'fragile' states are: Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, Tonga and Vanuatu (see O'Brien, 2007).

⁸⁹ RAMSI critics, however, suggest that Australia's initial motivation was more driven by risks to Australia's "potentially valuable" business and investment opportunities (ASPI Report p.14, cited in Dixon, 2006).

⁹⁰ In 1996 New Zealand's bilateral aid went primarily to the 'realm states' and Samoa. The Realm of New Zealand is the entire area in which the Queen of New Zealand (ERII) is head of state. The realm comprises New Zealand, the

Over the Labour term strong NZAID-NGO links were forged. With many NGOs having diverse relationships with communities built up over 40 years this reflected a growing maturity and trust in state and civil society partnerships. Support focused particularly on strengthening partnership, gender equity, participation and community capacity in partner countries. During the 2000s New Zealand's emphasis on development with a social conscience managed to remove some of the rough neo-liberal edges of previous decades (Thrupp & Irwin, 2010) and its reputation as a reliable and innovative development partner rose considerably; it is described as being "more responsive, closer to the ground, less arrogant, less driven by multinational or national economic objectives" (FADTRC, 2003: 9.33).

New Zealand's engagement with SWAps

The formation of NZAID in 2002 coincided with DFID's plan to withdraw its support and move out of the Pacific and East Timor⁹¹. As part of this withdrawal, NZAID seconded a senior education officer from DFID to assist with the development of New Zealand's first basic education for development policy⁹². The seconded officer had extensive experience of developing a sector wide approach in Uganda (Ward, 2002) and played a significant role in influencing NZAID's policy direction for aid delivery to education in the Pacific (Coxon & Tolley, 2005).

NZAID's first education policy statement, *Achieving Education for All*, (NZAID, 2002c) reflected the recommendations made in the DAC 2000 review of New Zealand ODA (OECD, 2000) in terms of making a long-term commitment to the alleviation of poverty, and focusing on achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA) targets across the Pacific region (NZAID, 2002a, 2002b, 2003). While it placed priority on 'basic education' it gave emphasis to access to education as a human right and education as an ends in itself. This reflects the values-based approach to development that underpinned NZAID's work and highlights its shift from the more economic and self-interested approaches of previous administrations and of many other donor agencies (Coxon, 2010). Its

Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau, as well as the Ross Dependency in Antarctica. These countries have constitutional ties to New Zealand as self-governing but associated states. All peoples of these countries are New Zealand citizens.

⁹¹ See <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/aboutdfid/dev-committee/dcmeeting18dec01.asp> Section 9.i.

⁹² New Zealand's education support was previously largely tertiary-biased, mainly in the form of overseas scholarships. In 2000 just 1.7% of ODA was spent on non-tertiary education, despite about 40% of its overall assistance being allocated to education (Tolley, 2003).

definition of 'basic education' also exhibited a wider understanding of the concept than the general benchmark of five years of primary schools⁹³ (Coxon, 2010). Instead it regarded early childhood, primary and junior secondary education; literacy programmes; indigenous education initiatives; technical-vocational education and training; and distance learning as all important mechanisms of achieving basic education (NZAID, 2003). In addition, peripheral activities helped to reclaim New Zealand's reputation for listening to Pacific voices. NZAID supported revitalised academic debates on the role, function and relevance of contemporary education in the Pacific under the title, 'Re-thinking Pacific Education'⁹⁴.

At the second Pacific Forum Education Ministers Meeting in 2002, NZAID spearheaded suggestions that the region move away from an individual project approach and adopt a sector wide approach as the primary mechanism for educational support and donor collaboration. Solomon Islands was the first to adopt the approach in 2003; by 2008 NZAID was playing a central and coordinating role in six Pacific nations among an increasing number of donors, including the World Bank (Tonga), the Asia Development Bank (Samoa), the European Union (Solomon Islands) and the Australian aid agency, AusAID, (Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa) (Coxon, 2010). In each case, however, rather than embrace all the areas NZAID had identified as important areas of basic education (see above), the SWAs focussed on assisting the education ministries to improve their delivery of the first 8 – 10 years of schooling through a "sound macro-economic framework, an agreed and credible education sector strategy framework, and effective alignment of donor support to this framework through the improvement of government systems and harmonisation of donor efforts" (NZAID, 2003: 15). For NZAID, focus was placed squarely at improving access, equity and quality of 'basic education' as a development tool.

By the end of 2008 NZAID was globally respected and judged to be a relatively well-functioning government aid programme (J. Spratt, 2012). With a clear goal of building a safe and just world free of poverty (NZAID, 2002c) it had placed education as a central pillar in its broad-based, pro-poor development policy and applied a sector wide approach to delivering its support.

⁹³ See Torres (1999, 2001) for discussions of the international watering down of EFA concepts to reducing Basic Education to access to just 5 yrs of primary schooling.

⁹⁴ See publications such as: (Coxon & Taufe'ulungaki, 2003; IOE USP, 2002; Sanga, Chu, Hall, & Crawl, 2005; Sanga & Taufe'ulungaki, 2005).

The first two years of National Government, from November 2008 had little immediate impact on New Zealand's aid activities 'on the ground' during the fieldwork period of this study, although significant changes were taking place at home and new directions are impacting activity abroad. For this reason, this is not the place to enter into discussion of the government's present aid policy. Suffice to say, that the most significant change to occur during the study period was the April 2009 decision to rescind NZAID's semi-autonomous status and reintegrate it into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) under the International Development Group (IDG). It has since become known as the New Zealand Aid Programme (NZAP). Touted as a cost saving and efficiency measure, the move indicated the government's desire to realign its bilateral activities more with its own economic and political agenda than on alleviating poverty in its neighbours⁹⁵. The core focus of the ODA programme is now "sustainable economic development" (MFAT, 2011: 3). There is, however, still a strong call for investment in education "to underpin all economic and social development" (Young, 2011). In the words of the Minister, "Increasingly, it is education that separates the relatively rich from the relatively poor. Education is the key to participation in the knowledge economy" (McCully, 2011). A recent communiqué announced New Zealand's intention to "provide \$145 million and Australia will provide \$158 million in addition to existing funding [to education in the Pacific] over the next four years. New Zealand will also invest \$122 million for scholarships and training over the same period" (TVNZ, 2011).

Summing up wider political implications of a sector wide approach

To complete this study of mainstream development and international aid the wider political implications of the sector wide approach are examined, particularly in relation to the focus on capacity development, that education is considered a global rather than an national public good and the concept of mutual accountability.

The focus on strengthening capacities in system-wide planning.

There is no point in saying that the government is in the driving seat if it does not know how to drive – teach us to drive first (a direct quotation from a Rwandan informant in H. Smith, 2005: 453).

⁹⁵ The Minister is reported to have referred to NZAID's poverty focus as "nebulous" and its aid efforts akin to "throwing money from helicopters and call[ing] that poverty elimination"(New Zealand Herald Online, 2009).

It is clear that a sector wide approach requires considerable workforce skills from all dimensions of a national education sector, as well as a different way of operating within development donors. For countries, capability in areas such as planning, prioritising and performance monitoring, as well as competence for high-level policy dialogue with donors, and financial nous to deal with financing modalities such as direct or sector budget support, are especially crucial. For donors, committing to longer-term engagement and relinquishing implementation control to partner countries, as well as having greater cooperation and dialogue with other donors are particularly pertinent. Many countries, therefore, acknowledge a need for considerable capacity building at all levels – central and local governments, partner stakeholders (faith-based or private providers), school principals, school management teams, teachers and community leaders. In addition, for informed decision making to take place capability to collect and respond to robust monitoring and evaluation data is required, together with the establishment of channels for information and knowledge to flow in all directions (top down, bottom up and horizontally).

‘Managing for results’ to provide clear indications of development outcomes of aid has led to considerable investment in education management information systems (EMIS), now a common component of sector wide approaches. All too often, however, the EMIS design is either contextually inappropriate or limited to data storage rather than data utilisation and knowledge generation (Hua & Herstein, 2003). Owing to weak data collection procedures or EMIS design, limited personnel skills, or cultures of secrecy, it is common in many countries that data made available donors do not meet their home-country reporting requirements. As a result, and counter to the principles of alignment and reduced transaction costs, donors conduct their own parallel reviews (Boak & Ndaruhutse, 2011).

Frequently, however, a lack of directional leadership and/or poor management becomes a “justification for an increased donor role in coordination to the extent that ‘putting locals in the driving seat’ becomes an over-worked and questionable analogy” (Hill, 2002: 1372). As noted in the quotation above, engaging government in the processes of ‘driving’ will engender the ideals of ownership and control. As Hill also points out, however, understanding the metaphor is culture-specific: for many it is often not the driver who is in control of a vehicle; instead it might be the

proprietor sitting in the back who determines where, and when, the vehicle is to move.

Under the principle of donor harmonisation, working more closely with counterparts to implement common programmes and procedures has meant that agency staff need to be able to adapt to a different type of management approach: one that demands much more time talking to counterparts and less time out visiting projects in the field (Eyben, 2010b). This creates need for different skill sets; not least, in-depth understanding of long-term planning and the complex relationship between education and poverty reduction. In addition, with domestic politics and local processes often relatively opaque (especially to outsiders), donors' knowledge of the sector and the country context has to be a lot deeper under a SWAp than the more technical project relationships previously demanded. In order for any capacity development to contribute to social transformation it has to go beyond a mere transfer of knowledge and skills; becoming involved with change, in terms of institutional development, necessarily places a strong emphasis on appreciating political and cultural factors that underlie the local formal and informal rules.

The shifting development landscape has also prompted an increasing number of development agencies to undergo internal restructuring and process reforms, resulting in "a good number of them attempting to *decentralise* the locus of decision-making to their country offices and to train their staff in the new aid modalities" (Riddell, 2007b: 4, emphasis added). This is an interesting contrast to a SWAp's *centralising* style that a developing country is expected to embrace: one that encompasses the country's entire education sector into one plan, and its entire funding (domestic and external) into one Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) - both rarely witnessed in most industrialised countries.

A further consequence of the centralised style of a SWAp is how to address the already difficult challenge that many provincial governments (or local divisions of central government agencies) face in establishing themselves as credible, effective public service institutions. In concentrating efforts on the centre, local institutions often find themselves marginalised both in political and administrative terms. Capacity building at the local government level - where the needs are arguably even greater - is then often overlooked (Foster, 2000).

Global public good

The new aid architecture of MDGs and EFA targets and consequent shift to conceptualising primary (and basic) education as a global public good (GPG) (Binger, 2003; Mundy, 2006) (see p.71) has provoked several political outcomes in terms of government-to-government relations. The first concerns the qualitatively different relationship between donors and partner governments under a SWAp: “where previously donor decisions were relatively insulated from domestic politics, the positioning of the SWAp makes donors more vulnerable to the local political process” (Hill, 2002: 1735). On the other hand, with donors becoming closely involved in central government development they potentially enjoy a disproportionate influence over national decision-making processes (Kasumba & Land, 2003), making recipient governments vulnerable to a ‘harmonised’ western orthodox agenda with, arguably, little room for manoeuvre or local innovation. This resonates with Binger’s (2003) comments, referred to earlier, that in presenting education as a *global* public good, international, inter-governmental organisations and other actors can legitimately intervene in regional, national and local affairs. Thus, with donors interested in everything within the sector, SWAps are more invasive for the government because everything is open to questioning.

Mutual accountability

Related to political influence is the concept of ‘mutual accountability’, perhaps the most controversial of the Paris Principles and the most difficult to put into practice, as relatively little guidance is provided in the Declaration. The PD suggests that in a true development partnership, commitments are reciprocal and that both sides of the relationship jointly assess progress and are accountable to the other on performance and delivery. This contrasts previous forms of accountability, which more explicitly reflected power imbalances in the aid relationship (Steer & Wathne, 2009), and where a recipient government was most often held responsible for project failure.

Binding partners together through shared values and reciprocal commitments, even in a voluntary process, still reflects a perception of aid as a contract and, as such, demands the identification of specific power holders. Conceptualising power in any relationship is dependent on an understanding of ‘mutual accountability’. From the

PD perspective, mutual accountability sets to strengthen mechanisms for regulating behaviour between autonomous parties, holding each of them to account for performance against pre-established objectives (Eyben, 2008). An alternative perspective, however, might be more about pursuing and acknowledging *mutual responsibility*. In reality, such distinctions are constrained by the global, political and economic structures that sustain the very inequities in aid relations that make mutual accountability so difficult. Inevitably it exemplifies the dominant ‘philosophical plumbing’⁹⁶ of donor organisations who view the world, not as an interrelated network, but as a collection of entities (Eyben, 2008).

With lines of accountability essentially running only between central administrations and the donor community, local stakeholders are not uncommonly overlooked or excluded from policy formulation, programme design and monitoring and evaluation procedures (Kasumba & Land, 2003). Such exclusion undermines fundamental SWAp principles – namely that sector plans are formed in partnership with *all* stakeholders.

A further implication of a sector approach is that combined bilateral budget support reduces the political advantage individual donors might gain in being seen, or claiming to support, particular initiatives within a particular country. Thus, a sector-wide approach is not simply a question of government-to government cooperation but involves donors in a complex political interplay consisting of many different stakeholders and political interests. The challenge for donor and government alike is to acknowledge the various actors, identify the motives underlying their involvement, and make explicit one’s individual role.

Sections B and C following will reflect on these political aspects as they trace national educational development and the implementation of a sector wide approach in Solomon Islands and Tonga respectively.

⁹⁶ Mary Midgley (2000) talks about ‘philosophical plumbing’ as the underlying (invisible) philosophical frameworks that nobody notices until it goes wrong.

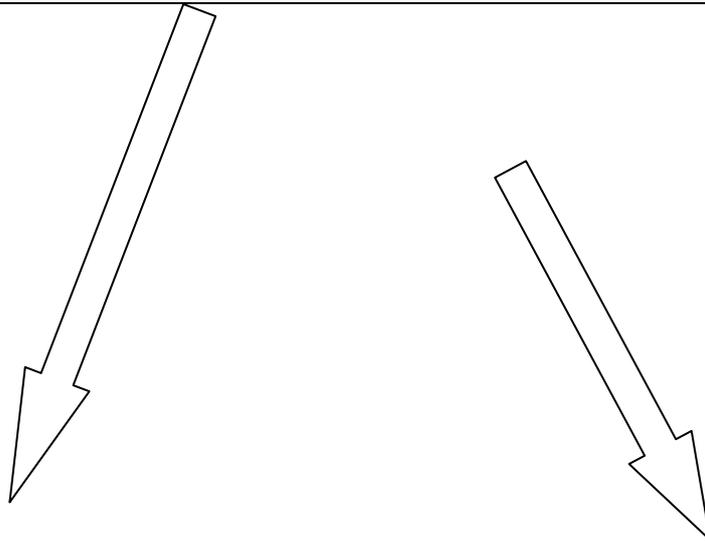
Location Map of Solomon Islands and Tonga

The images of the maps of the South Pacific Islands Region, Solomon Islands and Tonga have been removed from digital copy for copyright.

Map 1: South Pacific Islands Region

View at:

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/media/61639/Map-of-the-Pacific-Islands>



Map 2: Solomon Islands

Sourced from Fraenkel, J.(2004b) p.25 cited in Connell (2006) p.113

Map 3: Tonga

View at

http://www.seaoftranquility.us/sites/default/files/images_general/Tonga_map.gif

B. Solomon Islands

This section provides a geographic, demographic and socio-economic overview of Solomon Islands which traces the development of formal schooling in interaction with the cultural, historical and political circumstances. In describing the evolutionary path of the education system it relates to the country's historical engagement with New Zealand as a source of aid and explores donor-government interactions and relationships as they worked towards introducing and implementing a sector wide approach to educational planning and donor support.

Location and People

Solomon Islands, the third largest archipelago in the South Pacific, covers more than 1.35 million square kilometres of ocean and is made up of 992 islands, of which only 347 are inhabited (Kabutaulaka, 1998). The six main islands of the group, large and rugged, form a 1,400 km double chain stretching northwest-southeast. The southern chain includes the New Georgia Islands and Guadalcanal; the northern, Choiseul Santa Isabel and Malaita. The chains converge at San Cristobal (Makira), but Solomon Islands territory extends a further 555km east of Guadalcanal to the Santa Cruz Islands (Temotu Province), and southwards to the raised coral atolls of Rennell and Bellona that lie to the south. Geologically, Solomon Islands is part of the volcanic arc extending from Papua New Guinea to Vanuatu (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2008) and its terrain ranges from heavily wooded, ruggedly mountainous islands with deep valleys to low lying coral atolls ringed by reefs. The hot and humid tropical climate is alleviated by cool winds and abundant year round rainfall (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2008).

Estimates from 1999 census data put the population for 2010 between 530,669 (Solomon Islands National Statistics Office, 2006) and 559,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010) and the estimated annual growth rate over the last five years is about 2.5 percent (UNSD, 2010). This is not only one of the highest population growth rates in the region, but also puts the country in the highest 30 percent worldwide (UNDP, 2009). In 2004, 41 percent of the population was reported to be under 15 years (NZAID, 2007b; UNDP, 2006), with not less than 55 percent under 25 years (Bird, 2007).

Indigenous Solomon Islanders are Melanesian (93%) and Polynesian (4%). Micronesian communities (1.5%) form the largest migrant group with other minorities including Chinese and Europeans (ADB, 2007; Wale & Baeania, 2003). Christian church communities are prevalent and attract nearly 98 percent of the population. Congregations fall within two broad categories: mainline churches and Pentecostal (Bird, 2007)⁹⁷. The former includes the Church of Melanesia, Catholic Church of Solomon Islands, the South Sea Evangelical Church (SSEC) and Methodist; the latter, the Assembly of God, Christian Revival Church and others. Very few communities are without some form of Church representation (Bird, 2007) and religious organisations play a major role in the provision of education and social support within communities.

Although European missionaries had begun visiting from the mid 1800s, Britain's declaration of a Protectorate in 1893 encouraged many more to settle and proselytise Christianity, creating a myriad of churches and schools, many of which survive today (History of Nations, 2008). With a diversity of ethnic groups and over 87 distinct languages (Kabutaulaka, 2001), often with several dialects, contact with Europeans led to the introduction of English and the development of Solomon Islands Pijin (SIP). Today, although English is the official language of government and schools, Pijin is the primary language of urban Honiara and the national lingua franca. In most rural areas, however, villagers continue to speak one of more than 60 vernacular languages (Watson-Gegeo & Gegeo, 1991)⁹⁸.

Socio-economic Conditions / Trends

Solomon Islands is endowed with natural resources including significant undeveloped mineral resources, such as lead, zinc, nickel, bauxite, phosphates and gold. Timber and fish resources have suffered excessive exploitation and a great deal of potential revenue has been lost through poor regulation, tax exemptions and various 'corrupt practices' (Lamour, 2006: 10). Other export products derived from plantation crops (palm oil, copra and cacao) are developed mainly on Guadalcanal.

⁹⁷ Other groups are represented (e.g. Jehovah's Witnesses, the Baha'i faith and Mormons) and other world religions, mainly among the foreign community, are free to practice their faith (FCO, 2007; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010; US. Dept. of State, 2010).

⁹⁸ According to Glasgow et al, recent statistical data reveal 120 Indigenous languages in the Solomon Islands archipelago (Glasgow, Ha'amori, Daiwo, & Masala, 2011).

With approximately 12 percent of the country's land classified as agricultural and 80 percent as forest (SIG, 2007), it is estimated that 84 percent of the population live in rural areas (and 60% in communities of less than 200 people) with semi-subsistence agriculture and fishing providing the income base (SIG, 2007). Overall, the well-being⁹⁹ of the vast majority of Solomon Islands has improved little since political independence in 1978 and from 1980 to 2007 population growth (averaging 3.1% pa) has outpaced economic growth (2.5% pa) causing real per capita income to trend downwards (ADB, 2010). With insufficient job creation to keep pace with the growing labour supply, it is now estimated that only one in six school leavers finds paid employment (ADB, 2010), fuelling a growing population of young people underemployed in the rural areas or unemployed in the urban areas.

Solomon Islands 2011 UN Human Development Index (HDI)¹⁰⁰ is 0.510, ranking it 142nd out of 187 countries with comparable data. Despite a slight upward trend (it has risen an average of 7% since 2000¹⁰¹), it remains in the 'low human development' category and is the second lowest rated country in the region, after Papua New Guinea (HDI: 0.466; 153/187) (UNDP, 2010, 2011).

Social indicators generally fall short of the targets set for the Millennium Development Goals (Solomon Islands is among the only five countries¹⁰² that lack data for at least half of the MDG Index indicators). However, for the reported targets, the country scores a progress index of 3.5, which is just above the 3.3 average for low-income countries (Leo & Barmeier, 2010). Compared to the region, life expectancy is low, rates of infant mortality and maternal mortality are high, and overall access to health services are limited (WHO, 2009). In terms of gender equity in access to the formal schooling system, females are under-represented at every level, and most pronounced in the higher levels. In 2005, girls accounted for only about 30 percent of those enrolled in Form 7 (Solomon Islands National Statistics Office, 2006). Overall, women are significantly under-represented in all facets of decision-

⁹⁹ Well-being is defined by the ability to afford basic needs (i.e. food, clothing, and permanent shelter), access basic services (i.e. health, education, and transport), and work together in a community where there is law and order (ADB, 2010: 1).

¹⁰⁰ A country's HDI was created to provide measure of development that emphasised people and their capabilities rather than a country's economic growth. The HDI is a summary measure for assessing long-term progress in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living.

¹⁰¹ See <http://hdrstats.undp.org/images/explanations/SLB.pdf>

¹⁰² The other four countries are: Dominica, Papua New Guinea, St Vincent and the Grenadines, and Vanuatu (Leo & Barmeier, 2010).

making and the professions, including teaching. The UN's Country Assessment 2002 (UN, 2002a) reported a ratio of men to women teachers of 63:37. It is important to note, however, that women play a critical and central role in peace building processes, providing for their families and responding to the needs arising from the conflict (Oxfam, 2003). Women have had the right to vote and stand for election since independence but their participation in public leadership is poor. The first (and so far only) female MP, Hilda Kari, was not elected until 1989 and remained in Parliament until 2001. In 2009 only five women¹⁰³ were elected into Provincial Assemblies (SIG, 2009). Women's access to health and family planning services is particularly poor in rural areas, and infant and child mortality rates are the highest in the Pacific region, although they have fallen since 1990 (ADB, 2010). Violence against women is common and a major barrier to raising the status of women.

By the end of 2002, after four years of conflict known as the Tensions¹⁰⁴, the Solomon Islands' economy had contracted by at least 25 percent compared to the start of the conflict in 1998 (Pollard, 2005). Although economic growth between 2003 and 2008 was reported as strong, it was largely driven by unsustainable logging¹⁰⁵ and a surge in aid flows¹⁰⁶; average income remains the second-lowest in the Pacific region (ADB, 2010) with insufficient income-generating and employment opportunities for the fast growing population. There is little formal employment outside urban Honiara and unemployment is rising, particularly among youth (ADB, 2006). Although few figures are available, there is a high incidence of malaria, and HIV/AIDS has emerged as an important issue (ADB, 2006). There are 13 reported cases of HIV, dating from 1994 to 2009; of these, eight are still living (Solomon Star, 2010b).

Poor rural public services, including education, and limited employment or cash-generating opportunities have driven rapid urbanisation. This, together with a national development emphasis focussing on Honiara and its environs, has made North Guadalcanal a magnet for inter-island migrants, especially from the

¹⁰³ The five women serving as provincial members in 2009 were: Anne Pugeva (Rennell and Bellona Province); Rhoda Sikilabu and Beverly Dick (Isabel Province); Nester Marahora (Makira Province); and Victoria Sino Oloravato (Western Province): (SIG, 2009).

¹⁰⁴ This will be discussed in more detail in the next sections.

¹⁰⁵ In 2009 the forestry sector represented 11.4% of GDP and 60% of all export earnings (MFAT, 2010)

¹⁰⁶ Official development assistance grew from US\$21 million in 2000 to US\$179 million in 2006 (R Duncan, 2008). ODA increased by 55% between 2006 and 2008. The Min of Ed receives approximately 40 million SBD of on-budget support from NZAID (Levine, 2009), although this only represented about 20% of the education budget.

neighbouring island of Malaita. Honiara is now estimated to accommodate about ten percent of the population, approximately 55,000 people (FCO, 2007).

Political History

Human settlement of the Solomon Islands dates from at least 30,000 years ago, although little prehistory is known. The first recorded European to reach the islands was Spanish explorer Alvaro de Mendaña de Neira in 1568 who, in the belief that the islands were the source of King Solomon's gold, named them the *Islas de Solomón*. It was not, however, until the late 18th century that they were accurately charted after which European increasingly visited. Around the 1860s the growing need for labour to work the sugar plantations in Queensland and Fiji encouraged the often brutal 'recruitment' (or kidnapping) of the indigenous populations across the region known as 'blackbirding'. The hostility these abuses provoked in the archipelago led to several reprisals and massacres of Europeans. This lawlessness, some say, explains why the United Kingdom declared the southern Solomon Islands a British Protectorate in 1893 (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2008). More likely, however, was Britain's wish to forestall France's threat of annexation as it expanded into the New Hebrides (now Vanuatu). In 1896 the British set its administrative centre on the tiny island of Tulagi, chosen for its harbour and healthier alternative to the disease-ridden larger islands (Jersey, 2007), and during 1898 and 1899 more outlying islands were added to the protectorate. By 1900 Solomon Islands had taken on its present shape with the transfer of several western islands, previously under German jurisdiction, to British administration (Connell, 2006). As Kabutaulaka (2001: n.p) points out, "in declaring a protectorate the British were constructing a nation-state out of one of the world's most diverse group of islands".

With few development opportunities in the most islands, the movement of labour across the region continued through the beginning of the 20th century, with Malaita, the most densely populated island, particularly targeted for labour faraway and for the fast developing plantations in eastern Guadalcanal. In addition, the colonial head tax, imposed from 1921-23 on all Solomon Islands males aged between 16 and 60 years forced many to travel to seek income to pay the statutory one pound per head (Kabutaulaka, 2001).

With the outbreak of WWII many resident foreigners, and the majority of the British colonial government staff, were evacuated to Australia and New Zealand. From May 1942 until December 1943 the Solomon Islands saw some of the fiercest fighting against Japanese forces in the Pacific, most notably the battle of Guadalcanal in 1942–43, which gained allied control of the Japanese-built airstrip. By December 1943, the Allies were fully in command of the entire Solomon chain and the large-scale American presence toward the end of the war dwarfed anything seen before in the islands (US. Dept. of State, 2010). The Second World War left lasting cultural and physical legacies. For example, the temporary absence of colonial rule provided space for political consciousness to develop. Dissatisfaction with centralised government, and a desire for greater recognition of indigenous systems, contributed to various resistance movements developing; the two best-known during the post-war colonial period were Maasina Rule (or Marching Order) on Malaita in the 1940-50s, and the Moro Movement in south Guadalcanal in the 1950-60s (Hegarty et al., 2004).

After the War the capital was moved from, the now destroyed, Tulagi to Honiara on Guadalcanal. The US military built up a modern infrastructure and expanded the airfield, and the returned British administration reorganised the nation from twelve to four administrative districts (Central, Western, Eastern and Malaita), each of which was further subdivided into councils. The British administration's attitude, however, was largely one of benign neglect- especially towards the outer islands - and little effort was made to develop the country economically or socially. In Honiara the Malaitan population gradually dominated bureaucratic employment resulting in many holding key positions in the public sector and the government (FCO, 2007).

Despite the post-war political activism, Solomon Islands only gained political autonomy from Britain on July 7 1978, in a peaceful transfer of power. Left behind was a group of largely undeveloped islands, and an economy dependent almost entirely on the exploitation of natural resources by foreign multinational companies which afforded little benefit to local people and landowners (Connell, 2006; Kabutaulaka, 2001). Connell (2006: 114) describes the post-war history of forestry as “scandalous ... mismanagement, exploitation, corruption, economic loss and

environmental degradation ... a principal national resource ... depleted without real gain”.

At independence, the Westminster system of government was adopted and party politics introduced. However, the institutions needed to run an effective democracy were inadequate and the traditional leadership systems that had ruled the Solomon Islands for generations were largely ignored (Yoldi, 2007).

Having led the country to independence, Peter Kenilorea became the first elected Prime Minister (1978-81; 84-86) and was faced with the daunting task of forging a national consciousness from the fragmented, diverse societies that had come to make up the nation (Kabutaulaka, 2001). Following several administrative re-organisations the current nine provinces (Central, Guadalcanal, Isabel, Makira, Temotu, Western, Choiseul, Malaita, Rennell and Bellona) and one Capital Territory (Honiara) were formed (Cox & Morrison, 2004). Kenilorea’s successor, Solomon Mamaloni (1981-81; 89-93), once described Solomon Islands as a "nation conceived but never born ... [it] has never been a nation ... and will never become one” (Mamaloni 1992: 10-14, cited in Kabutaulaka, 2001). While Jourdan (1995) contended that there were three factors that helped to build a sense of national consciousness (namely, the education system; Pijin as a common language; and popular culture), Kabutaulaka (2001: n.p) argues that “for many Solomon Islanders, national consciousness is often only skin deep: peel that off and you have a person with allegiances to a particular ‘wantok’¹⁰⁷ or ethnic group”. Others, as Hameiri (2007: 412) points out, “have gone so far as to argue that Melanesian culture is profoundly incompatible with the sort of institutions required for the proper functioning of a modern state in general and the Westminster system in particular (Turnbull 2002)”.

Faced with increasingly difficult economic problems, Bartholomew Ulufa’alu, Solomon Islands’ fifth Prime Minister (1997-00), set about implementing reforms to improve the government’s worsening financial management and growing corruption; however, he was constantly harassed by motions of no confidence (Moore, 2008b). From late 1998, there was growing conflict on the island of Guadalcanal where

¹⁰⁷ *Wantok* is derived from ‘one talk’ meaning ‘from the same language’. It implies giving preference to kin, usually in expectation of reciprocal obligation. Increasingly *wantokism* is used to identify people from the same region or island, or political allegiance (Moore, 2008a).

militants had started a campaign of intimidation and violence towards Malaitan ‘migrants’. During the next year thousands of Malaitans fled from Guadalcanal back to Malaita, where the Malaita Eagle Force (MEF) was established in response. The Ulufa'alu government struggled to respond to the complexities of this evolving conflict and, as the security situation deteriorated, the government declared a four month state of emergency. In late 1999, the government requested assistance from Australia and New Zealand but neither was willing to intervene at the time (Connell, 2006). In June 2000, Ulufa'alu was kidnapped by members of the MEF who felt that, although a Malaitan, he was not doing enough to protect their interests. Ulufa'alu subsequently resigned in exchange for his freedom (Wikipedia, 2010).

Following this “*de facto* coup” (Dinnen, 2002: 288, emphasis in original), the violence increased under the succeeding Sogavare government (2000-01) and spilled over into other areas (Connell, 2006). The intent of Guadalcanal militants to drive Malaitan settlers from Guadalcanal resulted in the closure of the vital export revenue generating oil-palm estates and the gold mine, both with largely Malaitan workforces. With these closures, the economy collapsed and many parts of the country, including rural Guadalcanal, reverted to a subsistence economy (Connell, 2006; US. Dept. of State, 2010).

Elections in December 2001 brought Sir Allan Kemakeza as Prime Minister (2001-06). He inherited government finances in such ‘exceptional disarray’ (Connell, 2006)¹⁰⁸ that they were unable to pay public service salaries. Consequently, the following year was marked by strikes and closures in the public sector, deteriorating law and order, and a prevailing atmosphere of widespread extortion and ineffective policing (Connell, 2006; Kabutaulaka, 2004). Amid post-September 11th security fears, Australia proposed a need to intervene to prevent the state from ‘failing’. With the country bankrupt and the capital in chaos, the Solomon Islands Government eventually accepted Australia’s offer of outside help in June 2003 (Kabutaulaka, 2004). This was formalised in early July by the Governor-General who, with the backing of Cabinet and Parliament, made an official request for outside assistance.

¹⁰⁸ By mid 2003 country debt was three times the annual budget, registered at A\$352million (Kabutaulaka, 2004)

The first members of the multinational regional force, known as the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI)¹⁰⁹, arrived on July 24 2003 accompanied by a civilian leader with a mandate to restore law and order, address corruption and poor governance, and re-establish an economy (Kabutaulaka, 2004). The conflictual period between 1998 and the arrival of RAMSI in 2003 became known as “The Tensions”. The period had extremely detrimental effects on public services, including education.

By the end of RAMSI’s first year, security had dramatically improved and by mid-2005, Phase One (the restoration of law and order and stabilisation of the economy) was hailed a resounding success (Moore, 2008b; Whalen, 2011). Although RAMSI operations were scaled down as the second phase got underway (reforming the economy and machinery of government), significant political and economic problems remained (Connell, 2006). Kabutaulaka (2005) postulates that RAMSI’s top-down approach¹¹⁰ did not attempt to engage with or acknowledge alternative sources of legitimate political power and, rather than instigate a form of power sharing between the state and important societal institutions, it bred dependency on external bodies, which would prove detrimental to sustainable indigenous governance in Solomon Islands (Hameiri, 2007).

The country’s recovery progressed slowly, supported by an influx of foreign aid particularly from New Zealand, Australia, the European Union and Japan. Sir Allen Kemakeza’s government ended in the 2006 elections, yet, despite its unpopularity, it was the first government since independence to survive a full term in office (Dinnen, 2008). Intense public reaction to the subsequent election of Snyder Rini as Prime Minister¹¹¹ shattered the country’s fragile peace and resulted in two days of rioting, which destroyed a large portion Honiara’s Chinatown district, providing for some the “evidence of the hidden hand of Asian-backed ‘money

¹⁰⁹The first RAMSI contingent was a combined force of 2225 personnel mainly from Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Tonga and PNG. Two thirds were military personnel and many of the rest were police. The operation was organised and led by Australia (Connell, 2006).

¹¹⁰ RAMSI’s approach took the form of embedding Australian personnel into most of the key positions in Solomon Islands public administration to stabilise the economy and establish law and order.

¹¹¹ The Prime Minister is elected by the 50 member publicly-elected National Parliament. The elected PM in turn chooses his Cabinet. This process is vulnerable to corruption as members may be tempted to ‘cross the floor’ in order to gain ministerial positions, or succumb to monetary incentives to vote for a particular individual. As deputy Prime Minister in Kemakeza’s government, Rini had previously been discredited over some questionable activities involving the importation of merchandise from Asia. The targeting of Asian businesses in the subsequent 2006 riots is seen as a reflection of the public’s frustration with parliamentary procedures.

politics’ ” (Dinnen, 2008:18). RAMSI reinforcements were surprised but quickly brought in to restore public order and Rini resigned eight days later. A month later and fostering “disquiet among RAMSI officials and the Australian government” (Dinnen, 2008:19), Manesseh Sogavare¹¹² was voted into office for the second time. Although some viewed this appointment as the lesser of two evils, Sogavare’s confrontational manner, strong belief in nationalism and criticism of RAMSI has been attributed to the further deterioration in relations between Solomon Islands and Australia (Dinnen, 2008). Bilateral relations hit a new low in September 2006: the Australian High Commissioner was declared *persona non grata* and accused of meddling in local politics. The appointment Julian Moti as attorney general, a man who was wanted in Australia on child sex offense charges, only fuelled Australia’s agitation. Tit-for-tat wrangling between Solomon Islands and Australia continued into 2007 until when, on December 13, Sogavare's coalition government lost a parliamentary vote of no confidence.

On December 20 2007, Parliament elected Sogavare’s education minister (2006-2007), Derek Sikua, as Prime Minister who, a month previously, had crossed political sides to secure the appointment. Under Sikua, Moti was quickly dismissed and deported to Australia, following which the Sikua-led government set out to repair and strengthen relations with neighbouring country governments and donor agencies, particularly those of Australia and New Zealand, providers of vital finance for its development programmes¹¹³. In 2008, the World Bank and Asian Development Bank (ADB) opened offices in Honiara and, more controversially, the Sikua government reached an agreement with Iran to form closer ties, although formal diplomatic relations are yet to be established. The Press later reported that Iran signed a memorandum stating that it would fund scholarships to the sum of \$200,000 for Solomon Islanders to study medicine in Cuba (Solomon Star, 2009)¹¹⁴. Other controversial diplomatic relations include Solomon Islands holding official diplomatic

¹¹² Sogavare had succeeded Ulafa’alu as PM from June 2000-December 2001.

¹¹³ Official development assistance rose from 22% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 1990 to 66% in 2005, when aid reached \$415 per head (ADB, 2010). By 2009, the budget reported that the entire development expenditure (SBD2.7 b) was to be funded by development partners (Lenga, 2009). In March 2010 the Solomon Island Dollar was worth approx. 0.14USD, or SBD5.8:1NZD.

¹¹⁴ It is reported that this funding represents Iran’s “payment” to Solomon Islands for their vote in the UN for adopting the conclusions of the Goldstone Report condemning Israel for its 2008 counter attack in Gaza. Such ‘diplomatic cheque-booking’ is a tactic other countries are accused of in attempting to ‘buy’ PIC votes on the UN (see Tolley, 2010). The ANZ Bank, however, refused to process the funds on the grounds it was complying with United Nations trade sanctions imposed on Iran (Lenga, 2009; Solomon Star, 2010a).

relations with Taiwan/ Republic of China (ROC)¹¹⁵ and Taiwan's generous funding of the Rural Constituency Development Fund (RCDF)¹¹⁶, a discretionary fund for all MPs to use in their constituencies. This fund has, however, fuelled political tensions: provincial premiers' complaints that little benefit from the Fund ever reaches the provinces has, allegedly and controversially, led them to court the People Republic of China (PRC) for resources (Nanau, 2010).

Domestically, the Sikua government survived its term relatively peacefully with several achievements notable among the challenges. In late 2008, the government adopted the Fee-Free Education policy which was launched and implemented in early 2009. The priority given to this implementation was reflected in cabinet's 2009 approval of a 24 percent increase to the education's sector budget, making it the largest ever (Nanau, 2010). This budget was further supplemented with funding from New Zealand and ROC. Sikua's parliamentary term ended in April 2010 and peaceful elections were held in August. Long-time politician Danny Philip was narrowly elected as the new Prime Minister, by just three votes.

Governance

Solomon Islands, a constitutional monarchy¹¹⁷, inherited a centralised Westminster style system of parliamentary democracy from its colonial rulers. It is a unitary state with two levels of government: national and provincial. An election for the unicameral (single chamber), 50 member National Parliament is held every four years. Constituency MPs are elected often from a large number of candidates by a simple majority of votes. Political party structures tend to be weak and unstable as no party registration is necessary and the majority of MPs win their seats by relatively small margins. The MPs then elect the Prime Minister who forms a government (MFAT, 2010).

¹¹⁵ Under China's 'one China policy' both the PRC and ROC maintain their own government's legitimacy. Under this policy, countries seeking diplomatic relations with the PRC must break relations with ROC, or vice versa. Only 23 countries in the world currently have official diplomatic relations with ROC, six of which are members of the Pacific Islands Forum; namely Solomon Islands, Palau, Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Nauru and Tuvalu (Tolley, 2010).

¹¹⁶ This is reported to be about SBD 50m a year (Sasako, 2010)

¹¹⁷ Queen Elizabeth II is the Head of State, represented in Solomon Islands by the Governor-General, currently Sir Frank Kabui.

The provincial government evolved from the colonial local government bureaucracy and now consists of nine provinces¹¹⁸ plus Honiara City. Each province has an assembly of elected politicians, empowered to pass ordinances that are not in conflict with the national policy or legislation. The national government is responsible for the allocation of funds to the provinces. Cox and Morrison (2004) report, however, that most provincial assemblies are not effective as legislative bodies and many provincial politicians do not fully understand their roles, are cut off from their constituents and only rarely travel to villages¹¹⁹. Thus, the link between the village and the provincial government is weak; between village and central government it is even weaker. Consequently, the authority of the state does not stretch far beyond provincial centres (Cox & Morrison, 2004).

Premiership is not only contested by the national and provincial governments, but also by a host of other customary and religious entities and civil society groups. Political allegiances tend to be transitory and opportunistic; personal politics, friendships and kin relationships are often more important than ideology; backroom deals can be as influential as official rhetoric (Moore, 2008a); and political parties are viewed merely as the most efficient vehicle to travel the political path. The weakness of official government representation at the local level has engendered many informal systems of governance, including ‘traditional’ (chiefly), church, and kinship (or ‘wantok’) systems. These systems often exist in tension with each other and, due to different principles of justice underpinning the informal and the state systems they are not mutually reaffirming, creating potential for conflict between state and informal systems. The high level of effectiveness and legitimacy that these informal systems hold at the local level make them fundamental to the social life of the majority of Solomon Islanders, even in urban areas. In general, outside Honiara the state constitutes a weak presence in the everyday lives of most Solomon Islanders (Hegarty, et al., 2004). There is little sense of national identity or national consciousness; allegiance is marked by clan, island, province and nation - in that order of priority (UN, 2002b: x).

¹¹⁸ The nine provinces are Choisel, Central, Guadalcanal, Isabel, Makira –Ulawa, Malaita, Rennell & Bellona, Temotu, and Western.

¹¹⁹ To quote Duncan and Nakagawa (2007: 11) “In Solomon Islands, where the turn-over of politicians is very high, politicians are known as “four-year birds” as it is claimed that they only return to their electorate at election time.”

Discontent with the configuration of political power is a recurring issue. Wealthier provinces, in particular, resent what they view as meagre benefits from central government in return for their substantial contribution to national revenues (Hegarty, et al., 2004). For some, state failure in Solomon Islands is largely attributed to its institutional design and its lack of fit with local political cultures (Hegarty, et al., 2004). As Haque (2012: 1) points out,

...*wantokism* is said to fundamentally impede Solomon Islands society's capacity to deal with collective action problems due to the continued embeddedness of political leadership within personalised networks of reciprocity (Fukuyama 2008:1–2). *Wantokism* is, therefore, to blame for endemic problems of political instability, corruption, and slow private sector development ...

Such arguments have achieved broad legitimacy with development practitioners; in particular, cultural change and formation of national identity are seen as the ultimate solution (Haque, 2012). Bringing together formal and informal systems under an 'incentives framework' that enhances societal development is seen by Haque, for example, as critical for mutually reinforcing sustainable change. Notwithstanding, the lack of accountability resulting from unclear and overlapping mandates between provincial and central government, coupled with poor resourcing sub-nationally, has led to poor service delivery and a general 'blame game' between central and the provinces, and places even more importance on the rural constituency development fund (and its implications) mentioned earlier (p. 102) (Haque, 2012). The desire for a greater devolution of governance to the local level has picked up pace in the recent years and, following an amendment to the Constitution by Sogavare's government (2000-01), successive governments have all reiterated an intention to initiate the necessary constitutional reforms to establish a more decentralised system (MFAT, 2010). A current UNDP-supported programme is underway which is attempting to clarify rules, responsibilities and resourcing of local and provincial governments; however, exploration of appropriate representational and service delivery functions remains needed.

Formal Education in Solomon Islands

Formal westernised schooling was introduced in Solomon Islands in the late nineteenth century by a growing prosthetizing body of European Christian Missions. On becoming a British Protectorate (1893), education was generally

associated with Christianisation, providing the skills to further the work of the Church (Pollard, 2005). Gradually the colonial rulers liaised with churches to establish several national schools to provide a skill base to administer government and resource the emerging private sector (Pedersen & Wasuka, 2010; Pollard, 2005). By independence (1978) there were five church sponsored national secondary schools (NSS). It was not, however, until 1954 that the colonial administration took an active role in education with the establishment of Solomon Islands' first government secondary school, King George VI (Beuka, 2008). This school (originally located in Auki, Malaita, but later moved to Honiara in the early 1960s) remains one of only two state-run senior secondary schools in the country today¹²⁰.

By 1969, there were 393 registered primary schools, of which all but 17 were run by various churches (Prasad & Kausimae, 2009) and secondary education was academic and highly selective (Booth, n.d.). Following a widely consultative 'Education For What?' enquiry carried out in 1973 (Booth, n.d.) four Provincial Secondary Schools (PSS) were established in 1976 to provide a boarding, vocationally-based junior secondary curriculum aimed at helping students acquire skills likely to be useful to a young person returning to village life.

At independence, education formally became the responsibility of the Solomon Islands Government (SIG) under the 1978 Education Act. Due to the previous unplanned expansion, it inherited a sector comprising a range of school types and multitude of management structures (Pedersen & Wasuka, 2010). In general, it has remained a disjointed and complex system, hampered by poorly linked administrative and management structures (UN, 2002a).

From 1978, most primary schools shifted under Government jurisdiction, expanding access to primary day-school education to many (Pollard, 2005)¹²¹; but for many years secondary education remained generally centred on the elite, due to the limited numbers of boarding places available at the small number of National and Provincial Secondary Schools. While the number of senior secondary schools has

¹²⁰ The second government run National Secondary School (NNS) is Waimapuru National Secondary School, established in Makira/Ulawa in 1984. There are now nine NSS in total – the remaining seven are run by private education authorities.

¹²¹ In 2009, the number of primary schools was reported as 505 with a student enrolment of 115,728 children (MEHRD, 2010a: 19,33).

now increased (9 NSS and 18 PSS) it remains critically low and exclusive (MEHRD & NZAID, 2004). During the 1980s, community and political pressures precipitated a change in the PSS policy, leading to more a formal academic curriculum being offered; eventually this led to the introduction of a national secondary curriculum applicable to all PSS and NSS. Although PSS were originally intended to cater for provincial children, nowadays PSS select students nationally and are known to generally draw from those who fail to gain a place at an NSS. Currently, all PSS and NSS educate students from Forms 1-6; some NSS offer Form 7 (Booth, n.d.).

Due to the lack of substantial review or restructuring, the 1978 Education Act remains the legislative framework for current education policy¹²², echoing the country's colonial past. As such, many provisions under the Act are no longer rigorously applied (Pedersen & Wasuka, 2010) and expansion has been somewhat ad hoc; one example is the move in the 1990s to establish a third form of secondary education – Community High Schools. Community High Schools (CHS) are day secondary schools attached to existing primary schools. Originally envisioned as a means of extending the level of locally available education to include junior secondary Forms 1 to 3, this has been expanded to creating enough CHS to provide access to basic education up to Form 3, for all children (MEHRD, 2004a: 84). Assisted by Church or Provincial education authorities (EAs), CHS are built and managed by the community; in 2007 it was reported that over 130 CHS were operating around the country (Ruqebatu, 2008: 6). While most are extensions of primary (years 1-6) to Form 3 (year 9), some CHS cater for students up to Form 6 (year 12) (Ruqebatu, 2008). The increased number of day secondary schools has had a particularly positive effect on girls' access to secondary education. Appendix 1 gives an overview of the current structure of formal schooling.

In its day, the 1978 Act provided a legal basis for decentralising educational administration to the (then existing) provincial education boards, a move deemed necessary on account of the geographic isolation and cultural diversity of the country, as well as associated issues of communication and transportation (Malasa, 2007). However, devolved control was not confined to the provincial authorities and, in effect, any group or individual could be mandated by the Minister to open a school

¹²² A review of the 1978 Education Act was undertaken in 2011.

and become the registered authority to run it (Pedersen & Wasuka, 2010). Consequently, there are between 22 and 31¹²³ registered Education Authorities (EAs) operating schools and early childhood centres (ECE), all of whom receive operational grants from Government. The exception is the two NSS that are owned and managed directly by the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD) (Levine, 2009). Although all schools must comply with the national curriculum and standards set by central government, there is no clear administrative structure and few formal lines of communication with the Ministry of Education, or between the various bodies. Originally a National Education Board was created, comprising representatives of the various EAs to act as an advisory body to the Minister, but this board has not functioned since the 1990s (Pollard, 2005). Overall, the recruitment and allocation of teachers to individual schools is the responsibility of the EAs; however, all teachers' salaries and allowances are paid by the Government.

The internal destabilising conflict that occurred between 1998 and 2003 left the government devastated and the country on the point of near-collapse, with previously poor public services becoming virtually non-existent. Educational services suffered badly, especially in Honiara and isolated communities. Children of primary school age made up about 30% of the displaced population (an estimated 40,000 people¹²⁴) and, although most schools on Guadalcanal were seriously disrupted, the few schools that managed to remain functioning struggled to accommodate the extra numbers (Whalen, 2011). With some schools burned down, others vandalised and many with depleted teaching staff, Ministry of Education records noted that enrolment for the secondary Form 3 exam fell by 87 percent for the Guadalcanal province (Kudu, 2000), indicating that participation rates were amongst the lowest in the Pacific for that period (Pedersen & Wasuka, 2010). In Malaita, however, there was a substantial increase in enrolment – a reflection of the many that had fled back to their home island – which severely overstretched their meagre facilities (Kudu, 2000).

¹²³ Figures are contradictory: Pedersen & Wasuka state that “there are thirty- one authorities operating schools in Solomon Islands. There are eight Christian denomination groups and ten local government authorities”. On the other hand, the 2009 Public Expenditure Review states that “The Solomon Islands education system is highly decentralized with 22 separate Education Authorities (EAs) responsible for the operation of all ECE, primary and secondary schools, except for two national secondary schools that are owned and managed directly by the MEHRD” (MEHRD, 2009: 5).

¹²⁴ Due to the nature of the movement and lack of consistent registry, the exact number of displaced people is not known. The Red Cross Society of Solomon Islands recorded more than 20,000 displaced people in Malaita province alone during the height of the tension in 1999 (Kudu, 2000).

As the situation deteriorated, New Zealand and the EU provided significant support to maintain the operation of secondary schools affected by the conflict¹²⁵. By the end of 2002, between them the EU and New Zealand had provided over SBD8.8m in operating grants; the UK and ROC supplied resources - but no funds - to support the primary sector (Whalen, 2011). These were small efforts, however, considering the magnitude of the overall needs of the system.

With the arrival of RAMSI and the restoration of law and order, the SIG was able to start to rehabilitate. For education, the RAMSI intervention proved facilitatory in three main respects: first the provision of public security allowed schools to reopen and displaced populations to return to their homes; second, the RAMSI budget helped to stabilise government finances, thus providing vital funds for education; and thirdly RAMSI's infiltration of Australian personnel into key ministries (e.g. Ministry of Finance) and key roles (e.g. accountant general) opened the door for donors to re-engage (Whalen, 2011). For the Ministry of Education, the restart provided an opportunity for significant reform and realignment, not least in its aim to provide nine years of quality basic education to all children (Pedersen & Wasuka, 2010). The present education system now includes over 600 primary schools with an enrolment of 85,000; 140 secondary schools with an enrolment of 29,000; and a teaching establishment of over 4,000 principals and teachers (MEHRD, 2004b).

Introducing the Sector Wide Approach to Education

While underlying ethnic, political and social structures and values have all been cited as contributing to the 1998-2003 conflict, many believe that the values and attitudes promoted through the westernisation of Solomon Islands society, and in particular the education system, also contributed to the conflict (MEHRD, 2004b). The state of the education system prior to and between the periods 2001-2003 has been chronicled by Pollard (2005). He states that the conflict period essentially compounded many existing educational issues and highlighted the dysfunction of both the management structures within the system and the activities of donors in reinforcing this dysfunction. Despite the development of an Education Strategic Plan (ESP) in 2002, the government struggled to meet its fiscal obligations, especially in relation to recurrent teaching costs and school grants. This was compounded further

¹²⁵ Many donors declined to be involved with the government during these times.

at school level by the reduced capacity of parents to meet school fees. Although the ESP 2002-2004 (MOE, 2002b) outlined the Ministry's long-term aspirations for the sector, the immediate goal was to maintain delivery of education services during the recovery period (MOE, 2002a). Donors focused their assistance on keeping schools open, mainly through the provision of physical infrastructure for primary and secondary schools, and meeting outstanding (often overseas) tertiary fees. Overall, little attention was paid to local capacity for sustainable management of the infrastructure projects and, given the poor record of the Provincial Education Authorities (PEA) in managing resources for schools, donors tended to bypass them and assisted individual schools directly. Church EAs were largely neglected, mainly because many donors had little understanding of their role within the local system. This compounded their disengagement with government, particularly in processes of accountability and management of schools (Pollard, 2005). The heavy dependence on project-focused donor assistance¹²⁶, the lack of local ownership, minimal use of local processes, and a disconnection between the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Planning, as well as with Education Authorities and donors, rendered the Education Ministry largely unable to perform many of its functions (Pollard, 2005).

Amidst this landscape, Dr Derek Sikua became Permanent Secretary for Education in 2003, strongly believing that "*there has got to be a better way*" to approach educational development (Sikua quoted in Pedersen & Coxon, 2009: 8). Having been involved in Solomon Islands education system for many years, Dr Sikua had recently completed his doctorate in education in New Zealand and had close associations with New Zealand's bilateral aid agency (the newly formed NZAID). When he heard about the SWAp as a mode of aid delivery he instinctively felt that such an approach would address many of the dissatisfactions the Ministry had experienced with project aid (Pedersen & Coxon, 2009). Thus, together with NZAID¹²⁷ and support from the European Commission (EC)¹²⁸, Sikua became instrumental in spearheading a move towards developing a sector wide approach

¹²⁶ Bilateral assistance was provided by ROC, UK, NZ, Australia and Japan; multilateral assistance from the EU and UNICEF. Between Jan 2001 and July 2003 educational aid amounted to approximately SBD 103m compared to SBD 160m from the SIG (Pollard, 2005: 179).

¹²⁷ The development of NZAID's first Education Policy was heavily influenced by DFID's SWAp experience in Uganda and other parts of Africa (See p.84-85).

¹²⁸ The EU was involved through its Stabex '99 funding obligation but proved an incongruous partner as its bureaucratic procedural policies and decision making processes could not align with those of the government.

(SWAp) within the (now formed) Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD).

Building on the ESP 2002-2004, a sector wide approach was developed to establish educational priorities and a plan of action in line with the country's commitment to the MDGs, in particular: to improve the access, quality and management of education in the medium and longer term. The first phase of the *Education Sector Investment and Reform Plan* (ESIRP 2004-06) was launched in 2004 as a framework for the governance, implementation and monitoring of the ESP 2004-06. This marked the first Pacific sector wide approach and formed a precedent for education in the region, with New Zealand playing a pivotal financing and developmental role.

A formal 'Arrangement 2004-2006', signed by the Solomon Islands Government (SIG), the EC and NZAID, operationalised the SWAp model as a mechanism to support the implementation of the ESP 2004-2006 and cemented the shared understandings, commitments, terms and conditions agreed by the partners. A significant feature of the agreement was that the 'Arrangement' would be managed by the SIG, with the responsibility for overall supervision assigned to the Permanent Secretary, MEHRD (Dr Sikua) and the senior management team of the Ministry. The ESIRP has since moved through its second phase, guided by a National Education Action Plan 2007-2009 (NEAP), and is now in its third phase (NEAP II 2010-2012)¹²⁹ under the Education Strategic Framework 2009-2015 (ESF). In 2010 a Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) 2007-2010 was produced to indicate the progress towards the three main goals of the National Education Action Plan 2007-2009: improved access, quality education and efficient and effective management of education (MEHRD, 2010a).

What is interesting to note here is that none of the prerequisite conditions for a SWAp, as discussed in Part Two A (p.76-79), were in place in 2003 Solomon Islands. As one senior NZAID staff member mused, "*The Solomon Islands SWAp was floated on a sea of hope*" (S3a). Given this, the initial phases necessarily concentrated almost exclusively on putting these conditions in place (Ward, 2002), which led to a considerable capacity building effort at ministerial level. Much of this was enabled

¹²⁹ The EU involvement ceased at the end of phase II due to funding conditions.

by a NZAID-funded foreign technical advisor (TA) embedded within the MERHD as the sector coordinator¹³⁰. During my data collection visits, commitment and optimism among the MERHD staff was obvious; and significant policy development and system data collection mechanisms gained momentum. Such progress was fuelled by a consistently strong government commitment to education, helped by Dr Sikua moving from PS MEHRD to Minister of Education, and later to Prime Minister. Over this period the percentage of GDP committed to education gradually rose, and the ministry now receives a higher amount of government funding than any other sector (Solomon Star, 2011). Despite high levels of international aid being received by the country overall¹³¹, it should be noted that the SIG is now the main financial contributor to the educational sector programme, providing around 80 percent of the total funding. In 2009, Cabinet approved its largest ever sector budget to Education, representing a 24 percent increase in the recurrent budget compared to 2008 (Nanau, 2010). The SIG remains committed to maintaining a recurrent budget allocation to education of at least 22 percent (AusAID, 2011).

The involvement of only two donors in the SWAp was a deliberate decision by the Solomon Island authorities from the outset and, overall, served as an advantage in terms of building relationships and making initial progress under the ESIRP. To quote Dr Sikua (as Permanent Secretary for Education) (quoted in Pedersen & Coxon, 2009: 9):

Our experience encouraged us to identify which donors were more likely to work in ways that suit us through a SWAp arrangement - they agreed to our request that they guide and lead [the ministry] to an extent but not overpower (let them learn from their mistakes ...) and [they] provided really good technical advisors – a key ingredient of the SWAp success; we know who we want and they work for us.

The strong relationship that subsequently developed between the SIG and NZAID has been maintained and strengthened. Engagement with the EU was more fraught. Being bound by rigid bureaucratic procedural policies, and onerous reporting and decision making processes¹³² prevented any harmonisation of reporting

¹³⁰ This contractor remained in place throughout the research period although his role was later refined to ‘education advisor’.

¹³¹ In March 2011 the UN noted that foreign aid accounts for over 60 per cent of the development budget of the Solomon Islands (<http://www.taimionline.com/articles/2521>).

¹³² Funding is made available through a process of programme estimates presented jointly by MEHRD and the EC EDF National Authorising Officer with subsequent endorsement of the EC Head of Delegation for PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, based in Port Moresby.

mechanisms or alignment with local processes and thus considerably undermined the partnership principles. Arrangements to accommodate these external obligations resulted in a standalone Project Implementation Unit (PIU) being established within MERHD which was separately staffed (and trained) to handle all EU funded activities (Coxon, et al., 2011)¹³³. It is noteworthy, however, that there was a commitment to gradually reduce the role of the PIU over the period of the SWAp (Pedersen & Coxon, 2009) and in 2010 it was entirely dismantled with staff and resources reintegrated into MEHRD. This not only demonstrates understanding of the concept of partnership under a SWAp, but also a preparedness on behalf of the Ministry to find a way around obstacles to make a situation work.

Increased donor interest and engagement with the sector-wide approach prompted the drawing up of a *Statement of Partnership Principles between Solomon Islands Government and Development Partners* in 2009. Interested donors are encouraged to sign up and become a part of the subsequently named ‘Education Sector Donor Group’ with NZAID as the Coordinating Development Partner (CDP). The Statement reaffirms development partners’ commitments to align with Solomon Islands’ education policies as well as to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005), the Pacific Principles on Aid Effectiveness (PIFS, 2007) and the Accra Agenda for Action (OECD, 2008). The number of signatories has gradually grown, particularly in relation to the introduction of a school grant system and the abolition of basic education school fees. In 2008, the World Bank and UNICEF agreed to sign up to the Partnership Principles and by November 2010, a further five bilateral and multilateral donors had signed the Statement (Australia, Japan, Republic of China (Taiwan), UNESCO and the ADB¹³⁴). Despite the Statement’s intention to confirm agencies’ support for local systems and commitment to the ESF/NEAP’s shared working principles and objectives, NZAID has been the only donor to accept SIG processes and provide funding through sector budget support mechanisms. The recent Solomon Island-Australia Partnership for Development (PfD) document, however, indicates that AusAID is coming closer to using partner government systems (AusAID, 2011) and in 2010 the Ministry received SBD 14.7m budgetary support

¹³³ EU funding was earmarked for activities relating to the Secondary Schools Grants Project, the Technical and Vocational Education (TVET) Programme, and National Training Unit (NTU).

¹³⁴ While this is assumed to be a single document, due to the China’s ‘one China policy’ and the fact that PRC related countries cannot sign a document co-signed by ROC, there are at least two versions of the agreement.

from the ADB (PacificScoop, 2011). This variance highlights an important point raised by Cassity (2010), that although there appears to be a trend among donors to support SWAp in education, actual practice indicates that many donors are, effectively, a long way from aligning with country systems.

School Grants

Despite an apparent strong sense of ownership/leadership in upholding ministry plans and processes, and significant progress in policy development, criticism and concern have been expressed over the substantial level of SWAp resources that were spent initially in raising capacity at ministerial level, with scant improvement visible or tangible at school or classroom level. Launched in January 2009, the ‘Fee-Free (basic) Education Policy’ went some way to alleviating these concerns, making a substantial contribution to students and parents, as well as school resources. Under the policy, a regular disbursement of formula-based grant funding would be made to all schools (Year 1 to Form 3)¹³⁵, intended to relieve parents of obligatory school fees by covering the costs of teaching and learning materials (in addition to the new curriculum materials already being supplied to schools), basic maintenance and fuel. NZAID and the ROC provided additional funds to implement the policy but, by mid 2009, the Prime Minister acknowledged that the policy was challenging, both monetarily and practically. On a practical level, it soon became clear that MEHRD needed to clarify that the government grants did not relinquish *all* community responsibility towards infrastructure and school development. This followed reports from schools that parents had gained the impression that schooling had become the responsibility of the state and, thus, they were no longer required to make *any* contribution toward school expenses. This was not the intended message; parental contribution remains crucial, particularly for school housing and other infrastructure. To help alleviate further misunderstanding, MEHRD now tries to refer to a *free-fee* education policy rather than the original term, ‘fee free education’.

The extent to which this policy has increased enrolment overall was still being analysed at the end of my field research period although a “limited survey of schools

¹³⁵ In 2009 the school grants consisted of three tiers, (1) the student grant allocated per child [SBD 60-ECE; 320-Primary; 800-JunSec Day; and 1640-JunSec Boarding]; (2) the one-off school administration grant [SBD 500-ECE; 2500-Primary/Jun Sec]; and (3) a one-off remote area grant for geographically isolated schools to cover extra communication, travel and reporting costs [all eligible schools: SDB 2,000].

conducted in Honiara and some schools in Guadalcanal province indicated a 9.6 percent increase in primary enrolment and a 6.7 percent increase at secondary” (MEHRD, 2010a). In acknowledging the increased enrolment, a recent Church report (Foundation for Marist Solidarity International) also draws attention to the increased strain this has put on,

... teachers and the learning environment for the children. This has been a similar problem in many countries that have introduced free and compulsory education without provision for enough professionally trained teachers and classrooms to accommodate them as well as other resources such as materials and finance (FMSI & FI, 2011: 3).

These issues are recognised within the Ministry and a teacher training programme for untrained teachers is taking shape. Through the establishment of various technical working groups (TWG), other issues such as raising capacity for monitoring, learning assessment, financial management, school board management and the inspectorate are being tackled. Significant work has also been achieved in terms of Human Resource Development policies including revised job descriptions. But, in the words of one insider,

Our biggest challenge is to make the transfer [of] design and plans into real action – our biggest problem is not funds, its people ... we need quality staff in place and retained for several years not only in the ministry but in the provinces and at the schools ... it's impossible to implement everything in three years – it's a longer term business improving quality and management (S36).

Difficulties in down-streaming new policies are seen to lie in the existing structure and culture of the entire education system in Solomon Islands. The historical legacy of isolation, neglect and inequality, inefficiencies and administrative weaknesses at provincial level, and the lack of engagement between the public and private sectors all contribute to the dysfunction. On a practical level, administering an education system to a population that is highly dispersed across 347 islands spanning 1.35m km² of ocean creates immense implications for teacher posting, distribution of supplies and materials, delivery of support services, monitoring and evaluation, administering examinations, robust data collection and effective communication. Recognition of these structural limitations led in 2010 to a substantial review of the system and recommendations for its restructure (see Pedersen & Wasuka, 2010). The policy proposes integrating TVET at all levels throughout the current formal education structure focusing particularly on the primary and CHS levels (Standard 1 to Form 3). In terms of providing ‘basic education’, it suggests

moving away from the previous emphasis on academic learning to one which more evenly balances academic and practical subjects. From Form 3 it proposes three possible educational pathways for students: Senior High Schools (with academic and technical streams), Rural and Vocational Training Centres (RVTC), or other community-based training. While both the senior high school or RVTC routes should provide qualification to Solomon Islands' College of Higher Education (SICHE), it is important that a technical education be also viewed as an end in itself; one that will enable people to live successfully within their own community (MEHRD, 2004b).

Perspectives of Development in Solomon Islands

In drawing this section to a close it is important to briefly discuss the challenge that 'modern' orthodox development perspectives present for Solomon Islanders in terms their traditional standpoint. Solomon Islands' highly diverse society makes notions of common Solomon Islands culture and identity counterintuitive. By and large, however, culture and tradition are typically referred to as 'kastom' and therefore diametric to modernity or the 'whiteman way' (Kabutaulaka, 1998). Introduced, western, 'whiteman' forms of epistemology tend to be associated with modern, 'static' institutions such as the State, the Church and schools. Kastom and indigenous knowledge systems, on the other hand, are regarded as an evolving or 'alive' epistemology resulting from collective contributions, "always undergoing (re)construction [making it] relevant to changing conditions (Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2002: 379). Within kastom, 'development' is inherent; change is natural and expected. Western orthodox notions of 'development', however, tend to dichotomise kastom and development as opposites (Kabutaulaka, 1998) and incompatible.

Despite many leaders' pronouncements that the nation will develop in its "own way" (p.19), dominant orthodox notions of 'development as a project' have prevailed, steering Solomon Islands to "imitate and become more like industrialised Western nations" (ibid.). As a result, Kabutaulaka claimed in 1998 that "until recently, many Solomon Islanders thought that development was a task that should be left exclusively to the state - it was the responsibility and domain of the government" and, as such, development initiatives engendered limited engagement from local communities (p.20). Failure to acknowledge and account for this discord, is often

cited (rightly or wrongly) as a reason for the perceived ‘failure’ of many development projects in Solomon Islands (Kabutaulaka, 1998). Indeed, this dichotomy resonates in the shift in responsibility perceived by parents with the introduction of the school grants and fee-free education policy discussed earlier. Kastom is overshadowed by the ‘whiteman way’ and responsibility for schools shifts from community to state.

Social relationships, based largely around kinship links, play a critical role in Solomon Islands’ political, social and economic life (R. Spratt, 2011). While historically, clan and lineage were the primary forms of kinship identification, the colonial era and the subsequent drawing together of large numbers of people from different language groups (such as on plantations, in schools and as part of the civil services) saw the emergence of a new form of social identity known as *wantok*. As discussed earlier (p87-92), *wantokism* traditionally “advocates cooperation amongst those who speak the same language” (Kabutaulaka, 1998: 24) and implies cooperation and allegiance to this group above other *wantok*. Nowadays, however, the notion is used in a variety of ways to signify an exclusive group – to identify an ‘us’ from a ‘them’ – and is largely dependent on the context, audience and purpose (R. Spratt, 2011). In a village context, for example, one’s *wantoks* relate to direct kin, in Honiara it may include anyone from a home village, while in broader Pacific or international contexts it can extend to all Melanesians.

Taking a dichotomised tradition-modern perspective, Fukuyama (2008: 18), Kabutaulaka (2001), Hameiri (2007) and others view *wantokism* as “an obstacle to the country’s modernisation”. Its exclusivity and separateness hampers collective support of new initiatives or processes. Brigg (2009), on the other hand, disagrees and suggests that Solomon Islanders enter into “positive relationships with the foreign or other” (p.151) and maintain a subtle balance in their social relations between allegiance through lineage groups and embracing an entwinement with others through marriage, trade, employment, education and so forth. In many cases, rather than divide, cross-cutting relationships formed through intermarriage or friendships have protected people and property in times of strife. Crucially, cross-lineage relationships formed through churches consistently underscored peace efforts and reconciliation processes after the Tensions (Brigg, 2009).

According to Brigg (2009: 152), the centrality of relationality in Solomon Islands, and Melanesian societies in general, lead Solomon Islanders to be “more multi-cultural and cosmopolitan – and put far greater value on difference and on working together across difference” than many traditional understandings of wantokism. More, he sees wantokism as “a system of generalised obligations and supports that permeates contemporary Melanesian social and political life”.

Thus, Brigg contends, modern, centralised governance, as part of the development process, should not set out to displace wantokism (and, by default, to devalue non-western culture and tradition). Instead notions of development from a *kastom* perspective should be drawn upon, whereby ‘western’ and ‘traditional’ governance systems are allowed to intertwine and dynamically adapt (self-organise) and co-evolve to the point where it is impossible to separate the two. The emergent system is likely to have the potential to challenge issues of corruption and poor governance by allowing people to work within, rather than outside, their own forms of socialisation (Brigg, 2009) and demand from their leaders greater responsibility for Solomon Islands as a collective than a set of divisory units.

C. Tonga:

Location and People

The archipelago that makes up the Kingdom of Tonga consists of over 170 islands, 36 of which are inhabited. Situated directly south of Samoa, it has a land area of about 700 km² scattered over more than 32,000 km² of ocean along a roughly 800 kilometre north-south line (Volkel, 2010). The islands are divided into three main groups: Vava'u in the north; central Ha'apai; and Tongatapu, to the south. The largest island, Tongatapu is home to over 70 percent of the population (72,000), which the 2006 Census determined to be almost 102,000 (TDoS, 2006), with about 30 percent (24,000) living in the urban areas around the capital, Nuku'alofa. Geologically, most of islands that make up the Kingdom are low lying atolls, formed by tectonic plate movement raising the coral reef. A few are volcanic and all, except the Niua in the north, are uninhabited.

Polynesian by ethnicity, Tongans represent the majority of the inhabitants (98%). Chinese, other Pacific Islanders and Europeans make up the remainder of the population. Traditional Tongan custom and the Christian faith both feature strongly in everyday life. The Constitution declares the Sabbath 'forever sacred' and all commercial and entertainment activities cease for 24 hours from midnight Saturday. The Methodist tradition is most popular (37% are Free Wesleyans, FWC) followed by the Latter Day Saints¹³⁶ (LDS 17%), the Roman Catholic Church (16%) and the Free Church of Tonga (11%) (TDoS, 2006). The church plays a crucial role as education provider, with the FWC, LDS and Catholic church running three-quarters of all mission schools ('Atiola, Esau, Lavemaau, & Minford, 2010)¹³⁷. Tongan is the official language of the country, along with English.

Socio-economic conditions

Tonga's economy is characterised by a large nonmonetary sector and a heavy dependence on remittances from Tongans living overseas. Global competition has extinguished their banana and squash markets which had accounted for two-thirds of

¹³⁶ Also known as the Mormon Church.

¹³⁷ Mission schools account for 14/126 primary schools (FWC,LDS & Catholic) and 35/49 secondary schools (eight different faiths run schools) ('Atiola, et al., 2010).

total exports (Catherwood, Taufa, Scott, & Cook, 2003) and has severely narrowed its current, small-scale export base in niche-market agricultural goods (root crops, kava and vanilla beans) (Besnier, 2009). Some controversial attempts to raise national revenue coupled with poor investment decisions¹³⁸ have negatively affected the country's growth rate which has hovered around zero percent for most of the last decade¹³⁹. Since the 1960s, increasing unemployment and land pressures have led to ever growing levels of migration and an increasing reliance on foreign aid to offset the growing trade deficit (Campbell, 2001). New Zealand and Australia have been - and remain - major aid contributors. Remittances from the now significant Tongan diaspora, suggested by Besnier (2009) to be as many as half a million, are the largest source of hard currency for Tonga¹⁴⁰, followed by tourism (Campbell, 2001; Catherwood, et al., 2003).

Overall, Tonga has a reasonable basic infrastructure and well developed social services. It has made "... 'good and steady progress' towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)" (GOT, 2006: 1). Its 2011 UN Human Development Index¹⁴¹ is 0.704, placing it in the 'high human development' category, and positioning it 90th out of 187 countries with comparable data. Tonga has the highest HDI of its Pacific neighbours (UNDP, 2011) (UNDP, 2010).

Modern Tongan society and polity is highly stratified, shaped by its unique heritage. It has been under continuous monarchical rule for over 1000 years and has never lost indigenous governance¹⁴². For nearly a century and a half, the Kingdom has been a parliamentary monarchy dominated by the King and his nobles (Coxon, 1988). Only recently has this shifted to a more democratic, constitutional monarchy with an elected Prime Minister. The following section will present a brief insight to this history.

¹³⁸For example, some of the proceeds from the controversial sale of passports were placed in "an off-budget fund in 1988 intended to be used for special development projects and disaster mitigation. The fund was invested almost entirely offshore and by June 2000 was reported to have reached US\$37 million. The fund declined to US\$3 million at end-June 2002" (ADB, 2005: 1) (See footnote 156 for more details).

¹³⁹ Despite a boost in 2000 (5.3%) the growth rate has an average of 0 between 2003 and 2009. It reached a high of 1 percent in 03/04 and reduced to -3.2 percent in 06/7. (Atiola, et al., 2010: 4). See <http://www.indexmundi.com/g/g.aspx?c=tn&v=66>

¹⁴⁰ In 2004, remittances accounted for 42.5% of GDP (GOT, 2006).

¹⁴¹ For explanation of HDI see footnote 100. For more information on Tongan HDI see <http://hdrstats.undp.org/images/explanations/TONGA.pdf>

¹⁴² Although under the protection of Britain from 1900-1970, under a Treaty of Friendship, Tonga remained the only Pacific nation never to have given up its monarchical government, unlike Tahiti and Hawai'i. In 1958 New Zealand became responsible for Britain's defence obligation to Tonga.

Political History – a brief glimpse

The beginning of the Tupou Lineage and birth of Tonga's Constitution

It is believed that the islands of Tonga were first settled around 1500 BC by seafarers associated with the Lapita diaspora¹⁴³. From about 950 AD, it is generally accepted that Tonga was ruled by three connected dynasties. The first and pre-eminent was the Tu'i Tonga dynasty which lasted through to the 15th century. The second dynasty was absorbed into the third dynasty, the Tu'i Kanokupolu, following the death of the incumbent Tu'i Ha'atakalaua during the civil war of 1799 (Coxon, 1988). The modern day royal line is descended from Tu'i Kanokupolu, when in 1845, Tāufa'āhau finally unified the islands and quelled the turmoil and conflict that had marred the years following the civil war. In 1875, Tāufa'āhau became known as King George Tāufa'āhau Tupou I. Today, Aho'eitu 'Unuaki'otonga Tuku'aho Tupou is King Tupou VI, following the death of his brother, King George Tupou V in March 2012.

European 'discovery' of Tonga dates from Shouten and Le Maire's first sighting in 1616 and Tasman's early charting around 1645. More significant, however, were Cook's visits in 1773, '74 and '77 and the arrival of the first London Missionaries in 1797, just prior to civil war. About thirty years later the Methodist Wesleyans finally established themselves and became very influential in the rise of Tāufa'āhau. During the 1820s Tāufa'āhau of Ha'apai had begun to emerge as an ambitious and politically astute young warrior with high aspirations (Lātukefu 1974, cited in Coxon, 1988:63). Keen for Tonga to become a unified, Christian state with a centralised political system, the Wesleyan missionaries were quick to realise the political potential of Tāufa'āhau (Besnier, 2009) and with Tāufa'āhau's acceptance of the new religion (he was baptised *Jiaoji* - George - after the British king, in 1831) a mutual dependence between the Church and the Kanokupolu lineage was formed. This powerful union endured and effectively determined the future political development in Tonga (Lātukefu 1974, cited in Coxon, 1988:64).

¹⁴³ The Lapita are believed to be the first people to penetrate 'Remote Oceania' around 1000 BC (Irwin, 2009). The ancient archaeological culture is regarded as the common ancestor of several cultures in Polynesia, including Tonga and Samoa, Micronesia and some coastal areas of Melanesia.

Between 1845 and 1875, Tāufa'āhau concentrated on securing legitimacy for his dominance and laying the groundwork for maintaining Tonga's independence (Coxon, 1988). With the promulgation of legal codes in 1839, 1850 and 1862 enshrined in Christian principles and monarchical authority, "Law, God and King became conceptually linked" in the minds of Tonga's people (Rogers 1975: 224, cited in Coxon, 1988: 65). With almost complete conversion to Wesleyan or Catholic faiths (brought in by French missionaries) a new political and social order was being established.

The Wesleyan church minister Shirley Baker¹⁴⁴ became particularly influential from 1860 in supporting Tāufa'āhau's struggles to maintain Tonga's political independence and resistance to colonial annexation and assisted him in drawing up a new Code of Laws, which came into force in 1862. Baker's "Tonga for Tongans" slogan was enshrined in the 1862 Code and changed Tongan life radically. The 1862 Code was instrumental in defining constitutional rule governing how Tongan government would be conducted and remains largely in place today¹⁴⁵. Having resigned from the church, Baker drafted the Constitution and became Tonga's first premier (Campbell, 2001).

The 1875 Constitution, enacted on 4 November, was a "very radical innovation" (Campbell, 2001: 99). Legitimised by the Christian faith, it formally adopted a western royal style, giving law-making power to a new aristocracy ('nobles'¹⁴⁶) and a limited number of 'representatives' of the people. The constitution dealt, in particular, with three important matters: the emancipation of 'serfs' (which resulted in a Declaration of Rights affording equality to all under the law); the formation of government and a code of law; and the clarification of land tenure. In bringing royalty under its control, the Constitution declared Tonga a 'constitutional monarchy' making future political change "dependent on the interpretation of the rules in the document itself" (Campbell, 2001: 99). The Constitution guaranteed all

¹⁴⁴ Shirley Waldemar Baker (1836-1903).

¹⁴⁵ Recent constitutional changes were made by King George Tupou V in 2010 that allow for a more democratic election of MPs.

¹⁴⁶ According to the Palace Office, "The nobles were established in the constitution to secure the land, protect Tongan identity and promote our heritage" (GOT Palace Office, 2012). Initially King Tupou I selected 20 traditional chiefs and officially appointed them hereditary titles and estates. The term noble was used to denote this new aristocracy. Chieftains who did not become nobles had the same legal status as commoners. The number of nobles was later increased from 20 to 33.

Tongan tax-payers over the age of 21 the right to vote (Campbell, 2001)¹⁴⁷, however, most members of parliament were unelected including the nobles (appointed by the King), nobles' representatives (appointed by nobles) and regional Governors. Power was divided between the Executive Privy Council, the Legislative Assembly and the Judiciary, with the monarch retaining a significant role, including royal appointment of the Executive Privy Council and royal assent on new laws.

Although earlier codes emphasised the right of the individual to land tenure in the interests of the family and church support (Coxon, 1988), the 1875 Constitution declared that all land was ultimately owned and governed by the King. In establishing a hierarchical system headed by the sovereign, the King's nobles were given primogenitary titles and estates and could lease land to commoners but not *sell* land; commoners could also lease government land (i.e. land not included in either royal or noble estates) (Coxon, 1988). This prohibition on the sale of land was intended, in part, to avoid an influx of foreign settlers and uphold the notion of 'Tonga for the Tongans' (Coxon, 1988). The Constitution did, however, allow Europeans to lease land (for the first time) in the form of 21-year leases of town allotments and, with the prior approval of Cabinet, to lease bush or plantation lands (Bade, n.d). This change, along with the high prices for coconut oil at the time, attracted a variety of Europeans, particularly Germans¹⁴⁸, to set up coconut plantations and establish trading stations (Bade, n.d).

In 1882, the land tenure issue was further developed under a new Act. This stated that every male over the age of 16 was entitled, as his constitutional right, to receive from his noble a stipulated area of farmland (3.34 hectares) and a village site for a house (758m² - 1,618 m²), depending on the location (Besnier, 2009; Campbell, 2001). This statute remains in place today, but due to population pressures it is largely unachievable. The lack of access to land has been a key driver in the mass migration that began in the 1960s. A further important development to occur during this period was the move to create an independent national Methodist church following Baker's disagreement with the Australian Wesleyan authorities in 1879.

¹⁴⁷ Since only men paid tax, it excluded women from voting.

¹⁴⁸ Shirley Baker noted in 1875 that "more than three-fourths of the commerce of these islands is in the hands, directly or indirectly, of the German merchants, and especially that of the world-wide-known firm of J. C. Godeffroy & Son." (quoted by Bade, n.d) and, according to Bade, "At the turn of the twentieth century, half the European population in Tonga was German."

The Free Church of Tonga (free of foreign control) was established by King Tupou I in 1885 and became the official church of the state.

As in other parts of the Pacific, formal schooling began with the arrival of the Christian missionaries (largely Wesleyan) who, from 1828, were quick to establish the first primary schools so the congregation could read and understand the bible (Coxon, 1988). Recognising the need for educated people to run the state, Tupou I declared education compulsory in 1862 (Coxon, 1988) and in 1866 Tonga's first secondary school, Tupou College, was established under Wesleyan Rev. J.E. Moulton. Modelled on the English grammar school, its main intention was to educate the statesmen (the sons of chiefs) and churchmen of the future. The ethos of the school was, however, criticised by many missionaries and Europeans as presumptuous, claiming that Tongans were "not ready for such an education and that it was irrelevant to Tongan society" (Coxon, 1988: 86).

To clarify the role of education, Tonga's first Education Act was established in 1882 which instigated a national education system, stipulated that education be compulsory for all Tongans *between the ages 5-16*¹⁴⁹, and ordered that all primary schools be independent of the church (Coxon, 1988). Under the Act communities were to be responsible for constructing primary school buildings and, in 1882, Tonga College, the first government-run secondary school independent of the Wesleyan system was established for training future officials. Between 1882 and 1906, no new mission schools were allowed to be established, although no such stipulation was put on post-primary schooling (Allen, 1963). The resulting division of ownership remains obvious today with most secondary schools run by the church, and most primary schools government owned.

Although the Constitution inaugurated a more 'aristocratic' than 'democratic' governance structure, commoners accepted the ideology in preference to traditional chiefly rule which had become increasingly arbitrary (Coxon, 1988). Within a short time, Western powers recognised Tonga as a modern and independent self-governing nation. Under Tupou II (1893-1918), the British, as a significant colonial power in

¹⁴⁹ Calling for compulsory education in 1862 and stipulating that compulsory education was to cover the ages 5-16 is particularly prophetic since in Britain, for example, state provision of education was only introduced with the 1870 Elementary Education Act and only made compulsory between the ages of five and ten in 1880. The compulsory age in Britain was only increased to the age of 12 in 1899 (Parliament UK, 2012).

the region, were threatened by the growing German presence in the Pacific, particularly in Tonga, and urged¹⁵⁰ Tonga to sign a protectorate treaty. This eventuated in a Treaty of Friendship with Britain which lasted from 1900 to 1970. Tupou II, however, steadfastly refused to sign the clause which gave Britain the power to determine Tongan foreign policy. Tonga thus remained a self-governing state throughout (Bade, n.d). Although the vehement view is that it “never succumbed to colonial rule”, British interference in state politics was “sometimes extensive and subject of conflict” (Besnier, 2009: 218).

Into the 20th century

The long reign of Queen Salote Tupou III (1918-65) brought a period of relative unity and stability to Tonga. Under the Queen, concepts of honour, respect and obligation among commoners were strongly upheld, as were the chiefly privileges of the nobles. Whilst Tongan traditions were preserved, Tongans were encouraged to take advantage of the best of the modern world through what was effectively government-managed social change. Testament to her strong sense of purpose, on Salote’s death (December 17th 1965), the Tupou dynasty was undiminished and Tongan culture, although changed, had been largely preserved. Although, education flourished, as did other western-derived institutions, ideological hegemony based on rank and articulated by the monarchy and other powerful social groups (namely the nobility and church) remain rooted in the meaning and symbols of Tongan daily life to this day (Besnier, 2009; Coxon, 1988). Under Salote, women were given the right to vote in general elections in 1951, despite any sign of popular demand (Campbell, 2001); women did not take this up, however, until 1960.

With a developing infrastructure, nascent tourism industry and healthy financial situation by 1951, surplus government funds were funnelled towards financing new development policies (Boutell & Campbell, 1993) for which education was a cornerstone. By 1963, funds set aside for development expenditure totalled £720,938 (Campbell, 2001) and earlier educational drives were bearing fruit as the government was able to begin replacing foreign employees with trained Tongan nationals. 1955 saw the country’s first university qualified doctor (Sione Tapa), 1956 its first economist (Mahe Tupouniua) and 1966 its first doctoral graduate, Langi

¹⁵⁰ Some would say Tonga was forced to comply – e.g Besnier, 2009.

Kavaliku (Boutell & Campbell, 1993; Ewins, 1998). By 1964, the government terminated the practice of hiring foreigners for permanent positions in public service and the Government of Tonga became almost entirely staffed by Tongans (Campbell, 2001). Towards the end of the decade, scholarships from foreign donors became available for overseas schooling and, although first targeted at “students of high rank” they gradually became more equitable (Besnier, 2009).

With population growth set to double in the next 20 years, Salote’s successor, King Tupou IV (r. 1965–2006), was faced with considerable development challenges and the next four decades brought monumental change to Tonga (Besnier, 2009). In his inaugural speech, he declared four immediate objectives: greater technical education; improved land utilisation; increased export trade; and the establishment of industries to counteract declining agricultural employment. Subsistence agriculture was seen to underpin these objectives and serve as a supplementary activity (Campbell, 2001). To achieve these objectives a sophisticated five-year development plan approach was adopted.

The first five year Development Plan (DP1) (1965-70), funded largely by foreign aid¹⁵¹, focussed on greater agricultural efficiency and productivity, the development of small labour-intensive industry for export goods, education and infrastructure. By the third DP (1975-80), however, about 97 percent of cost of the plan (approximately \$49m) came from outside Tonga (Boutell & Campbell, 1993) from a growing number of countries (including Germany, Japan, Canada and India). With the gradual dissolution of the Treaty of Friendship with Britain, Tonga regained its full independence in 1970¹⁵² and soon joined the Commonwealth of Nations. Having formalised friendly relations with Japan it also became a member of the Asia Development Bank (ADB) and an associate member of the European Economic Community (EEC). This increased its access to foreign aid in terms of both grants and loans. Loans increased the country’s foreign debt and, by 1985, concessional external debt¹⁵³ was \$21.5m (IndexMundi, 2010), although this was still only a

¹⁵¹ Foreign aid emanated mainly from Britain, Australia and New Zealand.

¹⁵² Independence was achieved on June 4th 1970.

¹⁵³ “Concessional external debt conveys information about the borrower's receipt of aid from official lenders at concessional terms as defined by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD. Concessional debt is defined as loans with an original grant element of 25 percent or more”. For more information see <http://www.indexmundi.com/facts/tonga/external-debt-stocks>

fraction of the total aid received. Ninety percent of the \$89m price-tag of fourth DP (1980-85) was funded by aid¹⁵⁴ (Campbell, 2001).

Health and education consistently took the largest share of government resources. Health developments had emphasis on healthy living conditions and prevention of disease, while education focused particularly on buildings, teacher training and curriculum. As education gained national importance so did the desire among commoners to seek an overseas education for their children. The Church of the Latter Day Saints (the Mormons) capitalised on this demand by offering overseas scholarships and, as previously noted, there is now considerable Mormon representation (17%) in Tonga (Besnier, 2009).

Agricultural activity gradually declined and internal and international migration gathered speed, largely due to a lack of land access and increasing compensatory demands by land owners. In the meantime, the education efforts of the 1960s and 1970s were stimulating major social change. A new middle class began to emerge as Tongans shifted from subsistence living to professional employment in government, the church, or sought employment overseas. Between 1981 and 1995 the number of full time civil servants rose by 60 percent, making five percent of the population employed in public service (IMF, 2007). Inevitably, a lower class of landless workers dependent on wages also emerged and shifted towards the urban areas of Nuku'alofa, in particular. The pressure for jobs and increasing numbers of jobless youth became – and remain – significant problems, and the fourth and fifth DPs put greater emphasis on the growth of the private sector for export production, particularly in areas beyond Tongatapu. The new social classes co-evolved with movements demanding greater public voice in the workings of the Kingdom. Foremost was the Education Minister, Dr. Langi Kavaliku, who put forward his ideas for constitutional change to the King as early as the mid '70s. These suggestions, although repeatedly discussed in Parliament over the years, were largely ignored by the monarch (Benguigui, 2011). However, in 1978 the nurses staged an unprecedented strike targeted at head nurse nepotism (Benguigui, 2011). Gradually the professional classes, including teachers and the independent media, increasingly gained ground as political bodies.

¹⁵⁴ Germany, Britain, the ADB and various UN agencies were the main loan providers with Australia and New Zealand providing the largest grants, mainly in terms of goods and technical assistance (TA) (Campbell, 2001).

In 1982, the government made an ill-received decision which would have ongoing repercussions on Tonga's development. As a means to generating foreign exchange, the government elected to sell Tongan passports to foreigners. It was an offer that many Asian migrants took up and a decision Tongans abhorred¹⁵⁵. To add insult to injury, the revenue placed in an offshore trust fund, which was reported to have reached the value of US\$37m by June 2000 (ADB, 2005: 1), was all but obliterated following decisions made on the dubious advice from an American 'advisor'¹⁵⁶.

Continued dissatisfaction over the land system and radical tax changes introduced in 1986 (favouring the rich over the poor), together with the expanding professional middle class, which was to a large extent increasingly influenced by foreign economic and political ideas, led to increasing appeals for democratic principles and wider participation of the people in decision-making processes. The 1987 election signalled a significant shift in public political consciousness with 55 candidates standing for the nine People Representative seats (Campbell, 2001)¹⁵⁷. The six new members elected all had university degrees and demonstrated that votes were cast more on ideals and policy than family or village allegiance, as was common in the past. This new band of People Representatives, demanding more say in decision making, unnerved the nobles and Cabinet ministers and exposed various misuses of power within the government. To deliver their message more strongly, all nine People Representatives walked out of Parliament in 1989, garnering overwhelming public support (Campbell, 2001).

¹⁵⁵This decision was hailed as "an arrow in the heart of the people" and "Tonga has sold its soul" (Bain 1993: 167 cited in Benguigui, 2011). Various violent reactions to the policy took place, including several petitions and a large Church-presence demonstration on March 8th 1991 (cited in Benguigui, 2011). It is reported that many Hong Kong Chinese, and Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos were among the passport buyers (New Internationalist, 2003).

¹⁵⁶ According to the New Internationalist (2003) an "enterprising US Buddhist named Jesse Bogdonoff persuaded the King to allow him to invest the passport profits, and appointed him as the Tongan Court's first jester. The money all but disappeared (the ADB (2005) reported it was worth just US\$3m in 2002). Bogdonoff was tried for fraud, negligence and conspiracy. In 2004 Bogdonoff agreed to pay \$1m to settle the dispute The King faced no censure for his part in this scheme – thanks mainly to 'retrospective amendments' to the constitution." (BBC, 2004). (See also footnote 138)

¹⁵⁷ Tonga's unicameral legislature or parliamentary chamber, the Legislative Assembly, has 30 members. The Privy Council is entrusted to make major policy decisions and is the highest executive body of the Kingdom. Until recently, Parliament comprised: nine nobles selected from the 33 hereditary nobles of Tonga; nine popularly elected representatives; 12 members of the Privy Council (the King, his selected Prime Minister and Cabinet ministers, and 2 governors (Vava'u and Ha'apai)). The Speaker was also appointed by the King from among the 9 nobles. Privy Council members generally voted with the Government en bloc. Elections are held every three years.

The 1990 election saw the majority of the reformers re-elected signalling a new spirit of democracy in Tonga. In August 1992, the campaign became formally known as the Pro-Democracy Movement (PDM)¹⁵⁸ and, in 1994, Tonga's first political party was formed, the People's Party (Ewins, 1998). The party's constitutional criticisms centred primarily on electoral provisions, the appointment of Cabinet and the role of the King (Campbell, 2005) and were met with considerable disparagement by various nobles and government ministers. Notwithstanding, the movement continued to grow, was persistent in its calls for constitutional change, and demanded all 30 members of Parliament be elected by the people (Ewins, 1998). Progress did not come quickly, however. Numerous petitions to the King asking for political and economic reforms went unanswered; indications of dissatisfaction grew, signalled not least by the even higher rate of emigration (Wood-Ellem, 2007).

Following Tonga's switch in diplomatic allegiance from Taiwan to the People's Republic of China¹⁵⁹ in the early 1990s, an influx of Chinese immigrants was notable and quickly made a conspicuous presence in retail and wholesale trades. By 2008, it was estimated that 70 percent of retail businesses were in Chinese hands (Besnier, 2009). According to Langa'oi (2010:171) the Chinese presence in Tonga "has led to the emergence of a new social class, the businesspeople, or *kau pissinisi*" which added another layer – "outsider middlemen" - to the already transforming traditional social structure, and one which created a simmering tension.

During the late 1990s, the then Crown Prince (and later King George V) held great influence in Tongan politics and business, and assiduously pushed the country towards a free-market economy and neo-liberal reform. This involved among others, the privatisation of the electricity supply, Tongan telecommunications and insurance companies (all of which were bought either by himself, or his sister, Princess Piloevu) along with the sale of a good deal of Kingdom real estate. Such neo-liberal reform not only benefited the already rich elite, but also opened Tonga's fragile resources and markets to transnational competition and interests with little country allegiance

¹⁵⁸ Later known as the Tonga Human Rights and Democracy Movement (THRDM).

¹⁵⁹ The reasons behind this diplomatic switch are said to include: the personal preference and business interests of key decision-makers; Tonga's increasing economic dependence on foreign aid; and the increasing governance conditions attached to aid by Tonga's traditional bilateral donors (Australia, New Zealand and Japan) (Langa'oi, 2010). In addition, it is thought that King Tupou IV, who resisted moves towards greater democracy, was unimpressed with Taiwan's adoption of democracy and considered that such a shift might constitute a threat to his government (Jones, 2000, cited in Langa'oi, 2010: 167).

(Besnier, 2009). Besnier (2009) argues that this included the overseas aid industry with its army of international ‘specialists’ ignorant of the local context, which generates, he contends, an understandable “impatience ... among Tongans trained in the relevant skills” (p 223). Most importantly, neo-liberal ideas did not sit comfortably with Tongan culture and way of life which, rather than based on the ethic of economic exchange, is more based on the social principle of generalised reciprocity (Helu, 1999). This makes it very difficult for many Tongans to accumulate capital through savings on an individual or family basis (Besnier, 2009). The notion of individual wealth creation that capitalism invokes exacerbates the inequalities faced by the majority of Tongans.

Into the New Millennium

As the century turned, Tonga’s emerging middle class (urban, professional and salaried) became increasingly politicised and numerous large demonstrations took place signalling growing public disquiet with the lack of democracy (Benguigui, 2011). In 2003, in an attempt to stymie the media, the Government attempted to put forward a constitutional amendment to limit media freedom, which resulted in unprecedented demonstrations organised by the Pro Democracy Movement. Although they failed to prevent the disputed Media Operators Bill becoming law at the time (Powles, 2007), the Supreme Court later ruled that the grounds for the amendment could not be justified. This ruling, however, did not prevent many long established media being denied licences for a considerable time. In a surprise move in November 2004 (possibly a consequence of the King’s growing nervousness), the King announced that he would appoint (for the first time) two Nobles’ Representatives and two elected Peoples’ Representatives to the Privy Council¹⁶⁰, ostensibly signalling a beginning of the reform process (Moala, 2007). Critics, however, saw this as effectively diminishing the people’s representation¹⁶¹ and more a sop to the international financial institutions (the World Bank, IMF and ADB) that had joined the main bilateral donors (Australia and New Zealand) in demanding that Tonga reform its political system in order to be eligible for their assistance (Moala, 2007).

¹⁶⁰ See footnote 157. Up until this point the Privy Council of Tonga comprised the King, his Cabinet and the Governors of Ha’apai and Vava’u. All Cabinet Ministers, including the Prime Minister, were selected by the King.

¹⁶¹ Critics argued that, in effect, the government had increased its representation in the House from 12 to 16, since Privy Council members tended to vote with the Government (Moala, 2007).

As Tonga gradually slipped into bankruptcy “although this was never openly admitted” (Wood-Ellem, 2007:139), the government, supported by the ADB, launched the Economic and Public Sector Reform Program (EPSRP) aimed at “rightsizing” the public services, for which the wage bill was now close to 15 percent GDP (IMF, 2007). Under this programme, wage and salary increases were suspended and recruitment to public service was tightly restricted. In early 2005 the Government approved a salary reform package which allocated significant increases for high level officials but gave a relatively small increase for other public employees (IMF, 2007). At around the same time the World Bank offered the government a loan for education amounting to US \$4.82 million¹⁶².

The burgeoning democracy movement was reflected in the March 2005 elections where seven of the nine elected People’s Representatives were members of the Pro-Democracy Movement. Not long after, and largely because the Government had not discussed the wage bill proposals with the unions beforehand, a civil service strike on pay demands took place in June 2005¹⁶³, involving teachers, nurses, doctors, ports staff and other public servants. The paralysing strike lasted six weeks and magnified general dissatisfaction with the political regime. In the end, on September 1st a Royal Command was announced whereby the government agreed to wage increases of 60-80 percent in exchange for “an immediate return to work while negotiation continues between the Interim Committee for Civil Servants, the Cabinet Team and the Mediator until they reach an acceptable outcome for both parties” (Ma'u, 2005). More significant for the longer term, however, was an agreement to establish a royal commission on democratic reform. In October a National Committee for Political Reform (NCPR) was established to “consider submissions relating to political and constitutions reforms and recommend legislation and/or other changes with a view to building national unity and promoting social and economic advancement” (NCPR, 2005: 2). The creation of the NCPR, and headed by Prince Tu'ipelehake, nephew to King Tupou IV¹⁶⁴ was seen as a major victory, “a real

¹⁶² This will be explored more fully later (p. 137-42).

¹⁶³ It is reported that Tongan civil servants had not received a pay rise since 1986 while chief executives could expect pay rises of up to 80%. “Uliti Uata (the people’s representative from Ha’apai) articulated public reaction, saying that the government’s approach was based on the perpetuation of unfairness and selfishness central to the present system of governance” (TDP, n.d).

¹⁶⁴ Prince Tu'ipelehake, the eldest son of the King's brother, and a grandson of the late Queen Salote, became known as ‘the People's Prince’ after leading a protest march to the Palace, during the civil service national strike. See <http://archives.pireport.org/archive/2006/july/07-10-02.htm> for more details.

turning point” (Benguigui, 2011), both in terms of power to the strikers, and its precipitation of the sudden resignation of the Prime Minister, one of the King’s sons¹⁶⁵, followed by the appointment of the first People Representative (i.e. a commoner) to the post. Dr Feleti Sevele became interim PM in February 2006 (Benguigui, 2011). The extensive consultative process carried out by Prince Tu’ipelehake¹⁶⁶ further endeared him with the people and raised considerable hope for imminent political change. His sudden death in July¹⁶⁷ was deeply felt by all Tongans and seen as a significant blow for democracy for the people.

The aftermath to resolving the strikes materialised in the PM declaring that, through relatively generous voluntary redundancy packages, the civil service would be downsized by 18 percent (IMF, 2007)¹⁶⁸. Although this move achieved its objective extraordinarily quickly¹⁶⁹, considerable social costs were incurred by society. In particular, the arbitrary loss of valuable skills and experience caused disruption to public service delivery and a lack of retraining facilities left many retrenched workers with scant opportunity of reemployment. As a consequence, many experienced and skilled public servants have since left the country (E. Coxon, personal communication, 3 May 2012).

The death of the King on 10 September 2006 created further strain on the Tongan people and, although the ascension of Tupou V led to an anticipation of more speedy political change, the proposals put forward by the NCPR¹⁷⁰ were not fully embraced by either the Government or the Pro-Democracy reformers (Wood-Ellem, 2007). The ensuing wrangle “became very emotional” (Wood-Ellem, 2007:244) with both sides presenting its own set of reform proposals. When, in November, it seemed that Parliament would adjourn for the year without having made any advances, a pro-democracy rally was called. The ensuing demonstration degenerated into riots that left eight people dead and destroyed 80 percent of the central business

¹⁶⁵ Aho’eitu ‘Unuaki’otonga Tuku’aho Tupou is now about to succeed his brother as King Tupou VI.

¹⁶⁶ Generous funding from Australia and New Zealand allowed him to travel extensively to talk to Tongans at home and in the diaspora.

¹⁶⁷ His sudden death in a car accident in July 2006, while in the US carrying out committee duties, shocked the nation and was regarded as a considerable blow to the political reform process. See

<http://www.michaelfield.org/wikitonga.htm>

¹⁶⁸ The redundancy programme reduced the number of primary teachers by 20% which resulted in increased pupil:teacher ratios, although these remain relatively low by international standards (‘Atiola, et al., 2010: 38).

¹⁶⁹ The IMF has hailed 18 percent downsizing a “significant achievement” (IMF, 2007:7).

¹⁷⁰ These included: all MPs be elected by the people; the King selects the PM from the elected MPs; and the PM selects his ministers from the elected MPs (Benguigui, 2011).

district in Nuku'alofa (Harvey, 2010; Langa'oi, 2010). Public buildings and properties belonging to the King and PM became targets of resentment, and a large proportion of damaged businesses in the CBD were Chinese owned (Langa'oi, 2010). A final NCPR report was not produced until mid-2009 (MacLennan, 2010).

The post-riots rebuilding of Nuku'alofa, largely donor funded, continued into 2008 (and is still ongoing). The apparent normality, however, belie the continuing strains that went on between the pro-democracy movement and the royal family with ongoing investigations into the activities (during the riots) of pro-democracy legislators and their supporters, and their pending sedition trials (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2012). Political tensions, however, waned just before the new King's Coronation in 2008 when Tupou V announced that he would allow parliamentary reform to take place, such that the "the majority of the politicians would be elected by popular vote in the 2010 elections" (Harvey, 2010). Thus, in November 2010, 17 of the available seats would be elected by the people, with the remaining nine going to nobles. The pro-democracy party, the Democratic Party of the Friendly Islands (DPFI), secured 12 of those 17 elected seats.

This brief account reveals Tonga's rollercoaster entry to the 21st Century, both politically and emotionally. For a people unaccustomed to confrontation, the unmitigated battles they fought – both metaphorically and literally – and the resultant strains these instilled on public servants cannot be underestimated.

Formal Education in Tonga

In line with the wider orthodox modernisation project emerging after WWII, investing in 'social capital' for economic development was taken seriously by the government (Coxon, 1988). With Queen Salote Tupou III at the helm for 47 years (r.1918-65), the 20th century saw moves to make the national education syllabus more 'useful' to children's lives in Tonga with the introduction of crafts, needlework, nature studies, woodwork and agriculture into secondary schools. However, preference for 'academic-type' learning prevailed, as academic success was seen as a means of social mobility for commoners in Tonga's tightly stratified society (Coxon, 1988). The tension between academic and vocational tracks was somewhat alleviated with the setting up of a vocational school at the government's Tonga College in 1942,

providing boys with two years of post-secondary vocational education. When students who performed well under this system (usually commoners) began being appointed to positions in the civil service, vocational education generally became more accepted, as it was now seen as another way for commoners to achieve improved status.

The appointment of the Crown Prince as Minister for Education in 1943¹⁷¹ was instrumental in linking education to economic development and, having established Tonga's first Teachers' Training College in 1944, he founded the country's second government secondary school, Tonga High School, in 1947. Selecting the most academically able, it was staffed by New Zealand teachers and offered an English language secondary education comparable to that offered in New Zealand, and culminated in students sitting the New Zealand University Entrance Examination (Coxon, 1988). In addition, a government scholarship system was established which enabled the most promising graduates to further their studies in New Zealand.

In an attempt to maintain an emphasis on vocational and technical education in the local syllabus, the government launched a "new spirit of education" (Coxon, 1988: 94), which valued the development of character as much as the increase of knowledge and, between 1950 and 1965, the education budget rose by 400 percent. The new approach was reflected in the increasing number of Leaving Certificate students taking practical subjects such as agriculture, animal husbandry and wood work (boys), and home science and shorthand and typing (girls), along with compulsory Tongan and English (Coxon, 1988). In the end, however, a dual system began to emerge whereby children of subordinate social groups were offered local 'relevant' schooling, while those socially higher (offspring of the elite) had access to a more 'academic' education, by way of Tonga High School. Tonga High School soon surpassed Tonga College as the major pool for recruitment into the civil service and access to political office (Coxon, 1988), leading again to disillusionment with vocational education among most commoners.

¹⁷¹ Tonga's first university graduate and later to become King Tupou IV

Although some social mobility was evident¹⁷², in general the allocation of civil service jobs was perceived as more based on birthright than on merit and education. Notwithstanding, and as previously mentioned, by 1964 the majority of the civil service was staffed by Tongans, and sufficient upcoming talent rendered the hiring of foreigners for permanent positions in public service unnecessary (Campbell, 2001). Following the coronation of the Crown Prince as King in 1965, Tonga's first doctoral graduate, Dr Langi Kavaliku, became Minister of Education in 1966, a position he held for 34 years and one in which he not only shaped the educational services of his country, but also helped influence the educational policies of the 11 other nations in the region through his activity with the Commonwealth of Learning institute (Commonwealth of Learning, 2012).

Kavaliku, who had in 1974 bravely put his ideas for greater democracy and constitutional change to the King (Benguigui, 2011 1473), recognised upgrading secondary education was critical for a modernising nation. As such, he focused on upgrading teacher training and curriculum and effectively raised the number of students moving into higher secondary and tertiary education. With secondary provision largely provided by a variety of Christian denominational schools, it was realised that a centralised system was needed to establish a uniform curriculum (Coxon, 1988). In 1974, the Education Act laid down a national syllabus to which all education authorities adhere and determined that compulsory education would be free for all children between the ages of six and 14 years. The Government is one of ten educational authorities to provide educational services across the country; eight are owned and managed by various churches (Taufe'ulungaki, 2005).

The tenth education authority covers the 'Atenisi Institute established and developed by Professor 'I. Futa Helu¹⁷³ in the 1960s to provide a more critical, cultural edge to education. This was based on the critique of the largely utilitarian attitude towards education as a means to gaining employment and social mobility that

¹⁷² In 1961 two commoners were appointed to ministerial office, including the Minister of Education, a level previously only held by nobility.

¹⁷³ Prof. 'I Futa Helu, a "radical educationalist" (Coxon & Campbell, 2005: vii), was the founder of the 'Atenisi Institute (previously 'Atenisi High School and University) in 1966. 'Atenisi's educational perspective places criticism at the very heart of education. The critical component is realised by means of a core curriculum composed of classical languages and traditional subjects such as philosophy, logic, art and literature. 'Atenisi is self-supporting and independent of both church and state. The Institute has pioneered new methods, new curricula and new values for Tonga". In 2008 its total student population was about 150. See <http://www.atenisi.edu.to/index.html> for more details.

he saw developing. The debate is still on-going. In 2005, Dr. Taufe'ulungaki¹⁷⁴ lamented that quality education, in terms of appropriate and beneficial outcomes, “has continued to remain elusive” (p.46) and constraints within the system, especially inequality in terms of resources and selective secondary school processes, have led to high levels of children dropping out, being pushed out or repeating year levels (particularly at Class 6 and Forms 3, 4 and 5), thus compromising a significant proportion of the population. She also noted basic numeracy and literacy underachievement, and high non-completion rates at tertiary level which suggests that,

... the investments in education have not yielded the economic returns expected in terms of higher productivity growth and efficiency in both public and private sectors, or the expectation of social returns such as improved social cohesion, law and order, and enhancements in the health and general well-being of communities (p.46-7).

These investments have been significant and for many years have amounted to around 16-18 percent of the country's recurrent and development budget (Taufe'ulungaki, 2005). In the year 2008/09 this amounted to approximately US\$14m (15% of the government's operating budget); however, donor spending amounted to a quarter of total sector spending adding a further US\$4m. This represented a tenfold increase in donor support since 2003/04 ('Atiola, et al., 2010)¹⁷⁵.

At the beginning of the century NZODA's support to Tonga was described as an “ad-hoc inclusion of an overly large number of individual projects, administratively burdensome and not clearly enough targeted to priority Tongan development needs” (McGhie, Cornforth, Marriott, Taufe'ulungaki, & Fa'otusia, 2001: 7). The 2001 report recommended more focused support on the quality of formal education, particularly TVET, and greater support for sectoral management and policy planning. Finally, it foregrounded the need to discuss and establish with the government whether a ‘programme approach’ for managing NZODA assistance to the formal sector was desirable. In 2003 the Ministry of Education commissioned a

¹⁷⁴ Dr 'Ana Maui Taufe'ulungaki has worked in the Ministry of Education, Tonga, for 30 years as teacher, school principal, curriculum developer, educational administrator and planner. In 1999 she joined the University of the South Pacific as Fellow, then Director of the Institute of Education and later Pro Vice Chancellor, Research and Graduate Affairs (2006-2007). Following a consultative post with the Ministry of Education, Women's Affairs and Culture as Senior Advisor for the Tonga Education Support Project, she was appointed Minister for Education in 2011.

¹⁷⁵ “Total sector spending on education was close to 5 per cent of GDP in 2008/09. The latest figures for Pacific country education shares of GDP suggest that Tonga's education share of government spending may be lower than in comparable neighbouring countries” ('Atiola, et al., 2010: vi).

foreign-led team ¹⁷⁶ (funded by New Zealand) to undertake a comprehensive Tonga Education Sector Study and then develop a fifteen year Education Policy Framework (EPF) 2004-2019. The EPF was conceived as a vision and broad outline strategy for the medium to longer term development of the education system, to align the education sector with the demands of the 21st century, and to meet the objectives of the seventh Strategic Development Plan (SDP7) (Catherwood & Levine, 2004). Although the resultant EPF was approved by Cabinet in 2004, it was generally ill-received by the Ministry ¹⁷⁷. Notwithstanding, a three year Corporate Plan 2004-2007 for the Ministry of Education, Women's Affairs, and Culture (MEWAC) was developed which was further developed into the MEWAC Corporate Plan 2006-2009. These documents, which focus on transition and capacity building as the first steps to achieving the long-term objectives of the EPF (Pedersen & Coxon, 2008), were designed to underpin MEWAC's strategic approach over the first millennium decade. The three chief goals of the EPF are: to improve equitable access and quality of universal basic education up to Year 8; to improve access and quality of post-basic education; and to improve the administration of education and training. With the recent birth of NZAID (2002) and its new education policy signalling committed support to using a sector wide approach to assisting countries to achieve the EFA goals and educational MDGs, it is unsurprising that these plans were constructed under the auspices of a sector wide approach.

The formal structure of Tongan formal education has remained relatively unchanged for decades. With the advent of universal basic education, "primary services" (MEWAC, 2007: 28) (Class 1 to Class 6 and Form 1 and 2) have received considerably more attention, especially from donors, largely through the sector wide approach discussed below. However, a recent report states that "education spending across sub-sectors is becoming increasingly unbalanced with primary education share declining below 50% and the share of the tertiary sector increasing" ('Atiola, et al., 2010: vi). Government spending on primary education was estimated to be about 38

¹⁷⁶ This team comprised New Zealander Vince Catherwood, Victor Levine, an American economist and members of the Ministry of Education Planning Group (Catherwood & Levine, 2004).

¹⁷⁷ The impression gained from several interviews with staff at the Ministry was that it was questionable that a 'broad consultative process' had been undertaken as the incumbent Director of Education was not known for his inclusive, participatory management style. In addition, a lack of local consultative input and/or a mismatch between the thoughts of the external TAs and real local needs led to an unimpressive local attitude towards the framework. In the words of one senior interviewee, they were *not documents that the Ministry of Education have found useful, relevant or referred to ... [they are] not quite what the Ministry of Education in Tonga needed (T5)*.

percent, and secondary to be about 34 per cent¹⁷⁸, in 2009/10. Non-government schools (mainly secondary) only receive government funding of around 20-30 per cent of school costs so a considerable and crucial contribution is made by Church schools, however, as they educate about 10 percent of all primary and around 65 percent of secondary students¹⁷⁹. An overview of the current formal schooling structure is provided in Appendix 2.

Development of the Sector Wide Approach

The original funding modality for the implementation of the EPF was envisaged being via a pre-agreed World Bank loan of US\$4.8m, supplemented by a grant from NZAID. Lengthy negotiations led, however, to the World Bank loan being reduced to a minimal US\$1m¹⁸⁰ and NZAID raising its grant funding to the sum of US\$10.8m (TOP21m/NZ\$14m over five years). Under this new arrangement, the Government agreed to formalising the first EPF five year plan as a sector wide approach, initially known as the Tonga Education Support *Project*¹⁸¹ (TESP), with NZAID as its sole contributing donor (Pedersen & Coxon, 2008).

The altered financial situation led to an “innovative” (Coxon & Tolley, 2010: iv) financial arrangement being negotiated between the Government of Tonga (GOT), New Zealand and the World Bank. In effect, NZAID’s grant funding was split into two allocations: US\$ 3.82m was deposited into an elected World Bank Cash Account - forming a Trust Fund – to be maintained and managed by the World Bank in New York (incurring a US\$200,000 fee); and the remainder became a direct Grant Funding Arrangement between NZAID and GOT (Coxon & Tolley, 2010; TESP, 2005). This arrangement was proposed in order “to keep the Bank heavily involved in the SWAp, including joint supervision, technical assistance, technical analysis and policy

¹⁷⁸ Spending on secondary education has risen from a previous level of 30 percent, reflecting new government-run High Schools construction (‘Atiola, et al., 2010).

¹⁷⁹ It is estimated that 40-45 percent of the total cost of pre-tertiary schooling is funded by churches, missions and parents (fees and PTA contributions) (‘Atiola, et al., 2010).

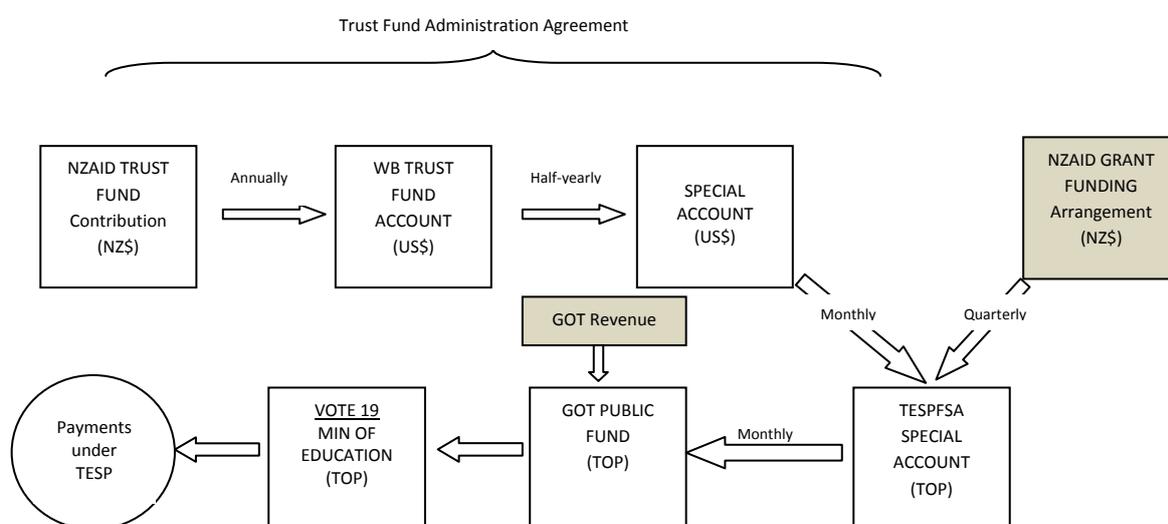
¹⁸⁰ NZAID’s increased grant allocation enabled the GoT to reduce its IDA credit agreement with the World Bank to US\$1 million. A minimal agreement with the World Bank was maintained so as to benefit from their expertise and services in certain areas.

¹⁸¹ See <http://www.worldbank.org/projects/P079657/tonga-education-support-project?lang=en>. From this World Bank abstract of TESP, it is clear that there is confusion in the use of the word ‘project’ and ‘program’. As this initiative progressed, however, the title Tonga Education Support *Project* became the Tonga Education Support *Program* (TESP) and two main initiatives within this programme were named the Tonga Schools Grant *Program* (TSGP) and the Curriculum Reform *Project* (CRP).

dialogue” (Coxon & Tolley, 2010:13) and relieved Tonga from having to immediately draw on the IDA credit facility¹⁸².

In contrast to the adjective ‘innovative’ to describe the WB Trust Fund arrangement, “cumbersome” has been preferred by some ministry staff¹⁸³ and it is easy to see why: in reality, New Zealand’s funds pass through five different bank accounts, three currencies and two procurement systems before they can be used on the ground in Tonga. Figure 4 shows the path the funds take:

Figure 4: The Path of New Zealand's Trust Funds



New Zealand funds are transferred to the World Bank Cash Account from which sufficient funds are advanced to a ‘Special Account (USD)’ to cover six months cash requirements, on request of the GOT and subject to satisfactory performance. From there, monthly advances to a special ‘TOP¹⁸⁴ TESP Financial Security Account’ (TESPFSA) are made. Upon necessary government authority, funds are drawn from the TESPFA to the GOT Public Fund. The GOT Public fund is then used to make payments to the Ministry of Education under the Education Vote from which funds can be used to pay for TESP goods and services etc. (TESP, 2005: 7-8).

An important result of this ‘cumbersome’ (and expensive) financial arrangement with the World Bank was the effective division of TESP activities into two clusters, due to the separate reporting requirements for Trust fund expenditure. Cluster One supported the school grants programme (TSGP) aimed at providing a more equitable and better quality universal basic education through the introduction of minimum service standards (MSS), school based management (SBM) and school

¹⁸²In effect, MEWAC avoided drawing on the loan until just before it expired in August 2010. According to a MEWAC interviewee, it has been allocated for school renovations (T28).

¹⁸³ Reference interview T5

¹⁸⁴ Tongan Pa’anga. TOP1:US\$1~0.56 (2012).

grants. Cluster Two supported reforms in teacher education, curriculum development, student assessment and improved sector coordination, policy and planning (Coxon & Pedersen, 2010). This division of activities, however, “*did not take adequate account of natural cross cutting issues; and the use of the word ‘clusters’ caused unnecessary confusion*” (T5e), as one insider explained. As the original IDA credit was earmarked to fund school grants and provision of TAs, under the restructured arrangement it was agreed that TAs would be funded through the WBTF and, therefore, the WB would be instrumental in their recruitment.

From the outset, the TESP was assigned to the Policy and Planning Division, one of numerous MEWAC Divisions¹⁸⁵. This positioning, and because the sector wide approach had not been properly explained (or understood), or appropriately distributed across relevant departments, caused certain internal disconnects between the various Divisions to the effect that the TESP was generally regarded as a Policy and Planning ‘project’. Despite its cross-cutting nature, it remained a ‘divisional’ rather than a ‘harmonising’ programme and was not generally regarded as an integral part of ministry business (Coxon & Tolley, 2010).

TESP’s initial implementation coincided with extremely volatile political circumstances and was severely affected by the series of national events previously described¹⁸⁶. In particular, the civil servants strike and subsequent the public service redundancies resulted in a significant number of experienced officers leaving the education service which created extraordinary and unanticipated capacity pressures that not only affected implementation of the programme but also necessitated a narrowing of the sector wide focus from that originally envisaged in the EDF (Coxon & Tolley, 2010). This largely resulted in a greater focus on basic education at the expense of post basic and vocational education. Long term, detrimental effects of the redundancy programme remain, in the form of severe capacity shortages due to the

¹⁸⁵ There are nine divisions in the Ministry of Education, Women Affairs And Culture (MEWAC) and not all are directly concerned with the provision of education.

¹⁸⁶ These include: the public service strikes in July/August 2005, subsequent pay-rises and establishment of the NCPR; the substantial public service redundancies at the end of the 05/06; the sudden death of Prince Tu’ipelehake (head f NCPR) in April 06; the death and official mourning of the King in September 2006; and riots in November 2006. Later, in 2009, further reforms to the public service resulted in the necessity for staff to take (or loose) all accrued leave entitlements before the end of the year. In some cases this amounted to six months.

retrenchment of many experienced personnel, many of whom have subsequently moved overseas¹⁸⁷.

Despite a Development Partner Harmonisation Protocol (DPHP) (TESP, 2005) between the GOT, NZAID, and the World Bank being formulated in line with the ideals of a SWAp, wherein “donor partners agree to harmonise their respective funding contributions” (p.5), the World Bank was unable to formally agree to all the components of the document. The World Bank’s inability to align with government processes effectively undermined the SWAp process, and this is now recognised to have been a serious impediment to the implementation of the TESP, not least in the delays that were caused in the up-take of funds (Coxon & Tolley, 2010). Precipitated by a lack of confidence in the EPF and original TESP design (especially the cumbersome financial mechanisms) relations between senior management in MEWAC and NZAID (effectively the only donor) became increasingly strained leading to New Zealand perceiving a lack of local engagement or willingness to take ownership of the intervention (Coxon & Tolley, 2010). This highlights Cassity’s (2010) views that many SWAps are sector wide approaches in name only; a lack of alignment to local processes contributes to a lack of real local ownership (Coxon & Pedersen, 2010). In Tonga, this was particularly acute with regards procurement. Under the rules of a World Bank loan (whether drawn down or not) there is a requirement for the country to recruit a Procurement Advisor to implement WB-specific procurement procedures. Therefore, rather than working within the country’s existing system using Ministry of Finance procedures (which itself was the subject of a WB funded government procurement improvement project) a parallel procurement system was set up within MEWAC. With the already severe staff shortages, this additional expectation added a tremendous strain on resources and relationships.

Further tensions arose over the recruitment of international advisors. Being subject to WB protocols the terms of reference tended to be “*World Bank generic rather than Tonga specific*” (TI5e) and positions were advertised in WB international circles rather than first calling on local expertise. The resulting recruitments were costly and several engaged international consultants were later deemed inappropriate

¹⁸⁷ Personal communication with Dr Coxon, following a recent professional visit to Tonga in April 2012. She indicated that discussions with ministry officials indicated that internal capacity in MEWAC is being recognised as having been seriously depleted, in comparison to levels at the turn of the century.

(Coxon & Tolley, 2010; Pedersen & Coxon, 2008). The recruitment of a Tongan national (to an international TA position as TESP advisor) highlights this point¹⁸⁸. Dr Taufe'ulangaki¹⁸⁹ is an eminent educationalist and internationally respected Tongan with a deep understanding of Tongan, Pacific and international education issues; her recruitment was viewed as “*a godsend*” (T5b) but it is a shame it took the World Bank so long to ‘find’ her. Similarly, the recruitment of a team of national consultants proved to be a very successful, as further discussion in Part Three will highlight. With this team, MEWAC was able to field an experienced and well-regarded team of local professionals who were able to form close working relationships with schools and principals in order to implement the school based management and school grants programme. However, due to a combination of the ‘cumbersome’ funding arrangements, inefficient procurement processes and the absence of key MEWAC staff¹⁹⁰ contract renewals were bungled and a gap of several months ensued, by which time several key members of the team had moved on and taken other employment (interview T29).

Since the TESP’s inception, other development partners active in Tongan education (e.g. AusAID, JICA, PRC, UNESCO) have become signatories to the DPHP and are gradually becoming more involved in the SWAp process (Coxon & Pedersen, 2010). Phase One of the TESP expired on 30 June 2010 and a short-term programme of support (until June 2011) was designed by Coxon and Pederson (2010) to be jointly funded by NZAID and AusAID. It remains unclear the extent to which this design was implemented. No progress had been made by the timing of my last field visit to Tonga in August 2010 and circulation of the interim programme appeared limited, with few MEWAC staff aware of its existence.

At the time of writing, some key TESP achievements included: the establishment of a formula-based resource allocation (grants) programme that links to agreed standards and school-based planning and decision-making. Limited progress had been made, however, in the development of an information system that should be capable of generating valid infrastructural and educational baseline data to inform

¹⁸⁸ There is a considerable contingent of Pacific educationalists who are deeply committed to tackling issues of access, equity and improving the quality of education in their own countries and across the region.

¹⁸⁹ Dr Taufe'ulangaki has since been appointed Minister of Education in 2011.

¹⁹⁰ This member was obliged to take extended leave under the use it or lose it decree for all public servants put in place in 2009 (see footnote 186).

forecasting and allocation planning, policy development and the implementation of a system-wide comparative analysis (Coxon, et al., 2011; Coxon & Pedersen, 2010). The Curriculum Reform Project had created a fundamental shift in the curriculum orientation towards outcomes-based education, and work was in progress towards defining professional pre-service and in-service teacher education needs to support the curriculum changes (Pedersen & Coxon, 2008). In particular, a significant contribution to progress under the TESP can be apportioned to the contracting of the national consultants who have extensive experience of Tongan schools, and have worked closely with school management in regard the school grants programme.

The “Tongan way”

To complete this section on Tonga, it is important to highlight what is referred to as the “Tongan way” (*anga fakatonga*) which is used to identify what is seen as a uniquely or specifically Tongan way of being (H. Morton, 1996). As described, Tonga is a largely homogenous society with a rich history and many influences. Sustained European contact through missionaries has had powerful influence on the social and political transformations from the mid 19th century. Western style codes of law and constitution were promulgated by Tupou I to stave off formal colonisation, and land laws prohibiting foreign sale of land protected the country from an overload of settlers. Under the two subsequent monarchs, Tupou II and Queen Salote, Tonga remained relatively isolated and conservative, albeit with a constant European presence, during which time much of the current definition of *anga fakatonga* was established (H. Morton, 1996). Tupou IV (r. 1967 – 2008) gradually opened Tonga to the world and the ‘modernisation project’, not least international trade development, increased travel and migration, new technologies and a massive inflow of imported goods. Such ‘progress’ can be coupled with a growing reliance on aid and remittances, unemployment, land shortages and urbanisation (H. Morton, 1996).

An intrinsically hierarchical society is central to Tongan identity. *Anga fakatonga* is shaped by notions of differential power and prestige within the social ordering. Rank and status are not only related to the monarchical social structure (rank) but also “in relation to the construction of individuals’ sense of self [status]” (H. Morton, 1996: 23). While ‘rank’ is designated by birth, the broadest demarcation

is between '*eiki* (chief/noble) and *tu'a* (commoner); 'status' cuts across the ranking system, calculated in context and relative. This means that,

... in any given context a person's status is relative to that of whoever else is present. Status is primarily determined by seniority (chronological or genealogical), gender and kinship relations. Another more flexibly determined factor is reputation, which can be enhanced by education, wealth generosity and involvement in church-related activities (H. Morton, 1996: 24).

It is not my intention (nor my position) to explore the intricacies and subtleties inherent in Tongan society, suffice it to draw the reader's attention to the vast complexities that underscore local attitude and behaviour, and their significance in terms of the image presented, particularly to the outsider. As ideological constructs, '*eiki* and *tu'a* conceive ideal personhood, and the dichotomy between them fundamentally shapes local norms. As Marcus (1989, cited in H. Morton, 1996: 24) explains,

Chieftainship is an idiom for characterising virtuous behaviour and a formally correct presentation of self ... Particularly as it extended to the base of society, chieftainship was not only a position of local leadership and collective symbolic focus, but also a generally employed idiom for evaluation and controlling common behaviour (1989, 187-189).

By way of further explanation, Gifford notes that the term *tu'a* was applied to anyone "who is not 'clever in Tongan ways', who does not act according to the prescribed etiquette or who is rude or boorish" (1971b: 108, quoted in H. Morton, 1996: 25). A tension exists, however, between striving for '*eiki* values (but not appearing to rise above one's status) and engendering respect and obedience (valued *tu'a* qualities) but not causing detriment to one's status.

In her essay on Tongan restraint, Wendy Cowling explains, how, in Polynesian communities generally, emphasis is on harmonious living which requires conformity and restraint and an aversion to showing anger. In Tonga, open expression of hostility and anger is particularly avoided in favour of the '*eiki* values of even-temperedness and good behaviour. The effect of an uncontrolled expression of anger deeply affects people's responses and behaviour (Cowling, 2005) and are often dealt with by silence. Compared to other Pacific countries, there is no protocol in Tonga for repairing a breach in relations caused by expressions of anger, or causing harm to another person. Cowling's research, however, found such incidents are

inevitably linked to a feeling of sadness, embarrassment or shame (Cowling, 2005).

As one of my interviewees explained,

Tongans would rather do nothing than encourage confrontation; western donors' pressure for action [can be linked] to a lack of effective (western) negotiation experience among the locals ... which acted against their better judgement and undermined ownership (T40).

With this said, it is unsurprising that overt interference from outsiders is poorly regarded in Tonga, especially regarding change management. As Ewins (1998: 262) discovered in his book *'Changing their Minds Tradition and Politics in Contemporary Fiji and Tonga'*, many Tongans "resist if not all change then at least those specific changes that seem particularly fraught with difficulty". An insensitive external effort to impose change, especially by donors, therefore instinctively raises hackles. The tumultuous events that transpired with the dawn of the new millennium must be added to this perspective. Never before had the political power of authority figures been questioned, and the emerging tensions prevalent in the early days of the SWAp build on this new-found audacity, legitimising the political power of the public servants over the assumed power of the figures of authority (including the World Bank and NZAID). New Zealand's fundamental lack of comprehension of these political implications of contemporary events is, in my opinion, likely to have added to the ensuing tensions between MEWAC and NZAID.

Concluding Part Two

Part Two has traced the evolution of orthodox development theory from the end of WWII through to the development of sector wide approaches under the 'aid effectiveness agenda'. Interspersed has been a commentary on New Zealand's role and influence as a donor in the Pacific, in education in particular. In reflecting upon on the international debates that have shaped development and the field of education, and continue to define its contours (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2006), it has highlighted how consensus for various declarations and agreements have created various global and local blueprints for development. With the latest 'aid effectiveness agenda' centred on reducing poverty through the achievement of the eight MDGs, it has outlined the macro- and micro-level influences that have led to the emergence of sector wide approaches globally and within the Pacific.

The complexity of the relationship between school, education, family, community and heritage resonates as much for Solomon Islands as for Tonga. The ongoing debate into rethinking the aims of Pacific Islands' education systems considers how to better address the needs of the majority of students who are unlikely to find paid employment or proceed to further studies. Policy aiming to provide people with cultural 'skills for living' is paramount to developing resilience, as well as enabling people to provide for themselves in the subsistence or economic sector. As Kabutaulaka (1998) explains,

In all Pacific Island countries, cultural tradition plays a significant role in national affairs. It influences people's understandings, reactions and expectations of political and civil institutions. Cultural traditions are salient in defining and influencing the goals for development and the how these can be achieved. Consequently, in order to fully understand the development process in Pacific Island countries, one needs to have an appreciation, not only of the economic factors that influence development, but also of the cultural and traditional issues that are equally important.

Current Pacific education debate takes the form of an online discussion forum, the 'Network of Pacific Educationalists (NOPE)'. Recent questions raised on this matter include:

- What does 'being educated' mean? Does it mean being highly qualified in a western sense or educated to survive in a Pacific sense?
- How many 'educated citizens' does a Pacific country need to have before the group is able to live as 'an educated community'?
- With Tonga's reputation for having the highest number of PhD per capita in the world, why does it remain so indebted to foreign donors?¹⁹¹

Part Two has given space to locating each country within its socio-political economy, as well as tracing their educational development from the missionary era through to their experience with the sector wide approach. I have endeavoured to provide the reader with a concise, but sufficiently detailed, image of the two Pacific case study countries that will form backdrops to the analyses to be presented in Part Three. As I pointed out in Part One, in order to apply a complexity lens, knowledge and understanding of the local context is critical. Such knowledge includes awareness of the physical landscape and its challenges; appreciation of how historical events have shaped and continue to influence current politics and culture; and some comprehension of the intricate relationship between culture and social norms. Both

¹⁹¹ Aubrey Young of the New Zealand Herald reported on April 11, 2011 that Tonga's debt to China was 32 percent of its GDP. See http://www.nzherald.co.nz/economy/news/article.cfm?c_id=34&objectid=10718478

countries have suffered conflict to some degree in the last decade, and some grasp of the historical / political tensions that may have triggered these clashes is offered.

Referring back to Cilliers' tenets of complexity (1998) (see p.20): "complex systems have a history which cannot be ignored. Small changes in circumstances can lead to large deviations in future". Part Two has endeavoured to provide sufficient insight to illuminate that history and provide the reader with a sense of how, within the wider complex system of 'orthodox development', formal education systems have evolved over time within each context; and how each of system has interacted and been influenced by others (both externally and internally).

PART THREE

Complexity Perspectives

Complexity is essentially a frame of reference - a way of understanding what things are like, how they work, and how they might be made to work (Byrne, 2001: conclusion).

Introducing Part Three

Part One established the aim and the theoretical framework underpinning this thesis. Part Two provided a multi-level philosophic, historic and geographic context to explain how sector wide approaches have become an accepted international approach to education development intervention and, as a result, have formed the *modus operandi* for NZAID to execute their ODA to education in the Pacific, with specific reference to Solomon Islands and Tonga. Part Three, will draw these strands together to discuss country-specific applications of the sector wide approach. In applying a complexity perspective, it will seek to provide a deeper understanding of:

- How the approach was interpreted and how it emerged within each context; the nature of and extent to which change was perceived, how it sits within the wider picture, and how particular circumstances or events influenced the path taken within the ‘space of the possible’.
- The nature of connectivity that co-evolved within the main institutions (NZAID and the country government) and between them and how these behaviours dynamically adapted over time, particularly in relation to implementing the SWAp.
- The interdependence between wider western orthodox development paradigms and local educational development in the Pacific.

In so doing, it will address the core research question; namely by exploring the processes of change over the products of change, to what extent does a complexity approach provide a useful framework for analysing the ‘success’ of development initiatives? To do this requires the exposition of my analytical framework.

Analytical Framework

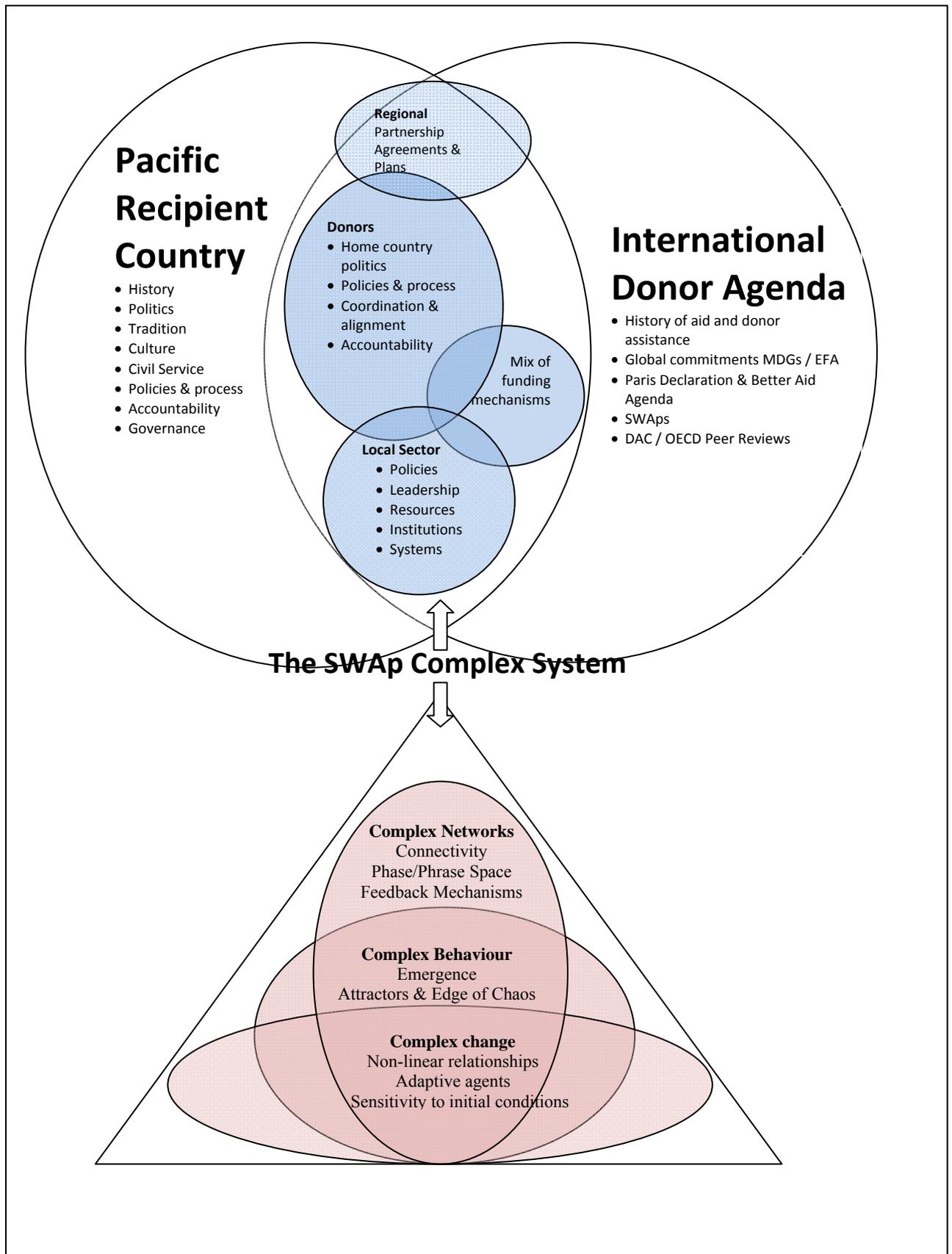
As indicated in Part One, unpacking the complexity of sector wide approaches, both as a modality for assistance and a mechanism to deliver international donor funds, demands multi-level analyses. This research utilises a macro-micro level approach incorporating both vertical and extended perspectives. The vertical situates NZAID, the main funding agency, within the wider orthodox development arena and examines the tensions between its commitment to global goals and responsivity to local needs, and the aspirations of partner governments. The extended, reflexive perspective, on the other hand, considers more the local actions of stakeholders within the two case study countries. By connecting the present with the past, the inter-relatedness and inter-dependence of previous levers of change can illuminate the system’s strength of feedback mechanisms and tolerance for

innovation, adaption and change. This will potentially provide insight into the likelihood and nature of future change within particular contexts.

The 'buffer' or overlap between these two perspectives - the global imperatives, such as the Paris Declaration and the 'better aid agenda' on the one hand, and the local goals of the partner government to deliver a more efficient and effective education system to its people on the other - creates a space where a complex adaptive 'system' actions the ideology and rhetoric within contextual constraints. I use the term 'system' in the sense that it is a coherent network of activities and an amalgamation of many actors that come together within a common framework or purpose, but without implying sharp or fixed boundaries. The basic organising principles applicable to all complex systems, regardless of scale, are self-organisation, dynamism /co-evolution and emergence (Kuhn, 2009). Complex systems are ones in which the agents (individuals, groups or ideas) are lightly constrained by the system (rules of the game, objective of the system, common cause) and, through mutual interactions with each other and with the system environment, the agents self-organise and modify the system. As a result, the system and its agents dynamically co-evolve and change is observed.

As I have attempted to make clear in Part One, a complexity perspective is firmly actor / transaction dependent and the complexly structured, non-additive behaviour emerging from the interactive networks operating within the system create a whole that is more than the sum of its parts. Development, or some form of transformational change, is, therefore, an emergent characteristic of this complex system; it relates unpredictably to inputs, but remains within loose, sufficiently predictable boundaries to allow the wider system patterns to endure (A. C. T. Smith, 2004). Figure 5 is an attempt to illustrate the space under study where loose boundaries form the complex 'system' of a sector wide approach.

Figure 5: The SWAp 'Space' and its relation to the analytical framework



Organisations are human enterprises reliant on those involved and their favoured and habitual ways of making sense of and engaging with others. Relationships and communication really matter (Eyben, 2010b; Kuhn, 2009), shaping how people influence and act towards one another. Often implicit in aided development is the notion that society can be ‘engineered’ and that change is linearly predictable: can be planned, tracked and reported through a series of processes and activities. Such reduction, however, undermines the evolutionary nature of complex systems and risks stifling the emergence of change by preventing crucial innovation and self-organisation. Confining results to formative data derived from pre-determined outputs (for SWAps this is often measuring the degree of achieved ‘ownership’, ‘accountability’, ‘alignment of processes’ and ‘value for money’) implies that conformity is part of the key to success. From a complexity perspective, however, conformity suggests a desire for stability and equilibrium over tolerating and encouraging conditions that may encourage transformative change to generate from within.

Explaining or examining the emergence of change from actor perspectives (dynamic self-organisation, evolution, adaptation etc.) rather than the causal efficacy of ‘planned’ intervention prompts different questions, interpretations and explorations (Fowler, 2008b). Not least it prompts an exploration of the entropy (energy) generated by human interaction and pays attention to “the evolution of hierarchies of power distributions, rules and arrangements that are embedded in all human transactions, with trust as a critical variable” (Fowler, 2008b:34). Viewing development as a technical process where results from aid inputs can be neatly accounted to western taxpayers emasculates the complexity of social change as a political and normative process (Woodhill, 2008). It ignores the ‘messy’ issues of power, control and influence which are fundamental to the nature of the emergent change. Embracing uncertainty provides an “optic into existing tiers of social arrangements, the power transmitted through connections and the reactions involved: compliance, resistance or ...?” (Fowler, 2008b: 42-3). Control of language and knowledge, and the determination of public agendas all play important parts in the evolution of change. In understanding social systems as evolutionary, path dependent and a function of what is and what has been (Byrne, 2001) provides insight not only

into what drives, but also what sustains (or hinders), “self-organised configurations that are reflexive, dialectic and never stable” (Fowler, 2008b:34).

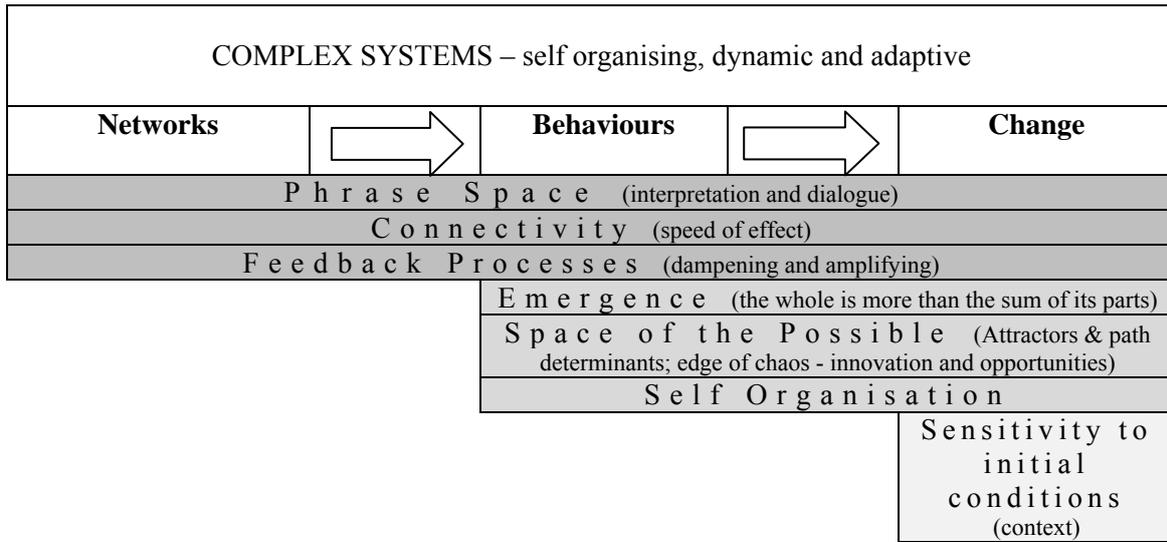
A complexity perspective is multifaceted and draws upon a variety of lenses, some more suited to gaze at particular features than others. It allows for perspective contention between agent-centric and systems approaches and adds a cognitive agility to our ‘sense-making’ of the situation, illuminating change from different angles and on a number of fronts (Kuhn, 2008a).

Within the context of the sector wide approaches in Solomon Islands and Tonga the following sections will examine the nature of any structural changes that can be identified¹⁹²; what effect these may have had on the actors within the system; and suggest how systemic change might be influenced in the future. Drawing on Ramalingam et al’s (2008) framework presented in Part One (Figure1), Figure 6 (below) sets out the framework that guides these analyses.

Within the ‘space’ forming the SWAp complex system, described above in Figure 5, I contend that self-organising, dynamic and adaptive agents act to form networks, develop behaviours and generate change. Thus, ‘Networks’, ‘Behaviours’ and ‘Change’ demarcate the analyses (3A, 3B 3C), under which the various tenets of complexity (Part One p.20) are used to interrogate the field and documentary data. The holistic nature of complexity thinking makes it impossible to isolate and assign one particular feature to one area of analyses; however, for the sake of manageability, I have developed the following matrix which attempts to show where the interrogative value of each tenet might best sit across the three analytical sub-divisions under scrutiny and, in applying it, illustrate the type of insight it may reveal.

¹⁹² Here I refer to Leftwich’s (2010: 96) notion of structure being thought as cross-cutting a number of dimensions, such as: material circumstances, geopolitical contexts and power relations; socioeconomic and social structures; and informal and formal institutions.

Figure 6: Model for analysing SWApS from a Complexity Perspective



Drawing on the contextual ‘initial conditions’ data provided in Part Two, each of the three main sections comprising Part Three will consider concepts of ‘connectivity’, ‘feedback’ and ‘emergence’. Section B, ‘Behaviours’, will also draw on ideas of ‘non-linear interactions’, the ‘space of the possible’ and ‘phrase space’ while the final Section C will highlight the concepts ‘edge of chaos’ and ‘co-evolution’ in particular. It is important to note that the arrows in the matrix above, leading from Networks to Change, are not linear representations but indicators of a macro to micro traverse. In looking first at the nature of the networks formed between government and donor, then at behaviours emerging within the respective institutions and, finally, at the nature of changes that have occurred due to the interactions and adaptations of individual agents involved it embraces Eyben’s mantra that “relationships matter” (see Eyben, 2007, 2008, 2010a, 2010b, 2010/11). Considering the relational over current orthodoxies of results-based management upends the substantialist logic of achieving predetermined, specific real world change by treating the recipient organisation “as an *instrument* to that change” (Eyben, 2010/11: 30, emphasis in original). It recognises that donors as well as recipients are changed by the aid relationship, and considers the hidden relational power practices that sustain a status quo or fuel change (i.e. dampening or amplifying feedback mechanisms). This leads to a more accurate understanding of the nature of stagnant, desired or unintended change processes and gives insight into why an initiative might appear to have created (or failed to create) a desired social change or help to explain the emergence of unintended change and consequences.

A. Complex Networks: Recipient – Donor Interactions

To recap, many of the principles underlying the sector wide approach stem from (western) notions of ‘harmonisation’ and ‘partnership’. Rhetorically, an ideal SWAp is one where the international development partners (donors) unite to work with a partner government to improve its delivery of sector services to the domestic public; in this case, accessible quality education. Steered by the ‘aid effectiveness agenda’, donors are deemed to agree to ‘partnership principles’ designed to harmonise their approaches and streamline their procedures to align with national government procedures and development strategies and priorities. In supporting contemporary donor aspirations to move away from self-managed, short-term project inputs this provides deeper, longer term assistance focussed on central government and policy development. From the country perspective, donors aligning to national plans and procedures and committing more reliable, longer term funding and support to central government provokes stronger national leadership and a greater sense of development ownership. Finally, through mutual accountability processes, problems with performance and delivery should be reduced to a minimum.

In reality of course, interpretation of rhetoric rarely (if ever) conforms to the ideal, each audience draws on its own perspective and experience within a specific historical horizon. The overlapping and interconnected worlds identified in Figure 5 and examined in detail in Part Two, provide the contextual, structural backdrop to the narratives collected during the field research and, in the following section, I examine how the complex relational nature of time and space have formed and modulated the emergence and understandings of the term SWAp in the various settings.

Interpreting SWAp Rhetoric - Phrase Space

Lesley Kuhn’s (Kuhn, 2008a:179) notion of ‘phrase space’ focuses on a relational nature of language and dialogue within complex systems. Applying it here illustrates how specific time and space dimensions can be revealed to have affected dialogue and understanding. Paying attention to which messages become dominant, who communicates them, and how they are discussed within local dialogues gives insight into interpretational shifts and modified understanding. It also can help

identify altered lines of communication as well as the degree of connectivity between agents within the system.

While the majority of the participants interviewed agreed that ‘a SWAp’ was broadly something that aimed to integrate contributions from development partners for the holistic implementation of a nationally developed policy framework, there were clear differences in how the notion of ‘partnership’ was perceived by the various stakeholder groups, both idealistically and practically. From early interviews with NZAID staff, SWAps were generally explained “*as a way of working, a dynamic continuum*” (S1) towards achieving an ideal. Exactly what that ideal was, however, or the extent to which partnership played a part, was often unclear making any attempt to apply common boundaries around the notion of a SWAp difficult.

In terms of the reach of a SWAp, one NZAID interviewee contended that a SWAp should not only be sector-*wide* and stretch across associated ministries, it should also be sector *deep* drawing together all institutions involved in delivering education (i.e. private, church, non-formal etc), and “*Ideally it should be locally led*” (T3, emphasis added). These caveats are interesting. The first because it highlights the reported reality that ‘sector-wide’ often becomes ‘sector-narrow’; a SWAp is often “...perceived not as a multi-stakeholder process but as a specific public expenditure programme funded by a group of donors” (van Reesch, 2009: 83). The second raises two issues; first, that local leadership is not deemed an essential component, and secondly and more obliquely, under the guise of ‘partnership’, a lack of local leadership leaves donors to determine the amount of external direction needed and a relatively open door for them to influence policy (Tolley, 2011).

From a country perspective, the sector wide approach in Solomon Islands was understood more in terms of a finance modality and a mechanism for harmonising and co-ordinating donor activities. As such, it generated defined expectations. With the National Education Board dysfunctional (Pollard, 2005), years of post-Independence educational development had been ad hoc and education indicators were poor. Dispersed, self-reliant, largely subsistence communities had little contact with central government, as evidenced by much of the country surviving relatively unscathed the five years of conflict at its centre. That it resulted in a near defunct public service was of little consequence to the majority of the population. The end of the Tensions

provided space for re-evaluation. In terms of education, senior management (led by Dr Sikua) were disillusioned with donors' selective and insular project approach and they recognised greater cohesion across the sector was urgently needed. Reconciling the numerous and disparate education authorities, consolidating provisional activity and creating a more unified educational approach within a central education strategy were all acknowledged as key to improving connectivity within the sector. Faced with the enormity of these challenges and unimpressive past experiences with donors, Dr Sikua concluded *there has to be another way* [to approach educational development and aid] and had the open-mindedness to consider alternative approaches. With the concurrent formation of NZAID and its adoption of SWAp in its education policy, Solomon Islands accepted the opportunity to try something new and adopted the approach.

Describing how the post-conflict environment boosted the government's resolve to write their first strategic plan for education, one NZAID staffer involved early in the implementation stages contended, "*that was the difference - for the first time they had a strategy – they had a plan and a vision and I think that's the difference*". Gradually, as the approach took hold, she was able to see,

...greater sense of ownership – it was about them presenting to themselves (colleagues and interested parties) against the goals, not presenting to the donor. ... Instead of people rushing around writing project proposals they are actually writing their own plans, confident that there will be some funding coming (S1).

Strong national ownership has been fully assumed by the ministry from the outset, "*we are using the money according to our own priorities*" (S15) and, as one MEHRD official explained, the SWAp is more to do with "*an approach for donors to come together and put funding into one basket. The ministry develops its own programme and it allocates funding from the basket*" (S8). This view was reinforced by another, who commented, "*... it is important that the Ministry is taking the lead and we hope donors will respond to this and not dictate to us. They need to let go*" (S5).

In contrast, Tongan perspectives revealed that the potential of the sector wide approach was generally interpreted as a means of garnering a more harmonised national education sector. As one senior MEWAC official explained, "*We feel that bringing all the ideas, bringing everything together and unfolding what is there and*

working together especially with non-government systems [is important]. That's how we feel a SWAP is in practical terms" (T15a). Others echoed this holistic attitude, for example,

[This approach] applies to the whole of Tonga not just one village or district. All children are beneficiaries of this project [sic]. Through this approach, all education sectors in Tonga, no matter whether they are private, mission, government schools – they all have access to the same (16e).

It is also interesting to note the contrasting boundaries conceived by those at different levels within the Tongan Ministry of Education. For instance, due to the nature of their relationships with principals and schools, the team of national consultants regarded the notion of a SWAp more in terms of sharing ideas and strengthening local leadership, *"It's a snowball effect, if the leader is good the next level down is good until you get to the level that really matters – the kids..."* (T16b). While the need to better engage with schools was acknowledged by some MEWAC officials (*we need to consider them in our operation* (T15a)), the MEWAC boundary remained limited to national and supra-national levels. In acknowledging the diverse and complex set of actors at all levels, including at the micro-level (such as principals and parents) the national consultants held much broader boundaries and exhibited more appreciation that it is through the combined action of all agents to achieve, or fail to achieve, development results (van Reesch, 2009), as illustrated in the words of two national consultants:

The key word in SWAp is **strengthening...** Principals certainly, and even we have learnt a lot from the principals we work with – most of our experience is with secondary schools – so working mostly in primary schools has been enlightening for us too. Learning from each other... (T16b)

Before, many schools spent grants on repairs & maintenance but now they focus on student/teacher materials. ... positive improvements ... have occurred now principals are buying according to the plan (T16f).

Nuanced interpretations of 'harmonisation' 'partnership' and 'ownership' form the crux of participants' understanding of what sector wide approaches mean, both ideally and in practice. For participants in the case study countries, messages of harmonising activity and creating partnerships were more pervasive than those calling for specific focus on setting a strategic framework and sector plan. Broadly, 'harmonisation' embraced aspects of cross-sector participation among peers and donors co-ordinating and aligning their processes within local procedures; 'partnership', on the other hand, tended to refer mainly to the donor-recipient

interface. In terms of ownership, clear differences emerged across the donor-recipient divide: the proxy for donors largely lay in the status and quality of each country's formal plans and stated priorities, while for recipients it was judged by their strength as a Ministry to choose to embrace or to stand up to donor advances and pressure.

Drawing on the relational nature of language, dialogue and culture in a Pacific context makes this focus on harmonising easier to understand. As noted in Part Two, commitment to one's social responsibilities and maintaining formal and informal relationships is a key aspect of Pacific cultural obligations. That both countries were less concerned with formalised education policies prior to the introduction of the SWAp suggests more a reliance on dialogue and negotiation than the idea of setting rigid centrally planned priorities. As a MEHRD staffer reflected, "*The SWAp was difficult at first – assimilating to this way of thinking required a lot of our time. It needed a change in our psychological thinking – we were not ready for it*" (S6). With time, however, he recognised that it became easier, "... *we are now able to recognise what we want and what we can do. We are no longer too ambitious and more aware of what is possible*" (S6). The influence of the embedded TA undoubtedly influenced the dialogues within MEHRD and created a change in the way staff envisaged the SWAp towards the end of the research,

In the beginning most was done by the TA ... now there has been a big difference ... it has enhanced our capacity sector wide. Now there is more coordination and harmonisation of our education activities with donors and other intergovernmental agencies and other ministries have interest in children and education ... It is clearer now ... we are beginning to see the outcomes (S5).

It is clear that perspectives have been negotiated by the agents within each case study system, influenced by donor and government sentiments, and tempered by individuals' own interpretation of contextual issues and constraints. As previously prescribed, this evolution resonates with the relational nature of language and dialogue within complex systems described as 'phrase space' (Kuhn, 2008b, 2009). Interpretations, dialogue and responses co-evolve according to specific time and space dimensions and the behaviour adaptive agents. As one NZAID staffer involved early in the development of Solomon Islands' SWAp noted, "*being an educator ... and someone a bit older who could have those relationships*" enabled her "*to have dialogue [with senior officials and share an] understanding of education and its principles*" (S1).

As the notion of a ‘sector wide approach’ became more familiar, the utility underlying a sector wide approach resonated with many stakeholders; for example,

I think the opportunities of the SWAp are endless. The literature tells us there are many advantages of the SWAp ... (T16b).

A SWAp is more holistic ...helps strategic and systemic thinking ... now the advisors work for us not the project (S38).

We are given the opportunity to drive... (T15a).

Being inherent in participants’ interpretation of a SWAp, these themes form a natural ‘boundary’ to the ‘space’ that will be interrogated in the rest of Part Three.

Connectivity in Solomon Islands

As explained in Part One, the richness of the connections between agents (organisations, groups or individuals) affects modification in the complex system as a whole. While interactions between individual agents tend to have a short range of influence (usually confined to near neighbours) the degree of connectivity within the system is characterised by the speed and effect that decisions or actions of a few spread through the system. In Solomon Islands, strong connectivity in the donor-government relationship has been clearly acknowledged on both sides, as the following comments elucidate:

Success within this SWAp ... is totally about the relationship we have built up with the Ministry of Education on a very personal level. We have developed a personal relationship and a relationship of trust. Taking a sector wide approach has really allowed us to do that (NZAID).

In terms of whether the SWAP is an appropriate modality in a fragile state – I would argue that it has been because it’s allowed that trust to build. In fragile post conflict states, there is usually a lack of trust between people, between communities, between government and people. But working in a SWAp here has allowed that trust to develop (NZAID).

That trust has been really the key – it has allowed us [NZAID] and the Ministry to make mistakes in a safe and honest environment. This has allowed confidence to build within the Ministry and it has been allowed to learn from its mistakes (NZAID).

I feel that the environment is conducive to people feeling safe enough to admit they may be wrong (NZAID).

The relationship – they [NZAID] are a very supportive partner and we have established a good relationship. They don’t tell us what to do, but they listen to us and allow us to make our own views known and what we think the priorities are. They don’t tell us, but they listen (MEHRD).

Everyone is happy to share information so there is a very intimate relationship between some of the directors and ... NZAID, which works positively here, but it can add pressure to some of the directors because they are all asking for better performance ... Even our PS with her busy schedule is happy to receive anybody from NZAID. ... They see that the Ministry is not doing well all the time but they manage for results rather than by results. They have become satisfied that result take a long time... (MEHRD).

NZAID's head office staff in Wellington also recognised the value in the strong relationship: "... *the relationship is what's made the Solomons' SWAp as successful as it is*" (S3b). The 'successful' relationship with NZAID was often contrasted to the less conducive relationship formed between the government and the EU who were initially involved in the SWAp. Early interviews with MEHRD staff in Honiara elucidated the problems:

[The EU] are not flexible; they are very, very rigid, and there is too much bureaucracy. It can take a lot of time to access funding as approval is needed from their own offices before they can transfer money. With NZAID as long as we provide the work plan they give the money to the Ministry of Finance (S8).

Not so much difficulty with NZAID, but the EU and even AusAID are still trying to maintain control; hence, we have an EU support unit – their own control (S5).

These sentiments were reverberated by NZAID staff:

[NZAID has a] very strained relationship with the EU – hard to see them as a partner as they still work under a PIU [Project Implementation Unit]. The PIU is housed within MEHRD but really the majority of the decision making is done by the EU contracted staff. It's a struggle to see them as a genuine partner. The Ministry probably think the same thing (S4).

The EU/Ministry relationship was not great – in fact it broke down. Perhaps it was personality-based, but it was disappointing that the EU rules were so inflexible. Missed opportunities ... The EU couldn't, or wouldn't, join in training sessions (S1).

These observations suggest that the perceived quality of the relationship played a crucial part in terms of how much control or driving power the Ministry felt it had, and thus its perceived level of ownership. Similarly, it also indicates how much agency is afforded by the donor to the government. The tension created between MEHRD and EU as a result of its inflexible processes and insular attitude ostracised general MEHRD staff from those involved in the PIU. As one senior staffer explained, "*The EU ... they are still trying to maintain control – hence we have an EU support team – their own control ... proving their own funding through their*

national authorising office” (S5). Once the EU funding¹⁹³ ended in 2009, MEHRD were quick to physically dismantle the PIU (that had been constructed within the Ministry’s office space) and integrate any contract staff wishing to become permanent MEHRD staffers. As one insider commented in 2008, *“we want to get rid of this unit. We have already given it another name – from Project Implementation Unit to Support Unit to MEHRD”* (S9), the main purpose of which was envisaged as concentrating on transferring information and skills to permanent staff. He went on to lament, however, that because *“they have been spoiled by [being on contract] they do not want to go into permanent service ... so we will lose those skills.”*

From a complexity perspective, agents’ actions are informed by previous experience. Thus, the behaviour of the ‘whole’ is influenced by a myriad of factors, but not least by the cognitive processing of information and actions of the individuals involved – the smallest element of the system. In the case of Solomon Islands, the SWAp was introduced relatively quickly – and without any of the usual conditions in place (see p.111) - spearheaded by one NZAID staffer in particular, and strongly supported in-country by a leadership elite; namely Dr Sikua. *“Derek was very influential [in writing of the ‘Blue Book’¹⁹⁴] throughout”* (S3b). With few of the assumed necessary conditions in place, the education Swap in Solomon Islands was, as one NZAID staffer described, *“floated on a sea of hope”* (S9) at an opportunistic time: *“the one thing XX did well is that he didn’t wait – he took the opportunity and started from where they were”* (S2).

The close working relations that had been built between the two key players (Dr Sikua and the NZAID staffer; see p.110) helped to forge a trustful relationship between NZAID and the SIG from the outset, which assisted in the development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) under the ESIRP. Notably, the government declared a commitment to invest 22 percent of the discretionary budget to education¹⁹⁵. At the same time, NZAID committed to accept an annual joint review, and MEHRD committed to holding quarterly education sector committee meetings. According to one NZAID interviewee, *“those were really good reminders of what the*

¹⁹³ As explained in footnote 128, EU funding came under the Stabex 99 agreement. The phased arrangement scheduled 100% funding to secondary school grants in 2002 to 0% by 2010.

¹⁹⁴ The ‘Blue Book’ was the colloquial name given to the Solomon Islands Education Sector Investment and Reform Programme (ESIRP) 2004-2006. Programme Submission document (MEHRD & NZAID, 2004).

¹⁹⁵ This commitment has been maintained; a recent NZAP document noted that SIG contributed “more than 22% pa of its total recurrent budget to Education, the single largest departmental budget.” (NZAP, 2012: 8).

Agreement was [about and]... it wasn't too onerous, it was all about good planning" (S1).

Interestingly, at the end of the first stage of the ESIRP, the newly appointed expatriate, NZAID-funded, sector coordinator (based within MEHRD)¹⁹⁶ challenged NZAID over its portrayal of the ESIRP as a sector wide approach; the inclusion of the EU PIU, in his opinion, was contradictory and not a sector approach aimed at supporting the strategic framework and education sector programme. A consequence of this dialogue was described during an NZAID interview,

So ... we actually don't even use the word SWAp when we're in the Solomons really, because I think it can mean quite a few things so we talk of it as an *approach* as a way of working ... we have a funding envelop, with a specific focus that we've agreed on, that supports the education strategic framework and the Ministry (S3).

Tonga

Tonga's long educational commitment and high indicators, set within monarchical hegemony reinforcing class divides and stringent social order create a contrasting backdrop. With education highly centralised and considered a cornerstone to development, Tonga (as earlier described) achieved a near complete localisation of government positions as early as 1964. With the Minister of Education incumbent for the next 34 years, significant educational change slowed in the latter years. The end of Kavaliku's tenure was marked by a series of education sector and wider government¹⁹⁷ reviews which, together with the move towards adopting a sector wide approach, led to the Education Policy Framework 2004-2019, the *Ministry of Education Corporate Plan 2004-2007* and the *Annual Management Plan 2004-2005*. Although these documents make first mention of a sector wide approach (see GOT, 2004: 76), there is scant explanation as to what this notion actually meant, or what was to be expected from it. With the 2001 review of New Zealand's Official Development Assistance (NZODA) activities in Tonga¹⁹⁸ recommending that "NZODA to discuss with [the Tongan Government] the desirability of adopting a 'programme approach' for managing NZODA assistance to the **formal education**

¹⁹⁶ This international TA was embedded within MEHRD and had come to Solomon Islands with significant experience of SWAps in Asia and Africa.

¹⁹⁷ Strategic Development Plan 7 (2001-2004) (July 2001); Final Report: Tonga Education Sector Study (March 2003); Education Issues and Policy Options in Tonga (September 2003); Education Policy Options Paper (November 2003); Education Policy Framework 2004-2019

¹⁹⁸ Referred to earlier on page 136.

sector” (p.8; emphasis in original) it has been hard to find evidence showing that the Tongan government demonstrated a clear desire to move towards a SWAp. The report goes on to state, however, that “... the development of a sector wide integrated plan for the Tongan education system as a whole is required” and that “NZODA should express interest in assisting in the process of developing this” (McGhie, et al., 2001: 23). The wording sets a clear boundary confining a ‘programme approach’ to the formal sector of education, and no mention is made of cross-ministerial involvement, or it being particularly ‘sector-deep’ (i.e. embracing other educational stakeholders). The subsequent Project Appraisal Document (PAD) (World Bank, 2005)¹⁹⁹ that was developed for the TESP was “*essentially a World Bank document*” (T5e) and, as one agency staffer commented, “*I think the design was too ambitious... about 30 budget lines ... not realistic*” (T11a). As explained previously (p.138), the design did not align well with government processes and did little to instil a sense of government ownership from the outset.

As previously alluded to, NZAID relations with the Ministry of Education in Tonga evolved very differently to those in Solomon Islands. At the start of this research, it was quite clear that NZAID-Tonga relations were not robust. Interview data showed that NZAID staff involved with the TESP had been frustrated with Tongan attitudes towards the SWAp and the apparent mismatch in understanding of intentions. For example, one NZAID Head Office official lamented,

.... they had a different kind of understanding of what the SWAp was going to be ... they kind of had the impression that Christmas had come and suddenly they would have all this money that they'd be able to spend themselves, without realising it was going to be an agreed programme. I think they found it a lot more restrictive than they had originally hoped it was going to be (T5b).

While on the surface this appears to be a direct criticism of Tongan capability, it is as much a reflection of poor communication levels between the designers of the TESP – largely World Bank TA - and the community it was intended to serve, as well as, arguably, their connection and sensitivity to the local environment.

The development and implementation of the TESP occurred during a highly volatile time in Tonga, politically as well as socially. As explained in Part Two, the new millennium brought with it growing public disquiet, which sparked

¹⁹⁹ Note the term ‘*Project* Appraisal Document’, rather than ‘*Programme* Appraisal Document’; see footnote 181.

unprecedented demonstrations against government decisions, most notably the six week civil service strike in 2005. The pro-democracy movement was also gathering momentum and was increasingly supported by the professional middle class: teachers, lawyers, medics etc. In addition, intellectual and professional debates were taking place concerning the relevance and value of the institution of traditional formal schooling, and raised calls for greater contextualisation and re-thinking of the old models. With this developing sense of a professional voice in Tonga in the early half of the decade, it is unsurprising that the EPF and TESP – both perceived to have been developed by outsiders - were greeted unenthusiastically by many ministry staff.

A lack of leadership was also noted by several interviewees as an obstacle to early implementation, coupled with a lack of communication of the aims and objectives of the TESP across all divisions and the underlying (key) concept of harmonisation in a sector wide approach. This was, for some, accentuated by the decision to situate the initiative within the Policy and Planning ministerial division rather than the, perhaps more obvious, Schools Division²⁰⁰.

We should have had very strong leadership from the beginning and coordination of the programme. We had no firm leadership and no real direction ... it took people a while to come to terms with new direction and change management (T28).

[Because it was o]riginally placed in Planning, it therefore became a 'Planning Project' and associated with the Planning division. Because it was never distributed across the other divisions it led to internal dysfunction – it was always seen as an extra on top of normal work -. The 'Project' notion was a barrier to implementation (T40).

The ministerial restructuring²⁰¹, that took place as part of the public service reform, and a re-staffing of key positions (including a new Director of Education and new Deputy Director of Policy and Planning), did little to appease the situation, and may even have amplified the level of mis-communication internally, as well as between the Ministry and NZAID. In addition, some poor decisions concerning the

²⁰⁰ This decision can be traced to two possible incentives: first, the then Deputy Director of Policy and Planning was influential with the then CEO, and pushed to have the programme positioned in his Division. Second, some conflict existed between senior ministry officials and the then Deputy Director of the Schools Division whereby the former did not want it to be the latter involved. In 2010, the Tonga School Grants Programme and school based management, under the national consultants, moved into the Schools Division, where the new Deputy Director "*is doing a really good job*" (T26).

²⁰¹ The creation of a new ministry effectively divided education issues between two ministries: the original Ministry of Women, Education and Culture (MEWAC) and the new Ministry of Training Employment Youth and Sport (MOTTEYS). Without corresponding reform of the 1974 Education Act there has been confusion over Ministerial roles and directives. From an education perspective, the main change is the movement of TVET from the MEWAC mandate to MOTTEYS.

recruitment of international TA further exacerbated poor relations. Not only were terms of reference described as “*overcooked and unrealistic*” (T5a), but the recruitment process was externally led and drew from the World Bank’s network of consultants, rather than seeking more contextually sensitive experts and advisors available closer to home (Coxon & Pedersen, 2010).

With hindsight, a Tongan interviewee reflected, “... [*we should have been*] *very clear how much can be done by locals. We could have [stretched] the money much further*” (T14). The data shows that NZAID became increasingly opinionated in their belief that there was a management capacity vacuum within MEWAC, which led the Ministry to feel increasingly belittled and pressured by NZAID. In turn, NZAID became increasingly frustrated with MEWAC’s perceived lack of urgency to get everyone around the table, “*Throughout 2006 the Ministry of Education constantly postponed having missions ... there was no formal education TESP-related missions for 15 months*” (T5a). Although NZAID acknowledged that wider extenuating circumstances²⁰² may have contributed to the delays there appeared to be scant sensitivity to the significance of these events to the people of Tonga (as explained in Part Two), illustrated in the following rather glib quote from an NZAID interview,

... we were about to have one [a meeting] and then the King’s family died; and we were about to have another one and the riots came, so there were extenuating circumstances. Clearly it was not a good thing because we could never get everybody around the table ... so that was a fraught time (T5a).

The paucity of information sharing became another bugbear, as indicated in the comment, “... *we can’t just have no reporting, no communication, but MEWAC seems somehow reluctant. I’ve never ever received an exit report on any international consultant*” (T5a). That the public service redundancies undoubtedly played a role in this situation seemed not to have been considered, and no moves were made to address the capacity gaps that resulted from the exodus of senior MEWAC personnel.

Interviewees alluded to, or out-rightly expressed, frustration with NZAID assuming a micro-managing style of engagement which was perceived as condescending by some Tongans and damaging to the overall relationship.

There were lots of problems with NZAID but the personnel are better and relationships are much better now. You wouldn’t believe! (T14)

²⁰² These events, examined in Part Two, refer to events such as the civil service strikes (June 2005), traffic death of the King’s nephew in the US (July 2006), the death of the King (Sept 2006), and the riots (Nov 2006).

...they would come and say “you people, why is this wrong, why is that like that, where is such and such?”! Whoever is on board could make my life difficult or easier (T26).

I think it depends also on the personalities involved and in charge. In the beginning the NZAID people and the people based here in the Nuku’alofa office were very difficult to work with- very bureaucratic, nit-picking and insensitive to the realities of the context of Tonga and the difficulties and constraints the Ministry was working under ... I think it depends also on the personalities involved and in charge (T15B).

A few years back we were able to break the ice and tell them straight what we think ... [but] ... when the SWAp started we felt we were always being dictated to – do this, do that! But then we said “no”... (T26).

The Joint Review Meeting in October 2008 became a watershed in MEWAC-NZAID relations. As one attendee described, “*there was a bit of an epiphany and [afterwards] MEWAC took on a stronger level of responsibility and began to view it all differently*” (T30). Changes in NZAID’s in-country and head office personnel, together with a head office decision to devolve more decision-making power to the country office, helped to generate a more positive atmosphere. An awareness of personality conflicts slowing things down was acknowledged, as one NZAID official pointed out, “we don’t want to be accused of micro-management again ... it’s a question of balance, when to drive and when not to drive” (T11).

Towards the close of the research, general opinion of the relationship was shifting towards the positive,

... with the changes we noticed considerable easing in the way we operate... with the current personalities involved we are having a much easier relationship and it is much easier to work with them. Positive since the beginning of the year (T15).

XX is very diplomatic ... very approachable ... and YY has a soft approach in the way she talks... New Zealand was not happy, but YY put it in a nice way ... Before we were dancing to NZAID’s tune but the change in [senior] personnel has improved this ... less pressure! (T26).

Despite this, however, some tension/caution still seemed to exist on both sides, as these later comments suggest: ... *[some in] New Zealand [aid] still pick on us ... manipulate a lot of things ... Tonga is a small place ... XX needs to stay in his office (MEWAC); I’ve tried to keep a pulse on this as much as I can without appearing snooping - you try to get that balance (NZAID).*

Connectivity

This narrative clearly indicates a poor degree of connectivity between MEWAC and NZAID as well as a lack of sensitivity in NZAID to the significance of the wider social events happening in Tonga at the time, all of which negatively impacted on the development of the SWAp in Tonga. This incongruity stultified change. As pointed out earlier (p.18), loosely coupled scenarios are often more resilient to dramatic or institutional change, resisting what is perceived as ‘imposed’. Rather than reacting to a situation where change might be viewed positively, the lack of connectivity impels agents to maintain the status quo and, in this case, manifests in a rejection of outsider influence.

Relations between Tonga and other donors were also strained, in particular with the World Bank. As one MEWAC official noted, “...*but it’s our own fault [for agreeing to the cumbersome World Bank Trust Fund arrangement]*²⁰³ *I think we all want to terminate the WB arrangement*” (T15b). Later, a more determined desire to “kick the WB out” was mooted but although “*the MOE is quite willing to do that ... it’s the top government that won’t let us – they want to hang on the World Bank because of the loans they want to get from them – they want to be on the good side of the Bank*” (T15b).

Drawing on the Tongan case study data (Part Two), it may be easy to attribute the tensions in the MEWAC-NZAID relationship to NZAID’s insensitivity to initial conditions; to its lack of appreciation of the enormity of contemporary socio-political events and its ineptitude to interpret its partner’s non-verbal messages. That is, NZAID didn’t listen to, or misinterpreted, increasingly loud Tongan ‘silences’ of disapproval. Eventually in the October 2008 Annual Joint Review (AJR) a senior MEWAC official uncharacteristically stood up and, metaphorically, drew a line in the sand with the single word, *enough!*²⁰⁴ I contend, however, that the underlying dysfunction is more deeply rooted. As explained in Part Two, the strong national identity created under the unification of the islands by King Tupou I and the subsequent strong monarchical leadership under King Tupou II and Queen Salote in particular, were instrumental in raising the profile of western education from an early

²⁰³ Refer to p.137-9 for further explanation.

²⁰⁴ Personal communication with Dr Coxon, May 4, 2012.

stage. Mandating primary education compulsory in 1862 created a solid education tradition that facilitated the rapid localisation of public sector services during the 1960s. While stability can be inferred on one side, increasing foreign influence – such as the recruitment of foreign teachers, curriculum and scholarships – might be identified as stimulating migration, as an increasing number of families sought higher levels of education overseas, largely in New Zealand. At the same time, the fierce sense of national pride, culture and tradition promulgated through the school system instilled confidence, independence and a natural sense of national ownership. The ensuing highly educated leaders were generally wary of outside ‘experts’ (as they still are), and at the same time the increasingly educated population began cautiously to question the autocratic monarchical rule, giving rise to moves towards greater democracy, and rise in the common voice, evidenced since 2006 in particular.

In addition, Tongans’ strong sense of autonomy and freedom is also fiercely protected. As the Hon. Dr Guilio Masaso Tu’ikolongahau Paunga said in 1997,

We Tongans are different ... other people don’t have the integrity that we have. We were born free, and we have this kind of mentality from the beginning, and we never want to be suppressed. We are proud of our heritage. We were the only Polynesian country in the South Pacific never to be colonised, and that is very important. Under the word colonisation there is something a little deeper than that, the thought of a non-colonised person, a person that has had freedom since he was born (quoted by H. Morton, 2001: 49).

For outsiders to misinterpret Tongan etiquette and traditional pride and to be unappreciative of the strong educational background of many Tongan leaders is highly likely to affect the course of insider- outsider relationships, as we have seen in the data. Tongans, do not suffer external intervention lightly, particularly (as stated earlier) when the intervention is conceived as “*essentially a World Bank document*”.

Loose donor-recipient connectivity is further illustrated in the variation of views over should be focused on in a SWAp. One donor agency executive contends

Getting everyone on board and developing good ownership is perhaps more important than sticking to the plan with clockwork precision ... and it all comes back to management – how decisions are made and who makes them (T30).

For a Tongan, however, concentration of the concept of national ownership in a SWAp is flawed. For her, it is unquestionable that the country has ownership of

what it does in its education sector and that under a SWAp the core approach should be *partnership*. As she explains,

We are trying to achieve a real partnership arrangement... Tonga would develop the plan within the Tonga education framework ... we have our priorities so we draw up our plans accordingly ... we have a choice of funding – donors assist ... Through this partnership and harmonisation between Tonga and the donors we feel we should result in a proper SWAp process (S15b).

Evidence from later interviews shows however a tightening of the connectivity levels between the two parties. As one NZAID staffer recognised in late 2010,

We have created a context for ourselves which is hugely problematic and gets in the way of us actually getting to partnership ... we have slipped into jargon words and then we try and either use them to pressure something to happen or as a default (T38a).

While, she went on to concur with the sentiments above, *“I wonder if it wouldn’t be more constructive to talk about it as a partnership rather than an ownership”*, she then inferred that ownership and partnership are incompatible, *“ownership implies that leadership is with you [the country] and that you are in control, and when that happens it doesn’t always mesh with what our [donor] needs and systems and processes require, and then we end up with some difficulties”*. If MEWAC shared this view, I suggest they would easily choose to maintain their ownership over partnership.

Considering the concept of connectivity signals some insight into the power relationship within each network. The contrasting level of perceived trust between the parties in each country is interesting. I suggest that the low levels in Tonga created a tussle for power, both sides assuming they had the upper hand and, in the process, generating further mistrust – effectively forming a feedback loop which thwarted the creation of an environment for change. On the other hand, the high levels of trust perceived on both sides in Solomon Islands allowed both parties to work together, experiment together and learn together, thus creating an environment more conducive to change and innovation.

Feedback

From a complexity perspective, as previously explained, feedback is a critical factor in non-linear complex systems by either maintaining the status quo and lessening the opportunity for change (negative feedback), or amplifying change

opportunities by reinforcing certain behaviours until they become unstable and break boundaries, allowing the system to move into a new phase or state (Byrne, 1998). As illustrated above, the strength of feedback processes is often intertwined with the degree of connectivity in the network. As Ramalingam et al (2008) point out, change is multi-faceted with many contributing factors and relationships, recognising feedback is a useful tool in understanding how change occurred or why it was dampened. Once recognised, ignoring negative feedback loops risks the system becoming ‘locked in’ to certain behaviours and more and more resistant to change. In contrast, ignoring positive feedback lessens the opportunity to understand and influence the ‘space of the possible’. This means that recognising and reinforcing positive feedback loops provides a mechanism through which the emergence of beneficial cohesion can be encouraged and managed (Snowden, 2009); recognising and acting on negative feedback - areas of failure – reduces the chances of outright failure of an intervention.

The increasing pressure on donors and ministries alike to demonstrate that public money is being spent to produce successful and recognisable results in short timescales strongly influences partner objectives and decisions, and often influences the degree to which feedback information is listened to. Recognising failure is an essential component of improving how the aid is used and moving forward to achieving the desired aims of development initiatives. However, if demonstrating results to (often) sceptical citizens is an aid agency’s priority, recognising failure would be politically undesirable and not likely to be encouraged. Under a SWAp, the notion of ‘mutual accountability’ professes that both parties should jointly assess progress and be able to hold the other to account on performance and delivery (Eurodad, 2008; OECD, 2005) – in effect a ‘contract of aid’ (J. Morton, 2009) whereby a ‘solution’ is applied to the ‘problem’ with the results measured under against a pre-determined standard. As Morton suggests, regarding aid in this way, without paying attention to the political and private interests of the players, renders ‘mutual accountability’ merely an assurance that agents are working as expected *at that time*, rather than determining whether what they are actually doing is useful or effective *over time*. The static snapshots informing traditional joint review mechanisms (external review teams brought in at mid or full term stages of the programme), and no embedded internal feedback processes in place within the

organisations, discourages the recognition and utilisation of feedback mechanisms at play in the system.

Paying attention to feedback requires a level of trust between stakeholders. At a central level, had reactive feedback mechanisms been in place to monitor the Tonga-NZAID relationship, the rise in tension between partners could, perhaps, have been dissipated earlier and the “October experience” avoided. Similarly, if the crucial, positive role played by the national consultants in Tonga (see p.127) (as an effective interface between MEWAC and school heads) had been better communicated to key personnel in the ministry, the importance of making sure their contract renewal was unhindered might have been better appreciated, and the necessary processes put in place earlier to avoid the resultant delay²⁰⁵.

In Solomon Islands, NZAID’s role as coordinating Development Partner (CDP) has provided a valuable conduit for feedback mechanisms to be established between the Ministry and the donors. Similarly the ESCC meetings have provided a forum for feedback between the Ministry and the extended education community. The extent to which messages are being heard and acted upon is not easy to determine; however, how messages are *sent* is perhaps equally important, which yet again underlines the importance of cultural sensitivity. As one interviewee explained, when recounting a potential clash between MEHRD and the World Bank,

... the WB kept pushing for the in-country assessment and pushing to get things going ... At that point the PS made it clear [that XX] was to back right off. This was ... a classic case of not being culturally aware enough or conscious of how softly messages are delivered here. You really have to really listen good – if someone has to say something twice, they are probably quite pissed off (S20).

Providing an environment that is conducive to people feeling safe enough to admit they may be wrong was, for one interviewee in Solomon Islands, not too far away, “*I’ve heard people say that such and such is not really working...*” although she qualified this by admitting, “*I haven’t witnessed it [yet, so] I don’t think the feedback mechanisms are working as well as they should – there are no formal processes in place [in MEHRD]*” (S20). The Inspector –MEHRD interface is seen as particularly problematic, as one official explained, “*The inspectors make an enormous*

²⁰⁵ This situation was accentuated by a key MEWAC employee being absent during the renewal period as a result of being obliged to take extended leave.

effort and expense to go out and prepare a report but no one reacts on it” (S18). Moves are afoot to address this area but it is not known the extent to which this has been adopted.

An aspect of feedback that has received considerable attention in Solomon Islands MEHRD is the introduction of formal staff appraisal mechanisms. In general, incentives for strong bureaucratic performance in Solomon Islands are weak and, even at the highest levels, there is little clarity regarding roles and responsibilities (Haque, 2012). Weaknesses at the institutional level, particularly in performance management systems, are widespread and disciplinary procedures are complex and generally outdated and inconsistent (Haque, 2012). Against this background, the progress made by MEHRD in human resource development is notable.

In 2010, half-yearly open dialogue discussions (rather than under the “*secrecy there was before*”), aimed at improving performance and job-description fits were introduced. As one official explained, while “*it may not have any implications ... the first two times ...if we don’t see any improvements by the 3rd one ...*” (S18), this suggests that, in conjunction with proposed changes to MPS procedures, disciplinary action may become more a reality in future, thus raising the sense of professionalism within the sector.

Later interviews (November 2010) revealed some of the hurdles the implementation of the Professional Appraisal System was facing, “*[it] can’t work fully yet because we have only just introduced it and it’s so new. It’s quite a different cultural way of talking to each other [so] it will take a long time ... you can’t say it is fully internalised*” (S36). Senior management in MEHRD were, however, “*...happy that it was accepted, and [there has been] enormous interest in in-house training*” (S36). While a general enthusiasm for the approach was detected, “*supervisors and staffhave a two way conversation ... [to] discuss the job duties ... how well they are able to do it ... and what areas need to be reformed*” (S19d), there was also recognised concern. For some, this focused on the disparity between job expectations and remuneration, as one employee explained, there is considerable “*mismatch between all the activities and technical reports and reviews we are expected to take part in, in our job description ... [but] the title of the posting is at the same level*” (S19b), and for others its more to do with overall employment implications. The

management perspective is “*you can’t expect us to have talks twice a year without [you] learning how you get your facilities to improve ...we need to know how [well] you are leading your staff*” (S36). In general, this new approach was regarded to more likely “*work with the younger staff who speak out ... others will be more conservative, protect themselves*” (S36).

Encouraging more open dialogue, bigger picture thinking and focusing attention on alleviating negative and fostering positive feedback situations creates ‘space of the possible’ where local ideas, solutions and institutions emerge to create ‘ownership’ that is not overshadowed by excessive prescription and external micro-management.

International Donor Relations

The focus of this thesis is underscored by the notion that development (or transformative change) is an emergent characteristic of a complex system (Barder, 2012). Viewing development from this perspective has important implications for international aid agencies. Explicit moves towards programmatic aid initiatives show that agencies have realised that traditional linear, reductionist approaches (treating ‘development’ as a series of small, tractable steps that can be independently conquered²⁰⁶) are unrealistic, and that more holistic approaches, such as SWAps, better address countries’ needs. With this shift, however, must come acknowledgement of the need for bilateral aid agencies to evolve different strategic approaches.

Adopting a different approach to providing support and financial assistance is not just an issue at the donor-recipient interface; it also disturbs traditional donor-donor interfaces and traditional power structures and ways of working within respective institutions. Interrogating these interfaces and examining how agency processes adapt to the new environment are important to the overall sustainability of the approach. As we have seen, relationships and the degree of connectivity between donor and recipient are clearly important to the nature of country developments; they

²⁰⁶ Rostow’s modernisation theory explicitly decomposed the process into neat sequential ‘stages’; the structural adjustment plans (SAP) of the 80s and 90s implicitly reduced development to an adoption of neoliberalism, and the MDGs and EFA agenda infer that once predefined goals are reached, ‘development will occur’.

are no less important to the strength of ‘partnership’ ‘harmonisation’ and ‘co-ordination’ between donors.

An important consequence of the increased donor collaboration invoked under a SWAp is, as Eyben (2010b) points out, that donor staff spend *much* more time interacting and talking with their peers, organising themselves politically with their counterparts, and becoming more directly involved in activities within the Ministry. In both countries NZAID has taken on the leadership role among the donor community and in this position the quality of its relationships in all directions has been crucial to its level of influence, both in terms of regional education development policy and, more specifically, ministerial policy development. In Solomon Islands the genial relationship has resulted in NZAID being invited and having a presence in almost all the technical working groups within MEHRD where policy is developed²⁰⁷. In contrast, the more strained country-donor relations in Tonga have led NZAID officials to be mindful of not “*want[ing] to be accused of micromanagement again*” (T11b) and MEWAC staff to prefer that NZAID staff “*please, stay in your ... office*” (T26).

As Coordinating Donor Partner (CDP), NZAID is generally perceived to be performing its role well. In Solomon Islands, in particular, “*so far NZAID has been very good as Coordinating Development Partner – and we should give credit to them*” (S19a) and their role was viewed as protective, in terms of reducing the number of individual donor missions that impinge on MEHRD’s time and capacity and also in suggesting to other donors that, at times, it might be better for them to review their priorities, “*we provide them [the donors] with information so they don’t weigh in too much, and we leave it to the ministry to say if it’s getting too heavy. Then [X] can step in and have a quiet word [with a specific donor], rather than act as gatekeeper*” (S20). By the end of the research period, seven donors had signed the Solomon Islands Partnership Principles and although it was agreed that the CDP role should be revolving, a senior MEHRD official remarked, “*no one wants to take it on at the moment ... It is important for us that whoever is taking on the role they are willing to take it on ... we feel very comfortable dealing with NZAID ... so whoever the next CDP will be they must be willing to go like that*” (S21). The Solomon Islands Statement of

²⁰⁷ The technical working groups will be discussed in greater detail in later sections.

Partnership Principles (SIG and MFAT, 2009) has influenced similar developments in Tonga and provides a model for other Pacific SWAp donor collaboration agreements.

A complexity approach does not see aid as a catalyst²⁰⁸ – donors do not remain unchanged by their involvement in the aid relationship (Eyben, 2006). Appreciating that it is a socio-political interaction and its staff will be influenced by local actors (as in any human interaction) legitimises the need for greater examination of the personal relationships that form and which relationship networks are supported in the complex and ambiguous aid arena. This relational view, Eyben contends, sits uncomfortably with the results-based management (RBM) many aid organisations utilise to supply public accountability (i.e. predetermining expected results and the kinds of evidence necessary to demonstrate achievement). This mismatch not only lessens their ability to respond more effectively to the challenges of complexity (the unpredictable effects of social interactions), it can also create unintended consequences of resistance (Eyben, 2006). Tonga provides a possible example of just such a situation.

Adopting a sector wide approach and undertaking the role of CDP requires a significant strategic mind-shift for a bilateral agency, such as NZAID, both in terms of staffing needs and its attitude towards accountability. This is particularly true when they are partnering with small, fragile Pacific states such as Solomon Islands and Tonga where national capacity is severely stretched, bureaucracy tends to be “highly personalised” (Turnbull, 2002) and politically complex, and conditions are susceptible to sudden natural or civil events. Well-informed, politically aware agency staff, with knowledge and experience of development initiatives and respectful cultural sensitivity is critical for the broader relational tasks donor staff now engage in: such as, negotiating with other donors, strategising collective approaches, liaising between ministries and advising on policy development. Affording greater autonomy to in-country offices allows staff to react quickly to unexpected opportunities, rapidly changing social conditions, or to act on recognition that an intervention might be triggering or stifling major social change. Creating such learning environments and actively communicating acquired knowledge to others in the system means a significant change in mindset. Applying rigid results-based management risks distorting relationships, hiding important aspects that should be understood, reduces

²⁰⁸ In this sense, a ‘catalyst’ refers to something that precipitates a process or event but does not become involved in, or is changed by, the consequences.

responsibility and blocks essential learning in an unpredictable world (Eyben, 2006). Events in Tonga did trigger changes; greater discretionary authority was afforded to new in-country staff so that every day decisions could be made quickly and in context. These changes, as well as the different personalities of the now incumbent staff, were recognised and appreciated by MEWAC: “*With recent changes we have noticed considerable easing of the way we operate – there is [now] ... understanding on the part of NZAID. They are critical of the stuff we do, but critical in a positive, constructive way*” (T15b)

While much of the discussion above relates to the communication connectivity of the role, attention must also be paid to the level of specialism needed by donor staff. As first, it would appear that under a SWAp demand for in-country education specialists lessens over time while demand for staff with more generalist development knowledge and greater managerial skills rises as the political negotiation role increases. In examining the progression of NZAID in-country staff in Solomon Islands over the course of the SWAp this does appear to be the case. The first staffer regarded her educational background and experience an asset in early negotiations; as she pointed out, it enabled her to talk knowledgeably with senior officials and share an “*understanding of education and its principles*” (S1). Staff changes occurred in August 2006 and again in December 2009; each had increasingly “generalist” development backgrounds and took on more and more inter-donor dialogue etc. with NZAID being CDP. Despite neither coming from an educational background, however, both were influential at the policy planning level within the ministry, and maintained an NZAID presence on almost all of the Ministry’s policy developing technical working groups. It is acknowledged that they were supported by a senior education advisor from Head Office, and their presence in the groups was welcomed by MEHRD but the appropriateness of their considerable policy influence in such a specialist area is questionable.

Common donor agency practices of postings of 2-3 years in-country, and often even more frequent turnover in head office, have been posited as risking relational discontinuity, especially if the new incumbent is resolute on making a mark, comes from a different perspective or discipline, or is an instigator of a new political direction (McNee, 2012). As we have seen, contextual knowledge and understanding

has clearly affected the quality of in-country relationships in both case studies. Staff changes and operational shifts were crucial in making a positive difference in Tonga, while in Solomon Islands harmonious relations have been maintained between partners despite the three changes in in-country programme officer and several programme manager changes in Head Office. MEHRD staff acknowledge differences in approach, but they appreciate the continuity in having approachable personalities and NZAID continuing in the role as CDP,

... XXX was very approachable and attended our meetings and took on board what we suggested – they have been very good. We don't see YYY so much as she has given some of the responsibility to ... one of her officers so XXX's role seems to be split into two – but its fine (S19a).

From the Ministry of Education, we are quite happy with the relationship with the New Zealand government being leading donor. There seems to be more collaboration between donors since we have had that arrangement – it seems to be working. UNICEF and NZAID are very approachable and can work together (S19b).

Overall, devolving more responsibility to the country office significantly improved relations in Tonga and allowed strong, trustful relations to build in Solomon Islands.

B. Complex Behaviours: Capacity Development

A further call under the ‘aid effectiveness agenda’ is for improved management, governance and development of local systems, which implies an overriding need for building capacity within government systems. Technical assistance (TA) is the most common mechanism used by donors to facilitate this. Thus, capacity development can be considered a ‘means’ to achieving improved governance, or an ‘end’ in itself, for an external TA. In the context of the Solomon Islands SWAp, in particular, there has been a heavy focus on institutional capacity building within the Ministry of Education, which has largely been facilitated through the longstanding activities of two expatriates on NZAID-funded international TA contracts (one as education sector advisor and the other in the financial division of the ministry) and other short-term consultants. Interestingly in Tonga, where there has been more emphasis placed on working with schools than on the development capacity and policy at a central level, it is Tongan TAs (on international or national contracts) that have proved most effective.

Analysis of the concept of building capacity from a complexity perspective, however, moves beyond questioning whether building capacity and capacity development is a ‘means’ or an ‘end’. Instead, it considers capacity development as the ongoing ability of individuals (individual competencies), groups (collective capabilities) or systems (system capacity) to respond to the broader context and bring about change. How such capacity develops cannot be controlled, predicted or identified in advance (Baser, 2009) but its emergence, and its nature, is fundamental to the survival of the system as a whole.

By looking at capacity building as more than an outcome of a purposeful (often linear) planning process, provided through a process of knowledge/skills transfer from outsider TAs, a complexity perspective sees capacity development emerging within a set of circumstances; may be seen as a spin-off of a (seemingly) unrelated activity, in response to a sudden opportunity or change of circumstances, or as a result of people determining or identifying their own needs. By acknowledging that small interventions can produce large impacts, the retrospective examination of instances where capacity actually developed may identify the forces or conditions that

contributed to, or stimulated, behavioural change, thus clarifying the *how* and the *why* of development.

Here I will attempt to apply such a lens to the interview data in order to explore where, how and why certain behaviours shifted and new skills emerged within individuals or groups of agents in particular circumstances, and why it may not have done so in others. As we have seen in the previous section, recognising feedback mechanisms is important as they highlight the level of stability in the system. The more unstable the conditions the more susceptible the system is to ‘phase shift’ and the adoption of new sets of ideas or norms. The more stable a system is, however, the more likely it is to be ‘locked in’ to a specific set of norms or traditions which dampen its susceptibility to change by pulling it back to ‘normality’. Recognising points of change (bifurcation points), and identifying the nature of the new dominant strange attractor that holds the system in its new position, are important from a complexity perspective. As previously explained (p. 12-15) being able to identify and change the ‘basic rules’ which reinforce existing (static) attractor patterns in order to allow new actions to emerge, can become powerful tools to promote change.

Tonga

As explained in Part Two (140-1), wider social and political events affected the implementation of the Tongan SWAp. Perhaps most influential was the extensive 2006 round of redundancy measures put in place following the civil servants’ strike in 2005 demanding pay increases for public servants, including teachers. The subsequent job losses not only caused to considerable staffing pressures in schools, they also caused a considerable loss in skills and knowledge within the Ministry of Education. Numerous long-serving senior civil servants, including some divisional deputy directors²⁰⁹ with considerable institutional knowledge and ability, took early retirement. With the Tonga school grants programme (TSGP) under development (TESP’s Cluster One activities), MEWAC saw the opportunity to re-employ some of the early retirees under contract to form two teams of national consultants to help develop and deliver the TSGP activities. Along with the early-retired, respected

²⁰⁹ The Ministry of Education in Tonga comprises nine divisions each headed by a deputy director. The Divisional Deputy Directors report to the Director/CEO of Education who reports to the Minister.

senior educators were seconded to the team from non-government (largely church) education providers; one team concentrated on the minimal service standards (MSS) and the other focused on school based management (SBM) and school grants. With this cluster being funded from the World Bank Trust Fund²¹⁰, exactly how the decision was made to recruit nationally rather than internationally is not clear, but the move proved to be fortuitous, as the comment below shows:

The idea to use national consultants rather than bring consultants in from outside, we think, has given us more opportunity to have a say and at the same time short-cut a few things ... someone from overseas would have had [to have gone] down a few false trails before deciding to do this or that. I think that has made a difference – we know the local connections and made things happen quicker, and avoided some problems taking place ... The national consultants have made things quicker to go into the implementation stage (T16a).

Including personnel from non-government providers also afforded opportunity to generate greater communication between the two systems. In addition, seconded staff were expected to return to their respective church providers with greater understanding of the workings and expectations of the Ministry to share with colleagues, new skills, a clearer vision and understanding of what is happening in schools, and the value of effective feedback channels. As the team pointed out, they made a point of sharing their observations, ideas and suggestions with individual schools following a visit, in a positive constructive manner:

It has built up the local capacity a bit more – these guys coming on from churches, they will go back after that; it's a positive move. Using the coordination and the working relationships between the church systems and this part [the Ministry] I think has brought them closer using this approach. ... When we go and [visit schools] ... we've recently written letters of the results to inform non-government heads that 'these are the things we have found out in your schools when we visited to do TSGP or MMS things. Going back to them to let them know, making sure they get the feedback. It's helping in that way (T16a).

We say thank you to the schools. We are not the bad lion; we are validating their work and say 'yes, you have done well', or 'well you just need to make this better ...' (T29)

Most of the team members were from the government or non-government secondary sector, which afforded the team further advantage, as team members explained,

... we noticed that when we started we had no history with the [primary] schools so they saw us and treated us as somebody new. Many of the Education Officers have history with schools so it is hard for them – maybe

²¹⁰ See explanation on p. 139.

the Principals didn't respond to them the way they responded to us. We felt lucky that the Principals were prepared to listen to us and we were fresh to be able to work with them (T29).

We can see it is building confidence in teachers and principals. Its good because it's non-threatening ... they know someone will help them .. its slow but in the end they become better principals (T16b).

This also highlights the communication problems that can arise in small communities where reputations are long harboured and changing opinions is difficult. As one Pacific researcher remarked in a recent post on the Network of Pacific Educationalists (NOPE), "... [in the Pacific you] *are judged along with who you are, the village you come from, your church and your grand aunt who was just a little bit too adventurous in her youth!*" The move to construct teams that were viewed as 'non-MEWAC' with the skills, credentials and credibility to engage non-threateningly at all levels of the system was innovative, and successful.

Principals interviewed agreed that the national consultants, especially those involved with the school grants, provided very useful help and advice. Concern was raised, however, at the level of involvement and commitment shown by the Ministry's district Education Officers who were supposed to be shadowing and learning from the national consultants in order eventually to take over their roles. As one Principal pointed out,

The grants people usually come around maybe once a quarter to check our expenses and how we are using the grant money – that seems to be on a regular basis. [But] they usually come on their own, not with the Education Officers [EOs]. I think it was only once they were accompanied by EOs right at the beginning. And the MSS hardly ever come around – they only come when they need data. And then the EOs don't come either (T27).

He translated this situation into a lack of governmental ownership in the TESP,

... a lot of the time we are finding that in the Ministry they still don't have ownership of the project. That's what I feel. And because they don't have ownership of the project they don't seem to know what the direction is and it's making it difficult for them to lead" (T27).

This is interesting as it can be linked back to the early tendency to think of the 'TESP' as a project under the jurisdiction of the Policy and Planning Division rather than as a sector wide programme spreading across all divisions in a concerted effort to improve the overall quality and delivery of education to Tongan children and youth.

As explained previously, a consequence of this political positioning led staff in other divisions to regard the activities under the TESP (such as the school grants,

SBM and MSS), as ‘extra’ and on top of normal work commitments, which ultimately created “*a barrier to implementation*” (T40). Fuelled by staff perceptions of ‘extra work’, the lack of divisional connectivity created a “*friction, tension, uneasiness between the national consultants and the permanent staff of the Schools Division*” which trickled down to the education officers and led to “*not much cooperation in doing things together*” (T17a). One national consultant suggested, however, that the persistence of the project mentality was more deeply rooted and “*allowed the EOs to hide behind extra work/‘project’ idea ... because they didn’t have the skills to do the job*” (T29). She went on,

We always felt that rather than being ‘extra’ to their jobs, this *was* their job – to see what the schools needed and how teachers and principals responded to activities we asked them to carry out and what their needs were. These activities are fundamental to their jobs – other stuff is superfluous (T29).

Exploring how the education officers were recruited gave credence to suggestion that some EOs lacked the necessary skills expected under the TSGP. As explained by a senior executive in the Schools Division, many primary EOs are recruited as near-retirement teachers – “*it’s sort of like a promotion*” – and although very experienced in the classroom most were not computer literate and many lacked the school management skills demanded by their new role as EOs on the TSGP.

The national consultants regularly reported their concerns regarding the lack of engagement by the EOs to central office (*we were told “you don’t recommend, you can only suggest”*) and, in 2009 MEWAC’s CEO made the decision to assign new senior management to the Schools Division and give it responsibility for the TSGP, a move that materialised in April 2010. It was made clear to the new Deputy Director Schools that there was an urgent need to develop the EOs’ capacity and that this was critical to the sustainability of the programme. This need was clearly reinforced by the virtual collapse of support provided to schools by the EOs during the hiatus caused by the delay in renewing the national consultant teams’ contracts. Although the NCs had attempted to ‘hand-over’ to the officers and had prepared detailed manuals and various aids to assist them, the lack of continuity gave insight into the level of sustainability reached by the efforts to date. This was not encouraging, as some of the consultants later noted,

I don’t think they were committed to us handing over them (T31a);

... there is understanding yes [in the outer islands (due to greater staff stability)] but to carry on the work... they are waiting for direction from here ... they just sit there and wait. There is no incentive. There is no reporting system set up by the ministry (T31b).

We gave them a week's handover going over everything we had done over the 3 years ... We explained ... that you have to start collecting information now and this is what you need to collect and what you need to do with it. We even got down to looking at the monitoring and evaluation framework for this year's grant (T31b);

They are supposed to have collected a second quarterly review and visited schools to check the grants have been received and checked that the correct amounts went into bank accounts ... they should already have made these visits which I know have not happened (T29).

The stronger leadership²¹¹ in place in the Schools Division was keen to “... *change the mindset of these officers to understand that they have no choice but to work together with these consultants so they can pass their skills and knowledge ...*” but high staff turnover, especially noted in Tongatapu²¹², and a lack of incentives were recognised as further impediments. Six months in, however, senior management felt some progress was discernible:

I think we are now more positive. We have definitely seen change and now they [the EOs] understand that if these consultants leave and they go out to the schools and are expected to implement the programme and don't perform, they are the ones who will suffer the consequences, the embarrassment of not knowing what they are supposed to be going out to teach the head teachers etc.

... I also think a lot has been done [to include] the other education systems. We continue to share and whenever there are training opportunities we continue to include them. They always have a lot of feedback and ... always have a lot of useful stuff to say which is good for us to hear (T17a).

This narrative illustrates the inherently political and dynamic nature of capacity development. Both internal and external forces affect how capacity might “change, evolve, stagnate, deepen, erode or stabilise” (Datta, Shaxson, & Pellini, 2012:3). Deliberate efforts to develop capacity are reliant on a close degree of agreement between externally assigned importance and internal expectations and perceptions, both in terms of deficit and urgency. Without the political buy-in for change, and the resultant political pressure on key decision makers, it is likely that powerful reasons *not* to change will dominate (such as vested interests in maintaining the status quo) (Datta, et al., 2012). This scenario is clearly illustrated in the Tongan data: initial political disengagement in the TESP by the Schools Division rendered

²¹¹ The incumbent is a person of considerable social standing who is afforded great respect.

²¹² High staff turnover was attributed to considerable numbers EOs retiring (due to the fact that most appointed EOs were close to retirement age) and the often sudden reassignment of duties by central office.

little ‘pressure at the top’ and thus weak incentives for the EOs to engage with the national consultants’ teams. Unrealistic expectations by the designers of the Cluster One activities, fuelled by underestimates of the general capacity deficit within the EO body (largely due to the culture of their recruitment), created an internal-external mismatch that generated more anxiety than acceptance. This is underlined by the premise that if “change processes are not owned and led by those whose capacity is being developed, they are unlikely to happen” (Datta, et al., 2012: 3).

Emergence and ‘Space of the Possible’

Returning to Cilliers’ (1998) central tenets of complexity, concepts of emergence and ‘space of the possible’, in particular, give insight into how the team of national consultants managed to improve the managerial capacity of heads and principals and make a notable, positive contribution to the TESP. While the repercussions of the public servant redundancies were generally viewed as having an overall negative effect on the education system, re-contracting the services of a few, carefully selected individuals to MEWAC on a short term consultancy basis took advantage of an opportunity and created a ‘space of the possible’. Combining the contracted staff with seconded private (church authority) employees broadened their skill/experience base and increased their potential to build capacity in schools to implement the ambitious initiative. As previously explained, the NC team was less successful, however, in its attempts to encourage the Education Officers to want to learn how to support and drive the programme into the future. The nature of the team, the political ministerial decisions, and the level of trust formed between the various stakeholders were pertinent in facilitating or hindering emergent behaviours and thus the degree of capacity building that occurred within the space of the possible.

Being experienced and competent *local* educationalists was the first advantage – time was not wasted becoming familiar with Tonga and its education system. Being unfamiliar with the primary sector, however, also proved advantageous as the consultants brought no political or relational ‘baggage’ that might impinge on building trusting to the working relationships with head teachers and principals. The gentle, respectful manner of individuals in the team and their recognition that they needed to approach school leaders with humility and offers of help, rather than superiority and criticism, reflected their experience as effective teachers and

educationalists. Building relationships with principals where they felt safe enough to ask for the help they needed, and providing sufficient help when it was requested garnered the level of trust and safety needed to encourage staff to face the challenges posed by the new initiatives, giving them the courage to learn new skills and approaches to tackle their difficulties. It also raised their awareness of the breadth of their role as leaders of schools. As one principal remarked,

...it has helped us principals. Although some of the principals complain that the grants etc. have given them a lot of extra work to do, for me I can honestly say that it has taught us that principals have another job to do. Previously, I thought that the only role of a principal, other than teaching, was to mark the role of the teachers and students, mark up students' data and check the plan books.

But now, since this grant, I know that there is much more to a principal's role. I have learned how to budget how to make a plan and how I am going to run the school. I have also learned what I can do to improve my teachers to improve the students in the school. [I have learned] to set up a standard that I wanted my school to be at after the year and make sure it is achieved.

It makes me feel that I am now a Principal. That I have a proper job to do in running the school. So now I have power [to achieve] the goals for the school that we set up every year (T24a).

By approaching the principals with respect, affording them the courtesy of feedback and follow-up, by extolling the good, and being able to offer suggestions on ways to improve less successful areas allowed more open relationships to develop. The consultants were rewarded by "*seeing [that] it is building confidence in teachers and principals*" (T16b) and enabling principals to "*feel like I am now a Principal. That I have a proper job to do in running the school*" (T24a).

This narrative highlights notions of co-evolution whereby positive relationships evolved between the parties that garnered and embraced changes in principals' attitudes towards school management and leadership and invited longer term notions of empowerment and responsibility. Thus, it is clear that the internally-generated awareness, which leads to changed attitudes and ways of working, has affected individual agents, and in turn reverberated through the systemic web of interactions and affected the whole. As we have seen, the level of connectivity between the agents will have an effect on the degree of reverberation and, as Mitleton-Kelly argues (2003), it is this subtler sensitivity and awareness of changes both in the environment and the consequences of actions that leads to a deeper understanding of reciprocal change and the way it affects the whole system.

The relative ‘fitness’ of the system, in terms of the transfer of information and knowledge and the behavioural strategies of agents determine its propensity to change. As shown above, certain conditions enhanced change and created a ‘natural’ onwards flow: once they better understood their expected role as a head of schools and had learned the skills/been provided with the tools they needed to better manage their schools, principals were empowered to move forwards and wanted to continue to work towards improving the quality of the education delivered in the classroom. In other conditions, however, maintaining the status quo and resisting change undermined the ‘natural’ flow of events (Ramalingam, et al., 2008). Attention is drawn to the reluctance of Education Officers to engage with the national consultants’ team and take on the proposed activities. As explained, part of this can be linked to the lingering political image of it being just another ‘project’ that creates extra work in addition to their ‘normal’ work. Moreover, previous experiences with project aid were likely to conjure images of short-lived, external consultant visits with highfalutin ideas. Compounding this was the political positioning of the TESP with Policy and Planning Division, and the general disconnection between the other divisions of the Ministry which did little to encourage the leadership in the Schools Division (responsible for the EOs) to incentivise its staff to work closely with the national consultant team. Central connectivity levels were therefore poor and the propensity to return to the safety of the status quo was strong.

The clearly inadequate skill-set among education officers, however, probably provides more of a key to individual EOs’ (in general) persistent reluctance to engage with the NCs or schools. With most lacking basic IT and technical skills, and many without the very management skills they were supposed to be peddling, it is inevitable that they lacked confidence and felt vulnerable to being ‘shown up’ by schools.

The overall effect of the failure to engage the EOs has important repercussions for the sustainability of the TESP activities as a whole. By its very nature, the national consultants’ team is a temporary ‘fix’ intended to provide the *means* – capacity development – for the country to achieve its desired *ends* – developing and sustaining better quality education through the provision of government school grants, improved school based management and the application of minimum standards in schools (the TSGP). The key to the sustainability of the initiative lies with the

School's Division and its Education Officers. It is imperative to have EOs with sufficient skills, knowledge and confidence to take over the training and support roles that the NCs have demonstrated to be so effective with the school heads.

This example highlights how constraints rather than opportunities affected the development intervention and led the EOs to co-evolve defensive, protective behaviour that curtailed positive change. Central policy direction – emanating ultimately from the donors' desire to implement a particular development agenda²¹³ - led to ineffectual 'solutions' and the generation of new (albeit unintended) 'problems' (Ramalingam, et al., 2008). The political unwillingness of the Schools Division initially to buy-into the scheme and the capacity and skills base of the EOs were overlooked or ignored, and this risked the potential of the entire enterprise. Creating an environment whereby the EOs can gain the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to sustain and propel the desired changes is crucial and, thankfully, a task not lost on the new divisional leadership of the Schools Division with its new responsibility for the school grants programme. Finding a 'common narrative' to emulate this move requires "mutual construction" (Darcy & Hofmann, 2003: 47) of processes and procedures which will cater for both the EOs' ends and the needs of the system.

Solomon Islands

In Solomon Islands, with little formal government infrastructure intact following the Tensions the need for human resource and policy development was considerable at the start of the SWAp. It is clear from the data collected that significant progress was made in developing the internal dynamics of the ministry. Several interviewees alluded to successes and drew attention to, "*MEHRD [being] very successful compared to other ministries*" (S18). "*Here in Solomons, the education sector is the example that others want to follow*" (S8).

From the outset, this is likely to have been strengthened by strong steady leadership, central budget support and consistent donor cooperation. Along with Dr

²¹³ As explained earlier, the TSGP formed the Cluster One activities funded through the World Bank Trust Fund, an arrangement that stemmed from the fact that the initial WB loan was intended to fund this area of work.

Sikua's strong, visionary influence, ultimately from the highest level²¹⁴, the role of Permanent Secretary (PS) remained stable for over six years, the incumbent having served as the Director of Planning (under Dr Sikua as PS) and been very involved with the original design of the SWAp. In addition, the NZAID-funded international sector advisor (who worked within MEHRD from 2006-2011) undoubtedly initiated many of the developments that have been achieved. Rather than undermining local ownership, however, a culture of self-ownership has emerged within the ministry and was clearly demonstrated in the strong convictions portrayed by the presenters at the Education Sector Coordinating Committee meeting (ESCC) in November 2010. A clear shift in attitudes was recognised by staff, which they associated with their growing understanding and appreciation for the approach over time, as these comments reveal:

[When we] set up the ESCC, at first there was not much participation from education officers; mainly advisors and people in planning. The other divisions were not really involved. Now [November 2008] much has improved and [now] we take a lead role in meetings and presentations. We see a lot of improvement in terms of local ownership and interactions in meetings (S8).

In the beginning most [of the presentation work] was done by the TA but since last year [2007] we have seen a big difference – it has enhanced capacities and now many of the local officers are doing presentations (S5).

We thought at the beginning staff would look at it [the SWAp] as an additional programme and additional work but now [Nov 2008] the mindset has changed and its part of what we should be doing. It's taken four years for it to be accepted (S8).

Emergence and self organisation

When asked what stimulated this shift in mindset, the answer seems to lie with the introduction of technical working groups (TWG). Towards the end of the first phase of the ESIRP (2004-06) three technical working groups had been set up (Policy, Finance/Planning/Budget and Monitoring/Evaluation) as space to develop new policies, and the phase two memorandum of understanding (known as the 'Arrangement 2007-2009'²¹⁵) recommended this approach be widened to include

²¹⁴ As explained on p110, Dr Sikua held the offices of Permanent Secretary (May 2003- Dec 2005), Minister of Education (May 2006-Nov 2007) and Prime Minister (Dec 2007-Aug 2010). It is not unusual for new ministers in Solomon Islands to receive little information on explicit objectives for their departments or good knowledge of what their departments currently deliver (Haque, 2012). Thus, in taking up the role of Minister of Education, Dr Sikua represented an anomaly, not only did he have a clear understanding of what the objectives of his ministry were, he had valuable insider experience of how to achieve those objectives.

²¹⁵This is the formal agreement (MOU) between Solomon Islands Government (MEHRD), the EC and NZAID to cover the second phase of the ESIRP, 2007-2009 (NZAID, 2007a)

other policy areas and “... supported by the Sector Secretariat and Co-ordination Team meet regularly to consider issues within their responsibility and make recommendations to the ESCC” (the Education Sector Co-ordinating Committee) (NZAID, 2007a: 8). By the end of the research period, there were more than nine TWGs covering a range of policy areas in addition to the three mentioned above. These include: Learning Assessment, Distance Flexible Learning (DFL), School Boards and the Inspectorate, Education and Emergency, ECE and Tertiary.

Each TWG comprises a variety of people and includes MEHRD staff, the Sector Coordinator and an appointed chair (who is part of a wider Co-ordination Team); all signatories to the PPD are also invited to participate in meetings and in 2010 NZAID had representation in almost all the groups. Such donor involvement in policy development could be construed as overly invasive, but as a senior NZAID staffer pointed out, “*it can't be forced, you have to be invited [to join a group]*” (S37), and it was clear that the opportunity to exchange ideas with others was generally regarded as a positive by those interviewed, “*[NZAID] attended our [TWG] meeting and took on board what we suggested – they have been very good*” (S19). Interestingly by the end of the research, most other PPD signatories remained unrepresented in the TWGs.

The TWG approach appears to have allowed a cohesiveness to develop that now seems to underlie understanding of the education SWAp in Solomon Islands, as the following comments from senior management illustrate:

The SWAp allows you to enhance capacity overall whereas projects just involve a few ... I don't think we could have reached this stage post-tensions [if we] had remained with just projects...

The SWAp is ... focussing on programmes of whole sector - it is getting everyone involved in meetings and making officers do their own presentations. In the beginning it was just me or another Director but now everyone is encouraged, regardless of whether their area is funded or not. Now it is for *all* core programmes...

The SWAp has built confidence in staff to do their work. They have opened up in meetings and interrupt more now. (S8).

The same participant re-confirmed these sentiments two years later,

You can see the change among the staff – they are very willing to be part of the TWGs and now we have so many of them. Unlike at the beginning when the SWAp just started we saw it as something different, additional to our duties but now I think we see it differently as being my duty – it's what we

should be doing. But commitment depends on different staff – we still have problems in terms of work but just a few cases. Overall it's good (S21).

The technical working group approach also appears to have facilitated more cross-ministerial dialogue and stronger understanding in other ministries of the challenges and issues faced by Education. For example, Monitoring TWG invitations to staff from other ministries to accompany the Monitoring Teams on their regular regional visits to schools are often accepted and signs of strengthened inter-ministry connectivity are emerging. The education-finance ministry (MOFT) interface, for example, had distinctly improved during the course of the research. Not only have senior MOFT accountant staff taken part in the monitoring trips, the regular meetings between MEHRD and MOFT, hosted by NZAID, have facilitated greater understanding on both sides, as this interviewee explained,

...recently [March 2010] the focus has been on tightening links and understanding between MOFT and MEHRD...its going well – a lot comes out of our two-hour weekly meetings ... MOFT are getting their heads around the school grants work and where the gaps are. We have their Assistant Accountant General leading one of the monitoring teams [to visit schools in Malaita] which is very valuable and creates more interest and understanding ... The weekly taskforce meetings have helped to lift expectations of professionalism and really resolved some outstanding issues. So we are actually dealing with the hard stuff (S20).

The positive effects of these improved relations were highlighted in the way MOFT rose to support MEHRD against potential donor criticism following an incidence of misinformation. *“The positive upshot of the whole thing was that suddenly MOFT was galvanised around supporting MEHRD because MOFT now recognised the value of SBS and didn't want to lose it and also didn't want the reputation of the SIG to be undermined”* (S20).

Although documents committing to forging stronger inter-ministry relations were signed by the Ministry of Development Planning and Aid Coordination (MDPAC) and others in 2007, making these more than paper-based agreements through meaningful participation has been more challenging. As one 2008 interviewee pointed out, *“other ministries are starting to take notice ... [but] although we invite them [to the MEHRD's open meetings], so that they will have better understanding and know what to expect, they don't come (S8)”*.

Poor communication with the Ministry of Public Service (MPS), responsible for disciplinary issues of civil servants, has proved particularly problematic and, in the view of one interviewee,

...that is where I have my biggest sustainability question marks – they are not fully involved in the SWAp – they don't understand it fully - because they don't come regularly to our meetings. We have issues regarding staff replacement – they have put a recruiting stop for us and other ministries ... its an obstacle (S38).

Perceived reluctance from MPS to take disciplinary action against ill-performing staff, in MEHRD's view, risked undermining the messages of professionalism it was endeavouring to portray through its revised Human Resources policy and its new performance-based appraisal system, introduced in 2010. By the end of 2010, however, there were indications that progress had been made and several disciplinary cases had resulted in severe action being taken by MPS. In his discussion paper on the influence of culture on economic growth in Solomon Islands, Haque (2012) purports that much ministerial dysfunction, such as that alluded to above, is due to the absence of institutional structures for ensuring ministers' public accountability for their departmental performance and service delivery, and the lack of incentives for those in positions of power to see them changed. The small positive steps that improved relations between MPS and MEHRD have fostered indicate that, despite institutional weaknesses, individual efforts from motivated officials can make considerable contributions to national welfare which in itself may create incentives for further change. Sending clear messages that unacceptable behaviour from public servants employed in the education sector (and often from those in positions of responsibility) will not be sanctioned, is one such step. Similarly, the revelation that MEHRD staff not providing adequate accounting information "*are having salary deductions*" sends clear messages that financial instructions are to be respected - "*things are changing now*" (S20).

Space of the Possible and (Strange) Attractors

From a complexity perspective, MEHRD's TWGs can be conceived as 'spaces of the possible' the entropic 'strange attractor'; that is, they provide an enabling environment (phase space) for new behaviours to emerge from a set of possible alternatives. They offer "the driver for the expenditure of energy to establish and sustain self-organised configurations that are reflexive, dialectic and never stable"

(Fowler, 2008b: 34). As previously explained, in a social context people make critical decisions which determine which, from a range of possible alternatives, particular path is taken. The nature of the decision is determined by contextual background and the current ‘state’ and ‘fitness’ landscape of agents involved; events that result from the path taken in turn influence future decisions (Mitleton-Kelly, 2003).

In thinking of TWGs in this way, it is possible to understand how the mindset within MEHRD has so effectively shifted from being insular and divisional to a more collective cross-sectoral team with a common purpose, as noted by these senior executives,

[I can see] confidence in staff taking on responsibility and taking on the work. There’s good networking among the staff sharing information. We also have more monitoring teams going out to the islands with people from different backgrounds going in a team, including other ministries, like planning and finance (S21).

Before there were divisions and that’s what they really were, divisions ... but we now have more cross-sector programming, cross-divisional so that the divisions are related to serving the same activities. School committee training is not just one division and now people talk to each other ... the working groups are helpful [they] make staff more confident; they have the information; they relate to what is happening in the NEAP and in the Pacific; and like to present what they have learned. That has grown enormously (S36).

The improved interconnectedness and interdependency of the elements involved in each group and the growing communication between the groups, as served by frequent reporting to the ESCC, have lessened individuals’ penchant to constrain change and fuelled enthusiasm to move forwards. The small working groups comprising a range of participants give space to explore new ideas; in other words, it provides the space to push boundaries and get close to the edge of chaos from whence ‘phase shifts’ are possible (the space where ‘sticky’ ideas tip a system towards one phase over another²¹⁶).

Drawing on the contextual study of Solomon Islands presented in Part Two and earlier discussions, the sectoral cohesion that has emerged within MEHRD so far, and its growing connectivity with other ministries (albeit slow) is unusual. As already explained, too often, political turmoil and weak bureaucratic performance undermines collective efforts, demoralises public servants and destabilises government. The unusual situation enjoyed by the Education ministry of long-term, constant, high level

²¹⁶ Gladwell (2001).

political support and leadership, informed through intimate knowledge and understanding of past efforts, current challenges and future objectives of the education sector as a whole and individual departments has undoubtedly been instrumental in its growth and development. It now receives the largest slice of the budget and is respected and envied by other ministries. Fundamental to its sustaining relative autonomy (enough at least to maintain its current policies and direction), are the collective efforts of Ministry staff to develop and maintain realistic, costed planning documents with manageable goals, and strategic directions that are robust enough to resist party political pressure. Interview data suggest that staff are beginning to feel confidence in achieving this, a status which they attribute to the extensive planning exercises that have taken place and been committed to under the sector wide approach,

... a new government can't come in and [tell us] how to do things ... In the SWAp there is this agreement that the government must [fulfil its agreed commitments] like maintaining funding to MEHRD at funding 22 percent - that is the stabilising factor...(S19a).

[A new government] can make a few changes in the margin ... but they will not be changing the direction of what's happening through the NEAP [national education action plan]. Fortunately that is why it is good to have a wider, longer term strategic plan (S36).

Most of the changes discussed so far have been relatively subtle ministerial shifts in policy approaches and ways of working. Understanding the notion of phase space contextualises how interventions might stimulate changes to the status quo, giving indication of the degree of flexibility a system exhibits. More flexible systems have greater tolerance of change, thus increasing the likelihood that more 'dramatic' changes can be sustained in the longer term. Such understanding can help shape how development initiatives are conceived, planned and executed (Ramalingam, et al., 2008).

Probably the most dramatic operational change to occur under the Solomon Islands Education SWAp was the introduction of school grants, aimed at alleviating some of the financial pressure on parents and, thus, encouraging greater student enrolment and retention in school. As noted in Part Two, implementation of this initiative was not without its challenges, but it is interesting to note the ministry's readiness to recognise the problems and set mechanisms in place to tackle them. The

positive reactions to the feedback²¹⁷ - the willingness to amplify rather than dampen the effects of the change - gives an indication that the Solomon Islands' system is relatively flexible and, therefore, relatively well placed to weather political storms and ultimately achieve and sustain movement towards change.

Phrase Space

As already noted, *phrase space* is a useful tool to look at interpretational shifts and modified understanding which result from how information is communicated and perceived. The unpredicted confusion arising from the public's interpretation of wording of the school grants policy makes an interesting example. As explained, in 2009 the Solomon Islands introduced an initiative whereby government grants would be provided to all schools (on a per-head basis) in lieu of fees previously charged to students. Dubbed the 'Fee-Free Education' policy, it was not long before many schools began to report a problematic, unpredicted consequence. Many parents had interpreted the meaning of the words 'Fee-Free Education' as absolving them of *all* obligation to their child's school, which, sadly, was not the intended message. Although introduction of the policy barred schools from charging parents 'school fees', most schools in Solomon Islands depend heavily on additional parental input, be it gifts in kind or monetary contributions, and the loss of this income was seen as catastrophic by many. As one rural teacher explained,

Fee free education is a confusing term. People say our government now pays for education – the policy is OK but the term is not good. It needs to be changed to make what it means clearer. It means more kids got to school, but parents still have to find money [for the school] (field notes).

Once this problem was recognised, messages were broadcast to encourage parents to maintain their support for schools and attempts were made to explain that the new policy was the first part of the way to rendering education 'free'; in the meantime, it would just be 'free of fees'. To emphasise this point, attempts were made to change the popular name of the policy to 'Free-Free Education', but it is unclear how effective this change became (field notes).

²¹⁷ These include making changes to the name of the policy from 'fee-free' to 'free-fee' education; increasing efforts to provide training for untrained teachers; and putting in place a programme for ministry personnel to systematically – though infrequently – visit all schools to collect and verify data and provide information to schools and communities over utilisation of the school grants.

This attention to phrase space gives insight of the considerable weakness of connectivity between government and the community. Messages are misconstrued, poorly understood and, as a result, often reinforce previously held convictions of the inadequacies of the government.

C. Complex Change: Long Term Survival?

It is difficult to assess the degree to which individuals adopt new ways of working and there is much literature to suggest that people only change their attitude and behaviour when they believe it is in their best interests to do so (Hinton & Groves, 2005). An important role for organisations, therefore, is to identify or create incentives (or drivers) for change that individuals are likely to perceive as personally beneficial. Applying the complexity metaphor ‘operating on the edge of chaos’ to social systems, however, provides a complementary but broader perspective. It argues that an unstable system is open to interaction with other systems/organisations and their environments and this novel interaction creates energy flows (or innovation) that can either be directed inwards, towards self-organisation through adjustments within the existing framework, or outwards creating systemic change; i.e. the adjustments are transformative enough to cause major shifts to the original environment. From this perspective, Kuhn et al (2011) argue that, for significant transformation to take place, social systems need to operate at the edge of chaos, for it is here that incentives emerge. In other words, the “long term survival of complex systems can be viewed as dependent on exposure to managed turbulence and controlled risk” (p. 261).

From this perspective, processes resulting in actual change always encounter trends that have not been foreseen. In this section, I attempt to highlight instances from each of the SWAps where change can be recognised, although was not necessarily foreseen. In examining aspects of recognised change I will attempt to explore the directions taken by the created energy flows. An important message that I have gleaned from the data analysis thus far is that ‘achievements’ and ‘change’ are not the same thing, which becomes a critical point under the ‘aid effectiveness’ agenda that focuses on results-based evidence. Under the SWAp both countries exhibited certain achievements, but the degree to which systems have fundamentally

changed is less clear; likewise, the degree of the system's robustness to *maintain* further self-organising, dynamic change.

Sensitivity to initial conditions

Drawing further on the notion of alternative pathways existing within the 'space of the possible', the particular decision taken is influenced by the agents' 'state' at the time the decision is taken; that is, it is 'sensitive to initial conditions'. To illustrate this, an obvious example to draw on is the so-called "*October experience*" (T12), the AJR meeting where the long-time simmering tension between NZAID and MEWAC was firmly put to rest by the MEWAC Director's unequivocal call for '*enough!*'²¹⁸. As explained earlier, (Part Two, p.143-4), Tongans adhere to strict social norms and etiquette that dictate restraint and aversion to show anger, for there is no protocol in Tonga for repairing a breach in relations caused by expressions of anger. In addition, expressions of anger in others are treated with disdain and culprits are considered 'rude or boorish'. Within a western context, Tongans' preference for silence over confrontation might be misconstrued for compliance or consent; or conversely, as a lack of interest, ability or engagement. Such cultural misunderstanding and a general insensitivity to the Tongan SWAp context on the part of NZAID (particularly in relation to wider social events occurring during the early implementation stages) was allowed to go unchecked for a considerable time during which tensions brewed on both sides ("*we felt we were always being dictated to*" (MEWAC26); "*they had a different understanding of what the SWAp was going to be*" (NZAID5b)). The resulting tension was such that it demanded cultural conventions be broken: "*Then we said, 'no'*" (T26), recalled one attendee; and according to another,

It acted like a catalyst for us to ask 'what are we actually doing and what is going on?' ... It was a shake up and forced a change to occur. I think they [MEWAC] asked themselves, well what can we do differently and how can we turn this experience into a positive one. And they have done so (T12).

... from then on things we have suggested worked... (T26).

From a complexity perspective this was the point at which 'space of the possible', with its numerous alternative pathways, presented itself. Past events and the current 'state' of the agents involved influenced the direction that was

²¹⁸ Personal communication with Dr E Coxon.

subsequently taken; in other words, the movement within the system rested on its ‘sensitivity to initial conditions’. In this case, NZAID re-shuffled its staff both in Tonga and Wellington and revised its decision-making procedures, affording country office staff more autonomy to deal with ‘on-the-ground’ issues. The greater sensitivity of the new NZAID staff was noted and appreciated by MEWAC, “*with the recent changes we have noticed considerable easing in the way we operate together – [more] understanding on the part of NZAID*” (T15b). Within MEWAC, staff felt they were now “*able to sit at the same table and argue [with NZAID] and come to agreement*”.

On MEWAC’s part, this prompted a shift away from the project mentality – “*it no longer talked about as a project and this has been a significant mind shift*” (T12) which led to greater integration of activities across other divisions, most significantly the subsequent shift of responsibility for the school grants, SBS and MSS from Policy and Planning to the Schools Division. As already discussed, the national consultants’ team was able to work more independently and not only act as “*good ambassadors for the ministry in schools*” (T26) but also helped facilitate vital discussion across MEWAC divisions. As one senior official acknowledged, “*we have now come a long way with working on partnership issues. Everyone has a better idea of what the whole picture is. They are now seeing things more strategically, rather than just working for CDU [curriculum development unit] or Schools or something*” (T26). Towards the end of the research period, stronger leadership in the Schools Division was establishing greater engagement with the challenge of sustaining the positive achievements in school management made by the national consultants working with principals and PTAs in schools. Up-skilling and incentivising the Education Officers to counterpart the national consultants to learn their new roles is now recognised as critical to sustaining the programme and ultimately delivering a better quality education service to the public. A further key to MEWAC’s stronger sense of ownership has been the realisation that the TESP has to become an integral part of MEWAC; in this respect the name attached to the second phase (due to start in 2011) has become important. “*We don’t want to call it TESP 2 – [previously the] TESP was [seen] as different from MEWAC and the TESP [was] more popular than*

MEWAC so they want to move away from this” (T26). Recent communications reveal that phase two is now referred to as ‘MEWAC’s ESP’ (Education Sector Plan)²¹⁹.

Communicative Connectedness

The following section looks at change from the broad perspective of ‘communicative connectedness’ (Kuhn, 2009), which Kuhn points out “is a shorthand way of describing the quality of interconnectedness between people” (p.52). Complexity views relatedness and the nature and quality of interactions as critical to understanding change in human systems. Communication plays a key part in determining the nature of these interconnections; as Kuhn describes, “In all that we do our relationships with other people really matter and are dependent upon the nature and quality of our communication with one another” (Kuhn, 2009: 53). The types and quality of communication between people shape the nature of an organisation by determining how it changes as a whole; that is, how change is manifest in relation to what messages become dominant, who hears them and how they are responded to.

As this study of complexity has underlined, conversations, like other complex interactions, are influenced by many factors, such as: personality, past experiences, cultural norms, the purpose of the interaction and players’ interpretation of the presenting context, and the power relationship. Overall, however, conversational interactions are most influenced by the *type* of relationship (its power asymmetry) and the *quality* of the relationship (the degree of trust) (Kuhn, 2009). Understanding the type and quality of communicative connectedness can, Kuhn purports, help shape future practice. Parties working towards presenting themselves as more trustful and reading others as more worthy of trust goes a long way to creating shared assumptions about work practices and developing mutual feelings of value, so creating environments where the new, or the different, can be safely tested and, possibly, assimilated in changed behaviour.

To illustrate this notion, I draw on data I collected as an observer on one of MEHRD’s quarterly provincial monitoring visits to schools in Solomon Islands. The ‘Malaita Southern region and Outer Islands Monitoring’ tour comprised seven teams and ran from the 23rd to 31st March 2010. The team I joined (Team F) was allocated

²¹⁹ Personal communication with Dr Coxon, following a recent professional visit to Tonga in April 2012.

ten schools in the “Su’u-Waisisi and Highlands/West AreÀre” region. Malaita Province is one of the largest provinces in the country, accommodating about 30 percent of the total population (estimated at 163,400 for 2011²²⁰). The interior is mountainous and densely forested²²¹, flanked by hills and narrow coastal terraces interspersed with swamps and valleys. Malaita is highly prone to natural disasters especially cyclones, flooding, landslides and tsunamis. The presence of logging companies has improved the road network, although many schools remain isolated, accessible only on foot or by boat. The radio remains the main means of access to information, although mobile phone networks now cover parts of the island.

In Solomon Islands it was acknowledged that the original design of the SWAp was largely undertaken within MEHRD’s Planning Division with *not much input from local staff* (S8). While the review of the National Education Action Plan (NEAP) for the second phase involved more local officers and stakeholders, it was noted in 2008 that *we still need to improve consultation at the school level* (S8). This challenge has been compounded by inefficiencies at sub-national level, particularly within the provincial and private (church) education authorities and their ability (or willingness) to visit schools, provide training and collect data that can be fed back to inform central policy.

As previously described, with no compulsory education policy in Solomon Islands, the Prime Ministerial launch of ‘*Programme to Support Fee Free and Quality Basic Education For All In Solomon Islands (2009-2012)*’ (MEHRD, October 2008), commonly known as ‘fee-free education’ (FFE) in January 2009 was aimed at boosting school enrolment by alleviating the pressure of school fees, which pose a particular challenge for the majority of Solomon Island parents where 80 percent of the population lead subsistence livelihoods. In his speech, Dr Sikua not only urged parents to enrol their children but also called on all stakeholders to work together to make the policy a success²²²:

... my government has made it one of its flagship policies to provide fee free education in the Solomon Islands [and] today marks the implementation of this historic policy initiative ... the beginning of payments of grants into our

²²⁰ See <http://www.spc.int/prism/country/sb/stats/Social/Popcen/Projection.htm>

²²¹ Malaysian logging companies are currently carrying out extensive logging activity on Malaita.

²²² In 2005 a Community Funding for School Funding (CFSF) scheme had been introduced but difficulties arose due to inadequate funding levels and a lack of financial skills and monitoring at school level.

schools to take up the gap that has, for many years, been met by parents (Sireheti, 2009).

Under the policy a model for the provision of school grants was designed to take in ten years of schooling (prep-Form 3) (MEHRD, 2009) and thus provide all children with potential access to nine or ten years of basic education. The SIG provided the bulk of the FFE funding (around 80%, including SBD5m from the national development budget) supported by grants from NZAID (to assist with financial management training for head teachers, school boards and EAs) (MEHRD, October 2008) and donations from the Republic of China (Taiwan).

Under the FFE policy, the concept of ‘whole school development plans’ (WSDP) was introduced which required all schools to develop an annual plan and budget, based on their expected revenue from the grant scheme²²³. In preparing a WSDP, principals are tasked with developing a budget and action plan detailing how funding will be used and providing information on the overall conditions and resource needs for the school²²⁴. As time goes on, evidence of grant retirement will be required, together with budget and resource forecasting. The timely delivery of the annual plans to MEHRD –via the education authorities - was deemed mandatory for schools to receive the following year’s grant, as *we [MEHRD] can’t take action if we don’t receive the information from the Education Authorities [or schools] (S21)*²²⁵ and, to facilitate this transition, operational funding was available to the PEAs and CEAs. Part of the conditions of this funding required the PEAs to develop Provincial Education Action Plans (PEAP) informed by the annual activity plans submitted by the individual education authorities active in each province.

Poor levels of communicative connectedness at the sub-national level, however, appear to have hampered these developments in some cases. One Church Authority representative spoke of his experience with a PEA,

In relation to the education action plan we have had a very poor reaction from the provinces. They know they should invite us to be part of their review – the ministry made it very clear to them – but we have not been requested to provide them with our action plans. ... No, I have not sent them the recent one or last year’s one. I asked them last year if I could attend with them but no, it was not on (S23).

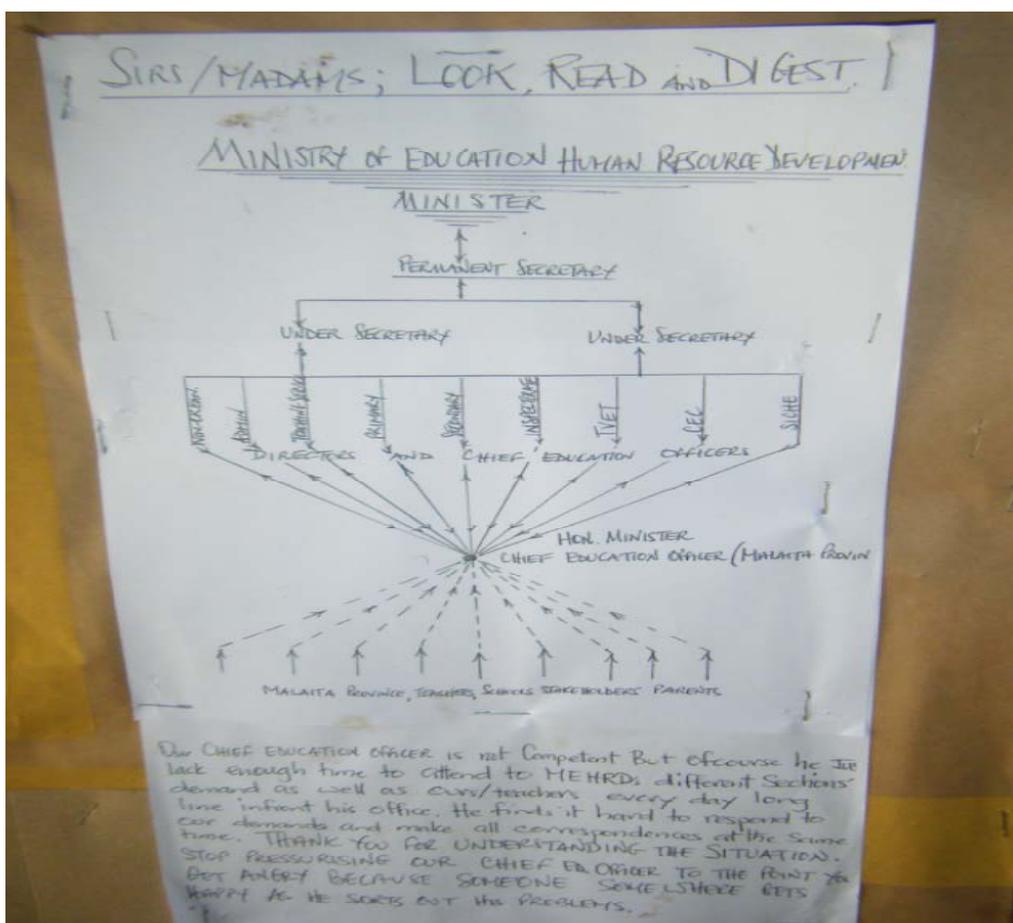
²²³ This WSDP began in 2008.

²²⁴ This would provide a means of valuable data collection for central government.

²²⁵ It is interesting to note, however, that during the first years of the scheme schools that did not deliver a sufficient WSDP was not penalised, for the sake of the children.

Likewise, a provincial insider agreed that some PEA personnel were obstructive, “there is a central figure in the province [and] we have to channel everything through him ... That is where all the grievances and issues arise” (S22b). The following notice, however, leaves little doubt about one school’s opinion of, and frustration with, the bottle neck created in one PEA:

Figure 7: Photograph of Staffroom Notice in a school in Solomon Islands 2010



The message at the bottom reads:

Our chief education officer is not competent but of course he just lack[s] enough time to attend to MERHD’s different sections’ demands as well as ours/teachers[’] every day long line in front of his office. He finds it hard to respond to our demands and make all correspondences at the same time. THANK YOU FOR UNDERSTANDING THE SITUATION. STOP PRESSURISING OUR CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER TO THE POINT YOU GET ANGRY BECAUSE SOMEONE SOMEWHERE GETS HAPPY AS HE SORTS OUT HIS PROBLEMS. (School 4, emphasis in original).

A lack of resources and limited staff capacity also add to provincial authority challenges; other PEAs reported lack of office space, few staff with any accountancy

skills and insufficient funds to cover expenses²²⁶. The fact that lines of communication between the CEAs, the PEAs and the central government “*are not very clear*” (S23) means that personal rather than official relations are relied on to keep things happening, “*Church authorities don’t have an office within the ministry ... nor in the provincial government ... but we somehow manage to work with the provinces ... because we know each other on a personal level ... [and] in terms of the SWAp, the voices of the CEAs are not well heard.*” (S23). Channels for sharing information across church communities are also informal and happenstance – “*I just met the new general secretary for the xxx church on a bus – I knew him before but now our relationship is revived*” (S23). Such high-level camaraderie is a crucial lifeline, but it does little to create a sense of responsibility or accountability, or to improve the flow of reliable data across the network necessary to provide the needed support for schools and teachers under their jurisdiction, as indicated in the following observation by a senior MEHRD official:

Take the example of teacher posting for 2010 – we didn’t receive all the teacher postings until end of February/beginning of March this year [2010]. The EAs are responsible for teacher postings but they send information to MERHD [so late] ... the problem is the link between schools and EAs, and between EAs and MERHD. The EAs are provided with operational grants from MERHD ... so we expect them to visit schools to gather good information to submit that to the ministry. They should know what the enrolments are, how many teachers they have in the system, and how many new ones they need, but I think that’s lacking. So [now] the Ministry is dependent on the survey it sends out to schools, but [still] the EAs need to verify this for us ... (S21).

To clarify, all education authorities find and recruit their own teachers and oversee their schools’ management. Central government is responsible for teacher salaries, promotion and placements and Provincial governments, besides responsibility for the Provincial Schools, have responsibility for running the Schools Inspectorate system which determines teacher promotion, staff training and in-service needs. School inspectors are employed by central government and allocated to work within a particular PEA. In Malaita, for example, there are four primary school inspectors (one in each region: Central, Northern, Eastern and Southern) and each is responsible for visiting all the schools in his²²⁷ region in order to confirm staff promotions, record staffing and physical resource needs, and administer the teacher-in-training (TIT) programme for unqualified teachers. This constitutes a formidable

²²⁶ These issues were raised during the ESCC meetings attended.

²²⁷ I use the male pronoun deliberately as Inspector positions are almost exclusively held by men in Solomon Islands.

workload for each Inspector; not only in terms of number of schools but also in terms of the difficulties often encountered in travelling to the schools, especially due to frequent transport and weather restrictions. To compound these challenges, fractious relations between the centrally-employed Inspectors and the provincial authority's senior education office often impedes progress, as we have seen above, and as one provincially based official explained,

He [the inspector] is dependent on the cooperation of the Education Authority's Senior Education Officer (EA SEO) ... *if* the SEO submits the names [of those needing promotions confirmed] to the Inspectorate ... then the inspectors will go and see them. ... The Inspectorate is dependent on the cooperation of the EA. The SEOs are the representatives of the authority throughout the region ... in all provinces. Teachers' postings are arranged through the EAs so they should know who is qualified and who isn't and be able to give a list to the Inspectorate and say 'go and check these teachers' ... but ... [sighs] (S22b).

In reaction to these problems, MEHRD "*purposely organised*" monitoring tours (made up of a variety of central government, provincial and church officials, and donor partners) whereby an official team would visit every school (on a 2-3 year country cycle) as a means of collecting and verifying data. These visits were also aimed at providing a forum for informing and updating stakeholders of developments and progress under the sector reform programme (ESIRP) (MEHRD, 2010b: 3)²²⁸. That the monitoring teams are multi-disciplinary is a creative move. Not only does it increase awareness and understanding of the challenges faced by the education sector among those not involved in basic education delivery, thus improving overall connectivity levels across departments and ministries, but it also sends a strong message to schools and communities that the government is taking education seriously and that they and their school are important.

The significance of the visits is reflected in my field notes: School 8 claimed to have never before been visited by MEHRD, and School 9 asserted this to be its first visit by MEA or MEHRD for ten years. In terms of verifying data, it was discovered that three schools submitted to the Ministry erroneous or inflated enrolment figures, which had led to inappropriate grant allocations. While it is possible that genuine mistakes were made due to misunderstanding or inability on the part of school management, they might also signal alternative scenarios: (a) a degree of confidence that the discrepancy was unlikely to be discovered and therefore the school would be

²²⁸ The year I attended, 2010, was the third year of these quarterly monitoring missions.

able to enjoy increased funding; or (b) that for small schools, in particular, the true grant allocation, based on their tiny enrolment, was insufficient for the school to adequately function and therefore some creative reporting would alleviate the problem. As one parent pointed out, *“Previously we [parents] paid SBD 700 a year in school fees. Now the fees the school gets from SIG is just 320, making a deficit of 400. This school asks for SBD 25/term/child – that’s 100 - but that still leaves a deficit of SBD300. Where can we get this extra from?”*

Without exception, the Principal or Head Teacher was keen to show the team their school, provide opportunities to talk with teachers and, when possible, called a community meeting. In this (often lengthy) meeting Ministry officials took time to explain how the grants were calculated and how much each school had been allocated. They explained what the money could and could not be used for, and outlined procedures to combat the risk of misappropriation. The generally well-attended meetings revealed strong community interest in their school’s financial affairs and for improving the quality of education and their children’s learning environment. As several of the schools had experienced the unscrupulous misuse of funds by previous senior staff, these communities was particularly keen to understand exactly how much money the school would have and the new roles and responsibilities assigned to the Head and School Board Chairman to ensure more transparency and accountability under the FFE policy.

It was clear that these face-to-face dialogues were appreciated at all the schools we visited²²⁹. That both Ministry officials in the team were from the region, were passionate about education and able to communicate in local dialect (in addition to Solomon Islands Pijin) was fortuitous and helped to ensure messages were understood. It also created an atmosphere where people were not afraid to ask questions or speak their mind. That people were eager to listen to the team, voice their concerns and grievances, and explain how they overcame the many challenges they faced, not only underlined the self-reliance many communities depend on, but also the overall scepticism they hold in government being able (or willing) to deliver (better) service (particularly in terms of teacher promotions and training).

²²⁹ Public broadcast messages had been made over the radio to alert schools in advance of the Ministry’s monitoring tour of the region. Although these had been heard, some schools did not expect a team to actually arrive having never, or very infrequently, been visited in the past.

For many, the key lay with the Provincial Education Authorities. Although, as one official remarked, “ ... ‘*authorities*’ – *that’s a strong word; they are not ‘authorities’; they are not even visiting their schools (with some good exceptions)*” (S36, emphasis in original). Inadequate funding and resources, and the generally negative opinion of the ability/integrity of some staff were perceived as critical to its ineffectiveness. Further evidence of dissatisfaction with the PEA can be seen in the fact that over the last ten years an increasing number of school communities have elected to shift their primary schools from provincial jurisdiction back to church control (S23). This is significant since, as previously explained (p.105), this represents a reversal of the post-Independence aim to bring all primary schools under SIG control. According to one Church official, communities justify their decision in their belief that church schools are better run, and that the teachers behave better under a church system, “XX [a community high school] is one that we have recently taken back from the Province. We [now] have seven schools on Malaita and all have been with the province before” (S23). In terms of governance and expectations, he elucidated:

We have an agreement with the communities over our different roles, like we become more responsible for the management of teachers, and the community becomes responsible for ensuring the teachers have houses and land to live off, that sort of thing. That is the understanding although it is not formal (S23).

This particular narrative illustrates how MEHRD is clearly attempting to increase communication flows between themselves and school communities. Its ambitious cross-disciplinary monitoring tour approach, and its programme to maintain school visits on a 2-3 yearly cycle overcomes some data collection and verification problems, raises public awareness of the Ministry’s commitment to improving access to education and increases understanding of the challenges for those concerned with but not directly working in education.

Two to three yearly central monitoring tours are hardly a means to engendering the systemic change that will stimulate and improve the delivery of education in schools. Ultimately this responsibility lies in the devolution of authority with the education authorities working more closely with schools and more actively supporting staff and parent bodies, “*The real impact in schools is made directly by the Head or Principal or School Committee – we need to address these more. So you*

need education authorities to follow up on promotions, on training, on grants, on salaries ... to improve the practical drive of the most important actors” (S36). A first step in this process is the need to improve the inter-relations between central government and the education authorities, first by explaining and training authority personnel in what they should be doing – *“maybe handover more or have the best officers from our organisation going for some time to work with EAs to inspire them* (S36) - and to demonstrate how, by delegating duties to the Inspectors, more regular data collection and better teacher monitoring can take place. Paying more attention to teachers and heads is likely to promote greater professionalism at this crucial level with the knock on effect of better teaching in the classroom. This need is clearly acknowledged, *“we need to focus more at provincial level”* (S21) but, as another senior official lamented, *“who is leading this process? ...We all understand, but who will implement the next stage”* (S36).

From my analysis perspective, however, it was hard to identify areas where significant change had emerged and moved the system on to a new phase, and it was hard to identify the evolution of strong and positive relationships and dialogues between state and community. Rather, it was easier to locate the bottlenecks and gaps which have potentially hindered the evolution of change. That is, areas where particular voices are unheard because formal communication channels have not been established, or where communities distrusted state institutions to carry out their obligations to staff and schools. In terms of feedback, there is no doubt that valuable lessons are learned by the individuals who undertake the monitoring tours. Turning those lessons into actions, however, is *“still not happening”* (S36) to any large extent. Communicating messages or taking action from feedback is *“still not fully internalised – very few are doing it”* although it did appear that the post-tour monitoring reports were being utilised at central level and presentations were being made to the wider community at the ESCC meetings. Senior officials acknowledge the criticality of tackling the shortcomings in the PEAs and in September 2010 a *Review of the Solomon Islands Education Sector Administration Structure* (Pedersen & Wasuka, 2010) was prepared; a review of the Inspectorate was also carried out in 2010. It is not known the extent to which any recommendations these reviews offered have been embraced or put into action.

Concluding Part Three

Development as a continuous 'whole' system

Throughout the history of development theory, (see Part Two), traditional assumptions implicitly or explicitly support the view that development is a linear process – a problem needing to be solved; starting from a discrete beginning – ‘under developed’, ‘less developed’ or ‘developing’ - and ending, with or without the support of donor aid, at the end point of being ‘developed’. Such reductionist approaches ignore numerous contingencies and external mitigating factors which, coupled with indeterminate time scales and unpredictable social events and interactions create capricious, evolving, non-linear pathways influenced by what has gone before and internal/external contemporary pressures.

Tracing a country’s development history reveals patterns of order and dominant narratives. With hindsight, contemporary patterns can be better understood and give insight into possible future directions. In terms of educational influences in Tonga and Solomon Islands, western missionary presence, colonial practices and, more latterly, western donors peddling an increasingly global development agenda have melded in different ways to create the each country’s unique, contemporary system. Given the limited human resources inherent in small island states, a small number of individuals/agents can be identified as wielding enormous influence over educational development in both countries. Not least among them has been NZAID. In early Tonga, King Tupou I (assisted by Shirley) fundamentally shaped Tonga’s strong commitment to education and formulated much of the approach that survives to this day. In Solomon Islands, the ad hoc colonial annexation of Melanesian islands, which created an entity called Solomon Islands, the consequent weak notion of ‘nationhood’, and a general lack of educational investment during the colonial period led to uneven development, fuelled by the concentration of economic and military activity (during the war) on Guadalcanal. The wide diversity of peoples and religions led a disjointed, self-reliant approach to education, with several authorities (mainly church) working in parallel. This mechanism survived, largely unaddressed, until Dr Sikua’s recent vision for a new approach and his efforts (as PS of Education, Minister and then Prime Minister) to create a more centralised, organised Ministry through application of a SWAp. With the World Bank and European Union both

demonstrative in applying their ‘conditions’ or ways of working during the early stages of each SWAp, NZAID’s more flexible approach has prevailed. Despite having adjusted its policies to align more closely to the orthodox international agenda - such as the Paris Declaration and the ‘better aid agenda’ – its more relational approach has resulted in it becoming, and remaining, key in coordinating other donor activity and harmonising approaches.

Paying attention to the power asymmetries acting within the various systems and to how the systems adapted, evolved and self-organised within their contextual and historical parameters, the analyses have provided some insight into how the dynamic and interdependent systems have organised themselves around particular attractors and how new patterns of events and behaviours will generate new relationships, shifts in behaviour and power relations.

Power

Like history, power matters (Fowler, 2007: 2) to complexity thinkers. Central questions within the context of development are ‘who wins and who loses from change?’ (Fowler, 2008b) and how does change affect patterns of power relations? That is, who is included and excluded and what effect does this have on identities?, remembering that threats to identity will always arouse anxiety and defensiveness (Stacey, 2010: 213). Power relation patterns emerge from local interaction and connectivity between agents within the system and take the form of figurations of inclusion and exclusion which confer identity on people (Stacey, 2010: 206). In order to examine power relations (the local political ‘state’), Leftwich (2010: 5) is resolute that “*agency matters*” (emphasis in original). That is, the potential to change things stems from the “choices, decisions and actions of individuals, groups and organisations and, in particular, their leaders and ‘elites’” (Leftwich, 2010: 5). Recognising the importance of agency in thinking politically resonates with Rosalind Eyben’s insistence that “relationships matter” - what we observe empirically (in every day events) in how people relate and communicate with each other.

These analyses have exposed various examples of local political state and exposed some of the asymmetries of power and their effect on whether change emerged from application of the development initiative. An obvious example is the

effective ‘exclusion’ of the Education Officers in Tonga. The lack of leadership from the divisional head and a lack of consideration of the capacity of the EOs to undertake their expected role threatened their identity (made worse as many are in their senior years of employment), and by creating feelings of vulnerability and insecurity led to the identified defensiveness and disengagement with the initiative. In Solomon Islands the reluctance shown by some provisional senior education officers can be analysed in a similar vein. Exposure of their limitations, in terms of lack of credibility with local schools and poor monitoring record created a sense of loss from the develop effort and engendered further disengagement with the change process.

From a wider perspective, MEWAC’s perceived feelings of outsider imposition of the change process, brought on by the cumbersome procedures and expectations of the donors, coupled with their insensitivity of contemporary local conditions and constraints threatened their collective identity and autonomy. This situation, left unacknowledged, threatened the emergence of desired change. Once acknowledged, however, local agents were given the space to initiate change through more culturally acceptable and appropriate mechanisms as seen by the work of the national consultants’ team.

Influencing complex systems

According to Helbing (2010: 10) influencing complex systems can lie in supporting and strengthening “the *self-organisation* and *self-control* of the system by *mechanism design*” (emphasis in original). This means that interactions among well-chosen elements within the system will self-generate coordination and cooperation, within the sufficiently flexible action boundaries (the ‘rules of the game’²³⁰), to allow self-organisation along desired lines. The emergent, collective properties work with the system, rather than against it, and are robust enough to cope with challenges from external perturbations. This resonates well with the empirical data from Tonga and Solomon Islands. The unsuitable interactions that arose in the Tonga SWAp (between MEWAC and NZAID) caused the system to become “trapped in a *suboptimal* (“*frustrated*”) *state*” (ibid. emphasis in original), while the space provided by the TWGs in Solomon Islands has the potential to allow the coordination and cooperation

²³⁰ Such rules in this case might include: overarching aim to improve education quality, appreciation of socio-cultural norms, sufficient levels of trust, clear objectives, honesty, degree of central /decentralised control, etc

to co-evolve and self-generated 'solutions' to local 'problems' to emerge. Thus, attention is to find "the right rules of interaction" (ibid. p.10) and ensuring the best elements are engaged in the system may present a challenge for decision-makers, but cannot be ignored. Not only do systems with best-suited constituents self-organise more effectively and adapt to the environment, they are also more likely to be innovative (collective intelligence), robust and resource-efficient.

The size of the system is also important for complex systems. Quick information exchange becomes less possible, especially among remote parts of a system, if the system becomes too large or has too much interconnectedness. The degree of central control is also a critical decision. Greater decentralisation may allow quicker and more appropriate responses to local situations. In Helbing's opinion, the best solutions are probably based on suitable combinations of centralised and decentralised approaches (Helbing, 2010). Establishing which aspects are to be centrally devised and controlled and the responsibilities and decisions that can be decentralised need to be clearly established and agreed, and communicated throughout the entire system. The lack of clearly defined communication pathways is evident in both country data sets, especially between the church and the government systems.

Ralph Stacey (2010: 208) goes further with calls for organisations to be thought of, "as patterns of relationships between people", rather than as 'things' or 'systems'. In so doing the focus for policy makers is subtly shifted from that of developing formulaic directives with targets to be achieved, to being more a purposeful conversation between professionals that, within the defined boundaries, seeks to reduce the incompatibility between theory and the actual setting it hopes to serve; thus, reducing the feeling of disempowerment, resistance and resentment that comes with being externally 'driven' in a certain direction. Stacey admits that "some form of control from a distance is still necessary for widespread improvement and accounting for resource use ... [but] centralised target setting ... should be scrapped" (p 213) since, in his mind, paying attention to organisational realities is more effective than the discourse of targets. He goes on to explain that if policy makers think of themselves more as players in the game than the side-line rule-setters and law enforcers, it shifts their perspective to paying less attention to the tools and techniques

and more to the moves other players may, or may not, make. This resonates with Pritchett et al.'s (2010) discussion that interventions fail, not because of implementation or management capacity flaws, but because of technical or design flaws.

As Pritchett (2010) points out, better understanding of the 'political space' relevant to nurturing endogenous debate is key to creating context specific reform. Rather than discovering which individual development initiatives 'work', contributing to an alternative theory of change that supports the emergence of platforms, simultaneously capable of effecting systemic change, is key (Pritchett, et al., 2010: 45). This is highlighted by the tension Hill (2002) alludes to; that the rhetoric to address a dual audience extracts concessions from both sides, with the promise of alternative benefits. On the one hand, for changes introduced by the SWAps to be sustained, local ownership (buy-in) is a crucial factor; on the other, in order to secure the commitment of donors, the schedule of reform must coincide with their analysis and interests. The reality is that 'partner' governments have limited effect (Hill, 2002).

Sustainable change?

The concept of 'sustainable development' has underpinned development theory since the 1970s, yet, it is a term badly in need of careful unpacking. The term became immortalised in the UN Brundtland Report definition as, "meeting the needs of the present [generation] without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs" (Brundtland, 1987: 3.27). Notwithstanding, as this thesis has tried to demonstrate, 'development' implies instability and change, while 'sustainability' infers a notion of equilibrium. To oblige people to act in a 'sustainable' way implies trying to find a simplistic, linear solution to the complex puzzle of 'sustainability'. As such, it contradicts how complex systems evolve, and reduces the notion of 'sustainability' to a paradox: it impels society to co-evolve unidirectionally over time, such that particular relationships do not deplete potential resources. In other words: it demands change while not changing. Unless very specific context is added, the concept remains mere rhetoric. For 'development' to be sustainable, material welfare, life chances and cultural cohesion need to be enhanced through time, which renders irrelevant many of the 'indicators' often applied the name of

‘sustainability’, not least aid dependency (Bertram, 2010). As Robert Chambers (Chambers, 2004: 6) so eloquently warns,

We must ask: who changes the words we use? Whose language brings forth our world and guides our actions? Who defines what words mean? The world brought forth is usually constructed by the powerful in central places or by those well-place to influence them. The words and concepts of development both express and form the mindset and values of dominant linguistic groups, disciplines and professions, and organisations.

CONCLUSIONS

... the most important implication of complexity ... [is] that it provides ways for practitioners, policy makers, leaders, managers, researchers, [to] collectively reflect on how we are thinking about trying to solve aid problems. Are we using inappropriate mental models and frameworks? Are we continuing to act in inflexible, top-down ways? Are we using too many off-the-peg approaches? Are we driven by naïve expectations of impact? Do we simplify complexities for the sake of convenience? (Ramalingam, 2008: 65)

As discussed in detail in Part One, a complexity lens draws on a number of theories of emergence from the natural and social sciences, each with its own character and interpretation but linked by generic characteristics of complex systems. These generic characteristics were described by Cilliers (1998) as a set of complexity principles (or tenets) with which to explore social change.

This study has examined these tenets and applied them in exploring development interventions as complex social interactions that explicitly assume achievement of social and behavioural change, but carry implicit assumptions that corresponding change will occur to deeply embedded political structures (Girdwood, 2012). Examining each case study as a continuous, dynamic 'whole' system, comprising networks of agents that act and react within loose boundaries and in response to their initial 'state' has revealed how each is more than the sum of its parts, and that the nature and extent of change cannot be assumed to result predictably or in linear relation to the inputs provided. In paying explicit attention to the embedded political structures both locally and arising from overarching international development perspectives, the study has highlighted areas where desired social and behavioural change has been stifled or supported by the underlying political structures, context and relationships between the actors. As such, it highlights how change is dominated by agents self-organising and networks co-evolving in relation to associated systems and networks, which themselves are continuously adapting to their environments. In concluding this thesis I will justify the way it has been constructed and that the argument for examining development from a complexity perspective - in a more holistic, non-linear manner - enhances our understanding of phenomena and challenges the basic assumptions underpinning orthodox development practice and 'management for results' rhetoric.

Combining complexity perspectives with vertical and extended case study provided the basis for my contextual analysis in Part Two and informed my development of the analytical framework which guided my foray into the empirical data, presented in the first three sections of Part Three. The final sections of Part Three draw together the issues and debates central to the thesis, shifting focus from the empirical to ways to action the 'critical mode of analysis' - complexity principles - for establishing 'locally appropriate' frameworks to analyse development

interventions. Finally, this thesis will debate how this ‘new emphasis’ responds to the original research question.

Development theory: simple steps to complex processes

The course of post war orthodox development discourses, traced in Part Two, has been and is dominated by rational modernisation theory, where externally determined inputs are converted by the system (the target ‘under developed’ country) into desired outputs and behaviours through a series of linear steps. As described, in order to implement the fundamental model, aid industry approaches have passed through a series of phases accompanied by a variety of theoretical discourses, be it basic needs, structural adjustment, social and physical infrastructure projects, human rights etc. By the turn of the century with much of the world still trapped in its ‘under-developed’ state, general disillusion with the aid industry called for a new millennium approach. Enter the ‘better aid agenda and the new architecture of Paris Principles, results based management and sectoral or central budget support.

From a complexity perspective, determining, as many have done, that ‘aid had failed’ fundamentally misses the point. Traditional measures of development and the effect of aid look for and evaluate what was planned for, and the extent to which expected transformations and desired ends were achieved. Such measures are unable to appreciate the unique pattern of actual changes that took place in response to the intervention-altered environment. The response and self organisation of actors, the manner in which related systems and networks co-evolved and adapted to the new environment, and the degree of connectivity between the various levels would have been overlooked or ignored, along with any associated positive, but unpredicted, effects. In cases where ‘development’ appeared to emerge as planned, causative credit would be placed with the intervention, and likely earn itself the label ‘best practice’. Not appreciating the myriad of small non-linear emergences, arising from responses to unexpected external events or reactions to other agents’ strategies, obscures the real nature of the changes that occurred, disrupts clear understanding and makes replication in other contexts impossible to predict. Although ideas of unpredictability, connectivity and relatedness are acknowledged by organisation and management theories as manifest in complex decision making, complexity thinking draws them together in relation to the degree of equilibrium exhibited by the system

(Klijn, 2008). As explained, highly stable systems are resilient to change (e.g. Tonga), while ones that are more open to constant adaptation and self-organisation (e.g. Solomon Islands) are likely to be more highly innovative and open to new ideas and approaches. Drawing on a biological metaphor, "... a stable equilibrium implies 'death' [to a complex system]" (Klijn, 2008: 304).

The top down approach to development assistance, prevalent at least until the 1990s, largely followed the informal doctrine of 'payer decides' (Klijn, 2008). Subsequent calls for greater stakeholder consultation and 'bottom up' participation, most notably for the preparation of poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSP) to access World Bank funding, was an attempt to be seen to shift power into the hands of the recipient. Instead, however, rather than respond to actual needs, the national agents involved were subsumed by the stronger structure represented by the Bank's 'thousand page rulebook'²³¹ which through its inflexibility, created an environment that inhibited interaction and prevented agents from reshaping and adapting the ideas to individual contexts. Space for innovation, self-organisation and local incentives was stifled, effectively locking the system into a path towards closure rather than chaos. The blame for the 'failure' of PRSP is often accredited to a country not wanting to achieve its goals; little mention is made of the process undertaken to devise strategies to achieve those goals. In complexity approach, "strategies are not seen as one-sided responses to a changing environment or another agent, but as adaptive moves affecting both the initiator of the action, and all the others influenced by it" (Klijn, 2008: 310); as well as one that fosters and creates enabling conditions, recognising that "excessive control and intervention can be counterproductive" (Mitleton-Kelly, 2003: 26).

The 'better aid agenda', with its focus on results-based criteria for evaluation, does little to move beyond this blinkered view. While SWAps place greater emphasis on harmonisation and coordination among donors and the promotion of ownership by the recipient country, these are measured in formal agreements and contracts, fixed time review processes, achievement of time-bound goals, demonstrable accountability and confirmed value for money. Again, processes of transformation, changing levels of connectivity, the nature of emergent behaviours, the strength of feedback

²³¹ Refer p.72 for more details.

mechanisms, and making available the necessary space for innovation are largely overlooked in official doctrine and reporting. Ultimately, as long as the bi-lateral interests of donor countries govern aid allocations, and EFA, MDG or PD criteria justify the deeper “real-politics of aid”, the quest for greater effectiveness will remain undermined (Fowler & Biekart, 2011: 6).

Country contexts: reassessing what development aid can deliver

As the country case study findings show, the degree of connectivity plays an important part in a system’s predisposition towards transformative change. In both countries aspects of the sector wide approach were undoubtedly ‘high leverage’, transforming behaviour and attitudes within certain networks, through the co-evolution of mutually acceptable responses and actions within a ‘safe’ space. From the donor reporting perspective, however, many of the micro-level transformations taking place were overshadowed (or under reported) in the pressure to report on the wider achievements of their large scale budget support, according to the reporting criteria noted above.

Drawing on complexity principles challenges donors to commit more to ongoing reflection to better understand the context of and where change is happening. Once changes can be identified and understood the donor is in a position to reassess and adapt its priorities/activities to enhance (or suppress) the resultant development trajectory. Central to this approach is a donor making more explicit its conception of change. For example, how it understands change; how it invests in relationships; how open it is to diversity of ideas/views, its preparedness to experiment, take risks and learn.

As the findings show, complex development situations are not easily externally regulated or controlled. Instead they are held in place around an ‘attractor’ determined by specific dominant logic and values (based on specific historical, geographic cultural, religious and political constraints) to form a complex, evolving, self-regulatory control system (Haynes, 2008). The degree of disturbance the dominant logic or values can withstand indicates underpinning relative stability and likelihood of reaching a potential bifurcation point – the chance for the system to settle around a new attractor based on new or alternative logics or values.

These insights have evoked ideas regarding how complex systems can be ‘managed’ and how complexity insights might provide valuable tools for improving ‘success’ of interventions (Jacobs, 2009; Klijn, 2008; Snowden, 2009). In a development context, in-depth contextual knowledge, which pays attention to the nature and quality of the interconnectiveness between agents and involves reflective analysis of past instances of transformative change, can provide valuable critical insight. Its value lies not in how to control the system, but more in understanding how an intervention might be designed to take advantage of the initial conditions of a specific situation by focussing on enhancing key channels of communication, such that the direction of change within the complex system can be influenced (Woodhill, 2009). In this way, instead of applying top down political power to try to steer change, a complexity approach encourages development practitioners to learn to enhance inherent areas or agents of power to remove barriers and unsettle systems and so influence the *shape of conditions* under which actors engage, interact, self organise and change evolves.

Self-generated change instilling new behaviours around new attractors (shifting dominant dogma or values) are more likely to remain sustainable than imposed change directives from outside. Recognising the existing attractors within a system and being sensitive to the opportunities posed by unexpected events or agents’ reactions and responses to new initiatives, noting those that ‘catch on’²³² and those that are rejected provide a heads up of imminent or potential change situations. Being aware of emerging behaviour change provides opportunity to disrupt or nurture it. From a development practitioner perspective (be it donors or recipient governments) this infers adaptive leadership, constantly sensitive to changing environments and looking for opportunities and energy (for the drivers in the system). According to (Termeer, 2009), leadership of the attitude to facilitate highly connected networks, discourse and emergence cultivates an environment of learning and innovation opportunities. Building leadership capacity that strengthens this awareness can equip leaders to take more contextualised decisions that can influence how the system evolves, whether it be taking advantage of an opportunity, or recognising a scenario

²³² Gladwell (2001) refers to things or events that cause people to want to join the bandwagon as “sticky attractors”. They provoke social change. Gladwell draws on “sticky” examples such as the internet, cell phones and social network technology.

that is suppressing transformation and locking the system into an impenetrable status quo.

Both case study countries provided examples of development events/activities that identified facilitative and suppressive conditions. Facilitative examples include the recruitment of redundant public servants in Tonga as national consultants to liaise between the ministry and schools; this illustrates an effective strategic use of opportunity and nurturing of a good effect. In the Solomon Islands ministry officials' improved confidence, commitment and determination have been recognised as emerging from the attitude and actions of the Ministry leadership. This inclusivity - for example, in the setting up the new committees and technical working groups that involve agents from across the sector and beyond - appears to have generated a degree of empowerment and sense of ownership among staff. Conditions that maintained the status quo and inhibited change, on the other hand, can be attributed to the heavy handed top-down donor directives in Tonga, and in Solomon Islands the weak connectivity between the central and provincial authorities and poor relationships between provincial education officers and schools.

As has been made clear earlier, fundamental of development initiatives trying to prompt transformative change is the system's ability to support positive human relationships. As Wigboldus points out, understanding and valuing relationships is essential to "being strategic in the face of complexity" (2009: 188). New people and ideas cause disturbances in development dynamics altering the 'landscape' of new processes and policies while at the same time they are influenced by existing procedures, in both predictable and unpredictable ways. Kuhn's notion of phrase space describes the interrelation between adaption and interpretation, where ones influence on others generates new interpretation that in turn influences further interpretations, adaption and development. Thus, how agents perceive the system – the interpretative boundaries - are continuously evolving as the system 'moves' or co-evolves through the landscape. A failure to consider the existence of boundaries, or neglecting to understand and identify how these boundaries are perceived and maintained, can result in goal conflicts and mismatches between donors' and recipients' understanding of local resources and needs which impede problem understanding and the identification of workable solutions (G. Midgley & Richardson,

2007). Consequently, from a complexity perspective, rather than assuming a particular development failure is due to a fault in the policy or in its implementation, it could be argued that a failure to frame and make sense of the problem within its particular context, and hence an appreciation of the different boundaries placed by the agents, is at the route of the breakdown. While this could be due to individual interpretation, it could also be influenced by their reaction to feedback loops within and between networks which in turn shape ideas and create change (Eppel, 2009).

The degree to which design and implementation co-evolve to fit the context gives an indication of the degree of local ownership that can be assumed. The case studies illustrate this notion clearly. In Tonga, the World Bank's inflexible, cumbersome donor-devised procedures; Tonga's entrenched attitude towards education, its self-professed strong local resource base and well-established procedures; and NZAID's neglect to take into consideration the cultural, historical and social context, left little common ground. The TESP, by common consent, was regarded as burdensome from the outset, overly ambitious and inappropriately conceived. The nature of the design and the nature of the society were clearly mismatched, creating strong and negative feedback mechanisms on both sides resulting for some time in a relative deadlock. For Solomon Islands, however, there was more alignment and flexibility. The visionary leadership was looking for change and was willing to partner with NZAID and the EU, despite the latter's convoluted bureaucracy. Ways to cope with the EU's inflexible working procedures were found and, although all admit that the situation was not ideal, a workable solution emerged.

Response to the Research Question

To effectively unpack the sector wide approach from a complexity perspective has demanded analysis from two fronts: the first lies in the global commitment of donor governments, multilateral agencies and 'partner' governments to instruments such as the Paris Declaration and the 'better aid agenda'; and the second lies in the local context and goals of the partner government to deliver a more efficient and effective education system to its people. For donors and governments alike, accountability based on formative data and prediction remains the critical focus for evaluation of progress, rather than a desire to uncover the more 'messy' issues of power, control and influence within the context of development and societal change.

Thus, applying a complexity perspective to an analysis of the sector wide approach in two Pacific Island countries has not so much highlighted or evaluated the ‘achievement’ of the intervention, in terms of tangible and quantifiable outcomes such as increased enrolment or more trained teachers. Instead it has been more about analysing the *process of change* (both organisational and individual), in terms of looking at how agents organised themselves and connected together (self-organise and co-evolve) and what resultant change emerged. A complexity lens concentrates more on the dynamics of the evolving phenomena under examination rather than providing a time-bound snap-shot. Thus, it gives a clearer picture of *how* the phenomena developed under a variety of influences (Teisman & Klijn, 2008). It focuses on storylines through time to expose what and how agents change or phenomena emerge within different contexts, and thus understand the stability / robustness of the evolved change in terms of being perceived as locally ‘owned’.

This research has highlighted the importance of context. Context is dynamic; ever responding to external pressures, ever shifting the surroundings in which living beings exist and behave. Context influences individual choices within the ‘space of the possible’, which in turn determines the effectiveness or amplitude of the emergent change. Complexity thinking pays careful attention to the behaviour of agents within the self-organising landscape; how relationships form, interconnect, create networks and how different individual perspectives and agenda affect the evolution of both individual and ‘whole’ change.

The use of a complexity-informed analytical lens has enabled an investigation of the strengths and weaknesses within each structure; it has explored the criticality of relationships to provide an insight into the condition of the ‘whole’ with its multiple interacting networks. In legitimising a focus on the nature of ‘relationships’, a complexity perspective helps to reveal where and to what degree individual agents wield power; it allows the exploration of ‘ownership’ and the degree to which effective or ineffective assistance is an outcome of individual relationships.

The unpredictability of human relationships, the uncertainty of connections between multiple agents and the constantly shifting dynamics of communications and the political environment are important issues for donors and recipients alike to consider. Not only in terms of the wider development goals but also, and as

importantly, in terms of individual staffing decisions and expectations. As these analyses reveal, the nature and condition of international and local relationships have contributed to the areas of effectiveness and dysfunction in each country. Although the nature and condition of key relationships are often understood among the agents involved, formal acknowledgement, analysis or feedback processes are rarely undertaken to inform future strategy.

Complexity purposely avoids oversimplifying situations and, thus, resists the search for a ‘simple’ solution to a particular ‘problem’. Instead its emphasis is on forming an appropriate holistic view of the system: the interaction of different components over time in relation to the historical context from and within which the system has evolved (Klijn, 2008).

Drawing on the most relevant complexity principles this study has been structured to embrace *wholeness* and highlight the multidimensionality and unpredictability of the various interacting and interdependent dimensions of development, both in developing country partner relationships and within the wider international aid system. Distinguishing between tight and loose *connectivity* has given insight into the likelihood that planned actions may be confounded by their limited scope to effect change in loosely coupled parts of a system (Ramalingam, et al., 2008: 15). In addition, unpacking the broader dynamics of both positive and negative *feedback* has revealed whether actors’ strategic actions to achieve their goals dampen or amplify each other’s actions. This has led to increased awareness of influences that maintain the status quo (system equilibrium) or allow the emergence of a new dominant *attractor* to shift (or tip) the system into a new *phase space*. As argued, understanding the dynamics of local circumstances, and the likely positive and negative effects proposed initiatives may evoke for particular agents (or groups), is crucial to an *emergent behaviour* becoming sustainable. Determining whether there is enabling space for local innovation and open discussion, and whether the ‘rules of the game’ are oblique or overt, has given insight into the accessibility local players have to the ‘space of the possible’ and the level of contribution to the emergence of locally generated change.

The thesis has further argued that appreciating the *non-linearity* of change in complex systems underscores the need for realistic acceptance of inherent levels of

uncertainty in development planning. As indicated (by the research findings presented in Part Three), it can be concluded that specific pre-determined, measurable outcomes can be unrealistic, ineffective and/or counterproductive. Any strategy can only be optimal under certain conditions and continual retrospective consideration of emergent change would help determine which strategic areas to enhance, or diminish, in order to influence more directional change. The recognition that change may emerge from unexpected influences, or as unforeseen spin offs of other interventions, has provided theoretical underpinning for the tension between accountability and learning; that is, the acceptance that development is an *evolving* process in which systems constantly adapt and self organise in a zone between order and chaos (the *edge of chaos*). Moreover, recognising the *evolving process* of development as an end acknowledges the determinants of space and time: “complexity puts the interpretative nature of human actors into the structural constraints of time and space” (Haynes, 2008: 403). This study concludes, therefore, that far greater insight into ‘development’ can be gained by taking the perspective that development (as processes of *transformative* change) is an emergent characteristic of a complex system. Such insight not only creates critical contextual knowledge and understanding with which to inform more appropriate design and implementation of future aid initiatives, but also encourages attention to accountability *with* learning and thus more insightful evaluatory approaches.

Value for Money to Value for Learning?

An overall conclusion of this thesis is the need for orthodox development approaches that are designed to recognise and place greater emphasis on ‘value learning’ rather than overly mechanistic ‘results and accountability’ agenda. That is, acknowledging that very often what actually emerges within a system is different from what was predicted to occur within a particular timeframe. Calling for greater scrutiny of unexpected outcomes (both positive and negative) raises awareness that “... stuff happens”. The case study approach adopted provides a multi-layered and grounded explication of Eyben’s claim that “power, history and culture shape the multiplicity of relationships and actors influencing any aid intervention” (Eyben, 2012: 47).

Of course, this is not new, but contemporary foci on results rhetoric shift the realities underground, forcing reporting “to portray reality other than it is – for the benefits of keeping things simple for the taxpayer” (Eyben, 2012: 47). A key objective of my research was to demonstrate the view that a complexity perspective provides a means to facilitate the natural and necessary propensity for systems to autopoietically²³³ self-restructure; that is to bring to the fore ideas of how desired outcomes can be achieved within a specific context (Warner, 2001). My view is that the findings and analysis offered in the thesis lead to the conclusion that embracing innovation, self-organisation and adaptation, in response to the ‘stuff that happens’, garners an embedded ownership that will lead to further locally inspired transformation. It rejects the notion that developing countries are passive ‘victims’ of development pressures and external ‘shocks’ (Warner, 2001). It lends support to the notion that development will come from within and fundamentally questions the notion that ‘mother knows best’.

Contribution to development thinking

This thesis has explored the usefulness of a complexity perspective in analysing development initiatives within a framework of sector wide approaches. I have explored and analysed the embracing methods that complexity thinking offers and demonstrated that the non deterministic qualities of such an approach promotes greater respect for the complex interaction between agents, thus offering a unique middle ground between realism and postmodernism. While complexity accepts that social structures and cultural norms govern individual action, it brings to the fore the importance of the unpredictability of the interrelationships between a range of influential factors, including policy objectives, human relationships, political agenda and ambition. It is this dynamical, unpredictable interdependence of agents that shapes the dynamics of decisions made in relation to time and space.

In drawing together a variety of ideas and concepts from a range of scientific, sociological, anthropological and managerial theories, complexity thinking contributes a collective framework for understanding why some development initiatives ‘work’ while others appear to be to remain stubbornly conflictual or unable

²³³ Emerging interactions within the existing rules of the system such that the overall purpose of the system remains the same but the manner of achieving the goals evolves as agents self-organise in response to prevailing conditions.

to move forward in a productive way (Warner, 2001). It enables reflection and the search for patterns of effectiveness within the complexity of the system itself, and helps to identify the simple rules that hold the system in place yet allow for diverse behaviour of individuals to emerge and co-evolve. Rather than providing an analytical framework for finding a generic set of transferable rules or ‘best-practice’ tools, it offers a methodology to uncover the ‘sets of rules’ idiosyncratic to each social organisation (Warner, 2001).

I contend the value of a complexity perspective lies in its capacity to shift evaluative thinking from “the simplistic and unrealistic demands for accountability”, that presumes, as Brenda Zimmerman points out (Patton, 2011: 83), that those involved in social change can predict in advance what will happen, towards making more explicit what practitioners and policy makers generally ‘know’ about the real world. Human behavioural change is complex – it cannot be broken down into its constituents and then rebuilt or repaired; it evolves in its own way as a result of where it is, who the players are, and how they react with each other and the environment/situation they find themselves in. Change – and hence development - is dynamic and flexible, ever reacting to its components and environment, which in turn are influenced by their history and their circumstances. Contemporary reporting systems tend to shun relational data in preference for hard ‘attributable evidence’ to fit results-based management approaches measuring progress towards pre-determined indicators and value for money assessments. A complexity perspective, on the other hand, provides a basis for understanding aspects of “messy realities” (Ramalingam, et al., 2008: 62) and draws explicit attention to macro and micro level power dynamics as well as the broader political challenges faced by developing countries and donors. It distinguishes between a focus on achievement and transformative change, whereby an examination of the transformation processes can more accurately reflect how changes occur, thus enabling development agents to strategise for change and design more effective programme to support positive social change (Eyben & Guijt, 2012).

Above all, a complexity perspective is highly flexible. Each of the concepts discussed in this thesis can be drawn on, as individual analytical pointers or in combination, to reflect aspects of the overall system or to review past initiatives in particular areas. The principles can help guide programme design and inform

evaluative approaches by suggesting alternative questions or raising strategic awareness, and they can be used to develop an entire framework or augment existing models (Ramalingam, et al., 2008).

The approach, however, is not without its critics. For some, it provides a new language to view the world but does not provide a useful way to study it; for others, it adds little new to social or policy literature as the themes are already discussed elsewhere in a variety of guises; yet others contend that the recommendations range from the abstract to stating the obvious, and as such are meaningless or banal (Cairney, 2010). These views are entirely understandable for, in effect, complexity thinking is a conceptual ‘umbrella’ that draws within its shade a multi-disciplinary set of notions, each well-known in its original field.

Yet, for me this is where its beauty lies. Not only does complexity take the links between the social and natural sciences seriously, it creates space for *conversation* to share ideas between types of science, rather than the importation of one into the other (Cairney, 2010). It offers a complex package of ideas, none more important than the others, for questioning development phenomena. It encourages us to look at the interconnectedness of agents within the system and forces us to refocus our attention on the contextual characteristics and nature of happening change, and to study the underlying processes that affect why and how systems behave and change over time. It is not until we confront these complex questions that ways forward can be imagined and steps can be taken to devise complex, diverse and locally fitting development initiatives that aim to improve a given situation.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Summary of Formal Schooling Structures in Solomon Islands

2009 – Total student enrolment across all levels = 175,218. Total school age population = 260,101²³⁴

Level	Official Age Range Formal Examinations	Provider and funding	Numbers of schools, students and teachers (2009) ²³⁵	Notes ²³⁶
Early Learning Centres	Pre-school years (below 6yrs).	Most are community based and privately run. Some are church run. Fees paid by parents. Govt. grant if registered.	512 ECE centres 21,045 children. 1,098 teachers (47% certified).	New ECE policy sets out minimum standards. Qualified teachers required for official registration. 2009 Net enrolment rate (NER): 41%; gender balance: 48.4% girls
Primary	Prep (5-6 yrs) Standards 1-6 (7-12yrs) <u>Std 6:</u> Solomon Islands Secondary Entrance Examination (SISEE)	Most primary schools are under government control (since Independence), provincial education authorities. Some have switched back to church education authority control. All primary schools receive SIG school grant.	505 day schools 115,728 children 4,865 teachers (58% certified)	Education Authorities find, recruit and promote teachers. All teachers are paid by SIG based on data received from EA. Many unconfirmed teachers waiting for EA to confirm completion of their probationary period. School grants allocated to all schools to cover resources and administration. No student fees payable for tuition. Depend on local community to build and maintain buildings and staff housing. 2009 NER: 99% (subject to unverified figures supplied by schools); gender balance: 47.5% girls. SISEE pass required to enter secondary education. Transition rate 88.1% in 2009.
Junior Secondary (JS)	Std 7-9 / Form 1-3 (13-15 yrs) <u>Form 3/Std9</u> Solomon Islands School Form 3 (SIF3) Examination in Maths and English	Community High Schools (CHS) usually attached to existing primary schools to extend locally available education.	167 CHS (day) 24,847 students at JS level (167CHS+10NSS+16PSS) NER at JS level (overall): 38% Total Secondary Teachers: 1419 teachers (86% qualified)	Entry to Jun-Sec level determined by SISEE results. Mostly general teachers. Some specialised. Greater proportion of trained teachers than in primary levels (std 1-6). Estimated 16% of CHS teachers untrained. Come under School Grant provision. No fees payable by students. Depend on local community to build and maintain buildings and staff housing. Increases access for girls Some CHS are applying to extend up to Std12/Fm 6 ²³⁷ Gender balance in CHS: 46.4% girls Entry to Form 4 (NSS/PSS) determined by SIF3 result. Transition rate to Form 4 = 71.4% in 2009

²³⁴ (MEHRD, 2010a:21-22)

²³⁵ (MEHRD, 2010a: 19, 33, 48-51, 20, 34, 52)

²³⁶ (MEHRD, 2010a:12,23,19,16)

²³⁷ (Ruqebatu, 2008)

Level	Official Age Range Formal Examinations	Provider and funding	Numbers of schools, students and teachers (2009) ²³⁸	Notes ²³⁹
Junior Secondary	Forms 1- 3 (13-15 yrs) SIF3 Exam in Maths and English	National and Provincial Schools (NSS/PSS) Mainly boarding; selective entry into Form 1.		Highly selective entry based on SISEE results (to Form 1) or SIF3 (to Form 4) Boarding schools with limited accommodation facilities for girls. Come under School Grant provision, therefore Form 1-3 students pay no tuition fees (does not include accommodation costs). Schools increasingly under pressure take local community children under access for all policy. Implications include issues of overcrowding and selective entry. Gender balance: 33.6% girls. Entry to Form 4 determined by SIF3 result.
Senior Secondary (SS)	Form 4-6/7 (16-19 yrs) <u>Form 5</u> SI Secondary Certificate (SISC) <u>Form 6</u> Pacific Senior Secondary Certificate (PSSC) <u>Form 7</u> USP Foundation Certificate	National and Provincial Secondary Schools (NSS/PSS) take students from Form 1. All but two under church control.	NSS/PSS = 26 (boarding) 13,598 students	All but two are church-controlled. Church responsible for buildings and teacher housing. MEHRD takes this on for its two schools. Often physical facilities are poor. SISC results determine entry to Form 6. 2009 transition rates 45.3% Some schools extend to Form 7 offering USP foundation course (student paid). 2009 NER = 23% PSSC is a regional examination awarded by the South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment. The PSSC and USP foundation certificate grants entry to regional universities
Rural Training Centres (RTC) and TVET	Age range 16-25 yrs	Most are affiliated with churches (24), others are community based	27 RTC 130 TVET teachers 62% TVET-managers certified	The larger well-established centres provide rural vocational skills; smaller centres, particularly community based, offer a lower level and more limited range of courses. Course subjects for boys and girls in agriculture, business studies, accounting, wood work, building and carpentry, mechanics, sewing, typing, plumbing, health and nutrition, home economics, religious education and leadership training. Maths and English are also included. Long -term residential courses may run for one to three years, and short -term block courses may run for one, two or three months ²⁴⁰ .

²³⁸ (MEHRD, 2010a: 19, 33, 48-51, 20, 34, 52)

²³⁹ (MEHRD, 2010a:12,23,19,16)

²⁴⁰ (Ramoni, 2000: 18)

Appendix 2: Summary of Formal Schooling Structures in Tonga

Level	Class Range & Formal Examinations	Provider and Funder	Numbers of Schools, students and teachers (2008)	Notes
ECE		Community based funded thr' fees, donation and fundraising.	62 registered centres (Assoc ECE) ~2000 children 150 teachers, many volunteers	In 2006 govt introduced an ECE teacher training scheme for practicing ECE teachers. First 67 students graduated in 2007. ECE is now included as part of mainstream basic education cycle, although policy has not been formalised.
Primary	<i>Class 1-6</i> Class 6 Secondary Entrance Examination (SEE). (transition to secondary)	89% of primary schools owned by government (14 church-run by four religions: FWC Catholic, SDA and Baha'i).	Total 126 Schools: 112 govt. + 14 mission (only 4 mission primary outside Tongatapu) 16,667 children 665 teachers (84 in non-govt schools)	Education is compulsory for all children between ages of 6-14 yrs until a child has completed the 'basic education' cycle, now ECE to Yr 8. Government school grants provide for Years 1-8. Some primary schools now offer Forms 1&2 (yrs 7-8) to improve access to the basic education cycle. Average primary school size (2008) ~130 pupils (although some schools on Tongatapu have >500 and others on outer islands have <50). NER= 93.1% (drop from 99% in 2002). Gender= girls 47%; (figures suggest more boys re-sit SEE than girls leading to a disproportionate number of boys in Class 6 (55% in both 2001 and 2008). At the age of 11, Secondary Entrance Examination (SEE) scores 'stream' students into govt High Schools and non-govt. schools. Those with highest grades gain entry to govt. High Schools. In 2008, around 35% gained entry to govt. secondary schools. Recommendations have been made to phase out the SEE in favour of the Form 2 Common Exam at the end of the basic education cycle (Catherwood, et al., 2003).

Data sources: 'Atiola (2010), Catherwood (2003), and Coxon (2010)

Level	Class Range & Formal Examinations	Provider and Funder	Numbers of Schools, students and teachers (2008)	Notes
Secondary	<p><i>Forms 1-2 (Junior Sec)</i> <u>Form 2</u> Form 2 Common Examination (transition to F3) <i>Forms 3-6/7 (Senior Sec)</i> <u>Form 5</u> Tonga School Certificate (TSC) <u>Form 6</u> Pacific Senior Secondary Certificate (PSSC) <u>Form 7</u> Cambridge International Exam (CIE) or South Pacific Form Seven Certificate (SPFSC) or USP Foundation Certificate</p>	72% secondary schools are church run.	<p>50 Secondary Schools (14 govt; 35 mission, 1 private) 14,632 students 974 teachers (702 teachers in non-govt schools) (F1-6)</p>	<p>Average sec schools size <300 (ranges from 60 in 2 govt middle schools to 1,366 in Tonga College). Av teacher:pupil = 1:15. NER secondary 75.7% (up from 68.2% 2005). Repetition of the SEE leads to a distorted age profile (9 - 14 years). The Form 2 Common Examination determines entry to Form 3. 62% passed TSC level in 2008 at govt schools (overall average is 45%). Overall, govt.-run school pass rates at TSC are higher than non-govt schools, principally because govt High Schools require higher SEE entrance scores than non-govt schools, and hence pre-select more able students. The TSC (Form 5) and PSSC (Form 6) allow students to enter most vocational and technical institutes in Tonga. Sufficient grades in any of the Form 7 programmes allow students to enter universities in the region and further abroad. Tonga has not established a national university, although Prof. 'I Futa Helu's independent 'Atenisi Institute runs degree courses. The University of the South Pacific (USP) operates a centre in Tonga which enrol extension students for most non-degree and degree courses offered by the University.</p>

Data sources: 'Atiola (2010), Catherwood (2003), and Coxon (2010)

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