



Strategic Plan

for

Education

in the

Republic of the Marshall Islands

DRAFT

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Introduction

A strategic plan is a blueprint for planning the future. The purpose of a strategic plan is to identify and address needs by

- establishing a clear set of priorities
- enhancing the co-ordination of effort
- improving overall effectiveness and efficiency

This draft plan has been put together on the basis of

- a stocktake of current educational performance in the Marshall Islands
- a review of previous reports on the education system of the Marshall Islands
- an analysis of the Ministry of Education’s management capability

This plan has been developed in order to assist the Minister of Education set his priorities. The proposals put forward in this plan are intended to provide support for the changes that are required to manage education in the Marshall Islands over the medium term.

Background

Between November 1999 and April 2000, Change Consulting of Wellington, New Zealand, researched and prepared two documents to guide and direct efforts to improve the quality of education in the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI). These documents were the Strategic Plan for the Ministry of Education, Republic of the Marshall Islands (Strategic Plan for Education) and an accompanying technical reference document titled Developing a Strategic Plan for the Ministry of Education, Final Report (Strategic Plan Report). Both reports were prepared under a contract with the Asian Development Bank (Project TA No. 2599: Civil Service Reform Implementation).

This original Strategic Plan for Education identified 36 major objectives on which the RMI Ministry of Education (MOE), as well as other stakeholders, should focus in the efforts to strengthen the nation’s education system. Most of these objectives were organized around and grouped under the four major sectors of the education system: (1) preschool education; (2) elementary education; (3) secondary education; and (4) post-secondary education. In addition, the Strategic Plan identifies objectives to (5) improve the overall effectiveness of the education system; and (6) implement an MOE restructuring initiative proposed and discussed in detail in the Strategic Plan Report.

After initial review and consideration of the Strategic Plan, Ministry of Education staff noted that the objectives cited in the original document are often quite broad (e.g., “develop measures to improve the language development of students”) and did not always provide detailed guidance to educators about *how* to achieve them.

Accordingly, in June 2000, the RMI Minister of Education requested assistance from Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL) in developing

educators. The results of PREL’s work are contained in a report titled Implementing Guidelines for the 2000 Strategic Plan (Implementing Guidelines).

In June 2000, the Minister of Education also requested PREL’s assistance in preparing an assessment of the impact of U.S. federal education programs on the RMI’s education system since implementation of the Compact of Free Association between the two nations in 1986. This report, An Assessment of the Impact of Federal Education Programs in the Marshall Islands (Assessment), was published under separate cover and submitted to the Minister of Education in February 2001.

In June 2001 the Government of the Marshall Islands developed Vision 2018, the first segment of a Strategic Development Plan for the nation for the next 15 years. This document sets out the broad vision for the whole country in terms of its sustainable development by the year 2018. Vision 2018 and the companion document Strategic Development Framework (2003 – 2018) set out long-term goals, objectives and strategies, which were developed through an extensive consultation process starting with the second National Economic and Social Summit, followed by extended deliberations by various Working Committees established by the Cabinet.

The second and third segments of the Strategic Development Plan are to consist of Master Plans focusing on major policy areas, and the Action Plans of Ministries and Statutory Agencies. These documents will incorporate programs and projects, together with costings.

Following the adoption of Vision 2018, Master Plans are being developed in the following major policy sectors: Human Resources Development, Outer Islands Development, Culture and Traditions, Environment, Resources and Development, Information Technology, Private Sector Development, Infrastructure, and Tourism.

The Action Plans of Ministries and Statutory Agencies will be developed in order to state in detail the respective programs of action aimed at achieving the targets identified in the Master Plans.

The Human Resources Development Master Plan is the product of a wide cross-sector planning process that touches all sectors, and focuses on national capacity-building to implement Vision 2018 and to achieve its goals, objectives and strategies. The education sector will have a central role in implementing the Human Resources Development Master Plan. While the Ministries of Education and Health are two major stakeholders in respect of human resources development matters, their responsibilities do not represent the total picture. The broad goals of the Human Resources Development Master Plan are to deliver capacity to implement Vision 2018, to increase national capacity through baseline, manpower and standards studies that determine training and educational requirements, and to deliver specific or special capacity building interventions based on the information from the national baseline, manpower and standards studies.

Both the Ministries of Education and Health have existing Strategic Plans. To a very substantial degree these strategic plans are consistent with the goals and objectives of Vision 2018.

The original Strategic Plan for Education, and the accompanying Implementing

above, are subordinate to Vision 2018 and to the Human Resources Development Master Plan that arises from the goals and objectives of Vision 2018.

A review of the original Strategic Plan for Education (April 2000) and the Implementing Guidelines document ((January 2001) was therefore undertaken in November 2001 in order to incorporate both these documents into one, in a form compatible with Vision 2018. This document is the result.

Marshall Islands - Profile Summary

- The Marshall Islands consist of 29 atolls and 5 low islands scattered over 2 million square kilometres of ocean in the Central Pacific, midway between Hawaii and the Philippines
- The total land area is only 180 square kilometres, compared with a total sea area of approximately 2 million square kilometres
- The region has a long history of occupation and control by foreign powers. Spain claimed the region in 1686. Germany declared a protectorate over the islands in 1885. Japan occupied the territory between the two world wars in the early twentieth century. The United States of America governed the region as part of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands from 1947.
- The country became an independent Republic in 1986. The legislature is modelled on the British parliamentary system, and the Parliament (Nitijela) is elected every 4 years. A change of Government occurred following the November 1999 elections.
- The economy is largely dependent upon United States funding. The Compact of Free Association has provided US\$53 million from 1987-91, US\$49 million from 1992-96, and US\$46 million from 1997-2001. These figures include payments for the use of the US military base on Kwajalein atoll.
- The population of the Marshall Islands is 50,840 (1999 census). Majuro Atoll (the capital) is the largest population centre (23,676 people), and Kwajalein Atoll (Ebeye Island) the next largest (10,902 people). The remaining population is spread over a large area in the Outer Islands.
- Pre-school education is provided almost exclusively through the Head Start programme, funded by an annual US Federal Grant of approximately \$2 million each year. 1200 children are enrolled each year in 48 centres throughout the country. The programme reaches only about 20% of the children aged 3-5 years in the Marshall Islands.
- The present 12 year structure of compulsory school education is based on the US model of 8 years of elementary school followed by 4 years of high school. There are 104 elementary schools (77 public and 27 private) and 16 secondary schools (3 public and 13 private). School rolls in 2000 total 11,739 (elementary) and 2586 (secondary).
- 16% of children aged 6-13 and 30% of youth (aged 14-18 years) do not attend school.
- A High School Entrance Test at Grade 8 is used to select students for entry into secondary school, as no places at a secondary school are available for 35%-40% of the elementary school graduates.
- Problems with literacy are endemic. The Pacific Islands Language and Literacy test (a standardised test used across the Pacific Islands) rates about 70% of the Grade 4 population of the Marshall Islands in the “at risk” group. This is one of the lowest rankings in the Pacific.
- Teachers are not well qualified. Nearly half of the teachers in the Marshall Islands have a high school diploma as their highest qualification.
- The total unemployment rate is 30.9%. The unemployment rate for young Marshallese (aged 15-19) is much higher
- The median age of the population is 17.8

Strategic Direction

Education delivers substantial social and economic benefits to students, their families and communities, and to the Republic of the Marshall Islands as a whole.

The benefits of education include:

- knowledge, skills, and attitudes which promote social and economic development
- individual development through gaining knowledge, skills, and understanding
- development of attitudes and values that promote social cohesion and stability

The vision of the Republic of the Marshall Islands is of a future where every child has positive first learning experiences, and where parents support their child’s learning. Young children will be encouraged to participate in early childhood learning activities, regardless of their background, and will gain in confidence and experience success. Schools will be welcoming and inclusive, and parents will be encouraged to participate in the life of the school and support their children in their learning. Principals will be regarded as leaders in their community. Teaching will be a dynamic and respected profession. Opportunities for further learning will be available through the College of the Marshall Islands or through other tertiary providers. All students will have a desire for lifelong learning. People in the Marshall Islands will value education, and everyone will succeed in reaching their full potential.

The Ministry of Education is not a provider of education. Its influence is therefore indirect. The Ministry of Education is responsible for the administration of the education system. Its goal is to foster a policy environment in which teachers can operate effectively and students can participate and achieve to a high standard. It must ensure the education system is able to respond quickly and effectively to social and economic trends as they emerge, and can meet the diverse needs of different communities, employers, and the wider society.

Its role is to empower other people through its own leadership, through its support of the infrastructure, and through its assistance of those who are at risk of underachievement.

The Future

The Ministry of Education’s priority in the medium term will be to improve education by strengthening its own capability and effectiveness. Improved internal systems will be needed, and better relationships with the wider education sector. A focus will be placed upon:

Educational outcomes

The Ministry’s work will focus on improving educational outcomes. These outcomes include improving student achievement and the performance of providers of education. Factors that limit student achievement will be identified, and unnecessary barriers will be eliminated. The objective is to improve the educational “health” of the system as a whole.

Policy advice and implementation

To establish its leadership role and credibility within the public and wider education sectors, the Ministry needs to provide the Minister and the Government with high-quality policy advice. It must be able to implement that policy effectively.

Resource delivery, monitoring and accountability

Regulations need to be enabling and to encourage schools to be self-managing. The regulations need to focus on accountability and quality assurance. The criteria for determination and allocation of resources should be clear. The Ministry’s role is to deliver resources to self-managing schools according to the criteria. It should empower people rather than try to control them. The Ministry’s emphasis will shift to monitoring and intervening at an early stage to address problems that emerge.

Local empowerment

Relationships with local education providers are important. The Ministry needs to work with local communities to help them play a stronger role in the education of their children.

Internal business partnerships

All parts of the Ministry will be business partners that work closely together to achieve the common goal. The Services Division will contribute to the overall effectiveness and capability of the Ministry by becoming business partners in the educational enterprise. Strong links will be forged between the Policy and Implementation Divisions. The Property Division will exist to ensure that facilities and equipment are adequate to serve educational aims and aspirations.

A list of outputs arising from this plan is set out later in the document.

Operating Environment

As social and economic circumstances within the Marshall Islands and the world beyond change, so do expectations of what the education system should deliver. Strong global influences, growing social economic and ethnic diversity, and evidence that the educational achievement of students in the Marshall Islands does not compare well with the educational achievement of its neighbours, are all putting pressure on the education system.

Expectations keep rising, challenging all to keep lifting the quality of education. These issues create demands for schools, teachers, and policy-makers to keep improving the quality of their response to the changing needs of students. To meet these challenges, the Ministry of Education must develop and implement strategies that anticipate future trends and developments, and support changes necessary to respond to such developments.

Key dimensions of the operating environment in the Marshall Islands are:

- the challenge of raising achievement
- demographic changes
- social, economic and community needs
- diverse needs of the population of the Marshall Islands
- global influences

The Challenge of Raising Achievement

Recent educational studies have highlighted areas where the educational performance of Marshall Island students needs to improve. For example, recent Pacific Islands Literacy Levels (PILL) data for the Marshall Islands show that a high proportion of Grade 4 students are categorised as “at risk” in respect of literacy in English or in Marshallese, or are “at risk” in numeracy skills.

Standards of education attained by both primary and secondary school students, in general, are low by comparison with international and Pacific Island country norms. The levels of literacy demonstrated (both in the Marshallese language and in English) by students at all levels are not sufficient to ensure that the young people of the Marshall Islands are adequately equipped to contribute effectively to the sustainable development of the Marshall Islands, nor to participate on an equal basis in an increasingly globalised economy.

A comprehensive long-term strategy needs to be implemented to raise the standard of educational achievement in the Marshall Islands.

Demographic Changes

The total population of the Marshall Islands (as at November 1999) is estimated at 50,840. 23,676 people are estimated to reside on Majuro Atoll. The population of Kwajalein Atoll is 10,902. These figures are below previous population estimates. It appears that there may have been increased migration by Marshallese over the last decade to the United States of America. The generally low level of education of Marshallese citizens, and better job prospects in the continental United States for those with few or limited qualifications, indicates that Marshallese have had strong incentives to use their free access to the United States of America.

Birth rates in the Marshall Islands in the past have been high by comparison with other countries, and the population as a whole has a very high proportion of young people. Just under 43% of the population is under 15 years of age.

Demographic pressures are significant in their impact upon the school sector. As an increasing population of school-age students moves through the school system, administrators face challenges in providing educational opportunities for all. In the year 2000, 14325 students were enrolled at primary (elementary) and secondary schools in the Republic of the Marshall Islands. 9959 were enrolled in public schools, and 4366 were enrolled in private schools. 11739 students were enrolled in primary schools and 2586 were enrolled in secondary schools. Current arrangements mean that 35% to 40% of students cannot progress beyond the Grade 8 cut-off point, as insufficient secondary education places are available. The challenge for the future will be to provide universal education for all students of primary and secondary school age.

The decrease in school enrolments from 14888 in 1999 to 14325 in 2000 indicates a significant shift has occurred in the last year. The reasons for this decrease in school enrolments are not clear. The 1999 census data indicates outmigration is a factor in the lower-than-expected population estimates. The fall in numbers may be occurring partly because the proportion of the population composed of children under 15 is decreasing. There are significant implications for the school sector as it faces a period of contraction if the school roll decline in 2000 becomes established as a trend.

The tertiary education sector is likely to face continuing growth pressures, and a shift in the mix of its student population. The demands of the workforce in the future are likely to require adults already in the work force to undertake further retraining and upskilling.

Social, economic and community needs

There is a strong relationship between student achievement and factors outside the school, although the links between these are complex and difficult to influence. Education policy needs to take account of wider factors that influence a student's ability to succeed. Different approaches are likely to be needed in different parts of the country.

Socio-economic factors are known to have a major influence on school achievement. Health status, the quality of housing, and parental income levels are also known to affect children's performance in school. A broad and comprehensive approach that

sole focus on education may not bring about the desirable social improvements that the Government is seeking.

There is still much to be done to ensure that all students gain benefit from the education that is available, irrespective of their background. Ways to achieve this goal may depend on the dynamics of each local community. For instance, only about 20% of children aged 3-5 gain access to pre-school education, and 16% of children aged 6-13 do not attend school. Important initiatives to deal with these facts will include improving access to early childhood education and care and fostering parent education. It will be important to address the special needs of specified individuals or groups who are “at risk”. This can be done by establishing closer links between education providers, social welfare and counselling agencies, disability services and health service providers.

Economic imperatives also drive the demand for further education. Parents and employers expect the school system to prepare school leavers for the changing employment market. The labour market is demanding higher levels of generic skills (such as problem solving skills, critical thinking or confidence with modern technology) and well-developed specialist skills that relate to particular industries. The demand for lifelong learning is likely to intensify, and there are consequent implications in this trend for tertiary education providers. There will be a need, for instance, to offer more retraining programmes for those currently in the work force, and more programmes that focus on on-job training.

One of the effective ways in which social, economic and community needs could be integrated through education is through carefully nurturing the process of devolution through the Community Based Governance System (CBGS). It will be important that the Ministry of Education take a leadership role in advocating the benefits of local communities taking responsibility for the education of their children, and in providing support for those communities that evince an interest in participating in an expanded Community Based Governance Scheme. For this reason, the appointment of a CBGS liaison officer needs to be made within the Ministry of Education as part of the proposed restructuring programme. This person could assist with training, and would provide liaison with existing and any emerging new Community Based Governance Schemes.

Diverse needs of the population of the Marshall Islands

The education system must recognise that there is an increasing diversity of needs in the population of the Marshall Islands, including the Outer Islands.

The patterns of population growth have led to an increase in the number of young people as a total proportion of the population. This factor has brought a consequent need to provide education for more young people if the goal of providing education for all is to be met. There has been considerable urban migration from the outer atolls of the Marshall Islands occurring over the last decade, partly as a result of parents wishing to provide better opportunities for their children, with a consequence that the larger metropolitan centres such as Majuro and Ebeye have experienced considerable pressure on their educational facilities.

There is a unique background in the Outer Islands, and the education challenges are

associated with land rights, geography, isolation, climate, and travel make continuing access to education, and consistent attendance of children at school, a real challenge. Sustaining the quality of children's learning and maintaining the standard of educational facilities in these remote communities is difficult, since direct communication with the central Ministry of Education in Majuro is relatively infrequent, transport to and from these atolls is sporadic, and teachers feel professionally isolated and lack development opportunities.

The world of the twenty-first century is demanding a higher level of skill from those graduating from primary and secondary schools, and from those currently in the work force or looking for work. A high quality teaching profession is essential in order to improve education outcomes. Meeting the demands of the future will require a highly trained and well-educated teaching work force (preferably with good quality teaching degrees) to teach in schools. Principals will need to combine both staff management and curriculum leadership roles to improve and maintain the quality of education in their schools.

Many people in the Marshall Islands who are not in the formal education system need access to continuing education to develop their skills. Adult education offers a means of upskilling the population as a whole to meet the country's needs in the new century. Providing education to the adult population will require techniques and approaches that are different from those adopted in the formal education system. It may be necessary to consider diverting funding to community groups or other agencies outside the “traditional” education system in order to foster objectives such as adult literacy, parent education, or improved productivity in the workforce. The family, the neighbourhood, the churches, local authorities, the workplace, sports organisations, libraries, the media, and cultural and scientific bodies all have a part to play in the education of the whole community, young and old.

Global influences

Global influences, including new technology, and will continue to have major implications for the provision of education in the Marshall Islands.

New technology and more efficient transport mean that international influences will increasingly have a marked impact upon the Marshall Islands in the twenty-first century. The traditional geographical isolation of the North Pacific is rapidly disappearing as the ‘global village’ becomes a reality. The impact of satellite technology means that international media, particularly television programmes, are now accessible to Marshallese. The use of the internet is revolutionising communications and economies, both nationally and internationally. International providers are able to offer education in the Marshall Islands through sophisticated distance education methodologies. Technology such as computers and CD-ROMs and its use in the classroom is affecting how education is delivered. Advances in technology will continue to affect people's lives and employment options, and inevitably people will need to develop skills through education to take advantage of the benefits of these new developments.

Education is also becoming more internationally focused, as more Marshallese travel overseas to study. Global market trends and labour mobility are having a growing

Of particular significance is the question of language. There is a strong imperative for all Marshallese to be bilingual, and achievement of that goal can only be attained through education.

Marshallese is the first language of most families in the Marshall Islands, and will continue to be used and spoken both as a primary means of communication and as a cultural dimension that is unique to these islands. For these reasons, the school curriculum rightly places a strong emphasis on the development of a sound grounding in both the spoken and written forms of the Marshallese language in the early years of schooling.

But learning only Marshallese will not be sufficient in the future. The global influences that will shape the Republic of the Marshall Islands in the twenty-first century will be dominated by the English language as an international currency, through the mechanism of international trade and tourism, through the pervasiveness of the mass media, and through the influence of the United States of America as a military and economic presence in the North Pacific. It will therefore be essential for all Marshallese to develop fluency in the English language (both in oral and written forms) through the school system, in order to equip the population with the linguistic skills that will be essential for the country to meet the global challenges that it will face in the future.

Key Issues

The following key issues have emerged from an analysis of the environment in which the Ministry of Education is operating:

- Development of a long-term strategic policy
- Linkage between policy and implementation
- Capability of the Ministry of Education
- Improving educational standards
- Language
- Teacher education
- Management of risk
- Quality of information management
- Relationships with stakeholders
- Communication

Development of a long-term strategic policy

The Strategic Plan should establish a clear sense of those longer-term education issues that should be the centre of a strategic focus for education policy. Once these longer-term education issues are defined, the management and leadership of the Ministry of Education can be aligned with the direction of change that is required to achieve resolution of the issues.

There is a need for a clear set of linkages between the policy development and policy direction that occurs at Cabinet level, in which the Minister of Education is a key player, and the implementation of that policy by officials in the Ministry of Education. An effective mechanism needs to be operating to ensure that the Secretary of Education is briefed on the Government's policies, and that officials reporting to the Secretary receive adequate communication about the Government's policy direction, so that the policies of the day can be successfully implemented.

Linkage between policy and implementation

The key risks for the Secretary of Education in the delivery of policy advice and implementation are:

- Establishing a clear mutual understanding of roles with the Minister
- Improving the quality of the Ministry's policy advice
- Effective management of implementation of policy change in the sector

1. Defining a clear role for the Ministry of Education implies agreement on the requirements on it to deliver policy advice for the Minister, and on its leadership role as the Government’s principal source of policy advice on education issues
2. Developing a widely shared strategic view of policy issues in the sector, a longer-term view of the required responses, and ensuring that decisions and interventions all support this strategy
3. Creating a clear analytical framework that is based on efficient use of resources
4. Developing a culture of sound analysis, supported by good systems and procedures for quality control
5. Recruiting, developing and retaining top-quality policy analysts
6. Ensuring a strategic approach to research
7. Developing effective working relationships with other agencies and stakeholders in the management of policy development processes
8. Ensuring effective communication between policy advice and implementation concerns throughout the policy development and implementation process
9. Equipping the local staff of the Ministry for effective communication (both ways) with the education sector and key education stakeholders

Capability of the Ministry of Education

The analysis undertaken of the Ministry of Education to date has identified the need to develop a clear sense of strategy, the need to develop robust policy frameworks, and the need to be more effective in implementing policy.

The task of implementing these priorities raises issues about the Ministry’s capability to meet its policy and property management responsibilities. There are also issues related to the Ministry’s capability to provide strategic leadership, and its need to manage effectively the risks associated with its operational responsibilities.

Improving the capability of the Ministry of Education is therefore a key priority in this strategic plan. Capacity building may be achieved through a number of strategies.

First, the whole Ministry needs to establish a clear long-term strategic context. This context will serve to integrate the outputs of an organisation whose efforts in the past may have been fragmentary and unco-ordinated. Everyone in the Ministry needs to understand what the Ministry is trying to do, and how it should be done. This Strategic Plan provides a good basis for that shared understanding. When overall objectives are shared and transparent, issues can be placed in their wider context, and linkages can be identified between shorter and longer-term perspectives. The relationships of day-to-day decisions to longer-term education priorities can be identified.

Secondly, there needs to be a change of focus in the culture of the Ministry of Education. This change of focus can be best achieved by a restructuring of the Ministry of Education to reflect the changed emphasis that is required, and the key roles that it will be required to undertake in the future.

Thirdly, the human resource capability of the Ministry needs to be improved

resource strategy. Some progress has already been made in developing a performance management system for the education sector in the Marshall Islands. The progress made to date needs to be built on and further extended. A more strategic focus is required on the skills the Ministry will need in future. A clearer view is needed of the standards of performance the Ministry expects of its officers. Supporting performance management, remuneration, training and recruitment strategies will need to be developed.

Fourthly, the Ministry needs to improve its internal processes and its communication. Better systems and communication will ensure connections between different issues and different parts of the Ministry are recognised and taken account of. It is particularly important that effective links between policy and implementation exist.

Finally, the question of adequate resourcing of the Ministry of Education will have to be critically examined. While devolution of some functions previously undertaken by the Ministry of Education will free up some existing additional specialised staff resources, the strengthening of its policy and property capability will require an investment in training, and possibly an investment in additional specialised staff.

The Government of the Marshall Islands is encouraged to prepare a proposal for consideration for funding by external donor agencies, in order to fund a programme of professional staff development and capacity building within the Ministry of Education.

Improving educational standards

Improving the standard of educational achievement is central to the Ministry of Education's strategic plan.

The level of literacy demonstrated by students at all levels (both in the Marshallese language and in English) is not adequate. Similar concerns exist with respect to performance in numeracy skills. The results of the Pacific Islands Literacy Levels (PILL) data for the Marshall Islands in 1998 show that at Grade 4 69% of students are categorised as “at risk” in respect of literacy in English, and 76% are “at risk” in respect of literacy in Marshallese. 66% are “at risk” in numeracy skills.

The results of the PILL data give an independent assessment of the “health” of the Marshall Islands education system in respect of key education performance indicators. Major problems with literacy and numeracy are revealed by this data. These results show that active steps urgently need to be taken to deal with the fundamental issue of children's language development in the Marshall Islands. If these problems remain uncorrected, they will adversely affect future social and economic outcomes in Marshallese society. It is therefore important that the Ministry of Education continue to monitor the literacy levels of the student population.

The major initiative that must be taken to deal with the problem is to improve the standard of teaching. This issue is discussed in more detail in a subsequent section.

The Ministry of Education is to be commended on its initiative and educational leadership in establishing the Marshall Islands Standardised Achievement Tests. These tests will evaluate performance of Marshall Islands children at Grades 4 and 6

provided as a result of using an external assessment instrument, gives useful information whereby the performance of Marshall Island children in Grade 4 in literacy and numeracy can be measured against objective benchmarks derived from other Pacific Island nations. The Ministry of Education is encouraged to continue the development of assessment programmes that measure and monitor student achievement in a systematic and comprehensive way.

It is essential to establish standards, and to ensure these are being followed. The Secretary of Education has a role specified in legislation that requires him or her to conduct nationwide student testing, although for practical purposes at present that role is restricted to the administration of the National High School Entrance Test. A system of regularly evaluating performance is essential if standards are to be maintained. Ideally, an evaluation system would assess student achievement and progress objectively at the beginning and end of each school year, and students would be required to demonstrate a minimum level of competence.

Teachers could then make decisions about how or whether students would progress to the next grade on the basis of solid and reliable evidence. Diverse views have been expressed in the consultation on this Strategic Plan about the desirability or otherwise of “social promotion”. One view, strongly expressed, is that students who do not achieve to a satisfactory standard in a particular grade level (right from the earliest years) should be held back to repeat that grade level, and should not progress to the next level until they have demonstrated that they have achieved a specified level of mastery. The contrary view is that holding students back reinforces failure, and is counterproductive. Humiliation does not promote a positive attitude to learning. Proponents of “social promotion” argue that students learn better with other students of approximately the same age who have reached a similar physical stage of maturity. Where students do not achieve to the appropriate standard, teachers will need to adapt their professional teaching methods and materials to the level at which the individual student can perform, and may need to use special intervention methods (methods such as the New Zealand Reading Recovery programme, for instance) if a student is not progressing satisfactorily.

Resourcing an extensive evaluation system on a national basis is probably unachievable at present because of the cost implications. The responsibility for monitoring standards will therefore largely fall on schools. It would be helpful for teachers and parents if agreed standards of performance across the school curriculum were developed and promulgated, with benchmarks of adequate student performance established and widely communicated. Training of teachers would be an essential part of such a system.

It is clear that help will be needed from the Ministry of Education to create a national school culture where students are expected to achieve to high standards.

To summarise, a comprehensive long-term plan is required to raise the educational achievement of students in the Marshall Islands. This plan will need to target particularly the fundamental areas of literacy and numeracy. The single most important factor that will make a difference in raising the standard of educational achievement will be improving the quality of teaching.

Language

Language is at the heart of education. Language competence and development in first and second languages is a central issue in the Marshall Islands.

Most people in the Republic of the Marshall Islands operate in a first (mother) language other than English. A foundation is necessary in the mother language for the cognitive development of the child. Yet people are expected to function in a second language (English) as the language of education and business. There are inevitably linguistic barriers for those people who are learning to use English as a second language. There is a relationship between improving the first language of the child (Marshallese) and developing competence in a second language (English). There is a linguistic link between improving children's learning and improving the standards of teaching.

Learning techniques based on English as a second language are critical. On average, it takes up to seven years to acquire fluency in a second language. A solid base in the first language is needed to develop competence in the second language. Without a solid base in the first language, language confusion is inevitable.

Over time, as children progress to a solid base in their first language (Marshallese), competence in the second language (English) will also develop. Children in the Marshall Islands need to develop an “academic” language in Marshallese, in addition to the “common” everyday Marshallese they use in interaction with their peers and at home.

While it is important that students do not lose their Marshallese language and culture, they also need to take on a “literacy” culture, as print is a fundamental medium for education and the transmission of global culture. The issue of transfer to written language forms is critical. Creating a school system that works in English is more than simply teaching English language. Children in the Marshall Islands come from an island culture that is based on oral language, and that does not have a strong historical grounding in literacy. They have access to few books in Marshallese. Few Marshallese homes are book oriented.

There is therefore a challenge for the teacher to introduce the culture of the book in the classroom, and to promote the value of “book learning” and literacy if these values are not reinforced in the home. The challenge is made even more difficult for the teacher because of the paucity of suitable books for children written in Marshallese. The books that are used in the classroom are mainly written in English. Students who speak English as a second language will need considerable assistance from the teacher in order to access what these books have to offer.

Literacy development in the Marshall Islands is a challenging and complex issue. Children are expected to develop reading and writing skills. These literacy skills are sophisticated, and will not develop adequately if the environment is not linguistically rich and supportive. There must be a strong focus on literacy in the education system, and on remedies for eliminating weaknesses in literacy.

The education system in the Marshall Islands needs to place emphasis on bilingualism. Both Marshallese and English contribute to the uniqueness of these islands. There will be a problem if one language (either Marshallese or English) is seen to dominate over the other. An emphasis needs to be placed on **both** languages. Fluency in Marshallese will not hinder learning. There is similarly a key need for competence in English. Developing competence in both English and Marshallese is the key to improving achievement and raising standards.

The Government could consider promoting language development programmes in schools by encouraging fluent native speakers of English to work alongside Marshallese teachers in primary schools. Peace Corps volunteers from the United States of America have been very helpful in the past. Initiatives such as inviting in volunteers from the USA or other English-speaking countries for limited periods of up to a year could be considered. While such volunteers would not be likely to be formally trained as teachers, their presence in Marshall Islands primary schools would create a “win/win” situation. Their English language skills would bring benefits to Marshall Islands students (and possibly also to some teachers), while the expatriate volunteers would benefit from much improved cross-cultural understanding as a result of their experience of living in the Marshall Islands.

Teacher education

If it is accepted that the major priority driving reform in education is the improvement of educational standards, the single most important issue to be addressed to achieve this goal is the improvement of teacher education and training. Nearly half of the teachers currently working in primary schools in the Marshall Islands have a high school diploma as their highest teaching qualification. This qualification is inadequate for teachers in the twenty-first century. Those directly responsible for improvement of educational standards in schools, the teachers, need, as an absolute minimum, a two-year degree qualification. A four-year degree qualification would be preferable.

A key focus of the new Ministry of Education strategic plan must therefore be on improving standards of teacher education and training. In the first instance, the quality of teaching in the Marshall Islands schools must be improved, and improved as soon as possible. There is no simple “quick fix” available to achieve this objective. A variety of responses will be needed. Those who graduate as newly trained teachers in the Marshall Islands must be fully equipped with appropriate professional skills to locally relevant, but internationally comparable, standards. Those currently teaching who do not meet minimum requirements must upgrade their skills and qualifications.

A teacher certification system (the Education Personnel Management System) has been established in the Marshall Islands to ensure that members of the teaching profession are adequately trained and qualified. Under this system, principals and teachers were to be upgraded, tested for competency, and certified. The design of this teacher certification system appears sound in principle, but it has not been implemented in practice. The deadlines that were originally stipulated in this documentation for teachers to upgrade their qualifications have not been met. No sanctions have been invoked to enforce the standards for teacher certification that have been set in the documentation. The deadlines need to be enforced by withdrawal of authority to teach and removal of salary for those teachers who do not meet the criteria by a specified date.

In order to implement the teacher certification system, a comprehensive database is needed. As a first step, the Ministry of Education needs to set up and maintain a teacher certification register as part of its information management system. This register of certified teachers must include accurate certification information about individual teachers. This register could use the existing data fields from both the College of the Marshall Islands and the Ministry of Education. Once the comprehensive teacher register is in place, and the data has been entered, action needs to be taken to ensure that all teachers meet the minimum certification requirements.

The current Education Personnel Management System needs to be revised by the Ministry of Education. The deadlines in the current documentation that have now passed need to be modified. It will be important in this revision by the Ministry of Education that clear accountability guidelines for teachers are set out, and that performance standards are clear and mandatory. Parents have every right to expect that teachers turn up for work on time, and perform well. Sanctions such as dismissal need to be invoked when teachers do not meet minimum standards of conduct.

All schools need to receive a copy of the documentation so that the teachers know what the teacher certification requirements are, and know what the consequences are if the requirement to upgrade skills is not met. New teachers should not be allowed to have their names entered on the register until they have met the minimum requirements. Entry on the register should be a prerequisite before a teacher is paid a salary. Existing teachers who do not meet the minimum requirements may need to be “grandparented” on the teacher payroll for a short period until they can either upgrade their qualifications or demonstrate that they meet minimum standards. It is essential that the teacher certification system is actually implemented if the present low standards of teaching are to improve.

The minimum requirement for teacher certification for new teachers is completion of a two-year Associate of Science degree in elementary education. A three-year teacher certification programme was initiated at the College of the Marshall Islands in 1996, but has not been successful to date in producing any graduates. This result is disappointing. Better co-operation between the Ministry of Education and staff at the College of the Marshall Islands may be helpful in encouraging some of the teachers enrolled in the two-year teaching degree programme to complete the higher-level three-year teaching degree programme.

There appear to be no effective incentives operating to encourage teachers to become well qualified. In practical terms, an effective teacher certification programme needs to be implemented, and prospective teachers need to be encouraged through clear incentives to complete higher level teaching degree programmes (preferably a four-year teaching degree programme) before they begin teaching. The most effective incentive to improve teaching standards would be a significant salary increase for those teachers who achieve teaching qualifications and competence at a high level.

In order to raise the standard of teaching, the introduction of a four-year RMI teaching degree programme is desirable. Such a proposal would affect the whole country, since it would foster the training of local teachers imbued with Marshallese culture. A bachelor's degree for teaching needs to be developed in Majuro to reflect the Marshallese context and the Marshallese curriculum. It is imperative not to delay the process of having Marshallese with RMI degrees in a key role living in communities

who can convince parents of the importance of education. These teachers could foster a culture of learning in the community. This culture will grow only slowly, and needs to be nurtured. An effective teacher in a school who is influential beyond the classroom could transform the whole community. The RMI system needs such teachers who will be catalysts for change in society. Teachers with degrees are needed. The two-year teaching degree is not sufficient to achieve this objective. To achieve such an objective, the four-year bachelor's degree needs to be the basic qualification for teaching. Reaching this point, however, will be a longer-term objective.

Language issues are central in teacher education. Students will not become proficient in reading and writing, in Marshallese or in English, if their teachers cannot themselves demonstrate language proficiency, both in written and spoken forms. A focus of teacher preparation programmes must therefore be on fostering the literacy and oral language development skills of the teachers.

While the College of the Marshall Islands does a commendable job in training new teachers to high standards, the numbers of new teachers each year who meet graduation standards and can enter the teaching service are still not sufficient to meet the country's needs. Additional responses will be required to produce more teachers who meet an acceptable standard of quality.

The initiatives of new providers such as the University of the South Pacific (USP) in developing teacher education programmes will assist in meeting this critical national need. The USP Beginning Teachers Programme is preparing teachers to teach the first three years of the elementary school curriculum. These teachers will be able to work as substitute teachers, thus freeing up regular teachers to upgrade their skills and qualifications.

The notion of raising standards needs to incorporate both improvement in student achievement and improvement in teacher competence. The key may be to emphasise the fundamental role of the teachers college and its teacher training role as part of the provision of tertiary education. The teacher education programme at the College of the Marshall Islands (CMI) may need to join forces with other teacher training institutions through conjoint arrangements in order to strengthen its effectiveness.

Those in the current teaching work force whose qualifications and training do not currently meet required criteria must be provided with incentives to improve their skills and qualifications, both through additional study and through in-service training. Again, multiple responses are needed to help solve a difficult problem. In-service training needs to move teachers towards a degree qualification. There should be some exploration of closer relations and co-operation between CMI and the University of the South Pacific (USP). USP could introduce a four-year bachelor's degree programme (for teachers) to the RMI. Representatives of the USP have indicated informally they would be prepared to consider the development of such a degree programme in association with the CMI.

A different model of teacher training may be needed in the context of a degree programme. The Master teacher/apprentice concept is worth considering as a fundamentally different model of teacher education. The idea of a Master teacher working with an apprentice on a one-to-one basis works in the Marshall Islands,

Current initiatives such as summer schools that help existing teachers to upgrade their qualifications and teaching expertise are helpful, but do not provide a sufficiently comprehensive or swift remedy. The release of teachers through scholarship programmes for extended year-long study leave abroad is helpful, but only a limited number of teachers can access such programmes. Release of a teacher for such an extended period can sometimes present isolated communities with a problem in arranging suitable replacement teaching staff, and, where a suitable replacement cannot be found, the education of the students suffers.

Distance education programmes for teachers have their place, but completing such programmes requires considerable tenacity and application from teachers (often unsupported in isolated environments) if they are to gain maximum benefit from them.

One useful strategy for improving the standard of teaching is to identify the “leading edge” exponents of good teaching practice, and then disseminate their techniques. Successful teachers can adapt readily to new curricula and apply teaching methods that will tap the abilities and interest of a wide range of students. New methods of training teachers – and of training the trainers of teachers – may be required to foster such approaches. The imaginative “pathfinders” in some schools and institutions of teacher training, who are experimenting with new methods and turning theory into practice, need to be identified, so that their methods can be observed, and possibly copied and disseminated. It is equally true, of course, that good teachers can use tried and tested methods. It would be helpful to find the good teachers in the Marshall Islands, observe their methods, and replicate their approach. For example, the approaches to teaching and learning used by the Maryknoll sisters on Likiep and Ailinglaplap have been commended as effective by a number of commentators. The consistently good results of their students on the High School Entrance Test certainly demonstrate their approach is effective.

Over time, a combination of improved standards of entry by new graduates to teaching, and an improvement in the teaching standards of those currently in the Marshall Islands teaching work force, should eventually lead to improved standards of teaching and therefore to an improvement in educational achievement.

If population growth continues to exceed the capacity of the Marshall Islands education system to supply enough appropriately trained teachers, it may be necessary to consider complementing the supply of trained teachers by bringing in expatriate teachers. Volunteers from overseas may be willing to assist for short-term assignments. If recruitment of expatriate teachers is affected by lower salary levels than they might expect in their home countries, some expatriate teachers may be willing to trade off lower salaries in exchange for other benefits of the unique Marshall Islands lifestyle and environment.

Teachers will need to be trained adequately to implement the new Marshallese primary school curriculum if standards are to be improved. Considerable effort over the last few years, with the support of the Asian Development Bank through the Basic Education Development Project, has gone into developing the new curriculum, and into producing supporting resources to implement it. This momentum must be maintained. Appropriate teaching resources and in-service training will need to continue to be developed and delivered to assist teachers to implement the school

Marshallese have been trained in the past as teachers. There is a problem, however, of leakage of trained teachers out of the education system. Currently, teachers' salaries are too low to be competitive. As a result, competent trained teachers shift to other jobs. People use the education sector as a springboard to increase their salary by transferring to other positions elsewhere (i.e. outside the education sector). The question of appropriate salaries for teachers is a significant issue that affects recruitment and retention of quality people in the teaching work force. A labour market strategy (essentially higher pay) is needed in order to attract, recruit and retain people of high calibre into teaching as a career. There need to be incentives for people to study for a teaching degree, and then to stay in teaching and gain financial rewards, as well as gain the non-financial rewards that teaching as a career provides. In summary, the Marshall Islands needs to provide better pay incentives for teachers with high level qualifications if it wishes to recruit and retain the best quality teachers in its education system.

Management of risk

A more conscious emphasis needs to be placed by the Ministry of Education on the identification and management of risk. A more proactive approach to risk management would reduce the amount of time spent in reacting to and rectifying problems. It would be helpful if the Ministry of Education were to develop a risk management strategy that could be incorporated into the culture of the organization. Learning to identify risks at an early stage, and take precautions in a proactive way, would be a good first step that could avoid many potential downstream problems, and save time in the long run.

For instance, there are risks in continuing to rely on manual systems for managing information. A decision could be taken to integrate the Ministry's handling of all its information using new forms of technology, as such an information management system would deliver efficiency gains. It would be sensible, before making the decision to proceed with such an approach, to assess the risks, costs, benefits, and downstream implications before implementing any new system. It would be worthwhile to run a trial of any new system to test how (and whether) it would work effectively. If, for instance, one of the functions of the proposed new information management system were to deliver teachers' pay electronically to each teacher's bank account, a risk management approach would ensure the technology was thoroughly tested before it was implemented. It would also be necessary to identify those teachers who might not have a bank account and make suitable arrangements for their pay to be delivered, and so on. A risk management approach might also ensure that the current payroll system was available for a defined period as a fall-back mechanism to deliver the teachers' pay cheques if a proposed new electronic payroll system failed.

Quality of information management

There is a problem in relation to data management and analysis. It appears to be difficult for staff of the Ministry of Education to locate and provide basic information about education. This observation applies to both quantitative and qualitative information. The types of information referred to include statistical, financial, and staffing information. While it is true that previous consultants' reports include plenty of data, Ministry staff does not seem to have assumed responsibility for analysing or

disempowered by what seems to have been the past practice of transferring the function of analysis of data to external consultants or other agencies.

There is a need to develop an information management strategy that Ministry of Education staff can understand and use, and a corresponding need to strengthen, improve and enhance the existing information management systems. This process will involve consideration of what information is needed in order to manage and evaluate education policy. It should include consideration of how the data will be collected, stored, and managed, what skills and capabilities staff will need to manipulate, analyse and interpret the data collected, and what information technologies, such as databases or data warehouses, may be necessary to enhance the management and interpretation of information. The policy methodology that has already been proposed would be enhanced if it included an effective information management strategy. In addition, the information management strategy should be an integral part of the proposed strategic plan. Since the integrity of the data obtained needs to be guaranteed, training of staff will be necessary to ensure that the information collection process is understood and well managed. This training should also ensure that the information gathered is analysed and interpreted effectively, so that the development of education policy is underpinned by robust information.

It will be important to invest in better management systems in order to improve the quality of information available for decision-making and policy formation. Planning and reporting systems need to improve in order to enable better control of financial resources, and to develop a better internal review capability. An initial priority will be to review and put in place improved internal planning and budgeting processes.

Relationships with stakeholders

Improved effectiveness needs to be supported by a greater emphasis on developing and managing relationships with the education sector and with other Government agencies.

More resources should be applied to gaining community support and endorsement for education. The support of the community will assist the achievement of higher educational standards through improved motivation of the students. This objective of greater community support for education can only be achieved if the schools themselves take the lead and involve the parent community in the life of the schools. The Ministry of Education is in a powerful position to exercise leadership in this field, although it will require the active support of the Government, and of Ministers in particular, if any of its initiatives are to make a difference.

One option for the Ministry of Education to consider in order to foster an objective of community involvement in education is the establishment of community forums to get “buy-in” from the community. Such an approach could be successful if a “task force” approach was adopted, whereby a small group of key educators and community leaders with high national credibility was established. This group over a period of, say, twelve months, could visit most parts of the Marshall Islands in order to gain engagement of parents in the process of supporting this Strategic Plan, identifying educational goals, and thus fostering improved community involvement in schools. This campaign would have a primary objective of persuading parents that education is the key to their children’s (and the country’s) future. Parents need to be convinced

Communication

The Ministry of Education’s communication with schools, and responsiveness to schools and their communities, needs to improve. It was clear from the interviews with Principals and teachers that the Ministry of Education is not perceived as having communicated effectively with schools. It is acknowledged that the geography of the Marshall Islands, and the distance of many isolated schools on remote atolls from the central Ministry operations on Majuro make personal communication and visits difficult. While the efforts of the school supervisors to make regular radio contact with the public primary schools on remote atolls are acknowledged, much more needs to be done.

The Ministry of Education should communicate clearly in a written newsletter with all schools on a regular basis. Private schools, for instance, are expected to provide statistical and other information to the Ministry in order to receive Government funding, or to apply for grant assistance through United States federal programmes. A regular newsletter could ensure that adequate clear instructions are provided in advance about what is required, and when the required information is expected within the Ministry of Education.

The Strategic Planning Process: Making It Work

The effectiveness of the Strategic Plan and its implementation will depend on much more than formal acceptance of the objectives and activities that they identify. All too often, thoughtful and comprehensive plans lead to disappointing results because the necessary conditions for their success are absent.

Through discussions with the Ministerial Consultative Group, members of the sectoral discussion groups convened in August 2000, and other key informants, it was possible to identify various matters that will need to be addressed to ensure that the Strategic Plan and Implementing Guidelines do not “gather dust on the shelf,” but become a pivotal influence in strengthening education in the RMI in the years ahead. This section of the revised Strategic Plan discusses some of these issues.

Building Public Awareness

There are valuable lessons to be learned from the fate of the earlier Ten-Year Education Master Plan (Master Plan) developed for the RMI in 1989 by the Academy for Educational Development in Washington, D.C. Although adopted by the *Nitijela* (Parliament) as the vision and blueprint for educational development and improvement during the first Compact period, the Ten-Year Education Master Plan lacked ownership by the Marshallese people, particularly its leadership.

In the rush to implement the 1989 Master Plan, little time and resources were devoted to raising community awareness and building consensus around the new directions recommended in the Master Plan. Consequently, just as soon as the Master Plan was adopted and implementation was under way, efforts were already in the making that were contradictory to provisions of the Master Plan. This lack of ownership of the Master Plan was also evidenced in limited funding earmarked by the *Nitijela* to implement goals of the Master Plan. Frequent changes in leadership of the Ministry also contributed to limited Master Plan implementation.

To avoid a similar fate for this Strategic Plan, it will be important for the Ministry of Education to design and implement an aggressive public awareness campaign to inform and gain support for the major provisions of the Strategic Plan from all relevant stakeholder groups including the *Nitijela*, parents, educators, employers, and government leaders. The more widely known and supported these provisions are, the more likely it is that the general public will hold government accountable for making decisions and establishing priorities that assist in achieving the aims of the Strategic Plan.

Nurturing Self-Reliance

The 1981 Marshall Islands Task Force on Education report, Education for Self-Reliance, proposes a philosophy and goal for the Ministry of Education to follow in establishing an educational system for a nation aiming at “self-reliance.” That report focuses on “what” the system should offer (e.g., attitudes, basic skills, and advanced studies) as well as “how” the system should function (e.g., administration, community

In essence, the 1981 Task Force report aims to strengthen traditional Marshallese culture through specific emphasis in the curriculum on promoting the traditional spirit of cooperative sharing among individuals. It stresses not only the “ability” to be self-reliant, but also the “will” to be self-reliant. The report provides a sensible basis for building an education system in the RMI, but most of its ideas were not translated into specific plans or action.

The 1989 Task Force on Education report also endorsed the ideas of the 1981 report and delved further into many problems within the educational system and critical concerns that have not yet been resolved. Although the 1989 Task Force report and subsequent Ten-Year Education Master Plan were submitted to the Cabinet and gained approval, the follow-through was short-lived. As mentioned earlier, the Master Plan was more or less abandoned before midpoint.

Regardless of past unsuccessful attempts in moving the vision of self-reliance forward, it is important that the current Strategic Plan continue to espouse and build upon this vision for the Marshallese people. The “ability” and “will” to be self-reliant must continue to be the guiding vision for the new Strategic Plan. The people are the most fundamental and valuable resource of the country. It is only when they are able and have the will to be self-reliant that the country will move forward.

The vision must also embody characteristics of Marshallese people. Among these is the fundamental resiliency of the Marshallese people. This resiliency has evolved over many years of living on small, isolated, and resource-limited islands that are spread over a vast ocean area. The Marshallese conquered their harsh environment and managed to establish an intricate system of governance that served the people and their environment well. Because of their relative isolation, the people relied on their own ingenuity to survive and thrive on these islands.

This resiliency, as well as their great sense of self-reliance, was undermined by colonial power and the people’s own fascination with western goods and inventions. The resiliency was replaced by a sense of dependency, fostered over 40 years of colonial administration by the United States and other foreign powers. The Marshallese people need to reclaim that resiliency and sense of self-reliance. If communities could thrive in traditional times, they can do even better in modern days. *Unnare peim* is a Marshallese saying which literally means “ask of your hands” to provide for your needs. This implies a belief in the ability of a person, or a community, to provide for its own needs.

Fostering Community Responsibility

While the education process plays a critical role in fostering self-reliance, governmental actions and policy directions also contribute toward self-reliance. In the management of schools, for example, self-reliance is practiced in the way the responsibility for the well-being of the students and schools is devolved to communities. This policy direction carries a message that the school belongs to the community and the community is accountable for its performance. In the last ten years, attempts were made to devolve this school management responsibility through the Community-Based Governance Scheme (CBGS). However, much more needs to be done to sustain and strengthen efforts in this direction.

can provide is a strong partner with major responsibility for training and technical assistance to communities in management skills and teacher professionalism.

Creating a sense of community ownership of schools is another principle which must guide the Ministry's action and thinking. The Ministry must create a sense of school ownership on the part of communities, and communities must be willing to take on that responsibility understanding that with ownership comes certain responsibilities. These responsibilities include taking care of school facilities and making sure schools are conducting the business of education in keeping with the Ministry of Education's school calendar and established standards of performance and expectation. It may also mean raising necessary funds to support building toilet facilities or ensuring that water is available for the children.

Improving education in the Marshall Islands is contingent on Marshallese people's understanding of the critical role they play in the improvement process. Only when Marshallese take responsibility for the problems and the successes will they endeavour to do something about them. Improving the schools, including ensuring that enough attention is given to the needs of the schools by the central government, are individual communities' challenges. We have seen other community-owned projects and programs thrive in the Marshall Islands. The successful implementation of church ownership in the RMI is one example. The same can be accomplished for schools and the educational process as a whole.

Restructuring the Ministry of Education

During the past decade, a considerable amount of resources and staff energy have been devoted to structural improvements that are a necessary foundation for a sound educational organization. Structural improvements that were fully or partially implemented in this period include the refinement of the curriculum framework, development of the Ministry of Education Personnel Management System, establishment of an MOE financial management system (which reverted back to the Ministry of Finance two years later), and piloting of the Community-Based Governance System (CBGS).

While necessary, the emphasis on these structural improvements took away resources and energy from the “bottom line” of all educational systems (i.e., classroom instruction and student achievement). Consequently, student achievement spiralled downward as shown by results from both the Pacific Islands Literacy Levels (PILL) test and the High School Entrance Test (HSET).

The current Strategic Plan suggests that “restructuring the organization and management of the Ministry” should be an important order of business. Following this line of thinking, time and resources would again be spent on building and refining the structural pieces of the RMI educational system. But placing emphasis on redrawing organizational lines will mean that the focus on teaching and learning will once again become secondary. A massive overhaul of the system would take a minimum of two years before people would be ready to focus on the important business of student learning. Furthermore, research has shown that simply re-drawing the table of an organization or coming up with new budget allocation schemes has little affect on achieving better student outcomes.

and capabilities of MOE staff through a rigorous professional development program that focuses, among other areas, on how to improve internal and external communication skills of staff. A part of the professional development program should focus on clarifying staff roles, ensuring staff understanding of both their own roles as well as those of their colleagues. This is essential for internal efficiency of the organization as well as for minimizing duplication of work within the Ministry. Without clear roles and a skilled and capable staff, it is unlikely that any proposed restructuring of the Ministry would lead to significantly improved outcomes.

Thus, many of the Strategic Plan’s organizational analysis and development priorities can and should be delayed while the system focuses its energy on improving family participation in the education process and on strengthening classroom practices. Experimenting with alternative organizational models and their relative abilities to promote an important classroom priority (e.g., literacy improvement) would be one way of determining the most effective type of organizational structure for the MOE, how best to allocate resources, and effective means of devolving decision-making and authority to local communities and schools.

Focus on Literacy Improvement

The Strategic Plan for Education is ambitious. The assumption that each and every objective identified in the Strategic Plan can be immediately and fully implemented is almost certainly unrealistic. The sheer number of objectives and activities that must be carried out suggest a need for a logical progression and a timeframe established for a smooth implementation process. No system, no matter what the level of resources, can attempt to implement so many initiatives at once while keeping a central focus on improving student learning.

Implementing Guidelines strongly recommended that “impacting family and classroom practice to improve readiness for learning and levels of student literacy at the primary and intermediate levels” should be the superordinate focus of the Strategic Plan in its early years. Literacy in both English and Marshallese must be made a priority of the RMI educational system.

There were several reasons for this recommendation. First, literacy is at the very core of preparing people for self-sufficiency in the 21st century. It is, thus, the “highest leverage” activity in achieving the Republic’s goals. Second, abundant expertise and resources exist to support such an effort. Third, the Strategic Plan itself indicates that there has already been significant investment in developing a formal literacy curriculum and assessment system. Fourth, there are numerous comments in the Strategic Plan that reinforce the notion that literacy improvement is key to achieving teacher certification requirements □ PAGEREF _Toc532748123 \h □ □ 70 □ □

The strategy to best achieve improved readiness for learning and enhanced primary and intermediate literacy levels is also indicated in the Strategic Plan. It strongly suggests that improving *teacher preparation* is the highest leverage activity to achieving improved literacy.

The College of the Marshall Islands (CMI) and University of the South Pacific-Majuro (USP-M), as the major teacher preparation institutions in the RMI, could contribute to and benefit from actively participating in improving classroom practice

classroom practice and learn much regarding necessary revisions that need to be made in teacher preparation and certification.

Based on their experience, recommendations for longer-term efforts at reforming teacher preparation will be more meaningful and more likely to succeed.

Implementing Actions

As noted earlier in this document, the objectives cited in the 2000 Strategic Plan for the Ministry of Education were often quite broad and did not provide detailed guidance to educators about *how* to achieve them. Implementing Guidelines was developed to fill this gap by identifying the specific tasks and activities that must be carried out to accomplish the Strategic Plan’s objectives. In this sense, Implementing Guidelines was intended to serve as a practical “road map” for those RMI educators who will be responsible for making changes in the nation’s education system consistent with the priorities set forth in the Strategic Plan. The objectives specified in Implementing Guidelines have now been incorporated into this Strategic Plan

The central purpose of the PREL Consulting team’s efforts was not to revise the original Strategic Plan objectives, but to determine the steps needed to accomplish them. However, in the course of discussions with RMI educators, numerous individuals pointed out that since the Strategic Plan is a living document, ongoing revision of its objectives represents a natural and healthy outcome of dialogue about educational priorities and needs in the RMI.

Mission of the Ministry of Education

The mission for the Ministry of Education, in the context if Vision 2018, is:



An Educated People

Goal for the Education System of the Marshall Islands

Government’s existing policy on education is formalised in the *Education Act 1991* and in the *Rules and Regulations of the Ministry of Education 1992*. The *Education Act 1991* provides a sound basis on which the Ministry of Education’s strategic plan can be developed. Its preliminary statement sets out a commendably clear statement of policy, as enunciated by the Nitijela. This statement from the *Education Act 1991* is reproduced below.

The Nitijela of the Marshall Islands declares and recognises the following

- The right of the people to education and the obligation of the Government to take every step reasonable and necessary to provide these services, consistent with Article II, Section 17 of the Constitution
- The Cabinet’s responsibility for establishing and maintaining such schools and for making such other provision as may be reasonable and necessary to provide educational opportunities for the people of the Marshall islands, consistent with Article V, Section 1 (3)(b) of the Constitution
- The need to encourage citizen involvement in educational matters by providing for schools that guarantee and support local participation consistent with the goal of a thorough and efficient system of education serving all the children of the Republic
- That the goal of education in the Republic shall be to foster self-reliance, and that all educational progress and curricula be structured to further this goal

This statement of policy forms a sound basis for proceeding to develop a Strategic Plan.

On the basis of this statement in legislation, *Vision 2018* sets out Goal 3:

- **Establishing a knowledge-based economy by equipping Marshallese citizens with internationally competitive skills, qualities and positive attitudes to work and society.**

Objectives for the Education System in the Marshall Islands

The five stated objectives for the education sector, as set out in Vision 2018, are:

Objective 1: Aggressively strengthen and enhance the quality of education at all levels of schools starting from kindergarten to college throughout the nation.

Objective 2: Instill awareness among all strata of Marshallese society to make each and every citizen of the Marshall Islands appreciate “education” as the top priority in achieving our Vision 2018.

Objective 3: Cultivate a reformed “mind set” among all Marshallese with special focus on the young generation to take pride and dignity in themselves by fostering a change of attitude to life, where one has to have a sense of purpose and lead a productive and self-reliant life.

Objective 4: Provide further education through formal and non-formal training opportunities for high school graduates, civil servants, and any other Marshallese qualified citizen.

Objective 5: Make the teaching profession a dignified, respected and attractive occupation in order to maintain high quality and dedicated teaching staff.

The Vision 2018 Matrix proposes a total of 27 strategies that should be implemented as a means of achieving these five objectives, and proposes 66 indicators to be used to measure their achievement.

Values

The values set out below are principles that everyone in the Ministry of Education is encouraged to apply.

- Seek innovation and excellence
- Ask questions
- Bring solutions
- Engage constructively
- Support and help each other
- See the bigger picture
- Focus on students
- Foster responsiveness in providers
- Improve quality
- Learn from experience

Business Strategy

The Ministry’s mission will be achieved through:

- Working in partnership with providers and government agencies to meet the needs of students
- Open collaborative relationships with providers
- Understanding and monitoring the dynamics of the education sector
- Creating and facilitating an operational environment which enables schools and providers to respond to the needs of students
- Making all relevant information available and easily accessible
- Developing systems and processes that are efficient and responsive, and facilitate ongoing improvement in educational standards
- Using clear and certain business rules and processes

Pre-School Education

Provision of pre-school (early childhood) education is an important output of the education system.

The Head Start programme (funded by a Federal Grant from the United States of America) has been instrumental in providing pre-school education for a number of Marshallese children. Currently, 1200 children are enrolled each year in 48 centres throughout the country. The Head Start programme reaches only about 20% of the children aged 3-5 years in the Marshall Islands.

US Federal grants, however, are “enhancement” grants and are not designed to provide funds for the basic administration of the education system. The basic administration of the education system is the responsibility of the RMI Government. For this reason, it is imperative that the RMI Government recognises the importance, from a planning perspective, of committing funds towards pre-school education on a regular basis. At present no funds from either the General Grant or the Compact-Tied Funds are devoted to pre-school education. This situation appears to have occurred as a result of the recommendation in the 1989 Ten-Year Master Plan for Education to postpone for a few years the development of pre-school and kindergarten programmes. It is now timely to revisit that recommendation. If the Government is willing to provide a small subsidy for early childhood education, each community could be expected to share some of the burden of providing pre-school opportunities for its children.

Because of the importance of the formative early years of a child’s life, particularly in relation to language development, the recommended Budget that accompanies this Strategic Plan makes provision for limited amounts of funding either from the General Grant or from Compact-Designated Funds to build capacity in the field of early childhood education. These funds would supplement any funding from US Federal Grants for the Head Start programme.

There are overseas developments, such as the New Zealand Te Kohanga Reo movement that fosters the development of the Maori language in pre-school language “nests”, that may provide useful pre-school language development models for the Marshall Islands.

Participation levels in early childhood education appear to vary quite widely. There is considerable potential for expansion of early childhood education opportunities in the Marshall Islands, in order to ensure that all children have equal access to education and opportunities for success.

Set out below are the recommended objectives and performance indicators for early childhood education.

Objective 1

Expand enrolments in early childhood education centres

- To expand incrementally enrolments in early childhood education centres

Indicator

- Collect data to establish a baseline of enrolments in Year 1
- Increase numbers of pre-school enrolments (including Head Start, kindergartens, other early childhood centres) by 5% a year from Year 2

PRESCHOOL EDUCATION		
Objective 1. Expand incrementally enrolment in early childhood education centers.	Outcome. Increase pre-school enrolment (including Head Start, kindergartens, and other early childhood education centers) by 5% a year from 2002 through 2005.	
Implementing Actions	Responsible Agency/Staff	Required Resources
(#1) Collect enrolment data from Head Start (HS) program and other preschool and kindergarten programs to determine number of 5 year olds currently enrolled and number that need services.	Head Start; MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics	Additional \$150,000 for staff time to put in place new program
(#2) Submit an amendment to the education law to require kindergarten at every public and private school and change school age attendance to age 5 in the RMI by 2001.	Minister and Secretary of Education	
(#3) Beginning in school year 2001-02, add kindergarten classes to 10 new school sites each year giving priority to communities where HS centers do not exist so that by 2005, all 5 year-olds are enrolled in an education program, either through the public schools or Head Start program.	MOE Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction; Head Start staff	
(#4) Identify additional funds required to add kindergarten to communities where HS centers do not presently exist.	MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics	
(#5) Adopt Head Start pre-school program curriculum to use in RMI kindergarten Classes as an interim measure.	MOE Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction	

(#6) Establish a task force comprised of Head Start curriculum staff and MOE School Improvement staff to develop a curriculum for kindergarten and to ensure it is aligned with MOE national standards.	MOE Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction; Head Start staff	
(#7) Refocus priority for Head Start program to 3 and 4 year-olds from needy families using RMI economic and social standards.	Head Start Policy Council; Minister of Education	

Objective 2

Provide funding for early childhood education on a regular basis

- To provide funding from the Marshall Islands Government General Grant or Compact-Designated Funds for early childhood education on a regular basis

Indicator

- To establish a baseline of \$250,000 from the RMI General Grant or Compact-Designated Funds for early childhood education as from Year 1
- To increase the funding for early childhood education by \$250,000 a year in Year 2 to Year 4 to reach a minimum baseline of \$1 million annually

PRESCHOOL EDUCATION (cont.)		
Objective 2. Provide funding from the Marshall Islands Government General Grant or Compact-Designated Funds for early childhood on a regular basis.	Outcome. The number of students entering school ready to learn (based upon vocabulary or early language assessments) will increase each year from 2002 – 2005.	
Implementing Actions	Responsible Agency/Staff	Required Resources
(#1) Develop a plan with accompanying budget requirements needed to enable all 5-year olds to enrol either in Head Start programs where they exist, or in kindergarten classes at public schools where HS centers do not exist. The plan should include additional costs for personnel, instructional materials, and training of new and assigned kindergarten staff.	Head Start Director; Secretary of Education, MOE	\$250,000 annually for personnel, training, and classroom materials.
(#2) Establish a student teacher ratio not to exceed 20 students for all kindergarten classes.	Ministry of Education	
(#3) Submit budget requirements as a new line item in the MOE budget, in order to increase the funding for early childhood education by \$250,000	Minister of Education	

Objective 3

Develop pre-school pre-service teacher training programmes

- To develop teacher training programmes so that well-qualified pre-school teachers will be available as early childhood opportunities expand

Indicator

- A pre-school teacher training programme established by Year 2

PRESCHOOL EDUCATION (cont.)		
Objective 3. Develop teacher training programs so that well-qualified preschool teachers will be available as early childhood opportunities expand.	Outcome. The number of teachers prepared to teach preschool and kindergarten will increase each year from 2002 through 2005.	
Implementing Actions	Responsible Agency/Staff	Required Resources
(#1) As an interim measure, recruit for and begin a 6-month intensive early childhood teacher-education program for kindergarten and preschool education teachers in early 2001. Contractual obligations for hiring program graduates should include a provision to complete teacher certification requirements including an AS degree in education.	USP and CMI	\$50,000
(#2) Hire 10 new kindergarten teachers incrementally each year beginning in 2001.	MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics; Head Start Program	
(#3) Contract retired certified Marshallese teachers to assist as master teachers in the program.	MOE Bureau of Administration	
(#4) Recruit parents from community to serve as volunteer teacher aides.	School principals/head teachers	
(#5) Develop an early childhood education program based on the RMI teacher certification standards by 2002.	MOE; Head Start; USP; CMI	\$30,000 salary and other support for the program
(#5) Begin enrolment of early childhood education teachers in the teacher certification program by 2003; courses can continue year-round through distance learning.	USP; CMI	

Objective 4

Establish a support programme for kindergarten teachers

- To establish a support programme for newly-hired kindergarten teachers

Indicators

- Co-ordinator and mentor designated and in place by 30 June Year 1
- Support programme and networks in place by 31 December Year 1

PRESCHOOL EDUCATION (cont.)		
Objective 4. Establish a support program for newly hired kindergarten teachers.	Outcome. Support system and required staff will be hired by school year 2002.	
Implementing Actions	Responsible Agency/Staff	Required Resources
(#1) Designate a coordinator for the kindergarten program to monitor program development and provide support to new teachers and school principals.	MOE Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction	\$20,000
(#2) Designate a mentor teacher for new kindergarten teachers.	School Principal	
(#3) Convene regular “sharing” sessions for newly hired teachers, either in person or through distance-learning mode whenever possible.	Coordinator	\$3,000
(#4) Create a kindergarten program newsletter as a means of communicating program accomplishments and challenges to the community and as a tool for information sharing among schools.	Coordinator	

Objective 5

Create Marshallese early childhood curriculum materials

- To create Marshallese curriculum materials for use in kindergartens based on standards and benchmarks developed by the Ministry of Education

Indicators

- Hold workshop and identify materials for adaptation by June 30 Year 1
- Engage consultant to facilitate teacher input and development of kindergarten curriculum support materials and learning resources

PRESCHOOL EDUCATION (cont.)		
Objective 5. Create Marshallese curriculum materials for use in kindergarten classes based on standards and benchmarks developed by the Ministry of Education.	Outcome. Marshallese materials for early childhood education, especially in language arts and math, will increase by 2003.	
Implementing Actions	Responsible Agency	Required Resources
(#1) Convene an annual two-week workshop for kindergarten teachers to develop language-arts and math materials in Marshallese.	MOE Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction; Teacher Training office	\$3,000 annually for consultant
(#2) Identify suitable materials to adapt for use in Marshallese classrooms.	MOE Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction	
(#3) Engage assistance from a consultant to facilitate and help teachers through the process of creating instructional aides for kindergarten classes using local materials.	MOE; Consultant	\$ 30,000 for materials
(#4) Identify suitable materials from workshop and print them for wider dissemination to all schools.	MOE	

Elementary Education

Provision of elementary (primary) education is the key output of the education system.

The elementary education system must be the prime focus of efforts to improve student achievement in the Marshall Islands. The objectives set out earlier in this Strategic Plan include establishing a quality primary education as the national standard for all citizens and promoting school attendance by all children between the ages of six and fourteen. Primary schools should undertake responsibility for building self-reliance in individuals, along with pride in their cultural heritage and appreciation of their natural environment. There is also a need to expand community responsibility for schools and build a sense of community ownership and pride in schools. Parents should be involved as partners in children’s learning.

The strategy for education must be broad, and must have an impact directly upon the classroom. The objectives and measures of performance adopted in this Strategic Plan must all be designed to make a difference to the learning that goes on in classrooms. This Strategic Plan is designed to reflect this classroom emphasis.

The objectives in this Plan are therefore student-oriented. The focus is on the student as a learner. The Marshallese model of teaching and learning is based upon parents as first teachers, interacting with their children. The focus of the work of everybody in education must be to improve student achievement. All practice must be evaluated in the light of this aim.

Because of the important role of private schools in the education system of the Marshall Islands, the role and performance of private primary schools needs to be recognised, and funding needs to be provided to ensure these schools remain viable.

Objective 1

Improve the language development of students

- To develop measures to improve the language development of students

Indicators

- Language learning programmes/ resources developed and sent to all primary schools by the following timetable
 - Programmes/resources for Grades 1-3 distributed by 31 December Year 1
 - Programmes/resources for Grades 4-6 distributed by 31 December Year 2
 - Programmes/resources for Grades 7-8 distributed by 31 December Year 3
- Professional development programmes for teachers focusing on literacy learning delivered to 20% of practising primary school teachers each year in

- Make arrangements for the annual placement each year of volunteers from the United States of America or other English speaking nations, at suitable schools in the Marshall Islands, by 31 December Year 1

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION		
Objective 1. Develop measures to improve the language development of students.	Outcome. 1) Reading scores will increase at all grade levels assessed between Year 2 and Year 5; 2) An increasing number of teachers will report (as measured by a teacher questionnaire) that they are adequately prepared to teach reading, from Year 1 - Year 5.	
Implementing Actions	Responsible Agency/Staff	Required Resources
(#1) Establish baseline data for minimum level for English and Marshallese reading achievement at all grade levels (1 through 8) or for each cluster level (end of grade 3, end of grade 6, and end of grade 8) in 2001.	MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics	\$208,000 (To include \$15,000 for MISAT annual testing program; \$30,000 for
(#2) Share and discuss meaning of test results with teachers at planned summer workshops or during school site visits.	MOE Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction	Literacy Specialist; \$13,000 for travel of literacy
(#3) Reprint, adapt, and develop language-learning/resource materials for MLA and ELA and distribute to all primary schools by the following timetable: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs/resources for Grades 1-3 distributed by December 31, Year 1 • Programs/resources for Grades 4-6 distributed by December 31, Year 2 • Programs/resources for Grades 7-8 distributed by December 31, Year 3 	MOE Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction	trainers to outer island schools; \$150,000 for purchase, printing, and adaptation of MLA and ELA classroom materials.)
(#4) Deliver intensive professional-development programs for teachers focusing on MLA and ELA standards and benchmarks. Other areas of emphasis should be phonemic awareness in both languages and ensuring teachers ability to teach such skills to students.	MOE with assistance from CMI, USP, or PREL	
(#5) Organize teacher groups, in grade clusters, to develop standards-based units for ELA and MLA reading as a way to increase practical understanding of standards-based classrooms, and to develop model unit lessons to assist classroom teachers.	MOE Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction	
(#6) As part of Implementing Action #4, plan	MOE with	

Training should be organized in grade clusters (1-3, 4-6, 7-8). Include demonstration and hands-on training that gets teachers to practice effective teaching strategies and conduct at school site where possible.	PREL	
(#7) Build in visitations to “model” schools in Majuro as part of the CMI teacher training program to allow in-service and pre-service teachers to observe effective literacy teaching.	CMI	
(#8) Develop and model effective literacy teaching on an ongoing basis at the proposed CMI Lab School. Explore uses of such programs as Parents as Teachers (PAT) and Compact for Reading.	CMI	
(#9) Make arrangements for the annual placement each year of volunteers from the United States of America or other English-speaking nations at suitable schools in the Marshall Islands by December 31, Year 1.	Minister and Secretary of Education	

Objective 2

Develop agreed standards of performance

- Develop agreed standards of performance for selected Grade levels, including benchmarks of adequate and superior student performance

Indicators

- Marshall Islands Standardised Achievement Tests for Grades 4 & 6 administered and results promulgated to all primary schools by 31 December Year 1 (Grade 4) and 31 December Year 2 (Grade 6)
- Additional Marshall Islands Standardised Achievement Tests for two further selected primary school grades developed and administered, and results promulgated to all schools, by 31 December Year 3 and 31 December Year 4 respectively

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION (cont.)		
Objective 2. Develop standards of performance for selected grade levels, including benchmarks of adequate and superior student performance.	Outcome: An increasing number of students will meet the standards as determined by performance on teacher- administered assessments and the MISAT at grade levels assessed between Year 1 and Year 5.	
Implementing Actions	Responsible Agency/Staff	Required Resources
(#1) By December Year 1, conduct	MOE Bureau of	

and gather input for final draft.		
(#2) Print and disseminate standards document by March Year 1.	MOE, Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction	
(#3) Provide training to teachers about standards. Training should be organized by cluster area (1-3, 4-6, 7-8) beginning in summer of Year 1 and continue throughout the plan period. In year one, heavy emphasis should be placed on improving teachers' skills to teach language arts and math standards in the lower grades.	MOE Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction	
(#4) Monitoring standards implementation in schools should be a regular task of subject area specialists and school principals. Efforts should be made to get specialists to visit each school twice a year to model effective teaching practices and to determine level of progress made by teachers in each grade by subject area, based on standards.	MOE Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction	
(#5) Beginning in Year 1, develop a teacher-administered grade level assessment program, based on standards, to gather ongoing data on student progress.	MOE Bureaux of Curriculum and Instruction and Administration and Logistics; outside consultants	
(#6) In the first two years of the plan, place priority on professional development for teachers in assessment and how to use assessment data to strengthen classroom instruction.	MOE Bureaux of Curriculum and Instruction and Administration and Logistics; CMI	
(#7) Administer Marshall Islands Standardized Achievement Tests for grades 3 and 6 and disseminate results to all primary schools by December 31, Year 1 (grade 3) and December 31, Year 2 (grade 6).	MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics; outside consultants	

Objective 3

Undertake a national public relations campaign

- Undertake a national public relations campaign targeted at parents to ensure all pupils of school age attend school regularly

Indicator

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION (cont.)		
Objective 3. Undertake a national public relations campaign targeted at parents to ensure all pupils of school age attend school regularly.	Outcome. Parents will report increased knowledge and skills in ways to ensure attendance (as measured by a parent questionnaire).	
Implementing Actions	Responsible Agency/Staff	Required Resources
(#1) During Year 1, conduct a study to find out how many and why children are not enrolled in school and provide recommendations for action. Assistance from local governments should be sought for this study.	MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education (CBGS Liaison and Area Supervisors)	\$10,000 for radio and print material development and possible outside consultant to conduct study.
(#2) Beginning January Year 1, establish a student attendance task force of key educators and community leaders to spearhead a national campaign to persuade and train parents to take the lead role in ensuring that their children attend school regularly.	Task force members and representatives from communities and other agencies	
(#3) As part of Implementing Action #2, develop radio, TV, and print materials as part of the public relations campaign for parents and communities. Development should be complete by June 30 Year 1.	MOE – possible outside assistance	
(#4) Develop necessary policies, or enforce existing policies, to ensure all school-age children are in school.	MOE and Local Governments	

Objective 4

Develop a policy to minimise truancy

- To develop a strategy to combat truancy

Indicator

- Truancy minimisation strategy developed& in place by 30 September Year 1

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION (cont.)	
Objective 4. Develop a strategy to combat truancy.	Outcome. 1) Attendance records will indicate decreased truancy between Year 1 and Year 5; 2) The number of students who drop out of school during the school year

	Agency	Resources
(#1) Establish baseline data on number of truant children by asking schools to compile daily reports of student attendance.	MOE – Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education (CBGS Liaison Officer and Area Supervisors)	No additional resources required
(#2) Assign responsibility to a student-attendance task force for assessing issues relating to truancy, and recommending policies and strategies on possible action to take regarding truant children and parents of truant children.	MOE and Ministry of Justice	
(#3) Conduct parent-education workshops in communities and in schools, and seek church collaboration and assistance in stressing the message about importance of school attendance.	MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education	
(#4) Develop comprehensive truancy strategy and put in place by September 30, Year 1.	MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education	

Objective 5

Foster parental and community involvement in schools

- To foster parental community participation and involvement in schools and education decision-making

Indicators

- Undertake and complete a national campaign to foster parental and community awareness and involvement in education by 30 September Year 1
- Establish two Education Development Initiatives in selected localities by 31 December Year 1 in order to determine the best way to meet education objectives in that community, including possible consolidation of schools, given limited resources

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION (cont.)		
Objective 5. Foster parental/community participation and involvement in schools and education decision-making.	Outcome. 1) Parents will report an increased awareness of the importance of involvement in their children's education (on a parent questionnaire) by 31 December Year 2; 2) School records will show increased levels of parent participation in school events by 31 December Yr 2.	
Implementing Actions	Responsible Agency/Staff	Required Resources
(#1) In Year 1, gather information about student achievement levels as compared to other children in-country and out-of-country.	MOE Bureau of Administration and PREL	\$15,000 to conduct community education campaign in outer islands.
(#2) Based on information gathered, create videotapes and radio programs to share information about the goals and purpose of education, what makes a good school, and other relevant information designed to raise the level of community awareness about education. Radio programs could be in both English and Marshallese and should commence early in Year 2.	MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education; PREL	
(#3) By February Year 2, design an implementation plan for a public relations campaign that ensures involvement and commitment of traditional and community leaders in school and education decision-making.	MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education; PREL	
(#4) Undertake and complete a national campaign to foster parental and community awareness and involvement in education by September 30, Year 2.	MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education; PREL	
(#5) Beginning in Year 2, require schools to establish and maintain regular communication between home and school, either through individual classroom letters from teachers to parents, monthly meetings, or school-home newsletters.	Individual Schools	
(#6) In Year 2, create a parent-involvement week where parents are invited to observe or take over class for a day, shadow school officials in the performance of their school roles, or perform other tasks to further their understanding about school.	MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education; Local Govt.; Schools	

friendly to parents by August 31 Year 2.	Secondary Education; consultants	
(#8) Establish two Education Development Initiatives in selected localities by December 31, Year 1, in order to determine the best way to meet education objectives in that community. Use a community-planning process that engages all stakeholders in the community.	MOE – Bureau of Elementary & Secondary Education	

Objective 6

Improve the Community Based Governance Scheme

- To improve the effectiveness of the Community Based Governance Scheme

Indicators

- Provide upskilling training programmes for key personnel involved in the administration of education through the Community Based Governance Schemes in Majuro and Ebeye, by 31 December Year 1
- Appoint a CBGS liaison officer to the staff of the Ministry of Education as part of the restructuring programme, by 30 June Year 1
- Undertake consultation with other communities in the Marshall Islands that may wish to be included in an expanded Community Based Governance Scheme, and begin a programme of training if interest is evident and such a programme is warranted, by 30 September Year 2

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION (cont.)		
Objective 6. Improve the effectiveness of the Community-Based Governance System (CBGS).	Outcome. 1) An increasing number of CBGS personnel will participate in training programs from 2002 to 2005; 2) An increasing number of CBGS personnel will report increased knowledge and skills in post-training evaluation forms.	
Implementing Actions	Responsible Agency/Staff	Required Resources
(#1) Establish a community relations office within the MOE School Improvement Bureau by June 2001 and appoint a CBGS liaison officer to staff the community relations office.	MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education	\$100,000 to fund the office and related activities
(#2) Conduct a review of CBGS legislation and recommend revisions and implementation efforts based on the revised	MOE Secretary of Education; outside consultants	

<p>(#3) Task the CBGS liaison officer to revise and reprint CBGS training modules by September 2001 taking into consideration lessons learned from the past ten years of CBGS implementation.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education (CBGS Liaison Office)</p>	
<p>(#4) Clarify roles and responsibilities of parties involved in management of schools under the CBGS scheme and provide training to all concerned including MOE staff.</p>	<p>MOE Secretary of Education</p>	
<p>(#5) Schedule regular monitoring meetings of all CBGS schools and local governments with the MOE to share progress of project implementation, enhance communication, and identify potential areas for improvement.</p>	<p>MOE Secretary of Education; CBGS Liaison Office</p>	
<p>(#6) Conduct an analysis of issues and challenges for the CBGS program from the perspectives of the Ministry of Education, local governments, and participating schools, and make recommendations for improvement by June 2001.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education; outside consultant</p>	
<p>(#7) Provide skills training for key personnel involved in the administration of education through the Community-Based Governance Schemes in Majuro and Ebeye by December 31, 2001.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education; outside consultants</p>	
<p>(#8) Undertake consultation with other communities in the Marshall Islands that may wish to be included in an expanded Community-Based Governance Scheme, and begin a program of training if interest is evident and such a program is warranted by September 30, 2002.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education</p>	
<p>(#9) Request additional funds from the government for CBGS implementation on a wider scale.</p>	<p>Minister of Education</p>	

Objective 7

Increase hours of instruction per student

- To increase instructional hours per student per year in crowded urban schools and in two-teacher schools in urban areas

Indicator

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION (cont.)		
Objective 7. Increase instructional hours per student per year in crowded urban schools and in two-teacher schools in rural areas.	Outcome. By end of Year 5, minimum instructional hours as dictated by MOE Rules and Regulations will be attained.	
Implementing Actions	Responsible Agency/Staff	Required Resources
<p>(#1) Increase classroom space in urban areas by 20% beginning in Year 1 in order to phase out double sessions, particularly in lower grades. Possible strategies to accomplish this should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Majuro Middle Schools to take all 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students from Rita, Uliga, Delap, and Rairo); • Establish a Middle School in Laura to take in 6th, 7th, and 8th grader students from Ajeltake, Woja, and Laura; • Establish a Middle School on Ebeye to relieve enrolment pressure at the Ebeye Public Elementary School; • Each primary school in urban centers offers K-5 classes. 	MOE Bureaux of Administration and Logistics, Elementary and Secondary Education	\$500,000 – Laura Middle School \$500,000 – Ebeye Middle School \$200,000 – New teachers
(#2) Recruit and train additional teachers to accommodate expansion of public schools in urban areas and reduce span of multi-grade teaching in rural areas.	MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics; CMI	
(#3) Establish a policy that limits span of multi-grade teaching to not more than three grade levels in one classroom, and allow this practice only in extreme situations.	Minister and Secretary of Education	
(#4) Review feasibility of consolidation of small schools having less than three teachers. Extensive discussion with communities should be part of the review.	MOE Bureaux of Administration and Logistics, Elementary and Secondary Education; Local Governments	

Objective 8

Improve classroom instruction

Indicators

- Establish cadre of “Master Teachers” and develop in-service training programme by December 31 Year 1
- In-service training programme implemented in each of Years 2 to 5 inclusive

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION (cont.)		
Objective 8. Increase efficiency and effectiveness of classroom instruction.	Outcome. Effective use of classroom instruction will increase by Year 4 (as measured by a principal and master teacher questionnaire).	
Implementing Actions	Responsible Agency/Staff	Required Resources

<p>(#1) Beginning in Year 1, establish criteria for what constitutes an efficiently run classroom and distribute criteria to teachers and school principals.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction</p>	<p>No additional resources required</p>
<p>(#2) Beginning in Year 2, provide training to cadre of “master teachers” from each school and put in place strategies, including proposed PREL Toolkit, to monitor classroom instruction to ensure teachers are effectively teaching to the standards.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction; Teacher Training Institutions</p>	
<p>(#3) Set aside half a day each month for in-service teacher training, particularly in large urban schools. Teacher in-servicing can utilize master teachers from school, or bring in outside assistance as needed.</p>	<p>Individual Schools</p>	
<p>(#4) Assist principals in establishing class schedules that ensure that maximum classroom time is spent on instruction.</p>	<p>School Principals</p>	
<p>(#5) Provide training to teachers on how to more efficiently use class time.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction</p>	
<p>(#6) Create a simple teacher observation protocol for principals to use in classroom observation. Provide training on use of protocol ensuring that principals use observation as a means of assisting in the improvement of their teachers.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction</p>	
<p>(#7) Establish a teacher substitute program, beginning with voluntary parent/community members, until such time as funds are allocated for substitute teachers.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics; schools and local governments where applicable</p>	
<p>(#8) Discontinue practice of sending children home when teachers are absent. Institute a buddy system in schools whereby teacher-buddies cover classes for their counterparts. (This creates peer pressure on chronically absent teachers to improve attendance).</p>	<p>Schools; local governments where applicable</p>	

Objective 9

Strengthen management of primary schools

- To strengthen management and operation of primary schools by establishing clear roles and placing accountability on school principals

Indicator

- Criteria for “excellent”, “good”, and “poor” schools developed and published by December 31 Year 1
- Roles and responsibilities of Principals specified and published by December 31 Year 1
- Roles and responsibilities of Principals implemented in Years 2 to 5 inclusive

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION (cont.)		
Objective 9. Strengthen management and operation of primary schools by establishing clear roles and placing accountability on school principals.	Outcome. Improvements in school management will be exhibited by 2003 (as shown by a parent and teacher questionnaire).	
Implementing Actions	Responsible Agency/Staff	Required Resources
(#1) Beginning in Year 1, establish criteria for what constitutes excellent, good, and poor schools and inform the public of these criteria.	MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education	\$150,000 for merit pay program
(#2) Require principals to conduct monthly classroom observations as part of their instructional role, and require that the results of these observations be included as part of the teacher-evaluation process. Both teacher and principal need to sign off on the results as an accurate record of what occurred in the classroom.	MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education	
(#3) Improve teacher morale by establishing and enforcing a teacher-attendance policy by Year 1. Part of the policy should include provision for merit pay each year to outstanding teachers based on their attendance and performance. Teachers with excessive absences should be dealt with according to the provisions of the attendance policy.	MOE Bureaux of Elementary and Secondary Education; Administration and Logistics	

<p>(#4) Establish principal certification program by December Year 3.</p>	<p>All MOE Bureaux;CMI; USP USP; CMI</p>	
<p>(#5) In the interim, provide practical training to school principals that focuses on their role as instructional leaders. This could be done through distance-learning modules based on immediate training needs.</p>		
<p>(#6) Institute a formal principal training program at CMI or USP beginning in Year 2</p>	<p>MOE; USP;CMI</p>	<p>\$100,000 for principal training and establishing</p>
<p>(#7) Strengthen existing communication between schools and MOE administration through weekly single-side-band radio communication with school principals, weekly radio programs, & a monthly newsletter that provides information about activities/plans of the Ministry of Education.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education (CBGS Liaison Officer and Area Supervisors)</p>	<p>principal-certification program</p>
<p>(#8) Evaluate system of distributing supplies and school materials to schools. Explore feasibility of an “MOE Store” where principals and head teachers “shop” for annual school supplies based on school allocations. (This will give more responsibility to school principals to be accountable for their own budgets without really handling any money).</p>	<p>MOE (may require contracting business person to set up system)</p>	

Objective 10

Revise the system of financing private schools

- To develop a revised system of financing private schools based on a per capita enrolment basis and performance standards

Indicator

- Revision completed, decisions made, and system operative by 31 December Year 1

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION (cont.)		
Objective 10. Develop a revised system of financing private schools based on per capita enrolment and performance standards.	Outcome. A revised private school financing plan will be in effect by Year 2.	
Implementing Actions	Responsible Agency/Staff	Required Resources
(#1) Establish baseline data on student performance in private schools, using MOE national standards.	MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics	\$150,000 for private school incentive awards
(#2) Establish a system of financing private schools that establishes a minimum (70%) contribution to each private school based on student enrolment and additional subsidy (30%) based on performance.	MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics	
(#3) Performance-based subsidy will be based on percentages of students performing at or above minimum expectations on MISAT.	MOE Bureaux Administration/Logistics; Curriculum and Instruction	
(#5) Request additional funds from the Nitijela for the private school incentive awards.	Minister of Education	

Secondary Education

Provision of secondary education is an important output of the education system if the skill level of the population as a whole is to be raised.

The secondary education system has a particularly important role to play in developing the skill level of the population. Secondary schooling also has a significant role to play in preparing young people for employment or for further study. Current legislation makes attendance at school compulsory for students aged from 6 to 14. Many young people in the 14-year-old age group are of secondary school age.

The economic and social development of the nation depends upon an effective human resource strategy. A key priority in such a human resource strategy will be increasing the number of secondary education places available to Marshallese young people. This increase is a prerequisite to achieving an increased level of skill in the population at large. While resource constraints make addressing this matter immediately a difficult issue, it is now appropriate for Government to consider what priority should be given to working towards universal access to secondary schooling, once students graduate from primary school.

One cost-efficient way of improving access to secondary education in the short-term may be to provide an incentive to private schools to cater for more secondary students by increasing the subsidy payable to private schools. Over time, consideration should be given to increasing the number of secondary education places available at the three existing public secondary schools.

Et out below are the objectives for secondary education.

Objective 1

Revise the secondary education curriculum

- To revise the secondary education curriculum, with special emphasis on students' acquisition of language arts and higher order thinking skills

Indicator

- New secondary curricula developed and promulgated, as follows:
 - language arts curricula, by 31 March Year 2
 - mathematics curriculum, by 31 March Year 2
 - arts curriculum, by 31 March Year 3
 - science curriculum, by 31 March Year 3
 - social studies curriculum, by 31 March Year 3
 - technology curriculum, by 31 March Year 3
 - health and physical education curriculum, by 31 March Year 3

SECONDARY EDUCATION		
Objective 1. Revise the secondary education curriculum with special emphasis on students' acquisition of language arts and higher order thinking skills.	Outcome. All secondary-level curricula will be revised by 30 March Year 3	
Implementing Actions	Responsible Agency/Staff	Required Resources
<p>(#1) By the end of Year 1, adopt procedures for eliminating vocational education courses from the public high school curriculum in accordance with the following schedule:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade 9—Year 1 • Grade 10—Year 2 • Grade 11—Year 3 • Grade 12—Year 4 	MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education	
<p>(#2) By March 31, Year 1, establish an advisory committee of high school administrators and teachers to recommend courses that should remain in the secondary curriculum at each grade level, and the number of class periods that should be allotted to each.</p>	MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education	
<p>(#3) By March 31, Year 1, disseminate the findings and recommendations of the advisory committee for comment by MOE staff and approval of the Minister of Education.</p>	MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education	
<p>(#4) Subject to approval of the advisory committee's recommendations, design and implement a public information campaign no later than April 30, Year 1, to explain the reasons for and philosophy behind the new secondary school curriculum.</p>	MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education	\$1,500
<p>(#5) By June 30, Year 1, contract with qualified subject matter specialists to review and assess the appropriateness of existing secondary curricula in subjects that have been recommended for inclusion in the public high school curriculum under Implementing Action #10</p>	MOE Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction	\$30,000

<p>(#6) During Year 1, conduct classroom observations in all three public high schools to identify the obstacles that teachers face in implementing the existing secondary curriculum (e.g., lack of instructional resources) and the extent to which these obstacles, rather than inherent weaknesses in the curriculum, have been responsible for the low achievement levels of students.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction; Consultants</p>	
<p>(#7) Collect and examine curricula that have been developed to implement the recommendations of the Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) to determine how higher order thinking skills can be emphasized within the secondary curriculum.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction</p>	
<p>(#8) Identify opportunities for the development of “integrated” curricula that emphasize acquisition of English language skills.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction</p>	
<p>(#9) Select appropriate standardized tests and conduct annual testing of all high school students in language arts and mathematics to facilitate comparison of basic skills proficiency on a year-to-year basis.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics</p>	
<p>(#10) By September 1, Year 1, contract with qualified subject matter specialists to develop new secondary curricula in language arts, mathematics, and other subjects according to the following schedule:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language Arts—Completed by March 31, Year 2 • Mathematics—Completed by March 31, Year 2 • All Others—Completed by March 31, Year 3 	<p>MOE Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction; Consultants</p>	<p>\$50,000</p>
<p>(#11) During June-July Year 2, provide training to teachers in implementing the new language arts and mathematics curricula for Year 3.</p>	<p>Consultants</p>	<p>\$10,000</p>
<p>(#12) During June-July Year 3, provide training to teachers in implementing all other revised curricula for Year 4.</p>	<p>Consultants</p>	<p>\$15,000</p>

Objective 2

Increase secondary school enrolments

- To increase the percentage of grade 8 students who enrol in private or public secondary schools

Indicators

- Baseline data on student performance and retention collected by end of Year 1
- Revision of financing system for private schools completed, decisions made, and system operative by 31 December Year 1

SECONDARY EDUCATION (cont.)		
Objective 2. Increase the percentage of grade 8 students who enrol in private or public secondary schools.	Outcome. By Year 5, 85% of 8 th grade graduates will enroll in public or private high schools—up from 70% in Year 1.	
Implementing Actions	Responsible Agency/Staff	Required Resources
(#1) By March 31, Year 1, convene a meeting of private secondary school principals and administrators to identify constraints, both financial and non-financial, on the expansion of private secondary school enrolment.	MOE	
(#2) During Year 1, collect baseline data on the performance of students enrolled in private elementary schools including, but not limited to, information on students' retention/graduation rates and scores on the High School Entrance Test (HSET).	MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics	
(#3) Calculate the average retention/graduation rate and HSET score for all private elementary schools.	MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics	
(#4) Develop a formula for rewarding private elementary schools that equal or exceed the averages calculated under Implementing Action 3 for improving on their existing retention/graduation rates and HSET results.	MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics	
(#5) Beginning Year 2, increase the per-pupil subsidy for students attending private secondary schools from \$75 to \$100.	MOE	
		\$109,150 (based on private school enrolment in SY 1999-2000)

(#6) Beginning Year 3, increase the per-pupil subsidy for students attending private schools from \$100 to \$150.	MOE	\$327,450
(#7) Beginning Year 4, increase the per-pupil subsidy for students attending private schools from \$150 to \$200.	MOE	\$545,750

Objective 3

Improve high school retention rates

- .To improve the retention rate of students in private and public high schools

Indicators

- .Establish baseline secondary school drop-out, graduation and retention rates for the previous year by 31 March Year 1
- Establish baseline data on secondary school college admission rates and progression to employment rates, for the previous year, by 31 March Year 1
- Monitor data for secondary school drop-out rates, graduation rates, college admission rates, and progression to employment rates for Years 1 to 5, with a target of 5% improvement in school retention rates, school graduation rates, college admission rates and progression to employment rates each year

SECONDARY EDUCATION (cont.)		
Objective 3. Improve the retention rate of students in private and public high schools.	Outcome: By Year 5, 75% of each cohort of students entering the 9 th grade will graduate from high school—up from 53% in Year 1	
Implementing Actions	Responsible Agency/Staff	Required Resources
(#1) Provide explicit policy direction to all MOE and high school staff that a top priority of the Ministry of Education during Years 1 to 5 shall be to increase the retention rate of secondary students.	Minister of Education	
(#2) Beginning with Year 1, collect data on each grade 9 cohort to provide information on the exact number and percentage of students who drop out of school on a semester-to-semester basis or who are chronic “no-shows” during any given semester (Note: This data should distinguish between students who are “real” dropouts and those who, for example, transfer to a private school).	MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics	

<p>(#3) Conduct group interview sessions with a representative sample of truants and dropouts to gain increased understanding of the factors, both academic and non-academic, that lead to chronic absenteeism and withdrawal from school.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics</p>	
<p>(#4) Convene an inter-disciplinary task force including representatives of health, social service, housing, and education agencies to consider and recommend improved methods of referring at-risk students with multiple problems to appropriate agencies and coordinating the provision of services to such clients.</p>	<p>Minister of Education</p>	
<p>(#5) By the end of Year 1, review the enabling legislation for all U.S. federal grants received by the public high schools to identify funds that can be used to augment services to at-risk students and dropouts.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education</p>	
<p>(#6) Using funds from appropriate federal grants (e.g., Title I, Improving America’s Schools Act) or local sources, in Year 1 hire at least two new counselors for MIHS and one for JHS to develop and implement a counseling, guidance, referral, and retrieval program for truants and potential dropouts.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics</p>	<p>\$45,000- \$60,000 (3 positions)</p>
<p>(#7) During Year 1, develop an early warning system to identify likely dropouts before they leave school on the basis of unexcused absences, grades, and other relevant factors.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education</p>	
<p>(#8) In Year 2, establish a task force of key educators and community leaders to spearhead a national campaign to persuade and train parents to take the lead role in ensuring that their children attend school on a daily basis.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education</p>	
<p>(#9) At the beginning of Year 4, establish outreach centers in the two Majuro communities with the highest numbers of truants and dropouts to provide on-site services to at-risk youth.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education</p>	<p>\$25,000 (2 Outreach Coordinators)</p>

(#10) Establish a new career education and guidance program at the public high schools that places increased emphasis on services that will assist students gain access to external job markets and training resources after graduating from high school.	MOE Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction	\$30,000 (2 new counselor positions at MIHS and JHS) \$15,000 (materials and supplies)
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Objective 4

Establish a National Vocational Training Institute

- . To establish a National Vocational Training Institute to provide technical vocational training instruction for youth who are not admitted to or drop out of high school

Indicator

- .Institute established, staff appointed and students enrolled

SECONDARY EDUCATION (cont.)		
Objective 4. Establish a National Vocational Training Institute to provide technical-vocational education instruction for youth who are not admitted to or drop out of high school.	Outcome. The National Vocational Training Institute will begin admitting students in Year 3.	
Implementing Actions	Responsible Agency/Staff	Required Resources
(#1) By March 31, Year 1, develop draft specifications for the proposed National Vocational Training Institute (NVTI) including information on: (1) target group(s); (2) instructional programs; (3) governance; (4) roles and responsibilities of cooperating agencies and programs; (5) organizational structure; (6) funding; and (7) location(s) and facilities.	MOE, ADB Secretariat	Any new resources needed to carry out the implementing actions for Objective 4 should be derived from the pending Asian Development Bank (ADB) loan to restructure the RMI vocational education system.
(#2) During Year 1, seek formal legislative approval for the establishment of the NVTI which shall serve as a secondary-level option for youth who are not admitted to or drop out of the regular public high schools.	Minister of Education	
(#3) Conduct an inventory of all current vocational providers and programs operating in the RMI including community-based enterprises such as Waan Aelon in Majel.	MOE, Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education	

<p>(#4) Organize and convene a conference of vocational education providers no later than March 31, Year 1, to review draft specifications for the proposed NVTI and solicit comments and input from participants.</p>	<p>MOE, ADB Secretariat</p>	
<p>(#5) By April 30, Year 1, appoint an interim Governing Board, modeled on the existing RMI Workforce Investment Board, to develop operational plans for the Institute that address the specifications developed under Implementing Action #1. Detailed operational plans shall be completed by October 1, Year 1.</p>	<p>Minister of Education</p>	
<p>(#6) Conduct a labor market survey to identify trades and occupations for which demand is high due to replacement or expansion needs and which contribute to the nation’s economic development objectives.</p>	<p>National Training Council</p>	
<p>(#7) By October 31, Year 1, contract with a suitably qualified firm to develop elementary, intermediate, and advanced training curricula in each of the high demand trades or occupations identified through Implementing Action #6.</p>	<p>NVTI Governing Board</p>	
<p>(#8) In conjunction with Implementing Action #7, identify the skill standards and competencies that students will need to achieve before promotion from one level of trade training to the next.</p>	<p>National Training Council</p>	
<p>(#9) Beginning in Year 2 and continuing through Year 5, admit a cohort of 100 grade 8 completers and/or high school dropouts each year to trade-training programs at the elementary level.</p>	<p>NVTI Administration</p>	

Post-Secondary Education

Provision of post-secondary (tertiary) education is an output of the education system that potentially affects everyone over the age of 14 in the Marshall Islands. The development of a high-wage high-skill economy depends upon delivery of effective tertiary education and training.

The College of the Marshall Islands (CMI) has a critical role to play in the provision of post-secondary education. CMI has a well-developed and comprehensive Strategic Plan which explores in depth its general mission, objectives for fulfilling and developing that mission, and the challenges that confront that institution. Long-range planning is a dynamic process at the College, and it is currently focusing on how to implement its plan and make the plan reflect changing realities.

The University of the South Pacific at its Centre in Majuro is also making a valuable contribution to provision of tertiary education in the Marshall Islands.

The National Training Council currently has a legislative role to provide for vocational and other training and human resource development for the Republic. It has developed a four-year Strategic Plan as a framework to guide its work.

All these agencies need to work co-operatively together to improve the delivery of the broad range of post-secondary education and training that is required in future. In order to perform well, the economy of the Marshall Islands needs educated people, including highly-trained apprentices, technicians and skilled workers. Better co-ordination and integration of initiatives in vocational education and training would bring about improved results. The provision of tertiary education and training, including the integration of initiatives to deliver vocational education and training, is a wider issue that requires more in-depth analysis. It would be helpful if the Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands was to initiate a review of tertiary education and training in order to improve the effectiveness of programme delivery and outcomes as part of a wider human resource development strategy.

The key focus of this Strategic Plan in the post-secondary (tertiary) sector of education is on teacher education. The purpose of this focus is to improve the quality of teaching as a means of raising standards of student achievement. It is a goal of this Strategic Plan to increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession and expand the cadre of trained teacher professionals, through elevating the importance of their role, strengthening recruitment and motivation efforts, and increasing salaries.

Objective 1

Review post-secondary education and training

- To review post-secondary technical and academic education and training

Indicator

- The Government will put in place arrangements to evaluate

- the articulation between all post-secondary institutions and agencies in the RMI
- teacher education programmes in the RMI
- programmes, resources, administration and facilities at the College of the Marshall Islands
- the implications of change on the College of the Marshall Islands

by 31 December Year 1

- Develop a Strategic Plan for post-secondary education and training in the RMI by 31 December Year 1

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION		
Objective 1. Review post-secondary technical and academic education and training.	Outcome. By December 31, Year 1, arrangements will have been put in place to evaluate (1) articulation between the CMI and RMI high schools; (2) articulation between all post-secondary institutions and agencies in the RMI; (3) teacher education programs in the RMI; and (4) programs, resources, administration, and facilities at the CMI.	
Implementing Actions	Responsible Agency/Staff	Required Resources
(#1) Establish a permanent Academic Planning Committee (APC) which shall report to the President of the College of the Marshall Islands at least annually on progress in implementing the College's <i>Academic Development Plan, 1999-2008</i> .	College of the Marshall Islands (CMI)	\$20,000
(#2) In keeping with the 1997 WASC Accreditation Report, develop an effective institutional research and analysis capability that provides data for use in long-range planning and allocation decisions.	CMI	
(#3) Involve the APC in the preparation of the CMI <i>Annual Plan</i> in order that the <i>Annual Plan</i> can serve as a regular update to and revision of the long-range <i>Academic Development Plan</i> .	CMI	

(#4) Identify quantifiable measures that will enable CMI to assess its progress in achieving the goals and objectives of its long-range <i>Development Plan</i> .	CMI	
(#5) Establish quarterly meetings of representatives of all post-secondary education and training providers in the RMI (e.g., CMI, USP, PREL, and NTC) to share information about program effectiveness and long-range plans; encourage all participating institutions to prepare strategic development documents similar in scope and content to the <i>CMI Academic Development Plan</i> .	CMI University of the South Pacific- Majuro PREL National Training Council	

Objective 2

Implement the official teacher certification requirements

- To implement the teacher certification requirements set out in the *Education Personnel Management System*

Indicator

- Education Personnel Management System* revised, and copies of the updated version sent to all schools and tertiary institutions, with Ministry of Education guidance and timeline for implementation, by 31 December Year 1
- Teacher Certification Register developed and operational by 31 December Year 1

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION (cont.)		
Objective 2. Implement the teacher certification requirements set out in the <i>Education Personnel Management System</i> .	Outcome. By Year 5, increase the percentage of teachers who meet current RMI certification requirements to 70% for elementary teachers and 90% for secondary teachers.	
Implementing Actions	Responsible Agency/Staff	Required Resources
(#1) Design and establish a teacher certification database that provides information on the certification status of all teachers in the RMI.	MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education	

<p>(#2) Among teachers whose highest educational qualification is a high school diploma, calculate the number who have earned 0-15 credits towards an associate's degree, 16-30 credits, 31-45 credits, and 46+ credits.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education</p>	
<p>(#3) At the beginning of each school year, provide schools with a summary of the certification status of their teachers and current MOE rules and regulations on teacher certification.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education</p>	
<p>(#4) Encourage all school principals to advise teachers of their certification status and assist those who have not met minimum requirements for the Professional Certificate I in developing individualized education plans.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education</p>	
<p>(#5) By the beginning of the 2nd semester of each school year, require all schools to submit the individualized education plan prepared by each provisionally certificated teacher along with evidence of enrollment in at least two courses leading to permanent certification.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education</p>	
<p>(#6) Examine current teacher certification rules and regulations for advancement (e.g., Section 14.35.6c) to clarify the circumstances under which the Provisional Certificate will be revoked.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education</p>	
<p>(#7) In collaboration with Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL), implement the Building Teaching Capacity (BTC) program on a pilot basis to provide improved access to in-service instructional programs for outer island teachers.</p>	<p>MOE; CMI; PREL</p>	

Objective 3

Improve in-service teacher training programs

- To increase the quality and effectiveness of in-service teacher training programs

Indicator

- Initiate and implement a Master/apprentice model of teacher training by September 30 Year 2
- A programme incorporating appropriate teaching resources and in-service

implement the new Marshallese primary school curriculum, for 20% of the teaching work force each year, from Year 1 to Year 5

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION (cont.)		
Objective 3. Increase the quality and effectiveness of in-service teacher training programs.	Outcome. By Year 2, establish procedures to evaluate and document the impact of in-service training programs on classroom activities and student achievement; by Year 3, begin implementing program improvement measures consistent with the findings and recommendations of these evaluation studies.	
Implementing Actions	Responsible Agency/Staff	Required Resources
(#1) Conduct a survey of all school principals and other key informants to identify and prioritize the in-service training needs of elementary and secondary teachers in the RMI.	MOE Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction	
(#2) Prepare annually a master calendar of in-service training activities supported under U.S. federal grant programs and other sources of financial assistance for distribution to all public schools and teachers at the beginning of each school year.	MOE Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction	
(#3) Establish a permanent committee of MOE and CMI staff responsible for managing U.S. federal grant programs to ensure that professional development activities supported under these grants reflect the training priorities of the Ministry.	MOE Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction	
(#4) Ensure that all in-service training providers, both internal and external, are aware of and adhere to the Ministry's in-service training priorities.	MOE Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction	
(#5) Provide release time and travel funds for a small corps of itinerant Master teachers who will provide training to outer island teachers through demonstration, modeling, team teaching, and similar in-class methods.	MOE Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction	
		\$60,000 per year (assumes 3 Master teachers each serving for 1 semester + travel funds)

(#6) Emphasize the recruitment of overseas teacher-volunteers who are able and willing to devote at least 25 percent of their time to the in-service training of Marshallese teachers.	MOE Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction	
(#7) Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of all existing in-service training programs in the RMI to determine their impact on classroom activities and student achievement.	MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics	

Objective 4

Increase numbers entering pre-service teacher education from high school.

- To increase the number of Marshallese high school graduates opting to pursue a career in teaching.

Indicator

- Number of Marshallese high school graduates enrolling in pre-service teacher education courses increases by 20% each year from Year 1 to Year 5
- Number of Marshallese high school graduates completing pre-service teacher education courses increases by 10% each year from Year 1 to Year 5

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION (cont.)		
Objective 4. Increase the number of Marshallese high school graduates opting to pursue a career in teaching.	Outcome. By Year 5, ensure that the number of Marshallese high school graduates opting for a career in teaching is equal to the annual demand for new teachers due to either expansion or replacement needs.	
Implementing Actions	Responsible Agency/Staff	Required Resources
(#1) On the basis of 1999 RMI Census data, estimate enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools from Year 1 through Year 5.	MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education	
(#2) On the basis of mandated student-teacher ratios and estimates of the number of current teachers who will retire or leave the profession during Year 1 – Year 5, calculate annual demand for new teachers over the next five years.	MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education	

<p>(#3) Continue the MIHS Teacher Academy using alternative sources of funding once existing School-to-Work Opportunities Act support ends; expand Academy enrollment until the number of participants equals or exceeds annual demand for new teachers.</p>	<p>Marshall Islands High School; MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education</p>	<p>Pacific Vocational Education Improvement Program (PVEIP) funds</p>
<p>(#4) Initiate discussions between representatives of the College of the Marshall Islands and the University of the South Pacific on the design of a collaborative baccalaureate-level program in education; finalize specifications for the new program by June 30, 2001.</p>	<p>CMI; USP; MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education</p>	
<p>(#5) Request the RMI Scholarship Board to award scholarships for post-secondary studies in education in a number equal to half the projected annual demand for teachers during 2000-5.</p>	<p>Minister of Education</p>	
<p>(#6) Conduct “talent searches” on the outer islands to identify and recruit prospective teachers among new high school graduates.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education</p>	
<p>(#7) Design and implement a residential program at CMI to prepare these recruits to serve as teachers upon their return to the outer islands.</p>	<p>CMI</p>	

Objective 5

Improve pre-service teacher education

- To improve the quality of pre-service teacher education programs in the RMI

Indicator

- All pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes at the College of the Marshall Islands will incorporate techniques to assist teachers to manage multi-grade classrooms, by 30 September Year 1

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION (cont.)		
Objective 5. Improve the quality of pre-service teacher education programs in the RMI	Outcome. By Year 2, establish procedures to evaluate and document the quality of pre-service teacher education programs in the RMI; by Year 3, begin implementing program improvement measures consistent with the findings and recommendations of these evaluation reports.	
Implementing Actions	Responsible Agency/Staff	Required Resources
(#1) Prepare a separate long-range development plan for the CMI Department of Education with special emphasis on strategies to alleviate the critical shortage of Marshallese education faculty at the College.	CMI Department of Education	\$30,000 per semester
(#2) Recruit new CMI faculty among the increasing number of RMI secondary teachers who are earning advanced degrees in education.	CMI Department of Education	
(#3) Offer the University of the South Pacific's Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Teaching (GCTT) on an in-service basis to qualified secondary teachers interested in pursuing careers at the college level.	USP-Majuro; CMI; MOE Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction	
(#4) Conduct negotiations with off-shore institutions such as the University of the South Pacific and Guam Community College to determine their interest in and capability of establishing Majuro-based associate-level teacher education programs.	Minister of Education	
(#5) Identify institutions, such as San Diego State University, that provide opportunities to earn degrees in education via the internet and examine the feasibility of offering such programs to Marshallese pre-service students.	MOE, Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction	
(#6) On the basis of activities and progress during Years 1 to 3, develop a policy statement on whether the urgent need for more teachers in the RMI shall be met primarily by internal or external pre-service providers.	MOE, CMI	

Objective 6

Allocate scholarships as preparation for a teaching career

- To allocate tagged scholarships as preparation for a teaching career on an annual basis (these may be taken up at the College of the Marshall Islands)

Indicator

- Allocate the first 5 scholarships for tertiary study leading to preparation for a teaching career by 30 September Year 1, and make an allocation of at least 5 scholarships for teaching annually thereafter

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION (cont.)		
Objective 6. Allocate tagged scholarships as preparation for a teaching career on an annual basis (these may be taken up at the College of the Marshall Islands)	Outcome. In Year 1, the Scholarships Board has established teacher education as a key priority and has made a policy decision to allocate a designated number of scholarships each year (tenable at the College of the Marshall Islands) for pre-service teacher education. In Years 2 to 5, these scholarships are taken up annually.	
Implementing Actions	Responsible Agency/Staff	Required Resources
(#1) 10 <check> scholarships allocated for tertiary study leading to preparation for a teaching career, by 30 September Year 1	Scholarships Board	\$50,000 <cost to be checked>
(#2) At least 10 additional <check> scholarships for tertiary study leading to preparation for a teaching career allocated annually in Years 2 to 5, and programme maintained thereafter (funds to be structured as a loan ; fees payable directly to CMI; remainder allocated to recipients in 3 phases – 1/3 at Phase 1 upon award; 1/3 at Phase 2 upon completion of qualification; 1/3 at Phase 3 upon completion of 2 years teaching)	Scholarships Board	\$50,000 Year1 \$100,000 Yr 2 \$150,000 Yr 3 \$200,000 Yr 4 \$250,000 Yr 5 \$250,000 annually thereafter

Making the Education System More Effective

The report *Developing a Strategic Plan for the Ministry of Education* that accompanies this Strategic Plan includes a number of recommendations that apply across the various sectors of the education system. These recommendations apply across two or more education sectors, and have therefore been grouped in this section of the Strategic Plan for convenience. Proposed objectives and indicators to give effect to these cross-sector recommendations are set out below.

Objective 1

Implement a management information system

- To design and implement a management information system (This system will assist MOE staff in (1) monitoring progress in achieving the objectives of the Strategic Plan; (2) preparing annual performance reports on U.S. federal education grants; (3) identifying emerging issues in education; and (4) developing or revising education policies at the ministerial level.)

Indicators

- Management Information System established by December 31 Year 1
- Progress of Education Strategic Plan monitored annually
- Annual performance reports on U.S. federal education grants completed by March 31 in each of Years 2 to 6
- Report on policies and issues in education submitted annually to Minister of Education by December 31 of each year (Years 1 to 5)

SYSTEM EFFECTIVENESS		
Objective 1. Design and implement a management information system that can assist MOE staff in (1) monitoring progress in achieving the objectives of the <u>Strategic Plan</u> ; (2) preparing annual performance reports on U.S. federal education grants; (3) identifying emerging issues in education; and (4) developing or revising education policies at the ministerial level.	Outcome. Implement the new MOE management information system by December 31, Year 1.	
Implementing Actions	Responsible Agency/Staff	Required Resources

<p>(#1) Establish, within the MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics, the position of Senior Management Information Specialist to take the lead role in carrying out Implementing Actions 3-9 below.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics</p>	<p>\$25-30,000 per year</p>
<p>(#2) Recruit for and fill the position of Senior Management Information Specialist no later than December 31, Year 1.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics</p>	
<p>(#3) Identify all data collection activities currently underway in the Ministry of Education and compile a master list of the kinds of data that are available, regularly or intermittently, through these efforts.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics</p>	
<p>(#4) Compile a master list of the kinds of data needed to construct a statistical profile of education in the RMI and monitor progress in achieving the objectives of the Strategic Plan.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics</p>	
<p>(#5) Review the enabling legislation for all U.S. federal education grants, identify the mandated performance indicators for these grants, and determine the kinds of data that are needed to report on the MOE’s success in addressing these indicators.</p>	<p>MOE Elementary and Secondary Education</p>	
<p>(#6) Identify gaps in existing data collection activities by comparing the master list developed through Implementing Action 3 with the data requirements compiled under Implementing Actions 4 and 5.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics</p>	
<p>(#7) Establish strategies and timelines for filling these gaps during June Year 1 - June Year 2.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics</p>	
<p>(#8) Review procedures for collecting all currently available education data to ensure their accuracy and reliability.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics</p>	
<p>(#9) Clarify the roles and responsibilities of all education-related agencies (e.g., MOE, CMI, the Scholarship Board, and individual schools) in collecting the data needed to create a comprehensive management information system.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics</p>	

<p>(#10) In light of the unexpected decrease in elementary student enrollment in Year 1, place special emphasis on reviewing the process for collecting school enrollment data to ensure that such data is accurate.</p> <p>(#11) Beginning October Year 1, conduct an analysis of school enrollment data in October of each school year with information on increases or decreases in student enrollment for each school and grade level, prevailing student-teacher ratios, and other factors.</p> <p>(#12) Using the capabilities of the new management information system, establish an annual program of policy analyses that targets 3-6 key issues per year for in-depth review and consideration by the Ministry.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics</p> <p>MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics</p> <p>MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics</p>	
<p>(#13) In Year 2, conduct research and/or policy analysis on the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy implications of declining school enrollment on the continued employment or transfer of teachers in such schools; • Barriers to the recruitment and retention of teachers in the Marshall Islands; • Effectiveness of the Education Performance Management System; • Impact of permitting tertiary institutions to charge tuition fees while providing government loans to students to cover these costs. 	<p>MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics</p>	

Objective 2

Improve communication between the MOE and stakeholders

- To improve communication between the MOE and stakeholders, including schools, parents, local school boards, employers, and other constituencies that are critical to the operation and improvement of the public education system.)

Indicators

- Annual survey results report 90% of customers “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with MOE communication on a 4-point rating scale from “very satisfied” to “very dissatisfied”

SYSTEM EFFECTIVENESS (cont.)		
Objective 2. Improve communication between the MOE and schools, parents, local school boards, employers, and other constituencies that are critical to the operation and improvement of the public education system.	Outcome. By June 30, Year 2, schools, parents, employers, local school boards, and other education stakeholders will report substantially improved communication with the Ministry of Education and its senior officers.	
Implementing Actions	Responsible Agency/Staff	Required Resources
(#1) Establish, within the MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics, the position of Senior Public Information Officer to organize and conduct activities that will improve communication between the MOE and its major constituencies.	MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics	\$25-30,000 per year
(#2) Under the leadership of the Public Information Officer, begin publishing a quarterly newsletter on MOE activities for distribution to all schools by March 31, 2001, and every three months thereafter.	MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics	

Objective 3

Improve budget management.

- To strengthen the Ministry of Education’s ability to manage, monitor, and increase the effectiveness of its operating and capital budgets.

Indicators

- Integrated planning and budgeting system in place by December 31 Year 1

SYSTEM EFFECTIVENESS (cont.)		
Objective 3. Strengthen the Ministry of Education’s ability to manage, monitor, and increase the effectiveness of its operating and capital budgets.	Outcome. By the end of the plan period, the MOE will have established an integrated planning and budgeting system to govern and direct its allocation of financial resources.	
Implementing Actions	Responsible Agency/Staff	Required Resources
(#1) Implement the recommendations of the ADB Civil Service Reform Project by developing annual MOE budgets that link projected expenditures to relevant sub-sectors of the education system (i.e., elementary, secondary, tertiary, and central administration) and provide detailed information on the cost elements that make up total expenditures in each sub-sector.	MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics	\$25-30,000 per year
(#2) Consider adopting U.S. ED guidelines for the development of discretionary grant budgets and budget narratives in the preparation of future MOE budget submissions to the Nitijela.	MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics	
(#3) Establish, within the MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education, the position of Federal Programs Manager to provide leadership and guidance in the preparation/monitoring of work plans and budgets for U.S. ED grant applications.	MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education	
(#4) Review the enabling legislation for all U.S. ED grants and prepare a summary of the purposes and allowable activities under each grant.	MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education	
(#5) Align these purposes and activities with the established objectives of the MOE Strategic Plan noting any instances where U.S. grant funds cannot be used in a manner that is consistent with and supports the Strategic Plan.	MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education	
(#6) Develop a new MOE policy requiring grant-funded projects to place primary emphasis on activities and expenditures that support achievement of the MOE’s strategic objectives.	Minister of Education	

<p>(#7) In cooperation with the Ministry of Finance, examine current procedures for the drawdown of federal grant funds to ensure that these funds are available to project managers when and where the ED-approved work plans require.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Administration and Finance; Ministry of Finance</p>	
<p>(#8) Organize and conduct an annual meeting of federal project directors to share information about work plans and budgets and identify any overlaps or inconsistencies among them.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education</p>	

Objective 4

Improve community responsibility for education.

- To implement measures to increase the responsibility and authority of individual communities and schools for strengthening the public education system.

Indicator

- 50% of all public schools in the RMI will report in a survey that they have undertaken community-based projects or activities to improve the academic achievement of their students.

SYSTEM EFFECTIVENESS (cont.)		
<p>Objective 4. Implement measures to increase the responsibility and authority of individual communities and schools for strengthening the public education system.</p>	<p>Outcome. By the end of the plan period, at least 50% of all public schools in the RMI will report that they have undertaken community-based projects or activities to improve the academic achievement of their students.</p>	
Implementing Actions	Responsible Agency/Staff	Required Resources
<p>(#1) Carry out the Implementing Actions cited under Elementary Education—Objective 6 to revitalize the Community-Based Governance Scheme.</p>	<p>MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education</p>	<p>No additional resources required</p>
<p>(#2) Prepare and adopt a ministerial-level policy requiring that a fixed percentage of funds for any U.S. education grant be used to support demonstration or pilot projects at individual schools that are consistent with the overall purposes of the grant.</p>	<p>Minister of Education</p>	

(#3) Issue credits to all schools for use in purchasing school supplies and materials at a centralized school shop organized and managed by the MOE.	MOE Bureau of Administration and Logistics	
(#4) Design and develop an RFP process for use in soliciting demonstration project applications from interested schools.	MOE Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education	

Objective 5

Monitor student and teacher numbers

- To develop an early warning monitoring system to detect and analyse trends over time in student and teacher numbers

Indicator

- Monitoring system in place within the Ministry of Education by 31 December 2000
- Regular reports received at six monthly intervals from 31 March 2001 onwards by the Secretary of Education

Objective 6

Develop policy on falling rolls

- To develop transparent policy on employment of teachers where school rolls are rising or falling

Indicator

- Policy developed and approved by Minister of Education, and implemented by 30 September 2000
- Moratorium in place on further employment of teachers unless specifically approved by Secretary of Education by June 30 2000

Objective 7

Review staffing policy of schools

- To conduct a staffing review of numbers of teachers employed at each school in relation to school roll numbers, and to investigate the reasons for the sharp decline in numbers of school enrolments in 2000

Indicator

- Review completed, report made to Minister of Education, and recommendations actioned by 31 March Year 1

Objective 8

Develop a formula-based system of school funding

- To develop a formula-based system of funding for schools based on student enrolments

Indicator

- Formula-based system of funding developed and approved by the Minister of Education by 31 March 2001, and implemented as a trial in selected schools for the 2001/2002 school year, with full implementation in the 2002/2003 school year

Objective 9

Investigate alternative policy for funding post-secondary education

- To develop policy on providing tuition subsidies for tertiary education by permitting tertiary education institutions to charge tuition fees to students to provide the balance of funding, with a parallel policy developed on access to student loans

Indicator

- Policy developed and approved by Minister of Education, and implemented by 30 September 2002

Objective 10

Undertake research into teacher recruitment and retention

- To undertake research into teacher recruitment and retention in the Marshall Islands, including a systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of the implementation of the Education Performance Management System

Indicators

- Research contract let, or arrangements to undertake research programme in place, by 31 December 2000
- Research report, and evaluation of the Education Performance Management System, completed by 30 June 2001

Specific Strategies for Change

Nine specific strategies for change are:

- Improving teacher qualifications
- Implementing a system of teacher evaluation
- Supporting the Curriculum
- Improving the Effectiveness of the RMI Scholarships Scheme
- Restructuring of the Ministry of Education
- Developing our people
- Business systems and process improvement
- Relationship management
- Aligning resources with changing priorities

Improving Teacher Qualifications

The single most important issue to be addressed to achieve an improvement of educational standards is improvement in the standard of teacher education and training. Improving the quality of the teaching work force is the key to improving future education performance.

Teacher capacity in the Republic of the Marshall Islands is inadequate. The standard of teacher education and training in the Marshall Islands needs to be raised. Improving the capacity of the teaching work force could effect an improvement in standards of teaching. Most of the lack of teaching capacity can be traced back to lack of formal, appropriate teaching qualifications. Lifting the standard of qualifications of teachers across the board would have a dramatic impact on the quality of education offered to students in the Marshall Islands, and would therefore raise standards of achievement by students.

A “Circuit-breaker” program to improve teacher qualifications is needed.

Quite simply, the effectiveness of education in the Marshall Islands is at risk because too many of its primary school teachers are insufficiently qualified. The priority area in the Marshall Islands for targeting resources for improving educational standards is the elementary school, and the quality of teachers in the elementary schools is the key factor in bringing about educational improvement.

It is desirable that all teachers hold a 4-year teaching qualification as a base minimum

future is unrealistic in the Marshall Islands, as it will take some years to increase the current low percentage (4%) of primary teachers with four-year degrees.

Realistically, however, the establishment of a four-year teaching degree at the CMI is a longer-term goal. The College of the Marshall Islands does not currently offer a four-year teaching degree. Such a programme could initially be established through a conjoint arrangement between CMI and a university. The University of the South Pacific, which already offers distance education programmes from its Majuro campus, could be considered as a potential partner.

Efforts have been made in the past to upgrade the qualifications of teaching staff through staff development exercises, through in-service training, and through provision of scholarships to enable teachers to upgrade their qualifications to either the Associate of Science (two-year) degree, or the Bachelor of Arts (four-year) degree. While these efforts need to be continued, on their own they are taking too long to make a substantial difference.

Those currently teaching who do not meet minimum requirements must upgrade their skills and qualifications. Teachers cannot simply be terminated because they lack a qualification, given that they were employed by the RMI knowing that they had limited qualifications. However, given a reasonable time, the encouragement of their employer and the availability of the needed course in the RMI, a policy needs to be adopted that teachers who fail to attain or satisfactorily progress towards the necessary qualification will be terminated.

The pragmatic position is that those directly responsible for improvement of educational standards, the teachers, need, as an absolute minimum, a two-year degree qualification. The minimum requirement for teacher certification for new teachers must be completion of a two-year Associate of Science degree in elementary education. This requirement must be enforced. To enforce it requires the urgent production of more teachers with the necessary minimum qualification.

The numbers of new teachers each year at the College of the Marshall Islands who meet graduation standards and can enter the teaching service are not sufficient to meet the country's needs. Additional responses will be required to produce more teachers who meet an acceptable standard of quality.

The initiatives of new providers such as the University of the South Pacific in developing teacher education programmes will assist in meeting this critical national need.

Standards of Teacher Education Programs

While considerable effort has been invested in the past in strategies for improving teacher education, it is clear that improvement in teacher standards has been slow. The problems appear to be systemic. The data already analysed indicates that too many teachers are still inadequately trained and qualified, and the measures taken to date to improve the situation seem not to have been effective enough to increase substantially the numbers of well-qualified teachers in schools. The number of new graduates qualified to begin teaching each year has not been large. The practical difficulties faced by schools (particularly schools in remote atolls) in recruiting staff appear to

teachers. Renewal, revitalisation and improvement of the teaching work force are challenges that will take time to meet.

In order to ensure that appropriate standards of pre-service teacher education are maintained, a mechanism for external moderation of teacher education programs in the Marshall Islands is required. It is recommended that an external moderator with expertise in teacher education and some in-depth knowledge of Marshallese conditions be appointed, and that regular checks and visitations are made by the moderator. The purpose of such an appointment would be to provide constant regular external monitoring of the curriculum and teaching procedures at those providers in the RMI that offer teacher education programmes. This procedure would help to ensure that the standards of RMI teacher education programs are internationally comparable, transparent and credible.

Since appropriate entry standards to study for a teaching qualification are often not achieved by Marshallese students by the end of high school, it will be necessary for tertiary educational institutions to establish an appropriate academic benchmark for entry to a course of teacher education and training. Those who do not meet this entry standard will need to have additional tuition through bridging courses and the like, such as may be provided through the proposed Skilling the Nation program, described in detail elsewhere.

The Teacher Rotation Program.

To make a real difference, a circuit-breaker is required. The teacher rotation programme that is outlined below has been developed as a practical way of bringing about a dramatic improvement in teacher qualifications in the elementary school.

The Problem

There is a serious teacher-shortage problem in the RMI. The College of the Marshall Islands is ready to do everything in its power to assist in alleviating this problem. CMI routinely offers college-level coursework to the 43% of the public elementary school teachers who lack even an associates' degree in education, in order to help them continue their education. During the summer semester, CMI conducts a broad range of degree courses designed especially for school teachers who require in-service training. During the regular school year, CMI offers additional credit-level courses for these in-service teachers. These courses are offered in the late afternoon and evenings, after normal teaching hours, so that in-service teachers may take them.

Despite these efforts, most in-service teachers make slow progress on their degrees. Even if in-service teachers take two evening courses each semester during the regular academic term, followed by a full load during the summer, they can expect to get only 12 academic credits, at the most. Since the current CMI A.S.Ed. Program is 93 credits, completing a degree at that rate can easily take almost a decade.

The notion of introducing accelerated teacher education and training programmes therefore has appeal, provided quality standards of teacher education are maintained. The barrier to this proposal is that many of the prospective teacher trainees need considerable additional academic help before they can achieve the standards required for a practising teacher, and this upskilling cannot be easily accomplished in a short

The proposed Skilling the Nation Program suggested as part of the Human Resources Development Master Plan should provide assistance to those teachers who need academic help before they will be ready to proceed to study for a two-year Associate of Science degree qualification. Successful completion of the Skilling the Nation programme would mean that inadequately qualified teachers would then meet the required standard for entry into a two-year teaching degree qualification. Even under this scenario, however, such teachers are likely to require three years of full-time study to achieve an Associate of Science two-year degree qualification.

Different models of teacher training which incorporate a mix of on-job and off-job training, associated with a period of probationary teaching for trainee teachers, with supervision and mentoring from experienced “Master Teachers”, may also be worthy of consideration as a strategy for improving over time the qualifications of the teaching stock.

Project Design

The following “teacher rotation” program of dramatic action is proposed:

- A “Marshalllese Teacher Corps” should be established, perhaps building on the Teacher Academy currently existing at Marshall Islands High School. High school graduates who participate in the Teacher Academy and enroll in the “Teacher Corps” would be promised public school teaching jobs upon graduation from high school and successful completion of a summer-long Emergency Teaching Certification Program at CMI.
- The Emergency Teaching Certification Program would give students an accelerated course in teaching methods, behavior management, and educational psychology. This training program would be preparatory to, and not a substitute for, college credit-level work. The training would lead to a temporary, emergency certification for successful program graduates, which would entitle them to teach in the public elementary schools for one academic year.
- “Teacher Corps” teachers would replace, for one year, a regular in-service teacher who lacks at least an associate degree. “Teacher Corps” teachers would be paid the regular salary of entry-level public elementary school teachers in the RMI. Regular in-service teachers who are replaced by “Teacher Corps” teachers would be required to attend CMI full-time during the summer semester, the following academic year, and the summer semester after that. These teachers should be paid their regular salary and benefits during the time they are studying full-time at CMI. It should be a contractual obligation that they make satisfactory progress toward their degree during this period. They must take a full load of courses, at whatever level they are placed, and they must pass all of the courses for which they are registered, as a condition of their continued employment with MOE.
- At the end of first academic year, in-service teachers who have been attending CMI should be rotated back into their regular classroom for the second year, while their “Teacher Corps” substitute rotates to CMI to work towards the A.S.Ed. degree. “Teacher Corps” teachers should be guaranteed full pay

- At the end of the second year, “Teacher Corps” teachers who have been studying at CMI would have their emergency teaching certification renewed for another year. They would then rotate back to the public elementary school classroom to substitute for the same, or other, in-service teachers who are continuing their education at CMI. The system can continue indefinitely, with in-service and “Teacher Corps” teachers alternating one year teaching and one year at CMI, until such time as sufficient teachers have completed the associate degree.

Resource Requirements

To accomplish this program, CMI would need additional funding.

- Funding for additional instructors in Teacher Education and related disciplines. The number of additional instructors depends upon the number of teachers participating in the proposed program. This funding can be provided by the tuition and fee payments of the students in this proposed program. Each student taking a full load of courses at CMI pays roughly \$1140 in tuition. If there were, for example, fifty students participating in the program, over and above the regular CMI student population, that would generate \$57,000 in additional tuition at CMI, approximately enough to pay the salaries and benefits of two additional full-time instructors at the College.
- Funding for additional classroom and faculty office space. Classrooms and faculty offices are already in short supply at CMI. During peak times, all available classrooms are fully utilized. Two or more instructors commonly share even very small faculty offices. This means that CMI cannot realistically plan to expand its programs unless funds are available to build new classrooms and faculty offices. CMI estimates that it needs at least twelve additional classrooms and ten additional faculty offices to meet immediate needs and needs projected over the next five years. Plans are under way for the Asian Development Bank to fund the construction of five additional classrooms for use in the CMI GED and vocational programs. The construction of seven more general-purpose classrooms, designed to accommodate approximately thirty students each, and ten additional faculty offices would allow CMI to continue meeting projected student demand for all of its academic programs, including those designed for pre-service teachers, as well as serving the additional needs of in-service teachers in this proposed program.

To implement this program, the Ministry of Education would also need substantial additional funds, as follows.

- Salaries for in-service teachers taking courses at CMI (since these teachers are already on the payroll, their salaries would not be additional, but would need to be maintained for the period of the upgrading course)
- Salaries for the “Teacher Corps” substitutes;
- Housing for in-service teachers from outer atolls who come to Maiuro to

- Housing for “Teacher Corps” teachers who are assigned to outer atolls and who lack housing on those atolls.

Estimated Costs

The costs of this program have been provisionally assessed at \$10,250,000 for capital requirements and \$5,000,000 for operational costs, as broadly outlined above.

Collaboration Between CMI and USP

Other providers of teacher education could be encouraged to establish alternative teacher education programmes in the Marshall Islands. The University of the South Pacific has already established a campus in Majuro, and could be encouraged to work co-operatively with the College of Marshall Islands on delivery of teacher training programmes.

The USP Beginning Teachers programme is a commendable initiative that is preparing teachers to teach the first three years of the elementary school curriculum, and in the Head Start program. These teachers will be able to work as substitute teachers, thus freeing up regular teachers to upgrade their skills and qualifications.

Co-operation between the CMI and the USP should be encouraged in order to ensure pathways to improve teaching qualifications for Marshallese students are easily available, if possible on Majuro itself. Co-operation and collaboration in achieving suitable articulation arrangements between the two tertiary institutions and their respective teaching degree qualifications, rather than competition between competing rival institutions, would serve the national interest.

Some collaboration in respect of recognition of prior learning does occur at present, but it could be improved. The University of the South Pacific offers a three-year teaching degree at its Fiji campus. Students who successfully complete the CMI two-year Associate of Science teaching degree are currently given one year of credit if they enrol in the more advanced USP teaching qualification. There have, however, been only a handful of students who have pursued this option.

If numbers enrolling were sufficient to make running this more advanced teaching degree course economic, the USP might be able to offer this qualification on Majuro at the RMI/USP campus. The preferable option for students to improve their two-year degree teaching qualification would be for students who have achieved a two-year Associate of Science degree at the College of the Marshall Islands to study for an advanced three or four-year teaching degree either at the USP/RMI campus or abroad. This arrangement would be more likely to retain qualified teachers in the Marshall Islands, as there is always more risk that people educated abroad may not return.

Incentives

There appear to be no effective incentives operating to encourage teachers to become well qualified. A combination of incentives and sanctions is required. One effective incentive to improve teaching standards would be a significant salary boost for those teachers who achieve teaching qualifications at a high level, who have demonstrated

this objective. As well, other incentives to recruit and retain teachers may need to be considered. The question of teacher certification and incentives to improve standards of teaching is a matter that the Ministry of Education should examine as an urgent priority. In practical terms, an effective teacher certification programme needs to be implemented, and prospective teachers need to be encouraged through clear incentives to complete a quality teaching degree programme (preferably a four-year teaching degree programme) before they begin teaching.

Those in the current teaching work force who do not currently meet adequate criteria must be provided with incentives to improve their skills and qualifications, both through additional study and through in-service training. Again, multiple responses are needed to help solve a difficult problem. Current initiatives such as summer schools that help existing teachers to upgrade their qualifications and teaching expertise are helpful, but do not provide a sufficiently comprehensive or sufficiently swift remedy. The release of teachers through scholarship programmes for extended year-long study leave abroad is helpful, but only a limited number of teachers can access such programmes. Release of a teacher for such an extended period can sometimes present isolated communities with a problem in arranging suitable replacement teaching staff, and where a suitable replacement cannot be found, the education of the students suffers. Distance education programmes for teachers have their place, but completing such programmes requires considerable tenacity and application from teachers (often unsupported in isolated environments) if they are to gain maximum benefit from them.

Over time, a combination of improved standards of entry by new graduates to teaching, and an improvement in the teaching standards of those currently in the Marshall Islands teaching work force, should eventually lead to better quality teachers and therefore improved educational standards.

Teacher Salaries

Marshalllese have been trained in the past as teachers. There is a problem, however, of leakage of trained teachers out of the education system. Currently, teachers' salaries are too low to be competitive. As a result, competent trained teachers shift to other jobs. People use the education sector as a springboard to increase their salary by transferring to other positions elsewhere (i.e. outside the education sector). The question of appropriate salaries for teachers is a significant issue that affects recruitment and retention of quality people in the teaching work force. A labour market strategy (essentially higher pay) is needed in order to attract, recruit and retain people of high calibre into teaching as a career.

There need to be incentives for people to study for a teaching degree, and then to stay in teaching and gain financial rewards, as well as gain the non-financial rewards that teaching as a career provides. Higher salaries or merit pay should be available only to teachers who meet the required high standards, including the minimum qualifications required for teaching.

A review of teacher salaries may be appropriate, although the timing of this review would need to depend upon the phased implementation of the Human Resources Development Master Plan. In summary, the Marshall Islands needs to provide better pay incentives for teachers with high level qualifications if it wishes to recruit and

Teacher Evaluation

There is a need to evaluate the performance of all teachers in order to determine that they are delivering quality education and training. The purpose of this evaluation is to identify where there is a need for further in service training. Independent, external evaluation is a requirement for all teachers regardless of their qualification or experience in the job.

Teacher Appraisal System Required

An effective teacher appraisal system will need to be developed that fairly assesses the performance and skills of teachers. Any appraisal system that is developed will need to be based on clear and objective performance criteria, and will need to be applied in a fair and professional manner. The performance criteria must state explicit professional standards. The criteria should include a description of benchmarks established specifically for teachers in the education system of the Marshall Islands. These benchmarks should incorporate international standards of education in dimensions such as literacy, numeracy and critical thinking.

The Principal of each school will be the lynchpin of the system of teacher appraisal. It will be the Principal who conducts initial teacher evaluations. However, the Principals themselves will need to be assisted first by a programme of management training, including training in conducting performance appraisals.

The responsibility for developing the professional standards to be used as the basis of teacher evaluation, and for developing the appropriate teacher appraisal methodology to be used by the Principals, should lie with the Ministry of Education.

Any teacher appraisal system should have the professional growth of the teacher as a prime objective. The appraisals will need to include visitation of the teachers in their classroom by a competent professional, and should include observation, written comment on and peer review of their teaching.

In addition, an external monitor or monitors will need to be engaged to moderate the standards of the performance appraisal system, and to provide a verifiable check on the accuracy and consistency of the application of benchmarks.

Objectivity could be verified by using evaluators or monitors who are external to the RMI training and education system. The purpose of introducing external monitoring is to provide an independent check on teaching standards against international criteria. Use of external monitors would ensure that any teacher evaluations that are conducted are based on standards that are objective, transparent, and verifiable. These external evaluators could be independent contractors based at the College of the Marshall Islands. They could also deliver any in-service training at CMI that might be identified as necessary as part of the evaluation process.

Management Training for Principals

Good leadership in schools, particularly from the Principal, is essential if the school is to become a top-performing institution. Successful schools invariably have good leaders. Priority therefore needs to be given to the recruitment, training and retention

teacher evaluation and feedback, supervision and mentorship of teachers, working with the community, developing effective school plans, and provision of educational leadership. Strong leadership from the Principal will be translated into effective student achievement in the classroom. To foster these leadership skills, Principals need access to effective management training and professional development, both prior to undertaking the Principal's role, and as a form of ongoing education and training while in the job.

The concept of the Principal as an agent of cultural change both within the community and within the school is a key idea. To make this idea work, effective training of Principals is essential.

There are management training programmes offered at institutions outside the Marshall Islands that could assist in upgrading the skills of middle and senior management in schools. The difficulty with such programmes is the expense of travel and accommodation costs in taking senior personnel overseas to these programmes. A more cost effective and efficient approach would be to bring a well-designed programme to the Marshall Islands, or to design an indigenous Marshall Islands management training programme that is specially tailored for local needs.

The most cost effective option would be to design a summer school programme that all Principals would attend. It may be possible for the College of the Marshall Islands to assist in designing a suitable short staff development programmes for senior management in schools, and to identify a small group of experienced Principals in the Marshall Islands who could act as facilitators and mentors for the course. Incentives should be provided for Principals to take part in the proposed summer school, in order to assist them in upgrading their management skills.

A system of “Principal Certification” should be implemented alongside the teacher certification requirements. Such a system would ensure that professional leaders have achieved a requisite level of competence to undertake their demanding roles as Principals of schools. If implemented, such a system would have the effect of improving the standards of administration and professional leadership in schools. The Ministry of Education should consider the merits of such a proposal in its review of the Education Management Personnel System.

In-Service Training of Teachers

An effective system of teacher evaluation will indicate areas for professional growth and improvement of teacher standards. If professional standards are to be improved, teachers will need to be trained adequately to implement the new Marshallese primary school curriculum. Considerable effort over the last few years, with the support of the Asian Development Bank through the Basic Education Development Project, has gone into developing the new curriculum, and into producing supporting resources to implement it. This momentum must be maintained. Appropriate teaching resources and in-service training will need to continue to be developed and delivered to assist teachers to implement the school curriculum.

Considerable investment has been made (particularly at the College of the Marshall Islands) in teacher education and training in order to ensure that the calibre of teachers employed in the Marshall Islands is of high quality. The Basic Education Project

education. Several initiatives have been supported. The Project is funding civil works, furniture and equipment for the expansion of the College of Marshall Islands teaching facilities. Four additional classrooms have been built at the College. A dormitory has been constructed to provide accommodation for trainee teachers, and basic housing units have been renovated for staff. While the focus of this work has been primarily on pre-service teacher education and training, support has also been provided for in-service training.

Other steps can be taken immediately to help teachers improve their skills. For instance, the Government could explore with authorities in the United States how support could be provided for language development programmes in schools. The Government could encourage initiatives that bring fluent native speakers of English as volunteers to work alongside Marshallese teachers in schools. Initiatives such as bringing in volunteers from the United States or other English-speaking countries for limited periods of up to a year could be considered. While such volunteers would not be likely to be formally trained as teachers, their presence in Marshall Islands primary schools would create a "win/win" situation. Their English language skills would bring benefits to Marshall Islands students (and possibly also to some teachers), while the expatriate volunteers would benefit from much improved cross-cultural understanding as a result of their experience of living in the Marshall Islands.

The initiative by Dr Allison Rowe of the Education Faculty of Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, USA, to bring graduate students to Majuro to achieve similar objectives is to be commended. These graduates are offering their services as volunteers by working alongside teachers in the Marshall Islands High School, and in other schools in the Marshall Islands. Informal evaluation has suggested that this approach has been beneficial, both for the graduate students and for the teachers and students in the high school.

Using Effective Marshall Islands Models for In-Service Training

It is a sound principle of curriculum development that one way of developing good models of teaching and learning is to find examples of innovative practice, describe them and invite teachers to use similar approaches. Good practice, if it is copied and disseminated, can have the effect of improving standards of teaching and learning. One effective model is based upon the system of mentoring pioneered by the Maryknoll sisters.

The Maryknoll Sisters took over the administration of the Likiep school in 1994. The sisters signed a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Education that they would assume responsibility for operating Likiep Elementary School as a public school. Up to that time, the school had an undistinguished record; teacher absenteeism was high, classes were conducted only half a day, and very few of the eighth graders were accepted for high school. The community was dissatisfied with its school and enthusiastically agreed to having the sisters take over the running of the school. The people of Likiep had a happy experience with the Maryknoll Sisters in the 1950s when they ran a top-quality school on the island for nearly a decade before the dwindling population forced the closing of the school.

When the sisters took over, they did not bring a large broom to sweep away what had gone before. The teachers, dedicated people but without direction, stayed on at the

school was a sense of purpose, a detailed curriculum, and willingness to train the teachers in how to use the curriculum guide. As one person remarked they also insisted that the teachers come on time every day and that classes not be canceled at the slightest excuse.

The community supported the changes that the sisters made in the school. Likiep had long thought of itself as distinct from and perhaps more progressive than other Marshallese atolls. Years ago when the island was purchased and settled by foreigners, it was freed from chiefly authority and embarked on a long history of fusing European pragmatism with island ways. Whatever problems their school may have had through the years, the people on Likiep always had a sense of how important education was. Today the Likiep community has taken ownership of their school as they never did before the turn-about in the school. PTA meetings are very well attended; most families have at least one member representing them at the meeting.

The school possesses a vitality today that is the envy of other schools in the area. The children in the lower grades maintain a garden plot, with students not only tending their plants but measuring them and graphing their growth over time to help them learn the basic skills they will need in their science courses. Students engage in the same type of hands-on learning through their work with tiny turtles in a shoreside tank that is part of the school's conservation project. Students also walk around the school grounds picking up trash each day, and there is no graffiti to be seen on any of the school buildings. As we find in many of the other top-flight schools, the student body and community have become protective of the appearance of their school.

Three years ago the Maryknoll Sisters turned over the administration of the school to the principal and community leaders, but since then Likiep has maintained its high standing among Marshalls public schools. Teachers continue to use the curriculum guides that the sisters introduced, and the school policies presented in the handbook are still embraced by the community and enforced by the faculty. Two Maryknoll Sisters still visit the school two or three times a year to hold training sessions for the teachers and to encourage the community to keep a vigilant eye on school operations. Their visits are essential to the success of the school since the sisters act as kind of a quality control; they make sure that the curriculum is being followed and make revisions in the curriculum materials as needed. To date the transition appears to have been successful, at least to judge from test scores of the students, for Likiep's students continue to pass the entrance test to the public high schools in very high numbers, with some of the better students qualifying for some of the more exclusive private schools in the region.

Supporting the Curriculum

School effectiveness appears to be low, and student performance is generally poor, as a result of several factors: class sizes are disproportionate across the country (class sizes are large in urban public primary schools, but are relatively small in remote rural outer atolls), teacher performance generally is inadequate, and logistic support for schools is poor.

Standards of education attained by both primary and secondary school students, in general, are low by comparison with international and Pacific Island country norms, especially in the key area of literacy. The level of literacy demonstrated (both in the

It is therefore important that the Ministry of Education continue to monitor the literacy levels of the student population, in order to assess over time the effects of measures taken to improve the basic literacy and numeracy of school pupils. It will also be important that measures to improve language development (including developing literacy skills) in all stages of primary schooling, but particularly in the early years, are given the very highest priority. This high priority should be reflected in the emphasis placed on children's language development in all teacher education programmes, and in the allocation of resources devoted to curriculum development.

Marshall Islands Standardised Achievement Tests

The Ministry of Education, with the support of the Asian Development Bank, has initiated work to develop new national tests (MISAT - the Marshall Islands Standardised Achievement Tests) in Grade 4 and Grade 6. These tests will sample achievement in English, Marshallese and mathematics at both these grades, and in science as well in Grade 6. The tests will be tried out from March to May 2000 in schools. The purpose of these tests is to assess student performance at these two grade levels, based on the new primary school curriculum that has recently been introduced in the Marshall Islands.

The Ministry of Education is to be commended on the development of this initial assessment programme, whereby student achievement will be measured and monitored in a systematic and comprehensive way. Continued regular monitoring against objective standards at key assessment points throughout both the primary and secondary school is desirable. It will be helpful for teachers and parents if agreed standards of performance for each grade level are developed and implemented, with benchmarks of adequate and superior student performance promulgated. The Ministry of Education is encouraged to demonstrate educational leadership by continuing to implement and expand an assessment programme in schools that monitors student achievement at key points.

Program Design

The Ministry of Education has been developing a national curriculum for elementary schools for the Republic of the Marshall Islands over a period of years, and a suitable national curriculum for the Marshall Islands has been developed and is in place. The Strategic Plan for Education also includes a number of objectives that, if implemented, would assist in raising the standard of educational achievement across the country.

Nevertheless, the present generally weak level of competence of teachers means that they need considerable help with implementing this new curriculum. More than the proposed implementation of the Marshall Islands standardized tests is required. The key need is to assist teachers to develop specific program planning guides (lesson plans and work plans) that will enable them to implement the curriculum objectives. These guides need to be carefully structured, organized in a detailed way, and supported with learning resources so that teachers can implement a program of work with minimal guidance. The sample programs of work need to be simple and clear, and should integrate all dimensions of the primary school curriculum (language, mathematics, science, social studies, art and craft, physical education and music) into

Because the elementary curriculum guidelines are quite broad in scope, many teachers are unable to develop lesson plans that integrate all the dimensions of the curriculum. Many teachers, too, have some difficulty with aspects such as effective time management, sequencing of work flows, and aspects of classroom management such as organising group work or meeting the needs of students of varying levels of ability groups in a single classroom.

To assist teachers in managing these challenges, a key focus of the Standards and Quality Development Program of the Human Resources Development Master Plan will be the production of Teacher Guides based on Lesson Plans. Effectively these guides will be specific work plans, including lesson plans, for each level of education in the elementary school, beginning at grade 1 and progressing up to grade 8, based on the Marshall Islands national curriculum and sound educational principles. Each teacher will be able to use these lesson plans on a week by week basis.

The responsibility for producing these lesson plans will rest with the Ministry of Education. The objective is that the Ministry shall, at the end of each week, produce and distribute lesson plans for teachers for use in the week or weeks ahead. These weekly schemes of work, including the lesson plans, for elementary teachers at each level of the elementary school will be a guide to the material to be covered in the next week or weeks. The work plans will include suggested lesson plans, the materials to be used, and the suggested assessment methods or tests to be held at the end of the week.

Thought will need to be given to how this ambitious objective might be achieved. Achievement of the immediate objective would be best achieved by purchasing texts or programs that can be adopted to suit the Marshallese curriculum with very little modification. This principle of adapting already developed materials will apply particularly to the mathematics and science curricula. It should also be possible to make use of existing resource materials, such as readers and other text books, that are already available and in use in Marshallese schools.

The Ministry of Education will be required to plan to deliver the weekly schemes of work and lesson plans in a timely way. Any failure to deliver the schemes of work without a good reason will immediately trigger a public enquiry and a report to be delivered to the Nitijela and the President.

While a curriculum for secondary schools in the Marshall Islands is being developed, it has not yet been officially endorsed and approved for implementation. The low completion rate of scholarship holders is an indication that the quality of training and education in the secondary schools is well below the standard required.

Specific curriculum goals and clear standards of performance for students in secondary schools are required immediately. One option is to consider adopting an external curriculum such as the Hawaiian or the New Zealand secondary school curriculum immediately. If this course of action was adopted, in practical terms, consideration would also have to be given to also adopting the Hawaiian or New Zealand elementary school curriculum. There are advantages and disadvantages to this approach, which would need to be assessed carefully by the Ministry of Education.

this option were to be followed, the examinations would be based on the Hawaiian or New Zealand curriculum. The appropriate pass mark and the percentage passing would need to correlate with the Hawaiian or New Zealand standard.

The expectation of this approach is that RMI students would be well served if there were clear and demonstrable standards of achievement that were set and assessed externally. In this way teachers would be able to establish clear expectations both for their own teaching and for the standards required of their students.

The promotion or retention of teachers could be performance-based, in that there would be a review of the numbers of their students who successfully pass the external examinations, and a teacher who consistently underperformed over time would be terminated.

Improving the Effectiveness of the RMI Scholarship Programme

Vision 2018 is the first segment of the Strategic Development Plan for the Republic of the Marshall Islands for the next 15 years. Vision 2018 states that a key issue is the extensive training requirements for the whole of the country. The lack of locally qualified people contributes to the low capacity of the Government to effectively administer development programs. The Government intends to review the present Scholarships Act in the light of a survey of the labour market, and any other training needs assessment, with a view to ensuring the existence of a satisfactory procedure for the selection and award of scholarships to the people of the Marshall Islands. This review will examine the legislation that provides grants for the further education of Marshallese at post-secondary educational institutions overseas. The aim will be to develop a national policy on scholarships and training that outlines clearly the procedures and entitlements to scholarships.

The development of the Human Resources Development Master Plan is part of the second segment of the Strategic Development Plan of the Marshall Islands. The RMI Scholarships Program is a key instrument to assist in achieving the HRD goal of developing capacity within the Marshall Islands. The HRD Master Plan is examining the issues raised by the RMI Scholarships Programme with the objective of improving its effectiveness. The issues raised as a result of this preliminary review are set out and analysed below.

Firstly, the present gross completion rate of scholarships, on the basis of the figures for the last decade, is 16%. While some of these scholarship recipients will still be studying and should eventually complete their studies, and therefore increase the gross percentage, this completion rate is very low. The reason for the low completion rate appears to be that many RMI post-compulsory students lack the academic skills needed to succeed in college and drop out before graduating. This low completion rate must be improved.

Secondly, the data about educational achievement for those on scholarships indicates, even for those who complete their studies, that the level of achievement is modest at best. Out of 245 persons who completed their courses of study during 1988-99, 91 attained certificates (usually one- or two-semester courses of study), 63 attained associate degrees, 79 earned bachelor's degrees and only 12 completed advanced degrees.

All this information indicates that a review of the policy on scholarships and their allocation is overdue.

Proposed Policy Changes for Allocation of Scholarships

The scholarship completion rate must be improved so that a success rate of 50% or more is achieved within 5 years. This goal can be achieved by a combination of tightening access, strengthening criteria for the award of scholarships, assisting students with pastoral care and support, identifying those tertiary education institutions overseas where Marshallese students do well and targeting them for placement of future scholarship recipients, and through regular and systematic monitoring of the scholarships scheme.

Standards

The fundamental reason for a low scholarship completion rate is that the academic qualifying standard of recipients who are awarded scholarships is not high enough. If the student is not able to perform at the adequate academic level, the chances of failure are high. Students are being set up for failure because they are being awarded scholarships to study for qualifications for which they are not ready or for which they have not been well enough prepared. The solution to improve scholarship completion results is for the Scholarships Board to raise the entry standard requirement for the award of a scholarship, and not to award scholarships unless each student has demonstrated the required level of academic competence.

The present policy appears to be to award scholarships in the initial year to students who have demonstrated a grade point average of 2.0 at college. This standard appears to be too low, given the high failure rate of Marshallese students who have been awarded scholarships in the past, and should be revised upwards. Achievement of a reasonably tough standard should be mandatory for students who are awarded scholarships to study at tertiary education institutions overseas. This standard should be introduced immediately, and could initially be based on a higher specified college grade point average, such as a minimum grade point average of at least 3.0, or could be based on a specified achievement on some verified external standard, such as performance on the United States SAT college entrance test. It is possible (even likely) that such a change in policy will lead to fewer scholarships being awarded, but the pay-off should be that students who are actually awarded scholarships will have a better chance of success.

It is also desirable that the entrance standard required in order to be awarded a scholarship to study at the College of the Marshall Islands should be raised. A two-phased approach is recommended. Initially a minimum grade point average of 2.5 should be set. Once it is established, completion of the proposed Skilling the Nation program with a pass at a satisfactory standard should be set as a prior requirement before a student is awarded an RMI scholarship.

There would be merit in setting an explicit external standard, specifically determined for Marshall Islands students, for the award of scholarships. The proposal in the Human Resources Development Master Plan is that all scholarship applicants must demonstrate completion of the Skilling the Nation Program, and the attainment of a pass, whether or not they have completed any course at CMI. Implementing such a

can be set immediately while the necessary development work is done to set a new Marshall Islands standard.

As part of the design of the Skilling the Nation program, an assessment instrument which is a scientifically valid measure of academic achievement at the equivalent point to high school graduation should be designed and developed. The work of designing an appropriate assessment instrument should be undertaken externally on contract by a body with the appropriate design and testing expertise, such as the Australian or the New Zealand Council of Educational Research, or the United States Educational Testing Service. All students wishing to undertake any course at CMI must either complete and pass the Skilling the Nation Program course, or demonstrate through performance on the objective assessment instrument that they have achieved the required level of academic competence. This demonstration may be by simple examination if the student is sufficiently advanced.

Setting the qualifying entrance standard that is required for the award of a scholarship at a high level will give an important signal about standards, and will assist in raising the level of academic achievement at the point of high school graduation.

The policy of requiring students to demonstrate success in their courses before a scholarship for a second or third year of study is awarded should continue. Students must be able produce independently verifiable evidence of satisfactory progress in their first year's work (for instance, by producing documentary evidence of having passed their courses or examinations) before being awarded a scholarship for the second or third consecutive year of study.

Administration of the RMI Scholarships Scheme

The Scholarships Board needs to develop its capacity in order to administer the RMI Scholarships scheme more effectively. It would be helpful if the personnel administering the scheme were linked to the Public Service Commission through the proposed Project Implementation Unit (suggested in the Human Resources Development Master Plan). This linkage would assist in developing and extending the range of skills (including financial skills) which the Scholarships Secretariat needs.

A public granting authority such as the Scholarships Board should produce an audited Annual Report within three months of the end of each financial year. No such reports are available. The annual report should include both financial and non-financial data. The non-financial data should report on the performance of the Scholarships Scheme and include relevant statistical and other performance data such as numbers of scholarships awarded, locations and institutions where scholarships were taken up, length of tenure of individual scholarships, student academic performance data, number of successful graduations (completions), and so on. The annual financial report should account properly for the expenditure of the relatively large sums of public money involved. The report should be audited according to the appropriate accountancy standards. This process of formal reporting on the allocation of RMI scholarships should start immediately, beginning with the 2000/2001 year. To achieve these objectives immediately, responsibility for the financial management of and financial reporting on the RMI Scholarships Scheme should be taken over either by the Ministry of Finance or by a private accountancy firm.

(approximately \$4000 or more in some cases) in one lump sum at the beginning of each semester has some disadvantages. Students unused to having such large sums of cash may not have the maturity to manage this money and use it effectively for the purposes for which it was intended. The system of administering and paying the grants should be changed to assist the students manage their own finances. Scholarship payments should be staggered so that amounts are paid at monthly intervals at most. A larger initial payment may be needed for payment of fees and initial bond payments for accommodation (although it is desirable that tuition fee payments should be made directly to the educational institution by the Scholarships Board).

This change will have administrative implications for the Secretariat, as it will add to the work load. Additional staff may need to be employed to deal with the extra work.

The granting authority should be authorised to make payments only after having received a written report from the scholarship holder which details the course of study undertaken in the previous month, accompanied by a certification from the relevant school administration which confirms attendance and satisfactory progress. Provision of regular and timely reports would be a condition of payment. E-mail could be used to provide these reports, so that there should be no unnecessary delay that would interfere with the student's access to funds for necessary living costs.

Incentives appear to exist at present to encourage all money tagged for scholarships to be awarded in any one financial year. The principle appears to be “use it or lose it”. It is not essential that all the money allocated for scholarships in any one year be allocated, if enough students do not meet the standard required. The present policy of allocating all scholarship funds on the basis of a low academic standard must be discontinued. If not enough students qualify, the Scholarships Board could be given authority to transfer and carry over any surplus funds in any one year into a future year, until enough applicants do meet the required standard to justify the award of a scholarship. If a change in legislation is required to enable the Scholarships Board to transfer funds between years and to hold that money in trust until the new criteria are met and scholarships can be awarded, this change could be examined as part of the proposed review of scholarships allocation by the Government.

Use of Scholarships to Meet National Priorities

In order to meet the goals and objectives of Vision 2018, and in particular to meet the capacity development requirements set out in the Human Resources Development Master Plan, a significant proportion of scholarships should be “tagged” for award to meet designated national priorities. These priorities are:

- Courses that lead to preparation for a teaching career (for instance, the two-year Associate of Science degree at the College of the Marshall Islands) (Major priority – 50% of scholarships);
- Courses that support priority health workforce needs;
- Courses that develop capacity in the public service.

More flexibility should be built in to the legislation governing the allocation of scholarships to enable the Scholarships Board to meet national priorities. To achieve this flexibility, monies for particular activities or sectors may need to be aggregated

performance (for instance, to fund the training of a doctor), sufficient funds have been generated and will be available.

Recovery of Funds from Scholarship Recipients Who Abscond

It is Government policy that outstanding repayments due from non-completing scholarship holders should be recovered. This policy must be enforced. No effort has been made to trace those scholarship recipients who have not completed their studies in the past, and to request the return of scholarship funds that were not used for the proper purpose.

The return of funds should not be required from students who have completed the course, but have failed their examinations. Such a policy would be unfair.

It would be necessary to ensure that the scholarships database accurately differentiates between two categories: those students who completed the course, but failed; and those students who simply dropped out soon after receipt of the money. Recovery of funds should only be contemplated from those in the second category: those who did not use the money for the purpose for which the award of scholarship money was intended.

It may be prudent to seek a legal opinion on the validity of the documentation signed by previous recipients prior to accepting an RMI scholarship, in order to verify that the scholarship is in fact a loan (as is alleged) to be written off upon successful completion of a designated course of study, and subsequent graduation, or recovered if the student does not pursue his or her studies. If the Government has a clear legal right to recover the full amount of scholarship monies from “defaulters”, the recovery of funds should be pursued with vigour.

A mechanism for achieving this objective would be to establish the baseline data with accuracy, and then contract a commercial debt recovery company (probably one in the United States) to recover all funds outstanding. One estimate is that these funds may currently exceed US\$6 million, although it is unlikely that this amount could be recovered. Recovered funds could be paid into a Trust Account, and the interest from the fund could be used to support the activities of the granting authority, or the funds could be used for additional scholarships.

Pastoral Care and Support

Isolation is a problem for some students who leave the Marshall Islands to study overseas. It is a significant challenge for a young Marshallese man or woman to leave the relatively sheltered environment of home in these islands and make the cultural transition required to move to another country, while at the same time maintaining the motivation and drive to succeed academically in a new and strange environment. Young people of character and determination have succeeded in the past, with the support of home and family, but all too many fall by the wayside.

Better interventions and support are required in future. Pastoral care and peer support in the host institution are required to assist young people to make a successful transition to successful academic study in a foreign country. If more than one Marshallese student attends a specified institution, peer support from other Marshallese would be available. Another suggestion to achieve a supportive

under the Marshall Islands scholarship regime. These institutions could be chosen by demonstration of a successful track record in assisting students to succeed. For instance, there have been 9 or 10 Marshallese students in the past who have attended a Catholic University, St Mary's College in Kansas City, Missouri, USA. All students who have studied at this institution have been successful. This high success rate is partly attributable to effective pastoral support and guidance offered by the institution.

It would be possible to negotiate with tertiary education institutions to offer courses to Marshallese students, and to negotiate with the institutions for part payment on the basis of successful outcomes. This arrangement is used in New Zealand to foster successful academic outcomes for Pasifika student nurses, and has been very successful. Institutions would then be motivated to provide effective guidance and support for Marshallese students.

If a limited number of selected institutions was approved for study by scholarship recipients on this basis, there would also be a critical mass of Marshallese students enrolling at each institution, and thus additional peer support could be provided by other Marshallese. For instance, all first degree scholarships could be awarded solely to tertiary institutions in Hawaii or New Zealand. No person would receive a scholarship unless he or she demonstrates that a pass (or equivalent) has been achieved in the Hawaii or New Zealand final year high school examinations. No scholarships will be awarded for first degree teaching qualifications. These initiatives outlined above, if adopted, would enhance the prospect of more successful outcomes.

More careful monitoring of, and communication with, the scholarship recipients by the RMI Scholarships Secretariat is also required. The granting authority should, as a minimum, make monthly contact with the scholarship holder in order to monitor progress and provide any necessary help and advice. Personal visitation of each scholarship holder during the academic year by the Secretariat of the RMI Scholarships Board for counselling and monitoring purposes could also be considered, although cost considerations may rule out this option. If negotiations occurred on the basis that a condition of sending RMI students to a tertiary education institution is that counselling and pastoral care be provided on a regular basis, the monitoring/pastoral care need could be met equally well by the host institution.

The Government has made it clear that it is willing to fund capacity building by the increased amount that it has invested in the scholarship scheme. If some of these additional funds were targeted at providing support to students, the prospect of more successful outcomes would be enhanced. If a consequence is that the numbers of scholarships offered each year need to be reduced in order to fund the necessary support for these people, that trade-off is one that should be made.

Restructuring the Ministry of Education

The analysis of the central administration of the Ministry of Education set out in the accompanying report *Developing a Strategic Plan for the Ministry of Education (20 April 2000)* outlined a number of problems with the central administration of education in the Marshall Islands, and recommended restructuring the Ministry of Education as a way of addressing these.

for strong linkages between policy and implementation. The Ministry of Education needs to undergo a change in culture, so that it focuses more strongly on its strategic policy role as the leading advisor to Government on education in the Marshall Islands.

There is also a need to improve the management of capital investment and education property in the Marshall Islands. The analysis set out in the accompanying Report indicates property assets are deteriorating. The valuation of the property assets managed by the Ministry of Education has not been computed with certainty, but it is clear that a figure of \$12.5 million is a conservative estimate of the net equity that is invested in school buildings alone. The size and worth of this property portfolio mean that definite steps should be taken to manage these assets actively for the benefit of future generations.

The following section of this Strategic Plan outlines the nature of a proposed restructuring of the Ministry of Education, and proposes objectives and indicators that will enable the progress of the changes to be monitored. A programme of change management with strong leadership will be required to implement the proposed restructuring. The full restructuring programme, however, should be delayed at this time as a higher priority is investment in the development of capacity, as set out in the Human Resources Development Master Plan. Some limited restructuring changes which aim to develop capacity, and which are consistent with the directions of Vision 2018, however, may be appropriate.

The benefits of the proposed restructuring for the Ministry of Education will be an improved focus on strategic policy for education, less ad-hoc decision-making, and more effective and efficient management of resources. Risk management will be improved. There will be enhanced relationships with stakeholders and better communication with schools. These changes will lead, in the longer term, to improved performance in the education sector and raised standards of education in the classroom.

Developing Our People

There is a need to develop a human resources strategy for the Marshall Islands as part of a programme to improve the skill base of the population. The Ministry of Education will play a central role in this strategy. In order to meet the demands implied by the reformed Ministry of Education, the capability of the staff of the Ministry will need to be improved. A recommendation of this Strategic Plan is that an approach be made by the Government to external donor agencies for funding to assist with a programme of capacity building for Ministry of Education staff. This recommendation is part of the wider policy to implement a Human Resources Development Master Plan for the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Managers will need to become more effective in responding to workload pressures and more able to empower staff to complete higher-level day-to-day business. This will require a management development strategy that equips all Ministry managers with the necessary skills and ongoing development opportunities for the effective management of their particular division or unit, and of the Ministry as a whole. Managers will have a key role in facilitating internal change. All staff have the right to expect a commitment from the organisation to their professional development, and to be valued as individuals irrespective of their background and the disciplines in

The programme of capacity building will focus initially on

- Management development through a structured programme
- Developing in all staff skills of information management, policy analysis and policy implementation
- Developing Ministry-wide competencies, and incorporating these into a performance planning and appraisal process

The Ministry of Education will have succeeded in developing its people when all staff have developed a high level of skill and expertise, when the education outputs required by the Government are delivered to a high standard in a timely way, and the staff are fairly rewarded, both financially and in other ways, for a job well done. Capacity building is a higher priority at this time than the restructuring proposed elsewhere.

Business Systems and Process Improvement

Quality policy advice and debate is important in establishing the Ministry's leadership and credibility within the public and education sectors. The Ministry of Education needs to concentrate on enhancing its policy role and ensuring that policy development and implementation is working together.

The Ministry's effectiveness depends on its ability to access and disseminate good information on student achievement. Better indicators of student outcomes will provide a more accurate basis for discussion and decision-making between providers, parents, and the local communities. Improved information will enable parents and students to assess the effectiveness of education providers and to make confident and informed choices on which provider best suits their needs. They will also help the Ministry to evaluate how the education system is performing and what factors are limiting its success.

The focus of this strategy will be on the Ministry's role in resourcing, monitoring, administering regulations, and collecting and disseminating information. There will be an emphasis on managing risk in relation to financial and asset performance. The Ministry will need to provide an assurance of quality and of accountability for spending of public money. The Ministry of Education must ensure that it is operating to the correct priorities, that the infrastructure is effective and efficient, and that operational activities are consistent with the overall strategic direction of the Ministry.

Initially the Ministry will

- Assess what internal management information is required, and ensure robust systems are in place to obtain and use that information
- Assess current procedures and requirements, and confirm the information systems and technological support required
- Develop an information management strategy that staff can understand and use
- Develop appropriate monitoring procedures
- Consider the roles of the Ministry's main office and the Community Based Governance System

Relationship Management

The Ministry of Education has an important role in communicating and contributing to a wider understanding of education issues. Effective relationships with stakeholders will be essential for the Ministry of Education in its change management role. Good relationships can help to obtain information and to influence changes in thinking.

There is scope for improvement in the way the Ministry of Education manages its relationships. The predominant provider focus needs to shift to an emphasis on students, parents and communities. The relationships with the Community Based Governance Schemes (CBGS) need to be addressed specifically. The proposed appointment of a person within the restructured Ministry of Education with the role of liaison with the CBGS will assist in cementing better relationships. The Ministry needs to be accessible to others and their ideas, particularly providers with whom the Ministry can work in partnership to address common concerns.

There are implications for staff training, communication skills, and the information bases needed to support stronger relationships. An emphasis on good customer relations is important.

The Ministry of Education will examine:

- How the Ministry manages relationships with providers and other organizations
- Standards for interactions with the public, and how client responsiveness can be improved
- How the Ministry manages information flows within itself and to the wider community
- Developing regular systems to review stakeholder satisfaction with the Ministry

Aligning Resources with Changing Priorities

The success of the Ministry of Education in implementing this Strategic Plan will depend upon the alignment of resources with changing business needs. The resource management process needs to be flexible enough to respond to the challenges of a changing environment. Planning processes need to assess the future directions and priorities of the Ministry. Identification of long-range needs well in advance will enable resources to be shifted to meet changing needs, or will ensure that the capability needed can be developed in time.

The Ministry will

- Improve its planning processes, so that medium-term strategic priorities facing the education system are reviewed and likely priorities for each coming year are identified

- Establish the basis for any reviews of particular areas of priority

Recommendations

Recommendations for improving the system are inherently a part of objectives and recommended activities that are contained in each sections of the plan. In addition, this section highlights substantive policy recommendations for which attention is needed to impact systemic change.

The policy recommendations center on four critical areas: 1) making preschool education universal; 2) focusing the mission of secondary education; 3) generating local revenue base for school facilities improvement and; 4) strengthening and expanding the Community Based Governance School system model to all RMI schools as a mean to empower and involve communities in the school improvement process.

Recommendation 1 – Expand Pre-school Education

Strengthen and expand preschool education opportunities for three-, four- and five-year-olds beyond that which is provided by the U.S federally funded Head Start program, and institute legislation that would make kindergarten education for five-year-olds compulsory, thereby lowering the beginning school attendance age from six to five.

Rationale: Instead of giving children a smart start, the existing policy leaves Marshallese children at a disadvantage starting at first grade. The children remain largely disadvantaged throughout their elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education careers in that they are always at least two or three grades behind their age cohorts. Postponing the development of preschool and kindergarten programs goes against what we know from the latest brain research which highly recommends development of early learning opportunities for children. In the long run, the current policy is also costly for the government. Resources allocation for remedial education programs at secondary and post-secondary levels could be better spent providing expanded preschool and kindergarten education at a much greater return for the government.

Recommendation 2 –Establish a National Vocational Technical Institute

Refocus the mission of secondary education in the RMI from vocational to academic preparation and establish a National Vocational Technical Institute to meet vocational training needs of the RMI.

Rationale: The current mission of secondary education in the RMI does not provide the necessary basic education and vocational skills to meet local market demands nor does it provide graduates with basic skills for college. Duplicating vocational programs in all three public high schools diffuses limited resources available to the Ministry of Education for vocational education. Refocusing the high school mission would allow the high school curriculum to focus resources and time to equip graduates with skills needed to survive in the global economy including literacy, numeracy, problem-solving, and technological skills. The National Vocational

high school dropouts, and high school graduates. In addition, the Institute would offer training opportunities for adults interested in learning new skills.

Recommendation 3 – Provide for a School Maintenance Fund

Allocate 20 percent of all RMI revenue collected from taxes levied on cigarettes and alcohol toward a school maintenance and construction fund and other education purposes as directed by the National Board of Education.

Rationale: Maintaining adequate school facilities and buildings throughout the nation is one of the major challenges facing the RMI government. By all accounts, the condition of school facilities is as pressing a problem now as at the beginning of the Compact period. The MOE 1997 data categorized 54 out of 81 public school buildings as fair or poor. This number has increased from 37 in 1988. The data mean that very few schools have toilet facilities and drinking water. Many have leaking roofs and none have school libraries. Most school buildings do not meet the Ministry of Education’s own school facilities requirements. External resources for school building maintenance are difficult to obtain as external donors often consider it a basic need for which the internal government must make provision out of domestic funds. Creating a school maintenance and construction fund would represent a beginning step toward creating a revenue basis that is sorely needed to maintain basic education services. At the same time, it represents a giant step toward fulfilling our vision of self-reliance.

Recommendation 4 –Improve the Community-Based Governance System

Expand the concept of the Community-Based Governance System (CBGS) to all communities and public schools in the RMI and create the necessary structure and legal requirement to empower local governments and communities to take over and own the responsibility for management and improvement of their schools.

Rationale: The effectiveness of the school does not depend simply on the competence of the teachers or the quality of the curriculum. It depends, even more, on the support system of the community that is being served. If the community does not serve as the watchdog over the school, providing constant pressure on the teachers to perform and challenging the school to improve its product, there can be little hope for genuine long-term improvement in education. Primary education, grades K-8, is likely to remain the only formal education provided in the majority of communities in the Marshall Islands. Primary education should be targeted as the priority area for investment of each community’s limited resources. Community investment in the schools will generate a genuine feeling of school ownership, a first step toward school improvement. The national government must complement community investment in schools by providing adequate financing to allow individual schools to succeed. The management of these combined resources must be vested in the school and its community-based governance structure.

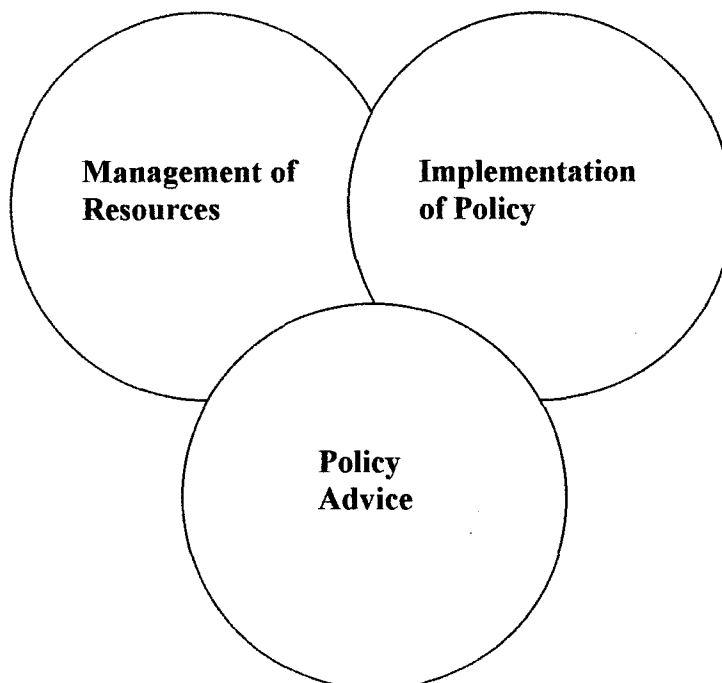
Central Administration of the Ministry of Education

The report *Developing a Strategic Plan for the Ministry of Education (31 March 2000)* analyses in detail the performance of the central administration of the Ministry of Education. This report identifies a number of problems, and makes recommendations for solutions that would improve the performance, not only of the central administration of the Ministry of Education, but also of the entire education sector. The proposals in this report need to be taken together as a total package in order to generate the improvements that are needed to bring about raised standards of education and better student achievement.

Purpose of the Ministry of Education

The proposed purpose of the Ministry of Education is to

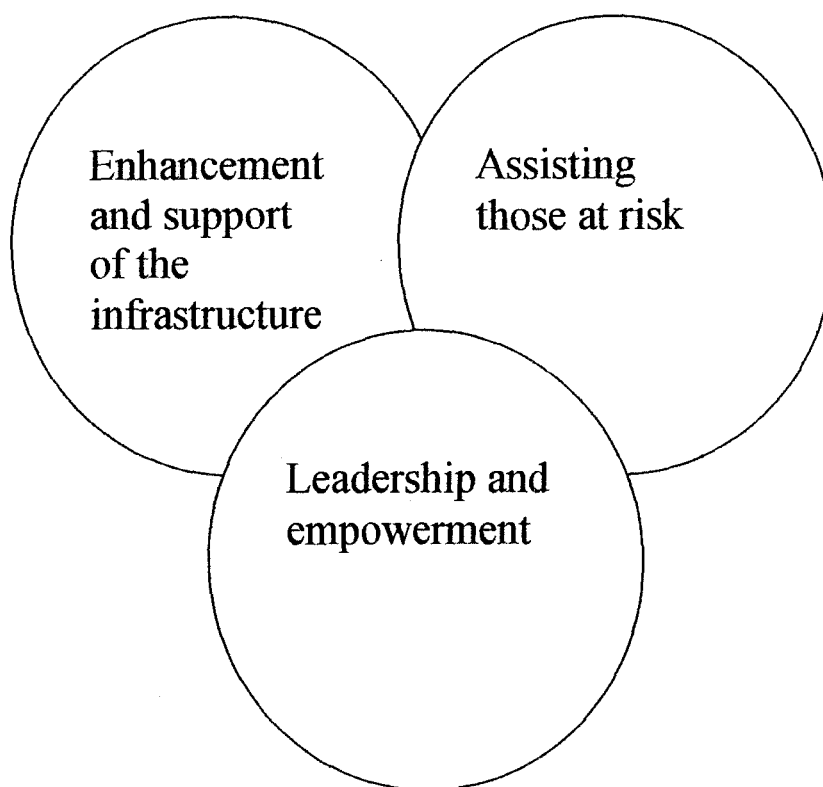
- Provide policy advice
- Implement policy
- Manage resources efficiently



Roles of the Ministry of Education

The proposed core roles of the Ministry of Education are

- Leadership and empowerment
- Assisting those at risk
- Enhancement and support of the infrastructure



Structure

The accompanying report *Developing a Strategic Plan for the Ministry of Education* sets out an analysis of the central administration of the Ministry of Education, with appropriate recommendations. In addition, the strategic directions outlined earlier in this Strategic Plan chart the improvements required to make the education system of the Marshall Islands more effective. To give effect to these recommendations, the current structure of the Ministry of Education should be changed, and a modified structure for the organisation should be put in place. The objectives and indicators that follow are based on the assumption that the Government wishes to proceed with the proposed direction of reform of the central administration of education, outlined in this report. These objectives and indicators below provide practical steps, and a realistic timeline, that could be adopted to give effect to the proposals made.

There are downstream implications in adopting the proposed new structure. Cabinet approval of the measures proposed will be essential. Strong leadership is also essential in order to ensure that the benefits of the proposed reorganisation are not lost during the change process. It is critical that the process of change be well managed. Legislative change will also almost certainly be required, as some current provisions in the Education Act 1991 (for instance, those establishing a Department of Education within the Ministry of Education) will need to be changed. A programme of change management (including staff training) will also be required.

Objective 1

New structure

- Implement a new structure for the central administration of the Ministry of Education, based on four new divisions (Policy Division, Implementation Division, Property Division, Services Division) as outlined in more detail in the report *Developing a Strategic Plan for the Ministry of Education*

Indicator

- New structure and change process approved by Government, change process implemented, and appointments made to positions in new structure, by 30 June 2001

Objective 2

Information Management Strategy

- Develop an information management strategy within the Ministry of Education

Indicator

Objective 3

Monitor Targets in Strategic Plan

- Develop a mechanism to monitor and report on the ongoing implementation of policy, as set out in the performance targets in this Strategic Plan

Indicator

- Mechanism developed, approved by the Minister of Education, and operative by 30 June 2000

Objective 4

Review Rules & Regulations

- Review the *Rules and Regulations of the Ministry of Education (October 1992)* with a view to reducing bureaucracy and developing guidelines that are more enabling

Indicator

- *Rules and Regulations of the Ministry of Education (October 1992)* revised and republished by 31 December 2002

Objective 5

Strengthen financial management in MOE

- Strengthen financial management within the Ministry of Education

Indicator

- Systems in place for forecasting expenditure, developing a proactive approach to budgeting, and financial monitoring and reporting quarterly on variances of expenditure against Education Budget, by 30 September 2000

Objective 6

Improve communication with schools

- Improve the Ministry of Education's communication with schools

Indicator

- First edition of a regular quarterly newsletter for schools published by the central administration of the Ministry of Education to all schools by 30 September 2000, and editions of the newsletter published quarterly thereafter (by 31 December 31 March 30 June and 30 September in each

Objective 7

Review vocational education and training

- Develop policy for a more co-ordinated approach to vocational education and training, by reviewing current arrangements (including the National Training Council, the Job Training and Partnership Act, and vocational training delivered through the College of the Marshall Islands)

Indicator

- The Ministry of Education will complete a policy review of vocational education and training in the Marshall Islands, and report with recommendations to the Minister of Education, by 31 December 2001

Objective 8

Improve management of capital resources

- Improve management of capital investment in education, and management and maintenance of school buildings and property

Indicators

- New Property Division in place within the reorganised central administration of the Ministry of Education, with responsibilities clearly defined (including setting priorities for capital investment, managing the budget for capital investment and maintenance of property, setting priorities for upgrading of facilities, and managing “catch-up” maintenance in schools), by 30 June 2001
- Programme of national priorities for school property development and maintenance approved by Minister of Education, and published by 31 December 2001

Objective 9

Prepare proposal to fund capacity development of MOE staff

- Preparation of a proposal for consideration of funding by external donor agencies, in order to fund a programme of professional staff development and capacity building within the Ministry of Education

Indicator

- Proposal documentation prepared and submitted to external donor agencies for consideration by 30 June 2000

Proposed Outputs and Indicators for the Ministry of Education

The following outputs are proposed for the central administration of the Ministry of Education. They cover the period of the Government’s financial year. It is intended that they will be documented in a formal Purchase Agreement between the Minister of Education and the Secretary of Education (on behalf of the Ministry of Education). This Purchase Agreement would be renegotiated each year.

Each output is described in general terms below. Each output will be accompanied by specific performance indicators, specified by quality, quantity, timeliness and cost. Quarterly reporting to the Minister of Education on progress achieved against these indicators will be required.

Output 1: Policy advice

This output involves the provision of timely and relevant policy advice through briefings and policy papers to the Minister of Education and the Government on a wide range of issues relating to various aspects of the Marshall Islands education system. The policy advice provided will anticipate future opportunities and pressures, identify priorities for improvement, develop options for improving the effectiveness of the Marshall Islands education system, and recommend appropriate legislative change (if required) to give effect to education policy.

In order to provide high quality policy advice, in both the short and the medium term, this output includes:

- The systematic collation of information covering various aspects of the performance of the education system
- Analysis of the impact of current and potential Government interventions on education outcomes
- Research on various elements of education
- Monitoring national and international developments in education and related areas

Policy advice will be provided on learning outcomes, including curriculum matters, approaches to assessment and qualifications, resourcing arrangements for education providers and individuals within the education system, and governance and management arrangements for state-owned providers. This output includes advice on the implementation of Government policy.

Performance Dimensions – Quality, Quantity, Timeliness

Aspects of Policy Advice – Qualitative Characteristics

All policy advice will be fit for the purpose of informing Government and/or Ministerial decision-making. The advice will have regard to the political context within which those decisions are made, incorporating the following two qualitative characteristics:

A Policy Analysis and the Policy Development Process

Problem definition – the public policy problem, including the underlying causes, will be identified and supported by data or other evidence, and the policy objectives will be articulated.

Analysis incorporates the following aspects:

- *A range of options* will be identified and assessed for benefits, costs, risks (including strategic or long and medium-term risks, as well as operational or immediate risks) and consequences to the Government and the community
- *Consistency* – linkages will be drawn with prior advice provided through cross-referencing or trade-offs, or explicit variations will be made to improve prior advice
- *Cross-sector inter-relationships* – linkages with Government policy directions and interventions across sectors, particularly other social policy areas and within the broad public education sector will be taken into account
- *Stakeholder impact* – the impact of the proposals on relevant stakeholders will be taken into account, including specifically the achievement or participation of disadvantaged or “at risk” groups of students
- *Assumptions/Principles* will be explicit and robust, with logical argument supported by fact
- *Cost implications* – costs will be identified, and methods and assumptions for costings will be transparent and robust, with risks explicitly identified
- *Regulatory impact* – the impact of the proposals on efficiency and compliance costs for the sector will be identified
- *Implementation implications* – the proposals will include approaches for addressing any feasibility, timing and change management issues, and associated legislative implications

Consultation – relevant Government agencies and other affected parties will be provided with reasonable opportunities to influence policy advice, and any comments on the analysis, options, or proposals will be taken into account

Timeliness – Policy advice will be provided to the Minister in sufficient time to enable the Minister and/or the Government to make decisions in a timely fashion

All policy papers, briefings to the Minister, and initial promulgation of Government policy will meet the following presentation standards:

- **Written policy advice** – will be presented in accordance with the following standards
 - *Purpose* – the purpose of each policy paper and written briefing will be clearly stated
 - *Argument* – each policy paper will present the assumptions and principles on which it is based, and the evidence on which conclusions and recommendations are based
 - *Recommendations* – all papers will include specific recommendations for decision or action

- **Initial Promulgation** – notification will be consistent with the objectives of those policies

B Policy Projects

The Ministry will maintain a capability sufficient to enable it to advance policy projects in accordance with milestones established in project specifications, which will be set out in a *Policy Work Programme*. The *Programme* may be modified from time to time during the year by agreement between the Minister of Education and the Secretary of Education

Output 2: Ministerial services

This output involves the provision of Ministerial services and support to assist the Minister of Education to meet his obligations to the Nitijela that are associated with a Minister. Ministerial services are provided primarily through drafting replies to questions and enquiries put to the Minister, or responding to inquiries directly, as requested by the Minister. Questions and inquiries include questions arising from the Nitijela, or requests to the Minister for information from other Government agencies or as part of general correspondence. This output includes the provision of advisory support to the Minister to assist his participation in Cabinet decision-making.

Performance Dimensions – Quality, Quantity, Timeliness

All responses and provision of information to the Minister of Education and the Nitijela will be prepared within any timeframe specified by legislation, or within 20 working days.

The content of all Ministerial services provided will be factually accurate, and appropriate in style and content for the Minister.

Ministerial services will be provided in the following ranges:

Requests from the Nitijela – an estimated 1 to 20

Provision of information – an estimated 10 – 100

General Ministerial correspondence – an estimated 10 - 200

Output 3: Administration of education sector resourcing

This output involves the provision of services to administer the distribution of resources to participants in the early childhood, schools and tertiary education sectors, consumers (students, parents and other caregivers), providers, and employees in public schools. The output involves determining the level of resources payable in particular circumstances, delivery of those resources through a range of mechanisms, and monitoring of ongoing eligibility for the resources. The resources include provision of resources to schools, and payments to students, parents or other caregivers to support access to education, such as scholarships.

This output includes the provision of an education payroll service for the public

Performance Dimensions – Quality, Quantity, Timeliness

All resourcing payments (entitlements, subsidies, scholarships, programmes for individual students, specific programmes and initiatives) will be determined, calculated and delivered with no less than 98% accuracy in respect of

- The returns and other information provided by public education service providers, and relevant Government resourcing policies and guidelines, upon which payments are based
- The amounts of the payments
- The schedules advised to public service providers, or the contracts agreed with those providers, and the timeframes notified to payees to ensure that funding is delivered to the correct provider

Resource allocation audits will be completed for 5% of education service providers.

Payroll service payments will be made on advised pay dates

- An estimated average of 500 education sector employees will be paid two-weekly
- An estimated 550 individual employees will be on the payroll during the year

All changes to employees’ pays each two weeks will be made correctly, with the right employee paid the right amount, with no less than 98% accuracy.

Resourcing payments will be made to education service providers:

Public schools – 77 primary schools, 3 secondary schools

Private schools – 27 primary schools, 13 secondary schools

Tertiary providers - College of the Marshall Islands, RMI/USP campus

Output 4: Administration of education regulations

This output includes the administration of the range of regulations in the education system that are focused on protecting the rights of students, parents, and other caregivers, and which are not administered by the Ministry in the course of delivering other services.

The provision of this output involves exercising judgments over whether early childhood services, private schools and home-based education providers are able to commence operation in the first instance, and continue to operate. The output includes actions to resolve situations of non-compliance by private education service providers with their obligations under the regulatory framework for education. The output also involves processing applications for variations provided for in legislation and regulations.

Performance Dimensions – Quality, Quantity, Timeliness

Entry and exit decisions

All entry and exit decisions, approvals or recommendations (for instance, for early

relevant regulatory provisions and good practice, as set out in Ministry Rules and Regulations.

Entry and exit decisions will be made as follows:

Early childhood centres – range from 0 to 5

Schools – range from 0 to 5

Cancellation of charters – range from 0 to 5

Monitoring and Taking Action to Ensure Education Provider Compliance

Appropriate administrative action, with the education provider directly or as advice to the Minister, will be taken to protect the interests of students where monitoring identifies matters of material concern in terms of student safety and/or the quality of educational opportunities offered

All actions taken will be consistent with Ministry of Education guidelines

Non-compliance investigations undertaken – range from 5 to 25

Amendments, Exemptions and Variations

All amendment, exemption and variation decisions, and recommendations to the Minister, will be consistent with legislative requirements and good current practice, as set out in Ministry of Education guidelines

Number of variation decisions, or recommendations to the Minister:

Range from 5 to 20

Output 5: Curriculum development and implementation

This output includes the ongoing development and review of the national curriculum for schools, and provision of support for its implementation in schools. Support of curriculum implementation includes provision of programmes and materials to support specific areas of the curriculum, as well as information and advice to assist schools and early childhood services to provide and manage the learning environment.

The output also includes the development of assessment methodologies for assessing and monitoring the educational achievement of students against national curriculum objectives.

Performance Dimensions – Quality, Quantity, Timeliness

An annual Ministry publishing programme will set out the curriculum guidelines and curriculum support publications to be published, and the date of distribution of each publication. The programme will be published and circulated to all schools in the regular Ministry newsletter by 31 December of each year, beginning with the first programme by 31 December 2000.

All curriculum guidelines and curriculum support materials will meet specifications

An estimated 1 to 5 curriculum guidelines will be published and distributed to schools, by 30 September 2001.

An estimated 5 to 10 curriculum support materials will be published and distributed to schools to assist teachers in implementing the national curriculum, by 30 September 2002.

The curriculum support materials will meet Ministry of Education publication standards appropriate to the purpose of each item.

80% of materials in the Ministry’s publishing programme will be published within planned timeframes. The balance of curriculum guidelines and support materials will be published within six months of planned timeframes.

The National High Schools Entrance Test and the Pacific Islands Literacy Level instruments will be administered annually by June 30, and results will be reported to schools by September 30.

Output 6: Provision of information

This output includes provision of information to both the consumers and providers of education services, as a specific Government intervention to address information gaps and to improve the quality of provision and decision-making. The information provided is intended to increase awareness of educational options, to improve educational decision-making by students, parents and other care-givers, and to better inform expectations about students’ learning and achievement. The information provided to education service providers is intended to strengthen their capability and lead to greater responsiveness to the needs of students.

The output involves collating and analysing and presenting information in the forms most useful for the range of audiences and purposes, including print and electronic publications and seminars that are not provided in the course of delivering other services. All information provided under this output will be in areas of existing Government policy, and will be information that is not provided by way of normal communication and relationship management with the education sector in the course of delivering other services.

Performance Dimensions – Quality, Quantity, Timeliness

Information will be provided in accordance with the documented terms of reference/specifications for each publication, campaign, seminar or other form of information. Information will be provided as follows:

Information campaigns: an estimated 1 to 3
Editions of the regular Ministry of Education newsletter: 4

Output 7: Provision of school sector property

This output involves the provision of the property portfolio (land, buildings, other

upgrades and improvements to maintain the current capacity of the portfolio. The purchase and construction of new property may be required to expand the portfolio's capacity to meet the demands of demographic changes. The output includes responsibility for administering arrangements for maintenance of school property. The identification and disposal of any surplus public school assets is included in the output.

Performance Dimensions – Quality, Quantity, Timeliness

A ten-year Property Work Plan for all public schools will be drawn up and approved by the Minister of Education by 31 December 2000.

A Property Work Programme for 2001 will be approved by the Minister, by 30 September 2000, and implemented in accordance with specified timelines set out in the programme. The Programme will include the type of work to be undertaken (such as purchase and construction of new school property, disposal of surplus school property, or property maintenance), the number of project items, the schools at which the work is to be undertaken, specified timelines for start and completion of the work, and the Budget for the Projects.

Output 8: Provision of Teacher Housing

This output involves the provision of teacher housing and accommodation, generally to expatriate teachers who take up teaching positions in the Outer Islands, and who would not be able to take up the position unless accommodation were available.

Performance Dimensions – Quality, Quantity, Timeliness

An annual report will be provided, to the satisfaction of the Minister of Education, setting out the numbers of teachers who have been assisted with teacher housing, the locations of those teachers, and the cost of that assistance. The report will be provided to the Minister of Education by 30 September 2000, and annually thereafter.

The Road Ahead

The road ahead would have an ultimate goal of achieving self-reliance for the Marshall Islands education system. Under the regime proposed, the outcomes envisaged are that:

- Teacher qualifications would be improved, and teacher capacity would be enhanced
- A system of teacher evaluation would be instituted
- Clear standards and support for the teaching the curriculum would be in place
- The RMI Scholarships system would be improved
- Education policy would be developed by the Ministry of Education, approved by the Minister of Education, and then implemented
- There would be a continuing move towards establishing self-managing schools with community support
- Student achievement would be improved
- Disparities in educational performance will be reduced

To achieve the goal of self reliance for the Marshall Islands education system, changes to two aspects will be required: people and systems.

Improving the capability of the Ministry of Education relies upon improving the skills of the people. These include the teachers who deliver the curriculum, and the administrators who administer the education system.

Changes to the current system will not be easy, but if the outcome of a more efficient and effective system is better student achievement, the effort will have been worth it.

This document is not an end in itself, but a milestone in the development of the Ministry of Education. It must be dynamic, and change to meet changing circumstances.

The challenge is to bring Vision 2018 to life in order to fulfil the mission of the Ministry of Education to educate the people.
