Takiwa, a case study of politics in education:

Exit, voice and loyalty

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New Zealand's reforms in education had many negative effects in schools and communities. This paper describes one of the few researched positive outcomes of the reforms. At a time when market forces were rampant, and 'choice' was advocated, parents and children chose not to exit Takiwa School.

Takiwa School is in a rural community. Democratic parental voice was able to bring about the creation of an education alternative within the school. Parents, teachers and governors instigated the progressive form of education, based on an early childhood education model, which was designed to meet the needs of the 'alternative' sector of the community.

The initiative's establishment process and the results for the children and community were positive. Hirschman's exit, voice and loyalty theory is examined, and is then used to deepen understanding of aspects of Takiwa School community's political processes.

INTRODUCTION

One of the effects of **Tomorrow's Schools** (Department of Education 1988), the policy document integral to neo-liberal reform in New Zealand's education system, was that school communities recognised they had more choice and power within the newly 'marketised' education system. The legislation, however, made little difference to parents' classroom involvement in local schools (Harold, 1992). As in many other countries facing similar reforms, increased parental membership on Boards of Trustees (governance) was the predominant and, in most cases, the only increase in community involvement. This paper discusses aspects of one of the few researched New Zealand exceptions to the norm, and provides some theoretical illumination using Hirschman's Exit, Voice and Loyalty theory (Hirschman, 1970). The complete case study research from which this paper draws is outlined in a recently completed PhD thesis (Carpenter, 2000).

In Takiwa School[1] a group of parents interpreted **Tomorrow's Schools** to mean that they could 'have more say' in the education of their children. Successful democratic parental voice was able to bring about the creation of an education alternative, described

here as the Kiwi initiative. To partially understand why the parental initiative succeeded it is necessary to know something of Takiwa. The environment, the people, the school, and a little of Takiwa's history are discussed. Following this is an account of what the parents were asking for and a brief description of how they were able to achieve their goals.

The focus then moves to Hirschman's economic theory: Exit, Voice and Loyalty (Hirschman 1970). Its description is followed by a discussion of how this theory is able to explain a range of educational phenomena. In the concluding section links are made between Exit, Voice and Loyalty theory and the creation of the Kiwi education alternative in Takiwa School. Underpinning this paper's content is the assertion that seemingly straightforward political activity is better understood, explained and justified with theoretical input drawn from a range of disciplines (Ozga, 2000).

TAKIWA

Takiwa is an isolated, spiritual and very beautiful place; located on a harbour, it is framed by a forest of native bush, the sea, and clear unpolluted skies. Over the decades the village has slowly grown to accommodate approximately 600 people in close proximity to the school, with perhaps double that number residing in the valleys, hills and villages in the catchment district.

Maori were the first settlers and are tangata whenua, people of the land (indigenous people). For Maori the land is their turangawaewae, the home of their ancestors and therefore their home - Maori live in the area and family members regularly visit. Most Takiwa Maori have a close affinity to at least one of the local marae (meeting ground/community centre). Through marriage and kinship many have close links to several marae. There is a strong sense of the importance of te reo (Maori language) and tikanga (Maori protocol).

Pakeha (people of European descent) arrived in Takiwa hundreds of years after Maori. For Pakeha the attractions include physical landscape beauty, fertile soil, relative non-pollution, work and/or unemployment opportunities, inexpensive land, and a sense of community. The early Pakeha immigrants tended to be farmers and small business people, and to this day many community businesses are owned by Pakeha.

The Takiwa School Kiwi initiative emerged in the mid 1990s from a sub-group of mainly Pakeha people; within Takiwa these people are often referred to as 'alternative'. The ancestors of these people, in a philosophical sense only, arrived in Takiwa during the late 1960s and 1970s. This was a time known as the 'hippy era', a time of opting out. They were escaping suburbia and its restrictions, and seeking freedom from a society they did not wish to belong to. While some of these original settlers still live in Takiwa, more recent 'alternatives' are not opting out in the ways the 1970s hippies were. The later arrivals tend to be university educated, pro-environment, politically left-leaning, anti-violence, and more prepared to work for a wage.

The conscious choice the 'alternatives' made to live in Takiwa is partially based on the sense of community the place provides – there is a long history of respectful and integrated race relations, and an ability to unite for common community causes. For example, during the neo-liberal health reforms the united action of Takiwa people meant they were one of the few communities in New Zealand to retain a totally free health system (Kearns 1998).

Decisions various groups of people have made to live in Takiwa have resulted in homogenous sub-communities; these value education in particular and similar ways. Hoxby (2000), citing Tiebout choice theory (Stoddard, 2005), describes how residential choices can raise the productivity of schools by simultaneously raising achievement and lowering spending.

TAKIWA SCHOOL

Remote village schools, many of them formerly Native or Maori schools, closed so that Takiwa (Area) School could open in the 1970s. Area Schools are a unique way of meeting the needs of large rural districts; they cater for children from infants (5 years old) through to Year 13 (18 years old), and are combined primary and secondary schools. The primary part of Takiwa School caters for approximately two thirds of the school population.

Philosophically, prior to **Tomorrow's Schools,** Takiwa School was similar to other state schools. The curriculum was a clone of that prescribed for all schools and students were expected to learn in particular ways, with a common core curriculum as the basis.

Approximately one quarter of the students in the primary part of the school are Maori, and many are immersed in tikanga and te reo. Within the last decade, partly in response to calls for Tino Rangatiratanga (self determination) and also because Te Kohanga Reo (early childhood Maori immersion programme) graduates arrived at the school fluent in te reo, the school has established a Maori immersion unit. Approximately one quarter of the students in the primary part of the school have opted to learn in Maori and their sector of the school has relative autonomy.

Maori children are one of three groups of students and these groups reflect the population of the surrounding community. The three groups are Maori (tangata whenua), the children of the local small business people and farmers (mainly Pakeha) and the children of the 'alternatives', the people discussed above.

Historically, the children of the `alternatives' were arguably amongst the poorer attendees at school. This was because the parents placed equal if not more value on the learning gained through home and community activities. Because a holistic form of education was valued, home schooling was often preferred. When the children did attend school many were amongst the higher academic achievers. The parents and caregivers of those 'alternative' children who attended school were very supportive.

KIWI INITIATIVE

After **Tomorrow's Schools** (1989) Takiwa School had an election for a Board of Trustees (BOT). In the required democratic manner the Board co-opted extra Maori people to ensure that all segments of the community were fairly represented. The school embarked on its own particular journey into **Tomorrow's Schools.** During the writing of the Charter, BOT members spent considerable time consulting with the community. The 'alternative' sub-community was fully involved in the consultation process.

Notwithstanding this dialogue some parents were discontented with what the school ultimately offered. In 1993 a group of 'alternative' women parents met and discussed the education of their children. They shared strong philosophical beliefs regarding education. Their chief concern was that when their children entered Takiwa School they were educated using a philosophical approach which was diametrically opposed to that which the children had experienced in Playcentre. Playcentre is a relatively unstructured early childhood programme which has a focus on the importance of play, and parent involvement.

> ... we feel our Playcentre children are not being offered a schooling option that follows
> on comfortably from Playcentre ... (parent interview comment, 1994)

In a written submission to the Ministry of Education, requesting a separate school, they described parts of Playcentre philosophy which they considered encompassed a sound base for learning. These included child-initiated self choice programmes, the whanau concept of extended family involvement, the supporting and educating of parents, and a high adult to child ratio:

> A high adult to child ratio is maintained, ensuring children learn to relate to and benefit
> from a wide range of people and also allowing for a much wider range of activities to
> be occurring at one time in any session. Children do not have to be restricted and their
> individuality stifled, because of the constraints of discipline and control required in a
> classroom of 1 adult and 20 or more children. When there are more adults present the
> learning can take place in a more active and creative way, experientially and out in the
> environment more often .... Thus learning remains exciting and fun and children are self
> motivated...

> A special character school incorporating Playcentre philosophy may wish to employ
> registered teachers, but there would be a strong emphasis on parent involvement, with
> a requirement for parents to participate in ongoing educational programmes for
> themselves, enabling them to participate in their children's learning confidently.
> Parents and children would be involved in planning the curriculum with the teachers
> and together they would decide how it was to be delivered, keeping in mind the child
> initiated philosophy.... The curriculum would have a holistic approach to life, looking
> at the physical, emotional and spiritual development of the children, with a strong
> emphasis on relating to the natural environment and the use of experiential and co-
> operative learning, in a caring supportive whanau (parents' letter to the Ministry of
> Education, 1993)

One woman stated:

> It's now Tomorrow's Schools and we have more say in how our children are educated
> (parent interview comment, 1994).

When the Ministry of Education did not respond to their petition the parents instigated a series of community meetings, and proceeded to form strategic and political alliances within Takiwa School. They cited the **Tomorrow's Schools** legislation and Playcentre philosophy as rationale for change.

Community meetings initially centred on parent's long term goals for their children. Then the focus moved to the achievement of the goals; what should children's education comprise? Parents reached a philosophical consensus: they wished to be more involved in their children's schooling, family grouping/vertical grouping was preferable to age - based classes, and learning should be child initiated, and fun. The parents decided to formally approach the school with a request for a primary school Playcentre based learning unit.

Several meetings with the BOT ensued. These governors eventually gave the Acting Principal permission to put into practice 'something that the staff could work with'. As a result the BOT agreed to: survey parents regarding interest in a Kiwi unit, allow teachers to opt into teaching within the unit, and also to alter the school's structures to accommodate the unit if the numbers indicated 'enough' interest.

In its first year of establishment fifty six placement applications were made for the Kiwi unit. Two vertically grouped primary level classes were formed, a younger and older class. Thus, during 1994, there were three parallel structures within the primary sector. The Maori immersion class continued as previously, as a virtually autonomous unit. The 'mainstream' classes also continued as usual with children in conventional classes with, at the most, two year-groups taught together. The Kiwi unit became the third group.

Two experienced women teachers volunteered to teach in the trial Kiwi programme. Both teachers were ex-Playcentre mothers and therefore had some understanding and sympathy for the philosophical base of the desired programme. Sue could comfortably accommodate the philosophy as she shared it, she had lived in the area for over a decade and most of her friendship networks were amongst the Kiwi parent group. Helen, a more formal teacher, had also lived in Takiwa for over a decade. She had teaching expertise in music, and computers, and was trained in Reading Recovery. She was reputably a very good teacher; one who encouraged peaceful relationships and conflict resolution in her classrooms. Both Sue and Helen had high credibility with the group of parents who championed the programme.

The 1994 pedagogy of the two Kiwi classes included: considerable physical parental involvement in class programmes; parental involvement in planning and evaluation; a learner centred programme where the children were expected to decide what they would learn, how they would learn, and for how long they would study a topic; a diverse range of classroom visitors; children spending more time learning out in the community -

especially in their segment of the community; the autonomy to exempt Kiwi children and teachers from some school systems and structures (for instance, fitness programmes); more exposure to creative activities - in particular art, dance and drama; family rather than class camps; and a parents' committee which organised and networked on behalf of the classes. The published aim of the Kiwi unit was:

> To achieve the best possible environment for our children and maintain their enthusiasm and self-motivation for learning.

After a trial year, a decision was made by the BOT that, provided each year there were sufficient numbers interested in the programme, the Kiwi programme would continue to operate. This meant three programme options continued to be available in the primary school.

The choices the Kiwi parents, children and teachers made had a considerable impact on those who did not make the Kiwi choice. In other words the choices of few had a huge effect on many. Considerable within-school structural change was necessary to accommodate the Kiwi programme and within school flow-on-effects became inevitable. Probably the least impact was felt by those in the Maori immersion unit - the numbers opting for their programmes showed little movement. The mainstream classes and their teachers experienced the most change. Mainstream teachers lost a group of historically high achieving children. They also lost some parental support for their programmes; for instance in the area of transportation for school trips. Because the mainstream numbers decreased, teachers had to teach a wider ability and age range of children, their classes also had a higher ratio of boys to girls. Teachers lost some collegial input from Sue and Helen into their professional development programmes.

Many aspects of the development process and establishment can be theorised at a deeper level. The remainder of this paper, however, focuses on why and how the Kiwi parents were successful in their advocacy for change. Hirschman's Exit, Voice and Loyalty theory provides some elucidation.

AN ECONOMICS THEORY: EXIT, VOICE AND LOYALTY – ALBERT O. HIRSCHMAN

Hirschman's Exit, Voice and Loyalty theory (Hirschman 1970) gives a political and economic perspective on organisational behaviour; it provides abstract knowledge of the structures of social relations. With a focus on politics and economics, Hirschman theorised the ways people deal with dissatisfaction with an organisation or with a product. Hirschman used the three concepts of *Exit, Voice and Loyalty* to explain action and inaction on the part of dissatisfied people. He offered by way of example a firm selling goods; producing saleable goods for customers. If the quality of the goods deteriorates, management has two ways of finding out about this problem. Some customers stop buying the goods and revenue therefore drops. Hirschman called this departure the exit option. Exit is a response which involves leaving/resigning/not purchasing and in a sense it is the ultimate expression of dissatisfaction. Exit is related more to markets, economics and business; it involves a clear cut decision to desert:

> The customer who, dissatisfied with the product of one firm, shifts to that of another, uses the market to defend his (sic) welfare or to improve his position; and he also sets in motion market forces which may induce recovery on the part of the firm that has declined in comparative performance. This is the sort of mechanism economics thrives on. It is neat - one either exits or one does not; it is impersonal ... and it is indirect ... (Hirschman 1970:15-16).

If people do exit, it deprives the organisation of voice. The voice option is democratic argument/action/interaction which, if utilised, could make the organisation or the goods better. In the example of the firm selling goods, voice could perhaps mean lodging a complaint with management. Hirschman described voice as far more 'messy'. Voice does occur in market situations where goods are sold, but it is found more often in non-market situations such as organisations like schools. Voice is political, it involves articulation in some form, and is 'an art' which evolves:

> Voice is here defined as any attempt at all to change, rather than to escape from, an objectionable state of affairs, whether through individual or collective petition to the management directly in charge, through appeal to a higher authority with the intention of forcing a change in management, or through various types of actions and protests, including those that are meant to mobilise public opinion (Hirschman 1970:30).

> Voice is political action par excellence (Hirschman 1970:16).

Hirschman's third concept was loyalty. It is through loyalty that voice can be forced to function. '... the likelihood of voice increases with the degree of loyalty' (ibid. p.77) The importance of loyalty is that it can delay or neutralise the tendency of people to exit. Often the first people to be most dissatisfied are those who are the most quality conscious. If these people, through loyalty, stay with the product or the firm there is the possibility that improvement and/or reform can be achieved from within the organisation.

> Thus loyalty, far from being irrational, can serve the socially useful purpose of preventing deterioration from becoming cumulative, as it so often does when there is no barrier to exit (Hirschman 1970:79).

As well as applying Hirschman's Exit, Voice and Loyalty theories, theorists across disciplines have extended and elaborated on the usage of exit and voice. One example is O'Donnell's (cited in Hirschman 1986) distinction between horizontal and vertical voice. Reflecting on O'Donnell's work, Hirschman states:

> Horizontal voice is a necessary precondition for the mobilisation of vertical voice ... For vertical voice to come about - that is, for members of an organisation to engage management in meaningful dialogue and bargaining - it is frequently necessary for members to forge a tie among themselves and to create an organisation that will agitate for their demands ... the hoped for result of this collective and vertical voice is a freely available public good ... Horizontal voice ... is free, spontaneous activity of men and women in society, akin to breathing, and extraordinary violence must be deployed to

> suppress it .... Just because the desired result of collective voice is typically a public good - or, better, some aspects of the public happiness - participation in voice provides an alternative to purely self-centred, instrumental action. It therefore has the powerful attractions of those activities that are marked by the fusion of striving and attaining, and can also be understood as an investment in individual or group identity (Hirschman, 1986:82-83).

EXIT, VOICE, LOYALTY AND EDUCATION

While Hirschman's focus was on economics (rather than education) he did use public and private school education as examples on a number of occasions to illustrate his theory. In his original work Hirschman cited the economics based view of education provided by Milton Friedman as being 'a near perfect example of the economist's bias in favour of exit and against voice' (Hirschman 1970: 17).

Friedman advocated the possibility for families to exit schools through the provision of education vouchers. Such vouchers, issued to parents, could be used to 'buy' education for children. Schooling would be supplied on a competitive basis by private enterprise and parents could effectively 'shop around' for education. Thus, exit was advocated as a solution for dissatisfaction. Friedman (cited in Hirschman, 1970:17), as part of his argument in favour of exit, was disdainful of the use of voice as it involved resorting to 'cumbrous political channels'.

Hirschman's response was:

> But what else is the political, indeed the democratic, process than the digging, the use, and hopefully the slow improvement of these channels? (Hirschman 1970:17).

Friedman believed that the exit option would result in the overall improvement of schools. Hirschman questioned whether schools would improve with the exit option and also whether exit was the best way of expressing one's unfavourable view:

> A person less well trained in economics might naively suggest that the direct way of expressing views is to express them! (Hirschman 1970:17).

Hirschman likened education to 'connoisseur goods', and indicated that those who developed the art of voice in the education context were likely to be high quality consumers:

> ... in the case of 'connoisseur goods' - and, as the example of education indicates, this category is by no means limited to quality wines - the consumers who drop out when quality declines are not necessarily the marginal customers who would drop out if price increased, but may be intramarginal consumers with considerable consumer surplus; or, put more simply, the consumer who is rather insensitive to price increases is often likely to be highly sensitive to quality declines.

> At the same time, consumers with a high consumer surplus are, for that very reason, those who have most to lose through a deterioration of the product's quality. Therefore,

they are the ones who are most likely to make a fuss in case of deterioration until such time as they do exit. 'You can actively flee, then, and you can actively stay put.' This phrase of Erik Erikson (1964) applies with full force to the choice that is typically made by the quality-conscious consumer or the member who cares deeply about the policies pursued by the organisation to which he belongs. To make that kind of consumer and member 'actively stay put' for a while should be a matter of considerable concern for many firms and organisations, and particularly for those, of course, that respond more readily to voice than to exit (Hirschman 1970:49-50).

In more recent years other academics, particularly from the United States - e.g. Chubb and Moe (1997) and Levin (2002) - have echoed Friedman's arguments for neo-liberal reform in education. Levin advocates vouchers, maintaining they are integral to improving education as they make access to private education alternatives a possibility for all. His philosophical position is that such choice mechanisms empower parents; ultimately their introduction will have positive effects on student academic achievement. Chubb and Moe selected from Hirschman's concepts to urge that parents and students have the freedom to exit schools and switch from one institution to another when they believe it personally beneficial. Again, vouchers are advocated as the key mechanism for change:

> In the private marketplace, educational choice is founded on ... the exit option. If parents and students do not like the services they are being provided, they can exit and find another school whose offerings are more congruent with their needs.... Lacking a real exit option, many parents and students will choose a public school despite dissatisfaction with its goals, methods, or personnel. Having done so, they have a right to voice their preferences through the democratic control structure - but everyone else has the same rights, and many are well armed and organised. Voice cannot remedy the mismatch between what parents and students want and what schools provide. Conflict and disharmony are built into the system (Chubb and Moe 1997:365).

As can be seen from this quotation, the perceived inadequacies of 'democracy' are central to Chubb and Moe's argument. Like Friedman, Chubb and Moe viewed voice as cumbrous.

In contrast to the extreme positions of Friedman, and Chubb and Moe, Westoby (1989: 70-72) distinguished the positive effects that voice could have in education. He contended that more extensive 'exit' weakened the 'voice' that could help modify performance in schools (Westoby 1989: 66). He argued (p.76) that it was not the actions of the parents who opted away from schools which would produce changes (except indirectly) but rather the behaviour of parents and others who remained involved in schools. He maintained (p.77) that parents varied in their attitudes to expressing voice and wielding political influence. For some it was a cost, while others enjoyed it. However all parents had views; parental voting in governance elections was one way in which the 'silent majority' made their views known.

Westoby cautioned, however, that those parents who did become involved in schools could eventually be affected by the educational rhetoric of 'partnership'. Such discourse, (a possible synonym for loyalty?), could ultimately inhibit parents from directly criticising the school (Westoby 1989:68). Despite this, voice was generally seen by Westoby as being a positive force within schools:

> ... from the point of view of improvement of the supply (school) system as a whole, high levels of uncertainty will tend to make voice more important relevant to exit, both because voice (unlike exit) is 'information rich', and because switching may contain a significant 'random' element, by consumers who are dissatisfied but who know little of the alternative to which they are switching (Hirschman 1981 pp 219-222 cited in Westoby 1989:73).

While Westoby provides a wealth of information and theory-informed analysis, his key point, that more extensive exit weakens voice which could improve the performance of schools, is integral to what happened in Takiwa School.

Dale and Ozga (1993) utilised Exit, Voice and Loyalty concepts in an examination of the theorising of education reforms in England, Wales and New Zealand. Hirschman's theory was used (p.76) as a way of setting out an 'alternative means (in place of 'new right theory') of examining current differences in educational policy'. These theorists discussed Hirschman's exit and voice alongside Dahrendorf's concepts of provision. The latter are concerned with the availability of goods and services, and entitlement, and the distribution of goods to whoever is entitled to them.

Dale and Ozga identify a linkage between exit and provision, and between voice and entitlement. They contend that liberal policies favour the former through the mechanism of choice and unfettered markets, and that socialist policies favour the latter with a prioritising of collective over individualistic principles. They use this combination of concepts and terminology to explain the political shift to neo-liberal policies in New Zealand and the UK. Thus, the main directions of the changes in the two countries, rather than being a blanket move to the 'new right', were: 'an increase in provision and encouragement of exit, a revision of the conditions and scope of voice, and curtailment of entitlement' (Dale and Ozga 1993:77).

Dale and Ozga also utilised the notions of horizontal and vertical voice (described above, Hirschman 1986) to discuss the role of community in the period post **Tomorrow's Schools** in New Zealand, suggesting that within the education reforms the wider community was an example of horizontal voice. As an 'amorphous' body it was not expected that the community as a whole would develop vertical voice - the community was not seen to be a 'single-issue interest group that would press demands' (Dale and Ozga 1993: 84).

Voice is more likely to manifest if exit is not possible; there is greater potential for voice if students and their families stay within schools, rather than exit to neighbouring schools:

> The presence of the exit alternative can atrophy the development of the art of voice
> (Hirschman 1970:43)

The Smithfield Project (Lauder, Hughes, Waslander, Thrupp, McGlinn, Newton, and Dupuis 1994) identified that the capacity for New Zealand students to exit schools resulted in 'voice', which could help modify and improve performance within schools, either weakening or disappearing. Parents preferred to withdraw students from particular schools rather than press for institutional change. The 'choice' of 'education consumers' was expected to be, and generally became, solely between schools. While a voucher plan was never officially advocated by the New Zealand government, the abolishing of school zoning in 1991 meant that, in theory, students and parents could choose the school they wished to attend. Parents who were unhappy with their children's education had little incentive to try and change the school programme if a neighbouring school would enrol their children.

HIRSCHMAN'S THEORY AND NEW ZEALAND EDUCATION REFORM

In the early stages of education reform (1987-1990), the New Zealand state promoted the discourse of 'voice' to encourage parents to become involved in administrative matters within their children's schools. Deference by the New Zealand state to such democratic notions as 'partnership' and 'community' signalled voice possibilities to parental communities. While loyalty was not articulated as such, it could be argued that this was also an assumption behind the Tomorrow's Schools' rhetoric.

Once parents were involved and schools were comfortably handling, albeit for gratis, the work which historically a huge bureaucracy had been hired to do, the emphasis of the state changed. Rather than continue on the voice track and encourage parents to work with BOTs and teachers to make schools better places for their children, the state's focus transposed to a stronger market model and the discourse of exit. This shift, from voice to exit, was formally brought about by the Education Amendment Act (1990) which permitted dezoning, enrolment schemes and more 'consumer choice'. Rational choice theory can elucidate the state's motivations. Bosetti (2004) explains this theory as the assumption that parents are utility maximizers who are able to make rational decisions based on the best interests of their children.

As a consequence of New Zealand education's continually expanding exit provision, democratic community voice was taken less and less seriously. An indication of the marginalisation of voice became apparent when, post the initial reforms, the state disbanded two structural avenues for parental voice - Community Education Forums, and the Parents' Advocacy Council (see Mansell (1993) and Ballantyne (1994)).

The theories of Friedman (see Hirschman 1970), Chubb and Moe (1997) and Levin (2002) appeared to come to fruition with New Zealand's emerging choice policies. In New Zealand choice became synonymous with exit. However, no matter how one names the manoeuvre, its actions and effects were the polar opposite of participative and democratic voice. Choice based on 'positive freedom' is central to the maintenance of

social justice. Opposite of this is 'negative freedom' – the latter works against social justice because it advances the freedom of some at the cost of the freedom of others. One example, previously discussed, was the removal of school zoning in New Zealand. According to Codd (1994) policies which increase the discretionary power of educational consumers can give priority to negative liberty over social justice.

Reay (2004) researched the effects of choice policies in the UK and demonstrated how they "fail(ed) the majority of working class children and their families" (p.537). She argued for the need to "balance getting the best for one's own child with a commitment to a wider common good" (p.537). In the USA and the UK levels of choice possibilities are highly correlated with social class positioning (p.538); the same is true for New Zealand.

The changes in legislation had differing effects on individual New Zealand communities and schools. While in some communities the newer legislation meant school choice and exit possibilities were opened up, in other communities there were physical limits to school exit. In some communities, especially those which were geographically isolated - like Takiwa - there were no other schools to exit to.

TAKIWA SCHOOL AND DEMOCRATIC VOICE

Takiwa School had available to it a unique combination of Voice, Loyalty and Exit options. Its particular combination was a product of the school and community's history, combined with the particular coexisting challenges each was facing.

The combination of structural conditions and motivations which converged in Takiwa between 1993 and 1996 resulted in and from the emergence of democratic voice. Structural conditions included the legislative changes of **Tomorrow's Schools** and the new 'autonomy' this gave to BOT members. While these new legislative structures enabled exit to neighbouring schools the isolation of Takiwa meant that this rarely, if ever, occurred at the primary school level. Thus, parents of Takiwa School children could either exit and home school their children, or agitate for 'within-school' change. Loyalty to the community and school, and the homogeneity of a community influenced by Tiebout choice (Stoddard, 2005), enhanced the prospects of the political track; Kiwi parents were motivated to 'actively stay put'.

The Kiwi parents understood the education system. As 'high quality consumers' of education their preference was to 'actively stay put' and organise for change. They first talked with each other in a series of meetings to establish their priorities. Only then were they prepared to initiate and drive change through the 'cumbrous political channels' of the hierarchical school system. The use of horizontal voice was a necessary precondition for vertical voice.

Aside from the support of the legislative framework encompassed in **Tomorrow's Schools**, the Kiwi parents had a strong philosophical and educational base to their demands. They documented carefully, mobilised quickly, strategised, were persistent, had allies in powerful positions within Takiwa School structures, worked strategically to keep most teachers on-side, affirmed the Treaty of Waitangi, showed respect for diversity,

and, most importantly, they believed they were within their rights to ask for change. Interview transcripts demonstrate that the Kiwi parent leaders enjoyed facilitating meetings, and they relished their community mobilisation role. Some Kiwi parents were unemployed, others had free time available - thus their political processes had little financial impact in the personal sense. In summary Kiwi parents knew and understood how to make their voices heard; this knowledge was a result of their respective histories, education, beliefs and connections. The costs, both financial and emotional, to them of their using their voice were minimal. The benefits were happy children who were able to learn using an early childhood Playcentre approach within the state primary school system.

Those with power in the school showed by their actions that they believed in a form of participatory democracy. Most BOT members and senior management believed in the rights of all parents to articulate and realise their desires. Consequently the BOT listened to, and ultimately championed, the cause of Kiwi parents. The combined proactive agency of Kiwi parents, BOT members and school management meant that people talked with and listened to each other regarding respective needs and requests. There were those who resisted change, but established processes meant they were able to voice their concerns, understand, and ultimately accept innovation.

> ... the potential of participation is most fully realised when the commitments and energies of democratic leaders are directed in concert with courageous followers toward the elimination of the institutional and psychological barriers to authentic forms of democratic participation. In such a way, as old social ground shifts, creating the potential for either conflict avoidance or the politicisation of everything, new social ground that re-establishes and facilitates norms of dialogue and participation can be sought (Anderson 1998: 594).

CONCLUSION

In summary, the establishment and change process enabled by systems within Takiwa School's organisation encouraged the use of democratic voice. Systems facilitated a form of cultural politics to work effectively for particular groups within the school's context:

> .... schools are sites of constant political and cultural struggle: Teachers, parents, and administrators struggle with one another over resources, ideological commitments, and the meaning of the school ... Participatory reforms cannot be understood without understanding how participation is mediated by politics and culture, but the construction of culture and politics implicit in most studies of participation is one that tends to mask rather than illuminate these struggles. In other words, politics and power are embedded in a school's culture, resulting in a form of cultural politics that makes successful implementation of participatory structures more complex than current research indicates (Knight-Abowitz, 1997 cited in Anderson 1998: 591-592)

Public occasions like a BOT formal evaluation were celebrations of democratic voice, and such overt processes had a considerable impact on how the Kiwi initiative finally evolved within the school. Thus the establishment of the Kiwi initiative, an alternative form of education in Takiwa school, was discernible by multiple voices. Those voices were sometimes heard publicly, and sometimes as quiet murmurings uttered strategically and discretely. In some way, nearly all were heard.

Democratic voice brought success for the Kiwi parental group. The initiative survived, albeit with some changes, through to 2003. The emergence of voice rather than exit makes the Takiwa case distinctive. In the interests of the empowerment of all minority groups, there is a need to understand why it was that a certain group of parents were able, and chose, to use their voice within educational structures to bring about change. Hirschman's theory of Exit, Voice and Loyalty enhances some political understanding of Takiwa School's creation of an education alternative.

NOTES

1 Takiwa is a pseudonym for the school, people's names in this paper are also pseudonyms.

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