

SUMMARY

The transformation of the Torres Strait Islanders' attitudes to school education, based upon analysis of writings on educational policies and media discussion

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The aim of this paper is to clarify the transformation of the Torres Strait Islander's attitudes to school education since the 1980s to the present analyzing statements on educational policies and articles in the *Torres News*, a weekly newspaper in the Torres Strait Islands. In the middle of the 1980s, the Torres Strait Islander Regional Education Consultative Committee (TSIREC) was established by representatives of Torres Strait Islanders to submit their educational demands to the government. They insisted that their children needed to receive the same levels of school education as others in Queensland, while maintaining their own culture. This means that Islander people at that time recognized school education was a way of obtaining a ticket for 'social success' in Australia and maintaining traditions.

This attitude of Islanders to school education has been changed under the influence of federal/ state education policy which primarily aims at improving educational outcomes of all students, especially indigenous ones. Torres Strait had a new regional education policy which was developed by the coordination between the state education department and the Torres Strait Islands in 2006 and initiated educational reform targeted to improve their students' low educational achievements. This policy encouraged Islanders not only to commit to develop the policy but also to share responsibilities for the results. Islanders should regard school as a place where they attain basic skills needed in mainstream of Australian society.

Torres News which is one of the most important information resources for the people in the region has a role to strengthen Islanders' perspective on education and school. With regard to educational reform, the *Torres News* referred to the obstacles to improve their educational outcomes through schools, and pointed out that school education is not to be against tradition and culture, but rather should maintain it. Here, their attitude to school education seems to have been transformed.

There is a common trend in attitudes to school education in the policies and a media. Islanders now recognize school as tool for cultural maintenance as well as improvement of academic skill. Both of them are essential for social success for Torres Strait Islander.