INTRODUCTION

Immigration is a complex, dynamic global phenomenon which impacts irrevocably on both immigrants and the receiving society. Immigration policies, reflecting governments’ political and economic intentions, significantly influence successful immigration and settlement. Immigrants’ success in meeting governments’ and their own expectations are influenced by the political, economic, regulatory and social conditions of the host society they enter. Developing communication strategies to prepare a population for a change in immigration policies would be advantageous for social cohesion. However, the introduction of radical economic change intended to restructure business and society at the same time was not conducive to smooth, social immigrant integration.

This paper explores the communication dimensions of an immigration policy set within the context of national political and economic restructuring. It does this by tracing the process and impact of the introduction of neo-liberal policies on New Zealand society without prior political debate. The economic and social consequences of neo-liberal reforms affected the reception and opportunities encountered by newly arrived business immigrants. To contextualise the discussion, the effects of neo-liberal policies on the New Zealand economy and society, including its immigrant communities, are traced from their inception in the 1980s through the 1990s.

Introducing an economic and political change process which enables people to connect and participate, requires leaders who can articulate a vision to persuade people it is in their best interests to incorporate the change (Shockly-Zalabak, 2009). An opportunity for political debate on the impending neo-liberal changes arose during the 1994 New Zealand election campaign but was deliberately ignored (Jesson, 1999). An unexplained change in the social contract potentially creates a sense of betrayal and unfocused anger (D'Aprix, 1996). Subsequently, as the neo-liberal structural reforms were introduced, communities reacted in confusion, anger and scepticism.
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONTEXT 1980S - 1990S

This section outlines the neo-liberal reforms, introduced by the 1984 Labour Government without electoral debate or a mandate and their impact on the New Zealand economy and society (Jesson, 1999; Kelsey, 1997). The reforms contrasted sharply with the pre-existing welfare state safety-net of benefits which had evolved from the 1930s depression era to support those in dire need. The irony of the Labour Party introducing neo-liberal reforms was explained by Jesson (1999, cited in Edwards, 2011).

The pervasive neo-liberal ethos of individual responsibility and the “ethos of the market” (Kelsey, 1999, p.4) promulgated in 1984, initiated the state divesting itself of state run enterprises businesses, deregulation, market liberalisation, government restructuring and privatisation of government corporations. Bourdieu (1998, p.1) described the essence of neo-liberalism as the “utopia of endless exploitation,” as neo-liberals reduced controls which might reduce the profits of economic efficiency. Neo-liberalism leads to “the general privatisation of public services and the reduction of public and social expenses” (Bourdieu, 1998, p.5). Ongoing restructuring systematically weakens public institutions, effectively masking the effects of an imperceptible transition to 'liberalism'. Critics of neo-liberalism were discredited in advance by accusations of self-interest or inflexibility (Bourdieu, 1998). For example, if the unions involved predicted the potential consequences of the neo-liberal policies, their criticisms were discounted on the basis of self-interest. In New Zealand, the privatisation of the state service sector including state-owned assets, combined with local government restructuring and subsequent layoffs, greatly increased unemployment (Kelsey, 1999).

However, these neo-liberal reforms did not deliver the anticipated, positive economic results. Instead, New Zealand’s foreign debt quadrupled, interest rates increased and the New Zealand economy contracted by one percent between 1985 and 1992. This compared badly with the average of 20 percent growth of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD] economies occurring at the same time (Kelsey, 1999). By 1993, New Zealanders felt alienated by a democratic system which had implemented neo-liberal reforms without them being debated during the election process. The loss of control over people’s economic destiny led to further demoralisation (Jesson, 1999; Kelsey, 1993, 1999). The neo-liberal restructuring occurred at local, regional and national levels, reforming both institutions and working relationships within communities. Divisions deepened in New Zealand society. The wealthiest benefited from targeted tax reductions, while the value of social welfare benefits was reduced under the new National lead government (Kelsey, 1999). In fact, an argument has been made that the neo-liberal tax reforms in New Zealand in the 1980s and in 2010 resulted from autonomous bureaucratic action (Christensen, 2012). According to Edwards (2011), the increasing economic inequality arose
from the Labour Party’s ideological move from achieving class economic equity, to increasing social rights for women, Māori, Pacific immigrants and gays. Ongoing government restructuring increased the numbers of unemployed. A shift from full-time employment to more contractual work created tensions amongst families and communities. Not only were public institutions weakened as Bourdieu (1998) predicted, but so were communities reliant upon social cohesion to endure the resulting tensions.

Under such fraught conditions, the opportunity for newly arrived immigrants to culturally enrich their host country through the respectful, mutual negotiation of customs, new technologies and perspectives, was imperilled. Immigrants could be perceived as a competitive threat through their numbers, economic or political power. In a time of social insecurity, immigrants’ cultures and customs were even more likely to be perceived as threatening the existing culture or cultures, by usurping the resources or changing the rules (Cockerham, 1995). Critics commented on the lack of societal preparation for a new wave of immigrants, particularly those from a different cultural background from the traditional immigrant sources (Ho, 2002a; Ho & Bedford, 1998; Ip, 2007, 2001). Neither the government, nor the media provided the reasons or the benefits of increasing and diversifying the immigration flow. Within local communities, competition for scarce resources surfaced in schools having to cater for English as-a-second-language students, initially without adequate resources.

NEW ZEALAND IMMIGRATION POLICIES 1987-1998

Consistent with the neo-liberal competitive rationale to revitalise the New Zealand economy during the 1987 to 1998 economic turmoil, skilled and investor immigrants, especially from Asian countries, were deliberately encouraged to immigrate. In 1991 protests and strikes against the Employment Contracts Act, involving half a million people (Boraman, 2006), failed to deter immigrants. New Zealand focused on attracting skilled immigrants and investors to fulfil occupational shortages and reinvigorate the economy. New Zealand sought to emulate Canada’s immigration policies, by selecting immigrants to make the economy more competitive while reducing immigration costs (Bauder, 2008).

THE 1987 BUSINESS IMMIGRATION POLICY (BIP)

The ambitious goals of the 1987 Business Investment Policy [BIP] expected the Skilled Migrant and Business Investment categories to provide 60 percent of new immigrants, about 45,000 a year (Beaglehole, 2005). Investors required a minimum investment of NZ$150,000, plus their business ideas and experience in order to develop innovative competitive industries and markets (Ip, 2007, 2001). English proficiency levels were initially determined at an interview by
an immigration official. However, in 1995, the requirement of an International English Language Test Score [IELTS] score of five was introduced for both the principal and secondary applicants. While investors did not need to meet any English language criteria, their minimum contribution was increased to $1,000,000 (Birch, 1991). However, somewhat naively, New Zealand did not require immigrant investors to retain their funds in New Zealand after the initial investment. A 1991 policy modification encouraged investment outside the main urban centres, to offset the trend of New Zealand’s regional businesses migrating to Auckland.

Initially, results of the 1987 Business Investment Policy, renamed the Business Investment Category [BIC] in 1991, were encouraging as the immigration targets were nearly met (Beaglehole, 2005). With New Zealand’s removal of country of origin as a factor, numbers of Asians sought to emigrate as a result of the socio-political changes occurring in China, Taiwan and Hong Kong. During the 1990s Chinese, especially from Hong Kong and Taiwan (Ip, 2001), were attracted to New Zealand. Familiarity with Western business processes and English assisted their settlement in English speaking countries.

New Zealand’s immigration strategies purported to increase diversity and vitality, while maintaining society’s high level of social cohesion (Ip, 2001). Critical to social cohesion and the success of the immigration policy, was the contentious level of English proficiency. If set too low immigrants could not integrate into mainstream networks nor interact effectively in business, education or health conversations. However, if set at a level where this could not be achieved, it incurred allegations of racism (Ip, 2007, 2001) and effectively excluded potential wealthy Asian immigrant investors targeted by the government. The move to a minimum level of IELTS five was perceived by some to signal a more rigid entry requirement than any other Pacific Rim country, specifically Australia, Canada and the United States (Ip, 2007). The 1987 BIP requirement for immigrant investors to invest in productive enterprises was criticised for its restrictions in comparison with the existing Australian and Canadian business policies (Trlin & Kang, 1992). Although immigrant investors may have been willing to invest in appropriate enterprises, there were few suitable to invest in (Ho & Bedford, 1998; Ip, 2007, 2001).

Concurrently Asians, mainly Chinese from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, plus South Koreans, entered New Zealand on a range of Student, Skilled Labour and Investor Visas. Many settled in certain Auckland suburbs (Lewin, et al., 2011; Meares, Ho, Peace & Spoonley, 2010a, 2010b), where their presence was indicated by the proliferation of signs in Chinese and Korean scripts signalling a significant Asian presence. This perception was reinforced by increasing numbers of Asian international students, whose families invested in a New Zealand education by sending their children to New Zealand high schools, language schools and tertiary establishments where they paid the full cost of their educational fees. The income derived from ‘export education’ contributed substantially to the government’s resourcing of the educational sector. However,
this financial contribution was mainly overlooked in the media so New Zealanders were unaware of the financial contribution by immigrants (Ip, 2007, 2001). The concentration of Asian students attending educational institutions in Auckland’s Central Business District was evident in the predominance of Asian faces on Auckland’s Queen Street. The burgeoning of ethnic eating places and the growth of inner city minimum-sized apartments, all contributed to creating the effect of living in a multicultural Asian city. Overseas tertiary students provide a transient population, as after graduating, students return to their home countries. While they are studying however, the public perceives the students as permanent residents. Export education funds were used in schools to boost government funding stretched to accommodate the needs of immigrant children. Although fully funded foreign secondary students boosted inadequate basic school funding, the children of immigrants stretched school resources. It was difficult for New Zealander parents to understand or distinguish between the two perspectives.

IMMIGRATION POLICY DEBATES 1987-1998

Public disorientation caused by the advent of neo-liberal policies occurred at the same time skilled immigrants from all countries, most noticeably those from Asian countries, were being recruited by the government. Social alienation originating from the neo-liberal economic reforms was compounded by the increasing numbers of culturally diverse immigrants (Spoonley, 2004). Immigrants affect the social cohesion of the receiving society by passively challenging the values of the inhabitants of the settler country who are forced to share collective assets with the newcomers (Cockerham, 1995; Cunliffe, 2006; Poot & Cochrane, 2004). Immigrants increase social complexity through their interactions at different levels of society, introducing different cultural values (Cockerham, 1995). Consequently, immigrants’ ambitions, customs and habits effectively test the infrastructure, resources and the attitudes of the host people. At a time when redundant, unemployed and under-employed New Zealanders endured benefit reductions and the imposition of charges for other state services, immigrants who received any form of state welfare or subsidised services, such as health, education, or welfare benefits, were perceived as competing for scarce resources (Spoonley, 2004). Increasing concern with the immigration policies was voiced from a number of communities, although, as the economy has improved over the last decade, this negative attitude has been modified (Spoonley & Gendall, 2010).

The government sought to attract two types of skilled immigrants: those with flexible, transferable skill sets to compete in the open job market; plus those with particular skills required, for example, in the health sector. In the latter case, immigrants’ skills were matched to employment skill shortages so work could be found, whereas in the former case, immigrants from non-English speaking backgrounds [NESB] having to compete in an unfamiliar, highly competitive market, were considerably disadvantaged (Bauder, 2008). Ho and others
initiated a number of studies of Asian immigrant entrepreneurs from 1998, which identified the considerable structural difficulties they encountered and the drastic strategies required to survive (Ho, 2002a, 2002b, 2003; Ho & Bedford, 1998; Ho, Bedford, & Goodwin, 1999; Barker and Evans, 2007, 2005). However, little media coverage was given to the difficulties facing immigrants (Ho & Bedford, 1998; Ip, 2001). Engrossed in the implications of ongoing restructuring and uninformed about the plight of recent immigrants, New Zealanders focused on coping with the changing regulatory environment.

The combined effects of the relentless restructuring of state assets during 1980s and 1990s, high unemployment and benefit cuts (Boraman, 2006) alienated numbers of New Zealanders. In particular, those most affected found it difficult to identify with neo-liberal values. The perception and reality of incessant change stretched the fabric of society. New Zealanders’ apprehension regarding identity, sovereignty and foreign control re-emerged (Jesson, 1999; Kelsey, 1999). A fear of ‘losing control and losing a ‘New Zealand identity’ (whatever that was) was revealed in two surveys conducted by the Asia 2000 Foundation in 1994 and 1995 (Ip, 2001, p. 3) and was expressed in several sectors of society, particularly by Walker on behalf of Māori (Spooner, 2009). Māori, who had been disproportionately made redundant through the privatisation of state assets, asserted their rights for greater cultural and political control over the granting of New Zealand citizenship under the tino rangatira provisions of the Treaty of Waitangi (Walker 1995, cited in Spoonley, 2009). In addition, Māori Treaty settlement options were threatened by the sale of state-owned assets (Clarke, 2000).

Another concern regarding immigrants was that their profits would be moved offshore, limiting the benefits to New Zealand from immigrant investment (National Research Bureau 1994 cited in Ip, 2001). It was difficult for the public to distinguish between offshore Asian investors and new Asian immigrant investment. According to Ip Asian immigrant investors were “envied, resented and regarded with considerable suspicion” contributing to anti-Asian sentiments expressed in opinion polls in the 1990s (2001, p.4). Negative media reports on topics such as Asian immigrants’ frequent trips to Asia, passive funds deposited in banks without investing in the New Zealand economy’, ‘home alone kids’, ‘astronaut spouses’ and ‘parachute kids’ with absent parents especially in Auckland, contributed to this negative perception of Asian immigrants (Ip, 2001). An interface between these media stories and the public occurred in education where parents serving on Boards of Trustees and those raising funds for the school, needed to understand and inform the perspectives of new immigrants, who had been advised by the government that education was ‘free’.

Immigrants felt demoralised for several reasons: First, the New Zealand government had neglected to consult, inform, or educate the distracted population about the benefits of diversifying immigration policies (Ip, 2001), contributing to a muted or sometimes hostile reception by some New Zealanders to the sizeable influx of Asian immigrants (Spooner & Trlin, 2004). Secondly,
immigrants criticised the lack of a basic settlement programme or an induction into the local business environment to assist their establishment. According to Ip, this “betrayed an over optimistic and a naïve faith in the legendary Asian entrepreneurship” (2001, p.3). There was an informal reliance upon ethnic communities and church groups to provide support to new immigrants. Thirdly, the institutional cultural capital of immigrants’ qualifications was not always recognised by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, or by the professional organisations who were delegated the task of assessing the credibility of professional qualifications earned overseas. This could prevent highly qualified immigrants from practising in their profession.

The difficulty of establishing a business and an income in New Zealand drove some immigrant parents reluctantly to return to their homeland to continue earning, leaving the mother and children in New Zealand, or sometimes just the children if they were old enough (Ho, 2002b, 2003; Ip, 2007). Unprepared immigrants, ignorant of the realities of the New Zealand market, with limited fluency in English, resulted in both skilled immigrants and investors being unable to find appropriate investments or work to support their families in New Zealand during a challenging period of economic and social change.

In summary, the 1987 immigration policies successfully attracted wealthy, skilled Asian immigrants, partly due to the political changes occurring in Asia at that time. Immigrants applied for a range of visas including Student, Skilled Immigrant and Investor however, neither the public nor the government were prepared for the numbers who migrated to New Zealand. The number of Asians, which also included those on student visas, noticeably changed the demographics of Auckland. Regrettably, the considerable financial investments made by the immigrants, whether in export education, business or housing, were under reported in the media, as were investor difficulties in finding appropriate business investments. Despite their numbers, the business immigrants had not boosted the economy as anticipated.

The considerable settlement difficulties the immigrants encountered arose from both economic and poorly communicated social change incentives (Ho & Bedford, 1998; Ho, et al., 1998; Ho, Cheung, Bedford, & Leung, 2000; Ip, 2007, 2001; Spoonley, Peace, Butcher, & O’Neill, 2005). The lack of political debate prior to the introduction of neo-liberal reforms had created uncertainty and anxiety in communities affected by the reforms. This was compounded by the lack of constructive media discussion regarding the contributions made by Asian immigrants and the challenges they encountered. The social changes promoted by neo-liberal reforms appeared to be exacerbated by the changing demographics, particularly in the Auckland region. Neither the political or economic changes had been communicated and debated in advance. The media reported mainly reactive immigration stories, often initiated by Winston Peters, leader of the New Zealand First Party. At a time of introducing radical structural economic change, communicating the change was not a government priority. Consequently, newly arrived immigrants suffered the backlash from a demoralised population, which
complicated the very challenging settlement process. The failure of immigrants to establish businesses is due partly to the economy and also to the lack of communication of the neo-liberal reforms.

**IMMIGRATION ISSUES IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

In the first decade of the 21st century neo-liberal policies have become established with few political changes to mitigate their effects. Immigration continues to be strongly influenced by South East Asian migration, facilitated by technological developments which enhance transnational networked connections of both immigrants and international students. In addition, circular migratory patterns, plus the New Zealand diaspora, particularly the trans-Tasman, has increased the complexity of the migrant picture (Spoonley & Bedford, 2012). Despite the considerable economic contribution made by immigrants, there remain challenges to resolve.

Human Rights Commission reports record examples of discrimination suffered particularly by those who are visibly different, such as Indian and Pacific Island taxi drivers. Only approximately one fifth of immigrants reported the incidents of verbal racial abuse they experienced. In 2006, the government actively considered some of the negative aspects of immigrant settlement, specifically discrimination, lack of appreciation of diversity, social isolation, social exclusion, losing skilled workers, barriers to settlement, not valuing a diverse workforce and little sense of belonging (Spoonley & Bedford, 2012, p. 270). Ministers have a role in communicating the value of immigrants and immigration to the public.

There is a move towards a multi-cultural policy, particularly in Auckland. Increasing ethnic diversity is creating a greater level of acceptance by those whose employment is not directly threatened by the new arrivals. Attitudes towards immigrants are influenced by peoples’ levels of education as the more highly educated perceive the immigrants as less of an employment threat (Spoonley & Bedford, 2012). Media reporting of immigration issues has been criticised (Spoonley & Bedford, 2012). A review of the Press Council in 2007 by Barker and Evans did not explore the members’ competence in cultural diversity or the cultural challenges media face. No questions regarding cultural diversity were asked, nor were members from ethnic communities canvassed for their opinion. As the media are responsible for communicating issues of social change, this lack of cultural awareness does not augur well for developing an appreciation of inclusiveness.

The largest impact of migration on New Zealand is the exodus of New Zealanders to Australia. In 2012, Australia absorbed 46 percent of total departures from New Zealand, or a figure of 39,500 permanent long term migrants. Comparable population losses from New Zealand to Australia had occurred in 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2010 (Spoonley & Bedford, 2012). However, should Australia suffer
more droughts or the effects of global warming, the flow could reverse, as circularity is a feature of the trans-Tasman migration flow.

Spoonley and Bedford (2012) identified potential immigration legacy issues. How do current and future children and grandchildren of immigrants perceive their identity and relationship to New Zealand, their countries of origin and their global connectivity? Today, and in their future, in their careers, music and fashion, the children of immigrants make statements about how they see themselves and the society they inhabit. The children and grandchildren of immigrants become cultural hybrids, with transnational connections.

**AUCKLAND – IMMIGRANT CITY**

While the latest New Zealand census figures have yet to emerge, in 2006, 37 percent of the Auckland population was born overseas, and if their children are added, this would amount to over 50 percent (Spoonley & Bedford, 2012). Auckland has been acknowledged as a Pasifika capital through its numbers and diversity of Pasifika immigrants, but in the first decade of the 21st Century increased ethnic diversity has occurred, not only in immigrants from China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Vietnam, but increased numbers from the Philippines, Indonesia and India.

With the unification of the various Auckland city councils into the new Auckland City, and the development of Auckland’s Unitary Plan for the future development of Auckland, the voices of the ethnic communities are being raised. In 2013, Uesifili Unasa, the chair of the Auckland Council’s Pacific advisory panel, contested the Auckland mayoralty in order to represent the interests of Pasifika people (Radio New Zealand, 2013). In July 2013, at a public meeting of Auckland Council’s Ethnic Peoples Advisory Panel representing more than 400,000 residents, a change was requested in the Auckland Council’s decision making structures and processes to involve the voices of ethnic communities (Scoop Media, 2013).

The diversity of Auckland’s population is publically celebrated in Auckland Council literature promoting various ethnic festivals and occasions, such as the Chinese Lantern Festival in Albert Park, the Pasifika Festival held in Western Springs, a Thai Festival held in Mt Albert, and the Diwali Celebration in downtown Auckland. All graphically capture the colour, sounds and flavours of the cultures which enrich the city’s cultural landscape. The first mayor of Auckland Council, Len Brown was elected on a platform including building an “inclusive culture in a city of 1.5 million and 180 ethnicities” (Auckland Council, 2013).
COMMUNICATING SOCIAL CHANGE

It is likely that New Zealand will rely on continued immigration to boost its skilled workforce and to offset an aging population, and to potentially care for it. Both the government and the media have a role in framing New Zealanders’ reaction to immigrants. Māori see the Treaty of Waitangi as forming the first immigration policy, allowing in British citizens. Thereafter, no consultation with Māori regarding immigration policy diversification has occurred. This issue remains unresolved. Immigrant reception depends considerably upon the economy at the time and whether it can absorb the new immigrants in meaningful work.

As the media promotes the economic contribution made by immigrants, and more people come into contact with immigrants, particularly in Auckland, a greater appreciation of their contribution is developing. In addition, the next generations of hybridised New Zealand citizens will continue to contribute while seeking connections both in New Zealand and overseas. Meanwhile, the dynamic patterns of immigration, remigration and circular migration add complexity to future migration patterns which New Zealand cannot afford to be excluded from.

REFERENCES


