CHAPTER 1

Give me another *niu tupu*[1]: Enhancing Pacific educational research capacity

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DISTURBING BUT VALUABLE QUESTIONS

A decade ago, Solomon Islands educator Stanley Houma shared a story which, at the time, seemed rather amusing. Yet Stanley's story influenced some of my later actions as a Pacific Islands public intellectual. The following are excerpts of the conversation between the two characters in the story—a visiting 'European' consultant and a Solomon Islands educator.

Arai kwao/palangi/pākehā (European) consultant: "What do you know about education in the Solomon Islands?"

Solomon Islands educator: "I know lots about education in my country."

Arai kwao/palangi/pākehā (European) consultant: "How do I know that you know?"

These were disturbing and somewhat discomforting questions indeed, for the Islander educator! Yet, over the past decade, these very questions kept me motivated to encourage, involve and engage everyday Pacific educator-scholars (teachers, students, curriculum officers, community mobilisers, emerging researchers, etc) to construct and demonstrate their knowledge and understandings. More particularly, the thinking behind these questions have inspired me to mentor a new generation of Pacific region scholars, early in their careers, to begin writing as a form of making a public contribution.

[1] In the language of Niue, *niu tupu* (or *vara* in Fijian) is a coconut seedling which is ready for replanting.

INTRODUCTION

In this introductory chapter I share the ongoing story of mentoring a new generation of Pacific scholars by framing this particular writing project within a wider education research capacity incubation agenda. This chapter has seven sections. The first introduces the call for improved national capacities for education research based on the argument that today's knowledge economy makes research an essential national development priority. In the second, I argue that for Pacific Islands countries, this call cannot be successfully put into action without a clear picture of the status of national and regional capacities for educational research. In support of this point I pose a number of capacity-related questions which, when asked and answered, carry the potential for building educational research capacities in the Pacific Islands region. Third, I provide a brief theoretical discussion of the concept of research capacity to show its encompassing and complex nature. In the fourth section, examples and lessons about capacity-building for educational research, based on the Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative for and by Pacific Peoples (RPEIPP), are offered. These Pacific applications of research capacity development illustrate how even incremental successes are to be celebrated within the often dynamic and longer-term agenda of educational research capacity building. Fifth, based on lessons drawn from RPEIPP, I explore the university engagement with research capacity development. In the sixth section, I introduce this book project and, finally, the seventh section provides a chapter by chapter synopsis of the book.

RESEARCH AS A DEVELOPMENT PRIORITY

The view that research-reflected knowledge is important for national development, including education development, is well supported. Speaking from Ghana, Baffour (2010) argues that improved research capacity is critical for advancing national development. Similarly, Simala (2011), a Kenyan academic, has also pointed out the essential link between research and development. In Aotearoa New Zealand, Best Evidence Syntheses (Alton-Lee, 2003) are commissioned by the Ministry of Education and are premised on a particular view of evidence-based education policy. The Best Evidence Syntheses are a series of reports which capture research evidence which then form the basis for educational policy and practice. To date, nine such reports have been produced including *Quality teaching for*

diverse students in schooling (2003), *Community and family influences on children's achievement* (2003), *Teacher professional learning and development* (2007) and *School leadership and student learning* (2009).

Given these views, there have been calls for enhancing research capacity in many countries (UNESCO, 1999). The rationales for such calls are varied. For instance, it is argued that because the predominant development paradigm is knowledge-based, countries that produce, disseminate and absorb knowledge are able to compete better economically (Cooke, 2002). As well, according to Dunning (2000), there is evidence of improved economic success based on enhanced national research capacity derived from high skill levels and innovative research cultures. In the general literature, the examples of China and India are often cited as developing countries that have adapted to the new economy and actively developed research capacity. As a final example, it is claimed that research is global and hence national educational development cannot be insulated from global research. These and other similar arguments are commonly cited by economists, policy framers, and development theorists in their advice to Pacific Islands countries (Asian Development Bank, 2009).

But how do countries, in particular developing ones, enhance their capacities for education research? According to Sanyal and Varghese (2006), a successful research capacity-building strategy for developing countries involves a focus on four areas. First, countries must invest in research not only from public but from private and international sources as well. Second, countries must engage people as active researchers and research managers in sufficient numbers and on a long-term basis. Third, a nation's researchers must be appropriately trained and retrained, whether at universities, research centres of excellence, or in applied settings within organisations. Finally, enhancing national capacities for research is linked to direct investments in higher education, thereby allowing for increased funding, increased enrolments and training in research, and obtaining advanced research qualifications.

As a general answer, Sanyal and Varghese's recommendations for capacity-building for education research seem sensible. However, for Pacific Island countries, the framework is difficult to implement for a number of reasons. First, the Pacific region comprises of a number of small Island states with their own issues of scale and methods of operation. The majority of Pacific Island countries do not have universities, dedicated research institutes, or dedicated research budgets. Second, related to the consideration of scale is the historical

application of regional education strategies, including education research capacity. Pacific countries commonly use regional strategies, as opposed to national ones, in undertaking education research. Often such research undertakings involve international development agencies, metropolitan universities, and external researchers. Third, for individual countries and for the Pacific region, education research capacities are largely unmapped. Or, if there is information about research, it is either scattered across different disciplines (such as linguistics, anthropology and history) and sites (libraries, museums, directories or bibliographies) or is not readily accessible to Pacific Island audiences within Pacific Island countries. Consequently, without a clear capacity picture of the status quo of Pacific education research, a capacity-building strategy is unlikely to be fully developed.

RESEARCH CAPACITY-MAPPING QUESTIONS

In this section, I show the need for establishing a clear picture of education research capacity in the Pacific region. I am limiting myself to describing the status quo as I presently see it through descriptive-evaluative observations and by posing certain pertinent questions. My intention is not to answer these questions. Rather, by posing them, I offer a heuristic for research capacity mapping in the Pacific region.

First, little systematic evidence about educational research in Pacific Island countries is readily available. The manner in which research is commonly conceptualised is unclear. For instance, the extent to which education research is perceived to be qualitative or quantitative, applied or theoretical, indigenous or conventional has not been systematically analysed. While international donors regularly undertake research, little data are available on the precise nature of donor research. To what extent is donor research generating new knowledge? Alternatively, to what extent have donors been users of their own or others' research? To what extent are Pacific universities such as the University of the South Pacific, the University of Goroka, the University of Papua New Guinea, Fiji National University, or the National University of Samoa responsible for producing educational research regionally and in national contexts? Alternatively, what volume of educational research is produced by metropolitan universities in New Zealand, Australia, Japan, France or Hawai'i? What proportion of educational research is conducted by practitioners, whether they are teachers, curriculum developers or Pacific education consultants? What percentage of published educational

research is produced by Pacific Islander graduate students? How much of the research in education is produced by policy framers, whether or not they are Pacific Islanders? Moreover, to what extent does this kind of educational research influence policy and practice within countries? As well, to what extent is educational research coherent or fragmented? To what extent does educational research embrace indigenous Pacific knowledge domains? These, and many more questions, do not, as yet, have clear or settled answers.

Second, there is little published evidence about education research capacity in the Pacific region. It would seem that, as yet, little systematic mapping of education research capacity has been conducted. Presently, there are no reliable profiles of either regional or national education research capacities. How many dedicated education research institutions are currently active? How many Pacific Islander credible researchers are conducting research, regionally and within national contexts? What proportion of Pacific Islander researchers are credible as indigenous researchers? What evidence exists on the quality of education research conducted in Pacific countries? What data are available on the numbers of Pacific Islander researchers who are being trained in doctoral and post-doctoral programmes? To what extent is a regional university such as the University of the South Pacific acting as a hub for doctoral and post-doctoral research training? In what research institutes and universities are the top quality Pacific education researchers located? How much funding is allocated for education research by country or regionally? These and many more questions can be validly asked without satisfactory answers, primarily because the answers are yet unknown or unclear.

While little is known, published or discussed about education research or its capacity in the Pacific region, pressure is mounting for research-based policy, teaching and practice at all levels of education. As previously argued, some of the pressure comes from external sources; a global agenda with an over-arching knowledge-economy development paradigm. An often ignored motivation for enhancing education research, however, has to do with the cultural survival of Pacific Islands people and their communities. This factor alone calls for a proper mapping of research capacities in Pacific Island countries and an enhancement strategy to strengthen research in the Pacific region.

THE CONCEPT OF RESEARCH CAPACITY

In this section I describe the concept of research capacity as a multi-faceted and encompassing phenomenon. By framing research more broadly within a capacity-building context, the complexities of Pacific educational research development are discussed. In light of this, research enhancement strategies are not viewed as single, simple or lineal activities but rather as a myriad of integrated and simultaneous strategies requiring sustained attention and action.

First, the National Education Research Forum (2000) has defined research capacity in an encompassing sense. According to this British forum, research capacity is "the resources—material, human, intellectual—that are available in the education system for doing and for using research, together with the ways in which those resources are brought to bear" (p. 1). This definition embraces different types of resources that are deemed important for research. Generally, in the Pacific Islands context, these resources are not explicitly evident in either national or regional education systems. Where the resources might exist, such as at the University of the South Pacific or the University of Papua New Guinea, their alignment or use is not necessarily effective.

Second, in a narrower sense, and speaking specifically of a Chilean context, Puryear (2005) explains educational research capacity as "a productive, modern, diverse and self-providing professional community conducting research at internationally acceptable levels of quality" (p. 93). The emphasis here is on a professional community and the support it is given to undertake research which is deemed credible internationally. In the Pacific Islands context, no single Pacific country can boast a professional research community either in education or more generally. While the more established Pacific universities such as the University of the South Pacific and the University of Papua New Guinea have small professional research communities, these tend to be more institutional than national or regional in nature.

Third, research capacity is also explained in terms of activities. Generally, this view includes such items as dedicated research facilities, qualified researchers and the training of younger researchers. Linda Smith (2004) of Aotearoa New Zealand provides a list of strategies that are important for building capacity in indigenous research. Specifically, for Pacific research, Smith argues that building capacity means "building networks, synergies, and collaborations within and across parts of the Pacific as well as building the researchers and the systems that support

research within and across Pacific communities" (p. 14). Comparisons may be made with a British perspective (Teaching, Learning and Research Programme, 2003) which contends that building education research capacity involves the following activities: resource concentration, networking, developing communication infrastructure, enhancing user-researcher interaction, providing strategic leadership, ensuring political independence, promoting cultural change, and resource maximisation. These activities are not to be seen as independent strategies that are disconnected from each other. Rather, these strategies must be aligned and sustained. While not yet fully developed, this view of research capacity as a set of activities and strategies is promising in the Pacific context.

Fourth, funding is deemed as a critical driver in capacity-building for educational research. As Sanyal and Varghese (2006) have observed, the basic point is that where investment is put into research and development, positive economic benefits seem to follow. Commonly, in developed countries it is the university sector that usually drives initiatives for capacity-building in research and development. In reference to Australia, Neumann (1998) has noted how in the 1990s funding for higher education research declined. Explanations for the reduced capacity in educational research include tightened budgets, the ad hoc nature of funding, political agendas, and an overemphasis on applied research at the cost of more theoretical inquiry. In the Pacific context, state and private funding for research is generally non-existent. Again, issues of scale largely explain the absence of research funding in national budgets. Pacific universities have traditionally been teaching institutions, and dedicated research funding has also been minimal in these institutional budgets.

Fifth, in relation to a developed world context, Baron (1993) outlines a number of strategies that are important for building educational research capacity. Baron's first point is that research capacity is enhanced through collaboration within a community of researchers based in different disciplines. Secondly, Baron argues that research is regularly published and this informs future capacity-building initiatives. Thirdly, regular conferences are held where individuals and institutions share and debate their research and capacity-building initiatives. Fourthly, researchers are trained, using multiple modes including formal postgraduate degrees. Sixth, policies and codes of practice for educational research are developed to mitigate political, personal and organisational factors that work against systematic research capacity

development. Seventh, deliberate initiatives, such as fellowships, are adopted to grow a new cohort of researchers and linkages are established with learned societies that are involved in education research. Eighth, to counter competitive tendencies by single institutions, regional research consortia are developed, through which expertise and common interests are shared. These kinds of strategies work well for developed countries. Within Pacific Island countries contexts, however, selective interventions are necessary and possible.

Ninth, the priorities for research capacity development are best aligned with national needs. This is reflected in four key questions posed by the United Kingdom-based Teaching, Learning and Research Programme (TLRP) (2003). According to the TLRP, these are: "Towards whom should research capacity-building be aimed?" "What issues and skills should have priority for capacity development?" "Who should provide advice, training and support?" "How might provision be generated, directed, organised and sustained?" These questions are relevant for Pacific national and regional stakeholders as well. The answers are likely to vary between each country or sub-region of the Pacific. As well, it is possible that national and community needs outside of education, such as food security, cultural survival, or environmental threats, may be accorded priority for research capacity development.

The final point relates to the issue of evaluation of research capacity development initiatives. What evidence exists that capacity development initiatives in both developed and developing countries are effective? Specifically, what evidence is there that educational research capacity development initiatives in developing countries are successful? Besides institutional evidence, the answers to these questions are not commonly available. For small developing Pacific Island countries, the questions above also highlight the need for an appropriate framework for measuring research capacity development initiatives.

Having described the concept of research capacity, I now apply some of these ideas to a decade of experiences through the RPEIPP.

RPEIPP EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS

When the Gula'alā fishermen of East Malaita (Solomon Islands) go net fishing on the outer atoll of Leli, they have a practice which is instructive for any development agenda. On arrival at the distant atoll early in the morning, the fishermen immediately cast their nets and eat the entire

catch in celebration of their safe arrival. This protein-rich meal sustains them for much of the day as they set about repairing their nets. Again, early in the afternoon, they cast their nets along the beaches. Again, the fishermen eat all the afternoon's catch in celebration of having repaired all their nets. As night falls, the fishermen set out to the fishing grounds. They fish all night for the choice school of fish that have been targeted. It is only the night's catch that the fishermen bring home to their families.

In this section, examples and lessons about capacity-building for educational research, based on the RPEIPP, are offered.[2] These Pacific applications of research capacity development illustrate how even incremental successes are to be celebrated. Like the Malaita fishermen, the targeted choice school of fish requires a longer-term strategy. Each step is celebrated as it is achieved. Together, each intervention during the day forms part of a bigger picture for the fishermen. In this sense, the small research successes of the RPEIPP experience need to be seen within a dynamic and longer-term agenda of educational research capacity-building.

As the RPEIPP is described in Chapter 2 of this book, I shall limit my introduction of this initiative to its underlying goal and arrangements. In a basic sense, the over-arching goal of the RPEIPP is to enhance leadership by Pacific educators for educational development of the Pacific Island region. This broad goal has been implemented through four strands, as follows: (1) big picture strategising of Pacific education; (2) engagement with key stakeholders, including international donors and funders, governments and regional institutions; (3) facilitation of national and regional forums to rethink education; and (4) the development of researchers and research capacities within Pacific countries, and the production of appropriate education research by Pacific Islanders themselves. In the following section, strands 3 and 4 are examined in order to draw out key lessons on research capacity development in a Pacific context.

Visions and aspirations

As early as 2001, the Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative for and by Pacific Peoples had a clearly articulated vision for Pacific education research capacity development. According to Pene, Taufe'ulungaki

[2] Based on Sanga, K., Chu, C., & Crowl, L. (2004, November). *Augmenting Pacific research capacity: A process of rethinking.* Paper presented at NZARE Conference, Wellington.

and Benson (2002), the inspirational goals recommended by Pacific educators in its inaugural colloquium in 2001 were as follows:

1. The establishment of a research centre for Pacific education attached to the University of the South Pacific Institute of Education.
2. The establishment of a network of education research institutes, including universities and tertiary colleges, in and around the Pacific region. Such a network would undertake appropriate research and disseminate research evidence.
3. Among a number of goals, each of the Pacific research institutes are encouraged to:
   - 3.1 Undertake Pacific research in informal and formal educational settings.
   - 3.2 Establish publishing houses for Pacific writers.
   - 3.3 Offer training in research methodologies, including indigenous Pacific methodologies.
   - 3.4 Promote further networking on and sharing of research evidence and staff.

In looking at the Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative for and by Pacific Peoples vision of 2001, a satisfactory degree of success has been achieved. The Pacific Education Research Foundation (PERF) has been established within the University of the South Pacific Institute of Education. Guided by an approved constitution and an Advisory Board, the Pacific Education Research Foundation's mandate is to promote educational research for and by Pacific scholars within local, national and regional Pacific contexts. The Network of Pacific Educators (NOPE) has also been successfully established. While this network has yet to fully utilise its research capacity, its ability to disseminate research knowledge is commendable. In relation to the aspirations for national research institutes, some successes had been seen in the development of indigenous Pacific research frameworks, strategies, and an increasing uptake of indigenous Pacific research. These successes, though small, are significant and are to be celebrated.

Pacific regional colloquium

The RPEIPP has used the strategy of conducting regular regional colloquia on a regular basis (for example, in 2001 on education, 2006 on leadership, 2007 on teacher education and 2008 on curriculum). This strategy has involved selecting a small group of Pacific educators

to meet, consider and discuss a specific agenda. Unlike other Pacific regional activities, the colloquium organisers handpicked colloquium participants for their individual educational and research expertise. The participants did not represent Pacific countries or governments as such, although some were senior government officers. Rather, they came from universities, ministries of education, colleges of education, technical colleges, and non-government organisations.

This strategy for capacity development brought many challenges. First, because Pacific regional meetings are commonly attended by government representatives, when participation was not based on country representation, some Pacific governments felt left out, and hence were not involved at the beginning. Pacific governments that did not have any of their nationals as participants felt marginalised. These challenges represent the nature of regionally framed activities, particularly if associated with established national and regional institutions. Nevertheless, the colloquium strategy was effective in its focused attention on particular issues. Participants made short-term recommendations aimed at improving educational systems through policies, curriculum and pedagogies, teacher education and training, assessment and evaluations, research, management and administration, and resourcing of education. Second, the implementation of the agreed strategies following each of the colloquia proved difficult. Although the University of the South Pacific Institute of Education was tasked to implement many recommendations, individual countries have their own educational priorities and research agendas to implement. During the funded period of RPEIPP (2001–07), it was the New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID) which funded the series of colloquia, but the University of the South Pacific did not have the resources to implement the outcomes. However, by publishing colloquia papers as edited books and by drawing the attention of politicians, researchers, educators and students to the issues raised by colloquia participants, Pacific educational leaders could still follow up on timing schedules suitable for their own national contexts.

We learned a number of lessons from the colloquium approach as a research capacity development strategy. First, this activity marked the sincere commitment of a donor to support, rather than lead, an important initiative by Pacific educators. NZAID's bolstering resulted in Pacific educators themselves achieving and sustaining successful outcomes. Second, the publication of the colloquium papers in the form of edited books happened with relative ease. Colloquium participants

turned their thoughts to writing in a timely manner. Because these busy Pacific educational leaders had NZAID support, bringing them together for dedicated time to rethink was valuable. From these experiences, this approach to research capacity enhancement, involving focused meetings of handpicked participants, has proved to be successful in articulating a regional vision for 'rethinking' education. As well, the approach has worked in developing a cohort of busy Pacific educational leaders who are focused on accomplishing specific regional tasks.

Competitive research projects

In 2002, a research grant was provided through the RPEIPP as seed-funding to support capacity development for undertaking research projects by Pacific educators, particularly non-university-based and emerging researchers. Researchers lodged twenty applications asking for three times more than the funds available. The organisers approved and gave funding to twelve projects in seven Pacific countries. Their recipients included teachers, curriculum developers, education officers, teacher educators and university lecturers. The Initiative was managed centrally from Victoria University of Wellington.

As a research capacity development strategy, the effectiveness of this approach was mixed. On a positive note, educators throughout the Pacific welcomed having a small fund available for novice and resource-starved researchers. All of the researchers started their projects enthusiastically, collected useful data and began analyses. A research team at the Faculty of Education at the National University of Samoa used its funding to undertake a country-wide research project, thereby enhancing institutional research capacity. On a not-so-positive note, very few of the research projects were completed. Two had final written reports, but only as part of wider university-based research requirements. Three projects were reported on as conference presentations but not written up.

This approach to research capacity development posed a number of challenges. First, managing the approach from Wellington was extremely difficult. Donor requirements for reporting on the use of funds were also unrealistic within Pacific contexts. Communications between fund managers and researchers were cumbersome, with researchers not having reliable and ready access to modern communication technologies. Timelines were extremely difficult to follow. Second, supervision and monitoring of individual projects were difficult. The skills of researchers varied considerably; and the isolation of individual

researchers from each other and the lack of conducive organisational environments for research were inhibiting. Third, due to the linkages of the fund with the donor, it was difficult to meet some of NZAID's requirements. For example, meeting outcomes according to the project timelines set by the donor proved difficult, although the outcome had to be met before further funding could be secured.

We can learn a number of lessons from this approach. First, tied aid, in the form of outcomes-based funding for research activities, is not appropriate for Pacific contexts as yet. Second, although novice researchers need funding, funding on its own is unlikely to result in improved capacity for research or lead to completion of research outcomes. Success is also heavily dependent on conducive technological, communication, organisational and researcher skills and support.

National research workshops

A further approach to capacity development within the RPEIPP was linked to a series of research skills development workshops, during which educators from several Pacific Island countries (Vanuatu, Tonga, Nauru and the Cook Islands) were trained and supported in their research projects. The experiences of researchers in Vanuatu and Tonga are focused on in this discussion. In this strategy, the goal was to take novice and busy educators through the entire research process from the formulation of questions through to publication of findings. Senior Tongan researchers ran workshops in Tonga. Two regional researchers ran the workshops in Vanuatu as no Ni-Vanuatu researchers were available. The trainers also supervised the projects. In both countries, the participants were teachers, education officers, school inspectors, community educators and teacher educators. These people were then given leave from their daily workplaces to attend the workshops. In the case of Vanuatu, time for the participants to undertake their research projects was negotiated with employers. The Ministry of Education also instituted some support for the researchers.

An evaluation of the Vanuatu education research workshop reported that the research participants felt that their needs and expectations were met in terms of writing skills, development of research topics, planning skills, understanding research processes, resources and access, vision building for Vanuatu education, and realising the need for a critique on Vanuatu education (Sanga, 2002). They commented that they would have liked a clearer definition of research, more work on referencing and more time to research and write. All the workshop participants

were employees of the Department of Education and had to find time to conduct research and write it up in addition to their other duties. In the case of Tonga, the participants expressed their need for support to allow them, as Tongans, to do their own research using Tongan protocols and ways of knowing—aspirations which were duly achieved.

As a capacity development strategy, the effectiveness of the research workshops related to the focus on process, support from the ministries of education, and recognition of local expertise. First, the national workshop approach focused on the entire research process, which permitted participants to understand what was involved, which skills could be developed, and where help could be obtained. Second, the approach ensured that appropriate support from the ministries of education and trainers was given to the researchers. Third, the approach recognised local (and regional) expertise. By using Tongan and Pacific trainers, local capacities were enhanced, thereby demonstrating that Pacific countries need not depend entirely on foreign or expatriate experts.

The national workshop approach posed a number of challenges. First, workshop participants came in with varying degrees of research skill and experience. In Vanuatu, support and supervision by trainers were therefore demanding, as nearly all the participants were novice researchers. The support of the local Ministry of Education, through time release, local coordination, and regular small group meetings, helped to ensure that researchers had adequate monitoring and appropriate daily support. Second, trainers needed time between workshop sessions to review drafts and to prepare materials. Progress by researchers was slow, but spreading the Initiative over a number of months helped to ease the pressures on them.

Two lessons on research capacity development are offered. First, with appropriate external (university, donor) support and local support, relevant research can be undertaken by busy practitioner educators, as shown in the Vanuatu and Tongan examples. Second, with effective local leadership, as shown by John Niroa in Vanuatu and 'Ana Taufe'ulungaki in Tonga, an effective strategy for enhancing research capacity can be achieved without too much money or external resources. Time and commitment were more important in completing the projects. In this way, a Pacific country can still generate its own research to complement other sources of information that are needed to inform policy development and educational practice.

National conferences

Within Pacific countries, indigenous discourse is an everyday event that happens when people gather, think, talk and make decisions. In Samoa, people gather for a *fono*. In Fiji or Tonga, they *talanoa* and in Honiara they *tok stori*. On such occasions, Pacific peoples enact indigenous Pacific discourse by creating and agreeing on communal meanings. An approach that closely reflects such Pacific gatherings is the conference.

As capacity development strategies, two conferences, a national one in Vanuatu and a sub-regional one in Micronesia, were held under the auspices of RPEIPP. The goals of these forums were to mobilise national/sub-regional rethinking of education by stakeholders who, as people, were familiar with each other. In both instances, the forums were the first of their kind to be held in these countries. The forum participants determined their own tasks as well as their outcomes. They mobilised local communities prior to and after the events. In Vanuatu, participants included government officials, teachers, community workers, students, chiefs, church leaders, researchers and university lecturers. At the Micronesia conference, the participants represented similar groupings of people who were drawn from the wider community. The debates were lively and participatory. These forums engaged local communities, used local media and were led by local people.

The national conference on Rethinking Vanuatu Education Together, held in Port Vila in October 2002, brought constructive debate and sharing of ideas and experiences on education to inform practice, policy, and research. Ni-Vanuatu educators had opportunities to develop their presentation and debating skills. They worked together to rethink their own education system. Vanuatu's Department of Education and the University of the South Pacific's Institute of Pacific Studies published the Ni-Vanuatu papers in a book, *Re-thinking Vanuatu education together* (Sanga, Niroa, Matai, & Crowl, 2004). The Vanuatu educators put some of their ideas into action, such as formulating a vision statement for Vanuatu education and incorporating conference recommendations into departmental policies.

The sub-regional conference on Rethinking Education in Micronesia, held in the Marshall Islands in October 2004, brought participants from five island groups of Micronesia (Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Marshall Islands, Northern Mariana Islands and Palau). Micronesian educators noted that the conference was one of the few times, since some of the island groups had gained independence, for educational

leaders to meet together. Led by a committee of educational leaders from these islands, the conference adopted the theme 'Honouring our Indigenous Voices and Visions'. Like the Vanuatu forum, the Micronesia conference saw lively debates and discussions on a wide range of topics relating to the theme.

The Micronesian conference experience, in particular, was effective in mobilising a number of international stakeholders, including UNESCO, the Asian Development Bank, and resident foreign embassies, together with NZAID, to be involved with local organisations and peoples. A key outcome of the Micronesian conference was the local leadership demonstrated in agreeing to establish an Education Commission for Micronesia and the formation of a committee to follow up this decision.

The effectiveness of the national forum approach to capacity development was wide-ranging. As a strategy to mobilise and engage national communities in intellectual discourse, the national and sub-regional conferences were effective, particularly as strong local committees facilitated the event. As a means of giving voice to and encouraging participation by local people who would otherwise not participate in influencing educational policy, the approach was appropriate. Adopting a variety of sessions enhanced effectiveness for participation. Because committee members comprised various community stakeholders, the forums were able to attract the involvement of multiple local communities, thereby strengthening cooperation, coordination and leadership locally. As the forums were locally led, the approach was effective in establishing ownership for the ideas generated and processes used. From a Pacific regional perspective, having one national experience feeding into, sharing with and learning from another has meant that meaningful cross-fertilisation of ideas and experiences has taken place, thereby further augmenting Pacific regional capacity for research.

A number of challenges were encountered. First, in both instances, the national forums were held over three days, which was deemed too short. Sessions for debate were therefore rushed and a few speakers dominated large group sessions. Even if the duration had been longer, difficulties emerged in understanding and managing local nuances, personality conflicts and the clan-based politics that played out during the discussions, without allowing these to disrupt the focus or goals of the forums. Second, documenting the intellectual discourse was challenging. Pacific peoples are orators in the first instance, rather

than writers. During both forums, many people spoke passionately. Many spoke with rich oratory skills. For these communities, intellectual discourse might take place while people are chewing betel nut, drinking kava, chanting their histories, or singing their songs. The environments and contexts of debates are part of intellectual discourse within Pacific communities. In recognition of this, organisers at the Micronesia forum used a video camera to capture the processes, the *spirit*, and the personalities of the debates. While much more needs to be done to capture intellectual discourse environments and processes, the Micronesian approach is possibly heading in the right direction. Third, the national forums were motivational. This positive point made managing expectations quite challenging. Once interest has been created and whole communities mobilised by successful activities, it is difficult to manage high expectations that have resulted from the activities and to guarantee continuing support, particularly with donor funding.

Two lessons are noted from this approach to research capacity development. First, intellectual discourse as a component of research is alive in Pacific countries. This realisation demands a response that recognises the nature and complexities of Pacific discourse in order to understand, support, and learn from it. Unfortunately, Pacific discourse has rarely been part of academic discourse even within Pacific countries. Rather than dismiss Pacific ways of intellectualising, it needs to become part of the apparatus academics use in research. Second, possibilities for further action, the successful incorporation of recommendations from the national forums or the sustainability of strengthened capacities are linked to local ownership, motivation and commitment by local leaders.

Commissioned studies

In 2003, in preparation for the regional conference on Rethinking Educational Aid in the Pacific, RPEIPP commissioned eight national studies on educational aid in the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Republic of Marshall Islands, Fiji, Vanuatu, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea and Samoa. The goal was to document the impact of educational aid on these countries. The studies were the first of their kind in two respects. First, they examined the impact of aid from the perspectives of Pacific peoples. Second, neither donors nor Pacific governments had commissioned them. Rather RPEIPP requested them independently of any other aid project. While funding for the studies was requested from NZAID, in no way did NZAID impose conditions on the studies or the reporting. Six of

the eight studies were completed in time and were used as background readings for panel discussions at the regional conference. The studies were later rewritten for an edited book, *International aid impacts on Pacific education* (Sanga, K., & Taufe'ulungaki, 'A., 2005).

As an approach to research capacity development, commissioned studies were effective in several ways. First, focusing on a single topic allowed for regional comparisons of the impact of educational aid. Second, the approach engaged Pacific national experts and used the goodwill of these individuals to undertake research and share knowledge with the region. Third, the approach was relatively easy to manage as the number of projects was small and the researchers possessed adequate skills for the tasks at hand.

In spite of the small number of commissioned reports, it was not easy to distribute and disseminate the reports throughout the Pacific. At Victoria University of Wellington, He Pārekereke did not have the capacity, resources or connections to disseminate the study findings. The use of the reports was limited to the conference, hence the need to reproduce them in an edited book format. Another challenge related to changing the reports into book chapters. While commissioned researchers could write reports, they did not necessarily have the skills for writing book chapters. This has meant that book editors had considerably more work than was normally the case.

Lessons from this approach are that extensive research reports place demands on already busy Pacific educators, that writing skills need constant improvement, and that editing is a fundamentally different task from writing. Time and training are needed for all three: research, writing and editing.

International conference

The international conference as a strategy for capacity development was used a number of times by the RPEIPP. The 2003 international conference, *Rethinking Educational Aid in the Pacific*, is used here to explore the lessons learnt from this strategy. The international conference approach was aimed at creating an opportunity for sharing experiences, reflecting critically, and strategising on aid to education in the Pacific. The approach recognised that while aid has become integral to educational development within Pacific countries, it has not received adequate independent scrutiny from Pacific peoples themselves or from other stakeholders. The conference was the first regional academic and

stakeholder forum on educational aid to be led by Pacific educators and it was held independently from government or donor's direction. It was, however, open to donors and other international participants.

The international conference attracted Pacific teachers, government officers, researchers, community leaders, students and university academics from Guam, Hawai'i, Tuvalu, Papua New Guinea, Nauru, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Tonga, Samoa, Niue, Cook Islands, Aotearoa New Zealand and Fiji. Senior officials from regional institutions, including the Pacific Forum Secretariat and the University of the South Pacific, took part. From the donor community, representatives came from the Asian Development Bank, European Union, AusAID, UNIFEM, UNICEF, JICA and NZAID. Consultants, academics, development specialists and educators from Australia and New Zealand also participated. Fifteen students from Victoria University of Wellington presented papers and some helped to organise the conference.

The conference used different types of discussion forums, including panels of experts, paper presentations, commentaries, *talanoa/tok stori*, and plenary sessions. The conference made strategic recommendations relating to Pacific education, leadership, aid relationships, research, and aid management. A book, *Re-Thinking Aid Relationships in Pacific Education*, based on the conference presentations, was published in 2005.

From a research capacity development perspective, the international conference approach was effective in a number of ways. First, the forum was motivating for Pacific participants, many of whom are isolated and often struggle in their daily work with donors, governments and consultants. By sharing experiences and ideas with each other, Pacific participants were able to learn of what was happening elsewhere. Second, the international conference approach was able to suggest regional strategies and agendas for attention, particularly with representatives of governments, donors and regional institutions present. Third, the approach was successful in facilitating rigorous critique and stimulating debates through the participation of senior Pacific policy-makers, regional civil servants, academics and thinkers. By including students in the forum, a new generation of educational leaders and researchers was able to engage with the current one. The effectiveness of the forum to convince donors and international agencies, in relation to critiques of aid by Pacific participants, was, however, uncertain.

Two challenges are noted here. First, the international conference approach raised the expectations of many Pacific participants, who wanted these to be sustained and for the conference recommendations to be actioned immediately. However, the conference organisers saw the event as part of a longer-term strategy of engagement and aimed to work through the issues according to a bigger plan. Second, the donor representatives at the conference found themselves, for the first time, not being in control. This was an unfamiliar situation as the donors and their representatives often lead or dominate discussions and debates. The speed with which donors are prepared for this newer form of engagement will determine how soon the strategy can be allowed to work.

Three lessons are offered from this approach to research capacity development. First, with proper and adequate organisation, useful intellectual engagements and sincere debates between Pacific and international participants can take place, thereby dispelling any beliefs or assumptions to the contrary. Second, when it is intended as a conference goal, publishing papers after a conference can be done with relative ease. In the Pacific context, the strategy to write, rewrite, edit and publish conference papers is an effective one and contributes towards increasing the writings of Pacific authors on Pacific matters. Third, when a wide range of Pacific participants play major roles in an international conference, the combined effect showcases intellectual breadth which is encouraging and promising for building Pacific research capacity.

RPEIPP LEARNINGS FOR THE UNIVERSITY

In rethinking the processes of enhancing Pacific research, I make a number of observations and suggest areas of attention for university engagement. First, the cohort of Pacific academic researchers is small relative to the need for voicing indigenous Pacific research within national, regional and global policy and scholarship contexts. Not all people within this small group have been mentored in the competencies and protocols of research. Not all have the time and resources for undertaking or managing research. Not all are adequately grounded in the epistemologies of indigenous Pacific research. Such situations call for university engagement that is supportive of Pacific researchers. The university may offer specific skills development training through mentoring or other appropriate forms of professional development

experiences. The university may bring together Pacific researchers for dedicated durations of time to strategise, to think and to write. As well, because Pacific researchers are full-time, busy educational leaders who are often professionally isolated, the university may provide assistance to create networks and build research alliances within and between these researchers.

Second, institutional structures for Pacific research are few and far between. Papua New Guinea has seven universities. Twelve countries share the University of the South Pacific campuses. The Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, the Marshall Islands, Samoa and the Solomon Islands each have one national institution, though some have branch campuses. Fiji has both a national university and a private one. The universities of New Caledonia and French Polynesia adhere to the French system; their colonial affiliations have led to better research resources. The University of Hawai'i in the United States has excellent facilities. Likewise, New Zealand offers better resources and dedicated research institutes, such as the McMillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies at the University of Canterbury or the Centre for Pacific Studies at Auckland University. Research institutes in the Pacific, such as the Institute for Solomon Islands Studies, National University of Samoa's Institute for Samoan Studies, the University of the South Pacific Institute of Education, and University of Papua New Guinea's Institute for Melanesian and Pacific Studies, are underfunded. So the research institutes can only serve some of the research interests of Pacific communities.

Given weak Pacific institutional structures, a metropolitan university may engage with Pacific communities by offering direct institutional support, entering into collaborative activities, undertaking joint projects, publishing and more. In doing this, I hope that outsiders will ensure that the purpose of engagement is to enhance Pacific research institutional structures, to aid Pacific researchers and, most of all, to assist Pacific peoples.

Third, the intellectual discourse on Pacific thought within Pacific Islands countries is alive and vibrant. Gegeo (1998) referred to this exciting phenomenon when he wrote about Kwara'ae Solomon Islanders *doing* indigenous Kwara'ae epistemology daily as they debate genealogical truths or settle land disputes. In the national and regional forums discussed earlier, Pacific Islanders, through their own oratory skills, have applied their intellectual traditions in context. They were posing questions, sometimes metaphorical ones, extending ideas, revealing important insights, and having debates through third parties.

Through these discussions, Pacific Islanders demonstrated a unique intellectual discourse within the environments with which they were familiar through using processes of discourse embedded in indigenous Pacific thought.

What needs to happen in addition to augmenting Pacific research capacity and participation is acknowledgement by academia of Pacific intellectual discourse. Academia has much to learn about Pacific research and what it may offer. Universities may wish to learn more about Pacific research, to include Pacific research in their disciplinary research, to offer courses that include Pacific research, and to support the growing intellectual traditions of Pacific research. Universities may assist Pacific researchers to capture more of Pacific intellectual discourse, in context, as these occur within Pacific Islands countries.

Fourth, capacity for Pacific research is effectively enhanced when focus is given to process considerations. As discussed earlier, approaches to teaching research and writing skills are more successful when learning is experiential, and when it takes place over the entire research process. By actually undertaking research projects, and writing, editing and publishing the findings, Pacific Islanders were able to understand the processes involved and the skills needed for the tasks. Having accomplished a learning experience successfully, novice researchers are more confident to repeat the experience, with or without support. Over time, skills are strengthened and confidence boosted, leading to greater participation by researchers. For the university that intends to support long-term engagement, it is necessary to facilitate experiential learning focusing on the entire research process.

Fifth, political, economic and popular support for Pacific research is weak. Few Pacific Islands governments have invested sizeable national resources into research capacity development. Little regular government funding is given to educational research. Where it exists, support for national libraries, museums and cultural centres is merely enough to maintain services rather than to build capacities. Because research is perceived as academic, Pacific Islands populations often do not have much regard for its value to their everyday experiences and their potential futures. Leadership, generally, for Pacific research within Pacific Islands countries is weak. The university that aspires to support Pacific research may wish to engage with Pacific politicians, demonstrating the utility and political value of research. As well, seed-funding may be given towards capacity-building within national and regional institutions and government departments. Universities have

the potential to do more for Pacific research by working with Pacific researchers in demonstrating the utility of research and its linkages to the societal happiness of ordinary Pacific Islanders, many of whom are living in crowded towns, isolated atolls or rural villages, without regular incomes or social opportunities for advancements.

AFFIRMING SMALL BEGINNINGS

A story is told of an aged leader who, at the time of a long drought, was delighted when he saw a cloud the size of a man's hand. People of this aged leader's time might have dismissed him. They might have ridiculed him. They might have doubted their leader's vision, judgement, relevance or value. However, it was this very small cloud which, days later, bucketed down the rain that ended the long drought and misery. The wise leader saw the potential in the small cloud. He placed hope in its ability to become something bigger. Indeed, wisdom had the last word.

In this section, the ideas and aspirations behind this book project are discussed. In a fundamental sense, this book project is about seed-sowing. Like the *niu tupu* (Niuean) or the *vara* (Fijian), coconut seedlings (as people and ideas) need to be nurtured if they are to grow, flourish, mature and multiply.

This book is part of the celebrations for 'a Decade of Rethinking Pacific Education', which is associated with the RPEIPP. The RPEIPP began in 2001 as a Pacific regional education initiative led by a core group of educational leaders based at Victoria University of Wellington and the University of the South Pacific. Since its inception, He Pārekereke, Institute for Research and Development in Māori and Pacific Education within the Faculty of Education of Victoria University of Wellington has played a key role in the leadership, coordination and sustaining of the vision of RPEIPP. The Victoria University Leadership Pacific Cluster has been an integral part of this RPEIPP movement. Today, members of the Victoria University Leadership Pacific Cluster are scattered throughout the Pacific region and beyond.

The authors of this book are members of the Victoria University Leadership Pacific Cluster. All are either recent or current graduate students of Victoria University of Wellington. All are emerging scholars. Of the authors, most are first-time authors who have been mentored and offered technical and content support by the editors.

The two general subject areas covered in this book are education and leadership. These subject matters mirror the areas of attention of the RPEIPP.

A contribution of this book is that the writings and views belong to a new generation of Pacific scholars. The authors, as yet, are not well known throughout the Pacific region. As such, the ideas shared will inspire emerging Pacific scholars and research students because they are likely to identify easily with the authors, who are themselves emerging scholars. Moreover, the ideas shared here represent a rethinking, newer thinking and some degree of clearer thinking. Furthermore, a key contribution of this book relates to the assumption of responsibility that these emerging Pacific scholars have demonstrated by putting pen to paper, thereby committing their ideas and insights for public scrutiny.

This book is part of the Leadership Pacific strategic vision of growing the Pacific region's own New Generation of leaders. Towards this goal, the book represents the active nurturing of a new generation of Pacific scholars who are fearless about their public engagements as influencers of the mind.

Needless to say, Pacific nation states, family groupings, tribes, schools and organisations, and communities are crying out for thought leaders. Without good thought leaders, no level of society can thrive and easily succumbs to the constraining challenges of life. Particularly in times of uncertainty, without good thought leaders, educational communities become stagnant and, possibly, die. This need for thought leaders, however, is compromised by a degree of apathy when it comes to the involvement of younger people. Consequently, if younger people do not see their place in influencing the minds of people, or do not participate in initiatives to shape ideas, then many Pacific schools, communities and countries are likely to suffer. This book fills a gap for younger Pacific scholars and invites them to participate in shaping people's ideas and ideals.

Specifically, this book provides a rethinking of aspects of education and leadership in Pacific contexts, thereby serving the following purposes:

1. It introduces varied conceptualisations of education and leadership.
2. It highlights awareness of context and understandings of education and leadership in context.
3. The book demonstrates the value and applications of ongoing reflection and rethinking.

The intended audience of this book includes those who are interested in education and leadership in Pacific contexts. Such groups might include university postgraduate students, lecturers, teacher-educators, researchers, senior high school teachers, curriculum developers, education officials, community educators and mentors in Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific region.

CHAPTER SYNOPSIS

The Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative for and by Pacific Peoples (RPEIPP) has focused highlighted attention on Pacific development generally and educational development specifically. In the first four chapters, examples of rethinking aspects of Pacific educational development are shared. In Chapter 2, **Laura van Peer** of Aotearoa New Zealand uses her knowledge of the Pacific literature and her close association with the RPEIPP to privilege the 'Pacific voice' about development and educational aid. In doing so, the author offers the RPEIPP as an approach to (international) development which has potential to influence future development practice.

Continuing with the theme of development, in Chapter 3, **Donasiano Ruru** of Fiji offers a critique of international development in a Fiji case study. The chapter offers a reconceptualisation of development aid by proposing an aid *bure* framework. In Chapter 4, **Billy Fito'o** of the Solomon Islands, continues with the theme of rethinking education. First, he critiques the concept of citizenship as popularly used and its application in citizenship education in the Solomon Islands. Second, this author offers a Solomon Islands conceptualisation of citizenship. This chapter exposes the problematics of unilateral applications of popular ideas such as citizenship in the haste to achieve good governance in Solomon Islands. Based on his years of experience as a scientist in Micronesia, in Chapter 5, **Riyad Mucadam** of the Marshall Islands rethinks the modes of delivery of development projects, using solar home electrification as a case study. A key argument for this author is for users of project services to be appropriately educated during the implementation phases of development projects.

Leadership has been a key strand of the RPEIPP. In the next three chapters, authors focused on aspects of leadership within the tertiary setting. In Chapter 6, **Louise Falepau and Laura van Peer,** leaders in a New Zealand tertiary institution (Whitireia New Zealand), share the call

of the Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative for change and leadership by Pacific peoples for their own development. In this chapter, these authors share their experiences and learning from their acts of instituting a policy strategy on Pacific education, based on the philosophies, principles and modelling by the RPEIPP. In Chapter 7, **Cherie Chu,** a New Zealander of Tahitian-Chinese heritage, rethinks mentoring by arguing that, within university settings, mentoring relationships which are based on fundamental principles of unique Pacific cultures can be established and made to work effectively. Using a case study of Victoria University of Wellington, this author offers some pointers about mentoring relationships for Pacific students at university. In Chapter 8, **Ema Sanga,** a New Zealander of Samoan-Dutch heritage rethinks Pacific students' success at university. Using her experience as a student adviser, this author critiques conventional conceptualisations of student success and calls for a holistic view. She offers a 'Te Vaka Framework' of student success as a holistic template for Pacific students' success at university.

The next three chapters share the common theme of curriculum. In Chapter 9, **Ali Glasgow,** who is a New Zealander of Cook Islands heritage, compares the roles of Early Childhood Education curriculum panels in the Cook Islands and the Solomon Islands. This author makes the point that, in assuming ownership of the early childhood education curriculum process, Pacific countries exercise control over their own educational aspirations and destinations. In Chapter 10, **Patrick Daudau** of the Solomon Islands discusses the positive perceptions of Solomon Islands teachers about the new outcomes-based education curriculum. He explains that this positive uptake by teachers is because of the practical and 'learning by doing' approach of outcomes-based education and its close associations with indigenous curricula. In the third chapter on rethinking curriculum (Chapter 11), **Anna Joskin** of Papua New Guinea discusses the experiences of three Papua New Guinea teachers on implementing outcomes-based education curriculum and part of a reform agenda in their country. Amongst other suggestions, the author proposes that curriculum reform agendas must include appropriate professional development programmes for teachers as implementers.

The three chapters that follow give attention to certain aspects of identity. Beginning with Chapter 12, **Amton Mwaraksurmes** of Vanuatu discusses a case study of at-risk students in Vanuatu. According

to this author, this group of students is not understood well by Vanuatu teachers. Drawing on teachers' beliefs and attitudes about at-risk students, the author exposes the misunderstandings the teachers have and offers some suggestions for how teachers might deal with at-risk students in Vanuatu. In Chapter 13, **Hiria McRae,** an indigenous Māori educator, argues a case for rethinking science education for Māori students. Amongst her suggestions, this author offers ideas for teachers for teaching science to Māori students. In Chapter 14, **Fuapepe Rimoni,** a New Zealander of Samoan heritage, rethinks identity and how a person's identity is shaped by a sense of place. The author discusses the implications of her thesis on place-based education.

As a concluding Chapter 15, **Joanna Kidman,** a Māori scholar of Aotearoa New Zealand, sums up the key themes that are covered in this book. In drawing the chapters together, Joanna traverses the wide range of topics covered in the book, including conceptualisations of belonging, assuming ownership, creating intellectual spaces, negotiating power relationships, and more.

As a co-editor of this book by a group of emerging Pacific region scholars, I invite you the reader to join us in nurturing these seeds of people and ideas towards maturity, growth and sustained excellence.

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Harvesting Ideas

A new generation of Pacific scholars has been mobilised to showcase their thinking on education for, and in, Pacific contexts. As authors they are energetic and courageous as they assume responsibility for harvesting the ideas sown by an earlier generation, while also planting their own seeds to inspire, motivate and encourage new scholars, teachers and students.

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