# Developing 'insider' researchers
## *The way forward for educational development in the Pacific region*

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## Introduction

For the purpose of generating new knowledge, a first imperative for the small states in the Pacific region is the establishment among tertiary institutions, their students and their staff of a vibrant research culture that fosters capacity building in such sectors as education. Without initial preparation and further development of Pacific Islanders' capacity for research work, Pacific-region strategies for much-needed improvement of educational practice will continue to be reliant on outside researchers' drop-in drop-out efforts in the region and on research outcomes derived in non-regional contexts. This type of transfer of research outcomes is little likely to give due regard to the ground realities of the local contexts of individual Pacific Island countries. Already a significant transfer of policies and practices from abroad into the region has "overlooked the realities of practice in real educational contexts" (Crossley, 2012: 6). In light of this, all Pacific Islands higher education institutions, their faculties, schools, research groups and individuals need to decide, foster and maintain their own significant research culture: building a thriving research culture and skills is vital in nurturing research activities that can respond effectively to the distinctive challenges in education as well as in other sectors in the Pacific region.

This chapter makes a case for greater emphasis on developing and strengthening local people's research capacity for the purpose of producing new knowledge in dealing in locally apposite ways with a wide array of local issues in education relating to pedagogy, assessment, leadership, teacher education, educational aid and curricula. In building this case, we became convinced that the incorporation of research work, especially under the action research paradigm, in all teachers colleges, may well be a critical prerequisite for educational

improvement and development in Pacific Island countries. To this er
chapter also provides insights about action research and how teachers c
can employ its strategies to prepare current and future educational practi
in the Pacific Island countries to develop and promote an ambient re
culture. Also, some mention is made of the desirability of promoting :
at the level of master's by research degree. Finally, the chapter dra
reviewed international literature to suggest some strategies for building
career staff research capacity and a healthy reputation for research in
education institutions in small developing states, to achieve this lon
goal of locally generated research-based knowledge for the local contex
review is done for the purpose of promoting dialogue and collaboratio
developed countries rather than blindly following them.

## What is the problem?

The small island states of the Pacific, despite having achieved p
independence, persist, for the most part, in applying educational p
and practices from countries abroad, mainly because of the paucity o
own educational research (Crossley, 2012; Louisy, 1997; Sanga, 2012)
perpetuate dependence on outsider researchers' results in bringing abo
reform in Pacific Island countries' education systems. The current pi
of sourcing ideas to introduce change and innovation in their Pacific
countries from western countries has, though, produced only somewhat li
success stories. As Crossley cautions (2012: 7), "the international tr
of currently dominant Western models and modalities deserves urgen
critical attention . . . [D]o these meet local needs, priorities and agendas?
example, most of the studies in education have been conducted by non-I
researchers in their own countries. These environments in these coun
whether internal (such as leadership styles, school culture, pedagog
external (such as government policies in education, political climate, cu
economy) differ markedly from the environments that we witness he
the Pacific; the non-Pacific researchers' assumptions, analytical framew
findings and strategies may likewise not be appropriate to the Pacific re
To make matters worse, we let them end up defining our problems fc
telling us what we have to assume. Their latest trendy concern is als

down the list of our priorities. In fact we would be better off defining our own problems and priorities and seeking our own solutions.

Thus the weight of evidence may slowly be swinging to suggest that adopting western educational practices in trying to meet the contemporary needs of the local systems is not a worthwhile practice in the long term. The point of origin and the destination of the transfer may be so different that the idea is bound to prove unsuccessful. So great is the significance of context that successful international transfer of policies and practices, far from being guaranteed, is highly likely to be unattainable because the nations' contexts and circumstances differ so widely in almost all aspects (Crossley, 2012). Consideration of both cultural and contextual appropriateness of policies and practices is necessary for any cross-border initiatives (Dimmock & Walker, 2000). Yet while most policies and practices may not meet the local needs, priorities and agendas, what are the alternatives for small states in the Pacific?

## Education dilemmas: What, if any, are the alternatives?

Education within the region is fraught with dilemmas and without constructive research, these dilemmas could remain unresolved. For example, over the past decade the Rethinking Pacific Education Initiatives for and by Pacific Peoples (RPEIPP) has been urging a transformative movement in education in the region (Maka et al., 2006; Puamau, 2002; Quanchi, 2004; Sanga, 2002; Taufe'ulungaki, 2002; Teaero, 2002; Thaman, 2002). For instance, Sanga (2000) suggests that there is much to learn from indigenous leadership in order to make school governance more effective. In particular, the local scholars, finding formal education foreign and pro-western, have been calling for cognisance of indigenous epistemologies in the education of children in the Pacific. They assert that the Pacific ways of knowing and learning are unique and that understanding and working within them would be of more help in meeting the learning needs of Pacific children. Likewise, a similar group with the aim of incorporating Pacific epistemologies in schooling for the Pacific children is also found in New Zealand (Airini & Mila-Schaaf, 2008; Tongati'o, 2009).

At the sametime, though, a study conducted by Tuimaleali'ifano (2007) suggests that the people have a more positive view of formal education as

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a means of meeting their goals in life and stakeholders also appear to be comfortable with higher-level schooling along western models. For example, they consider English competence as a means to access social mobility within and beyond their immediate communities. Despite the rethinking movement initiated by the PREIPP, very little has actually been achieved in shifting from the reliance on western schooling models to schooling that values indigenous epistemologies. In fact education must take into account of both past and future, and picking a creative and wholesome way between them. Without proper research together with critical reflection, any major shift in schooling and school governance is unlikely and debate (or lack of it) on various educational issues is bound to continue along the two divergent perspectives' non-communicating lines of thought. In this case, the lack of local researchers who can contest those models and modalities and then come up with better options to suit the real needs of the country means that there are no alternatives. This calls for developing more insider researchers.

## Benefits of having insider researchers

That Pacific Islanders should undertake research in their own contexts is vital for the future growth and success of their nations. Each country has to deal with its own unique challenges and issues and at the same time find ways and means to solve its own educational problems on the basis of research evidence. For this to happen successfully, Pacific Islanders must take centre stage in educational research work in their respective countries. Even in the school systems, the curriculum could include some elements of research work. This would provide students with a better understanding and appreciation of research activity when they become practitioners; indeed, they will embark on higher education already having some realisation of the importance of research in improving education. Research-led learning is to be encouraged in preference to a transmissive approach to learning and teaching that rob children of meaningful learning opportunities.

Developing locals' knowledge and skills in research would pave the way for initiatives in education from within rather than from outside. In point of fact strengthening of local capacity is the only solution and investment in capacity building, especially through higher education, is a must. Only by researching their own contexts will local educationists be able to generate new knowledge

for the long-term benefit of their respective countries; as insider researchers they have better knowledge of the local situation, and insights gained from such familiarity outweigh the disadvantages (Stenhouse, 1979; Stephenson & Greer, 1981). As far back as the 1980s renowned academic Ron Crocombe (1987: 133) subtly stressed the importance of insider researchers in researching various aspects of their own communities when he commented that "a grossly disproportionate share of the studies of islands and island communities has been done from external perceptions". Outside researchers' perceptions, however astute, may not authentically represent the ground realities, because their contextual knowledge is relatively shallow and their ability to empathise with the researched community and context is necessarily limited. In this way the western beliefs, purposes and practices concerning research continue to dominate the research scene, contributing to uneven flows of research benefits to the researched community itself (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999). With the new millennium, this situation has not changed significantly and capacity building of indigenous researchers still offers the best hope for fostering greater involvement of members from the researched community. This will not only enhance inquiry but also contribute to lively intellectual debate on educational issues and dilemmas while at the same time preventing small states from the risks of international transfer of ideas and practices (Crossley, 1990). A sound research background will better equip Pacific Islanders for critical analysis of the suitability of any transfer of educational policies and practices from other countries *before* they adopt and utilise them.

The importance of a fundamental shift in attitude to one that values the active participation of Pacific Islanders in educational research cannot be overemphasised. If each Pacific Island country, speaking for its people, is to be ultimately responsible for its own educational development, then undertaking research in education deserves a great deal more attention and weighting. As noted, the circumstances of each country are unique and efforts to strengthen national capacities for sustainable development should come from within as far as possible. Because of the vast contextual differences, ongoing dependence on developed countries for research results to be applied in the local contexts is not educationally sound. Crossley (2012) himself denounced the "uncritical international transfer of educational policy and practice, as illustrated by my own early studies of the inappropriate exportation of school-based curriculum development from Australia and the UK to the very different context of

Papua New Guinea". It is sad to note the British scholars realised this after more than a century of forcing British education down the throats of the empire. This is a glaring example of a situation that illustrates dependence on other countries' curriculum materials for a context that is totally different. Such practices are bound to persist if locals are not prepared to look critically at policies and practices transferred to their home countries from off-shore. After all, knowledge and learning are driving forces of economic development (Baffour, 2010; Cooke, 2002; OECD, 1999). In fact, there is a strong connection between research and national development, provided research outcomes feed into practice that forms the basis for educational improvement and development (Sanga, 2012; Simala, 2011). More than a decade ago, UNESCO (1999) stressed that research that better informs practice is essential to influence change in policy and practice in any area of education. In contemporary times, "pressure is mounting for research-based policy, teaching and practice at all levels of education" (Sanga, 2012: 12). This demonstrates that the need for more insider researchers is greater—or more recognised—now than ever before.

The spirit of critical inquiry will assist Pacific Islanders in their search for new knowledge in education for the benefit of their countries. Only hard evidence can influence change in educational policies and practices. In turn, local research output will have more value than depending solely on findings from other countries. In this regard, regional higher education institutions should invest more in research activities in order to prepare and further develop Pacific Islanders for educational research. Higher education should teach and emphasise the value of knowledge and research skills, especially in practitioner-based research for a start: this approach, having the potential to yield better outcomes for the Pacific region than other research paradigms, should be encouraged for practitioner-based research (Lingam, 2012).

## Practitioner-based research: emphasis on critical reflection

The ideas of practitioner-based research, also commonly known as action research, are similar to the notion of reflective thinking originating as far back as the 1930s from the work of John Dewey. He referred to it as "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the conclusion to
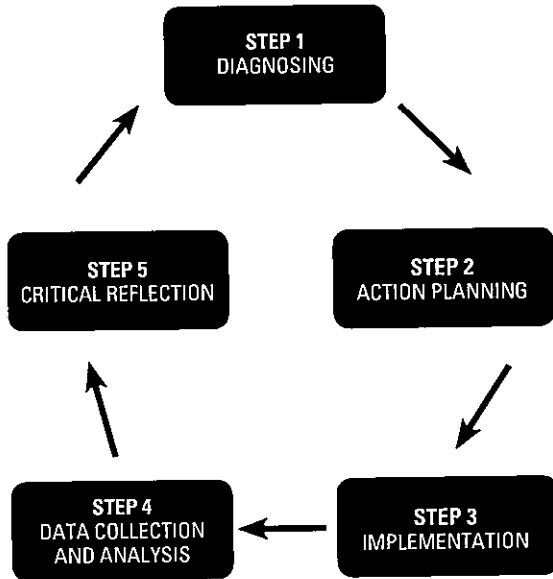
which it tends" (Dewey, 1933: 9). Definitions of action research abound in the literature. Best and Kahn (1986) describe it as examining a practice so that changes can be made by the practitioners themselves to improve the outcome of that practice. Mills (2003: 5) describes it as:

> Any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers, principals, school counsellors, or other stakeholders in the teaching/learning environment to gather information about how their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how well their students learn. This information is gathered with the goals of gaining insight, developing reflective practice, effecting positive changes in the school environment . . . and improving student outcomes and the lives of those involved.

The common thread in all the descriptions is that action research is *practitioner-based or participant research* with the aim of improving certain aspects of concern to them *in their immediate work environment* through reflexivity.

The action research strategy operates in a cyclical or spiral way and includes these stages: diagnosing, planning, acting, collecting and analysing data, and reflecting (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000; Mills, 2003). The first stage involves identification of a problem which triggers the idea of action research. In the next stage, a plan is developed to address the situation. In this planning stage, the educational practitioner is expected to map out possible interventions that could be used to bring about improvements related to the area of concern. The third stage, acting, involves implementing one of the planned interventions. This then leads to the next stage, where the intervention is implemented and monitored. Whilst the intervention is under implementation it is essential to collect relevant information on its effects, hence the fourth stage of the cycle. The last stage involves critical reflection on the information collected—analogous to an evaluation stage—to determine the success or failure of the intervention. If it is decided in this process that another of the planned interventions—modified if necessary in the light of reflection on the first trial—may be better worth trying, the cycle restarts. In simple terms, stages involved in action research can be visualised as shown in Figure 1.

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*Figure 1: The Action Research Cycle*



Source: Adapted from Kemmis and McTaggert,1998

## Relevance of practitioner-based research

Practitioner-based research is an effective means of developing reflective an critical skills and in turn, can make a positive contribution to education improvements and change (Booth & Ainscow, 2002; Higgins, 2005; Kembe 2000). The application of suitable ideas can help resolve a range not only personal but also of professional issues and challenges in educational pract (Norton, 1997). To achieve this, ongoing reflection both individually an collaboratively on various aspects of education in Pacific Islands countries warranted for the purpose of improving overall effectiveness. Future progr and developments in education will very much depend on reflective learni and in turn, appropriate action (Kember, 2000; Mills, 2003; Pollard et 2006). Hence, preparation of educational practitioners for learning by suita inquiry can contribute to solutions to long-lasting debates in education also contribute to improvement and development in Pacific Island count

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education systems. At the school level, application of the action research paradigm can help improve dimensions of school organisation as varied as curriculum, assessment, and learning and teaching processes. In view of this, the premise is that educational practitioners—including teachers, educational planners, school administrators and policy-makers—would reap benefits from becoming familiar with, perhaps even practising, the steps involved in action research.

While, in Pacific Island countries, teachers are expected to give priority to implementing the curriculum, they can no longer, in contemporary times, perceive themselves as mere implementers of curriculum. Yet they are not really encouraged to re-examine the ideas about learning and teaching theories acquired pretty much by rote from their training courses. In this regard, the use of an action research approach would greatly help them in critical assessment of issues related to classroom practices; for example, action research in the area of teaching practice may help them to settle on a more suitable pedagogy, that is, one that improves the quality of educational life in their classrooms and schools. Thus, there is wide scope for action research to be integrated with teaching (Crocombe, 2001; Pollard et al., 2006). Here, the emphasis is on the importance of making informed decisions based on evidence gathered from the classroom and school context. Evaluation of teaching strategies by using action research design is very likely to help teachers to plan more effectively for change in teaching strategies or for that matter any other educational change. The use of action research principles in daily professional practice will assist to improve the teaching profession as well as the educational experiences of the children, not only in Pacific Island nations but anywhere else they are utilised.

Without competent teachers whose armoury includes appropriate research skills, it is difficult to bring about any significant improvement in the educational experiences of children. Teachers are the key actors in any effort to improve the quality of education at any level. As Stenhouse rightly expresses it: "It is teachers who, in the end, will change the world of the school by understanding it" (cited in Hopkins, 2001: x) and in turn, enhance teachers' capacity for managing changes and their professional identity as teachers. Likewise, Fullan (1988) points out that the success of any planned change will depend on teachers' professional preparation as well as their capacity to understand the meaning of change. Research, and in particular action research, would enable

them to have a better understanding of the world of the school and in turn fulfil the aspirations of the children they teach as well as the parents and other stakeholders (Tuimaleali'ifano, 2007). In this regard, action research is useful in meeting "[a] felt need, on the part of the practitioners to initiate change, to innovate, [which] is a necessary condition of action research" (Elliot, 1991: 53). Thus as a result of action research, teachers' greater responsiveness to the changing world would open the way for provision of a higher quality of educational experiences to the nation's children.

Examples abound. In the Australian context, Grundy (1997) claims schools have achieved successful learning outcomes through action research. Higgins (2005) reports the use of action research to help a school change its school culture. The use of an intervention after critical reflection on the situation considerably reduced bullying rates and at the same time helped improve the school leader's leadership style. Similarly, Stuart, Morojele and Lefoka (1997) reported improvements in the Lesotho education context as teachers gained professional skills in action research. Likewise, Kitchen and Stevens (2008) pointed out the benefits of enhancing teacher's professional practice by introducing them to action research. Furthermore, the Graduate Diploma of Teaching and Learning (GDTL) secondary programme that became available in 1999 for untrained teachers at the Tonga Institute of Education has incorporated an action research assignment as part of the practicum component. The programme, developed with funding assistance from the New Zealand Overseas Development Assistance (French, 2005), was modelled along the lines of the secondary GDTL offered by the Christchurch College of Education. As French (2005) reported, the inclusion of the action research project afforded student teachers the opportunity to deal with everyday problems and practices in order to improve the overall performance of the school. The results of the project indicate that the action research process made a significant impact on the students' understanding, knowledge and skills as classroom practitioners. For example, in the words of one participant:

> I learnt a lot from this research project. I know that this action research has helped me, not only with my personal development, but also my professional development. I identified some shortcomings in my teaching, and learnt to improve those areas that needed attention. I recommend this research to anyone in the teaching field. It worked for me and I am sure it will work for others. (French, 2005: 288–289)

Some years ago at the University of the South Pacific (USP) one of the courses in the Bachelor of Education (In-service) Primary programme was on action research. In a study by Lingam (2012) conducted to determine in-service teachers' level of satisfaction with the course and its benefits to their professional work, the results (70 per cent) showed that most of these teachers found the course beneficial for their professional work at school, as they acquired relevant information about the use of action research to address an area of concern. The in-service teachers' feedback indicated that they learned much about action research and its application, as the following comment demonstrates:

> Studying the action research course helped me to be involved in an in-depth understanding of how I could improve my practice as an educator through a process that includes identifying a problem, doing something to resolve it, seeing how successful my efforts were, and if I am not satisfied, I try again. (Lingam, 2012: 15)

These are two of the shining examples from the Pacific region which illustrate how practitioner-based research can positively create improvements and educational change for the good of all. Higgins (2005: 17) sums up neatly, "Through the research process, they, themselves, own and can benefit from the knowledge that they are generating for themselves". Since teachers would thus be better placed to contribute to the overall development of the school and the education system, this is an effective way to encourage teacher professionalism. Despite the benefits, USP's School of Education has had to phase out its action research course to make way for new university-wide generic courses that were introduced in 2012. This course removal has been imposed despite calls from senior academics and international opinion in support of teaching of action research skills.

## Research at teachers college

The author's own work experience in the Pacific region, including over a decade on-staff in a teachers college in Fiji, produced the unavoidable observation that the college staff did not engage in any major research activity. Rather, staff members generally perceived research as something required of academics in university settings; for themselves, they were content to limit their own core responsibility to the training of teachers. Even in other teachers

colleges within the Pacific region, and beyond, research is not necessa
as part of their professional work. For example, the then Brisbane
of Advanced Education in Australia did not have a strong research
Similarly, the staff in the then Dunedin Teachers College did no
research as their priority. Reporting on the situation in New Zealand
(2005) states that the employment terms and conditions did not requ
in the teachers colleges to engage actively in research. However, the
of these colleges with universities changed this picture. At a university,
is a mandatory part of academic work and assessment for promotion r
in part, having a research and publication record. Academic staff n
need encouragement to engage in research even while they are hard
to maintain their teaching responsibility. Generally, universities requi
academic staff teaching degree and postgraduate level programmes to t
researchers (Alcorn, 2005). A further weakness in most teacher ed
curricula in the region is the failure to emphasise research-led learnir
reflects and justifies the absence of courses on research and will in
hinder students' preparation for research work.

As noted previously, the use of action research in their day-to-day
likely to improve the classroom work practices of educational pract
such as teachers, a necessary prelude to improved children's learnir
this to happen, pre-service teachers need to learn and develop the s
conducting action research. Action research may sound a bit frig
to educational practitioners but in our daily lives, we have all made
its principles to better our lives. However, a number of empirical
show that teachers are wary of research (Green & Kvidahl, 1990; C
Smith & Lytle, 1990), perhaps because of inadequate training in re
Adequate training and exposure to various aspects of action research
enable future teachers to appreciate and undertake research in the
professional work. Teachers on pre-service and in-service training sho
exposed to an action research course, which would encourage profe
learning among teachers and promote teacher quality (Pollard et al.,
Vialle, Hall & Booth, 1997). Overall, the need for reflection on and
into practitioners' own work context is gaining momentum (Beattie,
Higgins, 2005; Kember, 2000; Pollard et al., 2006; Vialle, Hall &

course in research methods, including an action research based component, which is compulsory for all pre-service teacher education programmes (Vialle, Hall & Booth, 1997).

Consideration of matters discussed here suggests that the development of a course on practitioner-based research in all higher education institutions such as teachers colleges in the Pacific region is warranted for the immediate and long-term benefit of the region. Continuation of the current nature of education is more likely to perpetuate Pacific Islanders' dependence on countries abroad for educational ideas and practices at the very time when we are in search of an endogenous and productive way forward.

## Postgraduate research

At the postgraduate level more students are to be encouraged to do research studies because the Pacific needs more local researchers to contribute and expand knowledge in a range of areas, including education. The author's own work experience at USP confirms that the introduction of a Master of Education by coursework appears to be the option students prefer in their efforts to fast-track their study. However, this pathway restricts rigorous and credible research and at the same time restricts entry into the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) programme. The USP School of Education is discussing the possibility of introducing a Doctorate in Education (EdD) programme, which would itself involve some rigorous research work. Unfortunately, though, most Pacific Islands students do not consider postgraduate work in education with a research component as an option for them. Findsen (2002) reports about the situation in New Zealand that an increasing number of educational professionals prefer to enrol in postgraduate programmes just to up-skill their professional practice, with no intention of learning to become researchers. As a consequence, says Findsen (2002: 7), most students gain only a "modicum of research capability and the ability to critique research rather than . . . substantive research competency". This is a challenge.

As a regional institution serving 12 member countries, USP must be mindful that the educational benefits are appropriately shared and more evenly spread across all the countries. Member countries, too, need greater awareness of the benefits of preparing their human resources for educational research.

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More than this, the universities within the region have yet to recognise the desirability of persuading their intellectuals of the importance for the twenty-first century of pursuing higher degrees by research, as 'home-grown' research-based ideas can better inform practices in education. Training for research could well form a mandatory part of all postgraduate educational programmes of Pacific region universities. Only then will more, and more appropriate, local knowledge be generated, breaking the cycle of reliance on practices adopted from elsewhere, as suggested in the literature (Crossley & Holmes, 2001; Crossley & Watson, 2003; Sanga, 2012). Locally grounded research is vital to address local concerns not only in education but in other areas as well. The USP's *Strategic Plan 2013–2018* has made a commitment to improving postgraduate research, a sound undertaking by the University as an incentive and to accord greater recognition to student research.

## Early-career staff research

Developing junior researchers' capacities in research in universities in the small island developing states was one of the recommendations of the Commonwealth Secretariat (Crossley, Packer & Bray, 2011). Generally, early-career staff, who tend to be mostly locals, are left on their own to struggle to produce research of any quality. The Strategic Forum for Research in Education in the UK (Pollard, 2008) outlines a number of ways for enhancing capacity building that are worth considering for assisting novice researchers and prospective researchers. These include:

- the potential of the systematic interaction between experienced and junior researchers through discussion and critical engagement with research outputs
- the strengthening of peer review processes
- improving the quality of the research community through enhanced skills training opportunities and the application of ICT
- the strategic use of career incentives and research scholarships to attract future generations
- the promotion of collaborative partnerships designed to provide knowledge and skills sharing for mutual support.

Novice researchers can profit from the support of experienced researchers through means such as mentoring and collaboration on research projects: every encouragement should be given to collaborative research efforts between experienced staff and early-career staff as a desirable means of knowledge transmission and development of high-quality research skills. This suggests a variety of practical approaches could be used to build research capacity. Such preparation will help not only to sustain research in the future but also to produce research of a higher quality. More recently, the USP began recognising outstanding staff researchers by rewarding them. However, the tendency has been for senior staff with many years of research experience to be the recipients of the awards while early-career staff are inevitably overlooked because of their very lack of experience in quality research. Some rewards at least should be awarded to those undertaking joint research projects, especially where experienced staff have collaborated with junior staff. In the same vein, rewards to be given to emerging research leaders rather than to those experienced researchers would help encourage and motivate junior researchers to undertake research more vigorously. Such a reward system would be a win–win situation for all: the early-career staff, experienced staff and the institution.

With regard to this last point, collaborative partnership can be further extended to include work with experienced researchers from abroad, which can both develop local researchers and at the same time contribute effectively to research initiatives that can then be translated into successful practices in the home country. Novice researchers *need* to work collaboratively with lead researchers to gain more hands-on experience with the 'nitty gritties' in research, as in an apprenticeship. Such collaborations have proved successful in Kenya and Tanzania, where local and international researchers have collaborated on various educational research projects (Barrett et al., 2011; Crossley et al., 2009). Thus, establishing networks with institutions where research culture is strong is another viable option for improving local researchers. In a positive development, the School of Education, USP, collaborates in this way with experienced researchers from the universities of Nottingham and Bristol. Another opportunity for USP would be to collaborate with those universities with which it has signed memorandums of understandings. Such an alliance could facilitate intellectual exchanges not only in research but also in other areas of common interests (Meek & Suwanwela, 2006). Other tertiary institutions

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could establish such alliances with institutions within and beyond the region for mutual benefit in research endeavours. An interesting development in this regard is the recent formation by eleven Pacific universities of a regional Pacific network in research, known as the Pacific Islands Universities Research Network (PIURN). The agreement to collaborate on research and intellectual exchange is significant in the enhancement of research and its contribution in the development of the region. It is envisaged that through such initiatives more could be achieved for the people of the region than for one university attempting to address regional problems through quality research. However, at times partners' commitment on paper is not truly reflected in their support towards the initiative.

## Research Grants

Apart from the lack of opportunities for developing junior staff, research grants appear to be another problem in universities in the small island states. The United States and other prosperous European countries such as the UK have spent considerable amounts of money on research activities between 1993 and 2003 (Galama & Hosek, 2008). In many western countries, including Australia, the UK and the USA, governments fund research activities. For example, in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries governments contribute about 72 per cent of the funding for academic research (Altback, Reisberg & Rumbly, 2009). Likewise, in the UK, £40 million of funding was allocated for a Teaching and Learning Research Programme (2008) to build the capacity of researchers together with other aspects relating to research. In the UK, a Strategic Forum for Research in Education was established to facilitate various aspects relating to strengthening research endeavours. Generally, western countries pour a lot of money into capacity building in research (Gilroy & McNamara, 2009). This is not possible in SIDS: in small, developing-world universities such as the USP, funding for and capacity to undertake large-scale educational research are extremely limited (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2009; Sanga, 2012, Crossley, 2011).

To achieve an aim of becoming a leading research oriented university, Queensland University of Technology (QUT), for example, set in place initiatives at university, faculty, school and individual levels, including a

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research and innovation policy and framework, strategies for managing and administering research, codes of conduct and data management, research structures, postgraduate programmes, research ethics, and rules about outside research work. Over the years these policies have evolved and the effects have been cumulative so that now QUT regularly receives large amounts of external research funding from Commonwealth research grants and the Faculty of Education has a very good record of success with applications for the funds.

One could consider the Faculty of Education of QUT as an example of a faculty in a higher education institution that from its formation set about rapidly developing a strong research culture. The Faculty of Education came into existence in 1990 when the QUT amalgamated with the Brisbane College of Education, the final integration of a series of earlier mergers. The Faculty of Education based the development of a research culture on a range of strategies, in particular:

- the wider university support for research development, which included policies for staff appointment, central research support and administration, rewards for research success (as well as teaching and learning) in the appointment system, a University Research Management and Ethics Committee, and development of a suite of research degrees
- within the Education Faculty, development of research degrees for Master and PhD programmes; appointments to lecturer positions, where possible, of staff with PhD qualifications and research and publication records; establishment of a Faculty research committee with a representative on the University Research Committee; use of small faculty and internal university grants to support pilot projects for publication and further research; and perhaps most important of all, encouragement of mentor–mentee relationships between experienced and developing researchers. This mentoring—occurring in research degree programmes, research with small grants, and among team members for larger grants—allowed developing researchers to learn to research and write with more experienced members of staff. Recipients of research grants were also allowed to calculate their overall workload to take into account time needed for research.

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These strategies are relevant as they helped the university achieve a goo[d]
record in research.

In the Pacific, though, the situation is a little more difficult. Most
structures exist but they lack overt purpose and impetus in their functi[on]
No funding body for pure and applied research, similar to the Aus[tralian]
Research Council (ARC), exists in any regional country. Also, unl[ike]
developed countries, the absence in the region of any big private compa[nies]
fund research means that funding for research tends to be minimal (UN[ESCO]
2005). At USP, for example, it is possible to obtain small research gra[nts]
worthwhile research projects. This can lead to publication(s) but the[re are]
difficulties in publishing because the grants are not usually large enou[gh to]
support the larger samples that would be considered of interest or signif[icant]
to international bodies. Pacific researchers can team with overseas resea[rchers]
to obtain larger grants but only if the research is of interest to the c[ountry]
providing the grant. There is a list of general international granting [bodies]
but again, it is difficult to justify the Pacific research to them. Son[ne]
organisations might fund applied research but their interest tends to d[epend]
on their perception that the research aims are immediately applicable to [them]
and at times researchers have to succumb to their demands. Neverthe[less it]
might theoretically be possible to apply to an aid body for funding to d[evelop]
Pacific research and to support reasonable research grants. Master anc[]
research can be sources of significant research findings; however, such s[tudents]
need to be carefully supervised by experienced and knowledgeable resea[rchers]
who are also aware of publishing possibilities. A poorly supervised stu[dent can]
too easily become an opportunity lost.

If research in the Pacific into Pacific problems is to gain impetus there ne[eds to]
be a clearly stated and strong research thrust. Then institutions need to su[pport]
the rhetorical thrust with funding, clear policies, and staff programme[s to]
encourage research to develop. This entails appointment of a proport[ion of]
staff who are research oriented, a strong student research culture, inflt[uential]
university and faculty policies, research cultures in schools and effective sl[owing]
of research in planning, seminars and publications. Staff members also[]
allowance of adequate time to conduct and write up worthwhile researcl[]

the enhancement of research and the recent *Strategic Plan 2013–2018* places more attention on research. This is a tremendous step forward for developing a research culture across the University.

It is often more difficult to obtain research funding in Education than in some other more hard-core areas: climate change probably seems a more pressing problem in contemporary times, for example. However, if research were to link learning about the climate change crisis with investigating good teaching and learning processes, for instance, then it might be easier to obtain funding and publication of results. In any research area, the researchers need to develop their ideas and projects to do what they are interested in within existing parameters.

At USP, especially in the faculties and schools such as the School of Education, the need to develop research culture is great. It could include:

- staff of good quality. This may necessitate change and renewal of contracts with a view to building up numbers of research-active staff members, because having a critical mass of researchers is important
- leadership at the senior management level and departmental Heads and senior staff who are positive and informed about research possibilities
- centrally endorsed and implemented impetus for research
- a collegiate, supportive, positive environment that is more likely to foster research activity
- generation of funds to be used directly for research
- effective research committees at all levels.

Similar views have been expressed by Tuhiwai-Smith (2004: 14) in her statement that capacity building means: "[b]uilding 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". Application of some of these strategies would pave the way forward for inside researchers.

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## Conclusion

This chapter argues benefits of developing the capacity for research, particularly for a start the practitioner-based research type, in higher education. With greater capacity, research could be conducted in the areas identified or driven by the stakeholders of the USP member states. However, without any constructive mechanisms for developing capabilities, it will remain difficult for insider researchers to conceptualise and conduct research in order to make informed decisions in education or in any other field. The Pacific region would then continue to depend on overseas research outcomes to bring about any reforms in education. Yet research outputs from other contexts may not be sensitive or acceptable to the Pacific context so transferring of exogenous best research outputs may not yield the desired results. Enhancing research in the Pacific may rather necessitate further strengthening of capacity and capabilities of inside researchers'—both students and early-career academic staff. For this to happen, higher education institutions should, as a matter of priority, put in place mechanisms for training students in research activities. Likewise, for staff some of the ways advanced in the literature could—perhaps must—be employed to ensure capacity building for research that is critical for the development of the Pacific region.

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