

Connecting higher education to the changing nature of the world of work

The case of teacher education

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Introduction

Any structuring efforts to improve the provision and quality of education cannot afford to overlook the major role played by the teachers as central figures in the education process (Delors, 1996; Dembele, 2004; Beattie, 1997; Watt & Richardson, 2006; Tickly, 2010). Their role in the education of children is crucial; in particular, teachers' competence in leading the learning and teaching processes makes a critical difference in ensuring what and how children learn throughout their lives (Hargreaves & Ho, 2000; Keer, 2006). Furthermore, in comparison with other stakeholders, teachers make the largest difference in achieving school effectiveness (Alton-Lee, 2003; Hattie, 2002; Sparks, 1985). In view of the importance of the role of the teacher, UNESCO (2005) emphasis in making a difference in education in the Pacific region is on both teacher quality and teachers' roles. Teachers of good quality are what the educational service requires, that is, teachers who can play their role effectively. At the same time, the current pace of political, societal, economic and cultural changes continues to have a marked impact on schools and the work teachers do. The heightened expectations stakeholders have of schools in response to these changes have enlarged and intensified the work demands made on teachers. This further complicates teachers' work and their capacity to manage the range of changes (Fanfani, 2004; Hargreaves, 1994; Lingam, 2012a). Their ability to cope with the changes and the growing complexity of their work depends to a large extent on the quality of their professional preparation (Coleman & Fitzgerald, 2008; Gendall, 2001; Lingam, 2012a). Since there is broad consensus on the centrality of the role of teachers in the provision and quality of schooling, it follows suit that teachers' professional preparation, both initial and on-going, should also receive the attention it deserves.

This chapter highlights the need to strengthen primary teacher education programmes in the Pacific region to ensure that prospective teachers are being better equipped to meet the ever-changing demands of their work environment. The focus is specifically on primary teacher education, as the provision of sound education at the primary level is crucial in attaining functional literacy and also lays the foundation for all subsequent levels of formal education. The chapter first provides an overview of the quality of teachers currently available in the Pacific region and the importance of primary education in a nation's development.

The quality of teachers in the Pacific Region

Towards the end of the twentieth century, several commentators on education expressed their dissatisfaction with the quality of teachers serving in the Pacific region (Hindson, 1988; Singh, 1997; Stewart, 1975). Reporting on the qualifications of primary teachers in one of the countries in the Pacific region, Fiji, Chandra (2000: 13) pointed out '... nearly 96 percent of the teachers do not have a Diploma, and an alarming 42 percent have a form five or lower level of education'. The situation in Solomon Islands is even more alarming, however, as the primary education system includes a large number of untrained teachers (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, 2007). Teachers in the service with a low level of education are unlikely to maximise children's learning potential and represent a degree of wastage of financial investment in education. It is rather unfortunate that most of these teachers are serving in rural schools; this may go a long way towards explaining why children in rural schools show lower levels of academic achievement than their urban counterparts (Burnett & Lingam, 2007; Narsey, 2004). In addition, opportunities for ongoing professional development and in-servicing of teachers are limited and when they do arise, are more likely to be offered in urban areas (Tuimavana, 2010). In this way urban teachers continue to benefit more, as they, not their rural counterparts, gain up-to-date knowledge and skills related to school work.

Incompetent teachers in the education system pose a threat to the quality of the education provided. Inadvertently, they are more likely to be breakers than makers of the futures of their pupils. Hand in hand with this qualitative aspect, academic commentators also report quantitative deficiencies. The

Pacific region still faces a grossly inadequate number of teachers (Lingam, 2012a; Singh, 1997). Worse, in some of the countries in the region the critical shortage is in the number of qualified teachers. The migration of qualified and experienced teachers and the lack of opportunities for in-service training should be areas of concern in planning for achieving qualitative improvements in education. Pacific Island nations cannot afford to lose sight of the fact that education has a vital role in the development not only of individuals but also of the nation as a whole. Well prepared teachers in service are a necessary part of the equation, particularly at the primary level. Even most of the developed countries are beginning to experience or are likely to experience teacher shortages due to the ageing teacher workforce (Duthilleul, 2004; OECD, 2006).

Pre-service training of primary teachers in the Pacific region is generally carried out in the teachers' colleges, most of which offer a two-year pre-service programme leading to a certificate or a diploma in primary teaching. Some of the countries do not have teacher training facilities and they sponsor their students for training elsewhere in the region; for example, students from Tuvalu and Nauru used to do their teacher training at the then Lautoka Teachers' College in Fiji. In fact, Fiji has three primary teacher training colleges, two of which are owned and managed by religious denominations, Fulton College by the Seventh-day Adventist Church and Corpus Christi Teachers' College by the Catholic Church. The third, Lautoka Teachers' College, which was owned and managed by the government, has now been amalgamated into the Fiji National University. This college supplied most of the trained teachers needed for the primary education system in Fiji. However, for almost two decades the training programme at the college remained stagnant (Lingam, 2004a). In the late 1990s a piecemeal revision of the upper primary curriculum in the four subject areas of Mathematics, English, Social Studies and Science was carried out. Later, that is, in the early part of the twenty-first century, with funding assistance from the Australian government, the college programme was revised and upgraded to Diploma level (Lingam, 2003). This is encouraging as children in the primary schools will benefit from the greater degree of professionalism gained by these pre-service teachers upon graduation. In the same vein, other teacher training colleges within the Pacific region need to consider revamping their teacher education programmes to make them more relevant and appropriate to the changing

landscape of teachers' work. In particular, a short duration pre-service training programme is insufficient to cater for the multi-faceted nature of work now required of teachers. As mentioned by Hallack (1990: 178) 'teacher training today can no longer be limited to a two or three year course of study prior to entering the profession'. This has been well recognised by developed countries such as New Zealand and Australia, for various reasons, paramount among them being the contracted economies of the Pacific Island countries, which constrain them from extending their training programmes. The shoe-string budgets also limit opportunities for in-service training of teachers.

Complementing the pre-service training in the teachers' colleges, the University of the South Pacific introduced an in-service Bachelor of Education (BEd) Primary degree programme in 1999. After some years of delivery in face-to-face mode, the programme was made available fully in distance mode (Muralidhar, 2006). This conversion to distance and flexible delivery mode for the degree is a move in the right direction as it will to some extent address the twin issues of equity and accessibility in teacher education in the Pacific region. Prior to 1999, Pacific primary teachers' opportunities for upgrading themselves in their area of work were severely limited. As Muralidhar (2006: 1) phrased it, the degree has 'taken the [primary] teachers from a dead-end to a new beginning'. The region's primary teachers, wherever they are, now have access to study in the degree programme so they can upgrade their professional qualifications without the disruption of moving to Suva for a time.

The importance of primary education

For any nation, the cornerstone of development in all sectors of the economy is good-quality education that leads to improved human resources development. High quality education, especially at the primary school level, is vitally important since it is the foundation for all further and future education: those who complete primary education are generally expected to attain literacy, numeracy and skills in communication and problem-solving, thus enhancing the capacity of a nation to develop (Lockheed & Verspoor, 1991). It has also been asserted that the 'primary education remains the foundation for continued individual development, and collective national development interests' (Webster, 1995: 10). In the same vein, Horn (1994: 83) reiterated this with reference to Fiji, cautioning that 'education neglected is a nation

destroyed'. Fiji, no less than other countries in the region, needs to turn its attention to the education system, especially in improving primary education, where the foundations are laid. It behoves every Pacific nation to make a concerted effort to improve the quality of its primary education.

To cope with the demand for education, all education systems need to plan adequately for the provision of teachers. The authorities responsible for supplying teachers should take cognisance of the need for qualified and professionally prepared teachers to enter into and be retained in the teaching profession. The expectation from these teachers would be the effective facilitation of the processes of learning and teaching. Since learning and teaching are interrelated processes, that is, an interactive and reciprocal process between the teachers and the learners, a teaching force of good professional standard is the first requirement. If such teachers are not provided, student learning in the short term and educational standards in the long term are virtually certain to be adversely affected. As noted, primary education, as the first stage of formal education, should enjoy the benefit of teachers who are appropriately and adequately prepared for the teaching and related tasks they will be expected to undertake. Because poorly prepared teachers can have far-reaching development implications for small island developing states (Voigt-Graf, 2003), well educated and professionally prepared teachers in the primary teaching service are vital.

The Changing Nature of Teachers' Work

Globalisation and modernisation have brought changes to all spheres of life including education. It is noticeable that the various changes and developments occurring internationally have an impact on our lives here in the Pacific region, and the speed with which information now travels from one place to another ensures that our 'isolation' is no longer an impregnable shield. The advancement in science and technology has made the dissemination of information much easier to all parts of the world. In the process, the pace of social changes taking place in formerly conservative Pacific societies is alarming. Similarly, changes relating to education in developed countries traverse continents and countries before reaching the Pacific region.

In the last two decades, changes in technology, economics, social, political, and cultural aspects of the world imposed considerable changes and forced reforms on many developed countries' educational systems (Lam & Pang, 2003). The rapidity of change is reshaping the nature of schools' external and internal environment. In some contexts especially in the small island states of the Pacific these changes have in some cases bewildered teachers by the rigour of demands and increasing responsibilities that have been imposed on them. As reported by Lam (2002) this has become a common phenomenon in developed countries, as government initiated reforms in education have contributed towards rapid changes in schools. This accelerating change is experienced not only in developed countries but also in small island developing states. As rightly mentioned by Hargreaves (2003: 2) characterises it, 'We are living in a defining moment of educational history, when the world in which teachers do their work is changing profoundly, and the demographic composition of teaching is turning over dramatically'.

All these changes have increased what is expected of schools and in turn, enlarged the work of teachers especially in terms of greater responsibility, expectations and accountability in most jurisdictions (Sloan, 2007). Reporting on the situation in Australia, Smyth and his colleagues (2000) have identified various changes in teachers' work, notable among them being work intensification that places a lot of pressure on teachers in their workplace. Likewise, in North America, Hargreaves (1994, 2003) has highlighted how globalisation, restructuring and market driven systems of education provision together with changing world climate in learning and teaching have affected teachers' work. The case is similar in the UK with respect to changes in the work of teachers (Boyle & Woods, 1996; Stevenson, 2007). According to a report commissioned by OECD (2006: 95), changes 'have broadened and deepened teachers' roles'. In the Pacific region, the changing realities due to 'new cultural practices and media texts, hybrid cultural identities, emergent social formations and institutions and changing structures of work and economy', as suggested by Luke (1997: 10) have implications for the professional preparation of teachers. Thus, the OECD (2006) comments about the changing roles of teachers are equally true of teachers in developed countries as also right here in our own region.

A study conducted in Fiji relating to changes and influences on primary teachers' work showed that most of the changes originated from outside and teachers experienced a wide variety of change in their work (Booth, Singh, Wilson & Lingam, 2000). The outside influences on change included, for example, the Ministry of Education instructing teachers to implement the new curriculum: change in the school curriculum is dictated to schools and teachers by the Ministry. Quite recently, a few more subjects were added to the existing primary curriculum, including Citizenship Education and Conversational Hindi and Fijian (Fiji Ministry of Education, 2008). Added to this are other reforms associated with classroom assessment to replace external examinations: Classroom Based Assessment (CBA) and Classroom Assessment Task (CAT). Another significant innovation is the formulation of Individual Work Plans (IWP), School Annual Plans (SAP) and School Strategic Plans (SSP). All schools are required to prepare SSP and submit it to the Ministry.

Further, in other contexts in the Pacific region, such as in the Republic of the Marshall Islands, schools are expected to carry out School Improvement Planning: feedback from the teachers illustrates lack of training on the initiative and as a result many schools have difficulties undertaking this valuable exercise (Pallota & Lingam, 2012). In the case of Solomon Islands, feedback obtained from the school leaders indicates lack of skill and knowledge to carry out school development planning. Also, discussions with teachers showed that a range of changes have taken place in their work such as in the area of curriculum, classroom pedagogy and assessment.

None of these changes is under the teachers' control; implementation of the reforms results solely from the Ministry's requirement that teachers follow departmental policy decisions. With the passage of time, it seems inevitable that more and more changes will be imposed on schools and teachers, not only by the ministries of education but also by other relevant stakeholders such as the parents, school managements and even religious organisations. Without appropriate professional development of teachers, the gap between the current teaching force capacities and the new demands educational reforms make on schools is bound to widen (Duthilleul, 2004; Coleman & Fitzgerald, 2008).

The job of a teacher is a demanding one, especially with regard to the pace of change. Apart from teaching, teachers are expected to undertake several non-

teaching commitments. Teachers are now expected to work with colleagues and other stakeholders in more collaborative and collegial ways than they have in the past. They need to work closely with parents and members of the community if their school and classroom work are to be effective in achieving the intended learning outcomes. This is reaffirmed by Velayutham (1987: 27) who stated that, 'In the field of education teachers not only work with colleagues in the school but also with people outside the school such as parents, community leaders, church workers and even with people at the grass-roots level. Hence, the professional role of teachers extends beyond the classroom situation'. Apart from the curriculum focus, teacher education programmes need to prepare teachers to work collaboratively with parents, community members and other stakeholders in education. However, a study in the Fijian context showed that beginning teachers were unprepared for work in the community domain and they did not fully appreciate the importance of partnerships in education (Lingam, 2004a). This is unfortunate as these teachers will later realise that it is difficult to achieve success all by themselves without working collaboratively with other stakeholders.

According to Bhindi (1989), teachers' work requirements are different from other workers'. In terms of 'goal focus', teachers' work is community oriented (Bhindi, 1989). Teachers need to establish healthy relationships not only with colleagues but also with parents and other members of the community as integral to their work. Thus, the emphasis on teacher preparation should be on school-wide practices. Teachers should be made aware that a school exists in the heart of each community and all its members need to participate actively in contributing to its development (Bauch, 2001; Epstein, 2001; Ginsburg & Kamat, 1997). They are expected to collaborate with people in the community in providing a broad-based learning experience to the children they teach. Support from families and the community at large has an impact on the quality of learning and teaching. As such, dissemination of relevant information to parents on children's school work and locating community resources for teaching and learning have also been considered to be part of teachers' work. Teacher education programmes could well focus on the community domain and the roles teachers can play in it. These roles can be effectively factored into the practical component of the programme so that pre-service teachers can also engage themselves in some community work.

To keep this tradition alive and at the same time to enhance the handling of non-teaching roles requires a change in attitude and acceptance of a broader role definition of teachers' work. This has to be incorporated into all teacher education programmes, particularly during field-based experience. It would be wise to equip prospective teachers with skills to work with other people, organisations and agencies, thus signalling willingness to contribute to community development. All such suggestions certainly require a re-orientation of the teacher education programme so that prospective teachers are able to perform effectively their primary as well as other adjunct roles, considering the continuous change in both.

Teacher education programmes are blamed for not adequately preparing teachers for the realities of living and working in rural schools (Boylan, 2004; Page, 2006). In a study of beginning teachers from a primary teacher training institution in Fiji, Lingam (2004a) found that there were gaps in their professional preparation for work in schools. The implication is that the pre-service teacher education programme was not well aligned with the work expected of teachers in the field. The study reported that many novice teachers faced an array of difficulties in teaching in rural schools where multi-class teaching is the norm. For beginning teachers, entry into classroom work is not easy and rosy. They are likely to be faced with difficulties and obstacles that could demoralise them and affect their performance at work.

The current teacher education programmes are more metro-centred and do not cater much to the unique circumstances of rural schools and communities (Green & Reid, 2004). The programmes should incorporate courses dealing with teachers' work in rural schools (White & Kline, 2012) and also provide some professional experience in working in rural schools as part of their training. Since multi-class teaching is the norm in remote schools in the Pacific region (Collingwood, 1991), the incorporation of a course on multi-class teaching would be a progressive step for qualitative improvement in rural education. Even particular circumstances of the school may necessitate a different approach to teaching from the one initially learnt, requiring perhaps for a school-based professional development programme (Sharplin, 2010). Such an exposure will help develop pre-service teachers' ability to understand, appreciate and recognise the range of differences found in rural settings, such as in geography, and social and cultural domains. A good understanding of the

situation in rural schools will help them change their attitude in positive ways and build the confidence needed to teach and live in rural settings (Hudson & Hudson, 2008). To ensure that well-prepared teachers are available for rural schools, teacher educators themselves need to have first-hand information about the realities of teachers' world of work and living in rural settings.

Additionally, the literature suggests a need for teacher education programmes to prepare prospective teachers to become reflective practitioners, so that from their own resources they could continue to improve their practice and performance (Beattie, 1997; Kitchen, & Stevens, 2008; OECD, 2006; Vialle, Hall & Booth, 1997). The OECD (2006) canvasses the need to develop skills for reflective practice and research on-the-job, as well as training in pedagogy and curriculum knowledge. It is envisaged that reflective practice would enable them to improve their practice and ultimately the context in which they work. In fact, a well thought out action could make a valuable contribution to the development of a whole community. Research skills and knowledge would undoubtedly contribute toward improving teacher quality (Beattie, 1997; Vialle, Hall & Booth, 1997). The increasing recognition now given to the importance of research suggests that perhaps a course in research methods would be a valuable addition to all pre-service primary teacher education programmes across the Pacific region.

Teacher education needs to address not only the art of learning and teaching but also a range of other salient issues such as the context in which teachers are going to work upon graduation, the culture, and the characteristics in teachers' work (Alton-Lee, 2003; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992). If these aspects are not adequately addressed within teacher education then the programme will be unsuccessful in its overall impact on the work teachers are expected to carry out. As Goodlad (1994: 2) puts it, 'There must be a continuous process of educational renewal in which colleges and universities, the traditional producers of teachers, join with schools, the recipients of the products, as equal partners in the simultaneous renewal of schooling and the education of educators. The sooner the process begins, the sooner we will have good schools'. This is quite true as all partners in education need to work together in order to foster improvements in the quality of schooling. Literature demonstrates that parents' participation in school work and partnership with teachers can improve student learning (Christeson, 2004;

Rosenholtz, 1989; Zyngier, 2011). As early as 1990's, Hargreaves and Fullan (1992) conceptualise teacher preparation as encompassing knowledge and skill development, self-understanding and also psychological and social ecological change. However, it appears that in Fiji, the pre-service teacher education programme places a heavy emphasis on the development of knowledge and skills of teachers, that is, it focuses almost exclusively on meeting the demands of work expected in the classroom domain (Lingam, 2004a). Consequently, self-understanding and ecological change as they impinge upon teachers' work are generally marginalised.

A narrow or lopsided teacher education programme will not suffice for the profound changes in teachers' roles (Beattie, 1997; Valli & Buese, 2007). For example, the course ED334 Values in Education that formed part of the BEd Primary degree programme was forward-looking in terms of building teachers' knowledge of themselves. Teachers in turn can follow on by using the ideas from the course to conduct outreach programmes for the benefit of the community served by their school. Such an engagement with the community is vital for the good of schooling and the nation's development. Unfortunately, in the university's process of rationalisation, this valuable course, which helped to shape teachers' personal and professional life, was phased out; this is a reminder perhaps that we must be careful when 'improving' things not to lose sight of the fact that teachers' roles in the community domain are as important as they are in the classroom domain. The School of Education at the University of Western Sydney has introduced courses on diversity and social justice and also a project based community service-learning to prepare teachers better for the realities of work in schools (Power, Southwell & Elliot, 2007). Such courses help teachers to serve the students better and at the same time adapt themselves well to the pressures emanating from within and outside the learning environment (Watson, 2005).

The findings of Burnett and Lingam's (2007) study relating to Pacific primary teachers who graduated in the in-service BEd Primary degree programme indicated the need for the inclusion of information technology, counselling and school leadership in the degree programme. With reference to information technology, Burnett and Lingam explained its inclusion as 'a result of teachers observing first-hand the impact new technologies are increasingly having on children's lives. The uptake of technology in the region, albeit unevenly across

social groupings, demands a pedagogical response. Simply, where children's lives are being impacted by technological change, logically, children's classroom lives must also keep pace'. Likewise, the New London Group (1996) also recommended for multi-literacies instead of continuing the use of traditional literacy practices such as reading and writing in page-bound print forms. To keep Pacific teachers abreast of communications technologies, ongoing education and training are vital in these areas (Chandra, 2004).

The technological changes such as digital media and the growth of knowledge have a tremendous impact on learning and teaching. There is now an abundance of online learning tools that teachers can utilise effectively for providing students with meaningful learning experiences and teachers should be exposed to them during pre-service training (Westera, 2011). These new approaches to learning have opened up the window of opportunities for the schools to link effectively with the real world for the purpose of authentic learning. Learners now have access to a range of knowledge resource and learning is no longer fixed to a particular place, like schools, because technology has made available a range of different settings such as workplace learning, learning at home, location-based learning, and learning on the move (Westera, 2011). Such opportunities need to be built in the teacher education programmes to ensure future graduates are able to use new information and communication technologies effectively.

It is heartening to note that the Fiji Ministry of Education in collaboration with the School of Education, the University of the South Pacific, has begun to mount training programmes for primary teachers on One Laptop Per Child (OLPC). Such initiatives are important for the currency of our education systems and for the long-term benefit of our children. Teachers will have to be prepared in ways that will enable them to employ a range of pedagogical practices to enhance the delivery of education using OLPC. At the same time the use of different information technologies will make teaching and learning more exciting and meaningful to the children. Wherever possible, teachers should use these electronic aids in teaching, rather than relying solely on the traditional pedagogies. Unless teachers are prepared for making use of information technology, they will cling to the conventional methods of teaching – and their pupils will leave them far behind.

Another area of concern to the graduates, Burnett and Lingam (2007) investigated was the need for knowledge and skills in counselling. The pace of social change is such that teachers now encounter a daunting range of problems, frequently ones relating to children's behaviour and attendance. As a result of rapid globalisation, some external, almost alien, values and attitudes infiltrate and through their negative influence in school culture can affect the children's everyday life and work (Prosser, 1999). In the case of Fiji, for instance, drug and substance abuse among school students is of growing concern, in light of the dangers and risks associated with it (Lingam, 2004b). Also, teachers are faced with children from poor socio-economic backgrounds, who may not have all the stationery needed for school work. In fact, in the past child welfare was an extended family responsibility but now responsibility for dealing with the lack of this type of support has shifted more to teachers and other social workers (Burnett & Lingam, 2007). Prospective teachers need some counselling knowledge and skills in order to deal constructively with children in their class or school having problems of all sorts that may not be of their making. Thus there are advantages in fostering teacher and parent cooperation in schooling. Again, the practical component of the teacher education programme can incorporate suitable projects and activities relating to counselling for the trainees to try out in the community.

The final area where the graduates felt some lack in the programme was its failure to include a course on school leadership. At present, decision-making in Pacific schools is centralised (Tavola, 2012; Velayutham, 1994). Such an approach hampers creativity and innovation: a change could only be good for Pacific education. The desire for leadership training may also be the result of 'wider societal concerns in many Pacific Island countries about transparency in positions of leadership more generally' (Burnett & Lingam, 2007: 315). In addition, the strong desire for school leadership training in future may in part reflect some unease about political unrest in the last two decades in some regional countries.

Since schools are subjected to intensifying demands that they operate effectively and provide good quality education, professional preparation programmes should cater also for some training towards educational leadership (Brewer, 2001). Also, in view of the dramatically different role of the contemporary

school leaders as 'one that requires focussing on instruction; building a community of learners; sharing decision making; sustaining the basics; leveraging time; supporting ongoing; professional development for all staff members; redirecting resources to support a multifaceted school plan; and creating a climate of integrity, inquiry, and continuous improvement' calls for leadership preparation (Brewer, 2001: 30).

Thus apart from preparation on the teaching and learning of the school curriculum, preparing pre-service teachers for leadership would be a step in the right direction. At present this is not catered for in the pre-service training of most teacher education institutions in the Pacific region (Lingam, 2012b). The pre-service programmes have the capacity to nurture future school leaders and should not be left to in-service training, which may not happen. Inclusion in the pre-service programme of a component on school leadership or school management would be relevant, as in their future as teachers they will be contributing to improving people and the environment in which they work. Consequently, they would be multi-skilled and multi-talented, not just competent in their classroom work but also possessing knowledge and skills in effectively leading and managing a school.

In general, the preceding discussion demonstrates three things quite clearly. First, teacher education programmes need to pay attention to teachers' roles not only in the classroom domain but also in the community domain. Secondly, even though the introduction of the in-service BEd Primary degree programme at the University of the South Pacific is quite recent, the feedback sought from the graduates indicates that some revision would already be in order. Likewise, thirdly, the regional teacher training colleges need to do some serious rethinking about their programmes in order to make them relevant that is, closely aligned with the transformations in work expected of teachers.

Where next?

To enhance the professional preparation of teachers in countries in the Pacific region, heeding the OECD's (2006: 95) suggestion seems pertinent: 'countries [would] benefit from clear and concise statements or profiles of what teachers are expected to know and be able to do'. At present such profiles or statements are not clearly spelt out by either the teacher education

institutions or the teachers' employing authorities. The statements or profiles once prepared should be updated continuously on the basis of changes and developments in education and society. Such profiles would provide to the teacher education institutions some guidelines about what professionalism as a teacher means in all areas of teachers' work – classroom, school and community – and the sort of skills and knowledge they need to inculcate to ensure effective performance in all areas. The profiles would be useful not only in guiding pre-service teacher preparation, but also in providing a basis for on-going effective teacher professional development. The teacher profiles need to reflect the student learning objectives that schools are trying to achieve, and profession-wide understanding of what counts as accomplished teaching (OECD, 2006: 95). Deviating from such a framework would mean that teacher education institutions are not responsive to teachers' professional work. A strong collaborative partnership with various stakeholders including parents, teacher unions, employers, teacher education institutions and classroom practitioners will enhance the task of establishing such a constructive framework, which will help improve teacher quality and in turn, the delivery of primary education in the Pacific region.

Furthermore, to ease novice teachers' entry into the teaching profession, the employing authorities and individual schools could prepare special orientation and mentoring programmes to help these teachers in their job and to enable them to become successful teachers. Such programmes could be devised for all novice teachers, as most primary teachers are initially appointed on probation before they are absorbed into public service. Mentoring these teachers in a number of areas of their teaching and non-teaching responsibilities, such as those associated with the community domain, will enhance their performance in the different roles they would be expected to play later on their own. Such an intervention at the school level would greatly help in the transition of the neophyte teachers.

Teacher education institutions, then, should continue reviewing and revising their programmes to ensure the quality of the teachers supplied to schools. Similarly, any education reform initiative taken by the countries in the Pacific region should first aim to improve the quality of the teacher cadre. Implementation of international initiatives in education, such as Pacific

regional countries' growing commitment to the achievement of Educational for All (EFA) will, after all, rely on better qualified, competent and well motivated teachers at the primary school level.

Conclusion

Change in teachers' roles is inevitable. The Pacific region is not alone in this experience: the change literature demonstrates that this is a phenomenon common in most parts of the world. Societal, economic, cultural and political changes will continue to have enormous effects on education and in turn, on schools and teachers' work. The institutional education sector itself will have to respond proactively and positively to some of these changes, introducing suitable reforms and innovations to enable children to participate fully in social, economic and political life when they leave school. The implementation of these reforms and innovations, however, will require proper training in the formation of well-prepared teachers. Otherwise, beginning teachers – already perhaps struggling a little to find their feet in their new profession – may feel overwhelmed by the myriad of changes while at the same time coping with increasing demands and expectations in their work today and in the future. Teacher education providers in the Pacific region need to be more proactive, considering various developments, changes and influences on teachers' world of work and revising their programmes accordingly, to ensure that teachers are not sucked under in the maelstrom of work demands lying in wait for them. The work of the teachers is not confined just to the classroom or even just to the school domain, but extends beyond. Considering and incorporating roles associated with the community domain can raise the value of the teacher education programmes towards substantial long-term gains in schools' and countries' development in the Pacific region.

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