

Transformations from within: Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative. The development of a movement for social justice and equity

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The paper reports on an initiative undertaken by a group of Pacific educators – “insiders” who have undertaken various activities and work of embedding Indigenous graduate attributes into teacher education courses, in leadership training of young and emerging young Pacific leaders and in communities, research that takes into account indigenous knowledge systems. This is at the University of the South Pacific and a number of other universities and colleges of education in the region including Victoria University in NZ. The effort of the Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative (RPEIPP) hence provides the background to the development and implementation of holistic Indigenous graduate attributes. The approaches taken by the RPEIPP Pacific wide in the rethinking and redefining of education and other courses in schools as well as universities and colleges in the region, ensure that aspects of indigenous peoples cultures and related worldviews and life values and philosophies inform the work of educators. This is besides the normal provision of global knowledge, skills and values that dominate schooling and higher education in particular.

RPEIPP is highly transformative and with the assistance of NZAid, is almost totally internally driven, implemented and progressively evaluated. While the first ten years of the initiative focused on teacher education, leadership, research and publications, the future should perhaps move to other parts of the Pacific region, most notably Micronesia and the North Western Pacific. Another dimension could also engage in comparative studies or researches of systems and curricula.

Keywords: indigenous knowledge, indigenisation, Pacific worldviews, cultural competencies, indigenous empowerment, inclusive curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, Indigenous Pacific research frameworks.

RPEIPP is a movement that saw the development of a range of approaches to teaching, research, publications, symposia, conferences and workshops as well as in mentoring by a group of tertiary educators, largely “insiders”. The transformative initiative attempted to contextualise and infuse higher education offering in various ways in order to develop graduates into people who have skills, knowledge and values that enable them to excel globally but more important are capable of working among their own indigenous groups.

The Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative for Pacific Peoples by Pacific Peoples (RPEIPP) was borne out of the need to ensure indigenous and Pacific peoples increased ownership of the processes of education as well as to re-examine curriculum processes. This re-examination critiqued the relationship between Indigenous and other local Pacific cultures, teaching, curriculum and assessment. Other related dimensions of this work focused on research, publications, conferences, symposia, mentorship programs and leadership. This is to ensure there is increased achievement of self-sufficiency in terms of human development capacity, funding and the successful indigenising of education in the Pacific (Sanga, 2011, p.18). The project is long term and led by a small core of Pacific Islands’ leaders in education and has as its long-term goal the sustained development of capabilities of Pacific graduates and educators, by Pacific educators themselves. Funded by NZAID who, unlike what typically happens in such donor recipient relationship, has selected to take a ‘hands off approach’ to the funding. RPEIPP as a first and what has been considered by a number of evaluations as “best practice in donor behaviour” has as stated by evaluator Van Peer (2006):

The RPEIPP project is unique in that for the first time NZAID – and possibly any international development donor agency – has funded a development project initiated, designed, managed and self-evaluated by the recipients of international aid. Beyond providing financial support, NZAID has adopted a largely hands-off stance, demonstrating a more collaborative form of partnership (p.1).

Further project partners, Sanga and Nally (2002) said RPEIPP tries to address major education issues at a very strategic level. The focus is very much on effectiveness – creating change with the main aim of developing leadership. The development of RPEIPP is enhanced by partnerships like the PRIDE project which facilitated a lot of the work to re-examine and strengthen administrative structures of Pacific islands’ education systems.

This is happening in a 21st century global context where the USP has seen the opening of the JICA funded Pacific ITC centre, the planned development of the Confucius Centre, and the amalgamating of Pacific Studies to be a part of the Oceanic Centre for Arts and Culture and Pacific Studies. This has been seen by some scholars as part of an overall weakening of the Pacific Studies program – one of the few programs that builds on Pacific cultures, knowledge’s, epistemologies and Pacific life philosophies. The amalgamation of the Institute of Pacific Studies (IPS) home of also the IPS Press to be jointly a part of the Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture (OCAC), one could

argue signals a reversal of the trend to develop Pacific and especially indigenous thought, philosophies, and an agenda that was infused by it.

Indigenisation is a conversation between the past and present of what entails the totality of indigenous people's lives. I think of it as a conversation because indigenous Fijians, for example, who spend a lot of time debating and questioning elements of what constitutes indigeneity and what doesn't are pretty fluid in terms of how they for instance, have re-defined and redeveloped the necessary wealth and gifts of value that they take to ceremonial. Wang (2006) provides an interesting account of this interrogation of the term when he pointed out: "In general, globalization implies homogeneity, unity, and oneness while indigenization implies heterogeneity, multiplicity, and pluralism" (p.6). So as not to engage in essentialism, RPEIPP has done work at various categories and levels of society and critiqued hard its local systems just as it has critiqued outside models of education and ideas borrowed wholesale without contextual considerations and understandings.

On research for instance, indigenisation has seen frameworks¹ that work across the Pacific Islands, yet these too have been critiqued from within or by Pacific island scholars and commentators. Some authors and critiques as suggested by Wang (2006) have pointed out that indigenisation as opposed to or as a binary to global discourses on education might promote collective and present hegemonies over necessary individual development. To this end, RPEIPP in its processes has consistently over the years, done research work and conferences that targeted all levels of society. An example is the 2003 Rethinking National Education Directions Conference in Vanuatu where all segments of Vanuatu society – tribal chiefs, youth, women, NGOs, government representatives and others were represented, spoke in their different languages and designed for the next ten years of education. These ensured conferences like those held by RPEIPP were culturally competent and relevant as well as addressed the issue of the inclusion of "voices" often silenced in such conferences to be heard.

BEFORE THE 21ST CENTURY AND RPEIPP

There were other efforts to indigenise graduate training and education over the Pacific Islands before the 21st century and before RPEIPP which is a 21st century initiative. Some of these efforts were happening in other areas of university: for example, at USP in disciplines like geography and marine studies, Pacific Studies and in history and politics. Such efforts at USP were largely one off and not coordinated like RPEIPP.

There are many examples, one of which is the 1970 UNDP-USP curriculum project that was the first attempt to produce curriculum locally for PINs that were not only developed by local Pacific persons but also contextualised.

1 See for example, Fijian Vanua Research Framework- Nabobo-Baba, U (2008) "Decolonising Framings in Pacific Research: Indigenous Fijian Vanua Research as an Organic Response" *In Alter Native* (December, 08 Vol 4, No. 2. 2008. pg. 140-154 and Maua-Hodges, T. 2001. Tivaevae. Unpublished paper, Victoria University, Wellington.

There are other examples even outside education. For instance in theological education, there was the 1980's movement of contextualising theology² at the Pacific Theological College (PTC) called by some authors as Coconut Theology, others like Tuwere (1992) called it Vanua: A theology of Place. Thaman (2000) writes of another major effort to boost the indigenisation of higher education in the Pacific Islands and notes the following:

At a UNESCO sponsored seminar held in the Cook Islands in 1992³, participants from Pacific Island Nations (PIN), as well as representatives of the indigenous peoples of Australia and New Zealand, affirmed their desire to ensure that schooling in general, and the curriculum in particular, recognize and value the cultural milieu in which children are socialized. Disregard for this would further hinder their ability to benefit from schooling or develop positive cultural identities. It was also agreed that elements of Pacific indigenous cultures should be incorporated into the school curriculum. The seminar also acknowledged that there exists huge cultural gaps between the culture of formal education and those of the majority of school students, a factor that is increasingly being seen as a major contributor to teaching and learning difficulties (p. 52).

Five years later in 1997, in the training of teachers at the USP and elsewhere in the Pacific Islands region, a major goal of the UNESCO Chair in Pacific Education and Culture⁴ was to see the review and future planning and implementation of curricula at USP and elsewhere in the twelve countries it served in the region improved markedly in the area of the contextualisation of teaching and learning. This is to ensure graduates are sensitised to indigenous knowledges, philosophies, values and ideas of education. Together with this was the agenda to decolonise the curriculum and its processes as well as to critique inequalities and disparities within our Pacific societies hence the need for reform.

Another example the author was involved in 1992 was at the then Fiji College of Advanced Education now a part of the Fiji National University, where efforts were made in the School of Education to make the cultures of the students be a part of their curriculum, pedagogy and assessment processes. This is because of a concern of producing what some may be called the marginal man, Pacific Islanders who were neither native nor European.

2 Discussions on relevant Pacific theology began with the Pacific wide theological consultation held in Suva, Fiji on July 8-12, 1985, entitled, "Towards a Relevant Pacific Theology". Pacific Conference of Churches, *Towards a Relevant Pacific Theology*, Suva, Fiji: Lotu Pasifika productions, 1986 (v).

3 The conference proceedings were partly recorded in a small but important book: Teasdale, B. & Teasdale, J. (1992). *Voices in a Sea Shell*. Suva, Fiji: IPS.

4 Professor Konai Helu Thaman is Chair of Pacific Teacher Education and Culture based at USP. She is also one of the three main educational leaders and scholars that led the formation of RPEIPP. The other two are Drs Ana Taufe'ulungaki and Kabini Sanga.

The training of teachers

Assisting teachers create a more culturally inclusive learning environment is a major goal of the UNESCO Chair at the USP. After a major review of the teacher education curricula in seven regional training institutions in 1997/98, a series of Teacher Education Modules was developed with improved contextualisation of teaching and learning as its main aim. The Project also helped raise awareness among teacher educators in participating institutions about the importance of Pacific cultures in the education of teachers both as a pedagogical tool as well as an important topic of study. As well as these Modules, two new courses were introduced at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels aimed at raising teacher trainee's awareness of the link between culture teaching and learning and the issue of cultural gaps, and the role of teachers in bridging these. The UNESCO Chair together with staff and students collaborated to carry out research into Pacific indigenous educational ideas of several Pacific cultures, as a way of documenting and providing basic information about Pacific Knowledge Systems. *Educational Ideas from Oceania*, (Thaman, 2003; reprinted in 2009) is used as a student text at the School of Education at USP as well as in other training institutions in the region (Thaman, 2009, 4).

In a course called Education and Society⁵, the course objectives, content and workshops ensured that students would turn out one day as graduates strong in their understanding of histories, past as well as that of the future that they would have to help carve. In other words, what was attempted was to produce graduates who had attributes that could serve in both worlds - their Pacific Island communities and the modern world. This attempt to bring both global and local indigenous knowledges to the training and education of graduates is depicted here via the course picture of a course on Education and Society done by Ranbir Singh and Jennie Teasdale as can be seen on course booklets in Sociology of Education.

What happens is that course coordinators of sociology of education called Education and Society,⁶ re-oriented the course so students were studying about their cultures as well as others introduced to PINs.

THE STORY OF A MOVEMENT CALLED RPEIPP – ITS DEVELOPMENT IN THE DECADE 2001–2011

The rethinking Pacific Education Movement (RPEIPP) is a local indigenous response to decades - old discourse widely heard among the islands, in the literature by Pacific

5 See for a detailed write up of the course and a research study on it: Nabobo, U and Teasdale, J (1995). "Education for Cultural Identity. A Fiji Case Study" in *Prospects*. Vol.XXV.No.4. December, 1995.

6 For details of the course and a tracer study on its continued impacts for college graduates please see: Nabobo, U and Teasdale, J (1995).

scholars and others on the general failure of islanders to make it successfully in the schooling system at all levels up to university. In the Pacific Islands Nations (PINs) that RPEIPP worked with: Cook islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Tonga, Tokelau, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Marshall islands, and Samoa: like elsewhere (for example among Maori, see for example, Harris, 2009), native children have been positioned, named, branded and equated with either being too lazy to learn, or just simply deficient learners.

In the PINs islands served by RPEIPP specifically, the same sentiments by Harris among Maori children in New Zealand ring true as various authors and education commissions, in the Pacific Islands have highlighted and tried resolving over decades of schooling. Sanga (2011) summarises these well saying that education systems which are currently in place in countries of the Pacific Islands region were introduced to the islands by foreign (Western) Christian missionaries and colonial administrators which have remained after three to five decades of their attainment of political independence. These countries inherited educational systems have remained (Taufe'ulungaki, et al., 2002; Sanga, 2002) and are deeply ingrained as colonial legacies (Bray and Packer, 1993; Altbach and Kelly, 1978).

Numerous other Pacific Islands' authors have highlighted similar sentiments noting that these inherited systems are antithetical to local ways of knowing and education (for example, Thaman, 2005, Nabobo-Baba, 2006). To this end, a group of Pacific islands scholars got together in Fiji at the USP in 2001 to rethink and interrogate current systems of education in lieu of ensuring PINs children are affirmed and succeed in schools as well as university as graduates get the necessary attributes that will enable them to work, and be appropriate workers among their own peoples. So, in April 25-27, 2001, a Colloquium on Rethinking Pacific Islands Education was held at the University of the South Pacific's main Campus in Suva, Fiji and was subsequently called RPEIPP (Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative for Pacific Peoples by Pacific Peoples). This was funded by the NZODA and hosted by the Institute of Education (IOE) at the University of the South Pacific (USP) and Victoria University (VUW) of Wellington in New Zealand.

Subsequent to that was a Research conference on Pacific Education convened by Dr Eve Coxon of the Research Unit in Pacific Education (RUPE) in the School of Education at the University of Auckland in 2000. The RUPE Conference saw a number of Pacific Island Nations scholars questioning and evaluating the impact of development aid to islands' education systems. For example, a Solomon Islands Study titled "A Diarrhoea of Consultants: evaluating aid to Solomon Islands education by Eve Coxon and Unaisi Nabobo (2000) critiqued the heavy presence of aid personnel in what locals perceived to be a tired Department of Education where aid donor agendas were not only present in big numbers, but sometimes had conflicting agenda, and other times duplicating efforts hence wasting much needed resources.

Another major theme was the need for ownership of education and development processes by indigenous and Pacific peoples as well as the critique of borrowed models (curriculum, pedagogy and assessment – evaluation) by some scholars especially in teacher education and educational development. The other concern was that Pacific Islands' research was done without contextual considerations hence produced graduates who were not critical of status quo nor appropriate or affirming to local situations and cultures. This saw a marked increase in discourse on indigenisation of educational development in PINs as well as focus on areas such as leadership, teacher education, research in education and cultures as well as indigenous epistemologies and philosophies of education organic to the region.

The need for RPEIPP

Most Pacific Island Nations embraced formal education around the time missionaries arrived – a little over one century and half for some countries like Fiji. As a result, as Thaman (2009) had pointed out, education delivered through schools (I would add at all levels) was culturally undemocratic: that is, they did not take into consideration the way most Pacific people think, learn and communicate with one another. This she argues relates to the values that underpin the curriculum, the teaching methods most teachers use, and the way in which student learning is assessed and evaluated.

Earlier on Kabini Sanga (2000) asserted that schools in the PINs including universities, in a very minimal way, represent the cultures of their island communities as the officially sanctioned values are those of the school structure, curriculum and teaching profession, not cultures of the people to which the students belong. The same can be said of university and its spaces, Nabobo-Baba, Naisilisili, Bogitini, Baba, and Lingam (2012) spoke of the very need for universities, like the USP to constantly review its mission and vision to ensure it met the needs of Pacific peoples and their aspirations. For this reason, RPEIPP's agenda was presented to the Pacific Islands' Forum Ministers of Education in 2001 in Auckland, New Zealand earlier on in its inception as well as of late in 2010 to inform leaders and has been adopted by the Pacific Islands Forum Ministers in their the Pacific Regional Education Plan.

Higher education and universities in particular play an important role in shaping thinking destinies and practice among people. To this end Varghese says:

Universities remained central to the realm of ideas and ideologies that have decided the destinies of societies and nations. Their essential role has mainly been due to their capacity to generate, retain and transmit knowledge throughout generations. They also succeeded in preserving cultural values...responsible for nurturing the growth of knowledge, managing development, and for engineering social transformation (Varghese, 2009, p.8).

In line with Varghese's point and other global and local trends of thinking and education, the work done by RPEIPP, funded for a decade and continuing by NZODA, has just seen the completion of a decade of its work (2001-2011) and celebrated in an

evaluative conference in USP in December 5-9. The conference celebrated and took stock of its achievements and projected its futures. RPEIPP is part of a worldwide movement by indigenous peoples to reclaim and reorient education systems hence improve achievement and outcomes for their peoples. The RPEIPP has been working during the time of a number of similar initiatives on indigenous peoples including for example the COOLANGATTA STATEMENT of 1999.

Philosophy and Range of Approaches of the RPEIPP: efforts of indigenisation of Education and Development in a number of Pacific Islands Nations

The *Tree of Opportunity* encapsulates a new vision of education in the Pacific Islands that seeks to ensure education promotes the survival, sustainability and transformation of Pacific communities, environments, its peoples, cultures, languages and knowledges. These are done to ensure success and optimal performances of student that are aligned to multiple contexts in which Pacific peoples live in. “The primary goal of education, therefore is to ensure that all Pacific students are successful and that they all become fully participating members of the groups, societies and the global community” (Taufeulungaki, Pene, & Benson, 2002, p.3). RPEIPP ensures that education is contextualised at all levels of education including the preparation of graduates at university level.

In line with the vision, the basic principles of RPEIPP as reported by Sanga (2006, p.2) are:

- Leadership by Pacific peoples (regionally) and by nationals of Pacific countries where national activities are undertaken;
- Enhancement of the autonomy of Pacific education institutions/stakeholders and local/regional capacities;
- Responsiveness to Pacific education needs, priorities and aspirations;
- Facilitative engagement with Pacific education stakeholders; and
- Non-jurisdictional engagement with Pacific education stakeholders at national, regional and international levels.

RANGE OF APPROACHES REGION-WIDE

The RPEIPP as a movement or initiative does not initiate activities but responds to requests for support to activities by regional Pacific Islands nations or their institutions and communities. Major activities have included the hosting or co-hosting of national education, research, education curriculum, research, and culture or leadership conferences. There have also been sub-regional as well as regional and international conferences that RPEIPP has been involved in. There have also been trainings or development workshops on a number of key areas of education, research

and leadership. Sometimes RPEIPP has also worked together with other organisations and bodies to collectively promote shared philosophies and agenda.

Regional Conferences, Workshops and Symposia

There were eleven conferences and symposia done between 2001-2006 by RPEIPP. Some of these include the Rethinking Pacific education colloquium in 2001 in Suva, Fiji, rethinking education aid conference in Nadi, Fiji in 2003, Rethinking education in Micronesia conference in 2004 in Marshall Is, Pacific Association of Teacher Educators (PATE) conference on rethinking teacher education in Apia, Samoa – 2004, Rethinking Vanuatu Education National conference in Port Villa, 2002 and one in 2011 held in Suva was the conference on rethinking education to evaluate the movement's work for the decade it had existed. There were numerous other workshops and symposia on education throughout the islands including one in Pohnpei in 2004 and a Chamorro Language and Culture conference in Guam in 2006.

Besides conferences and symposia, RPEIPP has also impacted on other conferences, symposia and related activities even though it did not fund these directly. One such event was the establishment of the Fiji Institute of Indigenous Studies based at the Fijian Teachers Headquarters in Suva, Fiji. What the institute does is to encourage symposia, seminars, research and writing of Fijian history, knowledges and stories as well as to run research workshops and other workshops to enhance the capacities of indigenous personnel to do research and writing among their own tribes and peoples. Under present circumstances, such activities have progressed slowly but steadily and are supported by personnel like Professor Thaman, amongst others from RPEIPP to assist its efforts from time to time.

Facilitating Leadership Training and Research

As mentioned earlier, RPEIPP and its core group of personnel or scholars have conducted numerous workshops and training on research as well as leadership to benefit graduates as well as members of the community and other bodies. Sometimes such effort are not immediately on the agenda by RPEIPP to fund, however scholars have participated in much more than what RPEIPP would have itself admit or bargained for. Another one of such training infused by RPEIPP was the research training conducted by the author on the request of the Fijian government to its provincial researchers in Vanua Levu, Fiji. This was done together with the Department of culture and heritage and co-sponsored/hosted by USP's Labasa Campus in 2008. The Labasa research workshop in the Takia Hotel, Labasa, 2008 was on Living Human Treasures as well as intangible cultures attended by representatives from the three provinces of Cakaudrove, Bua and Macuata. The Levuka World Heritage Workshop (one week) was attended by about 300 representatives of all the tribes in the island of Ovalau.

In terms of leadership, RPEIPP has established a network of Pacific leaders called Leadership Pacific that is a movement of new generation of leaders who practice,

study and teach leadership to enhance leadership capacity in Pacific communities. The aim of Leadership Pacific is to:

Foster ethical leadership in individuals, organisations and communities in the Pacific;
Promote understanding of leadership knowledge and practices, starting with context first;

Serve as a network for sharing of ideas, research and practices about Pacific leadership;

Strengthen the links and relationships between those who study and those who practice (Pacific leadership. (<http://www.leadershippacific.org/>, p1)

This is besides RPEIPP holding leadership workshops among community and other leaders like women for example the one in the picture below of 2006.



Figure 1. Pacific Women and Leadership at Local Governance Level: course offered by the Secretariat of Pacific Community and School of Education/IOE, The University of the South Pacific. 2006. Course Conveners: Una Nabobo-Baba, Seuula Johanson-Fua & Stanley Houma- (workshop modules infused by RPEIPP philosophy). Another one held in 2010 served the chiefs in Cakaudrove, Fiji, on their invitation which involved a number of USP personnel and the workshop infused by RPEIPP philosophies.

When faculty are involved this way, graduates learn first-hand about ways of engagement in the community to support chiefs and indigenous development not just as something theoretical in books but actual engagements in the field or in context. Such experiences are shared with graduates and infuse the thinking behind the delivery of courses teacher trainees and researchers undertake at USP.

The idea of producing graduates with skills that enable them to work well with indigenous peoples means that Universities and colleges of education provide real experiences and publish works that highlight ideas pertaining to these engagements. A number of research activities have been conducted by RPEIPP members over the decade that reflect this.

Publications of several education and related books as generated by RPEIPP activities

Another dimension of RPEIPP's work is to do with publications. A good deal of literature has been produced as the need for indigenising of curricula needs to go hand in hand with the production of appropriate resources. Some of these include local researched pieces and texts that are needed for teaching.

Among the books are: *Tree of Opportunity* (Taufe'ulungaki et al, 2002), *Rethinking Vanuatu Education Together* (Sanga et al, 2004), *Rethinking Aid Relationships in Pacific Education*,⁷ *International Aid Impacts on Pacific Education* (Sanga & Taufe'ulungaki, 2005), *Ta Kupesi* (2006). Other books include three volumes of Books on Education funded by JICA⁸, a book on *Knowing and learning: A Fijian Approach* (Nabobo-Baba, 2006), and lately a book on rural and remote schools in Udu, *Rural and Remote Schools in Udu, Fiji-Vanua, Indigenous Knowledge, Development and Professional Support for Teachers and Education* (Nabobo et al, 2012). The Udu book highlights, among other things, how graduates teaching in these schools apply their learning in such indigenous contexts. The book also highlights indigenous development via indigenous processes of land gifting and kinship relationships. There are a number of other books that have not been mentioned here that also attempt to capture, document as well as critique indigenous knowledge, pedagogies, epistemologies and ideas of education and research. This is all in the effort to indigenise graduate attributes besides the global knowledge repertoire they are already receiving in University.

7 Sanga, K; Hall, C; Chu, C; Crowl, L. (2004). (Eds). *Re-thinking Vanuatu aid relationships in Pacific education*. Wellington: He Parekerekere & Institute of Education, Victoria University of Wellington.

8 Two of which are texts and one is an annotated bibliography by Paserio Furivai of Rotuma, Fiji. The texts are: Nabobo-Baba, U; Koyavakauta, F and Teaero, T (ed) (2010) *Education for Sustainable Development-Continuity and Survival in the Pacific*. (Vol 1). UNESCO/ACCU and SOE, USP. And Koyavakauta, F, Nabobo-Baba, U; Teaero, T (ed) (2010) *Education for Sustainable Development –Pacific Stories of Sustainable Living*. (Vol 2) Pacific stories about Education for Sustainable Development. UNESCO/ACCU and School of Education, USP, Suva.

Other Approaches – Within Institutions: Research, Curriculum, pedagogy and assessment

i). Teachers and Teacher Education

As part of the activity of the UNESCO Chair of teacher education and culture at USP, Professor Konai Helu Thaman, together with faculty and students at USP and across a number of institutions in the Pacific Islands, research was carried out to document indigenous and local ideas about Pacific knowledge systems (Thaman, 2003; 2009). Like these books, others mentioned already and more have been produced as well such as *Ta Kupesi*⁹ and *Pacific Educational Journeys*¹⁰; all these contribute to the pool of local and indigenous knowledge and philosophies of education and stories those students at University use.

ii). Use of Indigenous metaphors and cultural symbolism to increase relatedness and affirmation of Pacific students cultures and backgrounds

Part of the work of RPEIPP is to encourage the promotion of indigenous knowledges, ways of knowing and thinking styles of Pacific peoples. As a result of this, a number of works have emerged using indigenous metaphors to articulate local ideas, actions, thinking and knowledge patterns.

Sanga (2011) examines selected examples of educational metaphors from Tonga, Fiji, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands as reflective of the emerging educational re-thinking by indigenous Pacific islanders to show that they are different from those used in Anglo-American systems as they are contextual and have value implications. Two of these as shown pictorially here are the Iora framework by Stanley Houma on Leadership and the Haus Framework by Daudau (in Sanga, 2011).

iii). Research: decolonising pacific research and introduction of indigenous & other local Pacific frameworks

Another result of the RPEIPP has been the emergence of Indigenous Pacific Research methodologies. Some of the thinking from the emergence of these stems from work among Maori in New Zealand in terms of Kaupapa Maori Research Framework (see Smith, 1999). The work on Vanua Research Framework is an example (Nabobo-Baba, 2008). Grant and Giddings (2002) have highlighted the importance of including indigenous paradigms and methodologies in research to affirm and enhance development and other questions indigenous peoples have of their education and life.

9 The Tongan Educational Research book is easy to follow and has guided many graduate students in trying to demystify research in their courses. Ed by, Maka, L.; Johansson-Fua, S. & Pene, F. (2006). (Eds.). *Ta Kupesi: Emerging Themes & Methodologies from Educational Research in Tonga*.

10 Nabobo-Baba, U; Houma, S & Veramu, J. (2008) (Eds.). *Pacific Educational Journeys* (eds). FIJI, Suva, USP: School of Education/Lautoka Campus.

Thaman (2009, p.5) said this of the role of research in indigenising the academy:

Research is an important consideration in any attempt to make teaching and learning more culturally inclusive in the Pacific. Research has always been a challenge to Pacific educators as up until recently; there was no serious challenging of the unilateral assumptions of a universal model of research, with the Academy being the central authority in knowledge production. A few Pacific graduates had realized that some European-derived systems and frameworks of research did not have the concepts by which their experiences and realities could be appropriately represented, named, described and understood. Moreover, they found that if their (indigenous) knowledge was included in their coursework, it tended to occupy a marginal position compared to those associated with Western or Global knowledge.

The RPEIPP has seen a number of research frameworks as well as introduced and now used by researchers all over the Pacific and outside. Thaman (2009) again outlines and details a number of these and include: Kakala (Thaman, 1992); Fa'afaletui (Tamasese et al, 1997); Kurakaupapa Maori (Smith, 1999); Tivaevae (Maua-Hodges, 2000); and Vanua (Nabobo-Baba, 2006).

CONCLUSION

The paper reported on the RPEIPP initiative that addressed in part the need for graduates acquiring appropriate skills – both global and indigenous – in order for them to work well among their people. The indigenisation of curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment processes has been addressed by RPEIPP in a number of ways as mentioned in the paper. The emerging group of educators and scholars who work behind the RPEIPP visualize a future where indigenous knowledge, philosophies, values and cultures of Pacific peoples will infuse what students learn at all levels of education, university included. Resource production through publications, e-networks, conferences, symposia, national advisories, research training and leadership training has all been done as part of RPEIPP. The emotional toll of the work stems from the fact that the challenges of new ideas, reforms and new ways of doing things at best are treated with disdain by hegemonic forces that dominate academia and in worse times are just totally written off as racist or even having no philosophical basis.

All reform agenda face numerous challenges and difficulties. RPEIPP has had its fair share. Whatever the verdict is by those who pass judgments on reforms and initiatives such as RPEIPP, the truth is, there is no other time in the islands' formal educational history where so much was done, produced and led by a group of Pacific scholars – “insiders” and owned by people themselves like what has been seen via RPEIPP (van Peer, 2006). The idea and hope is that in taking more and more control of education directions, assisted heavily by like thinking colleagues and organisations like NZAID and JICA, Pacific peoples may achieve more and begin to determine some of the directions and outcomes of their education processes. For graduates, what this would mean is that they have the appropriate skills both global and local to deliver to their people. A localised initiative like RPEIPP could not do its work without the help and

assistance of all those who call the Pacific home and or care deeply about its peoples. Future directions would have to include more involvement of the Northern Pacific nations of Micronesia.

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