

EDITORIAL:

Tensions between policy and practice: Learning how to 'edgewalk'

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The core mission of OCIES is threefold: encourage collaboration between those concerned with comparative and international education in the Oceanic region; foster a high standard in the teaching and study of comparative and international education at all levels; facilitate the dissemination of knowledge about research and practice in comparative and international education. Our focus is to build a relational way of working to embrace our diversity, encourage equity and provide inclusive support to emerging scholars. The aim is to remain conscious of achieving our goals through authentic connection and collaboration with each other in ways that value who we are and respect our diverse range of lived experiences and world views. The process of producing this Special Issue of IEJ: CP, a collection from the Society's 2021 annual conference, embodies this way of working. As a team of six, we worked collaboratively with the contributing authors to produce a high-quality publication and ensure the process was pedagogically sound and affirming for everyone.

In 2021, as the impact of COVID continued to ensure all travel plans were tentative, especially travel that crossed international borders, we once again conducted our annual conference in a virtual space. The conference was initially planned as a collaborative event involving four universities hosting face-to-face hubs and incorporating virtually accessible sessions. These universities were the Fiji National University (FNU), the University of Melbourne, Monash University and Waikato University. Although we planned to have three hubs geographically spread across our region (Fiji, Aotearoa-New Zealand, and Australia), with continued restrictions on movement and social gatherings, only a small Melbourne hub could proceed. After a lengthy lockdown in Melbourne, we were fortunate to hold this event and interact in person again as a community. We would like to acknowledge and express our gratitude for the work of all involved in enabling the conference to go ahead despite the challenging circumstances.

The focus of the 01–03 December 2021 OCIES Conference was *Strengthening, Expanding and Reimagining Connections for and through Education*. The Fiji University also chose a sub-theme to guide their contributions, *Post-COVID-19 Educational Challenges for The Global South: Access to Quality, Safe and Equitable (Online) Learning Experiences*. The New and Emerging Researchers of OCIES (NERO) community delivered a half-day pre-conference workshop that provided opportunities to explore approaches to research design, researcher positionality and, with the journal Editor and team members, the publication process and diversity, equity and inclusion in education research.

The 2021 conference explored the role of education in re(creating) positive forms of coexistence and interconnectedness and what re(creating) of education spaces needs to occur to enable this. It provided a much-needed opportunity to explore the multi-faceted

dimensions of questions of coexistence and connectedness in education spaces and as a scholarly society. Over the two-day event, we featured three keynote speakers: Professor Carl Mika (University of Canterbury), *Being and Convergence Within Wā: Excessive and Stupendous Interconnection*; Professor Marcia McKenzie (University of Melbourne), *Global Studies and Climate Change Education Policy*; and Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba (FNU), *Clarion Call for New Values and New Order: Equitable Opportunities in Pacific Education—Lessons from Pacific Indigenous Philosophy, Ecological Justice and Relationality*. There were 30 sessions comprising 78 presentations and 172 presenters (including over 50 from FNU). It was pleasing to note the attendance of many practising teachers and beginning researchers from FNU; many also presented virtually and discussed the impact of COVID-19 on Fijian teachers and classrooms.

As a new initiative in response to our online mode for the 2021 conference, the executive committee made significant changes to the scholarship awards that OCIES typically offers for emerging scholars to attend the conference each year. Rather than provide the financial support required for travel, as has been customary, we offered a structured mentoring program to support five new and emerging researchers to turn their presentations into publishable papers. The scholarship winners worked with Miriam Ham and Martyn Reynolds as their mentors to craft and shape their work into a draft and then polished paper. The group met monthly from December to April, each time delighted at the improvements made to the ‘next draft’. Through this process, participants learned the art of writing and gained experience, giving feedback and support to each other through editing and drafting each other’s work. The collaborative, relational space we created was supportive and challenging as we grappled with the varied topics and writing styles and faced the challenge of providing constructive advice, particularly when the drafts we were looking at were in their initial stages. We are pleased to say that four of the five scholarship awardees successfully published a paper based on their presentations at the conference, three of which are included in this edition.

SUMMARY OF SPECIAL EDITION

The authors in this Special Edition are primarily students who are part of the New and Emerging Researchers of the OCIES (NERO) group. We are proud that their doctoral and post-doctoral research makes up a significant proportion of the edition. We also have contributions from experienced scholars working in teams and some writing with their students. Several themes are evident in the collection of papers, but the overarching thread throughout is *the tension between policy and practice*. Differing expectations of communities, lack of shared understandings and disconnects between policy prescriptions and practice realities significantly impact how we, as educators and researchers, engage with our contexts and participants. Being mindful of these differences and the tensions they cause gives rise to the need for us as readers to listen and learn. In these moments, we need to ask questions, consider perspectives deeply, and then flexibly respond to issues as they arise to journey with the communities we engage with.

We begin this journey through tensions with the reflective work of Kabini Sanga, Johansson-Fua, Martyn Reynolds, David Fa’avae, Richard Robyns, Grace Rohana, Graham Hiele, Danny Jim, Loretta Case and Demtria Malachi. Their article was conceptualised and drawn from a *tok stori* at last year’s (2021) conference. The team of experienced researchers and leaders consider what leadership looks like in the day-to-day life of Pacific Island contexts. The article outlines the tensions leaders face in walking

between the various culturally inscribed positions they inhabit across different spheres of community life.

The second article, contributed by Melissa Chin, Victoria Beckworth, Ben Levy, Swati Gulati, Alea Macam, Tanya Saxena and Dwi Purwestri Sri Suwarningsih, uses vignettes of their personal experiences as doctoral students to critically reflect on the challenges and opportunities arising from their positioning as researchers within their doctoral research projects. Their reflections reveal the differing aspects of positioning and point to a firm conclusion of the importance of a researcher's explicit and critical examination of the dynamics of positioning in research. The term 'edgewalk' that is part of the title for this editorial is a reference to this article.

The third article follows a similar vein, also considering notions of positioning and relationships of power, but in the context of communities of practice in schools. The authors Lindsay Fish, Maggie Flavell and Emma Cunningham expose the embedded practice of silencing that can occur due to unexamined systems and assumptions of communication between schools and families despite 'best intentions' to be inclusive. Their article takes an innovative approach, presenting fictionalised vignettes that draw us into commonly experienced 'goings-on' in school systems. They demonstrate how schools and educators can learn from Indigenous knowledges and relational practices when engaging with families and the community. By engaging in these approaches, the authors suggest schools can foster greater equity and communality between teachers and families for the benefit of students.

The next two articles in this Special Issue discuss the impact of government lockdowns in response to the COVID-19 pandemic on university students' learning. Jeremy Dorovolomo, Siuta La'aupea'alu, Loriza Rafiq, Patricia Rodie and Billy Fito'o utilised Pacific Indigenous methodologies of *tok stori* and *talanoa* to learn from students in Fiji and Aotearoa-New Zealand about their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. The article highlights tensions experienced between the needs of university students during pandemic-induced 'lockdowns' and the practices of university staff and communities during the 'lockdowns'. The article identifies the value of social capital for mitigating the potential negative impact on students' well-being and valued strategies for strengthening students' social capital. Focusing more on the opportunities and challenges of transitioning to online learning, Fereal Ibrahim, Sangeeta Nath, Sofia Ali and Naqsheema Ali's article reports on research into the experiences of in-service teachers undertaking tertiary study at the FNU during pandemic lockdowns in Fiji. Ibrahim and colleagues' research highlights the diversity of student experience and associated preferences for online learning modalities. The articles from Ibrahim and colleagues, and Dorovolomo and colleagues demonstrate the value of rapid, practice-focused research undertaken by teacher educators, where findings can directly inform practice and university policy. Both articles conclude with recommendations for how universities can plan for and respond to mitigate the adverse impacts of rapid change. Their findings are useful suggestions for practice for university systems and educators.

The final three articles, drawn from the 2021 conference, deal directly with tensions between education policy and the practice of teachers and educators working in schools. Victoria Beckwith examines how unclear definitions of concepts, such as global citizenship, impact how such concepts are communicated in policy, with ramifications for curriculum and pedagogy. After discussing the historical and theoretical debates about the definition of global citizenship, Beckwith narrows the focus to the New Zealand

context to examine the ramifications on practice. Alea Macam similarly interrogates the ideologies underlying the introduction of professional teacher standards in the education system of the Philippines. Macam's analysis of two key policy frameworks demonstrates the importance of unpacking the values and assumptions carried within policy reforms and considering how these may (and do) shape teacher subjectivities and practices within local contexts.

The final paper in this Special Issue takes us to Bhutan, where Jobden Tobden and Miriam Ham share Tobden's research, undertaken with policymakers, which reveals how delays in educational policy reform have had a significant negative impact on the potential for education to contribute to the nation's Gross National Happiness agenda.

In this issue, we also have a Community Voices piece that, although not presented at the 2021 conference, fits with the thread of tensions between policy and practice experienced by educators across the globe. The piece by Robert Mizzi outlines recommendations for creating inclusive workplaces for LGBTQ international educators. The paper is based on the voices of teachers who have experience working in international contexts that do not value diverse identities. Their recommendations are practical and responsive to the tensions experienced by the educators, the schools and their leadership, and the institutions' cultures.

This issue also features three Book Reviews, by Niranjana Casinader, Marie Quinn, Preedha R. Govindasamy and Philip Wing Keung Chan, on recently published texts in CIE.

While diverse in topic, overall, the collection of articles for this Special Issue offers a rich representation of the 2021 conference theme and the diversity of OCIES and Comparative and International Education as a discipline. The Special Issue demonstrates how CIE research enables, and indeed requires, continual investment in relational connections and engagement across countries among emerging researchers through Indigenous dialogic methodologies and with teachers, students, policymakers, researchers, authors and editors.



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The context behind the context: A Pacific leadership research *tok stori*

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This article takes a relational approach to Pacific leadership by presenting three layers of discussion. First, we provide findings from our research team members about the relationships between the Pacific community and school leaders' understandings of leadership. We include accounts of how leaders negotiate in context between forms of leadership from different domains. Second, we reflexively probe ideas of relationality, distance and closeness in leadership research by considering researchers' experiences of the research process. Third, we show how Indigenous oracles such as tok stori can provide space and opportunity to rethink leadership as the ethical negotiation of positionality tensions. The overall findings centre relationships as a key concern of leadership practice and research, and discussion of Pacific-origin ideas of leadership, activities where the relational context behind the context is ignored at one's peril.

Keywords: leadership, education, customary/kastom, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Marshall Islands

INTRODUCTION

Hallinger and Truong (2016) observe that 'relational theories of leadership have gained increased traction in the global discourse in education' (p. 677). Such traction is a welcome development for the Pacific region, where many relational ontologies are in place (Koya-

The context behind the context

Vaka'uta, 2017; Matapo, 2021; Sanga & Reynolds, 2019). Relational ontologies support leadership to be understood as reciprocal relationships of influence (McLeod, 2008) and as service to the community (Sanga, Johannson-Fua, et al., 2020), in education (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2014) as elsewhere. By contrast, positional leadership is where leadership legitimacy derives from a position in a hierarchy to which a person is appointed – such as a job as a head teacher in a school. Such leadership tends to be uni-directional (top-down) and can have paternalistic tendencies (Sanders, 2014).

Education as an institution introduced under Western influence in the Pacific is a relational matter, integrated into webs of relationships in Pacific societies. Such integrations can be seen physically – schools are frequently built on sites determined by negotiations with local landowners – and socially – schools are often staffed by people related to the communities they serve. Because of that integration, more than one understanding of what leadership is or could be can be in place. For example, imported positional structures and the appointment protocols that accompany them may stress positional leadership as an individual concern; village-centred forms of leadership may stress communality.

Acknowledging this complexity, this article discusses the relationships between Western leadership theories and the understanding of leadership by communities in the Solomon Islands, Tonga and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI). The data include collective knowledge sharing gathered in the field and subsequent material iteratively developed through exploration of the field data during a conference session. Like all research reports, the scope of this paper is context bound, representing our attention to context in time and space and translated through relationships and dialogue.

The paper takes a layered approach. The first layer centres on fieldwork information gifted by school and community leaders in the three Pacific jurisdictions. The aims of this layer include presenting research findings about school leaders' understandings of leadership as an institutional practice as it is negotiated in community contexts. The knowledge garnered for this layer derives from oral encounters between school leaders and researchers, activities covered by both locally framed and institutionally framed ethics, the latter deriving from University of the South Pacific (USP) protocols.

We take a reflexive turn in the second layer and pay attention to learning about and caring for knowledge gained through research activities, including those featured in the first layer of relationality and distance in leadership research. The reflections presented in this layer are the expressions of researchers offered in a conference session. In the third layer, we discuss the value of exploratory talk about research knowledge and show how Indigenous oracles, such as *tok stori* (Sanga & Reynolds, 2020), a Melanesian orality, can provide space and opportunity to rethink leadership. The data for this tri-partite exploration – research knowledge, reflexive attention to research practice, and exploration of orality – is drawn from a *tok stori* session within the 2021 OCIES Conference programme. The *tok stori* was structured around school leadership research enabled by the Development Leadership Program (DLP) and funded by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

During the conference *tok stori* session, questions regarding authority were asked: Who holds control in *tok stori*? Who can be a legitimate convenor of a *tok stori*? Why or when do people become legitimate in this context? The creative potential of this line of questioning subsequently emerged in the form of attention to the 'context behind the context' (Sanga, cited in Airini et al., 2010, p. 11); that is, what lies behind what can be seen in terms of

relationships, experiences, understandings and so on. We thank the questioner for starting a journey that has led to the article as it stands today.

THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

Our field research aimed to improve our knowledge of how leadership is understood in different Pacific cultural contexts, particularly, for this research, how school leaders and Indigenous communities across three Pacific nations view leadership. Our assumption was that, within Pacific societies, there are multiple domains relevant to how people live, relate and lead.

Sanga (2009) notes that, in the Melanesian mind, there are three 'masters': culture (or *kastom*), church and formalised institutions (including education). 'Each domain is legitimate, demands allegiance, and competes for loyalty with the others' (Sanga & Reynolds, 2019, p. 11). Understanding how various domains operate within the holism of a specific Pacific society is relevant to an area such as school leadership because of how education is contextually embedded. One value of research into this area stems from how agencies, such as donors and governments, often seek to strengthen education by attending to leadership. Sanga explains that, for improvement in this area, '[t]he need is for programme designers to appreciate better, the tensions between understanding of roles, rules and knowledge in [the various] domain[s]' (Sanga, 2009, p. 1). One of the overall aims of this paper's field research is to seek knowledge to enable deep contextualisation, so that intervention outcomes are effective and worthwhile to those on the ground. This is because contextualisation is the key to a good 'fit' between the intent and outcomes of leadership development programmes. In Pacific leadership research, a relevant orality or Indigenous conversational mode (Kovach, 2010) may be useful to frame the kinds of storying that can assist the development and collection of contextual knowledge (Sanga, Reynolds, Houma et al., 2021). The research approach adopted in our fieldwork was to investigate cross-domain relationships between leadership ideas through appropriate oracles. In Tonga, the team applied *talanoa* (Fa'avae et al., 2016); in Marshall Islands, *bwebwenato* (Jim et al., 2021); and in Solomon Islands, *tok stori* (Sanga et al., 2018). Because *tok stori* was also the mode named for the 2021 OCIES conference session '*Leadership negotiations in education: Stories from Oceania*', we offer a summary of the form here.

Tok stori

Tok stori is a Melanesian orality through which Melanesian connectedness is operationalised. As an everyday activity, *tok stori* shapes discursive group communication. It involves negotiation in the social world so that relationality, time, space and information come together to form a way of being (Sanga & Reynolds, 2021). *Tok stori* is habitually used to share what is known (Vella & Maebuta, 2018), is legitimised by its longevity and ubiquity (Brigg et al., 2015) and is an oral activity for problem-solving within *kastom* parameters (Evans et al., 2010).

A well-configured *tok stori* is an orally mediated relational activity in which meaning is located in narratives rather than understood strategically (Sanga, 2017). In *tok stori*, speakers and listeners construct a shared reality in a safe space attuned to relational harmony (Sanga, Reynolds, Houma, et al., 2021). Fluid power dynamics are an aspect of *tok stori* (Davidson, 2012; Fasavalu & Reynolds, 2019; Sanga et al., 2018). Speakers and their stories do not compete but contribute to mutual learning. Emotion as an aspect of truth-telling is integral to *tok stori* (Andersen, 2017) because each contribution is personally positioned. Listeners are expected to respond accordingly, although this can be with silence, gesture or words.

In research contexts, *tok stori* has been used in several ways: for critical reflection in adult education (Evans et al., 2010; Honan et al., 2012); as *toktok* in programme evaluation (Joskin, 2013); in the evaluation of literacy initiatives (Paulsen & Spratt, 2020); to investigate relational positionality (Fasavalu & Reynolds, 2019); as pedagogy in leadership development (Sanga, Maebuta, et al., 2020); and in articulating land rights (Stead, 2013). In the digital mode, as a way of understanding and practising communication in virtual environments, including through platforms such as video links, *tok stori* has been used to investigate ethics (Iromea & Reynolds, 2021), relationality (Sanga, Reynolds, Ormond, et al., 2021), oral literature, and leadership (Sanga, Johansson-Fua, et al., 2021).

The *tok stori* sessions central to this paper progressed through a shared video link that provided the platform for the presentation and discursive exploration of leadership research.

THE OCIES 2021 CONFERENCE TOK STORI

The OCIES 2021 conference *tok stori* was an invitation for researchers and other conference session participants to share their contextual expertise, probe that of others and weave a joint *tok stori* of leadership, research and learning. The session was intended to combine dissemination with new discursive knowledge generation. The narrative began with scene setting, progressed to school leadership research, moved on to dialogue about research as an activity and closed with a summary. The sections in this article largely follow that order; however, participants' offerings are sequenced using a thematic approach to acknowledge the weaving in *tok stori* in which recursive expression and thematic iteration are often aspects of exploration.

We thank conference session participants for agreeing to gift their comments to the scholarship as reciprocation for the gift of the field data. The session was recorded and transcribed, and contributions were thematically coded. We respect conference session participants' sanctity through anonymity. At the same time, we acknowledge the significance of individual experiences and backgrounds as context to contributions. To focus on the woven *stori* rather than the storytellers, categoric and relational information about speakers, such as gender and ethnicity, is included only when directly relevant to cited comments.

Layer #1: Leadership information gifted by school and community leaders

The *tok stori* was framed at the outset by the notion of the various domains present in Pacific societies. Education in the form of schooling sits in the institutional domain, while community leadership draws from *kastom* or the customary domain. The *tok stori* reveals how conceptions of leadership straddle domains. This line of argument can be elaborated by considering the community origins of school leaders' understandings of leadership, the embeddedness of school leaders in communities and the contextual nature of negotiations between school leaders and community leadership.

The community origins of school leaders' understandings of leadership

Four examples of the influence of *kastom* (customary) and church domains on school leaders' understandings of leadership can be given from the *tok stori*. These involve relational and ethical socialisation, the location of leadership in space and time and the usefulness of metaphors to understand flows of influence. Examples are variously drawn from the Solomon Islands, Tongan and RMI research arms as reported from the field to the conference *tok stori* by members of each research team.

Socialisation: Relational cohesion

In the *tok stori*, researchers explained that Solomon Islands school leaders recognise a role that demands they 'organise teachers and students and work together with members of the

community to implement programmes that will support and develop teaching and learning'. Researchers summarised field-based *tok stori* school leaders' recollections of their leadership socialisation. These focussed on the ways that *kastom* leadership informs school leadership. In the case of one leader, this involved:

Learning for my family . . . giving, caring and sharing, building good relationships with other leaders and people in the community, organising programmes that bring people together to promote peace and harmony, planning and working . . . to meet expectations of the community.

Contextual results of this understanding of leadership as described by the school leader and summarised by the research team member include that leader:

[H]as mentored her staff . . . worked to build good relationship with parents . . . talked with parents for them to send their children to school, and more so, offered to take care of children after classes for busy adults.

In this *kastom*-origin, community-focused understanding of school leadership, the significance of cohesion provokes the organisation of social activities. These provide opportunities for relationships to develop or be renewed. The school leader cares for relationships in education and the community setting while simultaneously downplaying the significance of domain boundaries – in this case the boundaries of the school. Staff, as members of the school community, are gifted time by the school leader through mentoring; the gift of 'personal' time by the school leader shows her exercising care for the broader community by offering needed childcare regardless of school hours. This *stori* suggests that when influenced by *kastom*, the focus of leadership in the institutional domain is relational, external to the leader, and not fixed within institutional boundaries but extends to relationships beyond the school.

Socialisation: Ethics

For school leaders in the Solomon Islands, socialisation into leadership ethics occurs in the *kastom* and church domains. In the *tok stori*, researchers that reported the Solomon Islands school leaders' understandings of leadership often reference *kastom* and church-derived ethics. For example:

[Leaders] rely on what they have been groomed in—what they have learned in terms of important qualities and values . . . including being honest and fair, delegation of duties, trust and collaboration. . . . These cultural practices and values are what they brought with them to the vocation. Many rely on Christian principles as well . . . in terms of leading and managing schools.

Values from *kastom* and church domains travel with the Solomon Islands school leaders to underpin thinking and inspire practice in their school. The explanation of one school leader given to the researchers captures the ethical element well:

My upbringing in the church environment influences me to do things in a more God-fearing way.

To be God-fearing is to act in accordance with a moral code that transcends institutional boundaries so that values transmitted by socialisation in church apply to school leadership practice. The social harmony encouraged by the ethic of love within Christian ethics also sits well with the focus on relational cohesion promoted in *kastom* leadership. Consequently, school leadership has reference points and significance in spiritual and cultural terms as well as in social and physical contexts.

Time and space

Cross-domain influences on educational leadership were also revealed to the *tok stori* by researchers from Tonga. A central concept underpinning Tongan leadership, *fatongia* (duty/obligation) (see, e.g., Tofuaipangai & Camilleri, 2016), informs Tongan school leaders' understandings of leadership. This element of the *tok stori* extends the discussion of inter-domain leadership by reference to time and space.

As explained by a researcher from the Tongan arm of the research, where cultural origins such as *fatongia* are involved, school leadership is:

[N]ot necessarily tied to qualifications but is tied to relational aspects and values . . . [It is] tied to commitment to work . . . deep commitment to your community.

Although it can be translated as 'obligation', 'For the receiver, obligation is not about coercion, lack of choice or mandatory behaviour; it is a gift, a pleasure, not a burden' (Tofuaipangai & Camilleri, 2016, p. 61).

Obligation is a relational matter that implies a giver, a recipient and a relational state redolent of the gift. In the *tok stori*, researchers revealed how leadership as *fatongia* transcends the here and now.

Fatongia . . . is important as part of leadership . . . there is a sense in which it is inherited . . . someone is there before you and you are only there temporarily, and somebody is going to come after you. Also . . . stewardship—you are looking after this in your time. This is linked again to the influence of elders, and mentoring leaders.

When understood as *fatongia*, leadership is framed inter-generationally because school leaders recognise a responsibility to the past. Such responsibility raises the stakes for their leadership while assuring them of the value of their contribution. The notion of stewardship also indicates that the roles and relationships associated with school leadership are entrusted to leaders by the community as an opportunity to contribute to constructing the future. Thus, leadership is a matter of legacy as well as inheritance. School leadership informed by community understandings in this way transcends the present space and time. It takes place in:

[A] complex, messy, negotiable space linked to the past with our ancestors, the land and the people we have come from . . . as well as linking to the future, our children.

Metaphor

Another way of approaching the relationships between leadership in institutional and other domains was contributed to the *tok stori* from the RMI part of the research. This involved unpacking the cultural references of *kajoor wōt wōr* and *wōdde jeppel*, which refer to collaboration or, as explained by a Marshallese researcher, 'the Marshallese context of community responsibility towards student learning'. In the *tok stori*, this concept shows how metaphor is helpful when approaching the influence of the traditional domain on the institutional domain. The researcher, also a member of RMI communities, explained:

We are using this concept as very important when we are dealing with both community leaders and the school leaders. We can think of when we are building a canoe and house building. Every time that the community is doing this kind of task, it involves all the people in the community. The whole clan . . . And this relates to how we are delivering education to the children in the community. And in our school system today, the concept of no child left behind also requires the whole community's effort in raising and educating a child.

This *tok stori* contribution shows how metaphors of customary communal practice are valuable for understanding the influence of tradition on leadership in the institutional domain. The metaphors show that traditional Marshallese leadership is centred on the collective. When creating resources, people participate in their different roles, but everyone has their contribution. The skills and knowledge required have been passed across generations so that

the society is sustainable. When applied to school leadership, the metaphors suggest that leaders should pursue education that is inclusive, useful to the village and beneficial to the group. School leadership may be a specialised activity, but it is not a solo concern—partnership with the community is essential

Put together, the elements of relational cohesion, ethics, the transcendence of time and space, and metaphorical representations of leadership illustrate the profound influence of leadership from the *kastom* and church domains on school leadership in the institutional domain. Within the general notion of influence, some core features play out in various contexts and contextual differences.

In general, school leadership influenced by *kastom* and church is enacted through relationships between people, including those in the community, and seeks the benefit of the collective. It has an outward-facing stance and ethics of responsibility to others that extend beyond management of the here and now. For school leadership, this means that leading is as much a matter of community relationships as it is the exercise of skills in teaching and learning or management.

Consistency in leadership supports the integration of school and community because the ethics and values by which leadership is judged travel across domains. School leadership is relevant to community sustainability, so transferring leadership ideas and skills is significant and worthy of attention. Leadership socialisation can involve family, church membership, participation in communal activities where leadership can be observed and understood, or professional mentorship.

The embeddedness of school leaders in communities

Tok stori participants explained the depth of influence of *kastom* and church domains on the institutional domain. A common key element is the embeddedness of school leaders in communities, an aspect of the integration of schools within communities in Pacific societies. Two examples contribute to a nuanced picture of how community embeddedness shapes how various school leaders operationalise their leadership. These address the significance of presence and the effect of reciprocal relationships.

Presence

The physical presence of school leaders in their wider school community contributes to the significance of *kastom* and church domains in school leadership. Indeed, school leaders can also be community or *kastom* leaders, such as a Solomon Islands ECE supervisor who:

[M]aintains connections to . . . community by giving advice and making decisions over land resources.

A researcher from the Tongan part of the research contributed this account of the significance of presence to the *tok stori*:

In our context, the life of a school leader is very transparent because there is no division between your personal life and your professional life. You are judged 24/7. What you do after hours, you are still going to be accountable for that as well as what you do inside the classroom. People in the community know what you get up to on Friday night, and they won't see you at church on Sunday, and then they'll see you on a Monday and remind you.

This explains how presence in the community maintains coherence between a leader's actions in their positional role and their leadership in everyday life. A teacher may be a leader in school with a particular kind of expertise, and they may have authority in the classroom, but their leadership legitimacy requires appropriately sanctioned behaviour in a range of other community contexts, including family and church. Because of the way school leadership transcends institutional time and space, the consistent application of ethics in behaviour on the part of a school leader is essential for relational cohesion and community support. That is,

how behaviour in the community embodies (or undermines) ethics can legitimise (or erode) leadership legitimacy in the institutional domain.

However, the way leadership is framed in school as an institution does not necessarily reflect the embeddedness of school leaders in communities. A Tongan contribution to the *tok stori* problematised institutional practice in the light of school leaders' presence in the community.

The accountability put on a school leader . . . is so much more widespread [than school boundaries] . . . Transparency and accountability . . . is something we don't often recognise . . . in our strategic plans or policies. They are part of the social contract and they are part of the understanding, the relationality and the social environment that we live in.

This element of the *tok stori* suggests that while *kastom*, church-founded leadership and presence in the community are influential mediators in the construction of institutional leadership, institutional practice can sometimes work in another direction. A narrow institutional conception of leadership may mute the holistic nature of Pacific societies and erode the integration of education and community. The construction of tension between following policy and institutional strategy and furthering the integration of education and community may encourage unintended separation of school and community.

Reciprocal relationships

The communities in which school leaders are embedded may be active in their relationship with schools and extend their leadership into the institutional domain. Communities sometimes set expectations for schools and work to support the integration of school and community. This contribution to the *tok stori* from an RMI researcher is a case in point:

Community leaders felt they needed to strengthen collaboration through PTA (Parent/Teacher Association) meetings and training workshop to inform teachers, parents and community leaders on roles and responsibilities—linking child and school, increas[ing] the teaching and learning network behind the classroom, connecting local experts on knowledge and skills that are relevant and meaningful [such as] legends, [knowledge of the] livelihood of man and women, and also history.

This *stori* suggests the significance of reciprocal relationships as *kastom* influences on school leadership and the importance of communication and gifting in reciprocation. The PTA is a key structure through which communication is focused. When working well, a PTA can provide a forum where a relevant Indigenous oracy frames the respectful exchange of views, understandings and information, thereby cementing school-community relationships. The *stori* shows that the wider community understands the benefits of integrating community and school and the value to children of traditional knowledge. A 'network behind the classroom' involves a web of complex relational responsibility through which the community can contribute to education—in this example, in the form of legends, skills and histories. Community contributions illustrate the value placed on education beyond the institutional domain. It also illustrates that communities can offer leadership, for example, by supporting a place-based curriculum with relational resources.

The presence of school leaders in community and the potential of reciprocal relationships between community and school are complementary explanatory features of the influence of *kastom* and church domains on leadership in the institutional domain. Once again, the emphasis is on cohesive relationships and the communal good.

Negotiations between school leaders and community leadership

In this section, three episodes from the *tok stori* illustrate a range of domain-related challenges a Pacific school leader may encounter and the kinds of ethical and social navigation required. The examples involve negotiating conflicts of understanding and the ownership of resources.

Conflicts of understanding

The first example, given by a Solomon Islands researcher, shows how expectations and understandings founded in one domain can cause issues in another. Problems for a school leader occurred when landowners on whose land a school was built expected their children to access free education and had not paid fees for five years of schooling. When a new school leader refused to accept this situation:

[H]e was bashed and threatened because he enforced that every student must settle their school fees. With this conflict of understanding, the school was closed for a week because the principal had to run away to the town for safety.

This illustrates what can happen when legitimacy for decision-making is sourced in different domains. On the one hand, land ownership creates *kastom* authority; on the other hand, authority is invested positionally in the school leader. This clash presents practical and financial issues and requires negotiation.

The solution described in the *tok stori* shows how leadership legitimacy from church and *kastom* provides enough clarification for the conflict of understanding to be resolved, and continuity of education assured:

[With] the beauty of having the community chief, the tribal chief and the church leaders in the community, the problem was solved, and classes resumed.

This points to community cohesion as an enabler in how leadership from *kastom* and church domains are an asset within the institutional domain.

Resources

How resource ownership is understood in communities may result in school leaders navigating institutional boundaries. For example:

A head stated community would just go into the school and collect water from the school tank. When the tanks are empty the children do not have water.

In many Pacific locations, such as this Solomon Island example, tank water is an essential resource required for sustainable education. In times of shortage or as a matter of convenience, community members may avail themselves of water. The school leader must decide whether to provide school water to the community or protect the continuation of education.

Another finite resource is time. From the Solomon Islands research part, the *tok stori* learned that to avoid conflict with *kastom*, especially in rural communities:

[W]hen a person dies, a school must close for many days depending on the cultural practices of the community. For some . . . the mourning period may last for ten days.

Cohesive relationships with churches require negotiation. For example, in the Solomon Islands settings:

[C]hurch leadership expected the school to be closed [in term time] . . . for instance on Saint's day, church anniversaries or conferences.

Being embedded in community may be a resource that offers routes through these complex negotiations. The *tok stori* learned that some:

[S]chool leaders have a way of negotiating *kastom* and culture . . . and make use of cultural practices that can appease tensions in the running and management of the school.

Taken together, these examples of negotiation suggest that leadership and ethics drawn from *kastom* and church domains are vital assets for school leaders who value coherent relationships between schools and their communities. Trade-offs over resources, such as water and time, may be needed to maintain a balance between educational continuity and

community-school relations, but the ethics involved need to make sense in community and focus on school priorities.

Layer#2 Reflecting on leadership research during and after the process

Having presented themes from the *tok stori* that show leadership matters travelling across domain boundaries, we now turn attention to the *tok stori* narrative about how knowledge about leadership was generated through the research process. The concept of distance, which informed the *tok stori*, is used to structure discussion.

Distance in research

In the *tok stori*, a New Zealand-based researcher explored the experience of supporting research in the RMI through the concept of distance:

Looking at a piece of data . . . we asked ourselves, what does it mean? . . . Suddenly, the distance between us in New Zealand and the context appeared. We tried to think about . . . things like time and physical distance . . . what does time actually mean to a school principal who has to travel four hours on a canoe to talk about educational leadership with someone from USP? We tried to map what distance looked like for ourselves.

Distance here appears as a challenge to research. It is layered and includes physical space, the necessity of digital communication in COVID-affected research and aspects of the various roles enacted by researchers and participants.

Another *tok stori* participant elaborated on the concept of distance from her experience:

[A]cademics were writing about physical distance and . . . it was just so simplistic because . . . somebody is in the same space as others and they are all talking the same language, but they are not communicating with each other and nobody is understanding. . . . For me, [distance is] more conceptual, how people understand the world because of their cultural context or cultural heritage.

All forms of distance are relational by nature and can affect how ideas of leadership travel from educational and cultural communities to the research community. Physical distance emphasises the relative position of bodies, but cultural distance implies that researchers need to shift their minds to make claims about leadership that have contextual relevance. Attention to contextual validity means taking stock of ways that research can proactively reduce distance in its various forms.

Reflexivity and distance

One *tok stori* participant offered a speculative inventory of approaches to reducing distance in research:

How do you close the distance? This got us thinking about . . . language . . . custom . . . paradigms . . . metaphors. That forced us into a position to consider who we are and what we are . . . What is the relationship that is needed here?

In this account, the key to reducing distance in research is relational. Indeed, the relational notion of ‘walking towards’ as a deliberate strategy that surfaced in the *tok stori* places primary responsibility on the researcher to approach the context with humility. This includes interrogating what close-to-context on-the-ground research partners are asked to do and extends from the initiation to the dissemination phase.

Is it OK for [local researchers] to approach a traditional leader and ask a certain type of question? . . . What happens to that knowledge and understanding that is shared then? Is it ethical? Who is going to benefit and decide what the value of the benefit is?

Attending to the context behind the context in this way can reduce distance because nuanced, distance-orientated questions of this nature provide a path towards greater mutual understanding and appreciation.

Direction and distance

Another *tok stori* participant developed the idea of reducing distance through the notion of direction, which was experienced in another research initiative. He explained that:

When we tried to engage the community . . . somehow it is not sinking in for the parents to understand why education is important to go to school. . . . Not until we start . . . shifting from education to the child and they start talking about the child as the gift from God and as the successor to look after the land and the forest and the generation after them . . . We must shift the conversation from the head to the heart because in my culture, the head is less important than the *sae*, the heart.

In this case, changing the approach's direction brought the research's core closer to the participants' lives and interests.

Similarly, another participant storied about her experiences in women's leadership in Melanesia. She explained that in her catalytic research:

We have to be very sensitive to the local protocols and the church . . . We have to embrace the local principles if we are going to use things from an educator's perspective . . . to lead change.

Some of the distance between an educator's priorities and those of communities can be bridged through protocols, values and relationships.

These contributions to the *tok stori* indicate that distance in research is reduced where research values participants' concerns and ways of thinking and acting. Consequently, self-awareness is important for researchers to appreciate cultural resources that are already part of the context to close distance by 'walking towards'.

Layer #3 Exploring leadership through the dialogic activity of *tok stori*

The third layer of this paper pays attention to the value of exploratory dissemination of *tok stori*—the approach used to garner the data discussed above. Like all Indigenous oralities, *tok stori* is ubiquitous and well-understood in its Melanesian home. It is also being adapted to embrace digital communication. In this paper, one value of the form in the digital space is as a discursive exercise to appreciate participants' experiential wisdoms as oral literature (Sanga, Johansson-Fua, et al., 2021). The narratives offered to represent the three arms of the research and, in addition, the understandings of people with a wide range of experiences of Pacific leadership. The *tok stori* enabled the intersection of these perspectives.

In research, *tok stori* provides opportunities to reduce distance, especially for those practised in its use. One participant introduced a narrative from another context to explain how the distance between the researcher and participants can be managed. In this example, the potential distance between research actors attendant on uncomfortable disclosure in gendered contexts was managed through *tok stori*:

Sometimes they [women participants] organise *tok stori* within the *tok stori* . . . a small *tok stori* taking place within the women themselves—and they pass information to the brave one to give it to the bigger *tok stori*.

When *tok stori* takes place, there is always a context behind the context of which gender can be an element. In this case, participants worked to limit the effects of distance.

Time is a factor that can reduce distance so *tok stori* works to provide a deep exploratory space. Thinking about the 2021 OCIES Conference dissemination session, a session participant noted:

The context behind the context

Most people in this room are related as colleagues, as wantoks, as kainga in one way and another . . . even when we are silent, we understand each other and why we are silent . . . Reading our relationships across time and across space requires us as researchers, as academics to be humble enough to know how to listen and . . . to know this is a journey we are taking together.

Tok stori is iterative and continues across time through the relationships developed in its safe space. Because it pays attention to listening, values humility and sees the construction of a woven narrative as an element on the relational journey of (academic) life. *Tok stori* is helpful in explorations that value leadership as a relational rather than a positional activity. Deep connection and an ongoing sense of oneness are possible in *tok stori* so that shared ideas of leadership informed from multiple viewpoints can construct nuanced and responsive ideas about leadership.

As a final reflection, as described above during the conference session, a question was asked regarding positional legitimacy to ‘lead’ by convening the *tok stori*. This implied that legitimacy in matters of Pacific leadership derives from ethnicity. Categorical ideas of positionality such as this tend towards keeping people apart because they locate some as ‘inside’ and others as ‘outside’. However, appreciating the ‘context behind the context’ means appreciating that leadership is symptomatic of life as multi-layered, complex and not always available to our senses; that everyone’s understanding is necessarily partial; and that creating space for new understandings can serve one well. In *tok stori* and leadership research, taking account of the context behind the context can mean that speaking is not necessarily an act legitimised by one’s position as defined by categorical markers. Complexity exists so that, for example, a speaker can be a ‘talking chief’, facilitating as an act of service because ‘the chief will not start the ceremony’. While some have explored the approach of relational positionality (Fasavalu & Reynolds, 2019) when negotiating the complexities of how people are together in research (and beyond), at this *tok stori*, a speaker noted:

For me it’s better to understand this as relationships—researcher relationships—where you are on a journey and at some point, you may be facing a particular direction and you are walking along that path as part of a bigger journey. If we understood our experiences as being on journeys, we are likely to appreciate the complexities of the worlds we straddle every day.

In this understanding, focusing leadership claims on relationships provides ethical negotiation of any positionality tensions that may seem to exist. When considering Pacific leadership, relationality is the common thread that straddles domains. Thus, it makes sense for leadership researchers to seek to reduce ‘distance’ through relational activity. The same logic values relationally-focused oralities such as *tok stori* as exploratory platforms capable of plumbing the complexities of Pacific leadership.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, an account of a conference *tok stori* session has made possible a layered discussion. Leadership emerged as relationally-centred practice constructed through and across the domains inherent in Pacific societies. As reported by researchers in the *tok stori*, field data make a case for more contextually aware approaches to school leader development in Pacific societies. The significance of relational cohesion resulting from effective leadership is an important aspect of being a school leader. Acknowledgment of the situated (as opposed to professional) socialisation of ethics for Pacific school leaders, present as they are in community, is an aspect of this cohesion. Relational cohesion also provides a key to understanding the importance of reciprocity, leadership metaphors and conflict-resolution strategies for school leaders. All these aspects of school leadership are contextually informed.

For those who seek to develop Pacific leaders, attention to aspects of context such as *kastom* understandings of leadership, the implications of living in communities in which one leads and ideas about resource ownership would assist in providing nuanced support.

Pacific leadership is practised in context and thus needs to make sense in situ. Leadership that produces disunity is dysfunctional and requires renegotiation. School and other leaders would benefit from opportunities to consider how to perform negotiations regarding leadership across domain boundaries successfully. One way to achieve this would be to listen for and respond to the leadership stories of others.

In addition, the paper has related the accounts of those involved in Pacific leadership research. These accounts describe strategies to reduce distance so that research relationships will be close, understandings clear and benefits shared. These strands point to the importance of understanding leadership research in the region as a relational activity in which the complexity and significance of any data gained are likely to be affected by the relative distance between the researcher and, in this case, the leader. All pictures of leadership drawn from research are partial, but there is an ethical obligation on researchers to develop relational closeness to better support the Pacific communities they wish to serve. A significant aspect of research with ethical implications is reflexivity. When a leadership researcher attempts to 'walk towards' community, the focus must be on relationships, not data, an element of research that may or may not follow. Time, stories, presence and closeness are all gifts to be much treasured—in digital *tok stori* as in field research.

Finally, *tok stori* in the conference setting has provided rich exploratory dissemination data on Pacific leadership because *tok stori* is a relationally manifested safe space where the ideas and participants are respected, valued and treasured—as are participants. All questions are opportunities to learn in a *stori* that continues after any specific session has ended. Indeed, this paper continues the *stori* and, when later discussed, will be continued in its turn. Together these threads illustrate the value of applying relational theories to leadership in Pacific life, Pacific leadership research and exploring ideas through Pacific Indigenous oracy.

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Navigating researcher positionality in comparative and international education research: Perspectives from emerging researchers

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Articulating one's positionality as a researcher is crucial to social research. This is particularly important in comparative and international education research where context, culture and notions of power underpin much of the work. However, researcher positionality has multiple meanings, making it challenging for emerging researchers to navigate its muddled, cluttered and unfamiliar terrain. In this article, seven emerging researchers examine their own researcher positionality within the context of their postgraduate research. Through a series of short vignettes, they draw attention to the different conceptualisations of researcher positionality and uncover the challenges and dilemmas.

Keywords: researcher positionality; emerging researchers; insider and outsider research; comparative and international education

INTRODUCTION

Researcher positionality is central to social research. This is particularly true in the field of comparative and international education (CIE), where context, culture and notions of power make the subtle interplay between the researcher and participants of critical importance. Reflexivity about one's positionality matters, but the conceptualisation of researcher positionality is not straightforward or fixed. Therefore, Finlay (2002) encourages researchers to explore their positionality and multiple statuses through 'confessional accounts' (p. 224). A confessional account here refers to an examination of one's personal and often unconscious reaction where notions of power and privilege have the potential to profoundly influence knowledge construction and dissemination within the research process.

This article argues for the complexities of researcher positionality to have greater visibility within CIE research. As a group of seven postgraduate scholars at varying stages of our Masters and PhD journeys in CIE, we bring a unique perspective to positionality as we grapple with notions of power, privilege, representation, voice and context. We begin by examining

researcher positionality and considering the particular complexities of researcher positionality in CIE research. We then consider different conceptualisations of researcher positionality before sharing our reflexive accounts. Through this work, we aim to offer a nuanced and responsive insight into researcher positionality.

RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY?

Understandings of and approaches to researcher positionality hinge on a researcher's onto-epistemological position. Researcher positionality is dealt with, for example, in different ways in positivist, critical realist, post-structural and post-foundational research. Holmes (2020) describes the different ontological and epistemological assumptions as an 'individual's world view and the position they adopt about a research task and its social and political context' (p. 1). A researcher's world view is shaped by many factors, such as the researcher's life history, religious affiliations, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, political views, geographical positioning, status and social class. In other words, researcher positionality is underpinned by our identities as researchers, and this shapes 'how we see and understand what and whom we encounter in our research, and how research participants see and understand us' (Lee et al., 2018, p. 120).

The onto-epistemological assumptions a researcher adopts influences every aspect of the research design and process, including how researchers analyse and interpret data (Rowe, 2014). Reflexivity offers researchers a confessional account to provoke self-analysis of conscious and unconscious responses, perspectives and reactions experienced throughout the research process. The disclosure of 'self' invites researchers to critically examine their own subjectivities and consider their impact on data collection and analysis (Finlay, 2002). Locating oneself in the research requires researchers to be sensitive to their own social, political and cultural context and consider how their worldview shapes, informs and influences every phase and stage of the research process (Cobb & Franken, 2017).

RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY IN THE FIELD OF COMPARATIVE AND INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Several scholars (e.g., Lee et al., 2018; McNess et al., 2015; Milligan, 2016) have considered researcher positionality's significance in the CIE field. One important factor encouraging a focus on positionality is researcher-participant partnerships, which has brought greater awareness to collaborative and inclusive approaches to comparative research methodologies. The heightened emphasis on researcher-participant collaboration has led to more nuanced and reflexive ways of understanding the research-participant relationship (McNess et al., 2015). For example, transnational scholarship requires researchers to examine the movement of educational policies, ideas, practices and people across national boundaries and the notions of power in research relationships (Lee et al., 2018; McNess et al., 2015). The nuanced area of such scholarship raises important questions about how researchers interrogate unequal power relations in cross-cultural research and research that investigates marginalised groups (Lee et al., 2018; Milligan, 2016). McNess et al. (2015) argue that greater attention needs to be given to the power that researchers embody through their various statuses and the implications of power relationships in how knowledge is constructed and disseminated. Therefore, researcher positionality needs to be revisited and reimagined to better capture the subtleties and nuances of representative meaning-making within CIE studies.

Researchers have also challenged an insider-outsider dichotomy (Kipnis et al., 2021; McNess et al., 2015; Milligan, 2016). Research has highlighted the dynamics and complexities of such duality, arguing that researchers seldom operate as either ‘insiders’ or ‘outsiders’ and, instead, frequently occupy multiple cultural memberships, affiliations, systems and lived experiences (Kipnis et al., 2021; Merriam et al., 2001). For this reason, researchers tend to lie within, between, or outside these demarcated ‘insider/outsider’ boundaries (Kipnis et al., 2021; McNess et al., 2015; Milligan, 2016). Examining positionality about gender, class, culture and race has also revealed the unequal power dynamics within groups and how these dynamics influence how knowledge is constructed and represented (Merriam et al., 2001). Adding to the complex power dynamics, researchers can often experience varying and dynamic degrees of outsideness, insiderness and marginality in one research location as they navigate dimensions of their cultural positionality (Kipnis et al., 2021). To avoid the polarisation effects of the insider and outsider dichotomy, researchers have drawn attention to their multiple insider-outsider positionalities and argued for a more nuanced conceptualisation of the insider-outsider divide (Kipnis et al., 2021; Merriam et al., 2001).

When examining positionality, Savin-Baden and Major (2013) suggest researchers tend to conceptualise their positionalities in three different ways: 1) the research topic under investigation, 2) the research participants, and 3) the research process and/or context (p. 2). The conceptualisations have particular relevance and significance for CIE research because they challenge researchers to consider their positioning in relation to the research context, topic and process as well as the participants.

For this article, each author offers a short vignette to showcase their positionality journey and how they have situated themselves relative to 1) research participants, 2) research context, 3) the research process, and 4) the research topic under investigation. While we acknowledge that researchers locate themselves across all of these areas, we have each chosen one area to highlight in our confessional accounts. Methodologically, we interacted at least once a month between August 2021 and May 2022 on Zoom to consider how we located our positionalities in these areas. Through these interactions, we wrote our accounts, commented on each other’s narratives, asked questions and challenged perceptions to provide each other with a new and destabilising lens. For scholars of CIE, this collaborative process offered an insightful window into the challenges emerging researchers face as they navigate issues of power, representation, legitimacy and voice in a way that seeks to offer a more ‘inclusive, collaborative, participatory, reflexive and nuanced’ (McNess et al., 2015, p. 295) engagement in the research and writing process.

This next section begins by examining the positionality of the research participants. Vignettes from Chin, Macam and Suwarningsih examine their confessional accounts as they navigate issues of voice, power and representation. Levy’s vignette draws attention to the importance of research context and the complexities of the insider-outsider dichotomy. Beckwith’s vignette examines researcher positionality concerning the research process, demonstrating how a more participatory research process can challenge notions of power and representation, especially when researching children’s lived experiences. Finally, this article considers researcher positionality in relation to the topic. The vignettes of Saxena and Gulati highlight how researchers need to be aware of their ontological positioning and how such positioning shapes the research design and process.

THE RESEARCHER IN RELATION TO THE PARTICIPANTS

Locating oneself in relation to the participants is one way that researcher positionality can be conceptualised (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Participants offer in-depth understandings, insights, perspectives and lived experiences of educational phenomena. Locating oneself in relation to the participants requires researchers to not only engage in their own exploration of 'self' but also consider the identities that their research participants have constructed about them (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Bringing a reflexive lens to this work enables researchers to consider how social, political, cultural and economic contexts shape how participants construct these multiple and often overlapping identities. As scholars in the field of CIE, our work frequently reaches across two groups: 1) the global and the local; and 2) the elite, 'non-elite', and marginalised communities. The variances across groups require researchers to bring reflexive foresight to the way their researcher identity may be constructed by each participant and the implication of such identity construction on data collection and analysis.

In the following vignettes, Chin wrestles with these tensions as she questions how people with disabilities may view and interpret her – an able-bodied researcher. Macam considers how her positionality allows her to 'study up' and investigate and critique the work of the global elite. Suwarningsih's vignette also engages in this deep, reflexive work as she considers how her changing professional identity – from working in a United Nations agency to an emerging researcher – is constructed by her participants. These vignettes reinforce the 'inbetweenness' these researchers have experienced as they grapple with questions of representation from being both 'within' and 'on the outside' of their participants' social, demographic and religious communities.

Who should speak? An outsider's dilemma of speaking for people with disabilities

Mellisa Chin

My doctoral research critically examines education policies in Malaysia, focusing on those that relate to disability and inclusion. In this section, I reflect on my positionality as an able-bodied researcher in undertaking this research. My reflection will centre on one of the areas of positionality outlined by Savin-Baden and Major (2013): the way I locate myself in relation to the participants. In particular, I explore some of the tensions and dilemmas I encountered during the data analysis stage as an outsider researcher who lacks membership experiences and knowledge of the participants' community – that is, people with disabilities.

I locate my study within a critical paradigm to examine elements of bias and power inscribed in policy discourse. Given my ontological and epistemological orientation, one of my research aims is to foreground the educational inequalities perpetuated in policy texts. However, I have never individually experienced disability, and throughout this research endeavour, I often have moments where my privilege and ableism confront me. This has raised questions and tensions in how I analyse and interpret data about disability issues. For example, while my research works to provide critical explanations of the workings of invisible structures and power influencing inclusive education policy development in Malaysia, I can never truly understand what education marginalisation and oppression look and feel like as a non-disabled outsider (Castrodale, 2017). In turn, the absence of the necessary insider knowledge makes it more challenging to offer counter-narratives that challenge how people with disabilities are often pathologised, labelled, and treated through biomedical understandings of disability in inclusive education policies (Kitchin, 2000). Because of this, my research may unintentionally (re)produce marginalisation, exclusion and discrimination as I identify, construct and address

issues of disability-related education policy discourses from an able-bodied perspective (Barnes, 2012; Goodley, 2013).

Alongside the possibility of (re)producing ableist assumptions, a further source of tension in navigating data analysis within the complex terrain of critical disability studies is that the act of speaking for others can be problematic and unethical (Alcoff, 2009). Alcoff (2009) argues that the practice of speaking on behalf of less privileged individuals has contributed, in many cases, to deepening or maintaining the oppression of the group spoken for. As such, I recognise that I may also display a form of symbolic oppression as an outsider researcher in the critical examination of inclusive education policy discourses. In other words, the participants could be creating a false representation of people with disabilities' needs, goals, circumstances and, thus, their identity throughout my analysis. Acknowledging that it may not be possible for me to speak for others causes me to raise another question that Alcoff (2009) encourages researchers to ask themselves: 'if I don't speak for those less privileged than myself, am I abandoning my political responsibility to speak out against oppression, a responsibility incurred by the very fact of my privilege?' (p. 119). To negotiate this dilemma of being an outsider, I fall back on the words of Spivak (1990), who argues that 'Who should speak?' is less crucial than 'Who will listen?' (p. 59). Within this standpoint, I pose two questions: 'will policymakers listen to what has been analysed and found?' and, importantly, 'will the practice of representing and speaking for others through my research enable the empowerment of people with disabilities?'. Engaging in a deep reflexive work in these questions helps ensure that: 1) my findings are widely disseminated through publications and conferences; and 2) my analytical perspective, if possible, is of those who suffer most from dominance and inequality. I hope that such actions serve as a way to somewhat resolve the disconcerting tensions around conducting research from an outsider's perspective.

Studying Up: The power I have in critiquing the powerful

Alea Ann F. Macam

I had always dreamed of being part of international non-governmental organisations supporting the Philippine Department of Education. It was in 2017 when fate was on my side, and a donor funding organisation hired me to work on a project to improve teacher professionalism. However, I soon realised that my dream work was not as perfect as it seemed, and there were concrete reasons to question the power this project had to influence major educational reforms in my country. Like waking up from a 'dream', I found myself in an identity shift – from a development practitioner to an emerging researcher critiquing the work of an organisation I had previously worked for. This section examines my positionality as an emerging researcher in my deliberate move to 'study up' (Laura, 2018, p. 13) or, in other words, to investigate and critique the works of a powerful organisation. Throughout this section, I consider my positionality in relation to my research participants – the global elite.

I approached my study with several positionalities in relation to my research participants. First, I carry my identity as a Filipino whose professional experiences revolved around working within a powerful international organisation led by international colleagues. Reflecting on my experiences working with them, my scepticism towards what they do within the organisation motivated me to pursue my doctoral study. This made me a researcher who pushed for a critical stance, allowing me to navigate a position of being 'an outsider' to examine hidden assumptions about this organisation. Second, being a Filipino native whose focus of inquiry centres on critiquing a foreign organisation's work influenced my researcher identity. I approached my research fully immersed in the local culture, traditions and ways of thinking, making it easy for

me to justify the international organisation's marginalisation of Filipinos. Ironically, this locates me as 'an outsider' in terms of critiquing a foreign, international organisation. Third, as a doctoral student, critiquing a powerful organisation challenges me to navigate towards my 'unspoken sensitivities' (Wisniewski, 2000, p. 8), again placing me as 'an outsider' in my experiences of studying global elites. As I finished my initial document analysis, I realised that pursuing my research would involve discomfort associated with potentially uncovering hidden assumptions about the organisation. Such uncovering might impact my professional career and cause personal distress due to exposing unpleasant findings concerning influence and power.

Reflecting on my three positionalities as a researcher, I realise that, while they are helpful to acknowledge, I must learn how to navigate through them, so they do not become an obstacle in 'studying up' (Laura, 2018; Priyadharshini, 2003). I heed the call to turn my gaze onto the powerful and frame my research to explore power because the quality of all our lives may be affected by the influence these organisations have on educational structures (Laura, 2018). With this comes the expectation to rethink positionalities, challenging the assumption that these should remain fixed and stable in my research (Priyadharshini, 2003). 'Studying up' requires that I learn to adapt to different contexts and take on different practices and identities that deviate from traditional research (Priyadharshini, 2003). In the end, the challenge of critiquing a powerful organisation includes unravelling its coherent and stable identity (Priyadharshini, 2003).

Being in-between: The complexities of my positionality

Dwi Purwestri Sri Suwarningsih

Before undertaking my doctoral studies, I worked as an Early Childhood Development (ECD) officer for one of the United Nations agencies in Kupang, Indonesia. In this role, I was responsible for planning, implementing and monitoring a pilot ECD teacher mentoring programme. Soon after the programme ended, I decided to pursue a doctoral degree to examine how mentors and teachers, key government officials and development agencies had experienced the ECD teacher mentoring programme. My identity has, therefore, shifted from being a practitioner tasked with leading the teacher mentoring programme to a researcher investigating the experiences of those involved in the mentoring programme, many of whom I used to lead. This section explores assumptions, tensions and dilemmas I may encounter during the data collection and analysis phases of my research as I navigate the complexities of moving within and between this insider-outsider continuum.

As a researcher, I have power and privilege that comes from my socioeconomic status, education, and ethnic and cultural background (Muhammad et al., 2015). I describe my identity as a Javanese-Muslim, holder of Javanese culture and living on Java Island, the most developed island in Indonesia. My cultural identity positions me as 'an outsider' toward my participants, who are primarily Timorese-Christians, holders of Timorese culture and living on Timor Island. However, I am also 'an insider' because my previous role as a practitioner enabled me to work alongside the participants and share their experiences; researchers can have multiple positionalities, making it difficult to be 'fully inside' or 'fully outside'.

In some cases, an insider is assumed to have easier access to the research participants, can ask more meaningful questions and produce a more truthful description when compared to an outsider (Holmes, 2020). As my positionality illustrates, these assumptions of insider/outsider are too simple. Other factors frame the insider/outsider debate, such as power and representation (Merriam et al., 2001, p. 411). As the leader of the mentoring programme, I held a position of

power. This may create tension because potential participants might feel obliged to participate in my research. I also question whether the research participants will tell me the ‘truth’ during interviews or whether the power I held in my previous role will colour their responses so that they say what they think I want to hear. Also, even if teachers and mentors agree to provide truthful answers, I may struggle to represent the ‘truth’ in the findings because my own involvement in the programme may cloud my objectivity when analysing research data (Merriam et al., 2001, p. 414). My research participants’ voices will explore not only the benefits but also the challenges during the implementation of the mentoring programme in Kupang. The participants’ perspectives would either strengthen or reveal unpleasant ‘truths’ that might not be discussed during the implementation and evaluation phase of the project. Merriam et al. (2001) suggest the answer to the questions: Will they tell me the truth? Will they be honest with me? is ‘probably not’ because there is ‘no single truth or reality independent of the knower’ (p. 414).

As I reflect on my multiple identities from practitioner to researcher, I recognise that my positionality can be simultaneously insider and outsider. Holmes (2020) argues that insider or outsider as opposites may be an artificial construct. I realise my positionality is neither fully ‘inside’ nor ‘outside’. I am somewhere in-between.

LOCATING THE RESEARCHER IN RELATION TO THE CONTEXT:

Context is critical to CIE scholarship (Crossley & Watson, 2003; McNess et al., 2015). While most CIE scholars agree that context matters, more recent scholarship highlights the ‘problem of context’, with CIE scholarship sometimes perpetuating outdated colonial constructions of context that reflect static and artificial cultural and social values, meanings and norms (Spratt & Coxon, 2020). Researcher positionality offers a way to question and challenge assumptions about context and, in particular, a way for researchers to locate themselves in relation to the research contexts. Savin-Baden and Major (2013) suggest that locating oneself with regard to the context is another way to conceptualise researcher positionality.

Research contexts are fluid and dynamic sites of social inquiry which have the potential to strongly influence the research process (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). CIE research frequently locates itself within multiple and overlapping contexts for educational research. Institutions, such as schools, ECE centres, universities and Ministries of Education, are located within local villages, communities, towns and cities, each with its plurality of social, cultural, political and religious milieus. These contexts play a powerful role in shaping how research is designed, conducted and analysed (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Contexts can subtly and subconsciously shape researchers’ experiences of the phenomenon under investigation, influencing how researchers interpret, analyse and disseminate research findings. Bringing a reflexive lens to how researchers locate themselves within the research context is important at all stages of the research journey. In the following vignette, Levy examines his positionality in relation to the research context and questions the false dichotomy that an insider-outsider duality creates.

Resisting assumptions when navigating the false dichotomy of insider-outsider positionality

Ben Levy

The aspect of positionality that I explore is navigating the tensions, privileges and challenges of being both an insider and outsider researcher and the assumptions within the context of my research on higher education internationalisation in the Pacific region. I am a non-indigenous,

active practitioner in the field of higher education internationalisation who engages in research outside of my own cultural and geographic contexts. This requires constant reflexivity to navigate spaces and tensions that others and myself see, whether they are assumed or real. Additionally, I must be deliberate in the relationality of my positionality as an ethical, cultural, values-based, power and nuanced space (Fasavalu & Reynolds, 2019). This will be especially prudent as I begin a PhD in Education at the University of Waikato.

I have lived, worked and researched in contexts that were less familiar and not of my cultural heritage (Guatemala, Aotearoa New Zealand, Costa Rica, Argentina, Australia and more), and have strengthened my adaptability skills as I navigated these spaces in sensitive, respectful and ethical ways. Since my first engagements with the Pacific region, I have retained a strong appreciation and curiosity, which is why I have chosen this regional context for my research focus. I will constantly critique my knowledges and practices, explore the tensions of privilege, context, culture and my overall positionality within this relational research space.

My positionality as non-Pacific and non-indigenous is likely to offer the most challenges. With 20+ years working in higher education internationalisation, I am keenly aware of my inclination to lean on the most familiar, which has been within a Western, settler-colonial framework. I aim to follow the approach outlined by Jackson (2019) in creating balanced, non-colonising relationships. As Jackson states, ‘such transformations must confront implacability of a power unjustly taken’ (p. 149–150), including confronting my positions of power and perspectives on this research topic. My understanding of the exploitative extraction of indigenous knowledges and the importance of diligent reflexivity and relationality throughout that process will continue to inform my engagement with a participatory and culturally situated research design and methodologies.

Therefore, while I have some experiences that can support and strengthen my ability to be reflexive, reflective, relational and intentional in my research positionality, tensions remain that need to be continually addressed. These include a constant recognition and acknowledgement of my biases so as to not inappropriately guide the research process, results or presentation (Phillips & Schweisfurth, 2014). Researcher positionality is not a constant but is ever-shifting and evolving as it interacts and relates to the individuals, communities and institutions in which it engages. Fasavalu and Reynolds (2019) discuss the value of this relational approach as opportunities for sites of learning where ‘relational obligations and expectations [are] opportunities for researchers to seek agency, particularly over their development and research contribution’ (p. 12). I will seek counsel, consent and collaboration with the research stakeholders during each phase of the research journey and as an opportunity for my learning and development as we collectively aim to engage in a thoughtful and impactful research project. For example, when speaking to higher education leaders within the Pacific, I need to be clear that, although I have worked in the space of higher education internationalisation for an extensive period, my role in the research process is not that of an expert, but to look to them as experts in their institutional internationalisation processes. As someone not from the Pacific region and less familiar with the various cultures and contexts, I will also need to determine the advantages and disadvantages of partnering with sense-makers throughout the research process to add validity to my work and support the data collection, analysis and presentation.

While struggling to navigate one’s insider-outsider positionality, I have come to better understand myself as a researcher in diverse contexts, with a positionality that is far from static. A false dichotomy and a real duality exist in this intersectionality of insider-outsider positionalities. It is unrealistic to consider that someone can neatly be either an insider or an outsider because our personal and professional identities are multi-layered and intersectional

(Phillips & Schweisfurth, 2014). I will continue to resist the assumptions of my positionality within the construct of ‘insider-outsider’, actively learn through built relationality and present my research positionality in a reflexive manner that is ever-evolving and shifting.

LOCATING THE RESEARCHER IN RELATION TO THE PROCESS

Locating oneself in relation to the research process is another important aspect of researcher positionality. Research designs can empower or disempower participants (Milligan, 2016), and researchers can construct meaning throughout every stage and phase of the research process (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). How researchers locate themselves within this research process will determine to what extent knowledge construction truly represents participants’ knowledge, understandings and experiences. This form of reflexivity requires researchers to examine their positioning in the initial design phase and to bring a reflexive eye to their own bias, subjectivities, assumptions and power relations. Engaging in this important reflexive work can help researchers to consider research designs that facilitate authentic meaning-making, co-construction of knowledge and participant agency. For example, in CIE, participatory research designs have been strongly advocated (McNess et al., 2015; Milligan, 2016). Such designs enable participants to exercise agency within the research process by inviting participants to co-construct research findings. Likewise, such reflexive work can challenge researchers to examine their ‘in-the-moment’ research decisions which, unchecked and unexamined, can profoundly shape how researchers interact with the research process.

In the vignette that follows, Beckwith considers the inherent tensions of researching the lived experiences of children and questions how unequal power relations between herself and her participants could lead to misrepresenting their lived experiences. Through this account, Beckwith demonstrates how a participatory research design goes some way towards challenging power relations and more effectively capturing children’s lived experiences of being global citizens.

Examining the notions of power: Positionality as a new PhD student

Victoria Beckwith

In this section, I reflect on my positionality as a new PhD student and researcher who has yet to collect data. My research examines the phenomenon of global citizenship through the lived experiences of 12-year-old children. As I am still developing my research questions and design, I was initially unsure how researcher positionality was relevant to me. However, Holmes (2020) highlights the importance of novice researchers recognising their own positionality early on and questioning how it impacts their research process, understandings and interpretation of data. With this in mind, I soon learned how important it is to examine one’s own positionality in relation to my anticipated 12-year-old research participants (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). The questions positionality raises are: How can I, an adult, understand the lived experiences of a child? How do I locate myself, as an adult, in relation to my participants, who are 12-year-old children? How might my participants perceive me, and how might this impact what they share with me?

Throughout this section, I bring a reflexive lens to these questions by examining notions of power (Greene & Hogan, 2005) from my and the participants’ perspectives. In doing so, I consider how I might disrupt complex power relations by selecting a research method and process that enables me to understand the lived experiences of my participants better.

Power refers to social and legal status and institutional position (Greene & Hogan, 2005). The power balance between adults and children is unbalanced, leaving children vulnerable to adults' subjectivity, authority, persuasion and consent to access personal information (Greene & Hogan, 2005; Murray & Nash, 2017). As an adult and a PhD student employed in higher education and the context of this research, I hold a more powerful and knowledgeable position than children in the formative stages of their formal education. How children conceptualise me is important. While some children may perceive this difference in academic achievement as threatening or intimidating, others may not be aware of or even care about my academic qualifications. As a researcher, children may see me as an authority figure. Some children may trust my opinion, and others may feel concerned or fear what may happen if they provide an 'incorrect' answer (Lane et al., 2019). The interplay of these power dynamics shapes what children share with me during interviews and how I analyse and interpret my data. Children are the experts in their own lived experiences (Greene & Hogan, 2005), and I am merely the visitor (Supski & Maher, 2021). For me, as the visitor, it would be inappropriate to come into their world without questioning my assumptions and existing beliefs. How can I best understand and interpret children's lived experiences to reduce the entanglement of my assumptions and bias? For this reason, I recognised that I need to employ methods of data collection that reduce power dynamics. Ways to challenge these power dynamics are naturalistic ways of child-led data collection and including children as co-researchers involved in decision-making and identifying experiences (Lane et al., 2019; Supski & Maher, 2021).

To employ these naturalistic methods, I plan to employ photo-elicitation in my research (Murray & Nash, 2017). This method enables children to take photographs of their day-to-day experiences. I can then use these photographs in interviews to examine what children think and feel and how they make sense of their in-the-moment lived experiences. Photo-elicitation will enable children to reflect on how and why they construct and express their experiences. It will help me view the world through their eyes and better understand their lived experiences as global citizens. However, it would be presumptuous to assume that my analysis of children's lived experiences is accurate.

For this reason, I plan to invite children to co-construct the research findings with me at their final interview to ensure that my interpretations truly do represent their lived experiences and world views. Examining my positionality has challenged me to examine potential power dynamics in my research design. I have been prompted to identify participatory methods of data collection that invite participants into the co-construction of knowledge.

LOCATING THE RESEARCHER IN RELATION TO THE TOPIC:

Locating oneself in relation to the research topic is the final way researcher positionality is conceptualised (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013) and requires researchers to acknowledge their positioning with regard to the subject or issue under investigation. Personal beliefs, assumptions and values about the subject of the investigation have the potential to shape and influence how researchers analyse and interpret data. Researchers select their research topic and formulate research questions based on their experiences, interests and perspectives, privileging what will be given scholarly attention and included in the scope of their research (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). The process of selecting and privileging also extends to the literature review, where the researcher includes or excludes literature to frame the study in a way that aligns with the researchers' beliefs, assumptions and values. Savin-Baden and Major (2013) maintain that researchers need to be transparent at the outset of their research by clearly articulating their stance and acknowledging how this stance shapes the "parameters for the study" (p. 71).

In the following vignettes, Saxena illustrates how she ‘edgewalked’ between being a cultural ‘outsider’ and a subject ‘insider’. Throughout, Saxena highlights the delicate edgewalk she undertook as she sought to bring a more nuanced understanding of this insider-outsider duality. Similarly, Gulati critically examines her own ontological positioning, showing how her lens as a critical researcher shaped her research design, process and analysis.

Edgewalking an insider leadership world from the outside: Perspectives of a novice researcher

Tanya Saxena

My career and interest in mathematics education and curriculum in India led me to pursue a Master’s in Educational Leadership to better understand curriculum leadership’s role in curricula-related changes. My Master’s research marked a shift from my role as an educator in India to a researcher of curriculum leadership in mathematics classrooms in New Zealand secondary schools. In this section, I examine the change in my own positionality as I transitioned from being an educator in India to a researcher of curriculum leadership within the New Zealand educational context. Through this exploration, I discuss the fluidity and complexities of my position as an outsider to the cultural and leadership context in New Zealand while also being an insider in the field of mathematics education. Through my work, I highlight how I navigated multiple positionalities, intending to offer a more nuanced understanding of this insider-outsider divide.

As an outsider to the New Zealand cultural, leadership and educational context, there were several ways that my research context was unfamiliar to me. For a start, I had to understand the New Zealand mathematics curriculum. I felt the need to gain thorough knowledge and understanding of the curriculum to enable me to communicate with participant teachers and school leaders in a way that communicated that I was ‘one of them’ as a ‘curriculum insider’. For instance, having taught outside of the New Zealand context, it was valuable for me to understand year-long curriculum goals, learning levels/progressions and the National Certificate of Educational Assessment assessment structure to have an in-depth informed discussion around teachers’ curriculum-based classroom practices. Moreover, to gain an ‘insider curriculum knowledge’ during the research, I intentionally and actively deepened my knowledge of the curriculum to make sense of teachers’ experiences as curriculum leaders.

In India, I experienced a system where curriculum matters were handled at the state or national level rather than at the school level. Thus, the lack of conceptual and practical understanding of curriculum leadership added a layer of complexity for me. As a novice researcher, the complexities mentioned above made me a little anxious and left me with questions like: How will my participants, who are curriculum leaders, perceive me? Will I be confident enough to articulate and probe further interactions to understand subtle factors and nuances of curriculum leadership? Will curriculum leaders consider themselves superior through their leadership status, and, if so, how would this affect their response to me? Will I be able to gain trust to leverage responses on power relationships within their departments and learn more about impacting leadership practices in mathematics curriculum leadership?

While I confronted the challenge of being an outsider in curriculum and leadership within the New Zealand context, I was an insider to mathematics education. Hence, I was neither an insider nor an outsider in relation to the research; instead, I was an edgewalker who navigated through space where risks matched benefits (Reynolds, 2019). In other words, the risks of being an outsider in the New Zealand context matched the benefits of being an insider in mathematics

education. As I reflect upon this positionality edgewalk, I recognise the fluidity I have developed in edgewalking between these multiple insider/outsider identities.

Making the familiar strange: A critical researcher's perspective

Swati Gulati

I grew up in India admiring the World Bank's efforts to reduce poverty worldwide, and, as a young woman, I dreamed of working for such an international organisation. Little did I know my research would lead me on a new and unfamiliar path where I would evaluate and, later, critique the very organisation that I once idolised. My Masters dissertation commenced my journey from teacher to researcher. My research examined the ideation and development of the World Bank's *Strengthening Teaching-Learning and Results for States (STARS)* programme. This piece aims to share insights into my positionality as a novice researcher as I sought to make the familiar operations of the World Bank 'strange' by using critical theory to examine notions of power that underpinned the ideation and development of the World Bank's STARS programme.

My passion for studying the role of bilateral, multilateral and non-state agencies like the United Nations and the World Bank grew as I became exposed to diverse cultures. When I commenced my Masters degree, I engaged in courses that challenged me to question notions of power and inequality. I began to see what had previously been familiar to me from a new perspective. I had previously appreciated the World Bank as an organisation because of its support to emerging economies. However, my studies in New Zealand introduced me to the impact of neoliberalism on education and the World Bank's role as a hegemonic power. As I engaged in academia, I began to ask the question: How can I critique such a powerful and influential organisation as a novice researcher? As a researcher, I was interested in using critical theory to uncover power issues. This led me to research the World Bank's STARS programme.

To uncover the web of 'taken-for-granted meanings' (Mannay, 2016, p. 32), I adopted the concept of defamiliarisation, which states 'there is always something unfamiliar sketched behind the familiar' (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973, p. 169). The familiar is often uncritically examined as it fails to explain the correlation between 'familiarity and larger political-economic structures', (Gunderson, 2020, p. 48). I attempted to make the familiar (e.g., my previous experiences and perspectives of the World Bank) strange by looking at the World Bank's work in the STARS programme with 'fresh eyes' to allow me to critically examine the World Bank's formation, inner workings, structure and relationship with India. In making the familiar strange, my overarching objective was to 'gain deeper analytical knowledge of what everyone *knows of* but does not *know about*' (Gunderson, 2020, p. 60). Achieving this required a process of defamiliarisation where I became conscious of my biases and assumptions regarding the World Bank's mode of operation.

As I began to reflect more deeply, I asked myself: To what extent has my ontological position as a critical researcher shaped how I read and interpret documents from the World Bank? To what extent has my positionality influenced how I analyse and interpret findings?

This process of internal wondering raised the curtain in my mind, and I began to see how my positionality as a critical researcher enabled me to question and challenge an organisation that I previously considered to be unquestionable and unchallengeable. Now new questions are springing up inside me as I read and analysed documents. I wonder: What if challenges and issues presented in these reports and documents are presented to serve the World Bank's

agenda? What if the author of these reports and documents has omitted essential facts about the Indian education system to support the World Bank's position?

As I read critical literature, my beliefs and preconceived assumptions about the World Bank being a neutral and benevolent organisation continue to be revealed, challenged and reconstructed.

CONCLUSION

Researcher positionality is an integral process of social research, and even more so within the field of CIE. The fluidity, subjectivity and contextuality of positionality captured in the confessional accounts above remind us that identifying and clarifying one's positionality may not be a linear and identical process for every emerging researcher. Through Chin's experience of being a non-disabled outsider examining education policies for people with disabilities, Macam's insight into wearing multiple cloaks of positionalities in studying powerful organisations, and Suwarningsih's transitional journey from a practitioner (i.e., a United Nations officer) to an emerging researcher in embracing her 'inbetweenness', we have illustrated the nuanced complexities in locating oneself in relation to the research participants. By reflecting on Levy's struggle to navigate the insider-outsider continuum as a non-Pacific and non-indigenous person researching in the Pacific region and Beckwith's account of rupturing the adult-child power relations through a photo-elicitation method, we have revealed the intricacies of researching in relation to context and the research process. A closer look at Saxena's anecdote of her cautious attempt to 'edgewalk' as an insider and an outsider around curriculum and leadership in mathematics education in New Zealand and Gulati's engagement in the defamiliarisation process in unveiling the agenda behind the World Bank's STARS programme highlight the subtleties of personal positioning in relation to the subject or issue under investigation. While each tale narrates different aspects of positionality, they underscore the multiplicity of insider/outsider perspectives that may have far-reaching implications on knowledge construction, issues of representation and complex power dynamics ingrained in the research processes.

Given the muddled terrain of researcher positionality, our intention in this article was to bring attention to nuanced areas of tension in positionality that need to be deconstructed. We hope this article will encourage other emerging researchers to develop an honest and critical exposition of positionality during specific stages of their research projects and throughout their research careers. Equally important, it is envisaged that such reflexive praxis will enable more emerging researchers to consider collaborative forms of inquiry to develop a deeper awareness of their research participants, contexts, research processes and/or topics under investigation. An example could include conducting group discussions around diverse tensions and dilemmas of researcher positionality inherent within the research process, as exemplified in this article. This will likely facilitate collaborative endeavours to interrogate positions of power and privilege, guard against misrepresentations of knowledge, and cultivate greater sensitivities to contextual and cultural diversities, and through doing so, make us better researchers.

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Reimagining communities of practice: Using relational frameworks to disrupt assumptions and inequity

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*As theorised by Etienne Wenger, communities of practice are becoming settled as a framework for community engagement within Aotearoa New Zealand schools. In this article, the authors critically analyse the assumptions and inequities that can arise when communities of practice prioritise school values and staff comfort over the priorities of community participants and the knowledge they bring. The authors reference their experiences in communities of practice, using vignettes to explore tensions. The article argues that when schools draw authentically on Indigenous principles, including *teu le vā*, and use these to establish communities of practice, hospitable, equitable and productive relationships can be realised.*

Keywords: communities of practice; home-school relationships; Indigenous frameworks

INTRODUCTION

In this article, we seek to disrupt understandings of communities of practice, that are becoming settled in Aotearoa New Zealand schools to reveal assumptions and inequities in how they operate. Communities of practice are prevalent in schools in Aotearoa New Zealand, as the government organises and funds professional development using a “Communities of Learning | Kāhui Ako” (Ministry of Education, 2021) model. As communities of practice become routine, they are at risk of operating mechanistically. We look to how schools might engage authentically with indigenous frameworks to productively reimagine communities of practice. We have used fictionalised vignettes (Bell, 1985, 1987, Gillborn, 2008) to draw together threads of experience and understandings from literature and weave them into a text that points to the

Another busy day at Hapori College and Kim Wetzell, head of the school’s large languages department, was running late for her lunchtime meeting. “Alisi, please make sure these tables get wiped down when you guys have finished eating.” Kim grabbed her cup of tea and ran across to the staff workroom. When she arrived the Principal and senior managers sat in a neat row facing the other department heads who had grabbed chairs and gathered around the spare tables.

“So, let’s do our best to make this an inclusive evening for our parents, shall we?” the Principal was saying. “We really do want them to understand our new report system. Jeanette’s been getting her head around this and is going to speak to us on plans for the evening. Go ahead, Jeanette, let us know what you have in mind...”

Jeanette Hedges, the Deputy Principal, nodded and turned to her PowerPoint.

ideas with which we want to engage. This vignette imagines how teachers and senior managers might come together in an Aotearoa New Zealand high school to plan for engaging with families. Indigenous Māori and Pacific students are minoritised and often marginalised within the Aotearoa New Zealand schooling context. Historically within Aotearoa New Zealand, Māori and Pacific students have been underserved by the education system (Alton-Lee, 2008). Currently, in Aotearoa New Zealand, the term ‘Pacific’ and ‘Pacific peoples’ is used in several government ministries, such as the Ministry of Health (MOH) and the Ministry of Pacific Peoples (MPP). The Ministry of Education (MOE) shifted from Pasifika to Pacific in 2018 (Samu, 2020). Throughout this article, we refer to people of Pacific heritage in Aotearoa New Zealand as Pacific. Despite strategies in recent years to raise achievements, such as *Ka Hikitia* for Māori learners (Ministry of Education, 2013) and the Pacific Education Plan (Ministry of Education, 2012), outcomes for Māori and Pacific students in the state-funded, English-medium context, often referred to as the ‘mainstream’ remain inequitable (Tomorrow’s Schools Independent Taskforce, 2019).

One way to address these learners' needs is by promoting home-school partnerships. Research literature whole-heartedly acknowledges that learners benefit when families and schools work together in partnerships that support collaboration, reciprocity and two-way dialogue (Bull et al., 2008; Goodall & Vorhaus, 2011; Mutch & Collins, 2012). When collaboration between home and school works effectively to support the learner, there are opportunities to exchange knowledge and share decision-making (Bull, et al., 2008; Epstein, 1995). Parents are considered equal partners where the influence and support provided at home are as important as that delivered at school (Epstein & Sanders, 2002). However, equitable partnerships are challenging when western ideologies dominate education systems, countering minoritised groups' cultural values and knowledge (Fox, 2016). Tensions between teachers and families have been documented in the international literature (e.g., Gorski, 2016), highlighting barriers for families when their cultural and social capital are not legitimised within the school (Lareau, 2015). In a New Zealand context, Fa’avae (2017) observes how teachers continue to view minoritised learners in a deficit light despite professional development to counter this issue.

As this vignette illustrates, schools across the country must plan how to develop effective communication strategies with families. The application of a communities of practice lens can help explore power dynamics in home-school relationships (Flavell, 2021). This is an increasingly popular approach both in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally. One important focus of these communities of practice could be how to engage parents with the reporting process, considering how best to stimulate active participation and collaborative dialogue (Tongati’o et al., 2016a,b). This article uses vignettes to explore the power dynamics of home-school partnerships. Vignette texts provide space for the imagined characters and, therefore, us, the authors, to assert opinions, test and revise theories, raise misgivings and draw conclusions. Vignettes offer the writer and reader a forum to disrupt understandings, explore tentative suggestions, and imagine alternative possibilities by forging a creative space within the text. We draw on our experiences of doctoral research with teachers of Māori learners (Fish, 2020) and Pacific learners and families (Flavell, 2019, Cunningham, 2019), and work from our position as Pākehā educators, with a responsibility to our relationship with the Māori and Pacific communities we work alongside.

With a communities of practice framework in mind, we consider how educators might need to embrace discomfort when they re-evaluate their positioning to strengthen connections with families. We provide an overview of key ideas within communities of practice as outlined by a major proponent, Etienne Wenger (Wenger, 1998). Drawing on these ideas, we argue that a shift in positioning may be necessary for many schools so that their endeavours to engage with

families and communities are fruitful and do not exacerbate any feelings of exclusion amongst families. This article brings practical insights and offers suggestions for how inequities could be avoided by authentically drawing from Indigenous frameworks of relationality. While this article is focused on work in Aotearoa New Zealand, it offers relevant learning for education systems with similar social and historical contexts, where Indigenous students are currently minoritised.

KEY IDEAS IN COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Etienne Wenger (1998) studied workplaces to learn how individuals informally group for a common purpose, sharing social practices to promote mutual understanding. The use of a communities of practice framework to explore various educational contexts, such as professional development for teachers (Bickmore et al., 2021; Hunter, 2010), student teachers on school placements (Johnston, 2016), learning experiences in the classroom (Voskoglou, 2019), and educator and community partnerships (Hart et al., 2013), demonstrates its usefulness in the educational context.

The vignette above illustrates one example of the numerous situations in our daily lives where we congregate with others to interact in a purposeful manner. Wenger's theory of communities of practice is founded on the social constructionist principle that we gain an understanding of the world through social interaction. This principle acknowledges how a continuous process of interpreting, responding to, and predicting others' actions helps individuals to make sense of their surroundings (Gergen & Gergen, 2004; Wenger, 1998). Learning, Wenger argues, is fundamental to daily life because we are continually trying to establish meaning within given social contexts (Wenger, 1998). Thus, according to Wenger, learning is closely interconnected to identity formation; opportunities to learn and develop who we are, to grow as individuals, are subject to the quality of the interactions that we engage in as a part of everyday life (Bronfenbrenner, 1995; Wenger, 1998). We learn through our 'mutual engagement' with others in a common pursuit (Wenger, 1998, p. 73; 2000, p. 229). The word "mutual" indicates a degree of trust and familiarity in how people socially interact as they participate in a shared interest (Wenger, 2000, p. 230). It is this shared interest or "joint enterprise" which draws individuals together into a community of people who, because of the common interest, hold each other accountable for the way they conduct themselves (Wenger, 1998, p. 77; 2000, p. 229). This does not mean, necessarily, that there is homogeneity or harmony. Tensions and different perspectives may arise, but a shared sense of purpose helps individuals to act with a degree of responsibility towards one another. Returning to the vignette, the meeting could be one of the numerous communities of practice in which teachers and school leaders engage as part of their work. This particular community is drawn together with a shared focus on the engagement of families in the reporting process.

LEARNING THROUGH ENGAGING IN SOCIAL PRACTICES

In pursuit of common endeavour, Wenger (1998) argues, individuals share practices to find commonality to help them process understandings. These could include specific actions, use of language, documents or processes, or more tacit and subtle practices where common views are held but not openly expressed (like knowing when it is appropriate to hold a conversation). These practices are subject to continual negotiation through relationships with others and are, therefore, open to interpretation. They are key to our sense-making and relationship-building. Our familiarity with them helps us to connect with others, facilitating learning opportunities as we endeavour to make sense of our surroundings (Wenger, 1998). Wenger uses the term

reification to explain how certain processes or routines take on symbolic meaning; these processes may involve documents, artefacts or storytelling. Reification can be a helpful shortcut, representing prior negotiated meaning and enabling the negotiation of further meaning (Farnsworth et al., 2016; Wenger, 1998).

Thus, returning to our vignette, the established pattern of a lunchtime meeting permits a basis of familiarity upon which sense-making can be established. For example, the seating arrangement of the senior staff indicates those who will initiate discussion, enabling a momentum of exchange to unfold according to a set of established protocols. Ideally, if all can engage in mutually productive interaction, drawing on common practices to promote ideas with the understanding that these ideas are acknowledged and absorbed by others, then there are rich learning opportunities—individually and collectively (Wenger, 1998).

However, let's return to the meeting. The deputy principal continues:

'Mmm, I appreciate that some families may be very unsure of our new system. An over reliance on technology is going to be off-putting for some of our parents in the first instance. But I think as they wrap their heads around it they'll see the benefits of its interactive nature. You know, they'll be able to check grades, see progress, and ask questions if they don't understand. That's why I want this evening to be as welcoming as possible, make our families feel comfortable so they are not afraid to ask questions.'

Kim, who'd only been at the school since the start of the term, was not sure if this was the best forum to raise her concerns. She was actually wondering about the school's approach to connecting with the Māori and Pacific families whose students she was teaching. From her observations so far, families were much more comfortable receiving information at less formal, community events. She wondered about busy working families and about those who had limited access to the internet at home. While she felt sure the management team had thought about these things, she was not sure if there would be an opportunity to discuss the arrangements. Kim wondered, 'If I'm feeling unsure, how will our parents feel?' As she began to raise her hand, the bell rang and her question was drowned out by the scrape of chairs.

The level of engagement in a community of practice is influenced by the degree of competence with which the participant can engage in the relevant social practices (Wenger, 1998; 2000). We may initially participate on the periphery of a community or group of people and later become fully participating and knowledgeable members (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The more opportunities we have to participate in and engage with the practices of a given community, the more opportunities we have to learn; and the more competent and familiar we are with the core practices of the community, the greater our sense of belonging.

In this second vignette, we see staff discussing how they can facilitate an opportunity for family and community members to engage with the practices of the school. Specifically, to come to a meeting, much like the one they were currently conducting and engage with the school's digital data systems. The vignette suggests staff want to facilitate what Wenger would describe as mutually productive interaction, where participants use common practices to share ideas, understanding that these ideas will be acknowledged and absorbed by others. Staff are seeking mutual engagement with a clear joint enterprise—to strengthen teaching and learning and raise student achievement. Staff express their desire for family and community to learn, to become familiar and comfortable with the school's systems of engagement and data sharing. At the same time, they hope participants will share their desires for data sharing. In Wenger's construction of communities of practice, this hoped-for mutual interaction provides opportunities for individual and collective growth and avoids non-participation that can lead to (feelings of) powerlessness and marginalisation.

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE AS CULTURAL CONSTRUCTIONS

In the vignette, staff are fulfilling the role of ‘broker’ as described by Wenger (1998, 2000). Brokers can help move knowledge and shift ideas between communities of practice (Wenger, 1998, p. 105; 2000, p. 235). They play a valuable role in ensuring that individuals and the groups they belong to do not remain entrenched with fixed ideas but are open to considering new approaches and continued learning. In this vignette, staff acting as brokers are working to move family and community participants from the periphery of the community of practice to a more central position. This requires participants to gain experience with the school’s systems to reimagine and reposition themselves and thus participate in the negotiation of meaning. Wenger (1998, 2000) maintains it is the quality of the relationships the broker forms with others that particularly affects the mutually productive interactions, the transfer of knowledge and the negotiation of meaning.

Let’s return to Hapori School and see how the staff’s plan might actually work in practice:

“*Pō Marie whaea*, you’re in the right place, come and get a cup of tea, we’re just about to start.” Kim welcomed Mele into the warm classroom and poured her a cup of tea. “Have you come straight from work?”

“Yes, thanks, I didn’t have time to go home and change. Alisi’s got the little ones in the car.” Mele sat down and looked around the circle of chairs.

There was Paul, who had invited her, sitting behind a table with his laptop open and speaking quietly to the Deputy Principal. Paul, whose daughter played netball with her girl, Alisi, had told her that they would value her input to the group and that the school was really interested to know what Mele wanted in the school reports. But Mele wasn’t sure what she could add. She had only ever come into the school to meet the teachers for Parent/Teacher night and to support Alisi at Fiefia Night.

As Paul called the meeting to order, he invited Rev. P. to open with prayer and Mele settled into the familiar words. As soon as the minister had finished, Mrs Hedges, the Deputy Principal who Mele recognised from the netball courts, began to speak.

“Thanks Reverend and thanks for coming everyone, it’s great to have you here. We appreciate that everyone is busy and so won’t keep you too long. Tonight, we want to focus our discussion on the planning that we have been doing around our new reporting system. It would be good to hear what you think would be the best categories for reporting. But first, I’ll just quickly run through some of the features of the software we’re using so that we all understand the constraints we’re working within.”

When we look carefully at Wenger’s description of broker, someone who shifts entrenched ideas and creates openings for new learning, it becomes clear that the staff members’ understanding of their role as brokers will shape how the community of practice functions.

The vignettes describe staff working as brokers who perceive their job to be familiarising family and community members with the systems and artefacts of the school and moving them towards more central participation. This view of the role of brokers and communities of practice normalises a centripetal pattern that assumes participants will move from legitimate peripheral participation in a community towards fuller participation and occupying a more central position. Within this pattern, the broker’s role is to facilitate this centripetal movement. A similar centripetal pattern of movement can be seen in educational applications of Bronfenbrenner’s (1979, 1995) ecological system, Vygotsky’s (1978) zone of proximal development and apprenticeship models of learning (Rogoff, 1990; Rogoff et al., 2003; Schoenbach et al., 2003). The ubiquity of a centripetal pattern of movement in these widely used theories of practice means that the value of a centripetal movement within a community of practice has come to be

assumed and accepted as the intention (Fish, 2020). The opening vignettes that describe the planning meeting demonstrate the staff members' understanding of their role as brokers in facilitating *whānau*¹ movement from peripheral to central engagement. If school staff understand their role as brokers facilitating this centripetal movement, they will work to familiarise parents with the school and integrate them into the practices of the school. For example, at this meeting, the Deputy Principal shares information about the school's software so that parents understand how reporting will work—understanding the software allows parents to contribute ideas about how it could be used to report achievement.

For participants in a community of practice like the one at Hapori School, a centripetal pattern of participation assumes that when parents first join the group, they would observe how the meetings ran, who spoke when, in what register, and what was open for discussion. As participants become familiar and knowledgeable about the context and practices of the community, they participate more confidently and move towards the centre of practices. For example, Mele has observed the central role of the Deputy Principal to organise the agenda and structure the discussion. A centripetal pattern of participation would assume that as Mele became familiar with this community of practice, she could speak to the different issues during the meeting, ask for items to be put on the agenda and then possibly take on a specific role within the group. In the pattern of the centripetal process is the assumption that learners begin on the periphery, and as they gain experience and mastery, they move to the centre of a community of practice. If the brokers within a community of practice assume that this centripetal movement is an important and valuable goal, then they will work to shift thinking and create openings that allow for family and community participants to move into the community of practice of the school.

IDENTIFYING ASSUMPTIONS AND INEQUITIES

Our brief analysis identifies how the Hapori School Community of Practice structure reinforces two assumptions that create inequity. First, the community of practice reinforces many cultural constructs of mainstream schooling and positions them as neutral or naturally occurring. For example, the use of the agenda, the digital data system and the Deputy Principal steering the meeting. In these vignettes and analyses, the artefacts of the community of practice are shown to be negotiated before community involvement and, therefore, are exclusionary, limiting family and community involvement in any further negotiation of understandings. Secondly, the analysis reveals the power dynamics of peripheral and central participation and the assumption that central participants have the power to broker processes, interactions and learning. The assumptions of a culturally constructed education system and a centripetal movement in participation produces inequities. The inequities arise because the burden is placed on new participants to reimagine and adapt their practices to access the system's benefits. For example, for Mele to have her priorities for student success be acknowledged, implemented and reported to her, she must first learn and master the patterns of participation in this community.

If it is an inequitable assumption that those unfamiliar with the cultural constructs of the education system need to reimagine their practices to become competent and move towards the centre of practice, how can these assumptions be disrupted?

¹ See glossary at the end of the article for explanation of non-English terms.

DRAWING ON INDIGENOUS FRAMEWORKS

Hoani Te Rangiāniwaniwa Rangihau’s graphic description of Māoritanga (Figure 1), as presented by Dean Mahuta (2005), is thought-provoking when considered in response to the question of disrupting assumptions. His description of Māoritanga locates Pākehātanga in a peripheral position. A kaupapa Māori perspective of this description would maintain that this is appropriate positioning (Smith, 2012). This perspective does not exclude productive interactions between Pākehā and Māori but maintains that it is inappropriate for Pākehā to engage in centripetal movement in this context. This example and perspective demonstrate that a permanent peripheral position is a legitimate role within a system of relationships or community of practice.

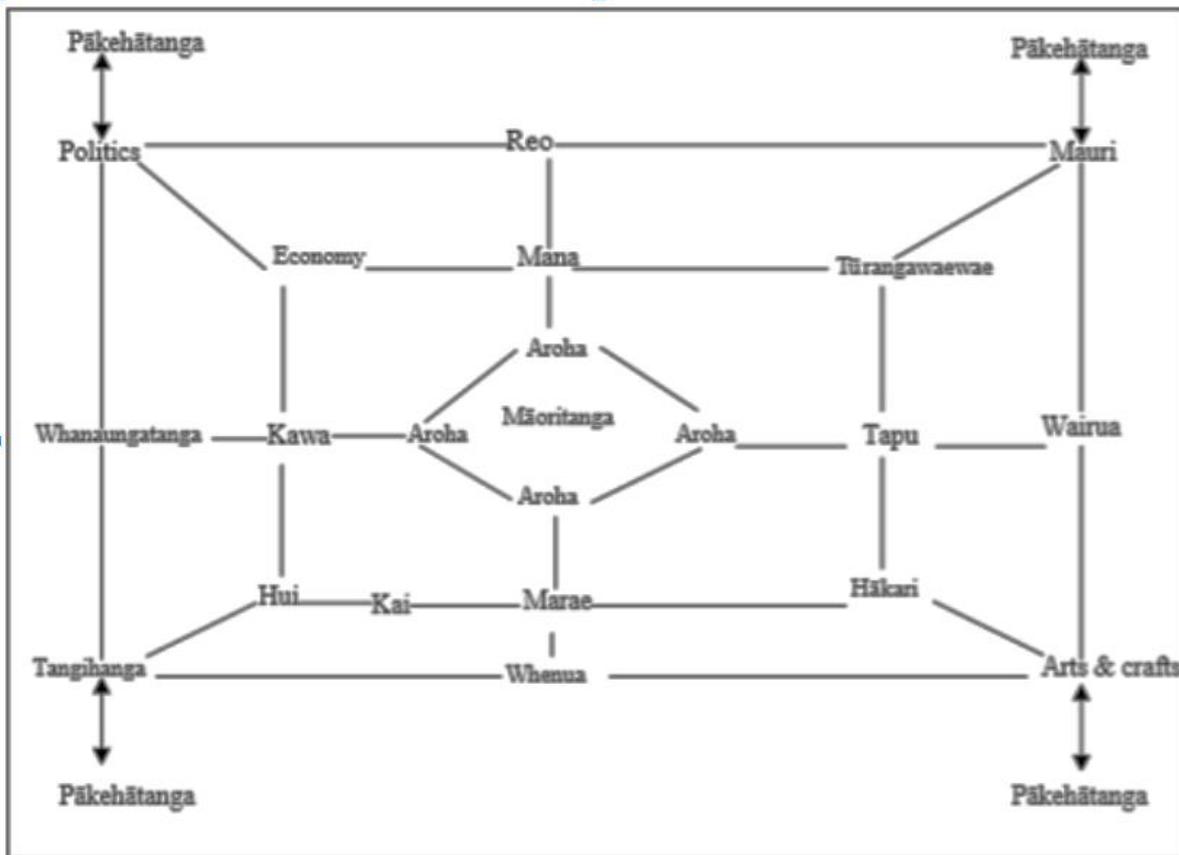


Figure 1: Hoani Te Rangiāniwaniwa Rangihau’s Graphic Depiction of Te Ao Māori.
 Source: Mahuta, D. (2005). *Ko taku rau kotahi* [Unpublished master’s thesis]. University of Otago, p. 3.

Rangihau’s indigenous perspective also suggests that inequitable assumptions within the structure of communities of practice can, and should, be disrupted and reimagined. To demonstrate how this can work in practice, let’s turn for a moment to another community of practice. This community consisted of 18 teachers from one school, who met regularly with the joint enterprise of strengthening teachers’ culturally sustaining practice with Māori students. The group was facilitated by one of the authors, Lindsay, and had been meeting for more than a year.

Lindsay introduced Rangihau’s graphic depiction of Māoritanga to her colleagues. Using this lens to look at their work created contrast and allowed teachers to identify their current understanding of Māori communities as occupying the periphery of their educational

community. Clarifying this current perspective then enabled teachers to reimagine and understand themselves in a different position. Through discussion of Rangihau's graphic, teachers came to understand themselves as agents of the mainstream (Pākehā) education system and that, in this role, they were positioned on the periphery of their Māori students' world.

Decentering, in this way, can be uncomfortable for participants who are used to occupying central positions within a system. However, using a model that names and permanently positions Pākehā on the periphery gave teachers in the community of practice an opportunity to disrupt assumptions creating inequity. It also opened up space for reimagining practice and structures differently.

One example of this changed pattern of practice occurred when a teacher in the community of practice used the framework to re-evaluate the texts that were being valued in her literacy class (Fish, 2020). Previously, the teacher had introduced the study of Suzanne Collins's novel 'The Hunger Games' (2008) by describing story archetypes and the classical story of Theseus and the Minotaur. Having used Rangihau's framework to rethink the web of relationships operating in and around her classroom, the teacher instead invited students to take their summary of the Theseus story and discuss it at home. Students asked friends and family a specific question: 'What does this story remind you of?' The ideas brought back were centred in class as valued objects of knowledge. This created a rich discussion of traditional and contemporary stories, books, pūrākau, films, family legends and personal experiences. These discussions then formed the basis for studying the novel. This changed approach centred on students' experiences and communities, and the teacher's understanding of story archetypes remained peripheral.

The use of Rangihau's framework within the community of practice and this example of how it created shifts in one teacher's thinking and practice suggests that drawing on indigenous frameworks can support communities of practice to disrupt inequitable assumptions and make positive changes to practice. In seeking to strengthen the communities of practice in schools and reduce the inequities produced by unchallenged assumptions, we asked how further engagement with Indigenous models of practice might support this.

In his discussion of communities of practice, Wenger (2000) highlights that the quality of the relationships is crucial in affecting knowledge transfer. This observation aligns with the principles and values embodied in Pacific research frameworks. Quality relationships and partnerships offer the potential for new understanding to develop, fostering greater openness (Burnett, 2018). When we consider the criticality of quality relationships and the brokerage of knowledge between schools and their communities, it is clear that the imbalance of power in mainstream school settings can create barriers to forming and sustaining equitable relationships (Rodriguez, 2013). Research evidence highlights the importance of partnerships between schools and their communities, and they are promoted as critical to students' academic success (Brooking, 2007; Fan & Chen, 2001). However, despite using terms like partnership which, according to Bastiani (2018), should imply shared purpose, negotiation and mutual respect, home-school relationships may often be more adversarial, focused on rights and power. In agreement, Christenson and Sheridan (2001) highlight that 'there is still more rhetoric than reality about family and school working together as genuine partners' (p. 18). Looking critically at the communities of practice established in mainstream schools through applying Pacific values can move practice from rhetoric to reality.

When we look carefully at what is going on at Hapori College, we can see the rhetoric of the school leaders: 'So let's do our best to make this an inclusive evening for our parents, shall we?', but this rhetoric is not translated into a reality where a partnership is meant to characterise

the relationships. Mele does not feel in a position to contribute her knowledge. This analysis reveals how staff within school settings protect themselves from feelings of discomfort and maintain control by seeking to replicate practices that promote schooling (Adelman, 1992). In our example from Hapori College, we see this protection and control in having one person speaking from the front and using a rigid agenda. When staff do this, their comfort and control are maintained at the expense of family and community participants' feelings of comfort and potential partnership. It is family and community who are expected to reimagine their practice to move into central positions of participation rather than the staff being required to reimagine their practice. How might authentic engagement with key values from Pacific research frameworks shift schools' practice from rhetoric to reality and transform interactions between schools and their communities to create opportunities for shared understanding?

PACIFIC CONCEPTS OF CARE AND RELATIONALITY

This section draws on scholarship on those values in the context of Pacific research as articulated by Anae et al. (2001), Airini et al. (2010) and Va'ai (2017). The values of respect, reciprocity and relationships are useful when considering how to reframe the dominant ways in which schools often engage with their communities and have the potential to ensure interactions are built on a relational foundation. Pacific research frameworks are founded on key principles of respect, reciprocity and relationship building between the researcher and participants (Anae, 2016). For the purpose of this article, the values of respect, reciprocity and relationships are focused on providing insights into how these values could be utilised within communities of practice and engagement with school communities. A common factor across comparative education systems is for educators to 'add snippets of cultural knowledge and practices' (Santamaria & Hoskins, 2015, p. 80) to their practices rather than acknowledge the cultural knowledge of their students and communities is valid and valuable. If education systems wish to promote diversity of pedagogical practices, 'they must place value on other ways of knowing' (Louie et al., 2017, p. 19). When enacted within a community of practice, prioritising relationships and reciprocity authentically ensures that patterns of practice and artefacts are negotiated in relationship with one another, ensuring that previously negotiated practices and knowledge do not work to exclude or invalidate participants' existing cultural values.

Relationality is a central focus in Pacific research and is prioritised to keep the balance between the researcher and participants (Va'ai, 2017). Airini et al. (2010) offer ethical guidance in the space of Pacific education through the Samoan reference *teu le vā*. Anae (2010), in the context of Pacific education research in Aotearoa New Zealand, has proposed the Samoan concepts of the *vā* and *teu le vā* to guide the development of quality relationships between all involved in the research process. The *vā*, meaning 'the sacred space that exists between researchers and researched and *teu le vā*, meaning to nurture and to tidy up' (p. 12). Well-balanced relationships are those where *teu le vā* is occurring, where there is a focus on "secular and sacred commitments, guiding reciprocal 'acting in' and respect for relational spaces" (Anae, 2016, p. 117). Expressions of care embedded in Pacific research approaches can usefully be applied to communities of practice, particularly those working to create home-school relationships. Recognition of the importance of relationality and relationships provides a means through which schools can reimagine communities of practice, achieving greater equity between schools and their communities in decision-making and engagement. One such approach that allows schools to enact *teu le vā* is adopting a spirit of hospitality (Va'ai, 2017).

ADOPTING A SPIRIT OF HOSPITALITY

Beginning with a spirit of hospitality (Va'ai, 2017) requires communities of practice to reimagine engagement with relationships at the centre. Approaching an encounter with a spirit of hospitality requires school leaders to put the well-being of family and community participants first and do this at the expense of their own comfort and convenience. A spirit of hospitality begins with understanding that staff will reimagine communities of practice to ensure that family and community can participate without having to learn patterns of participation previously negotiated by the school. In practice, this means schools and communities working together to attain balance and harmony within interconnections and relationships, including expectations and communication. Working together means shifting the emphasis to include processes associated with making, growing and thriving within good and ideal relationships (Airini et al., 2010; Wenger, 1998).

If the lens of a spirit of hospitality were applied to the Hapori College community of practice, it would require a review of many of the practices and artefacts, including the school-driven agenda that places the parent community on the periphery in the *hui* rather than as central, active and agentic (Blanchet-Cohen & Reilly, 2017). For example, the *hui* is opened with a *karakia*, and then the agenda quickly moves on. Santamaria (2009) describes the use of practices in this way as a surface-level cultural acknowledgement, which implies that actions taking place are done as a means to an end. A spirit of hospitality would allocate time for introductions and establishing connections between one another. Making the relationships rather than the agenda the priority of the meeting creates a space where participants can make genuine contributions.

Turning to another community of practice that one of the authors, Emma, had been involved with for several years demonstrates how adopting a spirit of hospitality can reimagine and realign a communities of practice framework. The community of practice that Jane was involved with was focused on developing and sustaining partnership with the schools' Māori and Pacific parent community. The partnership involved regular *hui* focused on the joint enterprise of supporting parents with literacy-related skills and strategies they could use with their *whānau*. School staff, led by Emma and several Māori and Pacific teachers, attended to support and facilitate. During the evening workshops, the facilitators intentionally fostered a spirit of hospitality by targeting potential constraints that may have prevented families from attending and participating. For example, kai and hot drinks were served. This provision removed the pressure for families to have dinner before or after the meeting and facilitated a forum for fellowship and relationship-building before the *hui* began. Childcare was also provided, parents with small children were welcome to have their children attend the *hui* in the staff room, or they could be supervised by staff. Again, this provision removed pressure on families to organise childcare to attend and made the rhetoric of a family-centred approach a reality.

Within the meetings themselves, the priorities of families were given precedence. At the initial meetings, families were asked what they would like the community of practice to focus on. This approach meant that families' priorities were placed at the centre of the community of practice. Family and community participants were not required to learn new patterns of practice or become familiar with school artefacts to influence the priorities of the meetings or make contributions. A primary purpose was for families to build on their existing repertoire of literacy activities. Families attended together, meaning adults and children could develop literacy activities during the meetings and negotiate patterns of practice they could use together at home. This practice addressed a priority identified by families at the initial meeting. The patterns of

practice and negotiated artefacts in this community of practice describe an approach that draws on a spirit of hospitality and prioritises family and community relationships.

Adopting a spirit of hospitality would generate changes in the community of practice at Hapori College. Potential changes would include providing time and space for building relationships, creating space for everyone to speak and contribute, and ensuring that family and community priorities take precedence. For example, rather than adopting a new reporting system and then working as brokers to teach families about its capabilities, a spirit of hospitality would begin by asking families about their priorities for tracking student achievement and reporting. The community of practice would begin with canvassing the community and drawing on parents' knowledge and priorities. Within the meetings, a spirit of hospitality would provide food and childcare so that these pressures were removed from families and the meeting would have been held at a time that best suited most families without causing a rush. Drawing on a spirit of hospitality to disrupt settled approaches to communities of practice pushes schools to prioritise family and community connection, participation and contribution over school-brokered priorities.

CONCLUSION

As theorised by Wenger, communities of practice are an increasingly popular model for educational partnerships internationally and are becoming a settled approach to home-school partnerships within Aotearoa New Zealand schools. Communities of practice offer the potential for positive and productive relationships. However, when they centre staff and school priorities, communities of practice also have the potential to reinforce inequity. This occurs when communities of practice incorporate patterns of practice and artefacts negotiated before family and community involvement, and staff act as brokers who draw participants into the pre-established patterns of practice. In this model of communities of practice, the comfort of staff and concerns of the school are prioritised, while community and family participants must reimagine and adapt their practices to participate in central roles. By critically examining how communities of practice operate in Aotearoa New Zealand schools, we have argued that the patterns of practice found in Pacific frameworks of relationality can be drawn on to strengthen communities of practice. The learning from these patterns of practice and how they are applied in schools has relevance for communities of practice in other similar education systems. In particular, when schools are willing to embrace discomfort and begin authentic engagement in a spirit of hospitality, it creates space for equitable and productive relationships to flourish.

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GLOSSARY:

Fiafia Night	a community night of Pacific cultural performance and celebration
Hui	meeting
Kai	food
Karakia	prayers
Kaupapa Māori	Māori principles, values and knowledge
Māori	Indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand
Māoritanga	Māori culture, practices and beliefs
Pākehā	The Māori language term for white settlers to Aotearoa New Zealand
Pākehātanga	Pākehā culture, practices and beliefs
“Pō Maire, whaea.”	“Good evening, aunty.” <i>Whaea</i> is a term of address for a woman of an older generation.
Pūrakau	traditional stories
Te ao Māori	the Māori world
Teu le vā	to nurture the sacred space
Vā	The metaphorical space that connects all aspects of life, both animate and inanimate (Wendt, 1999).
Whānau	family



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Social Capital is Critical to Perseverance at University during COVID-19: Pasifika Students in Fiji, New Zealand and Solomon Islands Universities

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This study investigated how university students in Pacific Island contexts coped with the shift to remote learning caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers aimed to investigate the social capital of a group of Pasifika university students in Fiji, New Zealand and Solomon Islands universities during COVID-19 and how they coped with the rapid shift to remote learning. Social capital refers to building relationships and networks to deal with collective issues in the present and future. The researchers used tokstori to collect data from Solomon Islands students and talanoa in New Zealand. Sixteen Solomon Islanders participated in tokstoris and ongoing Pasifika students' talanoa and faikava (kava consumption) to share concerns and challenges to their academic studies and lives. Deductive in nature, the analysis found that communication with fellow students, often via digital media, and interaction with supportive staff helped their success.

Furthermore, getting in touch with the family and following COVID-19 protective practices helped students adjust positively. Being able to 'tap' the social resources within these spaces helped build perseverance, resilience and strong social capital. The research findings show the importance of individuals, student communities and institutions consciously strengthening social networks among students during a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: social capital; social trust; social network; social norms

INTRODUCTION

The imposed COVID-19 pandemic requirements, such as physical distancing and lockdowns, risked depleting social capital. In education, digital media has become useful for connecting students and teachers isolated from each other. Ratuva (2021, p. 194) called the mobilisation of the school community and taking collective action in the face of the pandemic the building of 'communal capital' in the Pacific Islands. This study set out to investigate how the existence of social capital influenced Pasifika university students in the Pacific Islands and New Zealand in how they dealt with the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated shift to remote learning.

By mid-2022, most Pacific Island countries had officially recorded cases of COVID-19, though, in the Federated States of Micronesia and Marshall Islands, the cases were in quarantine (Australia Pacific Security College, 2022), and Tokelau and the Pitcairn Islands recorded no cases. By mid-2022, most countries had also relaxed their quarantine restrictions and some countries, such as Fiji and the Solomon Islands, had reopened their international borders (Australia Pacific Security College, 2022). Pacific Island countries differed in their COVID-19 pandemic experiences, with some having earlier encounters with the pandemic and more infections and deaths than others. Regardless, the pandemic has had economic, political and social impacts on the Pacific Islands, with the full effects likely still to be gauged (Bell et al., 2022). The education system, schools, teachers and students were not spared the impacts of COVID-19. For example, during the pandemic, Fiji early childhood teachers were concerned about their employment, health, and safety (Dayal & Tiko, 2020). Teachers were also concerned about their students' health, safety and impeded learning. They connected with their students through Viber app groups, Zoom and email. They met with parents and students at the beginning of the pandemic and decided what they would do (Dayal & Tiko, 2020). The meetings were instances of teachers, parents and students working together to find solutions to student learning during a pandemic. Similar meetings would have played out throughout the Pacific Islands.

LITERATURE REVIEW

'Social capital refers to an investment in social relations with expected returns' (Freeman & Condrón, 2011, p. 523). Tzanakis (2013) noted that the scholars Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam had similar views on social capital but differing underlying ideologies on the concept. Bourdieu emphasised durable networks and the potential for accumulating social profit. Coleman views social capital as a collective resource for an instrumental purpose and goal, and a public good. Bourdieu sees social capital as a scarce resource and often a conduit for class reproduction and various inequalities. Putnam defines social capital in terms of the amount of trust and civic engagement. Tzanakis states that social capital involves *bridging*, which entails an expansion of networks and *bonding* and refers to increased cohesion. This study incorporates Putnam's (1994) conception of social capital: 'such as networks, norms and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit' (p. 7). A community with a rich civic engagement history will also have strong networks. A community with rich civic engagement also fosters reciprocity, trust and norms. Social capital is a moral resource for the public good (Putnam, 1994). This study focuses on universities and students and how social capital facilitated their success during COVID-19.

Elgar, Stefaniak and Wohl (2020) used four dimensions of the social capital theory—trust, group affiliations, civic responsibility and confidence in public institutions—to analyse the differences in the spread of COVID-19 in 84 countries around the world. They found that countries that lacked one or more of the dimensions of social capital had more deaths. Social capital refers to having shared social resources due to relationships with mutual acquaintances (Elgar et al., 2020). Song and Lin (2009) surveyed 2,835 Taiwanese and found that social capital is important to social support and helps to avoid depression. Rodriguez-Pose and Berlepsch (2014) surveyed 45,583 individuals across 25 European countries on the relationship between social capital and happiness. They found that social capital influences happiness across the dimensions of trust, social interaction and norms with notable salience of informal social interactions. Mohnen, Volker, Flap, Subramanian and Groenewegen (2015) also found that face-to-face or phone contact with friends and non-household members had a positive

relationship with health. Thus, having a genuine social network during times of crisis, such as those instigated by COVID-19, is important.

Investing in 'true friends' and collaborative partners is salient because 'individuals with greater social capital have better health outcomes. Investment in social capital likely increases one's social capital, bearing greater implications for disease prevention and health promotion' (Chen et al., 2015, p. 669). Chen and his collaborators found that, with increasing social capital, there are lower stress levels, which resulted in better health outcomes. Portela, Neira and Salinas-Jimenez (2013) studied the correlation between well-being and social capital and found that social networks, social trust and institutional trust positively affect one's well-being. They claim that each country has a level of social capital that affects individuals' and institutions' well-being. A country's lack of social cohesion can result from inadequate social capital to hold it together strongly. Countries with strong social ties and trust will be better able to address poverty and lacklustre development (Portela et al., 2013). Cheung and Chan (2010) emphasised that help and services that rely on exchange and reciprocity are desirable. Individuals and institutions draw on exchanges for productivity via formal rewards and benefits. If individuals and institutions invest in social relations, they benefit. Interestingly, Cheung and Chan (2010) found that trust does not seem to influence morale or necessarily ensure the quality of benefits. Reciprocity and exchange, however, do influence social capital (Cheung & Chan, 2010).

Besides the online environment, which was critical during the shift to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, the physical environment is salient for developing social capital. For example, play parks, collaborative workspaces, or opportunities and spaces for school children to socialise can build social capital. How schools are planned and managed matters, and social and public policies have a role in building social capital in schools and their communities (Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004). The virtual environment is also critical for building social capital and can be fostered online through strong, appropriate and consistent online community membership (Solomon, 2013), requiring prompt replies to posts and valuing constructive feedback. A lecturer needs to be proactive in a university setting and initiate ongoing exchanges and conversations. The lecturer must also acknowledge students' participation and engage with them positively.

Dufur, Parcel and McKune (2008) found that the home and school influence children's social capital, with the home being more influential. Investments in social ties reap better social adjustment for children, allowing them to interact effectively with society. Despite spending a substantial time of their day at school, children's behaviour often stems from upbringing at home: 'Social capital, then, explains the mechanisms and processes by which bonds between children and other actors, such as their parents or their teachers, produce desirable outcomes' (Dufur et al., 2008, p. 148). Schaefer-McDaniel (2004) believes that social capital among young people consists of social networks/interactions and sociability, trust and reciprocity, and a sense of belonging/place attachment. To improve students' academic achievements, developing strong social capital at school is vital and can be achieved through robust social relationships between parents, teachers and students. Parents or guardians are too often neglected in their important roles of contributing to positive social capital. A strong school community can be achieved through trust and reciprocity among all. Parents and members of the school community and the networks they create can be considered a resource and collective asset that can benefit student learning and experiences (Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004). Schaefer-McDaniel (2004) emphasised the significance of encouraging rather than coercing young people to participate in the activities of organisations and schools. Young people benefit from social capital because it promotes academic success, quality of school environment, reduced stress and development of democratic participation among children (Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004).

In another perspective of social capital, Freeman and Condrón (2011) conclude that social capital and social class affect children's performance at school, particularly if there are weak ties. The unequal distribution of social capital based on social class is why children from working-class families often lag in their academic achievement (Freeman & Condrón, 2011). Thus, social capital exists within social relations, and schools can build trust, norms and social networks for better educational outcomes through cordial teacher-student, student-student and teacher-parent relationships (Vandelannote & Demanet, 2021). Vandelannote and Demanet (2021) stress that social capital is a public good, where everyone accruing it can benefit through the social network and resources they all bring to the school. A caring school community fosters a positive sense of belonging. Therefore, strong school-wide social capital can act as a positive mechanism to achieve outcomes that may not typically be achieved.

There are studies from other social contexts on the importance of social capital in students' learning during COVID-19 (e.g., Bartscher et al., 2021; Elgar et al., 2022; Pitas & Ehrer, 2020). Wong and Kohler (2020) reported on the salience of social capital at various levels of society to bolster the COVID-19 response by promoting virtual communities and building trust among the public and health systems. Arachi and Managi (2021) found that the elements of social capital conducive to avoiding COVID-19 deaths are family bonds and security. However, only relying on community interactions and trusting others caused more deaths. However, Fraser, Page-Tan, and Aldrich (2022) argued for the value of social capital in terms of trust, mutual aid and collective action to curb and recover from COVID-19. Therefore, social capital is relevant to policymakers for building population resilience for enduring the COVID-19 pandemic and other crises, such as climate change and natural disasters (Fraser et al., 2022). Wu (2021) points out that the aspects of social capital that were effective in the COVID-19 response were collective action, public acceptance of the protocols, and mobilising resources at the community level.

In the Pacific Islands, Nanau (2020) advocates for building social capital to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 through existing networks in Oceania, such as the *wantok* system, *Fa'a Samoa*, *Faka Tonga* and other similar notions in other countries. Family and relational support are critical to the Pacific Islands facing the challenges brought on by the pandemic. Such aspects of social capital are vital to providing a safety net for families in the Pacific Islands (Nanau, 2020). Ratuva (2021) adds that in many Pacific Island communities, it is important to strengthen social solidarity and the moral economy, especially when many lose employment. There is a need for communities in the Pacific Islands to nurture their 'communal capital' (Ratuva, 2021, p. 194) through kinship and solidarity to tackle COVID-19. This manifests itself in kinship networks, reciprocal assistance and shared land. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities in the market economy, and a return to communal capital is a social protection mechanism vital in times of crisis (Ratuva, 2021). In addition, Parc and Spieth (2020) state that the social capital in Pacific communities enabled people to stay on their feet before government and humanitarian assistance arrived. Communal life is an avenue for communal action during the COVID-19 pandemic (Parc & Spieth, 2020). Movono and Scheyvens (2022) found that people have increasingly worked together in times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, by engaging in *solesolevaki*, a Fijian term signifying communal work for the collective good with no direct individual return.

Theoretical framework

This study is framed through Bourdieu's (1986) social capital theory, which he defined as:

[The] aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintances and recognition—or in other words, to membership in a group—which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital, 'a credential' which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word. (p. 241)

Social capital is built on networks and relationships and maintained via symbolic exchanges within a social space. The volume of the social capital is related to the size of the agent's network of connections. It is important to reproduce social relationships to have durable obligations, respect and friendship (Bourdieu, 1986). Social capital encourages shared values in ongoing relationships to garner and solve collective issues. Thus, inherent in a network of friends is access to help in difficult times and being able to access new opportunities. Reciprocity and not taking advantage of each other are important to building strong social capital (Ostrom, 2009).

Harper (2002) agrees that social capital involves reciprocity, trust and having social institutions with support structures. Valuable to social capital are informal and formal networks formed at school, workplace, the local club or with neighbours (Harper, 2002). Social capital entails those who make up a social unit participating in mutual social intercourse and having genuine sympathy and goodwill for each other (Aldrich & Meyer, 2002). Alkather and Gan (2020) reiterate that critical to building social capital at schools is establishing and maintaining long-term relationships with diverse partners in society. Neira, Lacalle-Calderon, Portela, and Perez-Trujillo (2018) studied the components of social capital, such as trust, social network and norms of civic engagement and their relationship to subjective well-being (SWB) and found that all these dimensions influence the SWB of the person. SWB relies on how individuals evaluate their fulfilment and satisfaction on the three dimensions of trust, social network and norms of civic engagement.

Gittell and Vidal (1998) posited the notions of 'bonding' and 'bridging', and Aldrich (2011) advocated the element of 'linking' as dimensions of social capital. Kay (2006) explains that 'bonding' social capital is developed as a binding force between individuals, groups and organisations. 'Bridging' social capital occurs when an existing group reaches out creatively to other individuals, groups and organisations. 'Linking' social capital connects people of different levels of power, social class and status. Kay further stresses that social capital is the glue that sticks the community together. It is the grease that ensures things happen smoothly in the community. The primary dimensions of social capital that this study used in the analysis of students' experiences are based on the work of Neira et al.'s (2019) concepts of social trust, social network and social norms, as discussed earlier in this section.

METHODOLOGY

This study used the *tokstori* methodology (Sanga et al., 2017). *Tokstori* stems from *tok Pijin*, a language spoken in Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu, which developed after contact between the islanders and Europeans. Rumsey (2019) notes that Melanesia is the most linguistically diverse region in the world, with about 1,400 languages, making up 22% of world languages. Sanga et al. (2017) also describe the word *wantok*, used by Melanesian labourers who worked in plantations, as showing they are one community with a common basis for social interaction. The concept of social networks existed before European contact, but the *wantok* system underpins elements of Melanesianism. In other words, the *wantok* system is a relational network that attaches to the kin, the tribe or being from the same country. Relationality and reciprocity are key to the *tokstori* and involve an oral tradition in which there is dialogue over issues and

problems (Sanga et al., 2017). Sanga et al. (2017) added that ‘*tokstori*, then, is a Melanesian expression of commitment to togetherness manifest through engaging in *stori*, a shared narrative which dialogically constructs reality’ (p. 8). The *tokstori* is a contextual space to reclaim conversations on education and issues affecting local society. It should gather what people do, make and believe. When someone speaks the language to be used in the *tokstori*, it has the potential to collect information in the cultural and contextual setting and forms of language used, such as people’s metaphoric language (Sanga et al., 2017).

Tokstori involves interactions and relationships in which individuals can learn from each other to reshape their understanding of a phenomenon and make sense of their context. Traditionally, Solomon Islanders are suspicious of one another; thus, when a *tokstori* is organised, trust needs to be built. With trust, responses can be deep and rich. Often, the data derived from a *tokstori* can be plentiful since the sessions are not time bound and are ongoing. However, there is a need to be sensitive to the space, time and information provided (Sanga et al., 2017). ‘*Tokstori* is a form of discursive group communication which is an everyday occurrence in Melanesia’ (Sanga & Reynolds, 2018, p. 11). Even though it is discursive, developing relationships with participants is critical before engaging them in *tokstori*. In funded projects, this is imperative as there can often be a relational imbalance between the funder and recipients.

In the Eastern Pacific, *talanoa* is used. Halapua utilised both the *talanoa* and *tokstori* in the reconciliations of armed conflicts in the Solomon Islands (Sanga & Reynolds, 2018). Vaioleti (2006) states that from a Tongan perspective, *tala* can mean to tell, command or inform. *Noa* means ordinary and nothing in particular. *Talanoa* is a space for important conversations and a source of information from the community that can help in decision-making. It discourages rigidity and hegemonic control but encourages flexible and open adaptation to the context. The *talanoa* should be respectful and reciprocating in the conversations. Both the *talanoa* and the *tokstori* are relational and dialogic. It is important to view locals as experts. *Tokstori* can be viewed as a pedagogical tool, and, in the context of a professional development programme, it should be centred on person-development (Sanga & Reynolds, 2018). A *tokstori* should not only create but maintain relationships. Oral traditions can be found the world over, including the Australian Aboriginal yarning, the Hawaiian *talkstory*, or the *talanoa* in Tonga, Fiji, Samoa and elsewhere (Sanga & Reynolds, 2018). This study utilises a *tokstori* with ten participants in Suva and Honiara and various Pasifika students at a New Zealand University. We obtained consent from participants before beginning, and the *tokstori* took place over food and coffee.

The researchers used *tokstori* with the Solomon Islands students and the *talanoa* with Pasifika students in New Zealand. The features of relationality, connectedness, reciprocity, trust and togetherness are purported by social capital theory. The *tokstori* sessions went for more than an hour. Researchers guided the conversation to gain the information needed, but the *tokstori* continued with food. Those who wanted to leave excused themselves. The informal continuation of conversations often brought more information than would otherwise have been collected through rigid timekeeping.

Similarly, the *talanoa* sessions accompanied kava consumption and took time to finish. The sessions acted as data-gathering avenues and community-building spaces. These were existing *tokstori* and *talanoa* groups, so we asked permission to record the conversations for the sessions we wanted for this study, and the authors transcribed the recordings. Participants were a mixture of undergraduate and postgraduate students.

ANALYSIS: SOCIAL TRUST, SOCIAL NETWORK AND SOCIAL NORMS

This study is deductive in its analysis, using Neira et al.'s (2019) dimensions of social trust to organise information, as opposed to inductive analysis, where codes and categories emerge from the data itself (Bingham & Witkowsky, 2022). The dimensions of social capital are: social trust, social network and social norms and originate from Putnam's (1994) features of trust, norms, networks and reciprocity. These are considered useful to garner moral resources in times of need, such as the COVID-19:

Social trust

Social trust includes generalised trust, institutional trust and interpersonal trust. The quotes below show the challenges and positive resources students bring into their groups:

Gradually, when tutors were a little more lenient, that gave me more confidence. If they stuck to due dates, I would be in a lot of pressure but there was flexibility on extending assignments so we feel a lot more comfortable. (L1A)

We all know that this issue is one of the newest that we've experienced in COVID-19. It affected the world and it also affects us. In terms of learning, one of the advantages or pros was that I remained at home and focused on my work. I stay at home as everything is online and concentrated on assignments, which is nice. Feedback from lecturers is up to date. You give assignment and they give you feedback quickly. (L2A)

A disadvantage is that it's a new kind of learning. Most of the time, we can go to a lecturer and share our problems but during C19, you don't see the face of the lecturer. You contact through online. So having to go and tell your stories to a lecturer wasn't there. (L1B)

I think, online is good in some ways and you can concentrate on your studies. However, if you are new to the system, it can be hard as well. For those that's new to them, online is hard. But for me, because I know the system, online is fine. (L1C)

I also find it difficult when I emailed my lecturers for assistance and they did not respond to my emails for days. (L1D)

These quotations indicate that students gain institutional trust and confidence that universities will deal with emergency remote learning with flexibility and prompt feedback. On the other hand, institutional trust and confidence become diluted if individual staff cannot deal with students' queries promptly. Since this study involved only students, it is worth noting that staff may also encounter difficulties with the shift to remote learning and possibly the general restrictions that COVID-19 brought.

Social network

Social network includes informal relationships, volunteering, and organisational membership, which may be critical as many students have left their countries, families and friends to study. The personal impact could be telling, especially when COVID-19 brought with it global restrictions:

Two times, you are in a foreign land, purposely to study and you get stolen, it's something I will think about for a while. I couldn't eat. The first time, I reported it to the police, there was no response. For the second time, the whole day and the whole night I couldn't sleep. It affected me. I wasn't able to do the assignments. I was late. It was challenging especially when you are far away from home and in this kinds of situation, you need to be encouraged

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by your immediate family members. The good now is that I see my colleagues, our lecturers, and the interactions we have, has kept on encouraging me to come this far. (L1E)

And the other thing is I always liaise with my family back home so that it keeps me moving although I fear that this may cause us not to go back to the Solomons. So even if they are miles away, I attempt to contact them by phone and so forth. (L1E)

Personally, I would like to acknowledge you guys for your help in driving us forward, in an atmosphere where family are at home, parents are at home, we see you as leaders here, and this motivates us to push harder. The regular interactions we have and stories, have personally had an impact of me. That I have somebody who care for me here on my social and academic development here. So thank you doctors and staff of USP. These situations can be emotional, but your presence has been an encouragement and am sure my colleagues will say the same. (L1E)

I found it difficult at first but one of my wantoks who worked at the SI Telekom assisted me to access the USP website through the arrangement that was made. (L1F)

I cope by seeing online the health tips and follow those health tips and how your personal hygiene should be. All these help me to cope with the situation. And the other thing is I always liaise with my family back home so that it keeps me moving although I fear that this may cause us not to go back to the Solomons. So even if they are miles away, I attempt to contact them by phone and so forth. (L1E)

Having my family around during this COVID-19 period is also not helpful. I find it a bit difficult to focus on my studies because my children are not at school and I had to attend to their needs. (L2B)

It's a new normal and I will speak at the family level. The usual practice with us is, even when the times when things are normal, the family is used to just stay at the home. Therefore, there is no change in terms of experiencing that lockdown. It's just another normal. (L2B)

Three social networks can be summarised from the information above. The first social network involves the students' families. The roles they play are encouragement and impetus to study. The second is *wantoks* from whom students can seek advice and support. The third is through social media not only as a source of information about COVID-19 but also advice about the best way to deal with the new situation.

Social norms

Social norms entail shared norms of civic engagement and civic values, which are integral when students have to help each other cope with the sudden move to remote learning and operating online:

As the vice president, of the student body, I found it hard a little as you need up to date information to inform students from Solomon Islands. This is what's happening. This is what we should do. Plus, you are worried about due dates of the assignments. Things such as these can be difficult. You have to be up to date with information. Know the information yourself and pass those information to students. (L2C)

A good thing I learned from the online experience is it made me to be resilient. My hidden abilities came out. I took my own initiatives to manage my time so that I can be settled. I tried as much as possible to do my assignments, discuss in the forums, during the time frame. I tried to perform at a higher level, to discuss, to share ideas, through the online

mode. So the ability to work hard showed itself. This is a good thing I learned from this pandemic. (L2D)

I decided to return to my village because of this situation and was going to give up on my studies. I went through a period of uncertainty. Then as I reflected on my future when I was in my village, I decided to continue with my studies. I realised that I am responsible for my future and learning and that I must learn to adapt to this new mode of learning with the hope that I will later get used to this mode of study. (L1G)

I thought of getting away from Honiara and go home with my family, but then I thought of my children's education and access to health facilities here in Honiara. Then I listened to all those awareness through the media and through those advisories from the university then I decided to just stay in Honiara and to continue with my studies. Now, I do not feel the same as I did earlier. (L1D)

These quotations from participants showed three examples of social norms. The first pertains to civic responsibility towards peers from the same national background. The second relates to uncovering personal abilities and values. The third concerns the participants valuing the needs of others, such as the future of their children.

DISCUSSIONS

This study found that students gain institutional trust and confidence from universities that deal with emergency remote learning with flexibility and prompt feedback. However, trust and confidence in the institution are diluted if staff and the system do not promptly deal with students' queries. Kay (2006) supports the findings of this study by emphasising that trust in the institution is critical to students' success during the pandemic. He explains that trust is vital to any functioning institution. Social capital is intangible and may not be recognised unless made explicit, but its usefulness for a functional community cannot be understated. For example, if a local community lacks significant social networks, does not trust one another or has little mutuality and shared norms to work with, there will be a lack of cohesion resulting in continual social underdevelopment. It is imperative that people form social networks that encourage a sense of community and shared values. Kay further emphasised that trust is the most important element of social capital. There can be social networks and a sense of shared values, but if trust is not present, it will noticeably deplete social capital. However, trust can also be fragile, and mistrust could destroy the social capital built over time and take time to rebuild.

This study found students used three social networks during the quick shift to remote learning due to COVID-19. The first social network involved the family for encouragement and impetus to study. The second was *wantoks* from whom students could seek advice and support. The third was social media, which was a source of information about COVID-19 and the best way to deal with the new situation. Students also noted that with everyone staying at home, it could also be a challenge to have undisturbed time for studies. Pitas and Ehmer (2020) also found that the disruptions caused by COVID-19 and the need for physical distancing and lockdowns have diluted elements of social capital. They highlight the salience of individuals, communities and government institutions to strengthen social networks to curb the pandemic (Pitas & Ehmer, 2020). They also emphasise the importance of social capital to crisis management in situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the protective practices put in place due to COVID-19 have also compromised the social capital in many communities, caused by prolonged isolation, physical distancing, and the lack of face-to-face interaction. Simultaneously, there was a rise in digital communication via phone, chats, email, Zoom, and social media. These

digital mediums produce valuable social capital, but Pitas and Ehmer (2020) made the point that the face-to-face component cannot be neglected, and eventually, both ‘online and offline social capital’ (p. 943) are integral. Social connections within rules are vital to a collective response during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study found that participants evidenced social norms in three ways. The first pertains to civic responsibility towards peers from the same national and regional background. The second relates to uncovering personal abilities and values. The third concerns the participants valuing the needs of those other than themselves, such as the future of their children. These provided impetus for participants during the shift to remote learning to persevere. Bartscher et al. (2021), in an investigation of the health outcomes of Austria, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland concerning COVID-19 and social capital, found that there are health returns for strengthening social capital. Collectively adhering to socially recommended activities, such as limiting physical contact, wearing a mask and social distancing, are forms of social capital (Bartscher et al., 2021). Shared norms, values and understanding, including sanctions for what are not shared values, relate to individual and group attitudes (Harper, 2002). This study found that social norms ensured students had achievable expectations in the context of a swift conversation into online and remote learning.

This study has implications for universities and higher education institutions. The first is the importance of building students’ and stakeholders’ trust in the institution. It is important that universities show they can deal with sudden turbulence and uncertainty rigorously and successfully. The whole university system, including staff, is responsible for demonstrating the characteristics of a strong institutional image, including the staff. Students in this study liked it when staff spent time to *talanoa* with them and displayed empathy but disliked it when their queries were not answered or not replied to on time. Defeyter et al. (2021) termed this ‘recreancy’, which means ‘loss of societal trust that results when institutional actors can no longer be counted on to perform their responsibilities’ (p. 1). Defeyter gave an example about the importance of teaching staff performance, but performance can cover a myriad of areas, from food, housing, well-being, technology, enrolment and support services, to name a few. In other words, ‘social institutions are not trusted because institutional actors fail to carry out their obligations’ (Defeyter et al., 2021, p. 2). Thus, universities should aim to minimise creancy and the risk it brings with lowered trust and social capital. While this paper reports on student opinions, it should be noted that the wider institutional climate can have a major impact on the services of a university, which would also affect staff performance. The University of the South Pacific, since 2018, for instance, has continually undergone leadership and governance issues and rows that have had significant repercussions on the university's financial status (Sen, 2020).

Another implication is that universities in the Pacific should recognise the strength that comes from relying on the family as a source of support in times of difficulties and the *wantok* system (Nanau, 2020) or *Solesolevaki* (Movono & Schetvens, 2022) in Fijian, where work is done to help each other, not for individual benefit, but the common good. Kinships and relationships have always played important roles in the communal capital of Pacific societies, contributing to well-being, food security, and socio-cultural responsibilities. Whether the COVID-19 pandemic or a devastating cyclone, Veitata, Miyaji, Fujieda and Kobayashi (2020) found a strong family network, community cooperation (*solesolevaki*), and community leadership are integral to the social capital of the community, forming a valuable social safety net for the community.

Another finding of this study is that the university can use social media to gain information about COVID-19 or various disasters they might encounter and connect with students and stakeholders via virtual groups. For example, the University of the South Pacific has 12 member countries, and each campus can be a virtual group. Other groups with existing social ties, such as schools, faculties, programs, nationality and subject areas, could also be where virtual networks and social capital can be accrued.

The final study finding is that university students should be considered a vulnerable group during COVID-19 and in other crises—which are regular now—and should be supported to uncover personal capabilities and overcome disruptions. They can demonstrate civic responsibility for themselves, their peers and those who matter to them. Zhao and Watterson (2021) support this idea of civic responsibility by asserting there are three changes that education systems would need to make post-COVID-19:

1. Curriculum that is developmental, personalised and evolving. Students actively chart their own learning pathways and being helped to build capacity to deal with the unknown and uncertain instead of memorising and regurgitating solutions to known problems.
2. Curriculum that is authentic, inquiry-based and purposeful. The world students enter cannot be pre-imposed, which makes it critical to have learning that is authentic locally, nationally and has relevance in the global society.
3. Curriculum that capitalises on the strengths of synchronous and asynchronous learning. Students need to get used to regulate their own learning asynchronously as well at a particular time with the teacher.

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly affected social institutions the world over, including universities in Oceania. This study intended to investigate what has helped Solomon Islands and Pasifika students cope with a rapid shift to remote learning due to the COVID-19 and how this relates to notions of social capital. Within our sample, the presence of adequate social capital has helped them cope with the sudden shift to remote learning. High social capital can provide the milieu for social trust and network between students and the institution and among themselves. The presence of social norms and the valuing of civic engagement within the Solomon Islands and Pasifika community produce productive action among members. It is vital that social networks and interaction are encouraged and formed during such crisis as the COVID-19 and remote learning. Inability to form social ties, form trusting networks can have negative repercussions to students' achievement. It is recommended that universities could have policies and strategies that encourage new social behaviour that promote building of social capital among students and the institution. It could be formal and informal engagement of the university community to ensure students and staff access shared resources to succeed. The university online system can be used to promote connections and facilitate access to services. The family, *wantoks*, the social media, played a major role as sources of support. Higher values such as the future of one's family and the drive to succeed during difficult times were also evident. The university and lecturers also need to see that they play a major role as well in the success of students during a crisis. The limitations of the study are that the sample size is small and as a result, should not be generalised to other contexts even though the ideas could be applicable in instances. This study also involves only two institutions and a segment of those universities' population. Nevertheless, universities have a serious role in seeing how they engage with students post-pandemic. The data in this study were gathered during the height of

the pandemic, but now that universities are reopening face-to-face as well as being online, there needs to be formulation of policies and frameworks that build social capital among students and staff at the institution.

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Experiences of online learning and teaching during the second phase of the COVID-19 pandemic: A study of in-service teachers at the Fiji National University

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The current study investigated the experiences of in-service teachers' at Fiji National University (FNU) during the second phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. The research aimed to contribute to the evidence base of factors affecting the effectiveness of online learning for in-service teacher education in Fiji and identify strategies for improving student experiences in Fiji and similar contexts. The study involved an online questionnaire administered to 97 in-service teachers at FNU and a follow-up one-on-one interview with six questionnaire participants. The paper is structured into three sections: outlining the literature, context and methods used to gather the data; presentation of the results about online learning experiences of in-service teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic; discussion of the challenges faced by the in-service teachers in adapting to the online learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic. The main findings indicate that the FNU in-service teachers faced challenges in transitioning from face-to-face to online instruction, but, for at least some, the transition also brought benefits. The four main challenges included poor connectivity issues, unavailability of devices, inadequate technological skills and the demands of multiple roles. The benefits of online learning comprised improving students' technical skills, upskilling higher education staff and systems, staying connected during tough times, saving money and time, flexibility and convenience. The study reveals that adaptation should focus on improving the courses and accommodating the digital gap among in-service teachers by providing mobile-friendly, synchronous and asynchronous activities.

Keywords: Online learning; pandemic; Fiji; in-service teacher education; COVID-19

INTRODUCTION

Since early 2020, the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has led to global disruption, including in the education sector, primarily due to the closure of educational institutions (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021; Schleicher, 2020; Wang et al., 2022). Numerous schools and universities around the world closed their doors as part of measures designed to reduce physical contact between people to curb the spread of the pandemic (OECD, 2020). Many higher

education institutions, where face-to-face learning was the norm, were forced to rapidly transition to online and distance learning during the pandemic. Such a quick transition has posed many challenges to educators and learners. Despite the challenges, forms of distance and online learning have been seen by some as a panacea for this unprecedented global pandemic (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). The transition to online education has had a wide range of immediate impacts on teachers and learners, which have varied across contexts (Schleicher, 2020). Dhawan (2020) argues that the COVID-19 pandemic also contributes to longer-term impacts on education by further accelerating and normalising online learning use at all levels. In a time of such rapid change, the need for research to understand the positive and negative impacts of online learning for students is critical for informing future practice (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021).

Responding to this research need, this article reports on a small-scale study of the experiences of undergraduate and postgraduate students undertaking teacher education courses during the pandemic at the Fiji National University (FNU) in Fiji. The study was motivated by the authors' experiences as teacher educators at FNU and our desire to understand students' experiences to better improve our practice. As educators, the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in Fiji created many challenges because we were forced to rapidly transition to delivering our courses online to ensure continuity of learning for our students. It quickly became evident that this transition worked better for some students than others and that there was an immediate need for research to understand students' experiences.

We undertook our study in 2021, during the constrained conditions of a nationwide 'lockdown' (government-mandated requirements for all residents of Fiji to remain at home as much as possible, the closure of all non-essential businesses and the cessation of community activities) in 2021. We designed our study to allow rapid data collection and enable the learnings from the research to be used to inform an ongoing research agenda in light of the potential for online modes of delivery to be maintained beyond the pandemic. We share this research with the aim of contributing to the evidence base of factors affecting the effectiveness of online learning for higher education in Fiji, as well as to demonstrate the utility of rapid, small-scale research to inform practice, including in emergencies.

The article begins with a brief review of the literature on online learning in the context of COVID-19 before presenting the context of the study, namely teacher education in Fiji. We then describe the methods used to undertake the study, followed by a presentation of initial findings and an analysis and discussion of the implications for FNU and in-service teacher education more broadly.

ONLINE LEARNING IN THE COVID-19 CONTEXT

Since 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has placed enormous challenges on communities and governments globally, affecting nearly all countries. In the education field, this crisis has led to the suspension of face-to-face activities of educational institutions in many contexts for extended periods (UNESCO, 2020). James (2021) argued that the COVID-19 crisis has brought online learning to the forefront of daily life. Research shows the crisis has significantly impacted teacher education (Jin, 2022) and higher education institutions more broadly (Schleicher, 2020). Even though some universities used online platforms for teaching and learning in addition to face-to-face methods before the COVID-19 pandemic, most were not ready to transition to a completely online experience (Coman et al., 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has spread at different rates across the globe, and most countries have experienced several COVID-19 'waves' due to the virus's rapid mutation and seasonal

variations in infection rates (WHO, 2021). In this article, we refer to the first and second phases of the pandemic. We consider 2020 the first phase when countries came to terms with COVID-19 and its impacts. The second phase in 2021 was marked by the arrival of more infectious variants but also increasing access to effective vaccines and stronger evidence for and experience in implementing effective public health measures to contain the spread and impact of the virus.

The sudden disruption experienced in education in the first phase of the COVID-19 pandemic reshaped pedagogical practices and led to the rapid adoption of online teaching among universities (Lederman, 2020). The sudden transition from face-to-face to an online environment impacted curriculum, pedagogy and student outcomes across disciplines (DeCoito & Estaityeh, 2022). However, the experience of the first phase meant that by the second phase in 2021, many higher education institutions were more prepared to deliver teaching and learning online and were better able to transition fully to online learning when schools were closed again due to increases in infection rates. As such, researching students' experiences during the second phase of the pandemic can help inform an understanding of universities' successes in adapting to online learning and the potential challenges and opportunities in maintaining online learning methods in the longer term.

ONLINE LEARNING: DEFINITIONS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The literature uses various terminologies and definitions to define online and distance learning, including e-learning, digital learning, distance and flexible learning, and technology-enabled learning. Kauffman (2015) defines online learning as adopting a teaching strategy where all the content is delivered through technology from a distance. Kim (2020) claims that 'online teaching and learning is a form of distance education to provide learning experiences for students, both children, and adults, to access education from remote locations or who, for various reasons, cannot attend a school, vocational college, or university' (p. 147). Singh and Thurman (2019), Dhawan (2020) and Kim (2020) proclaim that online teaching and learning are learning experiences in synchronous or asynchronous environments utilising different devices, such as laptops or mobile phones, with access to the internet. We concur with this definition. We distinguish online learning from other forms of distance learning or technology-enabled learning. It involves using digital devices to access and engage with various static and interactive resources via the internet.

The literature also highlights several key variables that impact teachers' and students' experiences engaging with online learning. One is whether online learning takes place synchronously or asynchronously. Synchronous online learning involves real-time interactions between the teacher and the students. In contrast, asynchronous online learning occurs without a strict schedule, providing students greater flexibility regarding when they engage with the content and at what pace (Singh & Thurman, 2019). The study findings by Fabriz et al. (2021) revealed that synchronous environments allow for teaching methods such as teamwork or video discussions, which inherently support the social interaction of students as well as student-teacher interaction. By contrast, asynchronous environments are more content-oriented, and teaching methods conceptually tied to asynchronous settings focus on facilitating student interaction with the learning materials (Fabri et al., 2021, p. 10). Whether online learning occurs synchronously or asynchronously is just one example of the variables identified in the literature that can affect users' (i.e., teachers' and students') experiences of online learning. As Lei and

So (2021) assert, understanding current users' (i.e., teachers and students) experiences of such variables will help future planning and development.

Another important variable identified in the literature is teachers' and students' digital readiness and technological competence to engage in online learning (Bao, 2020; Crawford et al., 2020). While some students and teachers may have the required skills and knowledge about using digital devices, software and the internet, others may be less 'techno-savvy' (Hung et al., 2010). A further key issue is teachers' and students' ease of access to devices and the internet, including the reliability of internet connections and the affordability of quality devices. Moustakas and Robrade (2022) found that the lack of technological resources, poor internet quality and a lack of information communication technology (ICT) knowledge were essential barriers, especially in developing countries. Winter et al. (2021) argued that online learning could only be feasible if students and teachers access computers and reliable internet connections. According to Reimers and Schleicher (2020), financial implications may be one of the factors affecting online learning as students cannot purchase suitable electronic devices and buy data. For an online mode to be successful, it is of utmost importance to have access to digital devices, the internet and Wi-Fi.

The brief literature review has highlighted some of the many challenges faced by higher education institutions when they adopted online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. We have provided a definition of online learning for this article and highlighted some (not all) variables that affect online learning. We now introduce the specific case that is the focus of this study before reporting on the method and findings of the study.

TEACHER EDUCATION AT THE FIJI NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, FIJI

FNU is a provider of teacher education at undergraduate and postgraduate levels to an approximate average of 500 students per year across three campuses in Fiji. The Departments of Primary and Secondary Education under the School of Education offer teacher education to 'pre-service' and 'in-service' teachers. The pre-service teachers comprise students who enrol in teacher training institutes to complete their degree requirements before being awarded a teaching certificate. In-service teachers are practicing teachers recruited by the Ministry of Education who enrol at teacher training institutes to upgrade their qualifications. In 2021, 130 in-service and pre-service teachers were enrolled in various units in undergraduate and postgraduate courses offered by the Department of Primary Education at FNU.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the School of Education at FNU already offered some courses in a blended mode, with plans to shift other courses to an online mode in due course. The blended mode comprised face-to-face classes with integrated online learning, such as recorded lectures available for students to access via the Moodle platform and the Zoom platform for students to participate in real-time classes online. This mode of education was mainly provided to in-service teachers, though a few courses offered it to pre-service teachers. Prior to the pandemic, academics in the School of Education adopted the blended learning mode on a case-by-case scenario and only the staff taking blended courses were trained in the blended mode of delivery. As a result, not all academics in the School of Education were fully trained to deliver in a blended or online learning mode.

On 16 March 2020, on the arrival of the first case of COVID-19 in the country, schools and universities were closed overnight in Fiji and restrictions on people's movements were put in place. As such, universities in Fiji, including the FNU, were forced to deliver their courses online to avoid disruptions and ensure students could continue learning. For instance, FNU took

proactive measures and utilised the Moodle platform to offer the units in a virtual learning environment (FNU, 2021).

Most courses at the School of Education were offered in a blended mode to reduce face-to-face interaction for both pre-service and in-service teachers. An extended mid-semester break was provided to students so that academics could undergo virtual training provided by staff from the University's Centre of Learning and Teaching Enhancement Department, to learn how to deliver online. Staff were also supported to design alternative assessments that would replace face-to-face examinations, which were supposed to be administered at the end of Semester 1, 2020, of the academic calendar year. Students working from home in various geographical locations completed these units online. A flexible approach to submitting assignments was also offered, so students could submit assignments in the easiest form, ranging from hand-written scripts sent as scanned files to word-processed files, with an extension to due dates offered whenever needed.

During the second semester of 2020, restrictions were lifted due to reduced infections, and the FNU School of Education returned to 'normal' practices of face-to-face learning. However, due to the second wave of community outbreaks of the virus, schools and universities in Fiji had to be closed again on 16 April 2021. As the outbreak was more significant this time, blended learning was not an option, and FNU took proactive measures to provide all units entirely via an online learning environment. The blended learning mode was transformed to entirely online learning within a week and alternative assessment forms were again designed to be used in place of face-to-face examinations. Though challenges were encountered during the first phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, the learning experiences allowed the academics to deliver a more consistent experience in the second phase. Once again, the lockdown confined the students to different geographical locations, and they had to complete their units with varying experiences and challenges.

As members of the teacher-educator team at the School of Education of FNU, we had to endure these rapid transitions and were cognisant of our students' challenges in participating effectively online. We, therefore, recognised the importance of research to understand our students' experiences to identify the factors that should be considered by individual educators and higher-education institutions when designing online learning for the future. As such, despite the challenging circumstances of the pandemic, we undertook a small-scale study to gather evidence about the experiences of in-service teachers undertaking teacher education courses online at FNU during 2021. In undertaking the research, we sought to identify the extent to which participants were able to engage in online learning, the barriers and enablers they faced in doing so, and their broader experiences as students during the COVID-19 pandemic.

METHODOLOGY

The study reported here used a mixed-methods design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) to address the research questions. We collected quantitative and qualitative data to explore and assess Fijian in-service teachers' experiences with online learning from FNU during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. We aimed to obtain comprehensive quantitative and rich qualitative data detailing student teachers' experiences with online teaching. We collected the quantitative data by administering a structured questionnaire. We identified in-service teachers enrolled in 2021 at the School of Education, FNU, as our target. These in-service teachers were enrolled at Labasa, Nasinu and Lautoka campuses and lived in different locations across the country. We chose to focus on in-service teachers rather than pre-service teachers because in-

service teachers had multiple roles to play while continuing their study in an online and distance mode. These roles included being primary caregivers to their families, online students and remote teachers of their classes. The targeted students were a mix of undergraduate and postgraduate students. The in-service teachers enrolled in the undergraduate programme had attained either a Certificate in Primary Teaching or a Diploma in Primary Teaching.

The questionnaire comprised three parts. The first part contained questions about demographic information, including age, gender, campus enrolment, level of study and programme. Based on the literature review, we selected these variables as factors that may influence students' online learning experiences. The second part of the questionnaire asked about participants' access to devices and the internet and their technological competence and confidence. The third part asked questions about their preferred mode of course delivery, coverage of content, and methods used for online delivery. The questionnaires incorporated multi-choice and open-text questions, enabling both quantitative and qualitative data to be collected.

Before administering the questionnaire to our target sample, it was peer-reviewed by colleague researchers. We pre-tested the questionnaire using a small sample of students enrolled at the School of Education to ensure the reliability of its design. The questionnaire was improved in response to this feedback and then finalised. The questionnaire was administered using Google forms, and the web link to the questionnaire was shared with the sample population via the Viber/messenger group established by the School of Education lecturers for communication with student cohorts. This was necessitated by the social distancing regulations that had to be observed due to the national lockdown.

A desired sample size for the questionnaire was determined using Krejcie and Morgan Table (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). Acceptance of responses to the questionnaire was closed upon reaching the desired sample number. Hence, out of the 130 in-service teachers actively participating in the enrolled education courses at FNU, 97 students participated in this questionnaire phase of the research.

In the second phase of the study, we collected qualitative data using semi-structured interviews to obtain in-depth information about students' online learning experiences during the pandemic. The semi-structured interviews focused on the comprehensive personal experiences and challenges faced by the selected participants. The one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted via the digital communication applications of Viber and Zoom. One-on-one interviews were chosen in preference to focus group interviews to ensure interviewees' responses were not affected or influenced by the presence of other interviewees (Morgan & Hoffman, 2018). Combined with the challenges of conducting interviews online rather than face-to-face, we expected that one-on-one interviews would enable us to ask additional questions and seek clarification to get more accurate information.

The research employed purposive sampling to select the participants for the interview (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), choosing the sample after analysing questionnaire responses based on the criteria of ensuring representation in the sample from varying levels of study. Six questionnaire participants were identified based on their levels of study (undergraduate and postgraduate). Before beginning data collection, we gained ethical approval for the research from the FNU Human Research Ethics Committee. All relevant ethical guidelines were abided by when conducting the research, including ensuring informed, voluntary consent from all participants, keeping participant information confidential and maintaining participant anonymity.

Data analysis

We carried out the data analysis in two stages. In the first stage, we downloaded the quantitative data from the Google forms questionnaire and then converted it to a Microsoft Excel file. We carried out descriptive analysis to find the percentage and frequency of responses. In the second stage, we used thematic analysis of the qualitative data from the open-text questions of the questionnaire and the one-on-one interviews. Thematic analysis is a method for analysing qualitative data that comprises searching across the dataset to identify, analyse and report repeated patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). We first familiarised ourselves with the over dataset by undertaking an initial read-through. We then began a coding process, first identifying general initial themes and then iteratively refining these as we progressed through the data analysis. We used inductive coding when new themes seemed to emerge from the qualitative data collected through the interviews. We then reviewed the quantitative and qualitative data together to triangulate between the data sets and develop a more comprehensive analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). We undertook this analysis process jointly, engaging in a deliberative process to reach an agreement on key themes and interpretation of the data, which provided an additional layer of verification and triangulation.

Participant demographics

Table 1 summarises demographic data collected about the research participants.

Table 1: Research participant demographic data

Demographic variables	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Age	25-30 years	49	51
	31-36 years	22	22
	37-42 years	19	20
	43-49 years	5	5
	50 and above years	2	2
Sex	Male	24	25
	Female	73	75
	Others	0	0
Level of study	Undergraduate	33	34
	Postgraduate	64	66
Campus	Labasa	22	23
	Lautoka	48	49
	Nasinu	27	28
Tertiary experience	Continuing student	83	86
	New student	14	14

Most online questionnaire participants were between 25-30 years and were females. Most research respondents were enrolled in postgraduate studies and were continuing students. Most of the respondents were from the Lautoka campus of FNU. For the interview, six participants were identified based on their levels of study (undergraduate and postgraduate). We chose three undergraduate and three postgraduate students for the interview stage.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section presents results and initial findings from our analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data, thematically organised in terms of the findings: respondents' preferences for

online, blended or face-to-face learning modes; respondents' experiences of the transition to online learning; respondents' views on the effectiveness of online learning; the availability of devices; and, finally, the main challenges reported by respondents. As noted earlier, we undertook the study during the constrained circumstances of lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic and designed the study to allow rapid data collection to inform immediate practice. Therefore, there are limitations to the study due to reliance on in-service teachers' self-reported experiences. The study did not collect data from other sources about students' engagement in online learning (such as frequency of Moodle logins or duration of time spent online) or student outcome data. This limits the extent to which conclusions can be reached about the impact of online learning on student outcomes and how that varies according to the level of student engagement online. These are areas for future research to consider.

In-service teachers' preferences for online classes

The questionnaire asked respondents, if they had a choice, which would be their preferred learning mode (see the summary of responses in Table 2).

Table 2: Preferred mode of learning

Which mode do you prefer if you had a choice?	Frequency	Percentage
Online	40	41
Blended	29	30
Face-to-face	28	29

The data revealed that most respondents (41%) prefer the online learning option. Only 30% opted for blended learning, and 29% preferred face-to-face instruction. In the interviews, we asked respondents to provide a reason for their preferred option. Those who said they preferred online learning (n= 5) explained that they preferred it because it allowed them to stay connected from their preferred place and saved travelling costs. Furthermore, in-service teachers favoured the online mode provided the classes were well structured, had good internet connectivity and had competent lecturers.

Twenty-nine percent of the participants favoured face-to-face classes. Respondents in the interviews (n=2) indicated they did not prefer online learning because they lacked the technical competency required, did not have suitable electronic devices and faced internet connectivity issues. This finding indicates how the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly widened the digital divide because many students cannot equally engage in online learning simply because they do not have home-based access to adequate technological devices and stable internet connections (Li, 2022).

As stated earlier, the interview data revealed several reasons why some respondents preferred the online learning mode. As shown in the quotes below, these reasons included the convenience of not travelling and the ability to study at their own pace.

I observed that I did better while working from home than I did going to school every day. The lecturers were good at preparing and delivering their content, but I didn't always have time to read all the notes as they were too lengthy. (Undergraduate Student 1)

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It was an incredible experience. No face-to-face contact yet; I could complete things on time and quite well. I could spend a lot of time on assignments. No traveling time and cost used. (Postgraduate Student 1)

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the FNU liaised with Vodafone and Digicel to provide free access to the learning management platform (Moodle). The quotes above indicate that some respondents' experiences through the COVID-19 pandemic had taught them the need for and benefits of online learning. These findings resonate with that of a study carried out by Priyadarshani and Jesuiya (2021) in Sri Lanka, which also highlighted the acceptance of online classes during the pandemic. For in-service teachers working at the same time as studying, it is understandable that they appreciated the opportunity to study at their own pace and at the time of their convenience and that this preference for online learning may continue beyond the pandemic.

Transition to online learning

As shown in Table 3, most questionnaire respondents (77%) reported that they easily adjusted to online learning, whereas 20% indicated difficulty adjusting to online learning. Very few teachers (3%) reported that they could not cope with online learning.

Table 3: In-service teachers' feelings about the shift to fully online learning

How did you feel about the sudden change in education delivery?	Frequency	Percentage
Adjusted	75	77
Found difficulty	19	20
Unable to cope	3	3
Other	0	0

The interview data presented below suggests that technologically competent students could easily adjust to the transition to online classes. Several interview respondents indicated that their technological competence came from completing computer classes in secondary school or experience in online learning during undergraduate courses.

I could easily transition to online classes, as I had already taken Computer Classes at Secondary schools, which helped me develop my technological skills. (Undergraduate Student 1)

I could easily adjust to online learning as I had already taken a MOOC course on technology-enabled learning. As I am a fresh graduate from FNU, I have already been exposed to technology-enabled learning. (Undergraduate Student 2)

I had no problems transitioning to online classes, as I was used to the system. I was competent in using technology and could efficiently complete online assessments. (Postgraduate Student 1)

I had already done a course on Integrating ICT across the Curriculum at FNU under my B.Ed. [Bachelor of Education] program, so I had no problem using technology to complete my online course. (Postgraduate Student 2)

In contrast, the interview data indicates that respondents who were enrolled in the in-service courses for the first time faced difficulty moving to online learning due to a lack of technological skills.

It started well but faltered towards the end of the unit. I faced many issues that greatly affected my emotional and physical health, making it hard for me to continue my studies as I was too tired every day. (Undergraduate Student 2)

I had difficulty completing my courses online as I had problems using ICT. I believe ICT skills should be taught from primary school. (Undergraduate Student 3)

The results show that not all in-service teachers were fully prepared for the online classes. The emerging theme indicates that in-service teachers benefit from being technologically competent when participating in online learning. The implications of this result highlight the value of developing students' technological skills during primary/secondary schooling in Fiji. The research also indicates the importance of having adequate ICT infrastructure and internet connectivity across different geographical locations.

The effectiveness of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic

The data showed that 50% (see Table 4) of the participants found the online mode useful. The follow-up interviews revealed the following reasons for finding online learning effective.

Table 4: Participant perceptions of the effectiveness of online learning

Effectiveness of online learning	Percentage
Effective	50%
Not effective	7%
It depends on the Lecturer	18%

First, in-service teachers could complete their units online from different locations rather than travelling to do face-to-face classes.

It is easy for me to learn online rather than attend an online, face-to-face class as I don't have to travel from Rakiraki to participate in classes in Lautoka [approximately 100 km]. (Postgraduate Student 3)

I could devote more time to my studies because I did not have to travel to campus. The time saved was used for online learning. (Postgraduate Student 2)

Second, the interviews revealed that the pandemic taught them to be ICT competent.

This pandemic has taught us many things—We need to have computer skills to study. Also, having a smartphone with all features helps us learn despite this pandemic. (Postgraduate Student 1)

Some respondents indicated that they were guided and trained by their lecturers to attain the necessary technological skills and be sufficiently ICT competent to continue the course.

Though I did not have a laptop, my lecturer guided me on how to use a smartphone to do my assignment. With her help, I could download the relevant software to access and do my write-ups. (Undergraduate Student 3)

Third, several respondents shared their views that the online mode allowed flexibility to participate synchronously and asynchronously.

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I was given more time to complete my online quiz, and I could also access my course any time of the day. (Postgraduate Student 1)

Nevertheless, as shown in Table 4, 7% of the respondents were not satisfied with the effectiveness of online classes. In the interviews, respondents indicated that poor connectivity and lack of technological skills contributed to the non-effectiveness of the online mode.

Due to poor connectivity, I had issues coping with assignments. (Undergraduate Student 1)

I also had difficulty using technology because I had no computer classes to upgrade my skills. (Undergraduate Student 3)

Table 4 shows that 18% of the respondents stated that the effectiveness of online learning depended on the lecturer. The interviews revealed why the lecturer's role was crucial for effective online learning.

My lecturer was not supportive, and I had to do many things independently. (Postgraduate Student 2)

The contributing lecturer was very helpful. She always responded on time to our queries in Viber group. (Postgraduate Student 3)

Switching to an online course was challenging; however, the support provided by the Fiji National University guides was tremendous. (Postgraduate Student 1)

Availability of devices

The respondents used various devices to participate in their online learning. Questionnaire data, summarised in Table 5, indicated the disparity in the devices used by the in-service teachers to access online learning.

Table 5: Devices available to participants

Available Devices	Frequency	Percentage
Smartphone only	11	11
Laptop only	18	19
Ipad/tablet only	1	2
Smartphone and laptop	64	65
Smartphone, ipad/tablet and laptop	3	3

An additional question in the questionnaire indicated that 65% of the respondents shared the devices with their family members, and 35% had their own devices.

Research shows that access to appropriate technology is often due to geographical location and socioeconomic status differences. For example, according to Reimers and Schleicher (2020), differences in socioeconomic factors affect students' access to technology, exacerbating the challenges they face in online learning. The interview data reveal some respondents' challenges in accessing appropriate devices and how that impacted their online learning.

I had only access to a smartphone, and it was difficult for me to type my assignments using the phone. (Undergraduate Student 1)

We were sharing our devices at home. My children sometimes needed the laptop for their zoom classes which collided with my online courses. As a parent, I had to give my computer to them because I could not sacrifice their education. (Postgraduate Student 1)

Challenges faced using the Online mode of delivery

As shown in Table 6, the questionnaire revealed that most respondents (n=55) indicated poor connectivity issues as the major challenge of online learning. The unavailability of e-learning resources, like a laptop/desktop at home, was also a challenge for 18% of the respondents. Ten percent reported a lack of adequate technical skills as a challenge during online learning, while 5% faced difficulty purchasing data. Ten participants responded ‘other’ as a major challenge. The follow-up interviews revealed family roles and work commitment as challenges of online learning.

Table 6: Challenges reported by participants in engaging in online learning

Challenges in engaging in online learning	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of adequate technological skills	10	10
Poor connectivity issues	55	57
Unavailability of e-learning resources like laptop/desktop at home	17	18
Unable to purchase data	5	5
Other	10	10

The follow-up interviews revealed more about participants’ experiences of these challenges:

It has been a challenge when faced with family members admitted for COVID and balancing with school workloads. It has taught me to read widely and plan my time accordingly. (Undergraduate Student 2)

It was challenging for me as a working mum. There were times of role strain- being a mum, student, and teacher. I had to manage time which was hectic as demands from school also increased, and I had to be with my four kids, who are below the age of seven. (Postgraduate Student 2)

I had to disseminate worksheets to 50 students through their preferred mode of learning, which included zoom classes and hard copies of worksheets. This took much of the time I could have devoted to my studies. (Undergraduate Student 1)

DISCUSSION: CHALLENGES AND BENEFITS OF ONLINE LEARNING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

This section discusses the research's main findings, its equivalence with the literature on online learning, and the implications of the findings for future practice. Our study revealed that in-service teachers studying at FNU during the COVID-19 pandemic faced challenges transitioning from face-to-face to online instruction. However, for at least some, the transition also brought benefits. Respondents reported four main challenges. First, the in-service teachers faced poor connectivity issues (n=55). This is a common challenge cited in the literature on online learning, often related to geographical location (Aboagye et al., 2021; Dhawan,2020; Rouf, 2022). In the context of Fiji, where high-speed internet connections are not accessible in all geographical areas and are not affordable for all socioeconomic levels, this is a key issue to be considered. For in-service teachers to participate effectively in online courses in Fiji,

reliable, consistent internet connectivity is one of the priorities. Secondly, the research findings indicate the availability of devices, such as laptops, tablets and smartphones at home, can also be a barrier to online learning for in-service teachers in Fiji. Again, this is a common finding in broader research on teacher engagement in ICTs for education, which has also been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Lei & So, 2021). This finding highlights the importance that higher education institutions, such as FNU, need to consider options for ensuring in-service teachers have adequate access to appropriate digital devices for online learning. The research findings are consistent with those of other studies. For example, Moustakas and Robrade (2022) found the major barriers to adopting online learning in developing countries are a lack of technological resources and poor internet quality.

The third main challenge reported by respondents was inadequate technological skills. If in-service teachers do not have sufficient training in technology, they lack the necessary skills (Winter et al., 2021). The findings highlight the need for a mandatory ICT course to be offered at teacher training institutes so that teachers can upgrade their technical skills and develop computer literacy and competency.

The interviews also showed that the in-service teachers engaged in multiple roles, such as online classroom teachers, family chores and expectations, while studying remotely from home. The contextual conditions of in-service teachers can hinder or enable online learning. Pelikan et al. (2021) note that the home environment and contextual factors can affect students' online learning. While delivering online courses, there is a need to provide teacher care so that educators can provide appropriate support for students challenged with multiple roles at home. The interviews revealed a need for academic staff to be more flexible and supportive while delivering online courses to cater for the challenges faced by the in-service teachers.

The study highlighted the significant benefits of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic for in-service teachers in Fiji. The in-service teachers saved money and time compared to their usual travelling cost for face-to-face classes; time spent on travelling was devoted towards online studies, as also found by Ramírez-Hurtado et al. (2021). Online learning also allowed in-service teachers to navigate the course at their own pace. The in-service teachers could participate in online learning at their own time at any time of the day. Hence, flexibility and convenience are significant drivers of in-service teachers' preference for online education.

In-service teachers felt that the sudden shift to online learning during the pandemic made them more ICT competent. As the only means of completing the course was through the online mode, in-service teachers had to adapt to the use of technological devices to access online learning content. FNU provided students with some support to attain the necessary technical skills. Similar sentiments were shared by O'Connell et al. (2021), who confirmed that the sudden introduction of online learning and physical distancing led to a new acceptance of technology due to an increased perception of the usefulness of technology for maintaining community and social connections.

CONCLUSION

The Fijian in-service teachers had varied online learning experiences during the enforced closure of FNU during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their experiences were impacted by their ability to work in the transition period and adapt to online learning. During the COVID-19 pandemic, online classes brought several benefits, such as creating a digital learning community, improving students' technological skills, upskilling education, staying connected

during tough times, saving money and time, and flexibility and convenience. Challenges included the unavailability of electronic devices, geographical location and technological obstacles, which hindered some students' learning. Undergraduate in-service teachers faced adaptation difficulties with the sudden transition to online classes.

This study has provided initial findings valuable for informing immediate practice and future research. Future research needs to examine the pedagogies adopted for online learning to understand those most effective for in-service teachers' varied needs. While there is a need to improve course content and pedagogy, universities must also accommodate the digital gap amongst learners, that is, the variation in student access to digital devices and technical competence. Teacher education institutes should consider supporting in-service teachers to upgrade their technical skills and competencies. Furthermore, the synchronous and asynchronous activities used for online delivery need to be mobile-friendly so that all in-service teachers can participate in online learning regardless of whether they have access to laptops.

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Conceptualisation of global citizenship and global citizenship education: Does lack of clarity impact global citizenship education in Aotearoa New Zealand?

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This article explores conceptualisations of global citizenship and global citizenship education and questions whether a lack of clarity impacts global citizenship education in Aotearoa New Zealand. Drawing attention to the multiplicity of meanings associated with these phenomena, it argues that the lack of consensus surrounding the notion of global citizenship hinders the implementation of standardised and consistent global citizenship education in Aotearoa New Zealand. The discussion considers the foundation of global citizenship and global citizenship education, highlighting the tensions in reaching global consensus on their definitions. This article contributes to the debates on global citizenship and global citizenship education, particularly focusing on implications for global citizenship education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Keywords: global citizenship; global citizenship education' sustainable development goal 4; SDG indicator 4.7.1

INTRODUCTION

Global citizenship is a contested notion (Grimwood, 2018). The field of global citizenship research continues to evolve and develop, generating discourse and discussion about its mechanisms and concepts (Dill, 2018). Not only has digital and social media accelerated the ideas and research surrounding global citizenship, but they have also provided accessible resources, connectivity between resources and groups, and exposed people to global issues, often in real-time (Baek, 2018). However, the growth in this field has not yet established a firm identity or foundation from which to develop. Therefore, there is a multiplicity of perceptions, interpretations and definitions about global citizenship, with organisations and nations deciding what it means for them and how they use the notion of global citizenship to interact with others (Hammond & Keating, 2018).

This article aims to provide insights into how global citizenship and global citizenship education (GCE) are conceptualised and what impact this has on educational implementation within Aotearoa New Zealand. The themes being discussed consider the evolution of the notion of global citizenship, reflecting on its definition and how this influences GCE. The article begins by examining the background and growth of global citizenship from a social history viewpoint and then explores what it means to be a global citizen. Building on the growing awareness of global citizenship, the article considers how there has been an increased push to advance GCE in the last decade, with the inclusion of GCE in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Pashby et al., 2021), and considers how SDG Indicator 4.7.1 sets the aim for governments to develop GCE through a cultural lens and an appreciation of diversity by 2030 (UNESCO, 2018). By exploring the contestation around the meaning of global

citizenship, the article argues that a lack of global and national consensus hinders the integration of GCE into educational curricula. Finally, this article considers Aotearoa New Zealand's perceptions and contexts and discusses the need for a clearer level of shared understanding of GCE. The conclusion highlights the questions raised regarding the future of global citizenship and GCE within a post-COVID-19 world. A focus on GCE in Aotearoa New Zealand returns the concepts to the author's and other educators' current experiences in their research areas.

SOCIAL HISTORY OF GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

Throughout the 20th century, there has been a developing interest in global citizenship (Engel & Siczek, 2018; Grimwood, 2018). Significant events throughout the 20th century have led to a growing awareness of how global events shape and impact nations and their citizens. For example, the two world wars spotlighted warfare through the new global media lens of film. These wars affected countries around the globe and demonstrated that even independent nations were not immune to how war disrupted their peace or economies (Kefauver, 1944). Kefauver (1944) discussed how collective action and collaboration would bring advancement, respect, cooperation and stimulation to an increasingly interconnected world. Peace and cooperation were key aspects of rebuilding post-war relationships (Intrator, 2019; Kefauver, 1944). In addition, the media ran images of mass migration that the general public had not previously seen. Newspapers and film footage brought images and stories from war zones into people's homes, connecting people to places and other cultures, bringing the reality of what was happening overseas closer to home and drawing together communities with shared experiences (Gaertner, 2016).

National boundaries have become blurred or diminished through globalisation and global governance. Environmental and natural disasters, such as oil spills, deforestation, floods and earthquakes, and pandemic and epidemic diseases, impact multiple nations (United Nations Environment Programme, 2020; United Nations Joint Inspection Unit, 2019). Partnering nations and global organisations, such as the United Nations, work collaboratively to deliver supportive resources (Robinson et al., 2017). International laws, treaties and targets have required countries to work together to solve global crises. These laws, conventions and targets, such as the SDGs (UNESCO, 2018), work together to develop frameworks for nations to follow (Spijkers, 2019). More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has required nations to evaluate and focus on interactions between national and international interests to protect and support national populations and economies and maintain national security (Bryson & Vanchan, 2020). This merging of national borders and international issues has highlighted that national citizens now operate in two localities: the national and the global. As a result, the last century has seen the notion of global citizenship emerge. Its development is complex because it remains an ill-defined and largely misunderstood concept.

In summary, world wars, climate change, natural disasters, and pandemics have affected multiple nations on a large scale, acting as catalysts for the development of technologies and collaborative partnerships (Bryson & Vanchan, 2020; United Nations Environment Programme, 2020; United Nations Joint Inspection Unit, 2019). The increasing presence of and accessibility to diverse media platforms provide real-time information, easily accessible data and immediate connections for those with shared issues or interests (Baek, 2018). Awareness of global issues has increased, as has the diverse ways in which people become activated to respond to these challenges. Activism can be ignited in all age groups by global social or environmental movements, for example, Fridays For Future (Laux, 2021), or collaborative

fundraisers, for example, Team Trees on YouTube. The following section examines the development of what it means to be a global citizen and considers why it is a contested notion.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A GLOBAL CITIZEN?

The definition of 'global citizenship' has different meanings in different contexts (Schattle, 2005). Countries' governing structures, business entities, and environmental and cultural contexts often attribute their interpretation to the notion of global citizenship, making it difficult to identify a clear and definitive meaning. Citizenship, in the global sense, is not the same as citizenship in a national sense (Grimwood, 2018). For example, a national citizen is considered a citizen of a nation and holds a national identity, recognising their nation's official laws, languages, institutions, culture and values (Fukuyama, 2018). On the other hand, a global citizen is a national citizen who recognises their place within the global landscape. They can extend their awareness beyond national citizenship to relate to people in a global context (Schattle, 2009).

There is some agreement about the key element that underpins the definition of global citizenship: shared humanity. Pashby (2018) argues that the shared humanity of developing relationships and connections with others at local and global levels underpins the concept of global citizenship. This includes building local-global connections at home, school, work and in the community, as well as building communal areas where people can work and think together inter-culturally. These networks and shared areas are important facets of global citizenship (Vander Dussen Toukan, 2018). Engagement with others allows one to reflect on one's identity and place within global networks (Robinson & Levac, 2018). These global networks can help individuals understand other viewpoints and learn from the experiences of others, as well as enhance their own.

Being reflective of one's identity within these networks can also contribute to the complexity of global citizenship. Reflection can move individuals from an awareness of interdependence to the ability to think critically and become more active in global and local issues (Pashby, 2018). Connections with others can be established through shared local and global interests and/or action, prompting continued engagement, understanding and a cycle of reflection. Additionally, such connection can also develop empathy, compassion, tolerance, acceptance and an appreciation that other people live in different ways (Gardner-McTaggart & Palmer, 2018). Extending from this foundation of awareness, reflection on multi-culturalism and inter-culturalism, and engagement with others has the potential to develop the global citizen into an activated social justice advocate (Yemini & Furstenburg, 2018). Engaging with community and social justice issues through reflection and understanding can go some way towards activating a critical, responsible and compassionate global citizen capable of the flexibility of living within a global society (Gardner-McTaggart & Palmer, 2018; Robinson & Levac, 2018). Such engagement shows that shared humanity, reflection and action are areas underlying the concept of global citizenship.

However, despite some consensus on the meaning of global citizenship, tensions have been created by the ambiguity caused by countries attributing their interpretation (Yemini & Furstenburg, 2018). From a political outlook, the growing increase in nationalism alongside the interconnectedness of global citizens has further intensified friction between the outplaying of citizenship in the local and global spheres (Barrow, 2017). For example, there were tensions surrounding Brexit when the United Kingdom separated from Europe, which focused politics on nationalistic approaches (Crescenzi et al., 2018). Additionally, COVID-19 has seen nations prioritising their interests to protect economies and develop local rather than international

business locations (Bryson & Vanchan, 2020). There is also a fluctuating balance surrounding health and the economy in the discussions on when national borders should open (Loneragan & Chalmers, 2020). From a nationalist viewpoint, nations aim to govern individuals in a way that places national issues and interests above global concerns, and education focuses primarily on national citizenship development, in preference of a global view (Department for Education, 2013; Millard, 2014). However, globalism also seeks relationality between nations (Rosenboim, 2019) through global governance and intercultural engagement between nations. These differing mindsets create tension because of how individuals, communities and nations perceive their identities.

Even within nations, there are differing perceptions of global citizenship. Such differences can be seen in Canada, where English and French-speaking communities co-exist; however, these communities are also linked to global Anglophone and Francophone communities (Sioufi et al., 2016). Different political outlooks of global citizenship are seen from country to country. For example Norway's social democracy is affected by the context in which citizenship is placed (Hayward et al., 2015). Norway and Aotearoa New Zealand are parliamentary democracies with a constitutional monarchy but have contrasting interpretations of democracy. Norway is a social-democratic state that focuses on state and community rather than the individual, and Aotearoa New Zealand has a liberal, market-driven democracy (Hayward et al., 2015) and a strong bicultural identity. These examples demonstrate that there are different contexts and interpretations of global citizenship between countries based on their internal governance structures pertaining to citizenship. These differences present us with diversity, which offers us a forum to learn about each other, discuss our identities and work collaboratively for a more sustainable and inclusive future. Depending on context and subjectivity, global citizenship has a variety of interpretations. There is a multiplicity of meanings that continues to evolve.

UNESCO'S ASPIRATIONS FOR GCE

Since the international Education For All (EFA) agenda emerged in 1990 and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in 2000, the notion of global citizenship has become increasingly prevalent within the education discipline. The MDGs were the key driver in drawing nations together to take responsibility for meeting global expectations of accessible and quality EFA (United Nations Children's Fund & UNESCO, 2007). The increasingly interconnected global space has re-defined how people engage and interact with education and learning (UNESCO, 2015). In 2015, after the MDG target period, the international community met to recast its global focus, which resulted in the setting of 17 SDGs that were published in September 2015, with a completion date of 2030. SDGs were developed through ongoing conversations with the global community. SDG Target 4.7 encourages the world's governments to promote and engage with GCE. It sets the aim for governments to develop global citizenship through a cultural lens and an appreciation of its diversity in national education agendas and policies by 2030. Specifically, the global citizenship focus of SDG Indicator 4.7.1 (UNESCO, 2018) is:

SDG Indicator 4.7.1

Extent to which (i) global citizenship education...[is] mainstreamed in (a) national education policies; (b) curricula; (c) teacher education and (d) student assessment. (United Nations, 2022a)

This was the first time GCE had been included as part of the international development goals. However, it was difficult for nations to gain a consensus on the meaning of GCE because of the different perceptions surrounding its terminology, the political nature of citizenship and the tensions between national and international, and local and global, as discussed above. Finally,

in December 2019, SDG Indicator 4.7.1's classification was upgraded to Tier II (clear concept, established methodology). The Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) classify all the SDG Indicators using three tiers relating to the availability of data and consideration for methodology development (United Nations, 2022b). Upgrading to Tier II meant that international data collection about the mainstreaming of GCE and Education for Sustainable Development could begin in 2020 (UNESCO, 2019a). Whereas, before the upgrade, SDG Indicator 4.7.1 was classified as Tier III and had no developed methodology for collecting data. Currently, Aotearoa New Zealand is the only country in Oceania with published data for SDG Indicator 4.7.1, albeit it minimal. For Aotearoa New Zealand, The Global Change Data Lab shows no 2020 data available for the mainstreaming of global citizenship into curricula or student assessment, 0.35 for national education policies, and 0.6 for teacher education concerning the global Index of 0 (worst) to 1 (best) (Ritchie et al., 2018).

The aspirational goal outlined in UNESCO's SDG Indicator 4.7.1 invites nations to look at the global issues affecting citizens in the 21st century. Although unknown, the challenges of future global issues will be complex, requiring flexibility, nimbleness and transferable skills as contexts rapidly shift (Pashby et al., 2021). Technology and global events have brought us closer together. UNESCO aims to develop skills to support a progressive, sustainable and more inclusive global future through GCE (Anderson, 2019). However, impacting these aspirations are tensions created by the ambiguity of individual interpretations of language surrounding GCE brought about by context and viewpoint, political outlooks and nationalistic approaches. The following section explores some of the tensions between teachers and students' conceptualisations of GCE and how the political environment may impact those.

TEACHERS' AND STUDENTS' CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF GCE

While research has highlighted confusion surrounding the absence of a widely accepted definition of GCE, being aware of teachers' conceptualisations of GCE can help to bring greater clarity and understanding. Part of the problem is that GCE can be viewed through a multitude of lenses (Adaspayeva & Parkes, 2021). For example, the viewpoints of teachers, students, community and business can bring diverse experiences and expectations to the conceptualisation of GC. Researchers have begun to examine teachers' perceptions (Goren & Yemini, 2016, 2018) and students (Hayward et al., 2015; Yemini & Furstenburg, 2018) in developing and teaching global citizenship. In Israel, Goren and Yemini (2016) compared teachers' perceptions of global citizenship from a local and an international school. They found that students' socioeconomic backgrounds could affect teachers' perceptions. Hayward et al. (2015) compared the perceptions of young citizens in Aotearoa New Zealand and Norway through focus group studies carried out between 2006 and 2013 with students (8 to 12 years old) and young adults (18 to 35 years old) in Aotearoa New Zealand, and students (13 to 19 years old) in Norway. The results noted shared values of responsibility and rights and how communities and schools enhance them. The contrast in perception came from a more collective outlook from Norwegian students compared to an individualistic outlook in Aotearoa New Zealand. However, where Aotearoa New Zealand students had been involved in sports clubs, community action or *iwi hui*, there was a base of collective, public service.

The political environment appears to shape the outlook of the participants in the research outlined above. Students' perceptions demonstrated similarities in each context (Hayward et al., 2015) and awareness of global issues (Yemini & Furstenburg, 2018). According to Hayward et al. (2015), communities and schools feed into the development of awareness and education,

influencing behaviours and ownership seen as valuable for engaging and developing citizens with the ability to participate, be responsible and activated. Interestingly, the students in local schools in Israel were exposed to issues outside school, enabling them to become more aware of inclusion, diversity and rights than their counterparts in the international schools (Yemini & Furstenburg, 2018). The social-democratic environment of Norway generated more socially activated students compared to students in the neoliberal Aotearoa New Zealand context; however, there was consensus, in both nations, that students felt teachers enabled safer environments in which to discuss the issues facing global citizens (Hayward et al., 2015). Empowering student discussion increases the opportunities for curiosity, connection with others, and a sense of self and confidence in actively engaging in problem-solving within the local, national and global society.

Teachers offered perceptions and understandings of global citizenship, which differed from their students (Yemini & Furstenburg, 2018). A study by Goren and Yemini (2016) in Israel showed that teachers avoided issues deemed too sensitive, particularly given the experience of a divided political conflict environment. In societies affected by conflict, research shows that teachers are not necessarily avoiding critical discussions, but they are unable to effectively implement them because GCE may not be a curricular priority (Savenije & Goldberg, 2019). Teachers' perceptions of GCE may be mixed due to a lack of understanding or consensus. When working within a society experiencing conflict, there may be complex contexts to negotiate, generating barriers to GCE (Savenije et al., 2019; Yemini & Furstenburg, 2018). Students who are not given the opportunity to evaluate and talk about sensitive issues in an objective learning environment may not be aware of their contexts' cultural or social history (Savenije et al., 2019) or the potential for peace (Yemini & Furstenburg, 2018).

As this section shows, there is a conflict between teachers and differences in understanding between groups of students from different backgrounds and contexts. GCE will also be impacted by business, political, religious, financial and environmental values. Expectations within local, national and international settings will add their dimensions to conceptualisations of GCE, generating more complexity and opportunities for confusion. Having explored the international implications for global citizenship and GCE, the next section looks at the national level. I chose Aotearoa New Zealand because it focuses on my lived experiences and research and the country in which SDG 4 results are being gathered in Oceania.

GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

Aotearoa New Zealand, as do all nations, has a unique context regarding global citizenship, enhanced by its bicultural identity. The distinctive cultural capabilities of collective thinking, connection to place and sense of identity bring valuable outlooks and skill-sets to GCE discussion. The cultural capabilities can be seen in Hayward et al.'s (2015) reflection on collective public service within a neo-liberal and market-based democracy. Perreau (2019) highlights the need to recognise people's identities in the local context and recognise how those identities project into national and global contexts. *Tūrangawaewae* (a standing place for the feet, identity connected with place) gives a strong connection to place and a sense of belonging to Māori, who have a distinct relationality within Aotearoa New Zealand and global contexts (Macfarlane, 2019). In addition, the importance of the collective and relationship with place, people and the past, and present and future are woven into the fabric of Aotearoa New Zealand's shared space with the Pacific nations. Matapo (2019) discussed how an individual is connected to land and people through ancestors, sustainability and the interdependent nature of the collective. Through the Pacific collective, Matapo (2019) highlighted how the Pacific nations'

existing transnational connections demonstrate how different nations can come together in a larger collective.

However, the lack of clarification and definition of what global citizenship means increases the complexity surrounding the conceptualisation of GCE and how it is taught in Aotearoa New Zealand (Shephard et al., 2017). Although the *New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007) sets the vision for its students to connect with their position as citizens living within a global society (Ministry of Education, 2007, 2013), there are no specific references to GCE in the *New Zealand Curriculum*. For example, the ‘Key Competences’ section briefly mentions the discussion around belonging to local, national and global communities, and relationality is seen as an underpinning value of the school curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007), but these mentions do not explicitly connect to GCE (Adaspayeva & Parkes, 2021). It is possible that because the *New Zealand Curriculum* was published in 2007, prior to the global focus on GCE, the curriculum does not reflect the recent emphasis on GCE. However, there is scope to teach GCE within the social studies curriculum, such as where global contexts are discussed in Level 7 (Ministry of Education, 2017), yet, teaching GCE remains flexible (Ministry of Education, 2007; Peterson et al., 2018). This flexibility is intended to allow teachers to decide how GCE is defined and how it is taught. On the other hand, it could mean less focus on GCE specifically and more emphasis on the broader associated concepts.

This lack of specific direction for GCE within the *New Zealand Curriculum* couples with a lack of research within the GCE field. There are few available studies on GCE in Aotearoa New Zealand. One study researched the implementation of global citizenship concepts at Aotearoa New Zealand universities but did not examine the primary or secondary education sectors (Grimwood, 2018). The study explored the online promotional material of three Aotearoa New Zealand universities to gain an understanding of global citizenship in Aotearoa New Zealand. Analysing graduate profiles and exchange programmes, Grimwood (2018) concluded that the universities did not clearly define global citizenship because each considered global citizenship from their own contexts. There are more competitive aspects to higher education when compared to primary and secondary education, generating a drive by higher education institutions to focus on the employability of their students and funding for their institutions. It was this area that Grimwood (2018) concluded could be skewed towards an inauthentic view of global citizenship rather than one that was authentic in its approach towards educating *tamariki* (children) to become aware, participate and responsible. However, Jaufar (2021) explored the lived experiences of young global citizens in Aotearoa New Zealand and the Maldives to gain a deeper awareness of their commitment to sustainable and environmental citizenship. Grimwood (2018) and Jaufar (2021) highlighted two sides of global citizenship, one driven by market forces and outputs and the other through personal experiences and reflection. The different facets of global citizenship impact how GCE is conceptualised and, therefore, how it is presented and taught as part of the social studies curriculum.

There is a need to view different perceptions of GCE to gain an understanding of what is being taught in Aotearoa New Zealand, and where and how it is being taught. This highlights an urgent need to gain a deeper understanding of GCE within the Aotearoa New Zealand context. One area future research could examine is the perceptions of key stakeholders to gain their interpretations of global citizenship and GCE and how these might or might not impact the *New Zealand Curriculum*. Currently, the *New Zealand Curriculum* is undergoing a ‘refresh’. The new Social Sciences learning area references aspects of global citizenship without defining global citizenship or overtly naming it. The draft consultation document (Ministry of Education, 2022) includes references to local, national, and global levels of connections between people and communities, economic interdependence, global processes such as climate change, and

global challenges and consequences. Future research could investigate whether the curriculum's implicit GCE content and flexibility are successfully developing global citizenship awareness or confounding the learning through a lack of explicit consensus.

Another area for future research is to do with identity and how local and global identities are understood, assisting our *tamariki* (children) to find their place and have confidence in their relationship with others, locally and globally. However, before we can identify GCE more explicitly in the *New Zealand Curriculum*, there needs to be a clear, concise and thoughtful shared understanding of global citizenship.

One evolving description of global citizenship from an Aotearoa New Zealand context draws on the work of Gardner-McTaggart and Palmer (2018), Pashby (2018), Robinson and Levac (2018), and Clifford and Montgomery (2017). It describes a global citizen as being interconnected with others, objective, curious, empathetic and engaged, with the ability to work collaboratively and problem solve in response to global challenges and issues while being aware of their *tūrangawaewae* (a standing place for the feet, identity connected with place) and foundations in a global society (Beckwith, 2021). It is evolving because there needs to be further work done to explore people's perceptions of global citizenship. Māori, Pacific, rural and children's voices often remain unheard, though they have meaningful experiences that will add much to the discussion surrounding the future of global citizenship and GCE in Aotearoa New Zealand.

While Aotearoa New Zealand has taken an implicit approach to teaching GCE, other bicultural nations, such as Wales and Canada, are more explicit in their positioning of GCE within their curricula. For example, Wales has an Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) Development Framework (EDF) (Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Welsh Assembly Government, 2008). ESDGC is approached holistically and embedded within all curriculum areas. There is an expectation that all educational settings and educators participate. In addition, ESDGC extends beyond the classroom and should engage with all stakeholders, including parents, carers, and other communities to ensure its success and sustainability. Canada's reference to GCE begins in kindergarten and continues to the 12th grade. Chanicka et al. (2018) discuss additional challenges to education because different motivations and the evolution of what it means to be a global citizen have transformed traditional teaching methods. Critical awareness is being developed through strengthening students' sense of self within the world. As Canadian education is governed by provinces or territories, local awareness feeds into policy modifying a national blanket-type approach (Engel & Siczek, 2018).

Within Aotearoa New Zealand, the flexible and implicit approach to GCE has given it a lack of clarification, focus and identity. This vagueness is compounded by the lack of consensus in the global understanding of global citizenship. With clearer definitions of global citizenship and GCE, Aotearoa New Zealand could harness its existing strengths of cultural capability and collective identity to become a purposeful leader in this field.

CONTEXTUALISING GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP TO GROW

Clarification and clearer definitions would better support the teaching of global citizenship. Without this shared understanding, global citizenship is a phenomenon interpreted by others in a spectrum of ways, making it challenging to select one of the multiple understandings to use as a foundation for teaching global citizenship. The diversity of perceptions and interpretations means that GCE lacks consistency at a national level, which is compounded internationally.

It does not appear to be possible to constrain the meaning of global citizenship to suit all purposes, nations and people. Global citizenship, as a phenomenon, is constantly evolving, and each stakeholder, from individual to global governance entities, will have different perceptions that also change over time. However, before teaching a subject, educators need to be aware of their conceptualisations of citizenship (global and national), their context, what they are teaching and its foundations. To be able to incorporate GCE into teaching frameworks, with specific targets to achieve the SDG targets by 2030, nations need to know what GCE means, what it arises from and what its purpose is.

If Aotearoa New Zealand cannot clarify a national meaning or identity surrounding global citizenship, then a more consistent approach to teaching GCE and SDG Indicator 4.7.1 becomes an unachievable target. It would benefit educators for global citizenship to be defined within the nation's cultural, political, and social landscape. This proposal echoes the call made by Adaspayeva and Parkes (2021) who reviewed the *New Zealand Curriculum* and recommended that a definition of 'global citizen' be incorporated. A clearer definition of global citizenship would support the development of curriculum learning areas, education policies, schools' interpretation of GCE and how universities identify their graduate attributes and connect with their learners (Borkovic et al., 2020). Contextualising global citizenship and identifying how Aotearoa New Zealand perceives global citizenship will provide a stronger and more explicit and transparent foundation from which to grow GCE. It will allow other nations to strongly recognise Aotearoa New Zealand's identity in the global citizenship landscape.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this article has contributed to the discussion surrounding global citizenship and GCE through an Aotearoa New Zealand context. It demonstrates an increased interest in global citizenship and makes the case that the overall definitions of global citizenship flex with context and mindsets, making consensus inconsistent and contested. Few studies that have examined global citizenship from an Aotearoa New Zealand context. This article highlights the gap in this field, providing a basis for future research to build on to gain a greater understanding of how Aotearoa New Zealand defines global citizenship and how this translates into effective GCE.

The lack of research into GCE in the school sector in Aotearoa New Zealand makes it difficult to understand if the flexible *New Zealand Curriculum* is aiding or hindering the teaching of GCE. Additionally, as the *New Zealand Curriculum* does not clearly address GCE, it raises questions about how it is understood and interpreted by key stakeholders such as teachers, children and parents. Further research is needed to address both these gaps in current knowledge.

The unique cultural context of Aotearoa New Zealand offers a strong identity for leadership on the world stage. However, in addition to the individuality of Aotearoa New Zealand, there is strength in the historical and spiritual local identities that are shared by other nations. Researching how local is intertwined with global and how shared interests and issues can unite communities, would elevate the idea of connectivity and provide opportunities to collaboratively develop the notions of global citizenship and GCE while gaining a deeper understanding of GCE within the Aotearoa New Zealand context. In the current global context, there is some urgency to further examine GCE to ensure that Aotearoa New Zealand retains productive relationships with other nations and has the ability to develop grounded *tamariki* (children) who are actively aware of their local and global identities and those of other people.

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What's behind a policy? Examining the ideological intents of teacher professional standards in the Philippines

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Teacher professionalism has been a long-standing discussion in education. Education scholars often refer to teacher professionalism as the improvement in the quality and standards of teachers and their practices and the enhancement of the teaching profession. In the Philippines, teacher professionalism has become a focus of education reform upon the introduction of a new policy in 2017 entitled the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) policy. Government leaders and education officials claim that the PPST would help teachers achieve personal growth and professional development. However, the government introduced the policy without a transparent discussion of its ideological intent. This article examines this gap by analysing the ideologies that underpin the PPST policy and comparing and contrasting these to the ideologies emphasised in the policy it replaced, the National Competency-based Teacher Standards (NCBTS) policy. Using thematic analysis, the findings suggest that the change of policies reflects a shift from collectivism to a more individualistic orientation. This is manifested in the shift in focus from teaching practices to teachers themselves, from emphasising teachers' contribution to student learning outcomes to broader national goals, from the promotion of mutually obligated individuals' goals to personal aspirations, and from improving practice for students to improving practice for standards. This article contributes to the discussion on the influence of professional standards on teacher professionalism and how it becomes a mechanism for perpetuating a neoliberal agenda through policy.

Keywords: teacher professionalism; professional standards for teachers; education policy

INTRODUCTION

The concept of teacher professionalism has been a long-standing topic for discussion among educational theorists and scholars (Demirkasımoğlu, 2010; Evetts, 2008; Hargreaves, 2000). Teacher professionalism refers to improving the quality and standards of teachers' practices and enhancing the teaching profession (Hoyle, 2001). It is a social construct that is continuously being re-defined through educational policies and practices (Hilferty, 2008). The vast literature on teacher professionalism shows how complex the concept is and how its definition can vary according to changing historical, political, and social contexts (Demirkasımoğlu, 2010). In the Philippines, current understandings of teacher professionalism are considered to have been shaped by the biggest recent policy reform in teachers' practices and the teaching profession, the *Philippines Professional Standard for Teachers* (PPST) policy implemented in 2017 (Department of Education, 2017).

The PPST policy was institutionalised by the Philippine Department of Education (DepEd) to articulate what constitutes teacher quality in the country. As stated in the Department Order No.42, s. 2017, the policy sets out expectations for teachers' practice, professional development and assessment of teacher performance. Specifically, the policy articulates four main aims:

- set out clear expectations of teachers' status and practices along well-defined career stages of professional development from beginning to distinguished practice
- engage teachers to embrace a continuing effort to attain proficiency actively
- apply a uniform measure to assess teacher performance
- identify professional development needs and provide support for professional development

DepEd developed the PPST policy with Australian funding and technical assistance, including through the Australian Embassy, the Australian-funded Basic Education Sector Transformation Program (BEST), and the University of New England and its SiMERR National Research Centre based in Australia. The DepEd also worked closely with the locally based organisation, the Research Center for Teacher Quality (RCTQ), which aims to conduct research to strengthen and improve teacher practices, to develop the policy with support from the Australian Government (Philippine National Research Center for Teacher Quality, n.d.). Other local organisations which contributed to the development of the policy were the Teacher Education Council (TEC), Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the Philippine Normal University (PNU) (DepEd, 2017).

The development of the PPST policy responded to and was influenced by reform agendas and contextual changes at the national and global levels. The national-level agendas included reform of K-12 education and the changing characteristics of learners within the changing social and economic context of the Philippines. At regional and global levels, the Philippines' integration with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) frameworks and the establishment of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Education 2030 Framework also influenced the development of the policy.

In terms of national-level influences, the ideation and development of the PPST policy was a part of a major overhaul of the education sector in the Philippines in 2012. The DepEd embarked on the biggest education reform in the country's education, shifting to a K-12 system from a century-old, ten-year level education system (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2020). This move changed the landscape of teacher quality requirements in the Philippines and called for a rethinking of the National Competency-based Teacher Standards (NCBTS) policy (DepEd, 2017). From this perspective, the PPST policy is an evolution of the NCBTS policy, which was a long-standing policy on teacher professionalism implemented from 2009 until 2017. Encapsulated in the DepEd Order No. 32 s. 2009, the NCBTS policy is an integrated framework that defines effective teaching across aspects of teachers' professional life and development. This competency-based framework guides teachers to critically reflect on their practices, identify areas to be strengthened, and develop new teaching practices. The NCBTS articulates a view of ideal teaching characterised by a knowledgeable and skilled professional facilitating effective learning in different learning environments. Moreover, it advocates the active reflection of teachers about their practices and involvement in designing and evaluating student learning experiences. Thus, the image of a competent professional, as reflected in NCBTS, is someone who constantly reflects and strives for better facilitation of learning experiences for all types of students (DepEd, 2009).

Before the development of the PPST policy, the RCTQ embarked on a series of consultations and research activities to address issues and considerations identified in NCBTS. They also aimed to develop a new framework for teacher professionalism with the demands of the newly implemented K-12 education system and the evolving expectations from teachers. The recommendations from the research included (1) incorporation of career stages; (2) more focused expectations on knowledge and pedagogies; (3) integration of new ideas from the newly enacted K-12 law; (4) development of standards to serve as a guide for Teacher Education Institution (TEIs), teachers, and school heads, and (5) creation of an internationally acceptable quality assurance framework (RCTQ, 2015). These action plans were the catalyst for the development of the PPST policy.

As noted above, there were also regional and global influences on the development of the PPST. The introduction of professional standards in the Philippines is not in isolation from what is happening at the international level. The late 1980s marked the onset of education sector reforms. These reforms generally changed how professionals carried out their work through the birth of the standards agenda, which was first conceptualised in Western countries (Adoniou & Gallagher, 2017; Evans, 2011; Johnston, 2015) and later on became prevalent in countries outside Europe and America (Forde & Torrance, 2017). In most cases, the development of standards for teaching has become one of the major responses of multilateral organisations and national governments to improve the quality of teaching and enhance the status of the teaching profession (Bell et al., 2005). The Philippines followed this trend, albeit relatively later than most countries. Similar to the global movement, the Philippines enforced a revised mechanism to improve teacher performance: the PPST policy.

Despite the justifications of the policymakers and the growing acceptance at the international level of the professional standards, some Filipino teachers, labour unions and civic groups argue that the recent policy worsens the working conditions in teaching and de-professionalises teachers (Malipot, 2019). There has also been widespread criticism of the introduction of professional standards in the international research literature, including that such introductions are a regulatory framework imposed by the government to control teachers' works (Sachs, 2003), a tool that reduces the complexity of teaching to auditable competencies (Clarke & Moore, 2013), and a mechanism to advance managerialism and performativity in education (Mockler, 2013), to name a few. This article aims to explore these tensions by critically analysing the two recent policies on teacher professionalism in the Philippines, that is, the NCBTS implemented from 2009 until 2017 and its evolution, the PPST policy, which is currently being implemented. Specifically, this article compares and contrasts the ideologies that have shaped the development of the two policies, which consequently influence teacher professionalism in the country.

The next section presents an overview of the Philippine context and a more detailed discussion of the conception of teacher professionalism and the ideologies surrounding institutionalising teacher professional standards.

THE PHILIPPINE CONTEXT AND TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM

The Philippine education system has evolved over the past 400 years under foreign colonisers. Following independence in 1946, the system experienced major reforms. These reforms in education mirrored the challenges of the times, the interests of the country leaders, and global forces (Oxford Business Group, 2017). Challenges and interests include the 1991 Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM), the 2000 Presidential Commission on

Education Reform, and the 2006 National Action Plan for Education for All (Bautista et al., 2009). In recent decades, one of the most critical reforms implemented was the *Basic Education Governance Act 2001* (Philippines), which changed the framework of governance in education to a decentralised approach (Congress of the Philippines, 2001). Another significant reform was the shift to the K-12 education system with the addition of two years in high school, altering the long-standing K-10 educational system (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2020).

Despite all these reforms, the quality of education provided in the Philippines has remained questionable. The enrolment rate at the elementary level decreased from 95.9% in 2010 to 91.05% in 2015, and the completion rate remained poor, with 22% of enrolled students not completing their elementary years (Coram International, 2018). The drop-out rate has declined in the last decade, but there were still 2.7% or around 2.85 million Filipino school-aged children out of school in 2015 (Coram International, 2018). In terms of government funding, there has been an incremental increase since 2012 through the allotment of 2.1% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to education, reaching 2.3% in 2013 and, finally, 2.6% in 2015 (Coram International, 2018). However, this percentage remains low compared to other middle-income countries, which allocate almost 5% of their GDP. In the DepEd National Achievement Test, the country's national examination to measure the general achievement of Filipino students, the 75% mean percentage score has not been achieved, with only a 69.1% achievement rate for Grades 3 and 6 in 2014 (Coram International, 2018).

Teachers are at the heart of the problems and the solutions to problems with education in the country. Teachers are key to the success of educational reforms. However, DepEd has not focused on providing sufficient resources to support their development (Bongco & David, 2020). In 2014, the average primary school teacher could correctly answer only half of the questions on subject-content tests, leading to questions about the level of their technical knowledge and capability to provide children with quality education (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2020). Furthermore, in the most recent K-12 reforms, some of the challenges that confront teachers include: (1) the evolving role of the teachers in the reforms, (2) the mismatch between the goals of the curriculum and the roles that the teachers play versus the realities on the ground, and (3) professional engagement (Bongco & David, 2020). Philippine education issues remain unresolved despite several reforms, emphasising the need to support teachers in their roles.

Globally, during the last decade, teacher professionalism has become one of the targets of different governments' reforms to improve the quality of education (Demirkasımoğlu, 2010). Professional standards for teachers have been promoted as a major means of improving teacher professionalism (Johnston, 2015). The concept of professionalism, mostly taken from a Western perspective and literature, has undergone its own evolution of definition in response to the changing political, social, and economic terrains in different periods (Hilferty, 2008). During the 1920s, professionalism was widely regarded as an occupational value and was considered to be based on trust, competence, identity and cooperation (Evans, 2008). During this period, professionalism was closely linked to and defined within the prevailing social context of stability and civility (Evans, 2008). Around the 1970s, a more pessimistic view of professionalism emerged as a result of more critical literature (Evetts, 2003; Hargreaves, 2000). Professionalism was dismissed as a significant concern, and efforts were focused instead on improving practitioners' status in terms of salary and conditions (Evans, 2008; Evetts, 2003), resulting in a stronger avenue for managerial control of practitioners' status. A more recent discussion focused on professionalism as a discourse of occupational change and managerial control (Evetts, 2003). Hoyle (2001) further highlighted that this view of professionalism was more of an 'improvement in the quality of service rather than the enhancement of the status of the profession' (p. 148). From this brief discussion of the literature, it can be inferred that

professionalism is a dynamic concept commonly associated with enhancing a profession as influenced by internal factors (practitioners' drive to improve their conditions) and external forces (managerial control).

The evolution of the definition of professionalism presented above is closely linked to the conception of teacher professionalism. Similar to Hoyle's (2001) definition, some educational theorists define teacher professionalism as the improvement of quality and standards in teachers' practices (Hargreaves, 2000), qualifications, competence and capacities required for the excellent exercise of the occupation (Demirkasımoğlu, 2010); Hargreaves (2000) describes teacher professionalism in the 2000s as characterised by differing directions. In one direction, professionalism was characterised by social movements that promoted learning to work effectively and efficiently under stricter accountability mechanisms. In the other direction, professionalism was understood to be promoted by mechanisms such as increased performativity, surveillance, and intensified work demands. He added that market-oriented approaches influence the shaping of the characteristics of the new professionalism and that education is subjected to corporate systems characterised by competition, managerialism, and performance-based system. One of the consequences of this phase was the assault on teacher professionalism (Evans, 2008). Demirkasımoğlu (2010) argues that the market-oriented practices implemented by nations have resulted in decreased spending, decentralisation and competition between schools, and teachers have been subjected to restricted participation in decision-making, centralised curricula and increased control mechanisms.

The discussion in the previous two sections has raised the issues of how teacher professionalism has been the subject of major educational reforms advocated by international organisations and how the Philippines eventually adopted it. In the next section, the issue of how these professional standards embody neoliberal principles will be discussed. In doing so, I will argue that this can negatively affect and de-professionalise teachers.

IDEOLOGIES UNDERPINNING PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR TEACHERS

The introduction of professional standards has been linked to a broader discourse of a neoliberal or market-oriented educational agenda (Liew, 2012). Underpinning a neo-liberal agenda in education is human capital theory, which promotes that the key role of schools is to produce workers who will be assets for the nation-state in the growing global economic competition (Adoniou & Gallagher, 2017). Within the discourse of neo-liberalism, professional standards are used to advance the notion that high-performing teachers produce high-performing students who will contribute to an economically competitive nation (Adoniou & Gallagher, 2017). Another illustration of the market-oriented paradigm underpinning professional standards is the notion of the knowledge economy. The knowledge economy refers to an ideology in which knowledge is recognised as capital and as instrumental to national economic growth (Peters & Humes, 2003). Professional standards for teachers are reflected in the requirement to develop appropriate knowledge and continuously learn by upgrading and acquiring new skills.

Under these market-oriented, neoliberal paradigms lie ideologies that provide insight into the underlying intentions of education policies. Zajda (2018) provides a useful framework for a range of opposing sets of ideologies dominant within education policy, specifically: purposive rationality versus value rationality, self-orientation versus other-orientation, individualism versus collectivism, autonomy versus equality, and universalism versus particularism. For this study, the contrasting ideologies of individualism and collectivism are explored in relation to the neoliberal agenda advanced in the PPST policy and how these ideologies impact values and

practices in a collectivist society like the Philippines (Evans, 2016). The individualist and collectivist ideologies are presented before being used to comparatively analyse the NCBTS and PPST policies.

Individualism is defined as a focus on oneself, emphasising the values of personal autonomy, accountability and self-fulfilment based on one's accomplishment (Hofstede, 1984). It is an ideology that promotes self-reliance and the pursuit of personal interests (Coon et al., 2002), an ideology that is embodied in the neoliberal agenda for education (Hargreaves, 1980). Under this view, humans need constant management, and the state should create controlling and management measures to create a free market characterised by competition and choice (Cleary, 2017). In education systems, these practices are reflected in corporate strategies such as efficiency, autonomy, competition, decentralisation, accountability and consumer choice. A common critique of this approach focuses on the emphasis on objectivity, accountability and meritocracy to achieve efficiency (Liew, 2012).

Collectivism is an ideology that advances treating groups to which one belongs as the most significant unit for social practices, highlighting the importance of the subordination of individual ambitions and the group's priorities (Boreham, 2004). Collectivism assumes people to be collectively bound and mutually obligated to one another and fosters interdependence and shared success (Hargreaves, 1980). Contrary to personal interests, a collectivist ideology promotes permanent and hierarchical relationships (Coon et al., 2002). Under this view, individuals gravitate towards being identified as a part of a group and place more importance on the collective and shared views, principles, practices and interests over his/her own (Boreham, 2004).

Using the lenses of individualism and collectivism, four dimensions of the PPST policy compared to its predecessor, the NCBTS policy, are analysed. These four dimensions are the shift of focus from teaching practices to teachers themselves, student learning outcomes to wider national goals, promotion of mutually obligated individuals' goals to personal aspirations, and improving practice for students to improving practice for standards.

METHODOLOGY

To investigate the ideologies underpinning the PPST policy, this research adopted a critical approach to policy analysis, which aims to identify hegemonic principles underpinning education policies (Portnoi, 2016). The primary method of this study is document analysis, which involves identifying and critically analysing documents that can provide contexts and meanings to social practices, such as teacher professionalism. The documents analysed in this study are the NCBTS framework and the PPST policy. Thematic analysis was used to identify themes within a qualitative data set (Moules et al., 2017; Stainton & Willig, 2017). This method is useful for examining different perspectives within textual data and for summarising large sets of qualitative data. The different phases of thematic analysis include familiarisation with the research data, generating initial codes, identifying themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the analysis report (Moules et al., 2017).

Following Moules and colleagues' (2017) approach, descriptive coding was the first layer of analysis. A code is often a word or a short phrase that assigns a meaning to a portion of language-based data (Saldaña, 2016). In descriptive coding, a word or a short phrase summarises the basic topic of a passage. The categorised inventory of codes produced from this first layer of analysis became the essential groundwork for the second cycle of coding, that is, pattern coding. Pattern codes are inferential codes that identify emergent themes and

configurations. This method condensed large amounts of data into smaller analytic units, revealing explanations in the data. Lastly, themes were derived from coding, which brought meaning and identity to recurrent concepts and ideas and unified the data and codes into a meaningful whole (DeSantis & Ugarriza, 2000). Thus, for this study, the policy text documents were analysed, words and phrases were coded, and similar codes were merged to develop encompassing themes. The processes of coding the data and identifying the themes were guided by the review of the literature presented earlier in this article, in particular, the literature on individualistic and collectivist ideologies. The two policy texts (PPST and NCBST) were analysed separately and the themes were then compared to identify the similarities and differences between the ideologies underpinning these policies.

It is important to note that the policy analysis presented in this article focuses on the policy texts alone and does not include broader influences of the policy, such as economic, political and socio-cultural contexts of policy production.

FINDINGS

This section presents the findings of the analysis, identifying the themes that emerged from the policy document analysis on the ideologies underpinning the NCBTS and the PPST policies.

Quality of teaching or quality of teachers

A notable difference between the two policies is the shift in focus in terms of how each policy advocates for the advancement of teachers. While the NCBTS prioritises teaching quality, the PPST policy underscores the importance of the qualities of teachers as individuals.

In NCBTS, the focus on teaching quality is evident in the goal of the policy:

The NCBTS provides a single framework that shall define effective teaching in all aspects of a teacher's professional life and in all phases of teacher development. (DepEd, 2009, p. 3).

In the NCBTS, good teaching is being defined in terms of those practices that help students learn better. So the NCBTS is concerned with whether teachers are competent in helping students learn. (DepEd, 2009, p. 7).

The focus of this framework is for teachers to qualify their practices and help them critically evaluate if these contribute to helping students attain the learning goals in the curriculum. To do this, the competency framework is organised hierarchically: domains which are well-defined areas for demonstrating teacher practices; under each domain are strands, which are more specific dimensions of teacher practices; and under these strands are indicators which are concrete actions and observable practices of teachers that support student learning (DepEd, 2009). Teachers are evaluated based on the quality of their practices, the frequency, consistency, and appropriateness of these positive competencies and their self-awareness of the premises, rationale and nature of the teacher-learning process (DepEd, 2009). From here, the focus on teaching practices is evident as the policy takes on a developmental approach to evaluating these practices against student learning outcomes and learning goals in the curriculum.

By contrast, the PPST policy states its explicit purpose as standardising what a quality teacher is:

The Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers defines teacher quality in the Philippines. (DepEd, 2017, p. 4).

It articulates what constitutes teacher quality in the K to 12 Reform through well-defined domains, strands, and indicators that provide measures of professional learning, competent practice, and effective engagement. (DepEd, 2017, p. 4).

Evolving from the NCBTS policy, the PPST policy retains the structure for evaluating teacher practices with the domain-strand-indicator framework. It then introduces an approach to evaluating teachers through career stages: beginning, proficient, highly proficient and distinguished. This becomes a standards framework that details the expected developmental progression of teachers as they develop, refine their practices and respond to the complexities of education reforms (DepEd, 2017). Career Stage 1 or Beginning Teachers are those who have just gained the qualifications of the teaching profession. Career Stage 2 or Proficient Teachers can independently apply vital skills to teaching. Career Stage 3 or Highly Proficient Teachers consistently exhibit a high level of performance in their practices. Career Stage 4 or Distinguished Teachers embody the country's highest standards for teaching practices (DepEd, 2017).

These demonstrate that the earlier NCBTS policy is a guide for effective, quality teaching in the Philippines, while the PPST is a framework for affecting the quality of teachers across the country. It further shows that there has been a shift from focusing on teachers' practices to teachers themselves.

Focus on student learning outcomes or focus on national development goals

As a competency-based framework, the NCBTS's end goal is to ensure that teachers' improvements are seen and reflected in students' improved learning outcomes. The policy's goal is 'effective teaching' which means that teachers successfully ensure that learning happens for all types of students under different circumstances (DepEd, 2009).

The NCBTS is an integrated theoretical framework that defines the different dimensions of effective teaching, where effective teaching means being able to help all types of students learn the different learning goals in the curriculum. (DepEd, 2009, p. 3)

Therefore, teachers' knowledge and skills are meaningful, useful, and effective only if they help students learn within their learning environment. (DepEd, 2009, p. 8)

Aside from this, the idea of the development continuum of practice stated in the policy centres on students' feelings and appreciation towards teachers' practices. With the following statements, there is a clear indication that teachers' practices are evaluated against how the students learn in class. Below are some strands and indicators that reflect this.

Strand 2.1: Creates an environment that promotes fairness:

All my students always feel respected and appreciated in class, and that they all have an equal opportunity to learning and to achieve. (DepEd, 2009, p. 20)

Strand 3.2: Demonstrates concern for the holistic development of learners:

I create different learning activities to allow all my diverse students to grow and develop in many different aspects. (DepEd, 2009, p. 26)

In the PPST, improved student learning outcomes are also important, but the policy's aspirations extend to and emphasise the wider national development goals. Under this policy,

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teachers' continuous improvements are needed to deliver the new curriculum under the K to 12 and contribute to sustainable nation building and internationalisation:

The K to 12 Reform (R.A. 10533) in 2013 has changed the landscape of teacher quality requirements in the Philippines. The reform process warrants an equivalent supportive focus on teacher quality – high-quality teachers who are properly equipped and prepared to assume the roles and functions of a K to 12 teacher. (DepEd, 2017, p. 3)

Evidences show unequivocally that good teachers are vital to raising student achievement, i.e., quality learning is contingent upon quality teaching. Hence, enhancing teacher quality becomes of utmost importance for long-term and sustainable nation building. (DepEd, 2017, p. 3)

These quotes depict the emphasis on student learning outcomes in the earlier NCBTS policy and wider national development goals in the PPST policy. This shift also amplifies the expectations on teachers to not only teach for individual student outcomes but also help the country achieve wider national goals.

Collective goals or individual goals

Another difference between the two policies is the shift from emphasising the collective and collaborative professional growth of teachers in the NCBTS policy to stressing individual goals in the PPST policy.

The NCBTS policy emphasises the collaborative and collegial relationships between teachers for their collective improvement as a profession. One key goal of this policy is to ensure that teachers discuss and collaboratively identify how their practices can still be improved:

Thus, the NCBTS can help each Filipino teacher become a better teacher, and assist each teacher to continuously think about improving professionalism to become even better and better as facilitators of student learning. (DepEd, 2009, p. 6)

With the NCBTS, all Filipino teachers also share a common vocabulary for discussing their teaching practice, for defining their ideals as teachers, for negotiating and creating strategies to improve their practice, and for addressing their various stakeholders regarding the improvement of the teaching profession. (DepEd, 2009, p. 6)

By contrast, the PPST policy advances a premium on individual teachers' personal and professional growth, as detailed in the career stages. The standards make explicit what each teacher should be able to do in each career stage and detail the skills and knowledge they need to possess and demonstrate to achieve the next higher level. There is no mention of student learning:

The standards describe the expectations of teachers' increasing levels of knowledge, practice and professional engagement. (DepEd, 2017, p. 4)

Anchored on the principle of lifelong learning, the set of professional standards for teachers recognizes the significance of a standards framework that articulates developmental progression as teachers develop, refine their practice and respond to the complexities of educational reforms. (DepEd, 2017, p. 7)

This shift emphasises the collaborative and collective growth of teachers in the NCBTS policy and the focus on individual professional and personal development in the PPST policy.

Improving practice for students or improving practice for standards

Lastly, the document analysis indicates a move from improving practice for students in NCBTS to improving practice for meeting standards in the PPST policy.

The NCBTS is designed to be used by teachers to reflect on their practices, identify how less ideal practices can be improved and determine ways to enhance their practices. The passage below emphasises how the NCBTS policy can be used as a self-reflection tool and how teachers can best ensure that the students are learning through effective teaching:

Therefore, good teaching requires the teacher's active involvement in designing, redesigning, and evaluation of the learning experiences of students. Thus, the image of the good teacher is one who is constantly reflecting about how best to help different types of learners learn. The teacher is not a mere implementer of pre-defined or prescribed sets of actions. Instead, the teacher is an active agent engaged in higher level thinking about how to help the students learn. (DepEd, 2009, p. 9).

In the PPST policy, teacher innovation and improvement are advanced through increasing accountability measures linked to standards, contrasting with the NCBTS's focus on teachers reflecting on how their practice impacts student learning. Through the domains, strands and indicators, the expectations in terms of the teachers' practices and values are well-defined and delineated. The achievement of these targets is underscored as necessary for teachers to develop professionally. This is evident in how the framework defines what teachers should be able to do and know:

The professional standards, therefore, become a public statement of professional accountability that can help teachers reflect on and assess their own practices as they aspire for personal growth and professional development. (DepEd, 2017, p. 4)

The following statements, which define the work of teachers at different career stages, make explicit the elements of high-quality teaching for the 21st century. They comprise descriptors that have been informed by teachers' understandings of what is required at each of the four Career Stages. (DepEd, 2017, p. 7)

These passages indicate differences, including how some of the provisions in the NCBTS highlight the need to look at teachers' practices and reflect on those needing improvement. It also emphasises innovation by encouraging teachers and their colleagues to proactively design the teaching and learning process based on their students' contexts and needs. By contrast with PPST, there seems to be a shift of the lens to focus on teachers improving their practice to achieve professional standards and progress their own professional standing. The PPST emphasises individual goals and professional accountability as the focus for improving teacher practice linked to teachers' career progression rather than student outcomes.

DISCUSSION

In the previous section, the findings of the policy document analysis, which highlighted significant differences in the ideologies underpinning the NCBTS and the PPST policies, were presented. In summary, the NCBTS advocated for a focus on teaching practices, student learning outcomes, teachers' collective growth and improving student practice. By contrast, the PPST moves away from these and turns the lens to the teachers themselves, their contribution to wider national goals, their individual goals and improving practice to meet set standards. The analysis shows that the shift in teacher professionalism policy represented in the PPST policy is a shift from the ideology of collectivism to individualism. This section discusses the potential broader implications of this shift in ideology.

The shift to an individualistic ideology in the PPST policy constrain teachers' innovation and reduced autonomy in their professional practice. This is noticeable in the expanded demands of the teachers in the most recent policy. Teachers' goals are no longer only ensuring student learning outcomes but now extend to contributing to the wider goals of the country, such as internationalisation and sustainable nation building. Because of the regulatory nature of the PPST standards, it can prompt teachers to focus less on innovating in their practice for the benefit of student learning and more on meeting the requirements of the standards (Liew, 2012).

The biggest shift from the NCBTS to the PPST policy is the change in focus from teaching practices to the teachers themselves. Arguably, this reflects how the current government prioritises the individual achievement of teachers, relying on their motivation and skills to help improve themselves to achieve government aims. With this comes the assumption that the traditional perception of teachers as citizens of the country, with mutual obligations to the collective good, has been replaced by a premium on the importance of teachers' individual choices, which are believed to dictate his/her destiny (Telhaug et al., 2004). Indeed, with the institutionalisation of the PPST policy, these values will perpetuate within the education system. The central government sets national professional standards for teachers, which detail the expectations and requirements of teachers. While these accountability measures have been imposed in a 'top-down', system-wide way, it is left up to individual teachers to find ways to achieve these goals. This further strengthens the ideology of advocating for teachers' individual choices. Overall, this indicates that the Philippine government believes that teachers can be 'steered' from a distance.

The individualistic ideology also orients professional accountability with a perspective on a measurement of performance coupled with a system of rewards and punishment. The PPST policy serves not just as a professional guide that teachers can use to improve themselves and their practice but also as the credo which others can use to assess them. The policy's focus on assessing and evaluating teachers themselves sets meaningful and defensible standards for what school stakeholders (students, parents, community) can expect from the teachers. Furthermore, the policy encourages reasonable and feasible ways teachers can implement these measures. Finally, these standards provide a mechanism for corrections in practice when the teachers fall short of their expectations. All these aspects demonstrate that PPST serves as a public statement of professional accountability.

The individualistic ideology underpinning the PPST policy contributes to the neoliberal agenda entering the Philippine education system. The policy perpetuates the view of Filipino teachers as professionals valuing personal autonomy, accountability and self-fulfilment based on one's accomplishments. With the requirement to meet the standards, Filipino teachers allow themselves to be regulated with the belief that this mechanism will lead to improved teaching and, consequently, student learning outcomes. The PPST policy perpetuates a 'new managerialism' in education that emphasises efficiency and effectiveness (Tuinamuana, 2011).

As the major policy guiding teacher professionalism, the PPST policy influences how teachers are expected to grow into their profession and improve their practice, as well as collectively enhance the teaching profession. Hilferty (2008) affirmed that teacher professionalism is a social construct and that the changing political landscape defines what it means in a country. With the PPST policy and its prioritisation of an individualistic approach, teachers will be influenced by how they execute their roles and place importance on the values emphasised to survive and thrive in the current educational reform. With the PPST policy promoting the

neoliberal agenda, teacher professionalism in the Philippines might also be based on principles such as accountability, managerialism, efficiency and performativity.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the differences in the ideological underpinning of the NCBTS and the PPST policies reveals the shift from a collective orientation to an individualistic orientation regarding teacher professionalism and how it can be improved. With this shift comes the emphasis on evaluating teachers' individual qualities, a focus on their contribution to wider national development goals, an emphasis on their individual goals and the prominence of improving standards. This individualistic orientation is enveloped within a broader global movement that is neoliberalism, an ideology that gives the individual the responsibility to achieve their maximum potential through mechanisms such as competition and accountability. With the PPST policy underpinning these elements, teacher professionalism as shaped by this policy may result in teachers emphasising meeting the standards and exercising their professional practices with reduced professional autonomy. In conclusion, the analysis reveals that the PPST policy orients teacher professionalism towards a neoliberal ideology.

The findings in this article raise questions about the ideation, development and enactment of the PPST policy, which are worthy of further research. A notable feature of the PPST policy is that it has been developed with significant support from foreign aid from the Australian Government. The strong presence of the Australian Government's technical expertise and financial resources in the policymaking is notable and should not be overlooked. Exploring the degree to which Filipino policymakers have been susceptible to or have resisted foreign aid donor countries' influences is an area for future research. This research suggests a need to examine how the PPST policy was developed and influenced by broader international policy networks, the role of international experts and the influence of global ideas and frameworks. Finally, due to varying social, geographical and cultural conditions in different parts of the Philippines, future research into the enactment of the policy within diverse local contexts would be valuable. Building on the initial findings as presented in this article, these avenues for future research will enable deeper exploration of the different ways that the PPST policy perpetuates the neoliberal agenda in public education, as well as how this may be resisted by local actors.

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Gross national happiness and challenges for education in Bhutan: Perspectives of policy experts

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Nations, institutions and researchers worldwide are increasingly demanding their governments set out a systemic change to humanise the present order of the world. In Bhutan, introducing a Gross National Happiness (GNH) philosophy in the 1970s and applying GNH indicators in the early 2000s was a deliberate attempt to embed Bhutanese values into national governance structures. For Bhutan, GNH provides a focus to ensure developed policies stemming from international agendas are humane. The nationwide happiness index, constructed every five years, measures people's happiness level through nine domains consisting of 33 indicators by a GNH survey of all Bhutanese citizens. The latest survey indicates that citizens perceive education as making the lowest contribution to the GNH index. This study examines the perception of key policy actors gathered through interview and outlines three key challenges for policy architects implementing happiness-focused governance policies with implications for education. The paper concludes with observations on educational implications for Bhutan and other countries seeking to replicate a national focus on happiness.

Keywords: education; governance; politics; happiness; well-being; sustainability

INTRODUCTION

Standing on the cusp of the twentieth century (around 1907), the first King of Bhutan recognised the importance of modern education to prepare Bhutan for the future. At that time, there were no modern schools in Bhutan. His Majesty, therefore, sent Bhutanese children to study in the neighbouring states of India, built early foundations of modern education by building infrastructure, and enhanced policies to strengthen the existing monastic education system in Bhutan. By 2021, Bhutan had established 1,928 schools and institutes, with 12,487 teachers and 247,572 students (National Statistical Bureau [NSB], 2021). This translates to a gross enrolment rate in primary school of 96.50%, a youth literacy rate of over 93%, and a general literacy rate of 71.4% (NSB, 2021; Ministry of Education [MoE], 2020; Tobden, 2022).

More than 100 years since the first king laid the foundations for modern education, we find ourselves at the beginning of another new century and in need of a new vision to prepare for what lies ahead (The Royal Kasho on Education Reform [The Royal Decree], 2021). Globally, nations, institutions and researchers are increasingly demanding their governments pursue a progressive strategy of systemic change to humanise the present order of the world (Sachs & Unger, 2021; Unger, 2020). The introduction of a Gross National Happiness (GNH) framework was a deliberate attempt to embed Bhutanese values into national governance structures. For us in Bhutan, GNH clarifies what it means to be a politician, a public servant and a human being. It is every Bhutanese's responsibility to uphold the values of GNH, which is primarily the need to pursue everything in moderation. The Bhutanese expectation is that all policies focus on this

value. The result of GNH education, then, is to prepare a future generation to live in harmony with themselves, each other and the environment.

Education is one of the nine domains of GNH (Centre for Bhutan Studies & GNH Research, 2016). The goal for education in Bhutan is to pursue an educated and enlightened society of GNH, built and sustained on the unique Bhutanese values of *Tha Dam-Tsi Ley Gyu-Drey* (cause and effect) (MoE, 2020). To this end, higher education institutions, particularly the institute for GNH Studies (iGNHaS) at the Royal University of Bhutan, are increasingly engaging in research, teaching and training services that pertain to indicators under the education domain (Tobden, 2020). However, there is evidence to suggest emergent issues facing education in Bhutan.

The recent GNH survey (2016) shows that education is the least contributing domain to the value of GNH in Bhutan (Centre for Bhutan Studies & GNH Research, 2016). In a nation that values education highly, this is an alarming finding. This paper reports the perspectives of those working in education and other policy positions concerning the current indicators. The study gathered qualitative data using interviews as a deliberate contrast to the quantitative data of the GNH survey. The research sought to discover participants' perspectives on why they believe the GNH survey shows education as the least contributing domain to the value of GNH in Bhutan.

The findings indicate that a delay in implementing a National Education Policy has and continues to negatively impact the direction of education and teachers' ability to implement new GNH initiatives. The research took place in the context of a growing argument that the government must emphasise education reforms and implement a series of holistic development programs to realise the full potential of GNH in education. This study suggests that, although Bhutan has innovative educational guidelines and frameworks in the draft National Education Policy that align with GNH, they are ineffective until the policy is approved. Several examples of the impact of the delay on current practice include resource distribution and teacher implementation of international initiatives. The findings highlight the important role national education policies play in a nation's education system and align with similar findings from other studies in Asia. The impact of delays is particularly significant in terms of teachers' planning and practice concerning quality outcomes for the students.

BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE

The education system in Bhutan, in the form of national development plans and policies, was introduced in the 1960s when economic development plans were first introduced (NSB, 2021; Schuelka & Maxwell, 2016). In the previous 400 years, Bhutan had a well-established monastic system of education that continues in some form today. There are three main streams of education in Bhutan: general education, Monastic education, and non-formal education. All streams are state-run (MoE, 2019, 2020; Ramchand, 2020). The *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan* mandates free education for all citizens of Bhutan until Year 10, extended to Year 12 in 2020.

Further, the state makes technical and professional education available, and higher education is equally accessible to all based on merit (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2008). Since the beginning of the ongoing Five-Year Plans in the 1960s, the Royal Government of Bhutan has emphasised education as a priority sector in terms of human resource allocation and budget allocations (NSB, 2021; MoE, 2020). Since 2018, teachers have been the highest paid civil servants in Bhutan (Kuensel, 2021).

The Bhutanese education system started with the Indo-Western model in the 1960s, sourced from India as the nation's closest neighbour and development partner. However, Bhutan made significant efforts to infuse unique Bhutanese culture and traditional values into the borrowed educational materials and teachers (Ramchand, 2020; Zangmo, 2018). The national contextualisation of education continued in the 20th century, guided by the Bhutan *Vision 2020* policy, which emphasised a holistic approach to education to develop the capacity of young people to inculcate an awareness of the nation's unique cultural heritage and ethical values (Royal Government of Bhutan [RGoB], 1999). The two teacher education colleges under the Royal University of Bhutan have made tremendous progress in producing Bhutanese teachers to replace expatriates and enhance access to education for all (MoE, 2019).

However, changing job market dynamics and the impact of international policies are causing the education system in Bhutan to be unable to provide the necessary knowledge and skills to meet new national and global challenges (MoE, 2014, 2019, 2020; The Royal Kasho on Education Reform, 2021). The Bhutanese parliament, parents, and other officials discuss and share concerns about the quality of education in formal meetings and on social media (Kuensel, March 2018, December 2018). The results of the GNH survey evidences this national discontent with education's poor contribution to Bhutanese society's happiness, though no formal study demonstrates that the quality of education has declined.

To address the concerns and enhance the quality of education, the Royal Government of Bhutan initiated a series of policy interventions that included structural change, policy changes and changes to enhance human resources development. On the structural front, the Royal Education Council was instructed to oversee curriculum development with a vision of 'Innovation in Education' (MoE, 2019, p. 120). On the policy front, 'an education blueprint for 2014-2024, the education sector strategy' was prepared following a nationwide consultation with teachers, parents, students and policymakers (MoE, 2014). The government approved professional development programs for teachers on the human resource front. The Ministry of Education mandated that every teacher receive 80 hours of professional development each year (MoE, 2014).

Despite improvements in the education sector in terms of access and quality, several areas continue to lag, including quality of teaching and learning, inclusiveness, adaptive and digital learning, learning instead of classroom teaching, gearing towards emerging jobs, improving infrastructure, re-designing curriculum, and teacher quality (NSB, 2021; MoE, 2020; The Royal Kasho on Education Reform, 2021). His Majesty, the King of Bhutan, stated that the 21st-century educational requirement is defined by the accelerated rate of change in all aspects of our lives, driven by rapid technological advances and globalisation, wired and digital systems in rural areas, towns, homes and workplaces. The new vision for education must blend 21st-century competencies with holistic development so that Bhutanese children are educated and equipped to become caring, dependable and honest human beings (The Royal Kasho on Education Reform, 2021).

As noted, education is one of the nine domains of Bhutan's GNH. The indicators under this domain are literacy, schooling, knowledge and value (Centre for Bhutan Studies & GNH Research, 2016). The GNH framework was introduced into the Bhutanese education system in 2010 through the 'Green Schools for Green Bhutan' initiative (Zangmo, 2018) incorporating Bhutanese values. These values include *driglam namzha* (the national etiquette), *tha-dam-tshig ley gyu-drey* (sublime values of solemn devotion and trust based on interconnectedness, relationship and bonding, and cause and effect), *zacha-srosum* (etiquette of how one eats, one behaves and how one walks/moves based on national values), *sampa-semke* (notion, thought,

idea or anything arising or dawning in the mind (MoE, 2014; 2019). The Royal University of Bhutan has the vision to be a GNH-inspired university and, therefore, institutionalised the institute for GNH Studies in 2014 (Tobden, 2020). This is to say that the education sector in Bhutan, from schools to universities, is infused with the GNH framework.

The five-yearly GNH survey is designed to measure the happiness level of the entire Bhutanese people in each of the nine domains by asking questions about their sufficiency of the domains and the 33 indicators. In the most recent application of the nationwide GNH survey (2016), education (9.78%), good governance (10.18%), and psychological well-being (10.48%) were the domains seen to make the smallest contribution to the value of GNH (Centre for Bhutan Studies & GNH Research, 2016). The same survey revealed that community vitality (11.56%), ecology (12.41%), and good health (13.10%) were the highest contributing domains to the value of GNH in Bhutanese society.

While other nations cite money, wealth, financial security and health as the sources of happiness (Gunawardena, 2015; Langdrige & Crossley, 2005; Leontiev & Rasskozova, 2014; Sotgui, 2016), Bhutanese people cite education, employment, the future success of significant others and access to services as sources of happiness (Centre for Bhutan Studies & GNH Research, 2016); this is the Bhutanese exceptionalism. It is significant, then, to find that education is rated as among the lowest contributing factor to the value of GNH. The GNH survey has ‘government services in providing educational facilities’ as a sub-indicator of government performance. The biggest contributors to insufficiencies of government performance revealed in the GNH survey are the ‘absence of sufficient schooling’, ‘lower levels of knowledge’ and ‘higher illiteracy’. This perception is evident in many students repeating their classes and dropping out of school, which has resulted in Bhutan having one of the highest repetition rates in South and East Asia (Wangmo, 2013).

International research reveals why happiness should be the central aim of education (Noddings, 2003): education helps people to acquire knowledge, builds self-confidence and thus, it positively impacts happiness (Cuñado & Gracia, 2012). Globally, the Sustainable Development Report 2021 shows that achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) requires success in realising six major transformations, and the first on the list is quality education (SDG 4) (Sachs et al., 2021). It appears, however, that this is not currently the case in Bhutan despite the overt implementation of the GNH. Our study shows that one of the factors contributing to this result is the delay in the necessary educational policy to guide the education sector. This delay is a result of changing political governance. As mentioned earlier, the draft National Education Policy was initiated in 2015. The government then proposed an education blueprint for radical and systematic education reform in Bhutan. While the draft policy was in the process of being finalised, a new government was formed in 2018, and their priority became focused on teacher empowerment, resulting in the policy remaining in a draft form to this day.

METHODOLOGY

This paper comes out of a larger project where I, the lead author, explored the elements of Government performance in Bhutan, particularly in education. I have an ongoing interest in this topic as I have spent the last 15 years working in policy expertise, first in the Ministry of Education as a policy implementor and later in the Royal University of Bhutan, engaged in infusing GNH values in the education sector. The larger project was guided by the central question, ‘what elements of government policy and implementations, in the context of Bhutan's cultural and political economy, are critical to the continued enhancement of sustainable gross national happiness?’

The latest GNH survey quantitatively shows an intricate and textured picture of the lives of the Bhutanese people (Centre for Bhutan Studies & GNH Research, 2016). My project explores the complexities of the shortcomings in education in Bhutan by employing qualitative methods, which are more appropriate for exploring salient features of lived experiences (Creswell, 2014) that may not be revealed through quantitative methods. According to Tracy (2020), qualitative methods provide knowledge that targets societal issues, challenges or opportunities.

The findings of this study were derived through a qualitative inductive approach based on interviewing policy experts. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were held with 28 policy experts from various institutions, including members of parliament, government policy officers, corporate institutions' officers, leadership of the government, corporate and private institutions, civil society organisations, and representatives of farmers' groups and local government functionaries. The interviews with experts were held online and consisted of ten to fifteen interview questions, each lasting between one and one-and-a-half per participant. The participants were recruited adopting a purposeful sampling technique (Cresswell, 2014, p. 194) to recruit participants that fit the parameters of the research questions, goals and purpose (Coyne, 1997; Creswell, 2014; Tracy, 2021).

The study used Braun and Clarke's (2006) six stages of thematic analysis of open coding of the data, followed by categorising the codes into themes. All qualitative data analysis uses coding and theme-generating techniques; however, according to Braun and Clarke (2006) and Saldana (2013), each analysis's intent differs substantially. Since this paper is based on data collected in interviews with policy experts, this study adopted participants' terminologies and phrases as 'crystallisation points' (Bogner et al., 2009). Pseudonyms have been used for all participants.

FINDINGS

This paper focuses on three key findings of the larger Doctoral thesis project: (i) the need to approve the National Education Policy, (ii) reframing education and setting priorities, and (iii) the role of education in contributing to happiness and well-being—the GNH infused education. The following section is structured according to the three themes, with data presented for each and discussion following in the next section.

National Education Policy

Study participants echoed the emerging discourse in the Bhutanese media and policy forums about the length of time it is taking to approve the National Education Policy. One of the participants, Karma, said, 'We have been discussing about education long time back, is there anymore to think?' Karma narrated the milestone changes in education in Bhutan as follows:

[T]hat prior to 2008 (pre-democracy in Bhutan), we have institutionalised the Royal Education Council, which carried out extensive research into quality of education. The first government (2008-2013) introduced Educating for GNH. A lot of national and international experts met several rounds to discuss the quality and relevance of education; the second government (2013-2018) laid out the educational journey for ten years and came up with the education blueprint; the third government (2018-present) overhauled the teacher pay packages and made teachers the highest paid civil servants in the country. I think the most important job is to get the education policy approved and functioning.

Concerns were raised about the impact of the delay. Participants cited as an example the issue of inequity in resourcing according to the variances in regions across Bhutan. Chimi commented:

Our classrooms are not climate resilient. The schools in the south where the temperature rises up to 38 degrees in summer are not equipped with air conditioners and, likewise, the schools in the north where temperature falls to 0 are not equipped with internal heating systems. Our children write exams in freezing cold and it is not conducive to learning.

The irony is, that the draft policy allows for the requirements of regional challenges in resourcing schools according to their needs. The draft education policy has a statement that facilitates ‘special provisions and considerations shall be made for schools with exceptional circumstances, such as extreme remoteness, high altitude, and low socio-economic communities’ (MoE, 2019, p. 6). However, these infrastructure requirements can only be implemented when the National Education Policy is adopted because, in its draft form, the policy has no power.

Study participants unanimously indicated that much work had been done in the form of policy interventions and program initiatives that comes with every new government. The participants felt, however, that approval and publication of the National Education Policy would be a long-term solution to facilitate a focus on quality that would strengthen the entire education system. The participants also voiced frustration and questioned why the past successive governments were taking such a long time to endorse the National Education Policy. They strongly suggested that the ‘time to finalise the policy is now’.

Reframing education and setting priorities

Despite their demands for expedited approval of the draft policy, study participants raised concerns about the structure and focus of the draft National Education Policy. Their comments ranged across aspects of the overall vision, the policy's mission and objectives and, as discussed above, some of the structural priorities. The next paragraphs touch on the specific concerns raised about opposing ideologies between global education systems and Bhutanese values. Participant Kinga said:

The urgency now is to focus on one clear goal and get the education policy approved. While in the policy, we must decide whether to focus on value versus skills, or a combination of the two; access versus quantity; expansion of schools versus consolidation of schools; Compassion versus competition; and GDP versus GNH. The problem is, because of the modern education, it has given this wrong sense of self-importance and individualism, we must learn the values and discipline from our monastic education, and leverage that into the modern education system.

The participants explained that teachers cannot decide how to adapt their curriculum, resources and pedagogical approaches to incorporate GNH or new globalised initiatives emerging in the 21st century into their classrooms. Participant Dorji said:

Our teachers are confined to the rigid curriculum. Our teachers should be given the flexibility to operationalise their own teaching materials, and fix accountability of their own achievements.

He went on to say, ‘we must make systematic shift to gainfully reform our education system’. Dorji quoted His Majesty the King: ‘We will never go wrong, if we invest in human resources in building intelligent institutions’. Participants agree that substantial time and resources have been spent on reforming and rethinking education; however, the competing choices and confusion about how to effectively go about this is the main reason for delaying the policy objectives in the draft National Education Policy.

The vision and goals of education, as stated in the draft National Education Policy, are to develop citizens that value Bhutan's unique national identity, ancient wisdom and culture, and prepare them for right livelihood and knowledgeable, skilled, creative and innovative individuals. The draft policy states that Bhutan has made commendable progress in access to education; however, more needs to be done to focus on the quality of education in line with international policy and suggests instituting a Quality Assurance Board and a performance-based management system to maintain and the enhance quality of education. As raised by the participants, the issues of competing choices are already captured in the draft National Education Policy. Therefore, it is deemed that the approval and adoption of the National Education Policy would begin to provide a pathway forward to enhance the quality of education in Bhutan as it would clarify for teachers their right to make informed decisions about what and how to teach their students.

Role of education in contributing to happiness and well-being: GNH-infused education

Building on the base key findings above on the need to have the National Education Policy in place, with a clear vision and appropriate structural mandates, the next issue participants raised was the need to redefine the role of education in contributing to happiness and well-being in alignment with GNH values. The definition and role issues mostly have to do with aspects of curriculum and instructional pedagogy. One of the participants, Sonam, said:

We do focus on policy research, including social enterprises, and of course a very important component is education and professional development training, primarily for the benefit of who we would like to term as 'happy humanity', as you can say this is the direct inspiration from the philosophy of GNH.

Several participants suggested reorienting school structures, such as revisiting curriculum, teaching and learning pedagogy, learning processes and assessments, including making Science, Technological, Engineering and Maths (STEM) skills part of everyday learning but in a way that prioritises the values of developing holistic, caring, dependable and honest human beings. Participants Pema, Karma, Jigme and Sonam gave specific examples of how the GNH may be contextualised into various disciplines. For example, Jigme outlined how the college of Business Studies 'should be able to develop business plans for farmers cooperatives, community projects and young entrepreneurs for free'. Likewise, 'the College of Engineering, Science and Technology graduates should design landscaping, drawings and structural plans for the community projects for free of cost'. Participants outlined how the draft National Education Policy enables flexible incorporation of new global initiatives in a way that embodies GNH. They specifically cited how the school curriculum will strengthen STEM education to promote creativity and innovation (MoE, 2019, p.10) and how all educational institutes should put in place plans and programs to imbue a sense of volunteerism and foster character building embedded in the country's unique values and culture (MoE, 2019 p. 15). GNH education is the background (end objective), and education values are the foreground (a means to an end) of the Bhutanese education system (MoE, 2014; RGoB, 2008). However, until the policy is published, teachers and colleges are powerless to enact the changes.

DISCUSSION

One of the dominant factors participants cited as the reason behind the Bhutanese people's perspective of the limited contribution of education to GNH is the delay in approval of the National Education Policy. The Gross National Happiness Commission Secretariat (GNHC) is mandated to review and screen all policies in Bhutan to ensure the GNH congruence of any

new policy (GNHC, 2015). The policy is currently in draft form, and under review at the GNHC; however, its review has been delayed for over seven years, with the first draft of the policy initiated under the 11th Five-Year Plan (2014-2018) (Ball & Wangchuk, 2015) and only published in 2018 on the Ministry of Education's website in draft form (MoE, 2022).

The reasons for the delay are the corresponding government changes and priority focus changes. Bhutan is not the only country to experience the impact of political change on educational policy. In Nepal, one of the most significant impacts on the educational system was volatility in the governmental sector (Shrestha, 2011). Similar to Bhutan, the delay in Nepal's constitutional arrangements and competing political agendas resulted in teachers citing political interference as the number one reason for the lack of clarity in their curriculum, pedagogical approaches and assessment processes (Ham, 2020). In Bhutan and Nepal, an absence of national governing structures resulted in a lack of direction and confusion around the direction of education, which impacts its effectiveness at every level. Teachers from around the world cited similar issues of limited contextualisation of curriculum and teaching approaches that reflect cultural values and having a negative impact on students because of absent clear policy (Westbrooke, 2013).

Another direct impact of the delay in the policy is how new global initiatives are being incorporated into Bhutan's education system without the necessary guidance. For example, STEM has become more and more popular in international curricula and policy documents, which has given momentum to science education (National Science and Technology Council, 2013 and The Royal Society Science Policy Centre, 2014, both as cited in Naseer & Heba, 2021). Dalton (2020) defines STEM as a teaching philosophy that integrates all four disciplines, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math, into a single cross-disciplinary program with real-world teaching methods rather than focusing purely on the academics of these individual subjects. In Bhutan, the incorporation of STEM is primarily focused on equipping individuals to compete in the economic marketplace and underpinned by individualism and competition rather than the foundational values of the GNH. Although Bhutan must respond to the inclusion of STEM in its curriculum, the challenge is to do it in a way that reflects the wholesome education values according to the GNH (MoE, 2019). In the absence of an adequate policy, the participants in this study argue that contextualisation is currently not being considered at the level necessary to authentically incorporate new initiatives in a way that aligns with GNH. It will be important to inquire further as to how the next decade of GNH-inspired education unfolds as it emerges to embrace these 21st-century challenges.

To this end, the model of Green Schools, briefly mentioned in the background and literature section of this paper, evidences how a program has been adopted in such a way to embody GNH education and values education. At the school level, programmes, such as Green School for Green Bhutan, mindfulness meditation and training, and GNH clubs, have been rolled out since 2010. The GNH values and principles have been taught through five pathways: 'meditation and mind training; infusing GNH values into the curriculum; holistic assessment of students; broader learning environment; and media and literacy and critical thinking skills' (MoE, 2014, p. 84). Participants applauded the success of the unique green school policy, which is currently implemented in the schools in Bhutan.

The secret to the success of this program is that the Green School framework has been written in such a way that it can embody different meanings and purposes around the world, which facilitates a contextualised approach and enables appropriate implementation. For Bhutan, the Green School framework consists of eight indicators drawn from the GNH pillars and domains. They are: naturally and environmentally green (greening the school campus), intellectual

greenery (mindfulness learning), academic greenery (discovering), social greenery (relationships and society), cultural greenery (cultivating cultural values), spiritual greenery (enrich spiritual experiences), aesthetic greenery (being optimistic) and moral greenery (fundamental principles of truth and reality) (Powdyel, 2014). This framework is considered holistic and connecting. Each 'greenery' is well considered and important for enriching people's lives because they were drawn from the GNH framework. We suggest this could work in many national contexts, increasing relationality and inclusion. Further research into these eight indicators of the Green School framework would be significant as a model for how to contextualise new global initiatives, such as STEM, so that they better incorporate the values of GNH for not only Bhutan but also other nations wishing to implement a focus that aligns with GNH in their nation.

The participants in this research indicated that, with all these functionalities in place, the policymakers would be able to reinforce, re-evaluate and reframe new global initiatives and core competencies into Bhutan's education system to ensure education contributes to GNH. Several studies claim that Bhutanese GNH education is a human-centred approach that has captured global attention. 'Bhutan is demonstrating that education and schooling can be a catalyst for social development in dimensions other than human capital' (Schuelka & Maxwell, 2016, p. 12). It is suggested that once the delay in the National Policy is rectified, further research as to how Bhutan enacts their human-centred response to the international policy agenda aligned with quality education may act as an example for other nations seeking to ensure happiness as a priority of their citizens.

LIMITATIONS

The study reports the perceptions of policy experts, such as members of parliament, Chief Policy Officers and Directors of government and non-government institutions, the leadership of political parties and researchers only, and does not include the perspectives of teachers or voices of other actors within the educational system of Bhutan. Therefore, the inference that the approval of the National Education Policy will result in the alignment of teacher implementation and contribution to the GNH requires further research once approved.

CONCLUSION

Though Bhutanese GNH education is specific to Bhutan, education systems worldwide have much to learn from adopting a cultural lens that promotes happiness and well-being. Few nations take their unique cultural focus as seriously as a guide to every level of life, as the Bhutanese do. Such a framing has allowed Bhutan to retain its culture, protecting it from the impact of rapid change occurring in other nations. However, even with the protective mechanism of GNH, policy delay in reacting to global change is impacting the educational system in a similar way to that observed in other nations.

Delay in the approval process of the National Education Policy has resulted in a lack of clear direction for teachers, particularly around how to incorporate new global-based foci into Bhutanese classrooms with the appropriate incorporation of GNH. Reframing, restructuring, and rethinking education is an emerging phenomenon around the world, as educationalists and experts identify what competencies underpin the SDGs and how to enact them to improve the quality of education of children everywhere. While nations strive to skill their youth through innovative reform for global competitiveness, academics and researchers argue for progressive

alternatives to reorient educational curriculum towards environmental and human capabilities sustainability.

The qualitative data in this paper based on interviews with policy experts in Bhutan suggest that Bhutan has several innovative educational guidelines and frameworks, but these will remain ineffective until the National Education Policy is approved. Once enacted, it is hoped that Educating for GNH will remain at the heart of and continue to be the unique exceptionalism of the Bhutanese education system. It is suggested that with further research, Bhutan's approach may provide other nations with models and strategies to achieve an education system aligned with philosophies of happiness, interconnectedness and peace. Producing world-class competent future citizens embedded in happy humanity is promising. Bhutan urgently needs to address its lack of progressive education policy implementation because the cost of inaction will continue to be high.

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Creating inclusive workplaces for LGBTQ international educators: Voices from the field

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This paper aims to amplify LGBTQ international educators' voices on expanding school inclusivity to consider sexual or gender diversity. Fifteen LGBTQ international educators were interviewed about recommendations they would make to school leaders that would improve work situations for LGBTQ international staff. Analysis of the recommendations revealed four themes: pre-departure preparation, finding community, cultural navigation and school leadership. Study findings suggest that sexual and gender diversity are not absent in international schools and that LGBTQ international educators require various kinds of support compared to their cisgender, heterosexual counterparts.

Keywords: international teachers; sexual and gender diversity; inclusivity; recommendations

INTRODUCTION

Currently, 67 countries have criminalised consensual same-sex sexual acts (Mendos et al., 2020), including Malaysia, Bhutan, Kenya and the United Arab Emirates, that actively recruit international educators from around the world. In such countries, people who identify as heterosexual and cisgender (non-transgender) are considered 'normal' national subjects, representing social relations and values that are considered superior and thus hold power and privilege. People with same-sex sexualities or gender variances are repressed, partly due to the criminalisation of homosexual conduct during colonisation (Han & O'Mahoney, 2014). The problem is that many of these countries have not decriminalised homosexuality despite acquiring autonomy from their former coloniser. International lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ) educators who teach in countries with oppressive laws and social values may encounter violence and marginalisation partly due to this controversial history.

There is little scholarship on expressing an LGBTQ educator identity in international contexts. Having an LGBTQ identity does not fit comfortably within some international organisations, although LGBTQ international teachers express personal agency by choosing (not) to share queer knowledge in the classroom (Mizzi, 2013; Mizzi et al., 2021; Nelson, 2004). Agency also surfaces when engaging in LGBTQ activism to mitigate social isolation (Boshier & Huang, 2007). Given that LGBTQ international teachers can encounter dangerous situations due to their sexuality or gender (e.g., Martin, 2012), recommendations by experienced LGBTQ international educators on how to make international schools safer and more inclusive are necessary.

This paper aims to centralise and amplify experienced LGBTQ international educators' voices on how international schools can be more inclusive of sexual and gender-diverse faculty.

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Sharing community voices shifts the discourse around hegemonic forms of knowledge in the field of international education and explores the perspectives and interests of marginalised groups (Moore & Muller, 1999). As Moore and Muller (1999) explained, ‘knowledge forms and knowledge relations are translated as social standpoints and power relationships between groups. This is more of a sociology of knowers and their relationship than of knowledge’ (p. 190). This current study focuses on the recommendations from LGBTQ people to dismantle the ‘sociology of knowers’ (i.e., cisgender, heterosexual people) to promote authenticity, inclusion, and equity in international education. LGBTQ international educators, due to their personal and professional experiences, can identify recommendations for change. A recommendation study facilitates a greater understanding of what can foster social or organisational transformation. This work is similar to Moriña and Orozco (2020), who sought out faculty recommendations for improving their pedagogical practices for students with disabilities and then analysed their recommendations. Learning from the voices of those most impacted by oppression is essential to fostering equity and organisational change (Hill, 2009). This paper continues with a brief literature overview on LGBTQ expatriates and educators, followed by the research methodology, results and conclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on LGBTQ educators rarely considers transnational mobility, with most existing research situated within domestic contexts (Mizzi et al., 2021). It is clear from domestic literature that LGBTQ educators endure systemic and social homo/transphobia, struggle to find support, must keep their sexual/gender identity a ‘secret,’ and operate in hetero/cisnormative workplaces (Connell, 2015; Dejean & Sapp, 2017).

Unmarked sexuality is assumed to be heterosexual because teaching situations often mirror a broader heteronormative society (Paiz, 2019). For instance, Parry (2014) described how an international school in Hong Kong banned LGBTQ teachers from being employed at the school due to a staunchly heteronormative ‘morality code’. This unmarked sexuality merges concepts of ‘heterosexuality’ and ‘family’, thereby limiting any space to welcome LGBTQ perspectives, same-sex desire or homosocial relationships. As a result, Halicioglu (2015) warned that LGBTQ international educators ‘may find themselves marooned in a sea of heterosexual, marital morality, which can cause understandable stress’ (p. 251). Even in contexts that support sexual and gender diversity, educators with LGBTQ identities have been deprived of inclusion and respect (Mizzi et al., 2021; Meadows, 2018). Meadows (2018) detailed a high degree of resistance when trying to teach positive LGBTQ identity programming to students at an international school in Kuwait.

LGBTQ international educators experience more complexity than cisgender and heterosexual international educators (Mizzi et al., 2021). First, LGBTQ international educators deserve the option to be open and authentic about their identities and take advantage of all work opportunities. School leaders can confront the pervasiveness of hetero/cisnormativity in their schools and work with staff to support sexual and gender diversity. This effort may mean, but is not limited to, including diversity policies, queering curriculum, supporting queer pedagogy and creating support systems.

Second, international educators have a professional expectation to respect local cultural differences (Gibson & Bailey, 2022), which may include adherence to hetero/cisnormativity. This complication may result in LGBTQ international educators navigating awkward conversations around desire, relationships, and tradition and choosing when or to whom they disclose their authentic selves. The negative physical and emotional impacts of hiding a non-

normative sexual orientation at work will wear down staff satisfaction, productivity and cohesion (Collins & Callahan, 2012).

Third, identifying as LGBTQ may be controversial and dangerous in certain countries, and the consequences of introducing these identities into the classroom are significant (Mizzi & Walton, 2014). Consequences could be deportation, imprisonment, job termination or marginalisation. Given that Gibson and Bailey (2022) observed how leaders contributed to racial divisiveness at international schools in Malaysia, they may also be drawing on heteronormative assumptions in their leadership. School leaders not addressing LGBTQ inclusion in international schools cement a status quo that validates only cisgender and heterosexual knowledge.

There needs to be a re-articulation of sexual and gender identity in international workplaces and an evaluation of safety and security concerns because of the experiences of LGBTQ expatriates (Gedro et al., 2013). Some direction for administrators to unravel the inherent tensions and complexities will help current and future LGBTQ international educators in their schools.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research question centring this study was: *How can international schools improve the work experiences of LGBTQ international educators?* Responding to this question centralised LGBTQ international educators' voices for social and organisational change. Moore and Muller (1999) stated, 'The key question to be asked whenever we encounter the notion of "voice", is not only who is speaking, but who is hearing—or, more accurately, reading?' (p. 194). Through those hearing—or reading—the voices shared in this research, better support for LGBTQ international educators and creating inclusive pathways can occur.

Using qualitative, grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), generative questions posed to LGBTQ international educators about ways to improve their work situations helped guide the research, collect data, identify core concepts and summarise the research. There were no patterns among the countries other than being culturally, economically, or politically identified as non-Western. The data analysis is based on generating new and unaltered meanings and knowledge (Lichtman, 2010). Interview transcripts served as data and the social texts to be analysed. Coding these social texts meant detecting reoccurring topics. Codes were then categorised, resulting in themes (Lichtman, 2010).

Following Dworkin's (2012) size recommendation for in-depth qualitative interviews, 15 international educators from across queer humanity were recruited for this study. Study participants held a paid instructor position within an international school (primary, secondary, or post-secondary) and were expected to teach lessons to students, collaborate with colleagues, create a supportive learning environment, engage parents and support extra-curricular activities. Table 1 lists volunteer study participants and summarise their backgrounds. The gender identities and sexual orientations offered in the table reflect what the participants described during data collection. Names and locations have been changed to protect anonymity. Except for one African nation, all countries represented in this study legally allow homosexuality. No country permits same-sex marriage. This research received approval from the author's university human ethics review board to conduct the study.

Table 1: List of Participants

Name	Origin	Current Context	Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation
Stephen	Canada	Southeast Asia (urban)	Cisgender, Gay Man
Louisa	USA	China (rural)	Cisgender, Lesbian
Daniel	Canada	Brazil (urban)	Cisgender, Gay Man
Peter	Canada	Southeast Asia (urban)	Trans, Queer
Jeff	Canada	China (urban)	Cisgender, Gay Man
Evan	Canada	China (urban)	Cisgender, Gay Man
Katherine	UK	Eastern Europe (urban)	Trans, Queer
Karen	Canada	South Korea (urban)	Cisgender, Lesbian
Jake	USA	Southeast Asia (rural)	Non-Binary, Queer
Andrew	USA	China (urban)	Cisgender, Pansexual Man
Lawrence	USA	The Caribbean (urban)	Cisgender, Gay Man
Chris	UK	Japan (urban)	Cisgender, Gay Man
Stephanie	USA	Southern Africa (rural)	Cisgender, Pansexual or Bisexual Woman
James	USA	Southeast Asia (urban)	Cisgender, Gay Man
Michael	Canada	Japan (rural)	Cisgender, Bisexual Man

RESULTS

Analysis of the participants’ transcripts offered four main themes of recommendations, including pre-departure preparation, finding community, cultural navigation and school leadership. Each theme is presented below.

Pre-departure preparation

Preparing to work as an LGBTQ international educator means readiness for an experience different from cisgender, heterosexual colleagues. All participants affirmed earlier research that values pre-departure orientations for LGBTQ expatriates (Mizzi, 2014). The participants recommended that their employers’ pre-departure orientations contain LGBTQ-specific information (e.g., work visas, privacy laws, health care, human rights, support for same-sex relationships and their children, awareness of LGBTQ realities and local community groups). Michael and Chris, who worked for the same organisation that employed international teachers, were the only participants who shared that their pre-departure orientations included LGBTQ perspectives. Michael noted, ‘There was actually a former teacher [at the orientation] who was gay and gave his advice based on his experiences. Hearing that background relaxed me’.

In the case of an exclusionary or absent pre-departure orientation, the study participants recommended LGBTQ international educators ready themselves for the new community. First, teachers must make clear decisions about disclosure (or being out) in the workplace before arrival. Stephanie offered, ‘I would say before you go, you have to make a decision on how out and vocal you want to be about your identity. Because it is going to change your relationships a lot.’ This decision means, as Andrew shared, weighing priorities about which challenges educators will tackle in the workplace. Stephanie, Katherine and Andrew explained that not every staff member would approve of an LGBTQ international educator because of their sexual or gender identity. Second, Karen shared that LGBTQ international teachers need to ‘rely on

adapting to the host country's culture because, at the end of the day, you have to learn about that and find that nuance. I would say to still be cautious but be as out as you are comfortable with.' Third, Andrew recommended websites such as the *International Schools Review* (see www.internationalschoolsreview.com) to see what problems certain international schools face. Lawrence also suggested joining the Facebook group, *International School Educators–LGBT+andAllies* (see <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2250314125289347>), to discuss school climate, local culture and past experiences with other educators. Fourth, Jake recommended that applicants ask more questions during the job interview and be more open about sexual and gender identity differences. They commented:

For a long time, I was cautious about mentioning my sexuality and queer identity [during the job interview]. But those things being acknowledged and celebrated at schools is much more important to me now, and I wish I would have acknowledged that when I started teaching. It is not easy. You'll likely get rejected by a few places, but I wouldn't want to work for a place that doesn't celebrate me for who I am. Or students for who they are.

Related to this point, Katherine also shared for educators to 'choose the right country for you and find support. Schools need to be supportive'. This decision includes, as Louisa suggested, obtaining legal working visas despite the heteronormativity that dominates immigration processes to various countries (see Gedro et al. [2013] for a similar point).

Finding community

Study participants also emphasised the importance of finding a supportive community soon after arrival in the new country. Stephanie explained:

I think that [finding support] is amplified when you're abroad because you probably don't have the support systems you would have elsewhere. That is also amplified if you are in a place that is not queer-friendly because the other viewpoints are often stronger and more present.

To address the lack of support, Stephen communicated with current friends already living in his destination country, Jeff and James joined local LGBTQ groups, and Daniel connected with LGBTQ educators to get a sense of their experiences. Daniel recommended locating gay clubs or neighbourhoods and learning how present the gay culture is in that city because that makes a difference. 'I went from Dubai to here, and we have a huge gay community where I currently am. So, if you end up in a place that doesn't have a visible community, it can be more challenging.'

Cultural navigation

All participants acknowledged that navigating cultural norms, particularly in countries where state-sanctioned homo/transphobia is prevalent, are challenging and complicating aspects of the job. Navigating cultural norms means being aware of cultural differences in perceptions towards and expressions of sexual and gender diversity and finding ways to mitigate these differences. Such practices can include hiding one's sexuality or gender, keeping silent, learning from mistakes, or choosing who or when to disclose to. This process is often nuanced by tense and delicate manoeuvring in day-to-day conversations. Evan stated:

I would say there is often tension between personal values and your own culture and living in another culture. I find that when people cross cultures and live in other places, they refer to this thing about living in another culture and having to be respectful, especially in terms

of women's rights, children's rights, GLBT rights and disability issues, because the dominant culture is the one that we have to follow.

That said, study participants did not recommend returning to the proverbial closet. Michael summarised, 'never erase who you are and never try to hide whom you are' when sharing sexual or gender identity, as the ongoing secrecy will deteriorate mental health. James recommended:

I will say keep an open mind and be prepared to have your whole life changed in ways you didn't imagine it could possibly change. I could never have imagined what was going to happen to me when I came overseas. I would never change that. The key is an open mind and an open heart. Or you'll suffer. Any person, straight or LGBT, it doesn't matter. If you don't have that, you're not going to survive when you come overseas.

Karen recommended professional development opportunities involving LGBTQ international educators to sharpen their intercultural competency skills. Collaborating with local LGBTQ community members may be helpful and function as a cultural and learning opportunity. Evan also suggested:

If you're coming from another place, you can acknowledge and support those people who are similar to yourself, by just being who you are. You can enrich your own experience and the experiences of other people you work with and in that community.

Katherine offered a different point on the disclosure topic. She explained that openly sharing one's queer identity may result in experiencing blowback, which she endured when disclosing her trans identity at a staff meeting. It was something she would 'never do again or advise anyone [to do]'. As Evan and Katherine suggested, working in solidarity with other marginalised groups may help confront an oppressive system.

All participants recommended being cautious and safe, observing behaviours and interactions, and disclosing sexual or gender identity whenever it felt comfortable and to whoever felt most accepting. By waiting, as Michael explained:

You understand that culture a little bit more, understand what it is lacking, and understand where there is an opening. Then you can start to find the opportunity to introduce a little bit of yourself and make the world a bit better.

This openness could be to everyone, only expatriate staff, only local colleagues, only community members, or somewhat of a hybrid approach. Andrew explained that recognising LGBTQ identities or concepts 'do not travel perfectly from one national context to the next', so adaptation and a greater understanding of global sexualities and genders are paramount. Chris added, 'once I am in an environment and we've gotten used to our surroundings, it's easier to be more open. Also, being part of the LGBT community has helped me to be more open.'

While LGBTQ international educators may wish to use their classrooms as transformative and progressive spaces, Andrew offered caution to LGBTQ educators in this regard:

You can't go into these contexts expecting people to think about these issues or give them as much importance as you do. You don't need to get upset or offended; it means you re-evaluate where you are and how you engage with that person. The goal is not to win them over. The goal is to move the needle and raise awareness. Understand that their thinking is going to take time to develop.

These data points suggest that while international work may present one opportunity to make sexual and gender diversity visible, a cautious approach towards that visibility may produce more desirable results.

School leadership

The study participants offered recommendations for international school leaders regarding supporting their LGBTQ faculty, particularly for those administrators who are straight and cisgender. First, study participants recommended that school leaders and LGBTQ educators research and learn about being LGBTQ in the country. For example, Daniel and Jeff suggested learning about human rights, the treatment of LGBTQ people, queer culture, and school values towards sexual and gender diversity. Louisa recommended that school leaders learn and connect new LGBTQ educators to local community groups. This networking means not waiting for LGBTQ educators to self-identify but practising inclusivity of all identities during the onboarding process. Peter recommended keeping track of expatriate migration so ‘we know who’s moving out’. These efforts can result in a gender-sexuality alliance, an LGBTQ teacher network, and a school diversity policy. Jeff shared, ‘I’ve been working with a committee to support the creation of the gender-sexuality alliance. The committee that created the diversity policy is working around these issues, which is an extension of who I am.’

Second, schools can foster LGBTQ identities in general, and school leaders are in an excellent position to facilitate this effort. Katherine recommended that school leaders create a trans-positive space in their schools. She created a ‘confidence corner’ as a space where everyone could feel safer in her classroom. Evan established a ‘buddy bench’ in his schoolyard for support-seeking students. Lawrence laid out a ‘rainbow carpet’ in his classroom for LGBTQ students to feel welcomed. These examples demonstrate that school leaders should signal LGBTQ inclusivity and empower their teachers to take such measures in their schools.

Third, the study participants recommended ongoing professional development for leaders and educators on sexual and gender diversity. Lawrence commented, ‘I think it would be great if there were workshops and international conferences about creating LGBTQ-inclusive spaces. For example, [workshops on] how to navigate or resist parent communities, school boards, and local communities.’ Lawrence also suggested that ‘international organisations could conduct training and give the schools certification and markers of their schools' accepting places’. The overall goal here is for professional development to be a part of a larger strategy in which school leaders signal support for LGBTQ teachers and students. The pre-departure orientation may be a good starting point for setting a tone for LGBTQ inclusion (Mizzi, 2014).

CONCLUSION

The participants in the current study offered helpful insights and recommendations for LGBTQ international educators and their school leaders. Through pre-departure preparation, community, cultural navigation and LGBTQ-inclusive school leadership, there is an opportunity for positive experiences and employment outcomes for LGBTQ international educators. A poor ability to speak the local language and restricted access to resources and support in general positions the international school as a valuable LGBTQ socialisation and knowledge source.

The results suggest there were no differences among country contexts concerning the recommendations. Unsurprisingly, rural-based educators in this study reported having difficulty locating community resources and support more than urban-based educators. Queer teachers in rural areas struggle more due to a lack of resources and often staunchly anti-queer conservative climates (Lee, 2019). This current study reified the difficulties of being a rural queer teacher, with the participants emphasising the need for inclusive schools as a way for LGBTQ teachers to develop a sense of belonging.

In light of their experiences in their international schools, each participant offered recommendations that represented a range of disclosure practices (i.e., from being careful to being open about sexual or gender identity) and ways to confront heteronormativity in the workplace. Besides what was suggested by the participants, LGBTQ international educators may wish to seek additional ways to support one another and foster queer intercultural learning. This learning can be engaging in activism and community development that respects Indigenous and local sexual minority realities, queer mentorship and queer culture, which may help foster resilience and strengthen intercultural networks. Future studies may want to explore these additional dimensions.

In conclusion, this study expanded the voices of LGBTQ international educators, mainly on how to generate social and organisational change in their schools. Although this research is nascent and more is necessary, the findings demonstrated that sexuality and gender are not absent in international schools and that teachers with non-normative sexualities and genders will require support and information different from their cisgender, heterosexual counterparts. LGBTQ international educators need supportive and respectful work experiences that enhance their global careers. School leaders should work towards dismantling hetero/cisnormativity in their schools and accommodate sexuality and gender differences among their staff. Doing so would foster insights into how a visible and robust sexual and gender-diverse community strengthens international schools.

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BOOK REVIEW:

Families, the state and educational inequality in the Singapore city-state

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Charleen Chiong. (2022). *Families, the state and educational inequality in the Singapore city-state*. Routledge. ISBN 9780367646028. pp. 174.

Research monographs that adopt a different perspective on a research field are always welcome. In that context, Charleen Chiong's book provides an interesting contribution to the literature on Singaporean education. Her wider theme is the structures and processes of national education and if and how they contribute to educational inequality. Her more specific focus is on addressing two gaps in the research as she perceives them: (1) a qualitative (as opposed to quantitative) approach to the views of those who are among the more socially disadvantaged within Singaporean society in which meritocracy is a guiding principle; and (2) the utilisation of a 'studying through' approach, in which the interdependence and relationships between state, school and family form the research core as opposed to macro approaches centred on the state or micro studies centred purely on the family. Underpinning these aims are three policy dilemmas that Chiong identifies: (1) the tension between a meritocratic educational system that promotes possibilities for success and yet structurally works to counter this; (2) a perceived shift from meritocracy to parentocracy, where success increasingly depends upon parents' abilities to invest actively in their children's education; and (3) the tensions resulting from the recent educational reforms that promote more holistic, child-centred approaches compared with the older and high-stake performative approach.

In order to discuss these themes, Chiong adopts a conceptual and analytical framework that utilises Foucault's notion of governmentality, using three tiers of governance (political rationalities, political technologies and technologies). She discusses two key questions: how disadvantaged families conceptualise and work towards 'successful' education for their children; and how these families navigate their relationship to the state in all its facets in the broader educational context.

Given the promise of such a study, it is disappointing that, for two main reasons, the book does not entirely fulfil its potential. The first is a disparate structure, the logic of which is not entirely evident and confuses the reader. The second is a failure to extrapolate from the confines of this empirical research to the wider discourses in play; Chiong rarely addresses the wider relevance of the study in depth.

In the first case, the structure of the monograph tends to be fractured to a degree. For instance, the text is divided into three main sections (Morning, Noon, Night), but the reasons for this are, at best, not evident and, at worst, forced. Discussion of the societal

bases, such as the nature of Singaporean society and education, and the influence that both history and politics have played in their evolution, tends to be spread throughout the monograph, rather than constructed as a whole earlier on. The result is that the narrative does not effectively connect various interdependent socio-political elements associated with the overall analysis of the three tiers of governance. The three analyses are self-contained, but the overall understanding that would be generated by multiple common connections tends to be obscured or omitted. One major example of this is the way in which Singaporean society and education have been influenced by the country's approach to culture and ethnic diversity. This is introduced and addressed in the second half of the analysis, when there are strong arguments that the government's emphasis on civic unity and a national Singaporean identity have been far more influential across all aspects of participants' attitudes towards education than the text, as structured, suggests.

Although not explicitly stated, the data sources throughout the monograph strongly indicate that the book is based on the author's PhD thesis, and it is here that the problems of broader relevance tend to lie. The fact that the empirical study is focused on one demographic group (i.e., the socially disadvantaged), whilst not an issue in that specific research context, creates problems when the author attempts to draw wider conclusions from the study concerning the questions identified and the tiers of governance. To be effective, the analyses needed to include comparisons with families from different socio-economic groups, even if the emphasis remains on the socially disadvantaged. As it is, several conclusions (both comparative and otherwise) are drawn about the attitudes of families from other socio-economic groups in relation to the socially disadvantaged without sufficient empirical evidence and argument beyond the wider literature. In the same vein, firm conclusions about socially disadvantaged families in Singapore and their attitudes to education are made based on only 12 families and yet are expressed as if they are relevant across the cohort. The limitations of the data in making such declarations could have been acknowledged and taken into account more deliberately, or else the range and number of family participants' research could have been expanded for the monograph.

Towards the end of the book, the author states that her findings illustrate that any attempts to achieve greater educational equality in Singapore need to be more nuanced and multi-dimensional in their approach, accounting for 'the diverse material, historical, labour market and socio-political conditions in which families live, as well as the complex ways we cling to institutions that also curtail us' (p. 126). If the book had taken those same considerations into account in its scope and structure, its impact and value would have been greatly enhanced. As it is, the undoubted value of a study focused on the attitudes of the socially disadvantaged towards education in Singapore as part of a wider study of educational inequality has been somewhat diluted by the limitations of the data applied in that analysis.



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BOOK REVIEW:

Rebuilding the Education Sector in East Timor During UNTAET: International Collaboration and Timorese Agency

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BOOK REVIEW: Trina Supit. (2020). *Rebuilding the Education Sector in East Timor During UNTAET: International Collaboration and Timorese Agency*. Routledge. ISBN 9780367345617. pp. 280.

The United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET), spanned October 1999 until the re-establishment of independence¹ on 2 May 2002. It was preceded by UNAMET,² succeeded by UNMISSET, protected by INTERFET and later UNTAET PFK; this period was a time of transition from (Indonesian) occupation to (Timorese) independence under the watchful eye of the United Nations (UN). Amid this alphabet soup of acronyms, Trina Supit arrived in early 2000 to work at the coalface within the UN's education division, the section tasked with establishing a local school system in place of the destruction that had been wrought by the departing Indonesian army. As she says in her introduction, the book is her attempt at making sense of what she was a part of:

I determined to discover the background to the policies being implemented and the politics being played out in the field, of which I was mostly unaware, being so preoccupied with my work in the education division [of UNTAET]. (p. xix)

In determining the background policies and politics, Supit has gathered a sizeable number of reports, documents and research in Portuguese, Indonesian and English from not only these three-and-a-half years of UNTAET but going back to the arrival of the Portuguese in the 16th century. Analysis of these documents formed the basis of her PhD and now this 'sourcebook' of education in Timor-Leste. Chapter 1 presents a background to the arrival of the Portuguese and other Europeans in the region, the territorial skirmishes and the eventual settling of a Portuguese administration, taking us up to their withdrawal in 1975 after the major changes brought on by the Carnation Revolution in Portugal in 1974. While this chapter provides little insight into the pre-colonial Timor-Leste, it explores the

¹ The original independence was short-lived, declared on 28 November 1975, with Indonesian troops invading nine days later on 7 December 1975.

² UNAMET (United Nations Mission in East Timor) 1 June to 31 August 1999; UNMISSET (United Nations Mission of Support to East Timor) 20 May 2002 to 20 May 2005; INTERFET (International Force East Timor) 20 September 1999 to 28 February 2000; UNTAET PFK (UNTAET Peace-Keeping Force) March 2000 to May 2002.

legacy of Portuguese colonisation, including language, religion and what Supit calls ‘an enduring relationship’ (p. 24). In looking at ‘agency’ in the book’s subtitle, this chapter touches on Timorese resistance to aspects of the colonial rule while also explaining the *assimilados*, those Timorese who assimilated into Portuguese cultural, religious and language norms and the other elites who strongly influenced education policy in UNTAET times.

Chapter 2, ‘Colonial policies in education’, then outlines the educational policies enacted by the Portuguese colonial administration and covers the Indonesian government’s policies (not technically colonial but a predecessor to UNTAET). Happily, Supit dispels some myths of schooling in Portuguese times, such as that only 47,000 children attended school in 1975, much-quoted from the erroneous 2000 UN report *Building blocks for a nation* that has been recycled in many English-medium publications (e.g., Nicolai, 2004; Beck, 2021). Instead, Supit has accessed the Portuguese documents that indicate more than 94,000 children attended primary school in 1974 in a period of growing enrolments; this number was used in several contemporaneous publications in addition to those that Supit uses (e.g., Grupo Coordenador para a Reformulação do Ensino em Timor, 1975; Thomasz, 1975/2002). Indeed, this chapter might be read in conjunction with other Portuguese documents, such as the *Boletim Oficial do Governo da Colonia de Timor* held in the Australian National Library, going back to 1916, that include the educational policies of the government in Timor-Leste in the 20th century. For example, this entry from 1927 makes accommodation for local needs:

[S]obretudo nas escolas do interior, modificar êste programa de modo a torná-lo mais fácil, prático e aplicável as circunstâncias locais e necessidades dos povos timorenses [especially in rural schools, modify this program in order to make it easier, more practical and applicable to local circumstances and the needs of the Timorese people] (Governo da Colonia de Timor, 1927, p. 6)

Interestingly, these sentiments are echoed in one of the core principles of current primary school curriculum documents: ‘*Ligasaun ba kultura no maneira moris lokál nian* [Connection to culture and way of local life]’ (Ministério da Educação, 2014, p. 18). Thus, Chapter 2 provides good historical documentation from Portuguese and Indonesian times that serve as the basis for more current educational characteristics in Timor-Leste.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 then take the reader on a detailed recount of the ins and outs of the actors—international and national—as the UN sought to rebuild an education system, for the uniquely Timorese context. Certainly, many of us who haunted education in these early days will both smile and cringe at the mention of the names of people who intervened in the myriad decisions to be made, the convoluted processes for getting tasks done and the sense of both desperation and opportunity to create something new and worthwhile for Timorese children and communities and, ultimately, the nation. Education continues to be an issue high on the list of social concerns in the nation, and teachers still frame their work in terms of nation-building:

[E]ducation is important to the nation of Timor-Leste . . . if we don’t have education, the nation will fall. (Year 1 teacher, Timor-Leste, in Quinn & Buchanan, 2021)

Supit has marshalled a large collection of documents and memories—having been in the thick of it—to give the reader a ringside view of how education ended up the way it is now, 20 years later.

The final chapter that promises to deal with the legacy of this instrumental period of educational history in the country tries to give a current state-of-the-system, but this is always tricky when governments and their policies change quickly and new donor projects change the landscape. The vagrancy of publication schedules will date the ‘current’ situation. So there are already several gaps: more current figures for achievement, reports on the impact of the primary school leadership program, and current curriculum development programs – many of which are summarised in the government’s most recent *Education Sector Plan 2020–2024* (World Bank, 2022).

One gap that should be considered in reading this book is the under-representation of the considerable research published in Portuguese. In education, over 70% of all publications in the last 20 years have been written in Portuguese, many about language, pedagogy and curriculum (Quinn, in press). As acknowledged, Supit has provided many reports and documents across the various official and working languages of Timor-Leste, but it would be important for a reader interested in the history of the nation’s systems to supplement the picture with the research of others working in this key language of Timor-Leste. In the same vein, it would have been good to remind the reader that this is a multilingual nation, influenced by Portuguese, Indonesian, English and Tetum, and to see those languages representing Timor-Leste. I am certain that much of the rich material of quotes and documentation was rendered in a language other than English. The reader should keep in mind the diverse linguistic nature of Timor-Leste in reading this rich collection of documents and history of an education system that Trina Supit has put together.

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BOOK REVIEW:

Algorithms of education: How datafication and artificial intelligence shape policy

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BOOK REVIEW: Gulson, Kalervo N., Sam Sellar, & P. Taylor Webb. (2022). *Algorithms of education: How datafication and artificial intelligence shape policy*. University of Minnesota Press. ISBN 978-1-5179-1025-9. 192 pages

Have you seen a film called WALL-E, released in 2008? The story takes place about 700 years after people have left Earth. The lone robot, WALL-E (Waste Allocation Load Lifter-Earth-Class), keeps trying to clean up all the trash people left behind. WALL-E is a lonely little machine. A cockroach is his only friend. That is until a mysterious ship drops off a flashy robot named EVE (Extra-Terrestrial Vegetation Evaluation) on a mission to find life on Earth. WALL-E is very happy to show her his collection of rare things, including a plant found in the trash. EVE is happy, so she puts the plant in her cargo hold and turns off the ship. WALL-E takes care of EVE and treats her like a person. He goes with her when the ship takes her back to space.

The spaceship Axiom is operated by the captain with the aid of a lieutenant robot named Auto. It is filled with thousands of fat humans who can't walk anymore and are serviced by robots. The captain is happy EVE found a plant because they can now go home. But the computer co-pilot has been told not to let the spaceship return to Earth. So, he tries to destroy the plant and anyone else who gets in his way. WALL-E does everything he can to save the plant because he wants to help EVE. He teaches the people on the ship and the robots what it means to be human and how it feels to be alive. The movie ends with all people on the spaceship winning the battle and returning to Earth to start their new lives, changing the rubbish Earth into green Earth.

Now, as this decade embraces artificial intelligence (AI), what are you afraid of? Do not worry, if you are. In fact, as of 2021, more than 30 countries have released national AI policy strategies. These documents articulate plans and expectations regarding how AI will impact policy sectors, including education and, typically, they discuss AI's social and ethical implications (Schiff, 2022).

UNESCO published its first document, *AI and education: Guidance for policymakers*, in 2021. This document advises policymakers on how to maximise the benefits and mitigate the risks provided by the developing relationship between AI and education.

It notes:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to address some of the biggest challenges in education today, innovate teaching and learning practices, and

ultimately accelerate the progress towards SDG 4.¹ However, these rapid technological developments inevitably bring multiple risks and challenges, which have so far outpaced policy debates and regulatory frameworks. (UNESCO, 2021, p. i)

Algorithms of education: How datafication and artificial intelligence shape policy is a timely and indispensable book for understanding AI's potential and political consequences in education policy and governance. It goes beyond debates that separate humans and machines to develop new strategies for and a new politics of education. The original contribution of this book is to propose that datafication has combined with the rationalities of AI to produce a synthetic form of education governance.

In addition to the informative introduction chapter, this book comprises seven other chapters, including three conceptual and methodological chapters, three empirical chapters, and a concluding chapter. The book's purpose is to 'explore how algorithms of education move among us in the everyday workflows, values, and rationalities of education governance' (p. 2). The authors consider how machines complement and extend contemporary education governance; hence, they propose synthetic governance, which is neither human nor machine governance but human and machine governance. The book gives an in-depth analysis of how the arrival of AI has affected contemporary education governance. It raises awareness that the growth of AI develops new modes of thought and has been interwoven into our daily workflows and education governance ideals. The authors demonstrate that datafication is a process that cannot be disregarded since education generates enormous amounts of data. They investigate datafication linkages and potential contributions to the development of education policy.

The authors conceptualise and explain how AI may significantly contribute to governance beyond policymaking by using existing data sets to anticipate, forecast and frame educationally relevant challenges. However, the authors do not 'romanticize' the difficulties associated with AI and data in education. They highlight the need for interoperability and standardisation when generating, sharing and using data across networks. The book's discussion on how existing data collection methods, such as through facial recognition systems and other business intelligence systems, are already contributing to the development of AI in education is illuminating. It suggests that AI in education should gain a higher degree of importance and be utilised for its benefit because, post-Covid, more start-up companies and tech giants, such as Microsoft, Google and Amazon, are already focusing their research and development in this area.

The book reveals that using the ability of current systems to capture and analyse large volumes of data, AI and datafication are instrumental in discovering new knowledge regarding issues such as factors that influence students' performance in different fields of studies. The evolution and growth of big data is, undoubtedly, a game changer for AI and datafication in education.

It is, however, reassuring to know that datafication will increase accountability among key education ecosystem stakeholders. There is hope for better quality education that is

¹ Sustainable Development Goal [SDG] 4 aims for inclusive and equitable quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all. It is based on the principals of human rights and dignity, social justice, peace, inclusion and protection, as well as cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity and shared responsibility and accountability (UNESCO, 2016).

BOOK REVIEW: Algorithms of education: How datafication and artificial intelligence shape policy

inclusive without discrimination or biases. The authors' visualisation of digital education governance by integrating AI and datafication has yet to be realised fully. This is the expected result of improved monitoring and control of processes, people, systems, and administration. The book illustrates the domino effect that monitoring and management will have at a higher level of governance. As a result of not relying on personal preferences, policymakers may make more consequential choices that can alter the landscape of education because performance indicators, benchmarks and standards can measure the effectiveness of data-driven decision-making. In addition, AI systems have the capability to predict the favourable and unfavourable impacts of decisions.

The book argues that datafication and automation do not replace the Anglo-governance paradigm, which emphasises the rights and roles of stakeholders in governance. Rather, it strives to deliver new types of policy instruments and technologies of governance in tandem. Hence, it makes it more feasible to adopt and apply the concepts offered in this book. It acknowledges that using AI to create a synthetic form of education governance without the participation of humans would not be viable. It reassures that integrating machines and humans is necessary to lessen opposition to exploring data-driven computational rationalities in education. It is intriguing to learn that datafication may unify administration in education systems. It inspires optimism that new data analysis and representation modes may significantly contribute to identifying effective practices in an educational institution or system that intrinsically contribute to attaining goals.

The book successfully demonstrates that the innovation and improvement brought about by datafication are not cosmetic. The promises of data-driven management, personalised learning and automated testing and marking give educational institutions and students autonomy and authority. Consequently, it is alluring to investigate the opportunities that AI and datafication provide. Effective decision-making will promote the development of the education profession. Hence, it is amazing to realise that with the present computational power and recursive algorithm systems, we can unlock the potential for decision-making that is not possible by humans, such as processing large amounts of complex data and finding the interconnections between them. Inherently, this will provide the opportunity to identify remedies to the negative impact of previous ill-informed decision policies as well as education-related societal issues.

The book is an eye-opener, providing evidence that education is not a standalone entity. Whether we like it or not, technology, particularly AI, algorithms and datafication, plays a vital role in advancing education and resolving the challenges of the 21st century. We encourage teachers to explore the authors' questions further: What can we do with and about synthetic governance? And what would be a critical synthetic politics of education in this context?

Network governance² acts as an effective and legitimate way of problem-solving that assists policy implementation and education reform. It allows stakeholders within a policy arena to negotiate win-win outcomes by transacting differently valued 'goods' in negotiating agreements about governing (Chan, 2019). To conclude, we think it

² Network governance is defined as 'self-organising, inter-organisational networks characterised by interdependence, resource exchange, rules of the game and significant autonomy from the state' (Rhodes, 1997, p. 15).

important to mention another 2022 UNESCO document, titled *K-12 AI curricula: a mapping of government-endorsed AI curricula*, which states, ‘As AI technology represents a new subject area for K-12 schools worldwide, there is a lack of historical knowledge for governments, schools, and teachers to draw from in defining AI competencies and designing AI curricula’ (p. 4). We must provide our students with a framework for AI-related topics under this proposed curriculum. However, a one-size-fits-all strategy may not be useful for all nations. As a result, the policies of individual nations should be studied next.

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