Whose voice is heard? The potential of small-scale institutes to influence the policy of Aotearoa New Zealand on Pacific education

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Aotearoa New Zealand has had a long association with other states in the Pacific, notably with Pacific Island countries generally grouped as Polynesia and Melanesia. Donor-aid and the introduced ideas of consultants have been currencies in many of these well-appreciated relationships. However, more collaborative arrangements have also born significant fruit. These include the collaborative publications of the now dis-established He Pārekereke Institute for Research and Development in Māori and Pacific Education. This article offers a sketch of the potential of He Pārekereke as an example of a small-scale unit associated with a university to influence policy development. What emerges is the significance of such ventures to affect New Zealand Pacific policy in the field of education through privileging the strengths, priorities, understandings and ideas of Pacific Island peoples to balance those introduced to the region.

Keywords: Pacific, education aid, policy, rethinking, place-based, national agendas

Introduction

Aotearoa New Zealand is a nation set on a group of islands in the Pacific Ocean. It is related to other Pacific nations in a number of ways. Samoa was a colony of New Zealand from the time of World War I to 1962 (Anae, 2015); Tokelau has been a non-self-governing territory administered by New Zealand since 1926 (Government of Tokelau, n.d.); the Cook Islands self-govern in ‘free association’ with New Zealand, as does Niue (McDonald, 2018); and Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Tonga are among Pacific nations with no formal historical political ties but with current trading links. They are also recipients of New Zealand donor aid. Thus, New Zealand’s Pacific policy develops in a complex regional context, influenced by global trends such as Education for All (UNESCO, 2002), strategic considerations derived from both international and domestic politics (Ratuva, 2019), and the influence of other agencies and nations. Among these influences and players, alongside eduprenuerial companies and individual consultants sit small-scale academically aligned institutes. One such was He Pārekereke Institute for Research and Development in Māori and Pacific Education which existed at Victoria University of Wellington | Te Herenga Waka (VUW).

He Pārekereke

The Māori term he pārekereke refers to a sheltered area for seedings to flourish in before they are planted out into the main garden. The name He Pārekereke (HP) was given to an institute within the School of Education of VUW that commenced operation under the care of Kathie Irwin in 1992. HP carried the title ‘Institute for Research and Development in Māori
Education’ and was initially committed to nurturing Māori scholarship and Māori scholars. In 1996, Ana Koloto from Nukunuku, Tonga was invited to join with the support of Kathie Irwin and Turoa Royal, operationalising the idea of harnessing mutual indigenous support. Pacific scholars and scholarship would be welcome and nurtured in the pārekereke until well enough positioned to leave and seek new Pacific orientated spaces. In 1997, Marie McCarthy and Joanna Kidman became co-directors. Their leadership was succeeded in 2000 by co-directors Wally Penetito, a Māori scholar affiliated to Tainui iwi, and Kabini Sanga from Mala’ita, Solomon Islands. By that time the name of the institute had changed to ‘Institute for Research and Development in Māori and Pacific education.’ It was when the institute was under the leadership of Penetito and Sanga that the Pacific leadership and education texts in this study were published (Te Whānau o He Pārekereke, 2010). HP ceased operating around 2015.

Methodology

A main focus and means of policy influence of HP was publishing. This article reviews a selection of works published by the institute between 2004–2011. These provide a ground for discussing the potential of small-scale bodies to affect policy over extended periods of time, in this case New Zealand’s Pacific policy over a seven-year span. The article proceeds by sketching in chronological order each of eight publications before drawing out common themes. On these foundations, a discussion is provided of the ways publication by a small institution can act to influence policy in direct and indirect ways. The article concludes with forward-looking observations advocating for the niche involvement of institutions such as university units in important areas of policy such as donor aid.

This review serves two broad purposes: First, it locates HP’s contribution to the wider Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative for and by Pacific Peoples (RPEIPP)-generated knowledge base. This initiative, formally marked by the Re-thinking Pacific Education Colloquium held at The University of the South Pacific from 25-27 April, 2001, an event supported by NZ Aid (Pene et al., 2002), is an ongoing effort to reframe educational policy and practice in the region in ways that value local and indigenous knowledges, pedagogies and philosophies. Second, the review provides to New Zealand international development policy stakeholders relevant research evidence as they seek to understand New Zealand’s institutional contributions, influence and thought leadership to Pacific educational policy theorisation.

We delimit the scope of the review to sole and joint publications by HP during the period. Of the texts reviewed, six are sole and two are joint publications with the Institute of Pacific Studies (IPS) and Institute of Education (IOE) of the University of the South Pacific (USP). Except for one (Apem Moa Solomon Islands Leadership) which is an authored book, the rest are edited books. Other RPEIPP-generated texts not published by HP are excluded.

Methodologically, particular attention has been paid to ‘blurb material’ – publishers’ descriptions of the texts generally found on the back cover, prefaces, forewords, abstracts, and tables of contents; and introductory and concluding chapters. These sources provide summary material relevant to high level analysis of a wide corpus of texts. The aim of adopting this methodology is to capture each text’s essence. Individual papers were not analysed. Scrutiny of each text through this methodology points to already-identified themes/topics, and foci.

Because the evidence used comes from the texts or from claims present in the texts themselves, it is helpful in suggesting how HP saw its potential for influence at the time of the publications. Through our analysis based on collating claims and thematic findings from the
texts, we provide an in-depth layered analysis of the potential for policy influence of HP, a small-scale VUW-based Institute, on New Zealand’s Pacific education policy development.

Context
From the perspective of international development policy, the Pacific region is a crowded space (Jarvie, 2020). For donors, current hot topics for assisting Pacific Islands countries include climate change, the Covid-19 pandemic response, humanitarian assistance, food security, governance, energy and partnerships. New Zealand’s Official Development Assistance (ODA) is an integral part of New Zealand’s foreign policy as a donor (MFAT, 2021). In 2020, the total New Zealand ODA was NZD$707.09 million. Of this amount, 60% or around NZD$422.9 million was allocated to the Pacific Islands region (MFAT, 2021). The remaining 40% was shared between other regions and global programmes. Of the Pacific region’s allocation in 2020, approximately 33% was spent on education (including MFAT-related scholarships to Pacific Islands students) for study in New Zealand and as in-country awards.

Initially reflecting its Pacific Reset foreign policy, the New Zealand ODA privileging of the Pacific region supports New Zealand’s new Pacific Resilience foreign policy (MFAT, 2020b). This policy “promote[s] a stable, prosperous and resilient Pacific in which New Zealand’s interests and influence are safeguarded” (MFAT, 2020a, p. 24). The ODA policy uses a values-based approach in supporting Pacific Islands countries towards development outcomes which are effective, inclusive, resilient and sustainable for development partners (MFAT, 2020).

In the period of the publication of the texts which are reviewed in this study, the total NZ ODA annual budgetary allocation was estimated by Sanga (2005) as NZDS$226m in 2002, much less that the 2020 budget. Further, of the total in 2002, close to 50% of NZ ODA was allocated to the Pacific region via a number of programmes. One of these was the Pacific regional programme from which an ODA seed grant was allocated in 2001 in support of the RPEIPP. It was from the RPEIPP grant that HP obtained the funds to develop and offer a publishing service in support of the RPEIPP vision, thereby resulting in the publication of the texts now reviewed in this study. Thus, the texts both originated in, and supported future development of, New Zealand’s Pacific policy in the field of education.

The texts
Over a period of time, HP published texts written by various people for a range of audiences. Eight of these texts have been selected as data for the current article for their publication history and value in a discussion about policy influence in the area of Pacific education. Here, Pacific education is understood in broad terms to include school-based learning, leadership, educational research, and other pertinent areas. This published output is indicative of the work of HP and other institutes (such as the Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies at the University of Canterbury) that deal with niche areas relevant to the Pacific region.


The Rethinking Vanuatu Education Together was a joint production between He Pārekereke and IPS, USP. It is unique as an edited anthology of papers presented at the national Rethinking Vanuatu Education Together Conference, Port Vila, October 2002. The majority of the papers represent first step attempts by novice Ni-Vanuatu researchers writing about their
own research projects following fast-track training through mentoring workshops. The opening chapter posits this significance for the book which concludes with a list of recommendations proposed at the conference.

The overarching theme of Text 1 is the rethinking of Vanuatu education. Rethinking in this context means a root and branch re-approach to the field so that levels of conceptualisation such as assumptions and values are exposed and available for re-setting (Pene et al., 2002). Rethinking therefore goes beyond revision, a term that generally suggests change within existing frameworks.

As evidenced by the numbers of papers focusing on them, three particular areas of concern drove Rethinking Vanuatu Education Together. These were matters relating to curriculum; to language/s - embracing vernacular languages as opposed to the colonial languages of English and/or French, issues of multi-lingualism, and definitions of literacy; and policy issues such as education quality, exclusion of students from the education system, amalgamation of institutions, funding, resourcing, cultural practices, standards, and professionalism. Other less frequent topics included aspects of assessment; the place of cultural knowledge and values; management and administration; donor-dependence; home/school relationships; and research and planning.

Developmentally, both the contents of this book and the processes involved in its creation/production have significance. The papers were primarily written for indigenous Ni-Vanuatu audiences, in order to share knowledge and experiences for further reflection and analysis. However, while the research projects, workshops, national conference, and subsequent publication “were all initiated by Ni-Vanuatu” (p. 312), they resulted from innovative engagement between Vanuatu and regional Pacific educators, aid donors, the Vanuatu Ministry of Education, and staff and students from VUW. The initiative, designed to encourage, mobilise, energise, and facilitate ownership, “has helped [indigenous Ni-Vanuatu people] to act, rather than wait for others to act on their behalf” (p. 312), and was explicitly linked to “part of a wider regional strategy” (p. 16), the RPEIPP (Nabobo-Baba, 2012; van Peer & Abella, 2021). The “innovative nature” of the project and the engagement was seen as foundation-setting (p. 4), creating a platform for future policy and action.


Apem moa is a Solomon Islands Pijin term meaning ‘raise the bar.’ The bar in question is ethical leadership in Solomon Islands in the period after the inter-ethnic conflicts (1998-2003) and into the future. The book is a resource, explicitly designed for individuals or groups, that prioritises “understanding leadership, clarifying underlying principles for leading, articulating key roles, attitudes, rules and goals of leadership” (p. 11). It was co-authored by two leadership scholars, one each from Canada and Solomon Islands.

Apem Moa Solomon Islands Leadership comprises an introductory context-setting chapter; 12 instructional chapters containing leadership scenarios, explanations, rationales, suggestions for application, and reflective questions; and concluding lists of further readings, Solomon Island resources, and assessment tools. As such, Apem Moa is a manual/workbook; but it is also described in the Preface as a “gift for our decision makers,” a “masterpiece on leadership” arising from the authors’ “vision and concern” for the Solomon Islands. The creation of this book represents an example of mentoring, service, and leadership development.
The overarching, explicit theme is development of leadership “character, ethics, and quality” (Foreword). Within this, individual chapters elaborate by focusing on understanding leadership challenges, enhancing relationships of influence, leading according to ethical principles and constraints, following personal conscience, understanding leader convictions, attaining integrity, nurturing/mentoring leaders, stewardship, leading through service, and “ordinary” people as leaders (p. 13). Thus, the text, by offering an exploration of aspects of leadership and leaders, focuses firmly on leadership development as education. It is aimed primarily at “Solomon Islands community decision makers” (p. 11) at all levels “including beginners” and addresses these audiences “to ... (raise the bar) of Solomon Islands leadership by promoting ethics in daily decision-making and relationships” (Back cover). The book has been widely available in schools in Solomon Islands over a period of time.


Rethinking Aid Relationships in Pacific Education is a collection of 26 papers derived from the proceedings of the ‘Re-thinking Educational Aid’ conference, Nadi, Fiji, October 2003. This event was a first of its kind in the sense that the conference was initiated, run by, and participated in by Pacific people. Consequently, voices from Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia articulated “ideas and experiences in sessions organised through Pacific processes” (p. 16). The resulting collection is not the ‘polite’ stuff of many conferences but represents authors speaking freely within the family as well as talking back to the power of colonial domination as experienced across the region. Thus, the papers “challenge conceptual foundations of education ... [and] hegemony of the Western narrative” and the privileging of “one cultural view”; and work to “interrogate aid.” The result is a set of writings that “make interesting, if sometimes uncomfortable reading” (Foreword).

The key theme of relationships in educational aid in the Pacific region can be organised into four main subthemes. One subtheme opposes the rhetoric of aid with realities on the ground. This involves articulating the gaps between economics and culture; donor and recipient priorities and goals; supposed benefits and local values; short-term projects and long-term sustainability; and positive and unintended impacts. A second theme discusses long-term vision, asking questions of aid in terms of quantity or quality; time constraints; sustainability; and planning for nation-building. The theme of participation centres on relationality. In this theme, writers addressed dependency, sustainability and retention; context and ownership; transferability; training; collaboration and relationship-building; mentoring; volunteering and long-term commitment; and reciprocity in learning. A final theme, relational complexity, deals with some of the flaws of outcomes-based models; the roles of culture, context, and local knowledge in sustainability; and the relationships between success, mutuality, inter-dependence, relationship-building, leadership, and contextualisation.

Because some of the papers in Rethinking Aid Relationships in Pacific Education are based on authors’ projects and research, the book contributes to the newly emerging body of Pacific academic reference literature. Papers also point explicitly or implicitly to areas in need of further research. To this end, a “relational map of aid” (p. 431) is proposed to assist with future “exploration and mutual learning” (p. 432) in the field. The audience for the book is general: “government officials, community workers, educators, teachers, researchers,
academics, consultants, policy makers, politicians, students, donors” (p. 11) “and ... all who share a deep affection for and interest in the Pacific” (Foreword).


*International Aid Impacts on Pacific Education* relates closely to Text 3, *Rethinking Aid Relationships in Pacific Education*. It contains eight papers which are the reports of commissioned studies from the RPEIPP. This initiative instigated the ‘Re-thinking Educational Aid’ conference, Nadi, Fiji, October 2003, and some of the papers in Text 4 began as country papers at that conference. These were provided by recognised experts in Pacific education and were intended to “share insights and experiences ... for the betterment of education in the Pacific region” (Foreword).

At the time of publication, *International Aid Impacts on Pacific Education* was “itself unusual” (Foreword) because all the authors were Pacific Islanders. In the book’s own words, “the titles are telling—Educational Aid as ‘A double-edged Sword’ (Marshall Islands); ‘Blessing or Curse’ (Fiji); ‘For Better or For Worse?’ (Tonga)” (Foreword). Although the papers took a balanced approach to exploring and exposing both the positive and the negative aspects of aid, the tone reflected general dissatisfaction with the status quo.

While the overarching theme for this text is international aid impacts on Pacific education, the range of themes and topics reveal the writers’ appreciation of the complexity of the field. The substantial reports – averaging around 45 pages each – indicate that there was much to say. The Foreword identifies the following as particular areas of interest: the distribution and management of aid; the motivation of donors; aid conditionality; and the vexed question of who benefits. The chapter outlines (pp. 42-43) indicate that the authors collectively but contextually examined the width of the field including the status of aid; assessment of local capacity to manage aid; constraints and challenges; historical and contemporary influences on aid; structural and social impacts of aid; relevance; autonomy; accountability; conditionality; and changing roles/processes. Several writers explicitly offered key lessons for future policy.

*International Aid Impacts on Pacific Education* “balances a focus on educational aid across the Pacific region with the authors’ research of their own country contexts” (p. 42). The purposeful privileging of Pacific voice(s), “providing for the first time a wide range of Pacific perspectives hitherto absent from aid literature” (Foreword), encompasses perspectives from Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia. The text provides many potential launching points for subsequent inquiry with the potential to inform scholarship and research, as well as to improve understanding and awareness between aid donors and recipients. This book was described as “essential reading for understanding contemporary aid flows to the Pacific and their impacts on educational systems for small island countries” (Back cover). As such, the intended audience included Pacific educationalists and activists, and well as international aid professionals.

Ta kupesi is a Tongan term that refers to stencils used in the production of Tongan tapa or ngatu (Herda & Lythberg, 2017). This publication, jointly delivered by HP and the IOE at USP, presents the research projects of 10 mostly novice Tongan educator-researchers following research development workshops. The book describes the overall initiative as “culturally inclusive and methodologically daring,” [a] “challenge to epistemological silencing ...” (Preface), a “unique ... look from within rather than from outside” and a “step towards critical dialogue” on Tongan education (p. 8). The papers cover key areas of education including teaching methodologies, how students learn, community engagement, and school governance. It aims to reflect teachers’ knowledge, providing “invaluable insight into the reality of Tongan classrooms” (p. 8). The concluding chapter presents a critical examination of the research papers, lessons learnt, and discussion of the “weaknesses in the project” (p. 115).

The overarching theme of Ta Kupesi is Tongan Education. Within this, the researchers engage with a variety of topics including “teaching methodologies, student learning, administration and leadership, vocational training, and assessment methodologies” (p. 5); “educational policy and administration, pedagogy, learning styles, assessment, community practices and vocational training” (p. 113). In addition, there are explorations of more specific areas such as language(s) of instruction; school governance; motivation; and training of trainers. The book claims that: “The core issue is the value dissonance that exists between education and the social system ... Educational systems need to be more reflective of our visions, values and aspirations” (p. 8). The philosophy of the book is that the changes needed will come from teachers themselves given time and space for development.

Text 5 is described as: an exemplar of “what can be achieved with a little imagination, commitment to quality education [and] determination to re-claim Pacific education and research ...” (Preface); a “long overdue and a significant contribution ... to the research literature on education in the Pacific ... [and] to research methods courses” (Preface); and a “contribution to the development of reflective practitioners” (p. 1). Ta Kupesi focuses on “capacity building, values identification, ethics, local research, and alternatives [to Western] paradigms” (pp. 2-3). It aims to make a significant contribution “to Tongan education and the limited body of knowledge on Tongan education” (p. 8); has the “potential to inform teachers and policy makers” (p. 8); and “to educate students or researchers interested in Tongan education” (Back cover). In addition, the text seeks to offer a contribution to a general indigenous alternative knowledge base; take “Tongan educators a step forward” (p. 117); showcase how “empowerment ... becomes a catalyst for constructive practice” (p. 117); and encourage other Pacific educators to conduct research (Back cover). Thus, although the content is specific to Tonga, the model of practice and publication has broader applications in policy community and in indigenous scholarship.


Living and Leaving a Legacy of Hope is a collection of 27 personal leadership “stories” described as a “labour of love” (Acknowledgements). The text differentiates itself from other leadership accounts, claiming it is “[u]nlke the usual leadership story [of] ... politicians, traditional leaders, or celebrities” (Back cover) because contributors largely comprise Pacific post-graduate and recent ex-students of VUW, generally young people who have chosen to
assume “responsibility for providing leadership in their communities” (Back cover). As with Text 5, preparatory work was conducted with the authors, this time through writing workshops. The stories offered reflect the strengths of Pacific communities, emphasise and demonstrate that leadership is a choice (the domain of anyone and everyone, anywhere at any time), reflect the challenges and potential of diverse heritages, and are both “authentic” in character and “varied” in style (Introduction).

The overall theme is leadership development, but the topics presented are as varied and diverse as the authors. These include choosing leadership, assuming responsibility, mentoring, ownership, the influence of ‘ordinary’ people, being authentic, and tautua/service to communities. The storied approach leverages the potential of narrative for teaching (Sanga, Johannson-Fua, et al., 2020; Sanga, Reynolds, et al., 2020).

The stated overall focus of Text 6 is leadership development across the Pacific region, with the specific intention to grow a new generation of ethical leaders and to enhance leadership capacity at all levels. The publication is described as being “inspirational for all of us who are interested in leadership and mentoring” (Back cover) and intended primarily but not solely to share insights and inspire a Pacific audience.


The preface of *Re-thinking Education Curricula in the Pacific* declares: “There is something profoundly democratic in a book that deals with ‘rethinking education’ .... across the vast expansion of the Pacific Ocean” (Preface). In this edited book, 14 Pacific scholars/academics share their insights from papers presented at the RPEIPP-initiated ‘Rethinking Pacific curriculum’ symposium of Suva, 2006 (Helu-Thaman, 2013). The symposium papers were expressly designed to critique the curriculum for Pacific peoples—in effect to challenge the Eurocentric focus of Pacific education. However, beyond simply questioning the relevance and appropriateness of existing curriculum, the authors also aimed to “offer hopeful prospects” (Back cover) for new futures.

Among the topics covered in Text 7 are concerns about curriculum and assessment; undemocratic curricula reflected in the language(s) of instruction, teaching practices and learning styles and the values that underpin these; the training required for curriculum reform; definitions of basic education; and the cultural gap between curriculum and home. Some papers described steps forward including more inclusive, culturally relevant forms of teaching and assessment; and curriculum reform based on indigenous Pacific values, knowledge(s), worldviews, cultural epistemologies, pedagogies, processes, philosophies, models and frameworks. Taken as a whole, *Re-thinking Education Curricula in the Pacific* understands that reform in Pacific education is a task for Pacific Islanders.

Text 7 is described as being “written to educate ... Pacific curricula specialists, teachers, teacher educators, education policy makers students and researchers” (Back cover). As part of a series by Pacific for Pacific, the text acknowledges key challenges to rethinking curricula; these centre on ways of being more inclusive of students and cultures and better reflecting Pacific Islands countries’ development needs so as to align in the ground activities with sustainable development initiatives. The writers actively unpack the present, purposefully questioning underlying assumptions; assessing curriculum reforms; interrogating policies,
processes and practices for inclusivity; and discussing the value of contextually embedded indigenous values, processes and frameworks.


*Tok piksa* is a Melanesian creole (*tok pisin/pijin*) term generally referring to similes and/or examples (Smith, 1990). *Tok Piksa of Leadership Pacific* is a peer reviewed, edited book in the creative genre, comprising almost 30 students’ conceptualisations of the 21st century Pacific leader. Those responsible were second-year undergraduates studying education at VUW of Pacific, Māori, Pakeha, and international origins. Each chapter presents both a photograph of a student’s assessment material and the student’s accompanying written explanation. Every entry makes explicit links to chapters in Text 6, *Living and Leaving a Legacy of Hope: Stories by New Generation Pacific Leaders*, which had been used as a course text (see Chapter 1). This process of generating visual responses to written text demonstrates an innovative form of mentoring. The product is a collection of creative articulations that speak with personal voice but generalisable meaning.

Seven key themes in *Tok Piksa of Leadership Pacific* are identified, discussed, and then considered in relation to conceptualisations of leadership derived from Leadership Pacific (LP). LP is an ongoing cause movement (Leadership Pacific, 2019) that “seeks to enhance ethical leadership in the Pacific region and beyond” (p. 117). Themes in Text 8 include conceptualisations of leadership; leadership relationships; leadership as service; leadership in context; leadership skills; and the character of leaders.

*Tok Piksa of Leadership Pacific* contributes to the understanding and revitalising of Pacific leadership by inspiring new conceptualisations of leadership; making links between leadership and mentoring; deliberately involving young people in leadership; and influencing schools, institutions, industry, organisations, and communities to purposely develop leaders. The book is particularly aimed at youth and those in a position to influence youth.

**Mining HP texts for policy potential**

Having reviewed eight publications from HP, we build on analysis provided by Sanga (2012) to use HP as an example through which to discuss the potential of small-scale institutes to influence policy, in this case, New Zealand policy on Pacific education. The discussion is layered and first addresses the question, ‘Whose voice is heard?’ The answer is centred on the influence of the democratisation of voice through publication. Associated discussions are of the potential of publication (and associated activities) to influence the development of national education agendas; provide opportunities to demonstrate and develop capability in policy formation; and to enhance research capability and contextual research agendas. Finally, a brief reflection on the potential of university engagement to shape policy will be offered.

**Democratisation**

The eight selected publications of HP reviewed above are not all sole but connected endeavours. Two of the publications were joint productions of HP and institutes of USP. Further, some publications were associated with conferences held in Suva and Nadi in Fiji, and in Port Vila, Vanuatu under the auspices of RPEIPP. Significantly, the central notion of rethinking Pacific education that underlies several of the eight texts was first referenced in
the *Tree of Opportunity* (Pene et al., 2002), an RPEIPP-inspired, USP published text. In addition, the stimulus of Leadership Pacific as a movement is visible in leadership-focused texts 8 and 6. Beyond demonstrating the significance of a collaborative approach to life to Pacific people (Cammock et al., 2021), these connections attest to the significance of relationships in the Pacific that extend beyond institutional boundaries. At the same time, such connections work against the competitive elements of the Western roots of the donor aid economy which in turn can fuel competition for resources based on ethnicity and gender (McLaughlin, 2018). Further, inter-institutional connections demonstrate the value of deliberate collaboration to achieve goals valued in the region.

Collaboration of this type supports democratising the field of Pacific education and is capable of influencing policy in several ways. First, collaborative activity provides a model for future relationally focused action and serves to amplify diverse voices through solidarity. Pacific solidarity embodied in collaboration reflects the fluidity of the uniqueness of Pacific Island Countries (PICs) and regionalism, a factor discussed by writers such as Hau’ofa (1994), Crocombe (1976) and Subramani (2001), and cemented, despite recent divisive issues, in structures such as the Pacific Islands Forum and USP. The collaborative nature of RPEIPP and the value it places on diversity is particularly relevant in this context and, as has been discussed, is evident in the origins and outcomes of many of the selected publications.

Second, the multiple voices that emerge from collaborative solidarity provide opportunities for policy to respond to context in ways that move beyond the superficial (Sanga, Maebuta, et al., 2020). As examples, the country papers in *International Aid Impacts on Pacific Education* draw attention to PICs as varied contexts; the papers in *Ta Kupesi* illuminate the micro-contexts of Tongan classrooms as experienced by individual researcher-teachers. These collaboratively supported, individually diverse voices provide policy makers with tools with which to more clearly understand ‘how things are,’ and therefore what is required of aid policy and practice. Unheard Pacific voices offer no opportunity in this regard.

Third, the publications offer a collective Pacific voice to balance the discourse of well-established internationally framed aid protocols, understandings, and relational framings. As a result, the field of educational aid policy has the opportunity to pursue authentic partnerships when supported by learning from publications such as those of HP. Thus, there is the potential for policy to address the issue of whose voice is heard with enhanced equity and balance. For it is within changes to relationships that the possibility of decolonisation sits (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2014; Sanga & Reynolds, 2017).

**The development of national agendas**

The Pacific region is rich in indigenous oralities (Sanga & Reynolds, 2021), habitual oral forms of communication that include talanoa (Sualii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014) and tok stori (Sanga & Reynolds, 2020). Dialogue is part of the Pacific way (Airini et al., 2010). Unsurprisingly, orally focused events such as symposia and conferences provide the background to some of the selected HP published texts.

Texts that record and elaborate on the oral activities of Indigenous Pacific education conferences are able to support the ongoing, consistent, developmental progress of national agendas for education. Conference-related HP publications can play a role by collecting, transmitting and opening to critique developing Pacific national education agendas, expanding the range of spaces into which they permeate and from which they can be refined. As an example, *Rethinking Vanuatu Education Together* serves to broadcast thinking from one conversation in Port Vila to wider audiences of Ni-Vanuatu, and also beyond to...
international audiences. It provides opportunities for policy makers in the aid sector to access the thinking of Ni-Vanuatu practitioners, experts in their field through practical experience and cultural literacy. In a complementary way, *Re-thinking Education Curricula in the Pacific* provides scope for Pacific thinking on common aspects of education to receive more finely contextualised development. In both cases, influence on policy development is enabled.

**Capability**

The identification and recognition of indigenous expertise is a moot point in development aid. Sanga (2012) retells an anecdote from Solomon Islander Stanley Houma on the subject. In this story, when an indigenous educator claims expertise in education in their locale, an external consultant asks, “‘How do I know that you know?’” (p. 8). This points to a credibility gap that, rightly or otherwise, can exist between aid professionals and indigenous educators, and consequently between need and policy. This is an issue for the aid sector to address. However, the published, visible capabilities of educators, both established as in the case of *Re-thinking Education Curricula in the Pacific* and emerging, as in the cases of *Rethinking Vanuatu Education Together* and *Ta Kupesi*, can support progress.

The development of policy capability is a contribution of the publication activities of small-scale units such as HP, particularly true when an inclusive publishing agenda is employed. As discussed above, first time practitioners such as those who contributed to *Ta Kupesi* and *Rethinking Vanuatu Education Together* gain opportunities to grow when publication-related activities such as workshops and conferences are offered. In circumstances where opportunities to gain practical policy experience are scarce, such opportunities gain additional significance.

A similar developmental agenda for publication can be seen in the HP leadership texts *Living and Leaving a Legacy of Hope* and *Tok Piksa of Leadership Pacific*. As projects, these delivered creative opportunities and support for writing through which new, young leaders could hone their skills. The writers, leaders of tomorrow, are among those who may contribute to policy development in their own era. HP lived up to its calling by nurturing new growth, encouraging daring experimentation, and adopting pedagogical/andragogical strategies to develop policy and leadership capabilities within its publication agenda.

**Research capacity**

Puryear (2005) summarises research capacity as “a productive, modern, diverse and self-providing community conducting research at internationally acceptable levels of quality” (p. 93). Research feeds policy because it embodies what is (or seems to be) known. The development of research capacity and subsequent research agendas influence policy by asking certain kinds of questions in ways that produce valid and trustworthy answers. Of the three conditions Puryear (2005) proposes for capacity development, the most relevant here is “a deliberate, intensive, and sustained effort involving a variety of inputs” (p. 97). Several aspects of the publication work of HP support this criterion.

First, the collaborative and inclusive nature of the publications deliberately support sustained research. This is clear from the way the texts described form a suite. In addition, by supporting extant agendas (RPEIPP and LP), several HP publications leverage pre-existing communities, offering outlets around which to build coherently ongoing research capacity. Finally, diversity within the umbrella of Pacific regionalism is present in publications that balance the context of the Pacific regional umbrella with the hyper-contextuality of PICs at one level and classrooms at another.
University engagement
In a crowded policy space such as international development in the Pacific (Jarvie, 2020), it is easy to imagine how local voices become side-lined and remain unheard in the face of global trends, international and domestic politics, and the influence of a raft of external agencies, interest groups and agendas. Individual consultants have a part to play in supporting valued outcomes in fields such as education through their niche knowledge, as have edupreneurial companies in terms of supporting successfully structured deliveries.

However, what small-scale academically aligned institutes such as HP offer is unique. This is because they occupy a space in which ideas and actions that are not ‘deliverables’ in donor-aid terms can be nurtured to deepen discussion, democratise voice, build capacity and support sustainable development that aligns with local values and needs. Small units that shelter under the mantle of universities have the capacity to develop networks of relationships that cross institutional boundaries and are unaffected by philosophies of competition. Because of their populations, universities have a unique blend of established expertise, grass roots practitioner experience and new thinking in the form of student involvement. The HP publications reviewed above show how these strengths can be leveraged to provide reference and teaching literature capable of shaping policy and policy makers into the future. The reciprocal effect of the donor-aid seed funding that produced the eight reviewed texts is a case in point: New Zealand’s Pacific education policy that ignores their voices, standpoints and wisdom sells contextualisation short and is likely to produce ‘more of the same’ at the expense of the kinds of educational transformation that education in the Pacific region needs and deserves. A key lesson is that investing small change in development aid terms in thought-leadership and consequent capacity development through the involvement of those with long-term commitment, depth of knowledge and the ability to mobilise others, strengths of small-scale university units, is aid well worth spending.

Future directions
A cursory examination of Google Scholar reveals that citations of the HP texts we have analysed have supported work of potential influence on policy. This includes doctoral work by emerging Pacific scholars (e.g., Naisilisili, 2012) who are well placed to affect future policy, the output of international scholars (e.g., Spencer, 2012) whose work has potential to provide policy background, and the efforts of well-placed and frequently read Pacific academics (e.g., Koya, 2016) who are already active in the policy space. The relationships between scholarship and policy are seldom direct. Thus, we have not sought to describe specific moments of influence where HP scholarship and policy can be shown through literature to have come together. However, there can be no doubt that the RPEIPP agenda, of which HP publications continue to be a part, has changed much in Pacific education. Further investigation of scholarship and policy relationships might be well-served by discussing with those involved in policy development the texts that they have been reading.

Because the web of relationships and influence informed by the outputs of small-scale units such as HP continues to expand, the field is ripe for further study. The whakapapa or genealogy of policy, including New Zealand policy in the Pacific, is important. Indeed, the rise of recent players in the Pacific region such as China means that understanding factors that influence policy and have the potential to inform its effectiveness assume greater significance. Thus, as well as charting an aspect of the past, this article invites future
scholarship to sharpen policy so that it better serves intended beneficiaries such as the children and societies of the Pacific, by asking whose voice is and should be heard.

Summary
This article has been centred on a review of eight texts produced by HP. These have been viewed as contributions to policy making in New Zealand’s Pacific donor-aid response in the field of education. HP has been given as an example of a small-scale university unit capable of leveraging relationships and supporting Indigenous Pacific initiatives to re-think education. The various texts have been cited as contributions that enable democratisation of voice, support the development of national educational agendas in PICs, display and develop policy and research agendas, and illustrate the value of involving the unique perspectives and strengths of units such as HP in donor aid. What has emerged is the significance of such ventures to affect policy through privileging the strengths, priorities, understandings, and ideas of Pacific Island peoples to balance those introduced to the region. The concept of he pārekereke, the nurturing space, has been shown to have great potential by supporting sustainable policy that is deeply contextualised, responsive and embodies partnership at the crucial levels of values, representation, and audibility. As a result of engaging in a publication agenda, when small-scale units removed from the ethics of competition become involved in fields such as educational aid, the question ‘Whose voice is heard?’ can be answered in honourable and inclusive ways.

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