

Literacy Research: People and Context

Identifying conditions for successful literacy initiatives in Pacific schools



This research was prepared by the Institute of Education, the University of the South Pacific with funding from the New Zealand Aid Programme

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Introduction

This Research Brief summarises the findings of research exploring the conditions that led to successful outcomes from three related school literacy and leadership projects implemented in the Pacific region from 2014-2021. The projects were funded by the New Zealand Aid Programme of the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT).

Research Overview

The research focused on three recent school literacy and leadership projects implemented in Cook Islands, Solomon Islands and Tonga between 2014 and 2021, funded by the New Zealand Aid Programme. The projects were the Pacific Literacy and School Leadership Programme (PLSLP), the Leadership and Education Authorities Programme (LEAP), and the Tonga Education Support Activity (TESA). The projects were implemented in partnership with the respective Ministries of Education, by a consortium comprising the Institute of Education of the University of the South Pacific (IoE-USP) and the University of Auckland (UoA), and, in the case of Solomon Islands, the Fellowship of Faithful Mentors (FFM). Previous evaluative reporting from each of the projects demonstrated notable successes in advancing learning outcomes¹. Therefore, this research was not a re-evaluation of the projects. Rather, this research was designed to enable those involved in the project to systematically investigate and determine the mix of conditions and components that contributed to success and to identify learnings for future activities.

Summary Findings and Implications

Overall, the research found that the relative success of the projects could be explained by the way in which the following five themes were enacted:

1. Motutapu: a space to begin power sharing and collaboration
2. Indigenous expertise in leadership, literacy and language
3. Methodologies that incorporate culture
4. Sustainability and durability through commitment to collective, reciprocal learning
5. Recognising unresolved challenges

The key implications emerging from the research include the continued need to: cultivate locally-based relational leadership, expertise and engagement; foster collective learning and legacy creation for sustainability; invest in culturally, contextually and linguistically appropriate methodologies and resources; explore 'home-grown' and contextually appropriate models for professional development in each Pacific country context; and to consider the findings of this research for initiatives under the Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF).

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Research Background and Aims

In 2021, the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) commissioned the Institute of Education of the University of the South Pacific (IoE-USP) to research the critical components that led to demonstrated positive outcomes from three related MFAT-funded school literacy and leadership projects implemented in the Cook Islands, Solomon Islands and Tonga between 2014 - 2021. The research was designed to support the Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF) and contribute particularly to the policy outcome areas of Student Outcomes and Wellbeing and the Teacher Profession.

Areas of Investigation

- 1) The conditions that have contributed to success & sustainability
- 2) The role of key components of activity design & implementation in contributing to success & sustainability
- 3) The value of the design-based research approach & the multi-country programming approach
- 4) The sustainability of the activities' outcomes

The Pacific Literacy and School Leadership Programme (PLSLP), the Leadership and Education Authorities Programme (LEAP), and the Tonga Education Support Activity (TESA) were implemented in partnership with the respective Ministries of Education, by a consortium of IoE-USP and the University of Auckland (UoA), and, in the case of Solomon Islands, with the Fellowship of Faithful Mentors (FFM). While each of the projects were slightly different, they shared the common feature of using a contextualised design-based research (DBR) approach to iteratively co-design and implement strategies to strengthen school leadership, teaching and resourcing for literacy and language learning (and numeracy in Tonga).

In engaging through the projects, the Consortium sought to disrupt trends of 'how' aid-funded educational intervention is done in the Pacific. They responded to research evidence and local partner experiences that have both shown that only limited sustained outcomes are achieved from education interventions which assume that solutions developed under one set of conditions can be generalised across contexts, and interventions which privilege the 'expertise' and values of external actors over that of local actors.

Previous evaluative reporting from each of the projects had demonstrated notable successes in advancing learning outcomes, however, MFAT identified a need for further investigation into the critical factors behind such success. Therefore, this research was not a re-evaluation of the projects, or an evaluation of the performance of the consortium members (UoA, IoE-USP, FFM). Rather, this research was designed to enable those involved in the project, under the leadership of IOE, to systematically investigate and determine the mix of conditions and components that contributed to success and identify learnings for future activities.

Research Methodology

The PacREF Research Framework provided the methodological and ethical guidance for the research. A Pacific-based qualitative methodology was adopted, which centered relationality and the co-construction of knowledge-in-context. Data were generated and analysed via the following steps.

- Document analysis of project documentation and reporting was undertaken and, through talatalanoa between the research team and 70 people identified as the most directly involved in the projects, and by drawing on indigenous methods such as Talanoa and Tok Stori, initial themes were identified.
- Those same people engaged in collaborative analysis of this data through 'sense-making' sessions with the research team, again using methods such as Talanoa and Tok Stori. This process explicitly sought to

identify varied perspectives and interpretations of the data, allowing for contestation of meaning, and ensuring that the 'meaning' of the data was interpreted within context.

→ The analysis generated was shaped, together with the raw data, into a Case Study for each country.

→ Finally, through an iterative process of talatalanoa, the research team reflected on the findings overall to draw out key learnings from the research.

It is important to note that this research was not an evaluation of project outcomes or implementer performance. IoE-USP and UoA carefully managed any risk of bias due to their prior role in implementing the projects. A relational strategy was adopted, which included widening the research team beyond IoE-USP/UoA and involving a range of stakeholders in 'sense-making' sessions to enable collective analysis.

Research Findings: Understanding project success

Through the research, five interdependent themes emerged that capture components consistently identified as valued and critical to generating and sustaining outcomes. In other words, the research found that these five themes and the way in which they were enacted in each project, explain relative success.

1. Motutapu: a space to begin power sharing and collaboration
2. Indigenous expertise in leadership, literacy and language
3. Methodologies that incorporate culture
4. Sustainability and durability through collective, reciprocal learning and legacy creation
5. Recognising and articulating unresolved challenges

The concept of Motutapu emerged as an interwoven theme. Motutapu affirms the centrality of ongoing, respectful negotiation of relationality, reciprocity and positionality amongst those involved in projects as critical conditions for starting a project, for nurturing success throughout, and for creating a lasting legacy. By definition, a relational approach to intervention design resists prescription. However, the evidence from the research demonstrates how the weaving of these four themes throughout the projects provided the relational conditions for success. How these themes manifested differed in each country, each setting within each country, and in each dimension of the activity (the development relationships, the DBR approach and processes, and the leadership, school and classroom interventions). However, within each of the identified themes the relative balance of interests and the collaborative negotiation of a solution has emerged as a key design consideration underpinning relative success. In other words, the success of the intervention resided in the extent to which that balance met the needs of the context.

The remainder of this Research Brief explores the findings of the research related to each of the five themes. Table 1 summarises outcomes from the initial project document analysis, which provided a basis for orienting the Talanoa and Tok Stori with project stakeholders. It summarises the overall findings, integrating learnings from both the document analysis and the Talanoa and Tok stori. In line with the relational approach, the learnings shared here are intended to contribute to ongoing meaning-making in-context rather than provide a generalised prescription for universal application. The Research Brief concludes with a summary of the implications of these findings for Pacific Ministries of Education, Pacific regional agencies, and Development Partners wanting to enhance their contributions to sustainable, people affirming, and contextually appropriate literacy learning in the region.

Table 1: Initial findings from project document analysis

Starting place: Motutapu - space of negotiation. Negotiating entrance to a harbour	Theme 1: Motutapu, a space to begin power sharing & collaboration - Positionality - Relationality - Reciprocity External decision making only-----> External and in country decision making-----> In country decision making	Theme 2: Indigenous expertise in Leadership, Literacy & Language - Positionality - Relationality - Reciprocity Taking a 'knowing what works' stance -----> Taking a 'not yet knowing' stance to programme design.	Theme 3: Methodologies that incorporate Culture - Positionality - Relationality - Reciprocity Texts, methods, pedagogies, communication strategies, positioning, allowing for 'particularisation', honouring people	Theme 4: Sustainability and durability - Positionality - Relationality - Reciprocity Relative balance of sustaining capability (people) and processes (people in organisations) and content (materials). Contributing to local institutional strength.	Theme 5: Unresolved Challenges
Development in the Pacific educational context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local, context specific framework(s) Collaboration between stakeholders (Ministry, local leaders, teachers) Internal governance structures in project partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enduring mentor relationships Ongoing mentor support to work within local contexts over a long period of time (past the end of a project) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest in time for strategies, pedagogies and methods to be embedded Project structure flexibility to allow for local contexts and challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment of time at the start to establish systems across partners. Factor in a contingency of time/funds for induction of new staff should they change during the project Build capability of in-country mentors Systems and practices are maintained and embedded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At all levels of government, people in the right places/roles Ministry and government dept systems that allow projects to be resourced (for success) Relationships between local groups/organisations, school leaders and teachers
Design Based Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Learning from' the context(s) of practice Research component ensures learning from the context Systems for valuing knowledge across the whole project Learning from families, children, teachers as well as experts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sensemaking External mentors who support in-country mentors in initial phases In-country mentors who use evaluative tools to provide specific support for school leaders and teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DBR phases allow for flexibility and continual redesign of instructional approaches Start-up/first phase can highlight initial changes for project design Evidence from all participants Local/context specific methodologies Ethical consideration and appropriate documentation Culturally considered/consultation around ethics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DBR cycles of evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to / use of national standardised student achievement data
Classroom based intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher as assessor Teacher as decision maker in the classroom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessments, programme outcomes, and teaching frameworks conducive to local context Context specific learning resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Systems for incorporation of culture and identity within co-design of tools used in classes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build sustainable capability Resource school leader and teacher support beyond project ("external motivator" from Ministry) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Systems that allow teachers and school leaders to access support needed

Table 2: Summary of overall research findings

RESEARCH FINDINGS: UNDERSTANDING PROJECT SUCCESS		
Motutapu: a space to begin power sharing and collaboration		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A space to begin negotiation and a ‘harbour’ to wait in while a collaborative approach to design is implemented and invitations to stay are agreed ● A space to regularly return to as positionality, relationality and reciprocity are continually re-negotiated ● Guiding protocols of trust, reciprocity and respect and shared purpose of creating benefits for children ● Mana – the leadership required within a fit-for-purpose team ● Seeking access to communities at all levels; acknowledgement from external partners of their role as guests being hosted, and affirmation of teachers, school leaders and local partners as experts in their own contexts ● Centrality of relationships – historical (existing), new and expanding 		
Indigenous expertise in leadership, literacy & language	Methodologies that incorporate culture	Sustainability and durability through collective reciprocal learning & legacy creation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A collectivist, relational view of leadership ● recognising leadership as contextual, nuanced, and adaptive ● Valuing indigenous styles of leadership ● Valuing indigenous expertise and knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● First engagement with indigenous methods ● All methods guided by and designed to enact the values of reciprocity, respect and responsiveness ● Co-design of structures that incorporated indigenous ways of communicating, sharing and generating knowledge, and affirmed the mana of people in context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Building on existing expertise, processes, and resources in-context ● Shared purpose & legacy creation with students at the heart ● Collective and reciprocal learning ● Collective organisational responsibilities and relationships ● Designing in context; an additive approach that affirms indigenous knowledge, ideas and values ● User friendly, contextually appropriate teaching and learning resources
Unresolved challenges		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The role and use of indigenous languages across the curriculum and how best to support teachers to manage language transitions ● Determining the form of professional development delivery most effective for, and sustainable in, context, and exploring the potential of more ‘home-grown’ approaches ● Time frames for most projects are generally too short for the forms of relational engagement shown to be critical to success through this research ● Ensuring meaningful, continuous communication with stakeholders which allows for stories of lived experiences to be shared and told in relevant ways ● Considering the act of naming a project in terms of its impact on enabling local ownership and on addressing perceptions of named projects as ‘additional’ work ● Deepening understanding of the structure of Ministries of Education most relevant and fit for purpose for Pacific island country contexts ● Continuing negotiation of the most appropriate roles for different agencies working for education in the Pacific, including those located nationally, regionally and outside of the region ● Enabling development partner organisations and staff to ensure their relationships, communications and forms of support are informed by deep and authentic appreciation of the values and world views of Pacific peoples 		

Theme 1: Motutapu: a space to begin power sharing and collaboration

Johansson- Fuaⁱⁱ conceptualises Motutapu as “a relational space” in which those involved in projects can “co-explore new and more authentic dialogue and conscious action for educational development in Oceania”. Motutapu is a space for negotiation likened to when one is negotiating an entrance to a harbour. The findings from this study suggest that gaining access – to Ministries, to schools, to communities, to peoples’ heart and minds – and effecting some positive outcomes is a more complex process than commonly perceived. Spending time in the metaphorical harbour of Motutapu was identified as critical at the outset of the projects to negotiate the positionality and relationality of partners and connect around shared purpose. Regularly returning to the space of Motutapu throughout the projects was also necessary as the dynamics of positionality, relationality and reciprocity shifted and needed to be re-negotiated.

The evidence from across all the projects indicated gaining access and negotiating empowering relationships was facilitated by the following:

- A guiding protocol of trust, reciprocity and respect for local decision-making, expertise and values – in other words, affirming the mana of people, their world views and expertise in-context

In LEAP, the flexibility allowed for moving in ripples and in waves, simultaneously. At the community level, the FFM would connect with teachers and parents first, at the heart level, followed by mentors who would then come in and connect with the minds of people. This heart-connection happened throughout the entire program as opposed to just at the beginning. (FFM mentor)

- A consistent concern for children’s learning and well-being by continuously returning to the question of ‘how will this benefit children in-context’ provided a sense of shared purpose and legacy creation.
- Acknowledgement from external partners of their role as guests being invited in and hosted by local partners positioned external partners as collaborating alongside, and in support of, local decision-makers – thus affirming teachers, school leaders and Ministry personnel as experts in their own domains. This related not just to New Zealand based personnel being invited into the respective national spaces but also local team members being invited into schools and communities.
- A demonstration of long-term commitment to relationships and to reciprocity within those relationships, combined with a deep appreciation of ‘the context behind the context’. An understanding that the ‘local context’ is not homogenous nor static but multi-layered domains of lived social relationships, and therefore requires nuance, flexibility and adaptation within projects.
- Involving local educational leaders with mana - influence, honour, respect, strength and authority, within ‘fit for purpose’ teams. All projects involved local ‘champions’ – people who have invested in education development for decades and were easily recognised by communities as educational leaders. The research showed that these leaders were critical in negotiating access for the projects. This was something that was not a one-time task but an on-going process of negotiation and re-negotiation.

It was led by Tongans, and it was modelled by well-respected Tongans. So, who else is best to lead a project like that, but someone who is well respected in education, and I think you know, [she] just leading that project championing that – also influenced the teachers themselves... I thought it was intentional bringing her in, because it also raised the project to another level of standard...It’s modelling what professionalism should look like and it’s getting the teachers to work towards the standards, where literacy should be at. (Participant)

- The centrality of relationships, historical and new. The existing relationships amongst individuals and organisations provided a strong starting point. A feature of success evidenced through the research was also the way the projects expanded their circle of relationships over time, and from PLSLP to LEAP to TESA. What is evident from the study is that such relationships outlasted the projects and gained strength from one project to another because of the underpinning of trust, respect and reciprocity.
- Considering the three projects as a progression from one to the other, the research also showed shifts over time in terms of contracting and financial management arrangements and the relative mix of local and external project personnel. This was in terms of the arrangements between consortium partners, as well as those between MFAT and the national Ministry. There was clear evidence of learning from PLSLP feeding into LEAP and TESA in this regard, as trust and understanding of the relative roles amongst the partners grew.

I think one thing that really stood out for me about the project was the inclusion of the people and country. And also just a real acceptance of context, and the way that we communicate with each other, and the relationships that we have with each other. And so when you asked earlier, you asked we a part of the design of the project, and the initial design of the project. No, we weren't. But as we went along, I felt like our input was greatly valued. And, and that we were also a part of the design as it went along. (Programme Team Member)

By valuing the space of Motutapu and acting appropriately in this space, the implementing consortium were able to overcome the challenge often called 'getting local buy-in' or building 'local ownership' of externally initiated projects. Most clearly demonstrated in the Solomon Islands case, this approach enabled the projects to establish a deeper connection with schools and communities, generating a sense of shared purpose and connecting the projects to a long-lasting legacy.

Affirming from the outset a shared purpose of children's learning and an unerring commitment to the mana of people helped to facilitate connection with hearts and minds, and ensure a future legacy. This was further supported by the cyclical nature of project activities and the focus on mentorship relationships, which enacted the long-term commitment, recognised the importance of ongoing negotiation, and the understanding that there is no end point to learning. This helped to move beyond the bounds of a finite project.

By the act of co-design, 'recipients' of donor aid, are asked for their expertise. By this act of co-design, it recognised that teachers, field officers, school leaders have something to contribute to their own problems. Through use of their own languages, to describe their world and describe their solutions, people's world views were affirmed – and that is the restoration of their mana. Teachers, school leaders, field officers and national advisors were encouraged to behave and be who they are in their own world. Teachers, field officers and school leaders felt appreciated and valued and thereby gave their 'hearts and minds', contributing to legacy creation. (Research Report, 62)

Theme 2: Indigenous expertise in leadership, literacy and language

Across all of the projects, 'expertise' was problematised. Engaging in a space of Motutapu and with the co-design structures offered through DBR required all partners to move away from an already 'knowing what works' stance to an adaptive, relationally negotiated 'not yet knowing' stance. Evidence from all the three

countries demonstrated the importance of embracing, affirming, and supporting multiple and different individuals as leaders and holders of expertise, across different roles and settings. In this sense, teachers, school leaders, ministry personnel and local project personnel were all affirmed and positioned as leaders and experts within their own domains. In doing so, the projects embraced and appreciated styles of leadership indigenous to each context.

The research demonstrated that when multiple, diverse credible leaders come together to form a fit-for-purpose team, the credibility and influence of such a team is expanded and positively appreciated in-context. In understanding leadership and expertise as adaptive and

FFM brought credibility. The participation and involvement of respected Solomon Islanders and expert researchers in the project created a great credibility in the community and for the local people. (EA Mentor)

contextual, the projects also recognised teachers, school leaders, ministry staff, and project personnel as capable of learning on-the-job, capable of using linguistic or cultural tools available to catalytically to advance their own and shared visions, and to make further improvements along the way. Responses from research participants indicated that this mindset was critical for the success of the projects. Appreciating the different forms of authentic leadership in each country and providing support for these to flourish was affirmed by research participants as contributing to the lasting legacy of the projects.

Theme 3: Methodologies that incorporate culture

Given the focus on people and relationality, the beliefs and cultures of each context necessarily underpinned the approaches in all the projects. The research found that this was facilitated by the weaving together of the DBR approach and indigenous methodologies.

I believed that one of the positive aspects of this project was that the team came and talatalanoa with our teachers, the school principals and they also talatalanoa with the PTA. The way I saw it, this talatalanoa helped the parents also appreciate the intentions of the LALI. (School principal)

From the perspectives shared through the country case studies, culturally and contextually appropriate methodologies were agreed to be the starting point for any methodological approach, and underpinned and facilitated the local adaptation of DBR. This reflects that people learn better when taking on new knowledge in culturally appropriate situations. People were

more willing to engage, more invested in the process, and knew the appropriate ways of engaging when the methodology was familiar and appropriate for their context.

The co-design structures of DBR and iterative, cyclical processes of data collection, collaborative sense-making sessions, and joint decision-making on programme direction were highlighted in the research as central to project success. These approaches and processes aligned with the commitment to Motutapu. The use of local evidence and data was agreed to have had an impact on the way teachers, schools and the Ministries worked. For many it was the first time that data collection and evidence from their own context had been used to make decisions for that context. Importantly, however, the research strongly demonstrates that the effectiveness of the DBR approach relied upon starting with shared cultural

The use of Tok Stori method with DBR provided a friendly avenue through which people could express themselves freely. The FFM used approaches that were friendly to teachers and villagers; approaches which are place-based (MEHRD official).

practices and the use of cultural metaphors and practices such as tok stori and talanoa within the co-design and sense-making processes. These enabled a collectiveness of purpose when engaging with the data and

facilitated permission to think differently, gave permission to use local ways of thinking, and created a space for openness to what was not yet known. As noted above, the fact that these processes were led by local educational leaders with mana was also identified in the case studies as an important condition for success.

Theme 4: Sustainability and durability through collective, reciprocal learning and legacy creation

The value of the relational and collectivist approach again emerged as a critical success factor for sustainability. The weaving metaphor used by Veikune et al.ⁱⁱⁱ captures the intricate interaction and layers of people and processes that needed to be woven together to facilitate collective learning and embed that learning within organisational processes, responsibilities and resourcing.

For the people involved across each of the case studies, an underpinning commitment to collective and reciprocal learning was highlighted as a foundation for sustainability. The ethical imperative to keep learning in order to support education improvement was expressed by numbers of participants. The vision of learning as adding onto one's existing capabilities, rather than replacing traditional or existing practices, was shared.

The ongoing nature of the drive for professional learning was also attributed to the way the projects asserted teachers' roles as decision makers within the system. Shared decision making, through whole staff participation, was seen as a necessary condition, so that collectively leaders and teachers were open to continuous learning.

In LEAP, all stakeholders had worked together building bridges, going out with the same issues to achieve an imprint in life and to gain experiences, skills, knowledge, and values. Working collaboratively in the future, based on successful experienced pasts, is sustainability. (Solomon Islands participant)

This collective learning for sustainability approach also extended to the improvement of systems and practices in-country. Through talanoa and tok stori, collaborative negotiation of improvements based on what was already known to be working well was valued by participants. Case study findings also confirmed the value of the contextualised teaching and learning resources through the projects, in particular PLSLP. The wordless books, formative assessment tools and user friendly teacher guides were highlighted in case studies as valued, particularly for the way in which children's learning was kept at the heart of these resources. Case study findings show that using the evidence from the formative assessment processes has impacted on the way that participating schools and ministries are now working.

One of the key lessons I have learned from LALI was the idea of setting a baseline at the beginning of the year, and tracking my students' progress during the year. I have also put in place a mid-year assessment to again see the students' progress before our final end of year assessment. I have learned as a school leader, that it is my job to ensure my students are learning'. (School principal)

Several challenges or threats to sustainability were also highlighted in the case study findings. Within a collectivist approach, the very layered improvement of systems and practices created challenges with the movement of people during the life of the projects, particularly within Ministries. Case study findings suggest factoring in induction for new people and involving people who are

familiar with previous projects and the principles within those projects (e.g., DBR) was beneficial for sustainability. Maintaining appropriate levels of involvement of institutional and donor partners also emerged from the research as a challenge to sustainability, particularly in terms of maintaining a shared vision of project scope and priorities. Finally, particularly noticeable in the Cook Island case study, but not unique to the context, was the need to continue discussions about the evolution and changes in how the languages of the context are used and supported in education.

Theme 5: Unresolved challenges

While this research has surfaced hidden and often unspoken understandings about development in these three contexts, the study has also revealed a range of unresolved challenges. These unresolved challenges reflect the dynamic and exciting reality of learning and teaching; it is an ongoing process involving continual change and adaptation. Therefore, that these challenges remain unresolved is not an indicator of failure but an opportunity for engaging in a continual process of learning. Key challenges identified and articulated through the research included: use of indigenous languages in classrooms; contextually-appropriate professional development delivery models; contextually-appropriate project designs and modalities; the appropriate role and structure of Pacific Ministries of Education; the appropriate role of project implementing agencies, Pacific regional agencies and development partners; and questions around the potential effectiveness of a multi-country programme approach.

Implications of the research findings

From the research findings, several practical implications emerged for how those engaged in Pacific education, most specifically Pacific Ministries of Education (MoE) and their Development Partners, can best support meaningful, contextually appropriate and people-affirming teaching and learning in Pacific schools. The following summarises key implications, which are elaborated on further in the full report.

1. **Cultivating relational leadership, expertise and engagement:** the findings show that project success is fostered by meaningful, ongoing involvement of local educational leaders with mana, working in relational ways. This was necessary from the point of first negotiating access to communities and stakeholders and contributed to the sustainability of outcomes beyond the project lifetime. MoE and Development Partners (DPs) might consider how to enhance their engagement with, and trust in, local capability and indigenous ways of thinking and doing.
2. **Collective learning, leadership and legacy creation for sustainability:** the research demonstrated the value of investing in collective learning and leadership, while being guided by a long-term vision for and commitment to education. As such, the research provides further encouragement for Pacific MoE to work collaboratively with those across the education sector while also taking leadership in fostering a shared vision for education across all partners. For DPs, these findings provide encouragement to: re-think narrow measures of what counts as 'successful' learning; ensure access to deep contextual knowledge; re-think reliance on short-term projects designed by external 'experts'; explicitly consider themselves as learners that are learning *from* and *with* Pacific educators and education.
3. **Culturally, contextually and linguistically appropriate methodologies and resources:** the research found that culturally and contextually appropriate, respectful and responsive methodologies were central to project success. For MoE, this finding provides further encouragement for utilising indigenous methodologies in all areas of work, whether that be in the process of consultation for policy development or curriculum reform, in the design of projects, or in the delivery of professional development. For DPs, a key implication of the research is that while co-design approaches such as DBR have potential to be most effective, they must be embedded in and preceded by a culturally and contextually appropriate methods of engagement. Therefore, any project designs would benefit from incorporating both elements and allowing space for local experts to determine what appropriate methodologies are, as well as what meaningful measures of success are.

4. **Professional development models:** The research demonstrated the potential of home-grown approaches to professional development and identified the need for Pacific MoE and DPs to continue to explore, and invest in, appropriate models for sustainable professional development in each Pacific country context. The findings highlight the need to seek out opportunities to use what is already practiced or known in local contexts. The findings also point to an opportunity to enhance the sharing of lessons across Pacific countries, with a deliberate focus on ensuring this occurs in ways that enable countries to take up the lessons shared in contextualised ways.
5. **Rethinking roles and the ‘capacity’ challenge:** The research points to the need to rethink the notion of education system ‘capacity’. The research indicates the potential value in considering capacity in relational and contextual-specific terms, and in moving beyond concern only for institutional structures. For MoE, this finding is an opportunity to re-consider the structures and processes of a MoE as an organisation – to think critically about a tailored, fit-for-purpose organisation that is sustainable and fit for a small geographically spread country with defined financial resources and access to regional agencies and development partner support. For DPs, including Pacific regional agencies, the research points to opportunities to deepen genuine collaboration amongst agencies, recognising issues of ‘capacity gaps’ as shared, collective responsibilities.
6. **Strategic support of the Pacific Regional Education Framework:** This research was designed, in part, to support implementation of the Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF). Findings from this research highlight implications and opportunities for supporting various PacREF policies, as well as strengthening the connections between different elements of the PacREF. The research findings provide practical learnings relevant to the PacREF policy areas of: improving student outcomes and well-being; improving the teaching profession; improving coordination and collaboration; and the application of the PacREF Research Framework.

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ⁱ Final project reporting from PLSLP and LEAP is available from IOE. TESA is ongoing, with final report due March 2022.

ⁱⁱ Johansson-Fua, S. (2020) Motutapu: A Relational Space for Collaborative Research-Practice in Oceanic Education. In Johansson-Fua, S., Jesson, R., Spratt, R., & Coxon, E. (Eds.). *Relationality and Learning in Oceania: Contextualizing Education for Development*. Brill. Pp 42-56

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