

A Pacific Collaboration Model: Whitireia New Zealand and Tupou Tertiary Institute

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we explore: the history from a Tupou Tertiary Institute (TTI) and Whitireia New Zealand (Whitireia) perspective, values, a partnership model, education and relationship partnerships, and the on-going collaboration between Whitireia and TTI, Tonga. We will explore how the institutes have managed the process and also the long term effects of such a relationship and the possible benefits to both institutes. The results of the partnership for Tongan success within Information Technology (IT) courses at TTI are evident.

Categories and Subject Descriptors

Computers and Education: Computer Uses in Education
General Terms

Collaboration, Management, Measurement, Cultural Theory,

Keywords

Pacific collaboration, New Zealand, Tonga, Information Technology, Education Model, Partnership Model, Kaupapa Maori Theory, Talanoa Theory

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper highlights a working collaborative education model across the Pacific between two tertiary institutes: Whitireia New Zealand (Whitireia) and Tupou Tertiary Institute (TTI), Tonga. This paper describes a model of education collaboration across the Pacific between two Pacific nations that has been on-going for a period of time that has shown success over that time. It shows how this model has incorporated the different cultural aspects from both institutes but still retains cultural identity and moves into the new realm of Information Technology education.

2. HISTORY

2.1 An Idea from New Zealand

This collaborative model started as an idea from a Tongan woman Valeti Finau who was employed by Parumoana Community College (now Whitireia) as a Pacific Island Liaison Tutor. The position was to coordinate and support any Pacific Island student who started at Parumoana. This position included housing, educational support and other duties in ensuring better outcomes for all Pacific Island students.

As a former student of Tupou College, Valeti saw there was a need for an applied tertiary institute in Tonga and proceeded to have talks with Deidre Dale the CEO of Parumoana and Linda Baylis, business tutor about starting an applied business course in Tonga in association with Tupou High School and also an

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agreement with Victoria University for Business Students completing courses in Tonga having an agreement to attend Victoria second year Business degree (personal communication, Brimblecombe, 2013). After several visits to Tonga an agreement was signed and this was the birth of the model which is currently in use. This model is one of collaboration, quality education and one that is full cost recovery for Whitireia with provided services to TTI.

2.2 History from a TTI Perspective

Tupou Tertiary Institute (TTI) is at the current apex of the Free Wesleyan Church (FWC) Education System's development in higher education. The ceremony to mark the laying of the foundation of the Centre was officiated by Her Majesty Queen Halaevalu Mata'aho on 29 June 1998 and construction work began in October of the same year. The grand opening of the Centre by His Majesty Taufa'ahau Tupou IV on 4 May 1999 was celebrated together with the official launching of a Joint Venture Agreement for a working relationship between Tupou High School and the Whitireia Community Polytechnic of Porirua, Wellington, New Zealand.

This Joint Venture Agreement made possible the extension of the Whitireia's NZQA accreditation to cover for the delivery of New Zealand accredited programs at Tupou High School. The first of these programs was the New Zealand Diploma in Business which began in February 14, 1999 with a cohort of 20 students. More programs were added in the later years and it did not take long for the project to gather momentum and make favourable impacts on higher education in Tonga. Students are now able to access New Zealand qualifications locally at a much reduced cost of about 10% of what they would pay to study overseas. All the above developments were brought about under the auspices of the Tupou High School's management and commonly referred to as the Tupou High School Diploma Program. It was not to be for too long though - the ever increasing interest expressed by the public and students in the growing number of courses that were now available at this new development was a clear indication of the need for a post-secondary institution. This led to the inauguration of the name Tupou Tertiary Institute (TTI) conferred in 2004 by the late King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV.

By 2008, TTI had grown in stature and nature thus requiring more space for its development. Hence, the separation of the high school programs from the newly introduced tertiary programs. It was like Tupou High School handing over the torch of higher education to be Tupou Tertiary Institute's mandate. Such is the current situation with TTI, it has slowly but successfully located itself at the old Tupou High School Campus at Kolofu'ou.

It has now expanded to include four main areas of NZ accredited study programs, namely, Business and Management, Information and Communication Technology, Architectural and Construction Technology and Teacher Education. The first two programs are

delivered in collaboration with the Whireia Community Polytechnic; the latter two are delivered in conjunction with the Wellington Institute of Technology and Bethlehem Tertiary Institute respectively. In addition to this, the University of the South Pacific (USP) pre-degree studies courses, formerly known as USP Foundation / Tupou High School Form 7 are also being taught at TTI. Partnerships in developments and expressions of interests are familiar news at TTI. ITU and Cisco Academy have established their training centre on campus.

The United States (US) Embassy has set up an American Corner in the Institute's Learning Centre. Education USA have also found space in the same niche. It has been said that TTI mandates include facilitating higher education and enhancing employment capacity. To mark its 10th anniversary, statistics reveal that close to 500 students have graduated with diplomas and 45 have graduated with bachelor degrees, and a further 3 with masters degrees.

The graduates who are serving in the workforce in Tonga and abroad are abundant in numbers and fortunes. The chapter 1 of TTI's story is only unfolding and the adventure in the vast world of higher education promises more blessings amidst challenges. It is envisaged that the pages yet to be written "will bring joy to the Free Wesleyan Church and Tonga and above all – glory and honour to the Almighty God, who is the source of all Wisdom and Understanding." [4].

2.3 Values

One of the highlights of this relationship is the respect towards the reality of working together and the deeper respect of aspirations of Tongan students and the values and aspirations set by TTI and Whireia as set out below.

Tupou Tertiary Institute is a Christian Higher Educational Institution. Considering this background and identity, we strive to fulfil our mission through decisions and actions based on our core values

TTI values, from their web site, are:

The Teaching of Jesus Christ: Jesus taught us to love God, and to love one another. We show compassion, forgiveness, patience, concern and care for others because we first have been loved by Christ.

Faith: Our faith in God inspires us to trust that He knows what's best for all of us, and that all will happen according to His plan.

Mutual Respect: Individuals treat others with respect and are accepting of differences. Interactions are based on good manners and consideration of the ideas and feelings of others. Disagreements are dealt with peacefully with the intent to understand.

Obedience: We all strive to follow the rules and policies of our Institution and the Church.

Teamwork: Effective teamwork encourages creativity, innovation, and self-initiative in our respective roles and partnerships. It is essentially in getting the task done and in developing the skills needed to meet future challenges.

Integrity: Integrity includes adoption of a Biblically centred morality, congruence in thought and actions, wholeness, justice, grace, and being responsible and accountable. Persons of integrity uphold honesty and forthrightness at all times. We shall respect the confidentiality of the individual and confidences extended to us.

Services and Sacrifice: Offering our time and skills for the good of our fellow citizens leads to the prosperity of the community and to the character development of the individual.

Equity/Equality: We will provide equal opportunities for learning and training to all, irrespective of gender, age, creed, culture, or social standing.

Humility/Reverence: We will act as humble servants of God, acknowledging that all we achieve is by the grace of God, and not by our own powers alone. Without God, nothing can be accomplished.

Accountability: Any and all dealings and actions which could affect the Institution will be open to public scrutiny

Success: We encourage all students and staff by words, deeds, and, example, so that they can achieve their maximum potential. [5]

Whireia New Zealand values are as follows:

He Whakataurāki

Ko te manu e kai ana i te miro, nōna tengahere. Engari, ko te manu e kai ana i temātauranga, nōna te ao.

The one who partakes of the flora and fauna, that will be their domain. The one who engages in education, opportunities are boundless.

OUR VISION - Whireia will lead and illuminate its communities through tertiary education.

OUR VALUES - Council and staff are committed to the following values:

Manaaki - Encouraging cooperation in learning and resource sharing to promote individual confidence and group harmony through a positive and supportive learning environment.

Identity - Creating a learning environment where all people feel they belong because their uniqueness is valued and promoted.

Equity - Achieving more equal outcomes by providing significant learning and education success for those who have previously lacked such opportunities.

Responsiveness - Being flexible, creative and open to change, to better meet individual, industry, and community learning needs.

Success - Being an effective organisation with a clear sense of purpose, striving for excellence and creating an environment where all have the right to succeed.

Integrity - Maintaining the highest ethical standards and permitting public scrutiny to ensure the maintenance of those standards.

Accountability - Monitoring and reporting on the maintenance of educational quality standards and on the responsible use of public resources." [7]

These values are an integral part of each institute but also need to be acknowledged as an important understanding of the cultures as described with the Talanoa and Kaupapa Maori theories which both acknowledge cultural values as a core component.

3. A PARTNERSHIP MODEL

After looking at different partnership models, the one model chosen has the main aspects considered in which most of the other

models investigated. As described below these are the basic parts of this model:

- **Have the Same Mission and Goals:** Long-term planning is vital
- **Trust is Earned over Time:** Be open and honest
- **Both Partners Must Contribute to the Relationship:** Be committed to your mission and vision
- **Clear and Constant Communication Leads to Understanding:** Keep an open atmosphere and meet regularly
- **Both Partners are in Relationship for Long Haul:** Set long-term goals for sustainability
- **Create Culture of Sharing and Collaboration:** Always be open to share
- **Mutual Respect is Key:** Maintain mutual respect even in disagreements

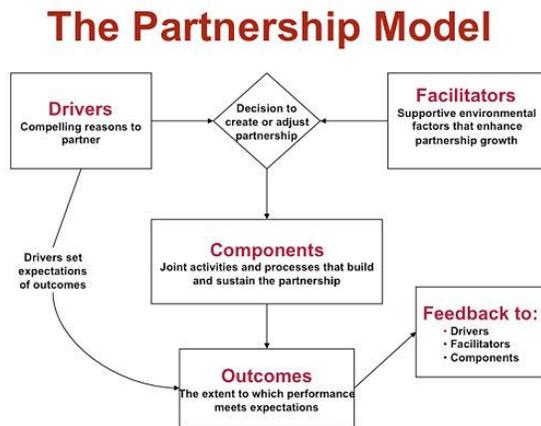


Figure 1: Partnership Model

The model in Figure 1 has a standard look at educational partnerships [2], but does not take into the consideration the unique Pacific relationship between New Zealand and Tonga. However, the basic components of the model are integral in the collaborative model used between Whitireia and Tupou Tertiary Institute and are used on a regular basis.

4. EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP

The questions that came to mind for the authors was: “What makes this relationship?” and “What does it bring to both parties?” From the institutes’ perspective there are several advantages:

- A relationship that has been ongoing since 1998 that adds value to building capacity and capability of Information technology teaching staff for TTI.
- Tutors generally that have received their IT qualifications from Whitireia New Zealand and then return to Tonga as teachers at TTI. These tutors generally spend three years and some move on to other employment but a few still stay and teach.
- The students in Tonga have the opportunity to do a six month Certificate in IT, The first two years of the Bachelor of Information Technology with the successful students completing the third year of the degree at Whitireia New Zealand at either Porirua or Auckland Campus.
- There are regular visits from staff from both institutes to carry out many tasks related to moderation of all assessments, management, attendance at conferences, to talk about curriculum and course changes, course content

training and the latest change in Tonga is the Pacific cable being introduced, Whitireia IT staff will help to build a network infrastructure (backbone) capable of connecting to this cable.

- Since 2009 there has been one Whitireia point of contact for the Information Technology Courses and this person deals with all communications between his counterpart in Tonga and then passes communications to the appropriate other IT staff members.
- This will give TTI a greater capability and will also give greater communication between both institutes and also the capability to run similar software and programmes simultaneously as opposed to the current system of running programmes with a six month delay.

5. COMMUNICATION RELATIONSHIP

Having a single point of contact at both ends for this relationship has also been a bonus with greater continuity building taking place. Most communication except for official emails requesting work is done using online tools like Skype and Facebook chat at night in a relaxed manner. This has worked more effectively than the official telling off scenario which has forced other groups within Whitireia not maintaining the relationship with TTI to the same level.

If we consider the style of Pacific oral knowledge as stated by Vaiotei [6]: “Superficially, Talanoa can be referred to as a conversation, a talk, an exchange of ideas or thinking, whether formal or informal. It is almost always carried out face- to-face. Tala means to inform, tell, relate and command, as well as to ask or apply. Noa means of any kind, ordinary, nothing in particular, purely imaginary or void.” [1].

This model of Talanoa is not dissimilar to the Kaupapa Maori Theory as stated by Pihama: “Kaupapa Māori theory is simultaneously local and international. Local, in that it is necessarily defined by Māori for Māori, drawing on fundamental Māori values, experiences and worldviews. International, in that there are many connections that can be made through a process of sharing Indigenous Peoples theories.” [3] and this has been evident in the communications relationship with both institutes.

Taking into account the closeness of the countries within the Pacific, the approaches towards the communication within the two parties of the relationship and the similarities of Talanoa and Kaupapa Maori theories are key aspects within the cultural communication aspect. This is because the authors’ ethnicities are Maori and Tongan respectively and these values of cultural awareness of this relationship have a significant role.

Management and Administration relationships are sometimes separate and also integral within the institutes and are handled accordingly with the appropriate management levels still driving the appropriate management directions for the overall partnership.

Having a single point of contact at each institute for the day to day business makes sure any enquiries at both ends go through this person and they have a handle on all queries regarding the course and their experience and their relationship with other tutors is vital in the relationship as well.

6. CONCLUSION

TTI and Whitireia have entered into a partnership model that is respectful of both cultures, values and a partnership model which is mutually beneficial to both parties since 1998. Valeti’s dream led to a viable model which has stemmed from a common partnership model but is unique to a solely Pacific island nations

through the Christian values of the Wesleyan Church in Tonga, using the Talanoa and Kaupapa Maori theories. This model is a user pays model which allows the input to come from a Tongan perspective a major advantage for both parties and for Whitireia that this is not a subordinate relationship but a mutually beneficial model which allows equality in decision making.

The Information Technology courses that are offered in Tonga are the pathway that opens the building of capacity within this discipline with students finishing their degree in New Zealand. This model also allows the unique cultural input by Tongan staff to increase their capacity as tutors and pass this knowledge to the students.

The communication skills used are not always the formal ways of communication but fall into typical Pacific communications which are generally oral and also done in a relaxed mode of using other forms of communication i.e. online using tools like Skype and Facebook chat. This is further enhanced with a single point of contact for moderation and academic quality for the IT Courses.

This collaborative educational partnership model has lasted over time and the culture and values of each partner are at the forefront of the model and mutual sharing of communication. One of the main aspects is having a single point of contact at each institute for the day to day business makes sure who the contact person handles any enquiries at both ends and they have a handle on all queries regarding the course.

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