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The re-integration of Tongan postgraduate scholars after study abroad

By

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ABSTRACT

Scholars returning to Tonga after their study go through re-integration. Limited investigation has documented their experiences and the impacts of their new knowledge and skills, both in the workplace and the community. Therefore, it is important that the Tongan society and community, and also the workplaces, are aware of the scholars' experiences and the challenges they face during the process of re-integration.

This study was conducted with selected returned scholars in the main island of Tongatapu, Tonga. These scholars had secured scholarships funded by foreign agencies and successfully completed overseas postgraduate studies, after which they had returned to Tonga and worked for less than five years. The goal of this research study was to investigate the experiences of returned postgraduate scholars in Tonga. In particular, it focuses on how these scholars utilise their new-found knowledge and skills in the workplace and the community. The scholars' experiences, including their perspectives and emotions associated with their new knowledge and skills, and specifically the professional usage of their new knowledge and skills in the workplaces, are investigated.

A qualitative approach was employed with semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews for this study. Participants were categorised into two groups: government and non-government groups. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of the selected participants from both government and non-government organisations. Focus group interviews were conducted with both government and non-government groups respectively. These interviews were recorded and analysed using codes and themes.

The data generated from these methods demonstrated scholars reporting their experiences, how they were reintegrated both into the workplace and the community, and how their new knowledge and skills had been utilised in both contexts. The data also showed how scholars felt during the re-integration process, the challenges they faced and how they confronted them. The findings of this study suggest that scholars experienced challenges when they returned to Tonga after their study. These challenges fall into particular categories: culture,

management, reception and, most importantly, the utilisation of their new-found knowledge and skills. The findings also demonstrate that the scholars were resourceful in accommodating to the needs and demands from both the workplace and the community. Their cultural ways became resources that helped them respond to the challenges in the workplace and the community.

This study also revealed interesting contradictions when it came to scholars' knowledge and skills. Some scholars were able to utilise their new knowledge and skills in their workplace; however, some scholars were not able to utilise their new knowledge and skills because their new assignments upon arrival did not allow this to take place. As a result, some of the unfortunate scholars felt the need to move career or migrate to find a job that would fit not only their qualification but also the new knowledge and skills they had acquired from their study.

This study has unveiled the returned scholars' experiences both in the workplace and in the community. This knowledge will make a contribution to the Human Resources Administration, advocating the importance of reintegrating the returning scholars to jobs that allow the utilisation of their new knowledge and skills, thereby therefore contributing to the development of Tonga.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved father,

The late Soane Hupoate Fua'atonga Kaho,

my unforgettable mother,

Mele Lotolua Kaho

and my dearest husband

Cleveland Sia-ko-latamai Langi.

for your endless support, faithfulness, prayers and unconditional love.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of returning scholars to Tonga

I returned to Tonga from my undergraduate study and taught in secondary level schooling for four years. During this time, I felt the need to upgrade my knowledge and skills so I could better assist the students and contribute to their academic success. Therefore, I applied and successfully secured a Commonwealth scholarship to study at the University of Waikato for a Master's in Education Leadership.

As I prepared myself for this academic journey, I was presented with alternatives whether to stay with my teaching position and continue teaching or take the scholarship and lose my teaching job along with my years of service. At this point, I was confused as to why this opportunity was not viewed as an investment for the school where I was employed as I would return with new knowledge and skills that would improve my performance. However, it was important for me to take the study opportunity, not only for professional and personal reasons but also because the fund was available. So I made my decision to take the scholarship.

There are significant numbers of Tongan postgraduate students studying in Western universities, thanks to scholarships provided by governments and agencies of other nations. This study is interested in the postgraduate degree holders who have previously secured scholarships and have studied overseas. These scholars have returned with their new knowledge and skills and worked for number of years to improve ways of living in Tonga.

Tonga is one of the most highly educated island nations in the Pacific region with regards to the population, with a high literacy rate, and a high rate of university graduates, even boasting one of the highest number of PhD holders per head of population (Moala, 2013). Nevertheless, Tonga is still in need of development in many areas.

There is limited research on returning postgraduate scholars and their contribution to the development of Tonga. There are assumptions based on observations and

conversations, and therefore research is needed. With the growing number of doctorate and master's degree holders, it is assumed that scholars will return with higher qualifications, which will enable them to make a great improvement in their area of expertise.

1.2 Purpose of the scholarships

Scholars secure different scholarships to study abroad that are advertised every year. Scholarships are offered for postgraduate and tertiary studies for Tongan citizens in different departments in different organisations in Tonga. These scholarships are offered by foreign countries who are in partnership with Tonga in the process of developing and enhancing the way of living in that country (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade, 2011; 2012; Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade, 2013).

The purpose of the NZAid scholarships is “to gain knowledge and skills in specific subject areas that will assist in the development of your home country by contributing to identified human resource development training needs” (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade, 2013, p. 1). The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade encourages these tertiary qualifications with similar purposes so that the scholars return with the skills and knowledge to drive change and influence the development outcomes of Tonga (Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade, 2013). This shows that these scholarships are offered with the anticipation that scholars will return and use their new knowledge and skills in their area of expertise to help the development of Tonga. With this development, it is believed that Tonga will improve in many areas, including; the public sector, health, technical and vocational skills and infrastructure that will improve the everyday lives of the people of Tonga.

Therefore, returned scholars consciously take these scholarships with the purpose of becoming a benefit to their country. They will readily go through struggles and obstacles during their studies because of their anticipation of then returning and utilising their new knowledge and skills to improve the way Tongans live.

1.3 Postgraduate returned scholars in Tonga

Postgraduate scholars in Tonga graduate from different universities then return with their higher qualification and work either for the government or non-government departments. However, limited research has investigated the experiences of the returned postgraduate scholars. Also there is minimal knowledge around the usefulness of the new knowledge and skills they have acquired from their study.

Tonga may not be rich financially or have other materials like other, developed countries but knowledge is the wealth of the country. The assumption is, if the new knowledge and skills are to be utilised in the most appropriate suitable areas, Tonga will be competing with other developed countries. It is believed that new knowledge and skills will contribute significantly to the development and improvement of Tonga. However little research seeks to investigate the experiences of returned postgraduate scholars and the utilisation of their new knowledge and skills. This is the focus of the present study.

Personal and societal factors have a great influence on scholars to return to their home countries (Hazen & Alberts, 2006). Scholars from Tonga are motivated and obligated to return. Their level of energy and enthusiasm is high with the anticipation of using their new-found knowledge and skills in the applicable jobs and fields where they can make a difference. Soon (2008) suggests that having the intention of returning prior to study has a great impact on the actions of the students.

1.4 The study

The present study is a qualitative research study that seeks to investigate the experiences of returned postgraduate scholars in Tonga. In particular, it focuses on how these scholars utilise their new-found knowledge and skills in the workplace. The scholars' experiences, including their perspectives and emotions associated with their new knowledge and skills, and specifically the professional usage of their new knowledge and skills in the workplaces, are investigated.

I have taught for four years and have been a member of different committees. This network and connection with other members of the committees made me realise

that not every returned scholar is happy in their job. This challenged my belief that all scholars return happily to positions. In addition to this is the fact that I am now a soon-to-return scholar who does not have a job. The thought of having to find a job that fits my new knowledge and skills is challenging.

This study investigates two groups of returned scholars including scholars who have been working for either the government or non-government organisations. The exploration of these postgraduate scholars' experiences in both the workplace and the community provides an insight into both positive and negative experiences they face when they return to the workplace and the community in Tonga, and also their perspectives on how to improve the process of re-integration for future returning scholars. These postgraduate scholars are transformed and are likely to view things through a different lens from the one they had prior to their study. Pratt (1992) states that we understand the world we live in through *lenses* - or our conceptions, interpretations and actions. Postgraduate scholars come to see things differently and only through these new lenses do they make sense of their surroundings. Therefore, there needs to be reconciliation between scholars' new knowledge and skills and their new context on their return to in Tonga.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters. Chapter One provides information on what can be drawn from other theories that could explain the phenomenon under investigation. Chapter Two discusses past and current literature related to the study that has guided this investigation. Chapter Three describes the methodology and methods applied that generated the collection of data to answer the research questions. This also includes the ethical considerations and a description of the research process. Chapter Four presents the findings which are themes that arose from the data analysis. Chapter Five is a discussion of the themes from the findings. This discussion seeks to interpret and explain these themes in relation to the research. The final chapter concludes this thesis with recommendations for the future of returning scholars. It also presents the limitations of this study and some recommendations for future research in this particular area of interest.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This study investigates the experiences of returned postgraduate scholars in Tonga. In particular, it focuses on exploring how these scholars were able to utilise their new-found knowledge and skills gained from their overseas postgraduate studies back in a Tongan workplace. It also considers other contexts in which knowledge may be utilised, such as the community or the family.

Research studies document the many challenges individuals face as they move to higher education contexts. Some research focuses particularly on the transition to first year university studies (e.g. Talebloo & Baki Bin, 2013), and other research focuses on the transition to postgraduate study (Franken, 2012; Tobbell, O'Donnell & Zammit, 2010). Not surprisingly, researchers have been interested particularly in the challenges faced by international students (Franken, 2012; Christopher, 2008), as these students are studying in unfamiliar contexts. Not only is there a transition in terms of level of study but also in terms of country and culture.

These research studies illuminate the notion that transitions between contexts impose challenges on the international students. These challenges fall into three major areas: culture, education, and language (Daly & Brown, as cited in Franken, 2012). While these areas of research are important and offer useful suggestions for international students (Franken, 2012) and also for future scholars, it is equally important to consider knowledge challenges. More research is needed to investigate what new knowledge and skills the international students acquire from their postgraduate study and what they do with it when they return home to their country of origin.

This study focuses on the challenges returning postgraduate students face when transitioning from their university postgraduate study back into a workplace. In particular, this study focuses on issues associated with the postgraduates' knowledge and learning. While the enhancement of knowledge and learning is the reason the student studies overseas, it is the opportunity for the student to use this knowledge and learning once s/he returns to Tonga that provides the actual

benefit. This study seeks to explore whether or not this benefit is indeed gained. Importantly, there have been limited investigations documenting the challenges that international scholars face as they return or transition back into a workplace following their higher education studies in which they have gained new knowledge and skills.

2.2 Communities of practice

Communities of practice are collective communities formed with the same purpose and understanding. For example, there can be a community of doctors and there can be a street gang, in which members share and learn from each other. These communities of practice are the building blocks of a social learning system (Wenger, 2005).

Wenger (2000) claims that “Participating in these communities of practice is essential to our learning” (Wenger, 2005, p. 229) and that people define themselves in relation to the communities. It is significantly important in our learning to participate in these communities of practice because “it is at the very core of what makes us human beings capable of meaningful knowing” (Wenger, 2000, p. 229). This puts learning in social and historical contexts that generate valued practices within the community, and emphasizes that learning occurs when knowledge, skills and meanings are created and transformed within social practices. Thus, since life involves an ongoing series of social practices it is important that we view learning as an on-going process.

The following are aspects involved in how a community functions: members have a common understanding of the purpose of their community; members have a mutual engagement and trust each other; they also have shared communal resources which they can access and use appropriately. As a community and its members demonstrate these aspects, the assumption is that it is an effective community.

Wenger (2000) explains that human beings form communities that share and reflect on collective practices and learning. Moving from one community to another provides an opportunity for the individual to go through different experiences. As individuals participate in each community, they continue to learn

and this constant participation continues to negotiate their competence. This is likely to result in being competent in more than one area. With that understanding, communities of practice “remain important social units of learning” where individuals come together with a purpose and interact with one another, thus contributing to their learning. (Wenger, 2000, p. 229).

Lave and Wenger (1991) focus on a more social and situated view of learning and on individuals as learners learning as they participate in the social world. Therefore learning is through participation and it does not exist as an individual event. It is the participation with others in a collection of events and experiences that allows learning to take place. Having a view of communities of practice in this study allows for the consideration of a wide range of aspects of a scholar’s experiences.

2.2.1 Learning trajectory

The concept of a trajectory has been used in conjunction with learning to capture the fact that learning is an on-going life process. A learning trajectory “brings the past and the future into the experience of the present” (Wenger, 2000, p. 241). The concept of a trajectory does not imply that there is a straight path that has been charted or foreseen but, rather, it is a continuous path built upon what has gone before but not constrained by it, and it can go in a direction that may not be planned or predicted. Despite the fact that a person’s learning is in motion, and has a momentum of its own, her/his learning trajectory does not always go forward. Sometimes regression can occur. When a person moves to a new context, their learning can be constrained or restricted by their own deficiencies or by the actions of others, or by limitations within the environment. In other words, the relative degree of learning can vary over time as a person crosses different boundaries and experiences different challenges. It is in this way that everyday life is said to create a chain or a history of learning, a learning trajectory.

Wenger (1998) describes five learning trajectories people can go through that contribute to the continuous changing of a person’s identities. Individuals join different communities of practice for different reasons. Some individuals choose to join a community but they have no intention of fully participating. Other individuals join intending to participate fully with the hope that their participation

will have more impact on the community in the future. Other individuals purposely join different communities so they can add more values to their identities as these continue to be negotiated. Also, individuals may leave previous communities to join others so they can develop new relationships and learning in other communities. For whatever reason, their participation has an impact on their identity formation.

2.2.2 Transfer of knowledge

Eraut (2004) defines transfer of knowledge as “the learning process involved when a person learns to use previously acquired knowledge/skills/competence/expertise in a new situation” (p. 10). Eraut also suggests that transferring knowledge from one context to the other is difficult. This is due to the differences in context, culture and the types of learning that take place.

The complexity of the knowledge transfer may depend on the nature of the context. On the one hand, the transferring of knowledge could be short and easy if the context is unambiguous and familiar. On the other hand, the transfer of knowledge could be protracted and challenging if the context is complex and unfamiliar. Even if the context is familiar, there are different variables that influence the situation: “the nature of what is being transferred, differences between the contexts, the disposition of the transferee and, the time and effort devoted to facilitating the transfer process” (Eraut, 2004, p. 10). In other words, transferring or *resituating* knowledge (as Eraut calls the transfer process) is not a straightforward process.

The transfer of knowledge is a fundamental part of the concept of a learning trajectory and also of communities of practice. A learning trajectory has momentum because the individual brings prior knowledge and skills from one context to the other.

Eraut’s (2003) research deals with the transition from academic study to the workplace. Eraut’s research shows that transitions are not smooth for any academic level. Teachers and lecturers often assume it will be smooth and easy for international postgraduate students because they have previously passed undergraduate study requirements successfully. However, international students,

particularly those who complete their studies overseas, often face challenges with their existing knowledge as they cross the myriad of boundaries in communities associated with employment, culture, community, family and religion as they return to work in their home country.

2.3 What postgraduate students know

As has been previously proposed, the focus of this study is confined to the participants' knowledge. It is most likely that, on their return from overseas postgraduate studies, students' enhanced knowledge will not immediately be integrated with the required knowledge of her/his workplace, even if this was her/his prior place of employment.

Bringing previous knowledge and skills to the knowledge demands of a new context is not a simple matter (Eraut, 2003) because of the complex nature of a person's knowledge. Knowledge is not a singular, but rather an accumulated, aspect of a person. There are a number of different sources and forms of knowledge that could contribute to a person's knowledge at any one time.

Eraut (2003) defines different types of knowledge based on his assumption that learning is significantly influenced by context and setting. He explains that the context and setting are strongly influenced by the physical environment and the artefacts. The surrounding including culture, play an important role in shaping the context where learning will take place. For example, in Tonga cultural values are strongly articulated and so the workplace and how it is managed may be directly influenced by this aspect of the culture. For example, if someone in the office has a funeral in their immediate family, the co-workers know to show respect by wearing black to work for some days.

Eraut (2004) argues that, from this perspective, "one can argue that all knowledge is cultural knowledge and socially situated" (p. 1). With that understanding it is important to identify knowledge and how it is transferred between contexts. The next section describes four types of knowledge: codified knowledge, cultural knowledge, personal knowledge and personalised codified knowledge.

2.3.1 Codified knowledge

Codified knowledge is the type of knowledge acquired through prescribed materials, “mainly in textual form and made widely accessible through publication” (Eraut, 2003, p. 1). In the academic arena, codified knowledge can be acquired through texts, lectures and other media which prescribe what is to be learned. Franken (2012) explains that this codified knowledge is made explicit for postgraduate students through the “statements of learning outcomes, the written assessments, the course texts and other textual artefacts” (p. 847). Eraut (2004) states that codified knowledge can also be found in all workplaces. This is in the form of “textual material containing organisation-specific information, records, correspondence, manuals, plans etc” (p.1). Whether in the academic domain or the workplace, members of the organisation need to acquire knowledge from codified sources, and they do so by reading it and hearing it read or talked about.

2.3.2 Cultural knowledge

This is a different notion of culture, as mentioned above when discussing Tongan cultural values. In most workplaces, the new employee will be provided with some form of orientation or instruction about how responsibilities are expected to be performed but it is also assumed that s/he will learn from watching, listening and observing how others work together and complete their assigned responsibilities. Cultural knowledge that has not been codified, that is tacit, plays a significant role in most workplace and activities while this tacit knowledge that individuals acquire informally through their participation in social activities in their environment is often very significant, is mostly taken for granted.

2.3.3 Personal knowledge

Eraut (2004) defines personal knowledge “as what individual persons bring to situations that enables them to think, interact and perform” (p. 2). This suggests that this knowledge provides far broader knowledge beyond the academic. For example, it includes everyday knowledge of people, situations and organisations, skills and practices, experiences extracted from memories of episodes and events, and also self-knowledge, attitude and emotions. This is helpful as when students face similar situations, they may recall their previous experiences and how they responded to such situations to help them in their current situation.

As personal knowledge, it is sometimes used uncritically because “people either believe that it works well for them or lack the time and/or disposition to search for anything better” (Eraut, 2004, p. 253).

2.3.4 Personalised codified knowledge.

There needs to be an integration of codified knowledge into personal knowledge. A postgraduate student’s writing of a thesis demands all codified knowledge from coursework and previous academic experiences to be integrated with the personal knowledge (Franken, 2012). This is personalised codified knowledge.

As students integrate knowledge from texts into their accumulated personal knowledge and document their learning into their thesis, it becomes personalised codified knowledge. Thus integration would thus also be needed between the new personalised codified knowledge and the knowledge that the workplace demands from the scholars.

In terms of the types of students central to this study, postgraduate students not only have prior knowledge gained from previous learning in their workplace and communities but also they have added to this through their recently completed overseas studies. Their participation in these different academic and other community activities builds on their previous experiences and knowledge. Because they are then employed in a new context, or have returned to a familiar context, their new knowledge and skills must be adjusted to fit this context. As a result, returned postgraduate scholars must analyse, make judgements and extract useful knowledge and skills that fit this context of learning. Eraut (2003; 2004) calls this “resituation”. These individuals must learn how to transfer their knowledge to their current situation.

2.4 Resituation of knowledge

Eraut (2003; 2004) proposes the notion of resituation for looking at the transition between academic study and the workplaces. More specifically, insight into the potential resituation problems returning postgraduate students will face as they re-enter the workforce can be gained from Franken (2012), who suggests that “the notion of resituation is helpful in understanding and appreciating how students new to postgraduate study face challenges, particularly with respect to academic

knowledge and skills” (p. 847). This idea is important for this study as it is looking at what the returning scholars take back in terms of knowledge and skills to their home country, into the workplace and the community.

Eraut (2004, p.256) explains that resituation involves five stages:

1. the extraction of potentially relevant knowledge from the context(s) of its acquisition and previous use
2. understanding the new situation
3. recognising what knowledge and skills are relevant
4. transforming them to fit the new situation, and
5. integrating them with other knowledge and skills in order to think/act/communicate in the new situation.

The importance of this study is that it seeks not only to add to the limited literature associated with the resituation of the international postgraduate student back into workplace and other contexts but it also explores this particular application of resituation within a Tongan context.

Essentially, resituation acknowledges a person relocating from one context to another in terms of how they make use of their knowledge. Understandably, this knowledge resituation is likely to be far more pronounced when the person is relocating from one country to another, as is the case for postgraduate students returning to Tonga after completing studies overseas.

Resituation highlights that as individuals transition from one context to another, they need to resituate, or adapt, their knowledge and skills to the demands of their new context, be it a family, community, educational or workplace situation. In each context the individual gains new knowledge and skills and these need to be reconciled with what they already know and can do. What we know and how we do things are rarely perfectly aligned with those required in new contexts. As individuals try to cope with the demands of adjusting to a new context, they change their habits and the way they do things, and they change their perspectives so that they can fit knowledge into the new context.

This research used the concept of resituation because it was confined to looking at the participants’ knowledge. Knowledge and skills were chosen as the focus

because this was primarily what each participant was clearly seeking to enhance in accepting his or her scholarship to study overseas. This research investigated each returning postgraduate scholar's desire and opportunities to apply her or his enhanced knowledge gained from their overseas studies, and the outcomes that resulted.

2.4.1 The emotional impact of resituation

Resituation has been described in knowledge terms but many research studies have shown that becoming a new scholar and returning again is likely to be accompanied by particular feelings and emotions (e.g. Eraut, 2003).

Transferring knowledge from an educational context to a workplace setting, as is the case for the returning postgraduate student, can also be challenging and emotional. This is because the individual needs to become familiar with the new context in order to work effectively. In an ideal situation, as we enter the new context, we continue to analyse and make judgments on our current level of theoretical and practical knowledge in relation to what we presume is required for the tasks we are given to perform. This often results in reconstructing and shaping our theoretical and practical knowledge to fit the new context.

This study is interested in students' perceptions of their opportunity to apply their knowledge to their new life, as well as being provided with an opportunity to learn to perform better where their current knowledge or skills is less than that required. This multi-layered form of learning is not only what creates the person's learning trajectory but also the practical outcomes produced by it, and interactions with others provide the person with a sense of their own identity – their belief about who they are, what they can and cannot do, how purposeful and valued they are, and the respect others have for them in each context in which they are attempting to use their knowledge.

Throughout a person's life, learning is a great part of who s/he is and who s/he will become in the future. Moreover, learning does not occur only within a single context or only in formal settings. It occurs in every context in which the person is engaged – professional, social, recreational, communal, cultural, religious, or whatever – as well as outside the ambit of formal learning. It occurs in interactions with others. As Bloomer and Hodkinson (2000) claim "It is a

participatory act – a profoundly social and cultural phenomenon, not simply a cognitive process” (p. 589). Thus this literature review will examine the nature of learning more fully.

2.5 Learning with change

As human beings, we need to understand the meaning of our experiences. We need to be able to interpret our own experiences rather than act on other’s beliefs, judgement and feelings (Mezirow, 1997). Generally we have our own expectations of the world based on our experiences, and these expectations continue to shape our experiences. Therefore, when we examine our expectations and act out our revised version, it is believed transformative learning occurs.

Adults continue to critically reflect on the assumptions upon which their beliefs, and habits of mind or point of view are based. We can become critically reflective of the assumptions we use when we solve problems or when we engage in communication or when reading, or even self-reflectively when we evaluate our own beliefs and ideas. This on-going critical reflection is critical as it results in personal transformation (Mezirow, 1997).

2.5.1 Academic study as transformative learning

Transformative learning emphasises the understanding that, through learning, the person changes or is transformed in some way. Practically, transformative learning involves continuous examining, questioning, validating and revising our perspectives and, thereby, transforming our self in some way. Mezirow (2003) claims that transformative learning is converting difficult situations, making them open, non-threatening and emotionally able to change.

Transformative learning develops personal knowledge, which encourages autonomous thinking. This is where adults make decisions based on their own interpretation and meaning of their experiences. Therefore, transformative learning “is the process of effecting change in a frame of reference” (Mezirow, 1997, p.5). The frame of reference refers to the assumptions that we make in conjunction with the expectations that we use to facilitate the understanding of our own experiences. This includes adult experiences – interactions, values, feelings, cultures and other frames that define their lives.

It is likely that scholars living and studying overseas experience some form of transformative learning. They are likely to learn to use their personal knowledge in conjunction with their new added knowledge and skills, thus promoting autonomous thinking. This would result in changing these scholars changing into different people.

2.5.2 Learning in the new workplace

A workplace provides opportunities for the employees to continue learning so that their competency may meet the requirements from the organisation. Employers should provide individualised and informal learning opportunities for the employees.

Individualised learning requires confidence. It is argued that this confidence arises from meeting the challenges that one is given. It is also worth mentioning that these challenges can be overcome more easily if there is some explicit level of support provided to new employee. This suggests that there is a triangular relationship between the new employee's confidence, the challenges that arise, and the support given to the learner (Eraut, Alderton, Cole & Senker, 2000). Similar to Senge's (1990) analogy of the three legged stool of sustainability, in order for the learner to be confident and motivated to learn, the challenge and the support should be present. Therefore, postgraduate students may experience these situations in their new workplace or community as they take part in projects or roles.

Apart from this formal learning, a great deal of informal learning takes place both in the workplace and the community as learners interact with other people who come into their lives on a daily basis. When these postgraduate students are faced with different workplace circumstances and demands they are likely to extract different experiences that lead them to act in certain ways. Eraut (2003) explains that an individual is able to make decisions using the personal and professional experiences they had in the past.

Another source of knowledge is formal learning which involves formal training and workshops at the workplace purposely for the purpose of the "development of employee competencies" so that they are able to perform better at their jobs (Cseh & Manikoth, 2011, p. 259). Another learning tool that instructs employees on how

to perform their tasks is formal training; however, it limits the capacity of the employee to broaden their knowledge. Senge (1990) explains from an organisational perspective, saying, “Through learning we extend our capacity to create, to be part of the generative process of life” (p.14). With that understanding, the informal way is likely to be the tool that is most favourable and effective for learning. Therefore, attention should be paid to creating a working environment that supports informal learning so that the employees’ competency will be enhanced (Marsick & Volpe, 2013).

This discussion of these sources of knowledge implies, in relation to the lived experience of a returning postgraduate student, that s/he will be simultaneously influenced by the knowledge they possess in different areas of knowledge. They will continually be drawing on the different sources of knowledge as they move to a new workplace context back in Tonga. Initially, the returning student will draw from each of these sources of personal knowledge until they learn which is most relevant, most useful, or most beneficial in enabling them to perform what is required of them in their new workplace. The student will continue to draw on all sources of personal knowledge until s/he learns how to complete their work “without having to stop and think about what to do next” (Eraut, 2003, p. 252). In the new working context, the returning postgraduate student will draw on personal knowledge that they believe will work well for them with the time and resources available to them. Some of this knowledge will be useful, some will be unhelpful, and some will need to be amended. While having access to these multiple sources increases the student’s total level of knowledge, it also contributes to the challenges these postgraduate students face as they change the ways they think and do things in their new working context following their return to Tonga.

2.5.3 The influence of learning on personal identity

There is a relationship between learning and personal identity. The concept of a person’s learning trajectory describes how the person’s learning is a continuous process over time that connects the person with events from their past, the present and the future, thereby providing them with a sense of their self. In this way, as the person’s learning trajectory continues, their personal identity continues to be negotiated as well. Lindgren and Wahlin (1998) argue that among these things, moving from one community to another “can create difficulties in establishing

social relations with other people” (p. 358) in the community. This can make it hard to construct a stable social identity because it will take time to become socialised and acquainted with people between communities (Bennis, 1968).

Wenger (1998) identifies the four components of learning and identity as a way of talking about how learning changes who we are as individuals. Wenger (2011) explains, “learning is a process of identity formation and conversely, identity formation is a process of learning” (p. 143). Identity is not fixed but rather it is the negotiation of trajectory over time and space. This illuminates that both concepts of learning and identity enrich the process whereby an individual is becoming a knowledgeable person.

Tobbell, O’Donnell and Zammit, (2010) argue that the identity of an individual can be shaped in terms of participation. We come to understand our identity through our experiences. This includes a range of community practices which we experience. Like all students, international students are members of communities but perhaps struggle to participate in unfamiliar communities which they become a part of. As they move from their country of origin to another for the purpose of study, “there are shifting patterns of community membership once they begin their academic studies” (Franken, 2013, p. 3).

There is a profound connection between identity and social practices. As individuals continue to learn over time from their experiences, they enter new contexts and their identity shifts. Postgraduate students may also find it challenging having to negotiate their different roles outside their study lives. This somehow further complicates the transition and shifting of identity.

For returning students, the cycle of transitioning, transferring knowledge and re-situating will start again. These knowledgeable individuals need to retune their knowledge again to the new context. Therefore, as individuals enter a postgraduate level of study, the same malleability and change of identity applies. So as the scholars return to their country of origin, their new knowledge has changed their identities.

2.6 The influence of expectations on personal identity

International postgraduate students have many expectations placed on them and they hold expectations themselves. A limited amount of research has explored these. Hazen and Albert's (2006) study illuminated that international students studying in America have expectations of themselves. This study focussed on the incentives faced by international students to stay in America or return home after their study. Questionnaires, focus group methodology and multiple observations methods were employed in this study. Participants included different nationalities from the University of Minnesota, including Chinese, Dutch, Greek, Indian, Japanese and Tanzanian. Their study showed that "economic and professional factors typically dominate among incentives to stay in the US while personal and societal factors tend to draw the students back to their home countries" (Hazen & Albert, 2006, p. 213). However, with the scholars' new qualification, they expected "better professional opportunities in home country; higher economic standard of living in home country; better quality of life in home country" (p. 20). They expected a higher standard of living for themselves when they returned from their study and that more opportunities would be available to them.

Butcher, McGrath and Stock (2008) demonstrated in their research on Asian returning students that expectations from students' families are placed upon the students. These expectations are part of the reasons why students return back to their country of origin. Sometimes students' "overseas education related to plans for the family to expand their business in some way or other" (p. 244). Also they are expected to gain more knowledge and skills to "ensure current technology could be incorporated into the business without the need to go outside the family for partnership" (p. 244).

Butcher et al. (2008) demonstrate in their important study that the family has a strong pull on Asian postgraduate students to return home. This is the same for most students from the Pacific. This is culturally exhibited through the concept of *vaa* in Tonga, or the "behavioral expectations among persons who are involved in different relationships" (Thaman, 2008, p. 464). These can be between family members, community, national and international. As Tongans, to nurture the notion of *vaa* is to know and understand the relationships among people. With that

being said, postgraduate students who leave Tonga to pursue education overseas bring this cultural perspective with them to the learning context.

Moving across contexts is particularly difficult because each context demands different expectations. The demands can vary according to the pace and pressure of the workplace (Eraut, 2004a). Because the expectations are different in each workplace, it requires knowledge and skills to be integrated and transferred to the tasks given. This implies that the individual would resituate their knowledge to fit the new context and what is required, and it would also require time to retune so that the individual can make decisions and perform accordingly.

Cliff (1998) and Entwistle and Pearson (2004) demonstrated in their studies that students display a “communalist orientation”. Cliff (1998) indicates that mature students, in particular, hold a strong communalist orientation whereby they have a social or moral obligation to their community. This suggests that personal and societal expectations are part of the reasons why students return to their homes after their studies. Other than the obligations from immigration regulations and donor expectations, they feel the need to return so they can use their knowledge and skills to contribute to the development of their community and society as a whole.

2.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, students go through different academic activities to become knowledgeable, stable and able people. As they continue to live, they learn and transition between learning contexts. Students resituate their knowledge into the new context where they can use their new-found knowledge and skills. This knowledge involves: codified knowledge which is found in texts and prescribed learning outcomes; personal knowledge which is accumulated knowledge that a person brings to the new context; and also personalised codified knowledge which incorporates codified knowledge in its personal form where all possible codified knowledge can be integrated into the personal knowledge.

Moving from one context to another means crossing boundaries between communities. This involves physical movement and also the transferring of knowledge and skills. It requires time to become familiar with the new context or

community. As students participate in these formed communities, they continue to learn, analyse and retune to the new context, thus resulting in shifts of identity. Students extract knowledge and skills from their learning trajectory that could be useful in their new context. Their experiences continue to be filtered and shaped by their context, while the expectations placed upon them from family, workplace and community also contribute to the complexity. This continuum with time and points in time is the trajectory. Knowledge transferred across boundaries is resituation. Because students continue to analyse, extract useful knowledge and skills, learn and grow, they change their habits of mind and perspectives. Critical reflection on their experiences decides what fits and what does not fit. This critical reflection, and taking action on the new perspective, results in their transformation.

International postgraduate students are privileged in having scholarships to study overseas purposely to return and contribute to the development of their country of origin. Prior to their study, they had jobs, previous study experiences and possibly families of their own, providing them with experiences that shape their way of doing things. These qualities they take with them to the new learning context and become challenging for their studies.

Research studies have investigated the experiences that postgraduate students face when they return to their home countries. However few research studies that have investigated the scholars returning to Tonga are available to draw comparisons from.

It is important to investigate returning postgraduate scholars' re-integration because it will provide insights into the challenges they face in their transformation from being a student/researcher to being an employee in a workplace. This research is focused on the re-integration of these scholars as they return to Tonga, particularly looking at postgraduate level scholars. The study looks solely at these returning scholars' experiences both in their workplaces and the community. The focus is on the utilisation of their new knowledge and skills in both the workplace and the community.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Tongan postgraduate scholars go through a transformation during their university studies. When they graduate and return back to Tonga, either to a new context or a previously familiar context, they go through the same processes as they encountered when they entered their new study context. This includes an identity shift which builds on their learning trajectory. Their learning trajectory changes as they learn more about themselves. As their knowledge and skills accumulate through experiences, transitioning from a study context to workplace context, they go through a process of resituation. Therefore they are required to re-tune and adjust to their new or once familiar context. As they continue to cope with the demands of the new contexts, they analyse, make judgments and extract the best-fit knowledge and skills. As a result they change their habits of mind and perspectives, thus contributing to their transformation.

A number of researchers have investigated the academic life history of returning postgraduate scholars through long-term research. They have followed and tracked these returned postgraduate students and documented their experiences. They have sought to understand and analyse scholars' transformation over a period of time (O'Donnell & Tobbell, 2007, 2009; Bloomer & Hodkinson, 2000; Illeris, 2009). The scope, however, of my present study does not allow for long-term research. The present study collected accounts only at a one point in time, even though it tried to understand the academic life history of the scholars. This was done after they had returned to Tonga and had worked for less than five years.

This chapter will discuss the following: the qualitative research procedure adopted for this study, the interpretive paradigm and its place in this study, research methods, data collection and analysis methods, and the validity and reliability of the study.

3.2 Research procedures

3.2.1 Qualitative research

Qualitative research was adopted for this study because its features were appropriate and fitted within the parameters of my study. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) define qualitative research as a combination of methods involving an interpretive and naturalistic approach. Qualitative research therefore seeks to study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpreting phenomena as closely as possible to the participant's own experience and interpretation. Qualitative research involves the use of a variety of different sources of data: case study, personal experience, introspective reflections, life story interviews, and observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

Descriptive data cannot be measured using a scale. It can only be interpreted. This study therefore is not based on measurable data but, rather, attempts to make meaning of the participants' experiences and reality. One study argues that "qualitative research being holistic, strives to record the multiple interpretations of intention in and meanings given to situations and events" (Cohen et al, 2011, p. 202). My study aims to understand the experiences of each individual scholar and therefore qualitative research is appropriate. Within this short duration of time, I have tried to collect as much rich data as possible, and from different sources, and have interpreted these sources to understand the returned scholars' experiences.

Soltis (1989) asserts that one purpose of qualitative research study is "developing an understanding of educational institutions and processes through interpretation and narrative description" (p. 249). This illuminates one of the purposes of qualitative research which is finding meaning in a person's experiences. Qualitative research can seek to understand the influences of extrinsic factors on people and the reasons for their actions. My study seeks to understand the influences of the scholars' new knowledge and skills in their lives and in the workplace when they return to Tonga.

Qualitative research gives voice to participants and therefore is suitable for my study. This provides an opportunity for the participants to share their experiences,

including their concerns and frustrations, in non-threatening one to one interviews and focus group interviews. Many scholars have never had this opportunity to share their experiences and have their voices heard.

3.2.2 Interpretive paradigm

Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005) assert that qualitative investigation that is based on an interpretive paradigm is exploratory. This allows researchers to investigate and gather information about areas in which little is known. The interpretive paradigm's main focus in the context is to understand particular aspects of the human experience (Cohen et al, 2011). Researchers and investigators use this paradigm in an attempt to gain an understanding from within by getting inside the mind of the participants. The purpose of this paradigm is to be able to obtain the participant's perspective of the issue at study. An interpretive paradigm was employed for my study because I wanted to understand as fully as possible the experience of being a returned scholar.

The challenge with research in cultural contexts like mine is that the researcher may not be fully conscious of the complex cultural dimensions that might influence the way participants' respond to the researcher, and the way the researcher interprets data. There are a number of factors that support my ability to interpret the research data I have collected. This includes the fact that I am Tongan and I am a postgraduate scholar. I was born and grew up in Tonga. I am a former teacher in Tonga. I am a participating member of the Tongan society and community, and hence I am knowledgeable about the culture, tradition and values embedded in my Tongan heritage. With this knowledge, skills and experiences, I have cultural consciousness. I have, and am currently living, the experiences of a postgraduate scholar. I have experienced transitions at different levels and also the challenges of entering a new learning context. I will soon be a returning scholar and therefore I will be living some of the experiences of these selected returned scholars currently working in Tonga.

3.3 Methods and procedures

This section is divided into six parts which are: as follows; the process of getting access from the University and gaining access to perform research in Tonga; the sampling process; the methods of data collection; the process of data analysis; the importance of validity and reliability to the research and how they were addressed; and the ethical considerations related to the study design.

3.3.1 Gaining access from the University of Waikato

The ethics application was completed shortly after the submission of my research proposal to the faculty for approval. After receiving the approval (see Appendix 1), I made travel arrangements.

3.3.2 Gaining access to conduct research in Tonga

I made informal contact via email, social networks and telephone calls to Tonga, seeking information on how to gain access to do my research in Tonga. I was informed by the Prime Minister's Office of the conditions to be met by a research candidate (Appendix 2).

Because my study seeks to investigate the experiences of returned scholars working for government and non-government organisations, I was required to send a formal request letter to the Prime Minister's office (Appendix 3). Attached with this letter were the conditions required for approval (Appendix 4). Copies of the same letter and documents were also sent to the Ministry of Education and Training. This is because some returned scholars were currently teachers, and therefore approval from the Ministry was necessary.

3.3.3 Contacting and meeting possible participants

I contacted the scholarship office in Tonga for the list of all returned postgraduate scholars. This list included their names, where they were currently working and how long they had been back and had worked at their respective organisations.

I confirmed with a contact in Tonga the whereabouts of these returned scholars. I was given some of the contact information and so I was able to communicate my research topic to some possible participants via email. I received informal acceptance responses.

Travel arrangements were scheduled for the first week of March, 2013. Upon arrival, I contacted my potential participants to arrange individual meetings with them to discuss and clarify any inquiries they might have regarding my research. The letters of invitation (Appendix 5) for their participation were given and consent forms (Appendix 6) were signed and collected. Appointments for the individual interviews were scheduled with 15 participants. Eight returned postgraduate scholars currently working for non-government organisations and seven returned postgraduate scholars working for government departments agreed to participate. Each one was given a hard copy or soft copy of the interview questions (Appendix 7) in preparation for the interview.

3.3.4 The sampling process

The quality of a research study depends on a variety of variables such as the procedures and methods used. It is also important to use a suitable strategy for sampling to ensure the quality of the research is maintained. However, due to restriction of time and resources, I chose to focus on 15 postgraduate returned scholars. This group is divided into two sections, including scholars working for non-government organisations and also government departments.

Criteria were used to select suitable participants for this study. Suitable participants had to have scholarship funds, and had to have studied at any overseas university at postgraduate level for qualifications including but not restricted to masters and PhD. They also needed to have returned to Tonga after study and worked in any organisation in Tonga for less than 5 years.

I communicated my research to all potential participants who fitted the criteria. They were given a week to respond. Follow up emails and phone calls were made after the one-week period. I also considered that if there were more than needed, I would select the first willing participants. This allowed fairness in the selection of my participants.

3.3.5 Data collection process

The suitability of adopting a qualitative research approach, and an interpretive paradigm has been established in Section 3.2. Because my current study seeks to

examine the experiences of the returned postgraduate scholars in their workplaces and communities, human interaction is a major part.

It is important to consider culturally appropriate data collection methods in order to obtain rich, convincing and valid data with respect to the research questions. Therefore I chose two data collection methods: semi-structured individual interview and a focus group interview.

Because my study seeks to investigate the experiences of the selected returned scholars, it was anticipated that the semi-structured individual interview would be appropriate. This was scheduled to be held first, so that I could establish a positive relationship with the participants, and also so that I could gather as much rich data as possible and then use and transfer this data to the focus group interview. Then members of the group could expand and confirm the data. This approach provided rigour to my study.

The semi-structured nature of the interviews also allowed me to prompt and steer questions in certain directions as the interview unfolded. These semi-structured individual interviews were scheduled via phone and email after potential participants responded to the letter of invitation to participate. The times and places for the interviews were left for them to decide on the basis of when and where they were available and comfortable to do the interviews. Prior to the interview, a copy of the interview questions was sent to the participants via email or given to them in hard copy. Provision of the questions prior to the interview enabled them to prepare for the interview.

The second method I used was the focus group interview, with questions guided by the data gathered from the individual semi-structured interview. (Appendix 8). Focus group interviews can empower the participants to voice experiences in their own words (Cohen et al, 2011). Having members of the group expand on data from individual interviews provides confirmability and rigour to the study. These focus group interviews were scheduled last. This is because, given with the rapport that I had established during the individual semi-structured interviews, it was anticipated that participants would be willing to come together as a group and share their experiences. The responses from the individual interviews also shaped the way I approached the focus group interview.

I chose the time and venues for these focus group interviews with the confirmation from the scholars. I chose to conduct these focus group interviews in the evening at 7 pm when all the participants would be available. Of course, I considered their family obligations. The venue I chose was a Chinese restaurant where there are private rooms for group or family dinners. I anticipated that having this focus group interview over served dinners would be effective. With this setting, I anticipated the participants would be comfortable to share their thoughts and opinions without fear. It was also my way of thanking my participants for their participation in my study. This gesture is culturally appropriate and respectful. Each focus group interview was scheduled for different days at the same time and venue. I recorded each interview using a digital recording device. These recordings were essential for the analysis of data.

3.3.6 Data analysis process

Because I adopted a qualitative research approach and an interpretive paradigm, I collected qualitative data. Analysis of this data involved different stages. Cohen et al. (2011) claim that qualitative data analysis involves “organizing, accounting for and explaining the data, in short, making sense of data in terms of the participants’ definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities” (p. 537). Qualitative data analysis relies on interpretation. The literature argues that there is no definite way of analysing qualitative data. Data analysis for this study involved transcribing, coding and themes.

4.3.6.1 Transcribing

The recordings from both the individual semi-structured interviews and the focus group interview were transcribed as my first step of data analysis. For every interview, I used a transcribing software called Dragon Naturally Speaking. However, to make sure that these transcriptions were accurate, after every transcription I listened to the interviews again and follow the transcribed interviews. This was so I could review and make changes where necessary.

The early start of transcription enabled *progressive focusing*, which allowed for the recognition and selection of key issues that would be helpful with my focus group interviews. (Miles & Huberman, 1984; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Prior

to my return, all the individual semi-structured interviews and the two focus group interviews were transcribed ready for the next step.

4.3.6.2 Coding

The next step was coding. Coding is defined as a translation process. This is where the responses and information given by the respondents are categorised (Kerlinger, 1970). Therefore, the content of my transcribed interviews were re-read and judgments were made according to the questions that were asked in the interview and also other information that arose from the discussion. These were categorised into different codes. Examples of codes can be found in Appendix 9.

4.3.6.3 Interpretation and themes

Reflecting on the coding and developed interpretation and meaning to it, I looked at the key concepts and continued interpreting the data at hand. Themes were determined from this coding and interpretation. I continued to rethink the data with regards to the research and themes that have been identified. This provided a clear pathway to how the report will present the data according to the issues under investigation. Examples of themes can be found in Appendix 9.

3.4 Validity and reliability in qualitative research

The validity of the research determines its worth. Cohen et al. (2011) assert that it is “an important key to effective research” (p. 179). Validity can be in different forms. Winter (2000) claims validity in qualitative research might be established through the honesty, depth, richness and range of the data collected. There are characteristics which qualitative research needs to demonstrate by if it is to be considered valid. The data needs to be descriptive and determined by the participants as much as possible. The researcher needs to take into account the context in which the research takes place, the importance of the process of collecting data, and his or her own presence in the research. The researcher also needs to seek validation of respondents’ information and researcher’s interpretation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

These principles play important roles in qualitative research, ensuring a level of validity in the data collection. As a Tongan researcher, I was conscious of these principles and immersed myself in the research. I was culturally aware of what to

do and therefore I ensured that places and times were suitable for the research. It was also an advantage that I am a Tongan going to Tonga investigating other Tongans because I validated information and interpreted their responses the best way possible. I acted upon these principles, ensuring quality data.

3.4.1 Reliability

In qualitative research, reliability refers to how accurately researchers record data and what actually occurs at the research settings (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). I ensured reliability by using a digital recorder to record the responses word for word. Also I took extra notes on what I observed, and tried to be consistent throughout the whole research process. I used triangulation to contribute to the reliability of this study.

Silverman (2006) claims that the in-depth responses that participants provide ensure an adequate level of validity and reliability. However, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest key criteria for validity in qualitative research. These include credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

3.4.2 Credibility

Credibility contributes to the validity and reliability of a piece of research. Stringer (2008) claims that qualitative research is open to chaotic, biased processes. The perspectives of those in control of the research may intrude in the study. However, to minimize such intrusion, it is absolutely key to pay close attention to the processes involved (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This involves getting to know the context and becoming familiar with different instruments that may be of use in collecting data.

Being a Tongan, and having grown up and worked in Tonga, gave me that knowledge about the research site. This benefited me as a researcher and gave me credibility. I planned to collect my data within three months. Therefore during this time, I carefully observed the context of study. I arrived in Tonga two weeks prior to the official starting date for my research. I was able to make informal contact, visit my possible participants and build positive and non-threatening relationships. I was also able to go to their workplaces to become familiar with the research

sites. Through this relationship establishment, credibility was achieved (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.4.3 Transferability

Instead of generalising, qualitative researchers prefer the notion of transferability. This is because transferability is evidenced on uniqueness rather than comparing research settings. This allows the researcher to “extrapolate and transfer aspects of the research settings described in those accounts to that of their own” (White, 2011, p. 237). Stringer (2008) and Lincoln and Guba (1985), state that this possible is possible if the future settings are similar to the previous setting in which the prior study was conducted to permit similar results.

For my study, I sought to achieve transferability by reviewing relevant literature that is both directly and indirectly related to my topic of investigation. I also provide a detailed description of the methodology that was employed in this study. I reversed the methods used by employing individual semi-structured interviews first and then transferred the data collected to be confirmed in the focus group interviews.

Demonstration of my findings and discussion is presented. This detailed information may allow other interested readers and researchers to decide whether it is suitable to conduct a similar study in other settings.

3.4.4 Dependability.

White (2011) defines dependability as “a measure of the extent to which a reader, on the basis of the evidence presented concurs with the findings of the research” (p. 235). One of the mechanisms that enables them to do this is thick transcription. The notion of thick transcription equates to auditing and this is so that readers might follow the research processes and understand the findings derived from them. This is the main measure of the authenticity of qualitative research (White, 2011; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

To achieve dependability for this study, my supervisors monitored the early stages of my research and the writing stage of my study. The ethics committee had approved my ethics application before I departed to Tonga. I also sought to strictly adhere to the University of Waikato’s Ethical Conduct in Human Research

and Related Activities Regulations (2008). With these processes I believe that my current study meets the level of dependability.

3.4.5 Confirmability

In qualitative research, the complement to dependability is confirmability. This is “the extent to which a researcher’s interpretation of the research material can be corroborated” (White, 2011, p. 236). Confirmability is achieved when information gathered from the research is reviewed (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Stringer, 2008). The information enables the participants or other observers to confirm that the research accurately and adequately represents the perspectives presented in the study. This therefore means the trustworthiness of the study is enhanced (Stringer, 2008).

To achieve confirmability for my study, I began by transcribing the individual interviews. Following that, I validated each transcribed interview with the participants by sending copies of their own interview via email. They responded, confirming what had been transcribed to be accurate. With the focus group interview, I followed the same procedure. Participants were given their own transcribed part of the focus group interview for validation. This provided confirmability for my study.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the qualitative approach and interpretive paradigm that this study adopted. Also the detailed descriptions of the methods and procedures used for data collection and data analysis have been provided. My study has tried to achieve validity and reliability by following the procedures of qualitative research, including credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. It has also discussed the process of gaining ethical approval from the research site and informed consent from my participants.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter one, scholarships are available to all suitably qualified Tongans who would like to pursue further studies. These scholarships vary from local scholarships to overseas scholarships. The local scholarships are funded by the Tongan government while the overseas scholarships are funded by the governments and agencies of other nations. This study is interested in postgraduate scholars who secured scholarships from other nations in order to study in universities overseas, but have then returned to Tonga and worked for less than 5 years.

The overall purpose of this study is to understand how the returned postgraduate scholars have utilised their new-found knowledge and skills in their individual workplace and community. This chapter is divided into six main areas, including anticipated beliefs about being a postgraduate student, experiences of being a postgraduate student, aspirations on returning as a qualified postgraduate scholar, lived experiences as a returned qualified postgraduate scholar, community reactions to scholars, return, and the expectations and beliefs about better re-integration in the future of postgraduate scholars.

4.2 Anticipated beliefs about being a postgraduate student

4.2.1 Anticipated benefits

The scholars explained their different reasons and motivations for studying overseas. All of them expressed similar professional reasons and motivations. One of these was to develop more knowledge and skills in their fields of expertise that could help them improve their professional performance when they returned. Furthermore they believed that such increased knowledge and skills would enable them to contribute more to the development of their organisations and Tonga as a country. The following are illustrations of such professional reasons and motivations.

Lu'isa: So I went to study overseas solely for professional reasons.

Sulia: The anticipated benefits were to further my experience, skills and knowledge and also to widen my views and perspectives. This will improve my performances at my job.

Finau: For me, it was improving the skills and to gain more knowledge and power. With that I can do more to help Tonga.

They desired these professional benefits because they anticipated contributing to the development of their organisations. Finau's comment extends this desire to be a positive contributor beyond just that of his organisation as he also desires to be of more benefit to his country. He anticipated being involved in the development of Tonga. This is referred to as a "communalist orientation" (Cliff, 1998; Boulton-Lewis, Marton, Lewis & Wilss, 2000; Purdie, Hattie & Douglas, 1996). Similarly 'Ofa's and Siaosi's comments reflect a strong communalistic orientation.

'Ofa: In my case I was anticipating what would be best for Tonga. Also what can I do to contribute to the development of Tonga.

Siaosi: be able to work together with other people cooperatively, be able to contribute to the economic, social and political development of Tonga as a whole nation, and also contribute effectively to the achieving of the Ministry of Education's sustainable goals and objectives.

Siaosi continued on to explain his specific motivations for studying overseas. These motivations were related to his role as a teacher and specifically an English teacher.

Siaosi: My interest lies in the how to make or the methodologies in making teaching English as a second language more effective. I anticipated also gaining a; broadened academic capacity, being exposed to different cultural values, gaining skills to make wiser and better decisions, being creative, especially when it comes to classroom duties and obligations, being able to withstand pressures and stresses,

More than half of the scholars anticipated a benefit from their overseas postgraduate study in relation to the enhancement in respect for both themselves and their families from the community and society. Sulia's comment reveals this.

Sulia: I also anticipated my little family to be respected by our community. My new qualification would place not only me but

my family and those close to me at a respectable level in both the community and society.

Peni described similar anticipated benefits to those of the other scholars but added that it was very important for him to accomplish something amazing so that his family would gain more respect. He also anticipated that this accomplishment would place his family at a higher level in the community.

Peni: Coming from an unknown family, it has always been on my mind to do something amazing to put my family at a high level where not only me gets the respect and benefits but also my family. Of course there were anticipated salary raise, knowledge upgraded, experience but the most anticipated benefit for me was to lift my family up levels in society and community.

Being an unknown family in Tonga means that you are not closely connected to the society. A member of an unknown family may not be entitled to the same privileges as a known family. Their opinions and suggestions may not always be recognised. There are also social functions they are not privileged to attend. Therefore Peni's comment above is particularly significant in Tonga.

Another anticipated benefit was highlighted when three of the scholars explained that their employers had expectations of them returning at the end of their studies with certain new skills which would enable the organisation to better accomplish its tasks. These employers anticipated the scholars would gain the knowledge and skills that would contribute to the growth and success of their organisations. Mele identified some of these specific skills.

Mele: Part of the application included were the skills that my employers anticipated that I would need. These were required and I needed to learn during my studies. The skills were analytical skills, designing, writing skills and research skills.

In addition to being motivated by the desire to improve the status and wellbeing of their families and by the need to fulfil employers' expectations, all of the research participants expressed the view that they each had personal reasons and motivations for studying overseas.

Some PhD scholars anticipated that they would gain a sense of respect with the title of doctor at the front of their names. The assumption was that they would be placed at a higher social level in both the workplace and the community.

All of the scholars who were married with children wanted their families to learn about what life in a developed country was like and to experience some of the opportunities and advantages that these countries provide. Some of the anticipated advantages and opportunities included work for their spouses and better education for their children. Being able to share together with their families in such experiences was highly desired, as demonstrated by Tevita's comment.

Tevita: I think I wanted to expose them to overseas life and opportunities there. My wife would work and my children would get an education while I studied. I know there would be an expansion of mentality for all of us in our little family. Personal benefits include my family experiencing the life overseas.

Fourteen of the scholars anticipated promotions and a salary increase on their return to Tonga as a result of the new knowledge and skills they would acquire from their individual studies. This was important as it would enable the scholars to provide financial security for their families. Salesi and Peni explained this.

Salesi: First of all, was the salary; some people will say knowledge, but for me it was salary first.

Peni: Of course there were anticipated salary raises. This was important for me, because now I can provide more for my little family.

Some participants believed that their new qualifications would make them appear more attractive to potential employers and would increase their opportunities of securing suitable jobs in their preferred areas of employment. Sulia's comment illustrates this belief.

Sulia: It gives you an advantage of finding a job applicable to your field of expertise and you can always find a job at any time. If you are not knowledgeable and skilled, you will have less chance of finding a job here. But if you have more skills and knowledge you will get to choose from alternative of jobs available for you.

These scholars anticipated many of professional and personal benefits from their overseas study. They saw their study as a means to achieve greater professional and personal success. They envisaged that they would be able to give back to Tonga by utilising their knowledge and skills to contribute to the development of the organisations, which in turn would aid the development of Tonga. They also saw the opportunity as a way to support their families in establishing a better life for them.

4.2.2 Anticipated obstacles

Each of the scholars had previously completed overseas undergraduate or postgraduate studies and so they were well aware of the range and type of challenges they faced. Thus, while the scholars anticipated considerable benefits they also anticipated obstacles and challenges and reported that as they prepared themselves for their academic journeys they focussed on being mentally and physically ready for whatever might arise.

As mentioned above, only some of the married scholars with children were able to take their families with them. Most of the married scholars were away from home and family for a minimum of one year and miles away from those closest to them. Half of the scholars talked about the anticipation of missing their family and loved ones while they were away from home.

Luana: I also anticipated missing my family because I couldn't be with them while I was away.

Salesi: First the thought of leaving my wife and kids here was hard. It was too expensive to bring them with me and that thought was hard.

Sela: Yes, it was the distance from Tonga to Britain. It was too far and I knew I would miss my family.

Katalina: Missing the family because we are family-orientated people.

On the other hand, taking their family with them on their studies meant that more money would be required to take care of their family. Hence, a number of the scholars who were accompanied by their family anticipated financial struggles because the scholarship only funds the recipient's costs. Tevita and Mele explained.

Tevita: I also anticipated financial obstacles despite the scholarship. This is because I would take my family which are not sponsored.

Mele: Financial obstacles because I was taking my whole family. I had to think about health conditions because my son is asthmatic and the weather changes.

Six of the scholars anticipated challenges caused through having to become familiar with a different culture. Not only was their anticipation expressed as fears about adjusting to different expectations and ways of doing things, but differences in physical conditions such as the weather were also a concern. For example,

Tevita: Moving from one culture to another was my main concern. Especially for my family because this would be the first time for them to go overseas and trying to cope with the culture would be difficult.

Siaosi: I anticipated cultural shock expected luckily I was there before and I knew how it is and still I expect to experience it again. Also the weather especially in winter, it is very cold to stay late at the labs in comparison to Tonga.

Katalina: The weather would be difficult to adapt to. When it is cold, it is extremely cold and when it is summer it is extremely hot.

Half of the scholars expressed the view that they were used to the so-called *Tongan time* where life is more relaxed and there is no pressure. They felt that time management and going to a different learning context, which is built around a different culture and environment where people have different expectations and requirements that have to be met, would be very challenging.

Katalina: My normal time in Tonga was a cruise and over in Melbourne you can't really make excuses all the time for being tardy. It would be challenging and would take time to adapt.

Mele: Time management: it was one of the critical things I've learned. Often here in Tonga we are laid back and we use specific time. I would be studying in Melbourne and it is such a busy and fast paced society and you can't afford to slow down for certain things. Having assignments due, being able to communicate well and using the time very wisely.

Three of the scholars anticipated personal concern with the likely increased academic demands as they felt under prepared. Some talked about high school

learning experiences and others considered their grades from their undergraduate studies were not sufficiently high. They anticipated a difficult struggle to familiarise themselves with new educational practices. Peni's comment illustrates this view.

Peni: My preparation in high school was not as great as it should have been. Also when I went for my undergraduate studies and transitioning from there to New Zealand were really hard because the papers I did in the previous university was really general. In New Zealand it was a whole different world. The content was really detailed which I was not prepared for. So it was not a smooth transition because it was really deep and detailed in New Zealand. I had to take prerequisite papers to get me updated. I really struggled in New Zealand because the foundations I built from high school and undergraduate study were weak.

Contributing to this view was the realisation that they had been away from studies for a long period of time.

Nesi: Also being away from the classroom too long made me nervous. I anticipated it would be so hard to go back and be a student again and try to be in tune with the education tide of today.

Because the scholars accepted development scholarships from different international donors, they could have been sent anywhere overseas for their studies and so language and communication was an issue of concern. Some scholars went to English-speaking countries and some went to non-English-speaking countries.

More than half of the scholars who travelled to an English-speaking country anticipated challenges when having to adapt to the academic English language requirements of the universities. The scholars who went to non-English-speaking countries had a particularly difficult time. Understandably, the three of the selected scholars who accepted a scholarships to study in China or Japan anticipated challenges with learning the language. Even though their study programmes were taught in English, they knew they had to communicate with other people outside the university, so they anticipated having difficult times learning the language. According to one of these scholars,

Salesi: I knew the university taught in English but the community spoke only Japanese. I had to know a little of Japanese to communicate at the shops and transportation and gym. This would be a challenge.

Also the scholars anticipated the challenges of adapting to the curriculum of a university different to where they had completed their undergraduate studies. Mele explained.

Mele: Qualification standards were a lot higher: My undergraduate degree, which was earned from the previous university had a total different academic system and education system from my perspective. Especially at the Masters level, it is a lot higher. The push for innovations would be great. They encouraged innovation even at the primary level and at the university.

In preparing to embark on their academic study journeys, the scholars anticipated both benefits and obstacles. These involved professional and personal reasons and motivations. There was the assumption that even though they anticipated obstacles, they were not going to give up the chances to gain new knowledge and skills. They were being driven by the belief that the benefits far outweighed the obstacles because study abroad offered the opportunity to contribute to the development of their self, their organisations, and Tonga, and to create better lives for their family members.

4.3. Experiences of being a postgraduate student

4.3.1 Strategies for coping with challenges

Even though the Tongan scholars anticipated challenges, they were prepared to face these and to try their best to cope with them. Because they had experienced university life before and had workplace experiences they were confident in their ability to cope with the challenges of studying overseas. It was assumed, because they had families of their own, that they had developed an increased level of maturity and so overseas study would not be so difficult that they would not be able to cope.

All of these scholars felt they had secured their scholarships at the right time. They felt that their previous success in university study would help them to prevail. Also some were now more settled with families than when they

previously completed university studies, and so they thought they were more mature and better prepared to face any challenges and to deal with them successfully. They were confident that whatever challenges arose, they would make wiser and better decisions. They believed their maturity would make their postgraduate studies a success as they now knew how to cope with new challenges.

Sela: When I went to do my PhD I was already very mature so I knew what to do and how to handle things as I have travelled back and forth from overseas countries.

Siaosi: Personally, I think I was given the opportunity and chance to do my postgrad studies at my right age. I think I was at a mature age when I went to do my further studies. This was reflected in the fact I was able to budget time and money well, and deal with alcohol better than the first time I went for further studies overseas.

Feeling that they were not alone in coping with their studies was an important experience. Half of the scholars expressed the view that they had supportive faculty who were always there when needed.

Mele: I had good friends that helped and helpful professors were there all the time. Also working with people of the same belief made my staying not so bad.

However, Mele's comment also raises the positive benefit of having friends of the same beliefs and values in making it possible to cope with the challenges. This networking provided both academic and social help. This made them feel that they were a part of a learning community of international students, thus helping them succeed in their studies. Siaosi described a particularly successful experience.

Siaosi: In the Faculty of Education, there is special help provided for international students. Through this network, we were able to come together as a big family and share ideas, cultural values, food at times, and even share ideas pertaining to our individual studies. Through this network also, we were able to enhance our sense of creativity through learning from others' ideas, not only in a Pacific level but also in terms of international, as there were other students in the group from different parts of the world. We were also well-governed by a dedicated and committed lecturer who was willing to assist us closely. Therefore, through this kind of network, I was able to

concentrate on my studies, giving less time for homesick and cultural shock.

Tonga is a religious country and all the scholars asserted that the one major thing which helped them through challenges during their studies was praying. They had developed their own pattern and ways of doing things but having faith and praying was a shared value and social practice that provided them with a beneficial structure and support. It helped each one of them to cope with the challenges. This belief can be seen in the following.

Sela: Pray as usual. Some things are out of our control and all you can do is pray. It always works to pray for comfort and peace.

Lu'isa: When I studied I had my own pattern and I like to sleep early and wake up early and that's when I am good at studying. Of course, praying and faith in the Lord was first. It made everything possible.

The scholars in this study had already experienced overseas university life. They expected similar experiences to these previous studies but they felt they were now wiser and older and, therefore, more able to make better choices in this new experience. They knew obstacles were inevitable and could clearly articulate some of these.

4.4 Aspirations on returning as a qualified postgraduate scholar

4.4.1 Anticipated benefits

As the scholars prepared to return to Tonga after their academic studies, they anticipated benefits. They felt they had acquired new knowledge and skills and enthusiastically anticipated contributing to the development of Tonga. They anticipated both professional and personal benefits following their return to their home country with their newly acquired postgraduate or higher qualifications.

All the scholars reported experiencing excitement as they looked to their return. They believed that their new knowledge and skills would make them feel more confident in doing their jobs and this would raise their performances in the workplace. Finau and Sela portrayed this belief.

Finau: It was exciting when I thought of and anticipated having to contribute to the development and was looking at non-government or government job vacancies. That way I would be helping and contributing to the development of Tonga.

Sela: I just wanted to give service to the people of Tonga and help any way I can. I think that that's the most important thing for me is to give and help as much as I can and whatever I gain from that is enough for me.

They also anticipated personal benefits when they returned with higher qualifications. Fourteen scholars stated it would be easier to find a job, whether in the government or non-government departments. They also anticipated promotions and salary increases which would be beneficial for their families. Nesi's and Sifa's comments illustrate their personal aspirations.

Nesi: I anticipated that I would be getting a job easily. I anticipated increases in salary and also promotion by which I can now provide more for my family.

Sifa: I anticipated to get a better job, better salary and better community life.

Tevita explained how he believed his new qualification would increase his chances of securing a job. Also he expressed the view that it did not matter whether the qualification fitted or not with the new job; what mattered was that he had a higher qualification.

Tevita: I anticipated promotion and in Tonga the degree it doesn't matter if it relates to your job or not, the degree speaks for itself.

It was also evident that the majority of the scholars anticipated that they would receive increased respect and trust from their local community and the professional community as a result of having successfully completed a new academic qualification. The level of expectation upon them would be higher than before. Siaosi's comment expresses this.

Siaosi: Higher expectations would be placed on me. I anticipated that I would gain more trust and respect from people from the community and within my professional community

The scholars clearly wished to utilise their new-found knowledge and skills and felt more confident to meet the challenges in the workplace. They also anticipated

respect, trust and greater expectations from the local community and the professional community.

4.4.2 Anticipated obstacles

Even though they were returning to a familiar context, these scholars stated they anticipated obstacles in the workplace that would affect their level of performance. Because they had experienced these working contexts before, the assumption was that they would be returning to the same working contexts. The scholars felt that they had acquired new knowledge and skills which had transformed and changed their habits of mind and perspective.

All of the participants expressed a common concern as to whether their old or new workplace would welcome them and their new knowledge and skills. There were existing cultures in their previous workplaces and the scholars anticipated that there had been no change in their absence. Therefore they were nervous that their new knowledge and skills would not fit easily into the existing culture. The following demonstrate such anticipations.

Peni: I also anticipated the kind of culture existing in the system because I have worked in the system before. I was not too excited about it.

Siaosi: I was kind of nervous, whether the workplace would receive me with open arms or not and what kind of job I would be given when I returned.

The scholars anticipated obstacles when they returned to their communities. Four of the scholars raised the belief that trying to negotiate with older existing members of the community and professional community would be challenging. In Tonga respect for older members of the community is an important cultural value. It is considered disrespectful for younger members to say or do anything against the older members of the community. Therefore, some scholars were aware that proposals for change coming from younger scholars would not be taken seriously. Sulia explains this belief.

Sulia: In our church community and from experience, a lot of the decision makers are oldies and we understand the oldies they don't accept changes. So, I knew it would be hard to go back and be part of that community where my opinions would not be valued because I am younger.

Four of the scholars who took their families with them expressed their excitement about returning to Tonga. However, the thought of no longer having all the overseas opportunities available to their family members was daunting. Peni's quote represents this concern.

Peni: I anticipated that life for me and my little family would not be the same. By saying this, I mean everything that we had and almost luxurious life would be gone. Also education for my children and good paid job for my wife.

Despite their excitement about returning with a higher qualification, the scholars felt that the existing systems and workplace cultures would be their main obstacles as they would not know how they would be received with their new knowledge and skills. They were also concerned that when they returned to the community changes, especially proposed by younger more highly qualified scholars, would be resisted. Scholars also anticipated that opportunities, such as better education for their children and well paid jobs, which were available to them overseas, would no longer be available when they returned to Tonga.

4.5 Lived experiences as a returned qualified postgraduate scholar

4.5.1 The reception of returned scholars

As the scholars initially entered the workplace, they experienced different types of reception and different levels of support. Six of the scholars, initially felt that they had been assigned to serve in positions that had very little to do with their newly acquired knowledge and skills. Luana's comment illustrates this.

Luana: I was assigned to a different field and I am doing totally different tasks that my knowledge and skills do not match.

They also talked about the fact that they sometimes experienced resentment from others. Sela explained.

Sela: I knew that the existing employees didn't like it and I agree with them and I don't blame them because I am from a totally different background and looking after areas for which I had no knowledge of the content. I knew they didn't want me here and they didn't know I didn't even want to be here.

Some of the scholars experienced a more openly supportive response from their colleagues. However, they did feel the level of support provided to carry out their individual roles was lacking because it was more social than professional in nature. Peni's and Katalina's comments demonstrate this.

Peni: Despite their good reception with the smiles and good behaviors towards me, I felt that I was not fully received well with regards to the level of support provided. So I sometimes question whether my knowledge and skills are received as well.

Katalina: How does one judge the reception, if it's judged by smiling faces I'd say I am well received but if it's judged by the amount of support you have I would say, it's not.

Salesi explained that he felt the reception and the support given to him was indifferent. This was because the nature of his previous job, not his new status as a returning scholar, affected his reception at the new workplace.

Salesi: In a way it was sort of a smooth transition and the reception from some of the staff when I came back was a bit different. This is because they still had that reservation of not opening up to me because of what I was prior to this job. I was a threat to my senior workers.

In this section, the data shows that the scholars had different experiences returning to the workplace and workforce. Some scholars were received positively and some were not. The few who were given support described different views. Provision of proper support would have allowed the returning scholars to better utilise their new knowledge and, thus, contribute to the development of their organisations. Then the scholars would have felt that they truly belonged to the organisation and could play an important part in the workplace. They would have felt useful and that their time spent in additional studies was worthwhile.

4.5.2 Ways scholars secure jobs

This section discusses how well the jobs gained by the scholars on their return to Tonga afforded an opportunity for them to use their newly acquired knowledge and skills. The data shows that the returned scholars were either offered or assigned jobs or they secured their jobs through application.

Three of the scholars working for non-government organisations were offered their jobs. The assumption was that these employers might have heard about the

scholars' return and felt that their new knowledge and skills were well suited for the jobs they offered. Sulia explained that she did not apply for her job but rather she was offered it.

Sulia: I didn't apply for this job, Mrs 'Uvea hand-picked me. I didn't apply. They called me in and offered me the job.

Salesi stated that he secured his job through who he knew. His PhD, and the network he had, made it easier and possible for him to get his job.

Salesi: When this job came up, it wasn't through advertising but it was who I knew at the time. I was told of this vacant position, and with my PhD it was easy to get the job.

Four of the scholars who were working for non-government organisations were assigned their new job. They explained that they had no choice but to accept their assignments. These comments illustrate this situation.

Sela: I was assigned to do this job, so hesitantly I came because this is what I was assigned to do.

Lu'isa: We are assigned, we don't apply, so you just offer your services and they will tell you where to go. It's a calling and you have to be ready to accept it.

Siua explained that he applied for his job and was successful. However, when he went to begin work he was given a different job. Although he was not satisfied with his situation, it was a paid job that could provide for his family.

Siua: I applied for a different job position and they called and said, you are hired but do you mind working in another area. I was not totally satisfied but I had to take it so I can provide for my family.

Scholars who were working for government organisations acknowledged similar experiences to those of the non-government employed scholars. They all, however, applied for their jobs. Some applied and secured their jobs prior to their studies. Siaosi's comment illustrates this process.

Siaosi: I was recruited at the Kingdom Institute, one of the tertiary level institutions in Tonga. After my studies I went back in October 2010 and resumed straight away.

The remaining scholars secured their jobs through application after completing their studies. This is because some scholars had had to give up their jobs in order to travel overseas to complete their studies. Five of the scholars working for the government departments successfully applied for jobs where they knew they could utilise their knowledge and skills. However, when they commenced work they were asked to perform a different job. Peni's comment illustrates this.

Peni: I applied for a position applicable to my knowledge but when I got there they gave me a different one which has to do with policy.

The processes of how these scholars secured their jobs are important because they illustrate the varying degrees of acknowledgement and acceptance within the Tongan workplace environment of what potential benefits these returning scholars possess. However, it is more important to investigate how their new knowledge and skills were actually utilised. Some felt they had no other option but to accept their jobs. Perhaps some of their career anticipations were not being met in their current jobs and workplaces.

4.5.3 Scholars' contributions to their workplaces.

Scholars returned to Tonga from their studies purposely to use their new knowledge in their workplaces. Generally, the scholars found their new knowledge and skills to be useful in contributing to the development of their organisations. Indeed, seven of the scholars specifically expressed how both their new skills and knowledge contributed to the development of their organisations. For example, Sela explained that her new knowledge and skills helped her ensure the quality of the school programme she was managing.

Sela: I have contributed my skills and knowledge to this organisation in different ways. I have managed to manage my staff very well and continue to do so along, with the students. Also I have managed to continue and make sure that the quality of our program is recognized. Recently we have students of ours going on scholarship to overseas schools pursuing further education.

The knowledge and skills Sifa acquired from his studies enabled him to raise the number of students passing the Mathematics examination at the end of the year.

Sifa: I came at a time when the math department was not producing results. The national exam results declined and also there was no teacher for the upper level (form 7). However, as I worked with them, there was a sign of improvement in the exam results. Also the skills and pedagogy of these fellow hard working teachers. So I do believe that my skills fitted.

Sulia used her new knowledge and skills to mentor and train small business owners. In this way, she was able to help them receive their business license.

Sulia: I trained them how to create business plans, also mentoring some of the women groups and their business ideas. Also follow-up their progress of production. I did my best and they informed me that they got their business license.

Salesi described the success he achieved by being able to apply his newly acquired knowledge and skills to create an educational team within his department to teach the public about parliament. This was knowledge he gained from his studies that he thought would benefit Tonga.

Salesi: Starting this year, I put up an education team. Since we are moving towards a more democratic form of government of the people for the people, I took parliament outside to the community. This was done because I believe the public would be aware of the purpose and what is going on in their government.

More than half of the scholars explained that their generic skills contributed to the quality, recognition and productive results of the programmes they delivered in their workplaces. Siua explained this in the following way.

Siua: They love having me there but mainly for the skills rather than the knowledge that I've acquired.

Some scholars found that their new knowledge and skills had served them well in their working context by enabling them to make better changes to the organisations. However, on the other hand, for some scholars their newly gained skills were far more generic than they had anticipated as these had helped them in all aspects of their jobs, whether their field of study fitted their allocated jobs or not. Knowledge had not been utilised to its full capacity.

4.5.4 Contexts affording knowledge and skills utilisation.

Eight of the scholars felt their new skills and knowledge fitted with their jobs. They applied their new knowledge and skills in ways they saw fit and this had a positive impact on their organisations. They saw beneficial results from their actions and this made them feel happy in their workplaces. The following statements illustrate this.

Lu'isa: This is a mission school and of course both my doctorates are applicable and helpful to my work. I am able to use principles of faith in disciplining the staff and students. I am able to use the models in education to get work done in the way it should be done.

Siaosi: I felt that my existing knowledge and skills in the field were upgraded to the level to which I was able to train teacher trainees. Also with my previous knowledge and skills plus my knowledge and skills from the studies, I can confidently say that I was prepared for my job. I can slowly see good results and am hoping for more in the future.

Four of the scholars adapted to the working environment and learnt on the job, despite the fact they had no knowledge or experience in the fields they were working in. Sela expressed her view that she had found a way to relate her knowledge and skills to her job, despite the fact that it had nothing to do with her field of expertise.

Sela: I found that my knowledge and skills were most useful in whatever area I could relate to it. Even in the most unthinkable situation, like doing business and IT, which I had not done before.

Because they were assigned to jobs inconsistent with their new knowledge and skills, these scholars had to carefully adapt this particular knowledge and skills to what they were learning about in their new job. In this way, they were able to more readily perform the tasks given to them, regardless of the demands. Hence, despite not working in the right area for their special expertise, their newly acquired skills and knowledge were still useful in the new workplace. Sulia and Tevita explained how their acquired skills had helped them immensely in their jobs. Even though they each worked in a different field from their area of expertise, they enjoyed their jobs because they had adapted to them.

Sulia: As the researcher in this department, I use my statistics skills for analysing data. I also use qualitative and quantitative methods of collecting and analysing data and also the interview skills. I feel that I can use my skills and some knowledge far better in this job than my previous job. I am happy in this job.

Tevita: In studying pure Mathematics it is very abstract so it develops very good analytical thinking. So in this type of job that I am doing there is a lot of analytical skills needed. Even though it has nothing to do with Maths the skills I have acquired from studying Maths I use here. I am enjoying my job though.

Peni described that throughout his course of study he acquired study skills that helped him accomplish his goals. He desired the same skills for his students to maximise their skills and knowledge in school.

Peni: I do not just want my students to pass with very good grades but also to acquire the skills that I acquired from my studies where I make things interesting to understand and so that they remember it longer. Another helpful experience from my studies that I am trying to establish with my students is the eagerness to research.

The scholars who were teachers explained that, with their new skills, they were able to better understand and appreciate the nature of the students they worked with. Their skills prepared and equipped them to meet the demands of the workplace and also the needs of their students. Provision of these skills and knowledge ensured more confidence in the teaching of the subject content. Finau and Siasosi's comments demonstrated this.

Finau: My postgraduate study is very helpful in my current workplace in terms of Pacific cultures and understanding them. I have learnt to contextualise and I've learnt to see things in a more interdisciplinary way. I am able to understand students and the culture, thus helping me be an effective teacher

Siasosi: Teaching at this level can be quite demanding yet I was fully equipped with necessary skills and knowledge required for such a workplace. These skills and knowledge I have acquired from the further studies I undertook. I am more confident in teaching the content now than before.

In summary, the data shows that some scholars stated that their workplace fitted well with their new knowledge and skills. Some scholars felt that despite the fact that their new knowledge and skills did not specifically align with the new job,

they learnt to adapt them so as to achieve beneficial outcomes. However some scholars explained that their workplace afforded the application of their new skills, only, and not their new knowledge. By contrast, the scholars who were school administrators and teachers expressed how suitable their skills and knowledge were to their current jobs.

4.5.5 Contexts constraining knowledge and skills utilisation

Scholars also had constraining experiences in the workplaces. The data showed that while the new skills were frequently used, it was not the same for the new knowledge. Some job contexts did not support the utilisation of their new knowledge because the roles or positions they were offered did not allow their new-found knowledge to be practised.

Half of the scholars stated their concerns and frustrations about the way their workplace had managed their new appointment. They felt that their administrators lacked professional leadership skills. Salesi explained that his department lacked proper communication channels. The new knowledge and skills he had gained from his experience overseas made him realise this.

Salesi: Our department lack leadership skills. To me it wasn't really a workplace. There was no proper channel of communication.

Also Siaso expressed a similar view that his department lacked effective communication between the workers and the administrators and added that this often resulted in poor rather than professional standards.

Siaso: Poor communication between administrators and teachers. This often reflects poor leadership quality in administrators, allowing teachers in some cases to get away with unprofessional behaviours and attitudes, particularly regarding teachers' prime roles of preparing lessons and trying to set good examples to adult students. Also teachers who lack professional qualities at times had to be supervised.

Moreover, Sifa presented a perspective that his administrators lacked leadership skills, which meant that what they planned for both the staff and students was often unsuccessful.

Sifa: I think the main constraint that I was facing within my workplace was the lack of leadership skills in our school

administrators. They always planned good things for us as teachers and also for our students, but they always failed to put them into action.

Finau suggested that the administrators at her workplace were not effective either, and that the principals and deputy principals needed specific professional training in order to become more attuned to today's educational theories.

Finau: So one of the constraining experiences is having to deal with administrators who are not so effective. Not only that, leadership skills that need to be refreshed. I mean principals and deputy principals they need to move with the current tide.

Together, this data describes how many of the scholars felt that the performance limitations of their workplace administrators was not only a constraining influence on their reintroduction into the Tongan workforce but also that this contributed to the poor level of performance and outcomes in their workplaces.

Five scholars also believed that the existing workplace culture was one of the main constraining factors on their reintroduction into the Tongan workforce. Peni and Katalina expressed that the extremely complicated nature of the existing workplace cultures made it a difficult working environment. In their view, the system's hierarchical structure and a sense of suspicion of them from their colleagues contributed to the fact that their opinions and views were not valued.

Peni: The next challenge is when cultures in the workplace influenced you, changed you and result in dragging you down. For example, seniority and hierarchical structures in the workplace. More experienced teachers may have been teaching for more years than you but you have the qualification so when you come back with a higher degree, you are a threat. So they don't listen or value your contributions

Katalina: It is actually a lot of things, I guess this is to do with the system, the education system and how it is run. Because the way it's organized is hierarchical and the power rest a lot elsewhere and not in here. We really don't have any voice when it comes to some decision making.

Some returned scholars also felt that the impact of seniority in their workplace further limited the utilisation of their new knowledge. Finau shared that being a returned qualified scholar did not really matter when it came to seniority and age

difference. Employees who had been working for many years were taken more seriously than the newly returned scholars.

Finau: Another factor is also age and seniority. For example, you may return as a returning scholar but there employees that have worked there and are more experienced than you. You might bring in your fresh conceptions or ideas but it will not be taken as a priority or taken seriously because there is seniority there.

This shows that, as the returned scholars tried to adjust to their new learning and working contexts, they realised that their contributions would be more effective if certain things changed within their workplace. The new knowledge that they possessed not only helped the scholars to realise that things could be better but also to see how they could improve the situation if only they were given the chance.

It was evident also in the explanations of six of the scholars that changing the existing workplace was almost impossible. Peni expressed his view that the workplace culture was overbearing.

Peni: However, leadership may be overtaken by the workplace culture and it becomes overbearing. And to change those cultures by yourself is impossible.

Salesi suggested that trying to change the existing workplace culture was hard. The existing employees reacted negatively when new changes were proposed because they were so used to the old ways of doing things.

Salesi: I think it is hard to change this workplace culture. Because I am working with people that have been working there for over 20 years. They are so used to their own culture of doing things and when I try put in place something that I think would be better and useful, they react negatively and say that's not how it is done.

‘Ofa stated that it was difficult to create awareness that education and learning was the responsibility of both the teachers and the students and not just the teachers. This was something he had come to appreciate as a result of his study.

‘Ofa: So this is a constraining experience and I am trying to create awareness among students by enlarging the idea that education is theirs not solely the teachers. It is difficult to break that culture of thinking within the teachers and students too.

There seemed to be a difference between the responses from scholars working for non-government departments and scholars working for government departments when they expressed their views on the effects that the Tongan culture had on the workplace culture. This was confirmed in the focus group interviews. Seven of the non-government scholars and five of the government scholars argued that the Tongan culture (e.g. respect) had been abused, or at least ignored, in the workplace.

Tongan cultural values include faka'apa'apa (respect). It is highly imperative that young people show a great deal of respect for older people. This is expected to be practised in the workplace as well. Many of the scholars felt that some senior staff and managers took advantage of this and misused it in the workplace, For example, some scholars expressed the views that the junior staff had been overworked by the senior staff but the junior staff felt they could not challenge this practice while, at the same time, showing the expected level of faka'apa'apa (respect). They felt that senior workers should not take advantage of the junior staff but felt powerless to oppose this practice. This understanding had come to be realised by the scholars as a result of their study and experience abroad.

Furthermore, Nesi explained how her workplace was dominated by seniority. Even though proper channels to be followed were established, the senior staff and those in the high management positions would disregard these so as to get what they wanted with no questions being asked.

Nesi: The culture in our workplace is so strong with seniority. Whoever is higher, you have to listen and respect them. We do have our policies to follow. For example, requesting for money or funds from our ministry will have to go through channels to approve. But whenever the minister or CEO or senior staff need money for whatever function, they tell us how much they need and when it is needed and we don't question and it doesn't go through the right channels but we have to do it. The junior staff, just do it. Sometimes I don't think it is respect, and sometimes I think it is together with fear and I felt sorry for the junior staff.

It was with good intentions that the scholars wanted to make changes to their workplace cultures. With their new knowledge and skills transforming them into a far more expert and productive worker, they believed they could produce better results and outcomes if given the opportunities.

Tevita believed that there needs to be a balance between workplace demands and the influence of Tongan culture in the workplace. In his opinion this would create improvement in the performance and results of his workplace.

Tevita: If I have to be critical, there are Tongan cultures that we can try to change. We as Tongans like to keep quiet and don't question because it is disrespectful. We have cultural values that are good but they can be criticised. There needs to be a compromise between the system demands and the Tongan culture. I believe that if we go by the system alone, work will be far better than what it is right now. But that shows the influences of culture.

The remaining scholars believed that having workplace cultures that worked positively in conjunction with Tongan cultural values is a good thing. With great passion, two of the scholars from non-government departments and four from government departments said these Tongan cultural values kept them safe. These cultural values were believed to be what made Tonga unique and different from anywhere else in the world.

This view is illustrated where Mele explained that she was expected to respect the workplace cultures, regardless of other considerations. She stated that adapting to the workplace culture made her a part of the workplace. That meant that as employees, they had a responsibility to each other and the organisation even outside of the workplace. She believed that because of the communal way of living in Tonga, where each one is accountable for the other (tauhi vaa) building a positive relationship with each other automatically becomes an essential and beneficial part of the workplace.

Mele: I would expect to respect the system they put in certain places, instead of bypassing all the systems. Adapting to the workplace culture makes you fit it, especially for work purposes. In the natural Tongan, you will put your responsibilities first. Like if you have a funeral, birthday or wedding you will take the day off to be there and your workmates understand and they will be there for you as well. It's unique because you won't find that anywhere in the world. It is almost like a communal way of living here in Tonga, ko e tauhi va (nurturing ties). Maybe it is a good thing.

Thus, on the one hand, some scholars felt that as they practised the workplace cultures in conjunction with the Tongan cultural values somehow

it supported the organisation to work well. On the other hand, their knowledge and skills were being compromised to fit into the workplace cultures. Hence some felt out of place and some felt that they did fit in well.

The data suggests that four of the participants felt burdened and frustrated because their job contexts did not allow their new knowledge and skills to be utilised. As a result, some felt the need to change their career path or move to a different workplace, and some were considering moving to another country so they could use their knowledge to its full potential. These scholars felt passionate about their respective field of expertise and wanted to use this for good, which had not eventuated as yet. This had left them feeling despondent, frustrated, and burdened with doubts about their future. They felt their extra study was perhaps just a waste of time and effort. The following views are demonstrations of these feelings.

Siua: Some skills I can use and have contributed mainly in small ways, but I am limited as to what I can do. Most of the stuff I learned was more for the managerial position but I don't work at that capacity. So much so that I felt the need to quit and find something else and change career so I can exploit my skills and knowledge that I have acquired.

Sulia: I decided to move out so that I could pursue developing my knowledge and skills that I've gained to date but not restricted to where I was.

Luana: I feel that my skills and knowledge have not been fully utilised and the work here is not challenging anymore. I am thinking of going for further studies and moving somewhere else. Of course I learnt new things but I would have loved to work somewhere that best fits my qualification. If I were to be put in the right job, I could use more of my skills and knowledge and probably achieve better results.

During the focus group interviews, the scholars confirmed the importance of reintegrating qualified scholars into the appropriate positions in a way that would allow their new knowledge and skills to be utilised. They felt that they had been given the chance to further develop their knowledge and skills with the purpose of developing not only themselves but also others, their organisation and their country and so they should be encouraged and helped to achieve this on their return. However, they continued to explain that it is common in Tonga to appoint

qualified scholars to positions that restrict them from using their new knowledge and skills. These are examples of such thoughts.

Peni: I felt burdened there because it wasn't my field of studies and I knew I would not do a great job so I quit.

Nesi explained the importance of being integrated into the right field of work. She was unhappy where she worked because she worked in a different area from her area of expertise. But she still hoped to secure a suitable position within the department so that she could practise and apply the knowledge and skills that she had acquired from her study.

Nesi: It is important, that you do the right job with regards to your field of study. At the moment I am doing something I am not happy with. They know I don't like it, but no one else can do it. I am hoping I get a new job in the department. It's a human resource, management and administration position and that is what I love to do. This way, I can exercise what I put my time and effort to study, otherwise I will be bored.

Siuva shared that even though he had learnt new things in his new job, he would rather have been given those tasks that he saw other people doing, which he felt were more suited to him and his new knowledge. He felt that he had gone off to study and returned with great enthusiasm to do something applicable to his area of enhanced expertise but he was given something totally different which made him feel that the outcomes from his study were being wasted.

Siuva: I have learned on the job and I am grateful but at times when I don't have anything to do and I see other people doing this and that on the job I would have loved to do, I say to myself why can't I do that. I have been waiting and studying my whole academic life to do something with my knowledge and yet doing something different. It's like I am trained to be a rugby player and ended up playing netball.

Mele described how it would be enjoyable to work in the right position that fitted her area of increased expertise because she could put into practise the theory she had learnt. She also explained how she believed that the system had placed scholars in unsuitable positions and hired palangis (white people) and paid them extensive amounts of money for jobs that returned scholars could have done as well and for less cost.

Mele: Being integrated to the right position and jobs is more enjoyable because what you've studied in theory can be practised in the workplace first hand. You are also able to contribute more and give back more to the workplace. The system places us in the wrong job and brings the palangi in and tells them to do the right job for you. They pay international consultants ten times more to do jobs that we local experts can do. It is ridiculous.

In summary, some scholars felt that their knowledge and skills fitted well with the jobs they gained on their return to Tonga while others felt they were able only to only use their new skills, because these were far more generically applicable than their new knowledge was. Hence, this variable has impacted on the attitudes and workplace performances of the scholars. Some have learnt to adapt and accepted the challenges of the new jobs, despite the unsuitability to their field of expertise, while others were still struggling to adapt and, therefore, were feeling burdened and frustrated to the point of seeking work elsewhere even if this meant leaving Tonga.

The key finding here for these scholars is the importance of being provided with positions that are more suitable to their enhanced qualifications. The organisations would benefit greatly from their increased level of performances if the returned scholars were able to apply and implement their new knowledge and skills. As a result, more of the scholars would enjoy their work and would wish to remain in their employment rather than feeling so burdened and frustrated that they are wanting to leave the workplace or even the country.

4.5.6 Strategies for coping with challenges in the workplace

On returning to Tonga, almost all of the scholars struggled with entering their workplace contexts, even if these were familiar to them. Even though some scholars learnt to adapt, and others to strategise, so as to fit into their environment and to complete the tasks they were given, this was still a struggle. However, they manipulated their strategies around grasping opportunities to make small improvements that would benefit them, their workplace and their co-workers. Lu'isa explained that she had to create her own resources and adjust her way of thinking to how things were done in Tonga.

Lu'isa: You have to create your own resources and be thoughtful here. If you come back and expect things to happen the way you were taught at the university, you would get frustrated so might as well leave Tonga and work somewhere else.

Salesi stated his way of coping was by delegating tasks to his staff. In return his staff felt more a part of the workplace and this improved their work.

Salesi: I make my staff feel that they belong here, like delegation of tasks to them. Like, I do the planning and then I delegate to the staff and they do the task.

Because all of the scholars were raised in Tonga, Christianity is a major part of their lives. They all expressed comfort knowing that through their faith and belief in God, they had been able to cope with the challenges at the workplace. Sela's comment represents this view.

Sela: My faith in God and praying have helped me a lot in my job. I have learnt to accept whatever is given. I know that I have been put here at my job for a reason.

Another way they used to cope with the challenges in the workplace was accepting what was there. Despite their dissatisfaction with what was happening to them, more than half of the scholars realised that the only solution for them was to alter their own perspectives and to try to adapt to the environment, whether it fitted their knowledge and skills or not. As Sifa stated,

Sifa: From my experience, most of these obstacles I had no solutions for but to force myself to stand and face them.

Some scholars also felt that it was mandatory to switch their habits of mind and their perspectives to accept the situation. Katalina expresses her view that she believed that being a teacher was her calling and she accepted it. She had to focus and use what was available and develop her future from there.

Katalina: Most of us believe that this is our calling and this is our lives. You do not concentrate on what's not there you focus on what's there and you build up from there. You make do and try all that you can to improve, no matter the situations.

Siaosi explained that it was difficult entering the new context but he had to switch his ways of thinking from secondary to tertiary level teaching and, thereby, be able to adjust and overcome this challenge.

Siaosi: I was recruited to a new workplace and to overcome the challenges of adjusting to the new context, I was able to switch mind-set in no time from secondary schools level to tertiary level hence adjusted to the new working environment. Though it was hard at first, I managed to get to the end successfully.

Some scholars explained that their respective departments provided some support from overseas sources. Nesi explained that experts from New Zealand were there to train them in how to perform certain tasks. This support had provided them with guidance in their workplace.

Nesi: Currently we have experts from New Zealand doing trainings and helping us a lot, like with the database and how to write up reports and to do surveys. They always come and provide guidance to what we are doing here.

Other scholars expressed their view that experienced and considerate working colleagues and friends had helped and supported them. This enabled these scholars to become familiar with the new workplace context more quickly and more ably. Siaosi's comment explains this.

Siaosi: Back at work, I had great work mates, who were very experienced in the field, had given great support and help academically, professionally and socially. These kinds of help were of crucial importance, especially as I was new in the workplace.

In summary, the scholars had experienced challenges in the workplace. However, they had developed ways that helped them to cope with these challenges in their respective workplaces. Some of these scholars explained that their workplace had provided help and support from overseas sources that benefited them as workers and the development of their organisations. Some also explained that supportive workplace colleagues had provided support that helped them to become familiar and compliant with their new workplace context.

4.6 Community reactions to scholars' return

4.6.1 The positive reactions

More than half of the scholars stated that returning to their local community had been a positive experience because there was a high level of respect and acceptance, and they felt useful in many ways. These experiences were different to those associated with their return from previous overseas study. This time, the local community and professional communities recognised them more and they felt needed more too. Lu'isa explains this.

Lu'isa: I think people were excited about my return. They respected me and had used me a lot for a variety of things academically and outside of context.

In addition, Luana explained that she felt respected by her professional community and community as well. Also returning with her Masters degree she knew that her opinions were more valuable now in the community meetings than they were before.

Luana: It has been positive and so far I have not seen negative responses. They respected and expected me to do more now than before. I feel respected by my professional community, by family and friends. My opinions are valued when we have community meetings. This I know because before I had my Masters degree, no one really cared what my opinions were on any matter.

Salesi stated that, despite his lack of association with the community, he felt they had great respect for him now that he has a higher qualification.

Salesi: I have been well supported and received in my professional communities. Even though I don't associate closely with my community, I feel that they have great respect for me because I have a higher qualification now.

Some of the members of the local community felt excited for the returning of the scholars. The assumption was that scholars would contribute to the development of the community by using their knowledge and skills.

At the end of every academic year of secondary schooling, the senior classes have external examinations. These examinations determine whether the student continues to the next level of schooling, or enters university, the following year.

Because these examinations are very important in Tonga, more than half of the scholars indicated that they had commenced conducting night classes in the community to help the local senior secondary students to better prepare for their external examinations. The following comments demonstrate this commitment.

Sulia: I conducted several night classes for the kids at my place. It is usually around September, October and November. The purpose was to prepare these students for their exams.

Katalina: We have started our night classes with the students. These extra class sessions are purposely held to help these students to catch up with their academic studies.

‘Ofa: Night classes will be starting around August until external exams are over. I travel around and between villages helping students prepare for the examinations.

Almost all of the scholars felt useful to their community by being involved with translating and writing documents, filling out applications, and generally being of service to others with English language-related tasks. Mele and ‘Ofa explain this.

Mele: Six people have approached me that they have been applying for a job and they have been asking me for my opinion on jobs. They have asked me to help them with their CVs and stuff as well. I am quite happy to share mine. I think my skills and knowledge in that perspective have helped them.

‘Ofa: Students, teachers, community ask to write this, analyse this and do this.

On the whole, these scholars enjoyed the positive responses from other members of their respective professional communities and the communities in these important but more generic tasks. The data shows that they were welcomed and received very well. Their unique perspective and practical expertise were valued more and taken seriously. As a result they felt their new skills had been of good use in different ways and not limited to their field of expertise.

4.6.2 The mixed feelings

Some of the scholars felt that the reception and support from their local community was more ambiguous.

Four of the scholars had experienced smiles and kind gestures from members of their professional community and local community but anything more explicit in

the way of support was lacking. For other scholars, the reaction to their return to their local community varied markedly, depending on the relationship or status of the other person. For example, 'Ofa described how his community accepted him after having mixed feelings about his return. Members of the community questioned his return. However his family celebrated his return and that neutralised his mixed feelings. He was then more accepted as a member of the local community.

'Ofa: With my community it was a mixed feeling. The responses and the reactions to my returned were not expected. There were lots of questions asked. But then the whole thing sort of died down, life return to normal. By the same token the news of my academic studies had already reached the town. That sort of helped calm everybody down. Not long after I returned I was looked upon as one of them and not just someone with higher qualification. So it was a mixed bag at first I think. My clan well received me but others were sort of quietly asking why he is back? But when they saw my family almost celebrating the fact that I returned then it was ok.

Peni felt that some people accepted him but people with power in the local community appeared threatened by his return and so did not accept him.

Peni: It felt funny because some people accepted me and some showed ambiguous expressions. People with power in the community but with no qualification were threatened by my presence therefore they did not really accept me and my opinions. This is maybe because they thought I would take their positions and power in the community and over the people.

Because each local community had some members who felt personally threatened or insecure in the presence of a returning scholar, those returning invariably dealt with people who tended to ignore their opinions about most things. This was offputting and made the scholars question their reception and acceptance in the communities. Thus, it took a considerable amount of time before the returning scholars truly felt that the community had accepted them and was willing to provide the level of support they required.

4.6.3 The negative reactions

Within the wide diversity of the Tongan local community the *wiser people* in the community are considered to be the more experienced and mature aged persons. More than half of the scholars expressed their feeling of distress when they dealt

with these wiser people in the community. It would seem that the wiser people had a hard time accepting the possibility that great ideas could come from younger people such as the returning scholars. Therefore, in some instances the scholars felt their opinions were worthless at community meetings. The following illustrate such an experience.

Nesi: It is depressing when we have family or community meetings; we (younger people) speak our minds and ideas, the older generations think that we were (fiepoto) trying to be smarter than them. Therefore our views and opinions were not considered important. Older people thought that just because I have a masters doesn't mean that I can tell them what to do. It's hard sometimes to communicate with them and make them understand that it is not like that. I am just trying to help.

Sulia explains that the Tongan value of respecting your elders restricted her from providing her opinions and ideas on any matter. Her knowledge of how wiser members of the community would react to younger people's opinions prevented her from speaking at a community meeting.

Sulia: I felt restricted. I have noticed at our community when we have the fakakolo and fono, political issues were raised for discussion. Since I am younger and we practise the Tongan value of faka'apa'apa (respect) at our Tongan community so I was restricted from raising my opinions. I have also seen in my community if you are educated but you do not respect the elders they won't respect you back. When you oppose them in public they think you are fiepoto and they are easily offended.

Some scholars felt that the expectations from the members of their local community became overbearing at times. It is not uncommon for Tongan people to assume that scholars can do anything in any academic field. Siaosi described that his higher qualification had placed a lot of pressure on him from his local community. Their expectations were high and he felt he needed to live up to these. The Tongan community's view about being a knowledgeable person meant that he had to know everything, which he felt was a mockery at times.

Siaosi: They think you have higher qualification and you have gone through some difficult decisions so they place new big roles on you thinking you can handle it. The typical Tongan thinking. Very high expectations from home, guardians and community; as I returned with a higher qualification, it raised their bar of expectation. This gave me great pressure. Just

because I have gained a Master degree, they perceived me as Mr Know all, which I took as a mockery which associated with the Tongan notion of faka'aluma (a typical Tongan cultural norm) at times, yet some were of honourable intention. This placed a burden on one's shoulder, that one must live up to their expectation otherwise they feel they are being betrayed. Really, it can be hard at times, one must try to live a perfect life.

Similarly, Finau felt that the community's expectations became demanding and tiring at times.

Finau: The community sees you with a postgrad or masters so they quickly think and expect you can do anything and everything. Therefore, you might be doing other things other than your field of studies. It became very demanding and tiring too.

In such circumstances, the participants felt they were being unfairly pressured by these expectations and, as a result, they felt isolated from their community. They kept to themselves and their immediate family, therefore, never really getting the opportunity to use their skills and knowledge in any really constructive way to support their community. Such feelings are illustrated in the following comments.

Nesi: I don't really get involved in a lot of professional committees other than church and family. I feel that they expect a lot from me and some I know I cannot do.

Salesi: I have been slacking and not really much in association with the community. I think it's better this way, so that I don't mislead them and cannot live up to their expectations.

The scholars experienced positive, ambiguous and negative reactions from their respective communities. Hence, some felt useful and were delighted to help the community but even this, for some, had the potential to become overbearing where community expectations became far too demanding.

4.7 The expectations and beliefs about how to reintegrate postgraduate scholars better in the future

4.7.1 The expectations from the workplace

Because the scholars initially left Tonga with scholarships, the time of their return was well known by all who had worked with them prior to their departure. Therefore, there were levels of expectations for the scholars.

The data suggests that the scholars had similar experiences in their respective workplaces, regardless of the context. They all explained that there were so much expected of them because they were going to return with a higher qualification. The assumption was that a higher qualification automatically meant expert knowledge and, therefore, the person can do anything expertly. Peni explained that this was a misconception in his case as he only considered himself competent in his particular field of expertise.

Peni: Our administration and the system were aware that I have returned with two Master's so they expect me to know what to do and to do everything. Their expectations are very high but this is such a misconception. I am competent in my area of expertise, not everything.

Lu'isa described that her administration expects her to run a school because she had two doctorate degrees, and had experienced working at the Education office. She explained that she was expected to know exactly what to do in any given task.

Lu'isa: The administration expects me to know how to run a school since I was educated here, have two doctorates so they expect me to know. Also because I have been working at the Education office for 20 odd years and they assume I know. They expect to put me anywhere and I will know what to do.

Siaosi stated that his workplace expected a similar response from him where it was presumed he could do any task because he had obtained a Masters degree.

Siaosi: However, in certain workplaces, I should say, including my own, they assume that one can navigate easily after obtaining a Master's degree.

Another major expectation that five of the scholars had in common was the frequency of being transferred to different work sites by their employer. They expressed their dissatisfaction about being regularly transferred because it was presumed they could more easily adjust their work to the new site because of their enhanced qualifications. They stated that whenever their organisation decided to transfer them, whether to rural branches or to an outer island, they had no say in the matter and had to accept it. That meant that it did not matter if the scholar would felt comfortable about transferring or confident that their knowledge and skills would fit their next jobs, they just had to accept it. Katalina and 'Ofa explain this.

Katalina: With the Ministry of Education, there is an annual transfer and they tell you where to go. Most of us don't have any say whether the posts fitted our knowledge and skills. We had to accept it.

'Ofa: I suppose that they quietly planned to put me in this particular position on my return. It wasn't up to me where to go, I was told where to go, really.

Because their workplaces expected so much, some scholars felt pressured to the point of feeling felt overused and burdened. Siasosi's comment demonstrates this.

Siasosi: These expectations developed into stresses at times. They look up to you, just because you have now gained a Master's degree. So this placed a huge burden on my shoulders at times. Being overused is not something new in Tonga. I have been overused by the Ministry.

From the data, it was evident these scholars felt frustrated with all the expectations from their organisations. Some adapted and some were still struggling to do so. For some, these expectations became overbearing and so they felt burdened and overused in the workplace.

4.7.2 Expectations from the scholars.

All of the scholars stated that, while their organisations had expectations of them, they too had expectations of their workplaces. Regardless of whether they were returning to a once familiar context or to a totally new context, the scholars expected to be provided with an induction or orientation program. Such programs are especially designed to help workers retune or become familiar with the workplace context. This would also help the scholars train for their new jobs so as to improve their performance. Sela's and Katalina's comments illustrate this.

Sela: I could have been better inducted to this job. So I could have been better inducted so I could be better prepared at my job.

Katalina: We don't have trainings prior to taking this role. There is no proper induction program. But as a returning scholar I would have liked to be led by the hand sometimes, especially if it's a new post.

Scholars who worked in different areas to that of their particular expertise explained that they would expect to be trained so they could be far more familiar

with the new context. They believe they could have done a much better job if they had been trained for their jobs. Luana and Nesi explained this belief.

Luana: I could have had more training on what I do right now so that I could be familiar with the job. So with this job, I have not been formally trained, there has been talk about trainings but there has been none yet.

Nesi: With my workplace, seeing that I am doing a different job from my area of expertise, a proper training prior to taking this job would have been beneficial to my work.

Siaosi expected professional development. He also stated an option where he would become familiar with the new context by observing another teacher prior to his commencement in this new context.

Siaosi: I started at a new job in a new environment, I still needed a proper pre-professional development rather than throwing me right into the deep ocean and letting me swim on my own. If not, maybe a few days of attachment to one of the teachers, this should have allowed me appropriate time to absorb in relevant requirements of teaching in this level before I teach on my way. I may have the knowledge but doesn't necessarily mean I have the skills for the new job. I believe I should have been given pre-professional development.

Not the least of their expectations, the scholars expected to be reinstated to a suitable level in their organisation so that they would be more able to utilise their new knowledge and skills. Thirteen of the participants felt they would be more useful to the organisations if they had been reinstated at a more appropriate level in the organisation. Finau explains this.

Finau: If we were integrated into the right field and utilised properly, I know that our region would be competing with the first world countries.

Scholars expressed similar expectations of how the workplace should be allowing the development and utilisation of their new knowledge and skills. In the focus group interviews, the attending scholars confirmed that another way their new knowledge and skills could be better utilised was through the nature of the workplace and the existing employees. They stated that the workplaces should be open for learning and development. A workplace should allow the employees to use their new knowledge and skills but not be limited by these. It should also

create a positive environment amongst the co-workers, which will enhance the working relationships and increase everyone's performances. The following comments are illustrations of this view.

Sulia: For someone to reach to capacity or the climax, she should have an open space to develop rather than working in the workplace in which she has been restricted to what the boss or what the leader wants in her own context.

Luana: The positive working environment makes the workplace attractive and would make the workers feel happy to come to work every day.

They also believed that there should be approved standards or criteria in the workplace. They felt that if those were clear enough then there would be no questions regarding how workers secured their jobs. This would minimize confusion and concerns about favouritism. Mele describes this.

Mele: I believe that there should be a level of expectancy in the workplace. The standards need to be cut out straight. I think this would avoid any confusion as to why I got this job.

Siua stated that his workplace was not a free environment. He was not able to implement anything he thought would be good for the organisation because he did not have the authority.

Siua: A lot of stuff which I think managers should be doing would be good, but cannot be implemented because I don't have that kind of authority. Professionally it is not a free environment.

In summary, the scholars anticipated an induction and orientation program that would help them with aligning settling their knowledge and skills with those required by the new context. Such training programs would help them to retune and familiarise their knowledge and skills with what was required by the new context. In the absence of such training they had to struggle through and wished they could have been trained so they would spend less time struggling and more time making progress. They also expected to be reinstated at a better suited level and in a job that fitted their new knowledge and skills. This would help them to feel useful and confident in their jobs. The scholars also expected freedom for learning and working environment where they would grow and learn more.

4.7.3 For better re-integration in the future

Scholars had different experiences that benefitted both their workplaces and themselves. They had also experienced challenging times because they felt their knowledge and skills were not received and utilised well. They also felt that their re-integration could have been more effective. Therefore, they suggested ways they thought could have improved their re-integration and that of future returning scholars.

This was discussed and confirmed at the focus group interviews where all of the scholars suggested simple ways that could be considered in the process of re-integrating future returning scholars. Scholars from the non-government departments suggested that there should be a mandatory program where the returning scholars would present their thesis or the key learning from what they had acquired from their studies to possible employers and scholarship donors. They felt that through such a process they could sell their new knowledge and skills, which would increase the chances of securing suitable jobs and show the scholarship donors that their funds had not gone to waste. Siua explains this idea.

Siua: What I wish would have happened, is that there would be a place or a program where returned scholar's can show, teach or present what they've learnt or thesis to possible employers. I think this is one thing that a returned postgraduate scholar would like to share and put themselves out there.

Also, the focus group interviews discussed the belief that this public presentation of their knowledge and skills would show scholarship donors just how their funds can be put to best use rather than being left to the whim of an employer. Sulia and Siua explain this.

Sulia: We can propose a program where all the donors, (NZ Aid, Aus Aid, Chinese, Japanese, Tonga and others) and the organisations they worked before they went on scholarships gather and scholars present their thesis or what they have learnt to the donors. This way the donors can see how their scholars have done.

Siua: If there is a program that will allow this to happen, it would be great so the donors and the organisation know whether their money has gone into good use or to waste.

They also felt that having training programs for the returning scholars in various jobs would be beneficial both for them and for the organisations in which they were to be employed. Though they had new knowledge and skills, they still believed they needed help to adequately familiarise themselves with the context whether it was entirely new or one in which they had been previously employed. Through such training, they would be far more confident in their ability to perform better and feel welcomed ritually and professionally. These comments demonstrate this belief.

Sela: I think training is very important. It aims to familiarise people who had no trainings before and makes them feel comfortable with their new jobs.

Katalina: Trainings and workshops would be beneficial for the returning scholars. These trainings would be like leading them by the hands in the beginning to guide them where to go. Through this they would become experts and then they could carry on from there.

The last suggestion discussed by the scholars was that from those employed in the government departments who all felt that having a mentor would be ideal for the returning scholars. These mentors would be advisors who would help and guide them to the right places where they would find suitable jobs.

Tevita: Having a good mentor who would help me find the right place for my qualification would have been great. I had no one like that but it would have been great.

Mele: Getting mentored and being that individual driving force that makes you as an individual to go further than expected. It would be amazing to have that support for the returning scholars.

In summary, these scholars had returned from their studies and had worked for a short period of time. During this time, they had been through both positive and negative experiences with regards to all aspects pertaining to their new knowledge and skills utilisation. They took these experiences and analysed them so as to be able to suggest ways which could help minimize the negative experiences they had been through and, thereby, benefit future returning scholars.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter explained the learning journey that the postgraduate scholars went through as they moved from one context to another. It explored the anticipated beliefs they had about being a student. These involved anticipated both benefits and obstacles. They continued to explain their experiences when they became students and how they strategised to cope with the struggles. Upon returning, all postgraduate scholars had expectations of both anticipated benefits and obstacles that they would face when they returned to Tonga. This study also described the scholars' experiences in the workplace, particularly the utilisation of their new knowledge and skills, accompanied by their emotions. There were context that allowed the utilisation of their new knowledge and skills; however some were not fortunate enough to utilise their acquired knowledge and skills. Scholars reported their experiences with their community and how they were received and supported both directly and indirectly in relation to their knowledge and skills. Because these scholars experienced both struggles and benefits throughout their learning journey, they had expectations for both the workplace and the funding agencies, suggesting better re-integration of future returning scholars.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings that arose from the data collected during this study of the Tongan postgraduate scholars who accepted scholarships to study abroad and had returned to work for less than five years. The findings were enabled by the data collection methods of semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews. The key findings which emerged from the analysis of the data will be discussed under the headings of (a) the cultural knowledge and practices scholars use to respond to personal challenges, (b) the scholars' stable expectations, and (c) the utilisation of new found knowledge and skills.

5.2 The cultural knowledge and practices scholars use to respond to personal challenges

5.2.1. Influence of prayer

For those growing up as a Tongan, prayer is a significant part of one's family and cultural knowledge and practices. Prayer is taught to each child from a young age. This is a normal practice in the life of a Tongan because it is believed that prayers bring peace, comfort and guidance to the individual, and these qualities help to bring success and satisfaction in all their endeavours. Peace implies that the individual accepts not only all of their roles but also all of what is happening around them. Comfort is about seeing themselves as not being different to others and, thereby, being able to unite with others to overcome unusual or challenging situations. Also, it is believed that prayer to a spiritual being will provide guidance to the individual to strategise and adapt to the demands of any unexpected, unusual or unsettling context.

This study showed that some scholars searched for peace, comfort and guidance through prayer when they returned and struggled to re-adjust back into meaningful work in Tonga. The tasks given to them did not always fit their new knowledge and skills acquired from their study. Through prayer, they learnt to accept their new workplace assignments, to adapt and strategise their available knowledge and skills to the new demands, and to make progress, despite the presence of any unsuitable circumstances. Therefore praying helped the scholars

not only to overcome obstacles related to the mismatch or under-utilisation of their knowledge and skills as they returned to work in Tonga but also to overcome omissions and hindrances to their gaining of the required knowledge and skills specific to their new workplace. In the words of the scholars, “some things are out of our control and all you can do is pray. It always works to pray for comfort and peace”. This suggests that they used praying as a resource to respond to challenges.

It is in this way that this research finding sits in contrast with other research findings where it is documented that culture is an area of challenge. Rather than being a challenge or a hindrance, data from this study revealed that in Tonga, but particularly with my participants, cultural practices were not always a challenge but were a resource for the scholars to help them overcome obstacles both when they studied and when they returned to Tonga and to the workplace. Therefore, this study suggests that it might not be always the case that culture is an obstacle when people study abroad, and when they transition from overseas studies back into a workplace in their home country. Rather, whether or not culture hinders or enhances this transition might be culture dependent, meaning that we must examine the specific nature of the culture prior to making this claim. In some cultural situations, there are cultural elements that can be beneficial and need to be acknowledged and utilised. At the same time, there can exist other cultural elements that can be an obstacle to the scholar’s return, and these need to be known and addressed, if possible.

5.2.2. Companionship with other Tongans/Pacific Islanders

Having companionship with other Tongans/Pacific Islanders is an important factor for each Tongan. This companionship provides familiarity, acceptance and confidence, all of which helps a Tongan to be the best s/he can be in both their study and work.

Familiarity is when you automatically know what to do, and what is expected of you, and so you blend into a community and continue to work and make contributions to the development of the activity that you are involved in. Companionship with other Tongans also provides a sense of acceptance: you know that you are automatically accepted into a group. This is a key

understanding for scholars returning to work in Tonga. They feel that they have not changed as a Tongan person; they believe that their identity is still that of a Tongan. This provides them with confidence that they will be welcomed back into Tonga, that others will immediately understand them, and that there will be mutual acceptance of each other regardless of the context. Such companionship amongst Tongans provides confidence because you understand what others are talking about, why they are talking about such matters, what is of interest to others, and what might be offputting for others.

In the companionship of other Tongans, where familiarity and acceptance are established, Tongans can have full confidence in what they do. They sense that other Tongans will not judge them harshly so that they can concentrate on doing their best. In this way they are more themselves, more able to take risks, and more likely to make a greater contribution. Confidence is important and, in Tonga, much of it is established upon familiarity and acceptance.

This sense of Tongan companionship surfaced in this study because the returning scholars felt that, regardless of where they would eventually be employed upon their return to Tonga, they would be able to predict what to do and to determine quickly what was expected of them. The scholars in this study were excited about returning and being able immediately to make a contribution by utilising their new knowledge and skills. Unfortunately, not all of them had this privilege. However, being in familiar contexts and experiencing this sense of Tongan companionship helped them to overcome some initial struggles in their new workplace in relation to their knowledge and skills utilisation.

Also, the data showed that the returning scholars required this confidence when they were assigned to their new workplaces. Most needed some sort of training so that they would become familiar with the demands and responsibilities in the new context and, thereby, learn to accept and be accepted in the workplace. This suggests that for the scholars to be confident in their new workplace assignments they needed to feel accepted and for them to accept what was expected of them. With that, they would be able to perform confidently and be effective in their new assignments. Having an initial sense of Tongan companionship provided them with an immediate and solid foundation for building this confidence. From the

perspective of one of the participants in this study, “I am more confident in teaching the content now than before”. This implies that the scholars’ confidence was built when they were familiar and accepted into the workplace.

For those returning scholars who were readily accepted into their new workplace, and gained the impression that their new knowledge and skills would be a welcomed resource, they truly felt that they were still very much the same Tongan as they were before they left to study overseas. Where the employer was a Tongan, and where the returning scholar felt an immediate acceptance because they were able to identify themselves as a Tongan and, in this way, knew how to act and what was expected of them and what is appropriate and inappropriate in the working context, these were the most satisfied returning scholars. It was this group of returning scholars who felt the most pleasure about being back in Tonga and the most successful in their contribution to their work and to the nation. These scholars reporting “I am happy in this job” suggests they felt accepted and so worked freely and enjoyed their jobs.

Literature suggests that a person’s identity is likely to change as s/he continues to learn (Wenger, 1998). For the participants in this study, their identity as a Tongan appeared to take priority over any other change in identity which may have occurred as an outcome of their overseas studies. Even though the scholars had acquired new knowledge and skills, and thus were likely to have experienced some form of change to their identity, these returning scholars still identified themselves as Tongans.

5.2.3. Respect for religious/cultural leaders

Culturally, Tongans have a deep respect for religious and cultural leaders. A person holding this kind of position in the community is assigned power, responsibility and compliance from the people of the community. With the Tongan cultural values, and the faith each Tongan is brought up with, respecting these religious/cultural leaders is thought to bring blessings and good outcomes to the families.

For these reasons, these leaders have power and they are respected by the people in the community. They look after the spiritual wellbeing and the safety of their individual community. Any instructions from these leaders regarding community

functions or district obligations, such as funerals and community cultural festivals, are immediately obeyed by the members of the Tongan community without question. The community members respect the power these leaders hold and, therefore, unquestionably take responsibility for turning these instructions into action. Tongan community members depend on their religious/cultural leaders to provide the guiding instructions on important occasions and then they implement these to ensure that the necessary tasks are completed properly. Invariably, these instructions are precise and inflexible and it is assumed that the community will be compliant.

In this study, scholars experienced this power during community meetings. The community/religious leaders were usually more experienced and older and supposedly wiser, and whatever they instructed the people in the community to do, it was bound to be done without question. However, this particular cultural practice became a concern for some of the returning scholars in this study. Having experienced postgraduate studies in another country had encouraged them to speak from a critical perspective and to provide their opinion with confidence. Yet, many of the returning scholars felt that, when they expressed their opinion, it was not valued because they did not have the power of the religious/cultural leaders in the eyes of the other community members, regardless of what was being discussed. Some scholars felt that “our views and opinions were not considered important” because they did not have the power which the religious/cultural leaders or older members of the community hold.

Similar reactions were evident in the workplace, based on the hierarchical structure of the organisation. In some workplaces, the hierarchy suppressed the returning scholars’ allowable participation because the people in higher positions had the power and were not questioned. The junior staff showed loyalty and obeyed because they believed they did not have the power to question but, rather, were responsible only for following instructions. This is what they had to say: “We don’t question and it doesn’t go through the right channels but we have to do it”.

Communal orientation suggests that one has a moral and social obligation to one’s community (Cliff, 1998). In this study it seemed to be in reverse. In the Tongan

community, everyone feels obligated to obey and respect their religious/cultural leaders because of the power they have. Arguably, though, when this idea is universally applied without question, Tonga may not be getting its full value from the learning of new knowledge and skills from other countries that a returning scholar will invariably bring back to Tonga.

5.2.4. Freedom to share personal opinions

Growing up in Tonga, a child soon learns that personal opinions are best kept to one's self unless one is certain of what to say. The natural fact is, in Tonga, it is most likely that the community comes before individualism and also community customs and routines are more highly prized than informed personal opinions.

As a Tongan growing up and living most of your life in Tonga, you continue to filter your opinions and thoughts so that these fit the community expectations. Whether it is family, religious group, or community group, you are taught not to express your opinions until you feel that it is safe and acceptable to do so. Therefore, the community comes before the individual. Opinions are also influenced by the community: opinions about life are created through the influence of the community and what they instruct you, whether as your elders, parents, religious/community leaders, or other members of the community. Hence, there are a lot of common opinions such that your ideas might not be very different from others because everyone is instructed in the same sort of ways.

However, when a Tongan person goes overseas and experiences different cultures, it is highly likely that there will be a serious clash in this person's thoughts on their return to Tonga. This struggle was evident for a number of my research participants because they experienced different cultures in which they were regularly asked to give their opinions so as to perform better as postgraduate students. So, slowly, they learnt that their opinions have value and, thus, it was important for them to share their opinions. However, when they went back to Tonga, they struggled over whether to go back and keep their opinions to themselves and fit in with what the Tongan context instructs and think like others around them, or to go back and be different and, thereby, countercultural.

There is a cultural dimension to this notion of personal autonomy but there is also a workplace dimension, too. It is similar in the workplace where the scholars

return with abundant enthusiasm to use all their new knowledge and skills but they know that the workplace is unlikely to change easily. In the words of a scholar, “because I have worked in the system before. I was not excited about that”. They knew it was going to be a struggle. The dilemma was in deciding to try to use their new knowledge and skills to bring about change or to forget these and just fit back into the workplace and accept the status quo. They were being challenged over whether they should return and disregard their new knowledge and experiences, and be like the rest of the employees and fit in, or take the risk and be different and challenge the status quo and use the new knowledge and experience acquired from their study to try to improve their workplace and, thereby, their country. This is what a scholar had to say; “I knew it would be hard to go back and be part of that community”.

Thaman (2008) focuses on the concept of vaa, the values related to relationships. Tongans must first learn who they are and then learn about others and how they can live together. In my study, the scholars had learnt who they were. They had also learnt new knowledge and skills, and they had the knowledge of others in the contexts they were returning to, but now they struggled to live in the Tongan society and community.

5.3 The scholars' stable expectations

5.3.1 Self-efficacy as a worker

Self-efficacy is about having that self-confidence to succeed in what you are doing (Bandura, 2006). For the returning scholars, their self-efficacy was in relation to their knowledge that s/he had been a successful worker in Tonga before leaving to study overseas and so believing s/he could be a successful worker again on their return. Self-efficacy is having specific beliefs and perceptions of one's individual abilities and the confidence to be able to take all necessary actions to achieve desired goals.

The scholars in this particular study showed self-efficacy when they reported that they expected to be successful in their jobs when they returned to Tonga and to the workplace. They showed self-confidence that they could successfully execute the tasks because they had experienced similar ones before they went on their study.

Although the participants' self-efficacy remained stable throughout the investigation, some described how, as they settled into their new workplace, they were drawn to question its accuracy in the light of limited help for them from their co-workers towards ensuring that they knew what and how to complete their assigned tasks. Feelings of underachievement or frustration over being assigned seemingly simplistic tasks tended to dent these participants' self-efficacy. However, a lingering belief that, eventually, they could and would succeed maintained their commitment to their work. In a scholar's words, "You make do and try all that you can to improve no matter the situations". This suggests that despite all of the circumstances, they believed they would succeed with their commitments.

As there appears to be limited research seeking to investigate a returning scholar's self-efficacy, as found in this study, this could be an area for further investigation in the future.

5.3.2 A sense of adaptability

The characteristic of a sense of adaptability suggests that the individual has confidence in their own ability to cope with the unexpected and unpredictable demands that are inherent in transition and change. People who have a sense of adaptability assume that they can cope as they move between different contexts. This was a common quality in the scholars involved in this particular study. Each had succeeded in coping with a number of changes from school to study to work and back to study. Hence, they had gained a sense of adaptability, which they brought with them on their return to Tonga following their postgraduate level study in an overseas country.

More specifically, data showed that the scholars' sense of adaptability was strengthened because they were returning to their home country where they expected to find similar conditions to those which they experienced before they left to study abroad. Some of the participating scholars reported that when they returned to Tonga they still had that confidence in their own adaptability, and regardless of where they might gain employment, they would cope with any changes and continue to work as they had done before. However, even though all

of the scholars in this study had this sense of adaptability, many came across other challenges that took them quite some time to resolve.

This study unveiled a surprising finding whereby the returning scholars presumed that their past knowledge and skills, and their sense of adaptability, would combine with their new knowledge and skills gained through their overseas postgraduate studies in order to create a highly capable and desirable worker. Unfortunately, some of the participants found that their capabilities were rarely called upon and they often felt unwanted and undervalued by their employer and co-workers. A scholar explained, “I felt that I was not fully received well... so I sometimes question whether my knowledge and skills are received”. This suggests that there was a conflict between the scholars’ sense of adaptability and the type of workplace adaptability required of them. Some of the returning scholars had to adapt to being underutilised and unappreciated, and this was something that they had not been adequately prepared for.

5.3.3 Familiarity with the environment

This refers to going back to a familiar, comfortable and secure environment where one could act naturally and be one’s self. This feeling of familiarity involves everything in the environment being commonplace and knowable, from the people, and how they do things, to the weather and the lifestyle. When in familiar environments, individuals are far more comfortable to use their new knowledge and skills, to be relaxed and confident, and to seek to be actively involved in what is happening around them.

Scholars in this study were all Tongan and they had lived in Tonga for a long time. They had interacted with other Tongans and this context in all its many and diverse aspects. Unlike their uncertain, cautious, and tentative experiences on first landing in a new country and commencing their postgraduate studies, their return to Tonga filled them with excitement. Moreover, having overcome their initial hesitancy formed in an unfamiliar country, they were even more buoyant and optimistic about going back to a familiar environment where they were certain they would fit right back into the familiar surroundings.

However, an interesting and surprising finding emerged with some of the returning scholars in this study when they found that a number of people, both in

the community and their workplace, saw them as being different. Leaders in the community now felt that the scholars were threats and feared they might take over the power from them within the community. For example, a scholar suggested that these community members “were threatened by my presence... they thought I would take their positions and power in the community and over the people”. Also some people thought that the scholars presented themselves too highly and this made the people in the community feel inferior in some ways.

Similar reactions were shown in some of the workplaces, whereby some employees showed a positive and friendly reception to the returning scholar while for other workers the presence of the scholar in the workplace was seen as a threat. One scholar commented, “I was a threat to my senior workers”. It seemed that the assumption amongst this latter group of workers was that the scholar’s new knowledge and skills would secure higher posts than that of the existing employee. Therefore, any ideas from the scholars were not taken seriously and in the words of the scholars, “You might bring in your fresh conceptions or ideas but it will not be taken as a priority or taken seriously”. Again this came as a surprise to the scholars as they thought and expected to return to a familiar environment and to fit right in and continue to work with confidence and optimism.

5.4 The utilisation of new-found knowledge and skills

5.4.1 Reaction of the employers

5.4.1.1 Securing the jobs

To apply for a job in Tonga, there are protocols and ways to follow in order to make sure that you secure the necessary job. Job vacancies are usually advertised for all eligible candidates to apply for. There are application forms and interviews involved in the hiring process.

Most of the scholars in this study reported that they went through similar processes to secure their job on returning to Tonga. However, a few of the scholars reported that it was who they knew in the system at the time that allowed them to secure a job. Such scholars explained, “It wasn’t through advertising but it was who I knew at the time”. This suggests that employers were aware of the scholars returning and their field of expertise, and, therefore, wanted to make sure that the scholars’ new knowledge and skills would be well utilised. Interestingly,

however, even amongst some of these employers who first seemed to almost celebrate the return of these scholars, there were some scholars who were still not able to utilise their new knowledge and skills. According to one of these scholars, “good reception with the smiles and good behaviors towards me” soon turned to, “I feel that my skills and knowledge have not been fully utilised”.

This raises a question about whether the employer actually wanted to utilise the scholar’s new knowledge and skills or were they simply excited to have someone with a higher degree employed in their workplace more for show than for practical benefit.

There is limited literature around this area which could be a potential area of investigation in the future.

5.4.2 Expectations of returning scholars

This study revealed that the expectations, beliefs and hopes that the scholars had prior to their study remained constant throughout this investigation. These resourceful scholars believed they would eventually return and contribute to Tonga. Surprisingly, this study revealed that, despite the excitement of going overseas to gain new knowledge and skills, these scholars were more excited to be returning to Tonga, not only because they were obligated to do so, due to the scholarship bond, but also because they had a very strong tie to their country and a deep desire to contribute to the future development of Tonga. This is what a scholar had to say: “It was exciting when I thought of and anticipated having to contribute to the development”.

These expectations were extensively explored in this study when the scholars were asked to reflect on what they would expect to gain from their study, as well as what they would expect to happen when they returned home to Tonga. Interestingly, this study revealed that some scholars knew their new workplace did not fit their area of expertise but this was not an initial deterrent. This was because it was a paid job which some scholars believed was their calling, despite its initial unsuitability. For these reasons, they used whatever resources they had to make do. They were resourceful and believed they could manipulate their knowledge and skills to fit the situation given to them in their new workplace and to meet all of its requirements in a professional manner. As one scholars said, “You make do

and try all that you can to improve, no matter the situations.” In this way, they felt that they would still be contributing towards making Tonga a stronger country.

5.4.3 Expectations placed on scholars

As a Tongan, more is expected of you when you accomplish something unexpected in life. For example, a person who graduates with a Master’s degree has higher expectations placed on them in comparison to a person who graduates from high school.

The scholars in this study revealed this to be the practice when they returned to Tonga. In the workplace, employers and employees expected them to do every task given to them, whether it was directly or indirectly related to their area of expertise. Scholars initially found this a privilege but, as time passed, the scholars found these expectations frustrating and burdensome. These expectations were heavily influenced by the fact that the scholars had gained a high academic qualification and, therefore, they were expected to do whatever tasks were given to them regardless of how simple or obscure these tasks might be. One scholar reported, “Just because you have now gained a Master’s degree, this placed a huge burden on my shoulders at times”.

This is a misunderstanding because the scholars in this study reported they were expected to execute these tasks with little help, even when the assigned task was outside of their expertise. A common assumption was that the scholar could do anything. For many in Tonga, it is thought that higher education produces generalist, rather than specialist, knowledge and skills. “They expect me to know what to do and to do everything but this is such a misconception. I am competent in my area of expertise, not in everything”, claimed one of the participants in this study.

5.4.4 Experiences within local community

Even though not all scholars in this study were teachers, many were able to contribute to their local community by helping the senior students prepare for the end of year examinations. Their field of expertise may not have been related directly to the subject areas but their academic skills helped them to educate the

final year students. Some mentioned that they “travel around and between villages helping students prepare for the examinations.”

Also all scholars were able to help other members of the community with application forms and the completion of any English-related documents. In Tonga, some community members have limited English literacy and so they relied on the returned scholars to help them fulfil this task. In a scholar’s words, often the community asked them “to write this, analyse this and do this”, which this scholar willingly did.

However, a contradictory view was unveiled in this study when the older members of the community thought these young returned scholars were back to take over their existing powers. Therefore new ideas and suggestions from these scholars often did not rest well with these older members of the community as they were seen as threats to the community.

5.5 Conclusion

This study sheds new light onto different areas in relation to the re-integration of postgraduate scholars back into Tonga. Scholars selected for this study utilised their cultural knowledge and practices to respond to the challenges they faced. These became resources for them to accomplish their academic goals. It was also evident that the scholars’ expectations remained constant throughout their study and well into their re-integration. These were the cultural knowledge and practices the scholars use to respond to personal challenges, the scholar’s stable expectations, and the scholars utilisation of new found knowledge and skills. Much of this was based upon the scholars’ anticipation of continuity, familiarity and optimism about returning to their home country. Essentially, they saw themselves as basically the same person as when they had left to study abroad except they would be returning with more knowledge and skills to help their workplace and the country. However, many people in the community and the workplaces saw these scholars as being different following their return, which was surprising for the scholars.

This study also revealed that employers and employees placed expectations on the scholars. These expectations involved doing almost every given task, whether

related or unrelated to their field of expertise and often with little support and help. This became daunting to the scholars, resulting in frustration. Some scholars were able to utilise their knowledge and skills in the workplace and in the community, despite any resistance, but others had to learn to adapt to a much less rewarding, fulfilling and purposeful existence. Regrettably, on too many occasions, the resource potential that these scholars gained from their overseas studies was either deliberately suppressed or ignored on their return to Tonga, much to the detriment of the scholar, their workplace, and the country as a whole.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1 Overview of chapter

Research studies exploring the experiences of postgraduate scholars in the Pacific have become an interesting phenomenon. This particular research study shares this interest but provides a distinctive perspective because of its context being the islands of Tonga. Specifically, the focus of this study was on exploring the experiences of the postgraduate degree holders who have studied overseas and then returned with their new knowledge and skills and worked for a number of years towards attempting to improve some ways of living in Tonga.

Even though each of these participating returned scholars shared the desire to use their newly acquired knowledge and skills to improve some ways of living in Tonga, the findings of this study show how some of these scholars were frustrated because their newly developed expertise was under-utilised or a mismatch in their new jobs. Despite this frustration, the research data described how these scholars used their prior knowledge and skills as a resource, in conjunction with their intimate familiarity with the Tongan culture, to become as successful as possible in their new workplace appointment.

Importantly, this study unveiled how some of the returned scholars felt that there were people misusing aspects of the Tongan culture in the workplace in order to suppress or exclude them, thereby, leaving them feeling devalued or overused but ultimately unhappy. As a result, some of the returned scholars from this study had started to look for better opportunities in other workplaces and even in other countries.

While all of the scholars in this study had acquired new knowledge and skills, some were struggling to find opportunities to utilise this new expertise when they returned, and this had caused disappointment, frustration, and, for a few, disillusionment. This poses a challenge with possible national implications for the administration of both government and non-government employment systems in Tonga. Arguably, the financial and human costs associated with sending Tongans to study overseas in order to deliberately enhance their knowledge and skills will

be wasted unless the benefits gained from this action are more widely and appropriately used when the scholar returns.

First, this chapter will state the limitations of this study in the hope of providing direction for future research opportunities. Secondly, this chapter will conclude by providing some guiding recommendations for future research in the area of re-integration into a Tongan workplace of postgraduate scholars who have studied abroad.

6.2 Limitations of present study

As a soon-to-return Tongan postgraduate scholar, I wanted to explore what previous postgraduate scholars had experienced with respect to the utilisation of their new knowledge and skills on their return to Tonga both in the workplace and in their community. Through this study I acquired a profound knowledge of the benefits and struggles that these scholars experienced both in their jobs and social setting. As there will be many returning scholars in future, this study not only describes the array of potential experiences that might occur but also raises the need for further research to be conducted in this important area. Although the research described in this research can be seen to be important, its limitations must be recognised, also.

One of the limitations for this study was time. The scope of my study allowed only three months for data collection. This duration of time allowed me to interview only 15 participants and document their experiences and perceptions. This limited my study to focussing on one specific time, one specific impression, in the life of each participant. However, this study could have provided a more detailed picture of the experiences of each returned postgraduate scholar to Tonga if the scholars had been interviewed at different points of time following their return to Tonga. In this way, it would have been possible to track the changes in their experiences and impressions. This would provide a more accurate insight into the experiences, impressions and beliefs of these scholars. In this particular research, the participants may have responded according to the way they felt at that moment in time. Subsequently, their circumstances and, thus, experience, could change for better or worse at a later time. In my research, I had no way of determining the longevity, validity or honesty of their responses.

Despite the research being carried out in both government and non-government organisations, a limited range of views was investigated because I only interviewed postgraduate scholars who had returned to the main island of Tongatapu. Expanding the boundaries to the outer islands would allow for more detailed and expansive results. This would also extend the number of participants, thereby providing a more in-depth representation of the focus of this particular study.

6.3 Recommendations

The data revealed issues discussed earlier but scholars themselves had suggestions and recommendations that arose through the process of engagement in this research. The scholars also had suggestions and recommendations that would be beneficial not only for the re-integration of future returning scholars but also for the local and overseas funding agencies.

6.3.1 For the returning postgraduate student

As has been described in this thesis, each returning postgraduate student was filled with excitement, confidence and anticipation as s/he commenced the process of returning to work in Tonga. Not only were they looking forward to fitting back into a familiar workplace environment and an assuring culture but also they were excited about their potential to be of great benefit to their workplace and their country as an outcome of having gained new knowledge and skills. However, this study highlights the importance of these students being provided with an awareness of the array of challenges they might face in achieving these desired outcomes on their return to Tonga. Arguably, being informed about the possibility of resistance to, or non-recognition of, their new knowledge and skills, both in the workplace and in the community, would help them to better deal with this situation, should it eventuate. Also, if the returning postgraduate student is prewarned that s/he could be employed in a workplace situation where s/he is expected to successfully complete any assigned task, whether it is trivial or complex and whether or not it is aligned with their knowledge and skills, then they may well respond more immediately and constructively before becoming overwhelmed.

6.3.2 For the Tongan community

As evident in this study, the older members of the community can become threatened by the scholars' return. As discussed earlier, the scholars had gained new knowledge and skills, which might be seen as a threat because the scholar might then have the power to influence community actions that existing older members of the community currently control. These knowledgeable scholars should be seen as a new community resource rather than a threat. The new knowledge and skills could be beneficial for the development of the community.

The community could also involve these scholars in developmental activities where they could exercise their new knowledge and skills to the advantage of many. In this way the scholars would feel useful and, in return, the community would benefit from their participation.

6.3.3 For the administrations and the workplace

The issue of cultural practice misuse was one commonly experienced by a number of the scholars who participated in this study. This suggests that it would be a good idea to engage the employers in training workshops aimed at making them far more comfortable and supportive of a returning postgraduate student. These training workshops would emphasise the standards and policy actions which should be provided to ensure the workplace, the employer and the returning scholar all benefit. Also, it is important that the returning scholar is provided with suitable on-site support and training to ensure that they know exactly what is expected of them and how they are expected to complete their responsibilities. These training workshops would better prepare the returning scholar for their new positions by familiarising them with their new context, task and co-employees.

6.3.4 For the donors and funding agents

The other implication from this study arises from some of the participating returned scholars revealing that their new knowledge and skills were not utilised to their full potential. This suggests that the desired national benefits of the scholarship scheme are not being widely realised. Also, it suggests that the money provided by the donors and funding agents in support of this scheme is not being maximised. Arguably, the scholarship process could be enhanced if it included some forethought as to where the scholar would be employed on her/his return. In

other words, the scholarship is offered to an applicant not only on the basis of current criteria but also on knowing where the scholar is to be employed on their return to Tonga. Presumably, this future place of employment would be one in which the newly acquired knowledge and skills gained during the postgraduate studies could be best utilised. This would reassure the donors and funding agencies of the quality of the programme and the benefit they are providing to Tonga by enabling scholars to study overseas. Also it would give them some sort of satisfaction knowing who they are funding and what new knowledge and skills they are investing in.

6.4 Conclusion

Several research studies (Tobbell et al, 2009; Hazen & Albert, 2006; Butcher et al, 2008; Franken, 2012, 2013) have been conducted in relation to international students and their experiences during overseas study. These studies acknowledge that the international students face challenges during their study. However, few studies (Franken, 2012) have been conducted about international postgraduate students who study overseas and return to their home country. Furthermore, little research in this area has focussed on the Tongan postgraduate scholars who studied abroad and then returned to work. This study has explored these contexts and unveiled how these postgraduate scholars' experiences contributed to the way they define themselves and how they have resituated their new knowledge and skills in the workplace and the community on their return to Tonga.

The important findings which emerged from the analysis of the data gathered in this research centred around issues associated with (a) the cultural knowledge and practices scholars use to respond to personal challenges, (b) the scholar's stable expectations, and (c) the utilisation of new-found knowledge and skills. Moreover, this research found both affordances and constraints within each of these issues. Under certain circumstances, some of the returning scholars were afforded the opportunity to utilise their new knowledge and skills gained from their postgraduate studies abroad so as to benefit their new workplace and, in some cases, their community. Ultimately, this contributes in a small but important way towards improving Tonga, too. However, it was also found that contrasting workplace and community conditions were present for some scholars. Here, the

students were constrained by various means from being able to use their newly acquired knowledge and skills. Under such constraining conditions, not only is there little, if any, benefit to the individual, the workplace or community, or the country, but also one must question the relevance of the scholarship scheme, itself. If the scholarship scheme is to reap its intended benefits then steps must be taken to ensure that the positive outcomes are more generally achieved.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Ethics approval

Dean's Office Phone +64 78384500
Faculty of Education www.waikato.ac.nz

Te Kura Toi Tangata

The University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton, New Zealand



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

MEMORANDUM

To: Nautalus Tuituiovai Langi
From: Associate Professor Garry Falloon
Chairperson (Acting), Research Ethics Committee
cc: Dr Margaret Franken and Professor Christopher Branson
Professor Brian Findsen
Date: 7 March 2013
Subject: Supervised Postgraduate Research–Application for Ethical Approval (EDU006/13)

Thank you for submitting the amendments to your application for ethical approval for the research project:

An investigation of the re-integration of scholars back in Tonga

I am pleased to advise that your application has received ethical approval.

Please send a hard copy of the full revised application to the Academic Administrator, Hayley Scrimgeour, at your earliest convenience.

Please note that researchers are asked to consult with the Faculty's Research Ethics Committee in the first instance if any changes to the approved research design are proposed.

The Committee wishes you all the best with your research.

Associate Professor Garry Falloon
Chairperson (Acting)
Research Ethics Committee

Appendix 2: Research conditions for conducting a research in Tonga.

RESEARCH CONDITIONS TO BE MET BY INTENDED RESEARCH CANDIDATES

Interim conditions:

1. Description of the research project proposal endorsed by the head of Faculty of the University or Institution concerned.
2. Copy of approval of the research by the University or Institute's Ethics Committee.
3. A supporting statement for the research from the Head of faculty of the University or the Institution concerned.
4. Evidence of financial support for funding arrangements for the research in Tonga.
5. A proposed starting date and finishing date for the project.
6. A written and signed statement of willingness to submit two completed copies of research thesis to the Office of the Minister of Education free of charge.

Send all applications to:

Director of Education

Ministry of Education

Nuku'alofa

TONGA

Appendix 3: Letter to the Prime Minister's Office and Ministry of Education

3/145 Knighton Road
Hillcrest
Hamilton 3216
New Zealand
Phone: 0211074045
Email: ntk8@waikato.ac.nz

February 11, 2013

Director of Education
Ministry of Education, Women's Affairs and Culture
Nuku'alofa
Tonga

Dear Madam,

SUBJECT: PERMISSION TO DO RESEARCH IN THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

My name is Nautalus Tuituiovai Langi and I taught at Liahona High School for four years (2007-2010). I am currently studying at the University of Waikato, New Zealand undertaking a postgraduate program. As part of my master's thesis, I am required to complete a research project.

Therefore I am writing to seek permission to conduct a research inquiry under your authority. The title of my project is 'The re-integration of scholars in Tonga'. The research focuses on the experiences of returning scholars in the workplace and their professional communities. I am seeking your approval to visit and collect data from selected participants. I am planning to conduct this research after working hours to minimize disruption in the workplaces.

With your permission, I am planning to begin my data collection in March 2013. Participants will be selected from government schools/organisations and non-government schools/organisations. These participants will be selected from scholars that have returned to Tonga in the last five years.

Should you need further information and clarification, I can be contacted via telephone or email as provided above or my chief supervisor in this study. Dr Margaret Franken, Department of Arts and Language Education, University of

Waikato, New Zealand. She can be contacted via phone: +6421532292 or email: franken@waikato.ac.nz

Attached are copies of the study proposal containing starting and ending dates, copy of the approval of the study from the University's Ethics Committee, Supporting statement for the research from the Head of Faculty, Evidence of financial support during the study and a written and signed statement of my willingness to submit two completed copies of research free of charge.

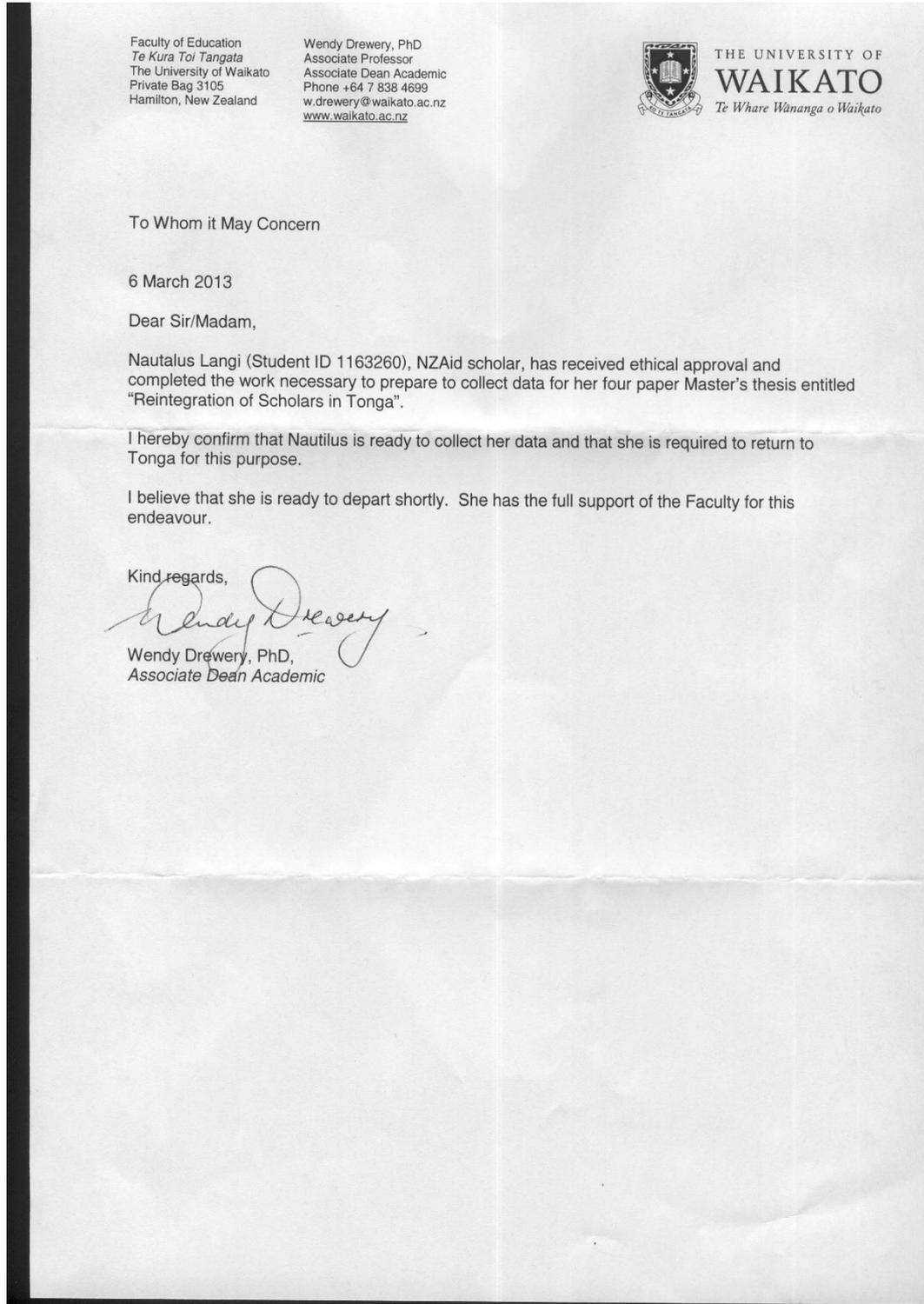
Thank you for considering my request. I look forward to receiving your response.

Yours faithfully

Nautalus Tuituiovai Langi

Appendix 4: Supporting documents for research approval from Tonga

a) *Supporting statement from Faculty*



b) Written statement to the Ministry of Education, Tonga.

Ministry of Education

Nuku'alofa

Tonga

27 February, 2013

I, Nautalus Tuituiovai Langi will submit two copies of my complete thesis to your office at the Ministry of Education. These two copies will be free of charge.

Yours sincerely,

Nautalus Tuituiovai Langi

Appendix 5: Information letter to the participants

3/145 Knighton Road

Hillcrest

Hamilton 3216

New Zealand

Phone: 0211074045

Email: ntk8@waikato.ac.nz

January 30, 2013

Dear Sir/Madam,

SUBJECT: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

My name is Nautalus Tuituiovai Langi and I taught at Liahona High School for four years (2007-2010). I am currently undertaking postgraduate study at the University of Waikato, New Zealand. As part of my master's thesis, I am required to complete a research project in education.

The title of my research project is 'The re-integration of scholars in Tonga'. The research focuses on the experiences of returning scholars in the workplace and their professional communities. I have received consent from the Ministry of Education, Women's Affairs and Culture to conduct this research in Tonga.

I am writing this letter to seek your willingness to participate in this research project. I plan to select up to eight returned scholars from the two sectors: non-government schools/organisations and government schools/organisations. The criteria I will be using for selection is that they have returned within the last five years. If I have more possible participants than I can manage, I will choose those who consent first.

This research will involve an individual semi-structured interview and focus group interview. The individual semi-structured interviews will be approximately half an hour. The venue and time for the individual interviews will be your preference to minimize any distraction to your work. This interview will be recorded for later transcription. A copy of the transcribed interview will be returned to you for scrutiny and confirmation. Should you wish to add further relevant details or change some detail, you have the opportunity to do so.

The Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee has approved this research project. Hence the study will strictly adhere to their ethical expectations. The identity of both you and your organisation will remain anonymous and confidential. It may be difficult to ensure complete anonymity because of the fact that the participants are likely to know each other. For this reason also, it is important that participants in focus groups maintain confidentiality. You have the right to withdraw from the study up to the stage when I ask for your confirmation of the data. Your rights will be fully respected. The duration and security storage of non-identifying data will be kept for a period of five years then destroyed. This

research will be published and also viewed as digital copy on the university website as Master's Thesis.

Should you need further clarification, feel free to contact me on my email. Alternatively you can contact my chief supervisor, Dr. Margaret Franken, Department of Arts and Language, University of Waikato, New Zealand via phone: +6421532292 or email: franken@waikato.ac.nz

If you are willing to be part of this research project please indicate by signing the consent form attached.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Yours faithfully,

Nautalus Tuituiovai Langi

Appendix 6: Consent Form for the participants

Research Project: An investigation study of the re-integration of scholars in Tonga.

I of
have read the introductory statement, have asked questions about the research project and understand that:

- The researcher will not identify me personally in any presentations or publications reporting the research.
- The researcher will delete all electronic files after the transcription.
- The researcher will only keep textual data (transcripts, observation schedule and documents) for the required period of five years

I understand that I have the right to;

- Withdraw from the research at any time
- Remove, change or add to the transcripts of the interviews up until data analysis commences.

I understand the need to maintain confidentiality of views and information provided by other focus group participants.

I understand who I can contact if I have any concerns that I feel are unable to be resolved by speaking with me directly.

I consent to:

Participating in the individual interview

Participating in the focus group interview

Having my contributions during the individual semi-structured and focus group interview audiotaped and transcribed.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 7: Research questions

Research Question 1: What are the experiences of the selected graduated returning scholars to Tonga in the workplace and the professional community?

1. What do you as a returning scholar identify as helpful experiences from your studies and in the workplace?
2. What do you as a returning scholar identify as constraining experiences in the workplace?
3. How have you been supported and received in the workplace?
4. In your professional community what do you think have been helpful experiences?
5. What do you identify as constraining experiences in your professional community?
6. How well have you been supported and received by your professional community?
7. What could have been done differently to make your re-integration process better?

Research Question 2: To what extent have selected returning scholars aspirations been realised?

1. What were the anticipated benefits for studying overseas?
2. What were the anticipated obstacles for studying overseas?
3. In what ways if any, during your studies, have you experienced the benefits and obstacles that you anticipated prior to your studies? Did these eventuate?
4. In what ways if any have you approached these obstacles? Were they resolved or not?

5. On returning, what were the anticipated benefits?
6. When you were preparing to return home, what obstacles did you anticipate?
7. In what ways if any, have you approached these obstacles? Were they resolved or not?

Research Question 3: How have the scholars' resituated knowledge in their workplace and professional community.

1. Tell me how do you feel that the acquired skills and knowledge are in your current context?
2. How have your acquired skills and knowledge contributed to the organization?
3. Have you felt burdened by your acquired skills and knowledge in application to your current job? Tell me how.
4. Within your professional community, how do you feel your acquired skills and knowledge are being utilised?
5. What do you think have been the impacts of your skills and knowledge in your professional communities?
6. Describe how your skills and knowledge fit in your professional community?
7. Is there anything else you would like to say?

Appendix 8: Focus group questions

Title: Re-integration of scholars in Tonga

Focus Group Interview Questions

1. A number of you one way or another talked about “CULTURE”, this could be referring to the workplace culture or our Tongan culture. From your experience in the workplace can you tell me more about CULTURE and how it is important to you in your current context?
 - a. What about in your professional community? How does culture play an important role?
2. A number of you suggested that even though you have postgraduate and Master’s Degrees there are times within your workplace and professional communities it does not really matter. You are restricted to what you can say and contribute. Tell me more.
3. A number of you shared that you were able to use some skills acquired from your studies however not so much about the knowledge that you acquired. Why is that important to you as a returned scholar with regards to our re-integration?
4. A number of you are working in an area you did not study for and no proper induction program but learn on the job, from your experiences; how important is it for you to have that induction program? What impacts would you anticipate from a proper induction program?
5. Why would you feel that you are a threat to people in your workplace and your professional community? How do you feel about that?
6. From our experiences, how can we better re-integrate returning scholars such as myself in the future? How would you do it differently from the process that it is currently using now?

Appendix 9: Examples of codes and themes

CODE (WHAT?)	WHAT ARE THEY SAYING?	RAW DATA EXTRACTED FROM PARTICIPANTS	POSSIBLE MAIN THEME
1. How did they get jobs?	<i>She didn't apply for this job. She was given the job</i>	<i>N2: I didn't apply for this job, Mele hand-picked me, I didn't apply I came after my resignation and informed these people. They called me in and offered me the job.</i>	<p>THEME 1: How the context of the job afforded knowledge and skills utilisation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Given the jobs - Applied for the jobs
	<i>He applied for the job through someone he knew that knew of this vacant position which was not advertised publicly.</i>	<i>N7: When this came up, it wasn't through advertising but it was who I knew at the time, the current Minister of Tourism.</i>	
	<i>She was called to the position so she has to accept and change her ways to fit the job.</i>	<p><i>N4: Again for the FWC, we are stationed we don't apply so you just offer your services and they tell you where to go. It's a calling and you are just ready to accept it.</i></p> <p><i>In the FWC this is a calling and we have to accept it and try to change to fit it.</i></p>	
2. Anticipated incentives for studying overseas. - Anticipated benefits.	<i>The anticipations include more knowledge and skills in which they eventuated</i>	<i>N8: I got more skills, more knowledge and more experiences about my world that surrounding me.</i>	<p>Returned scholars anticipated benefits from studying overseas</p>
	<i>Before going on the study, she anticipated more; experiences, skills, knowledge. Also having no problem in finding a job when he return.</i>	<p><i>N2: The anticipated benefits were to further my experience, skills and knowledge and also to widen my view and perspective.</i></p> <p><i>It gives you freedom or an advantage of finding a job and you won't be unemployed, you can always find a job at any time. If you are not skilled, you will have less chance of finding a job here. But if you have more skills or professional you will be the one to make choices. The alternatives are there (seven or six) that you can choose from. That was the major anticipated benefit of studying overseas.</i></p> <p><i>I also anticipated my little family to be respected by our community. My new qualification would place not only me but my family and those close to me at a respectable level in the community.</i></p>	
	<i>She anticipated living and experiencing China first hand and learning the language.</i>	<i>N5: To learn how to speak Chinese. Live the foreign life and befriend the Chinese people and meeting different people. Travelling and see the culture, so I just want to experience China first hand</i>	

<p>3. Returned scholars' contributions to the organisation.</p>	<p>Managing staff at a professional level thus maintaining the quality of the program we are doing at this school. As a result some of the students secure scholarships to study overseas.</p>	<p>N3: I have contributed my skills and knowledge to this organisation in different ways. I have managed to manage my staff very well and continue to do so along with the students. Not only this school but also the education board for the FWC and also the standing committee for the whole church where we make decisions for the church education program. My opinions are valued only when they agree to them. Also I have managed to continue and make sure that the quality of our program is recognized. Recently we have students of ours going on scholarship to overseas schools pursuing further education.</p>	<p>How the utilisation of their skills and knowledge contribute to the development of their organisations.</p>
	<p>Provide business trainings and mentoring business groups on how to be successful in their individual businesses</p>	<p>N2: So I have been trained them how to do business plans also mentoring some of the women groups and their business ideas. Also follow-up their progress of production.</p> <p>I did my best and they informed us the next day that T-Pack got their license.</p>	
	<p>There are more students passing the National exams at the level I am teaching Maths.</p>	<p>N8: I can tell that from the feedback and reflective that students make in class and after class. Also I used their achievement in the National Exam as one way to tell whether I deliver correctly the message or not.</p> <p>I came on a time where there math department was down, the national exam results were decline and also no teacher for upper level. However, as I'm being with them, there is a sign of moving up in exam and also the skills and life of these fellow hard working teachers. So I do believe that my skills are fit on this spot.</p>	