

Introduction

This study examines post-secondary education in the South Pacific by surveying the vast number of educational opportunities currently offered by a wide range of institutions, organisations, agencies and countries and by analysing the main trends arising from the survey. It pinpoints a number of crucial policy issues which would seem to require reflection and detailed discussion on the part of all those involved in post-secondary education, whether as policy-makers, donors, providers or receivers.

The book has to be set against a background of revolutionary change in Pacific post-secondary education. Among the causes of this period of change, four main driving forces can be identified. They are:

- 1 Rising aspirations for higher education and for the better incomes and life-style that are assumed to come from it are pushing Pacific governments into the expansion of educational facilities.
- 2 Metropolitan governments with interests in the Pacific are offering staff, scholarships, travel and research funds, equipment and construction for an ever widening range of training programmes in the islands and abroad. Almost all government higher education, whether conducted at home or abroad, is funded wholly or partly from abroad – the only region in the world where this is so to such an extent.
- 3 In the private sector, international firms are adopting patterns of training which have been developed in their home countries.

Most of it is part-time and involves comprehensive in-house courses, plus support for external study.

4 Increasingly students are funding their own education, whether within church-run or government-sponsored institutions, or by enrolling in distance teaching or summer schools.

The demand for higher education will continue to grow. The danger of quality being sacrificed to quantity as the pressures increase is a real one. Cost-effective ways of funding high quality education have to be found.

To grasp the immensity of what is currently happening in post-secondary education it needs to be remembered that not so long ago education beyond the primary level was only for the privileged few. The chapter on **Current Provisions** describes in some detail the widening range of higher education options and the increasing amount of education and training available from outside the formal education sector, not only from employers, governments, international agencies and non-governmental organisations but also through students funding their own study by work/study programmes or by using books, videos, computer software, etc.

The second part of this chapter examines some issues concerning the courses offered in the various institutions, including the selection of subjects, the qualifications to be gained and issues of access.

A case study of Cook Islands and a comparison with Solomon Islands illustrates further some of the major themes which have arisen from the survey of current provisions:

- the increase in post-secondary opportunities offered outside the conventional educational institutions
- some advantages of smallness
- the concentration of educational opportunities in national or regional capitals
- the correlation between a high per capita income and access to educational opportunities
- the advantages of having preferential access to a metropolitan country.

In the chapter on **Trends and Policy Options** a number of policy areas are identified, the first of which is the need for **continuous learning**.

Within the subsequent section on **curriculum issues** questions addressed include: What are the issues involved in giving a greater emphasis on science, maths and technology? How can the desire for a culture-specific curriculum be reconciled with the need for internationally accepted quality?

Moving on to the topic of **qualifications**, a particular focus is given to the international acceptance and marketability of qualifications and the correlation between quality and a country's economic success. The issue of **quality** is given particular attention. The need for **greater mobility** of students and staff is also stressed.

Management options are inextricably involved with a whole complex of issues, including those to do with size, consolidation and decentralisation. How feasible is it for an individual country to set up its own higher education institution, given the constraints of donor priorities and existing regional arrangements? How can countries co-operate while still retaining equity? Can a situation whereby an individual country chooses the most appropriate **mix of national, regional and international educational opportunities** for its people be achieved? Will cultural integrity and self-reliance be impaired by international interaction?

Issues of **equity** are particularly important for those who live far from a national or regional centre, for the disadvantaged and for women, at least in some of the South Pacific islands countries.

Where **finance** is concerned, it has in the past been assumed that cost-effectiveness and economies of scale were closely related. This assumption has to be increasingly questioned, especially in the light of evidence from some apparently cost-effective yet small institutions in the Pacific region. With national governments and donor countries unable to increase expenditure on education, solutions could be sought from integrated work-study programmes or from students funding their own study through distance methods or through books, videos, etc. Making a contribution to the cost of their education appears to heighten students' sense of responsibility.

This chapter closes with a look at the linkages between **post-secondary education and economic development**.

The various themes of this study are finally brought together in a series of recommendations, suggesting action which can take post-secondary education in the South Pacific into the **twenty-first century**.

Note on terminology

Post-secondary

We see a case for the term 'tertiary' to describe that which follows primary and secondary. It is simpler, more logical and broader than such alternatives as 'post-secondary'. Restricting 'tertiary' to selected forms of higher education carries an unnecessary connotation of elitism. But we accept that there is no 'right' term, and as we were asked to write on 'post-secondary' education, we use that term for all forms of education and training undertaken by adults. This study includes learning in all forms of public and private educational institutions, through business and by private study.

Education and training

We prefer not to distinguish between these two terms. There is a tendency for the former to be more prestigious and connote deeper understanding, but in our experience indoctrination is just as common in the social sciences and humanities (which some people regard as 'education' rather than 'training') as in any other field. To the extent that 'education' connotes deeper understanding of principles and processes, we hope to see more of it built into training programmes.

University/college/institute/school

Terminology, even within the English-speaking South Pacific, varies widely. Many courses at post-secondary institutions in the Pacific are at upper secondary level. The difference is often one of age of students, since particularly in countries where high schooling

is limited, many courses for adults must be geared to students who have had little secondary schooling.

Likewise, all universities in the islands teach many courses which would be taught in high schools or colleges in some other parts of the Commonwealth. The mix of degree and non-degree courses is partly because of the limited number of students for degree studies. Partly it was felt that economies of scale were made possible by such expansion. Partly it is an incidental by-product of aid donors wishing to finance a training programme and needing an institution to which to attach it. Also any institution has expansionist ambitions. The term 'university' seems to us sensible for the present Pacific institutions that so describe themselves.

The term 'college' in the US system is often used for institutions whose main task is teaching first (bachelors) degrees. In that sense all South Pacific universities have more in common with US colleges than universities. Pacific universities are more akin to what were called in Australia, Colleges of Advanced Education, but these are now adopting the term 'university'. In the South Pacific, the term 'college' usually implies that the institution offers a limited range of courses, and only teaches first degrees (if it teaches at degree level). The Pacific Adventist College (PAC) and the Divine Word Institute (DWI), both based in Papua New Guinea but accepting students from throughout the Pacific, offer programmes similar to those offered in universities to the bachelor's level, but only in education, commerce, administration and religious studies in both institutions. PAC also offers agriculture and DWI provides courses in communication studies. Neither offer post-graduate courses (nor does the Brigham Young University in Hawaii). In the Pacific context PAC and DWI perhaps should be called universities.

The Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE) incorporates Schools of Finance and Administration, Education and Cultural Studies, Nursing and Health Studies, Industrial Development (including surveying, construction, mechanics, etc.), Natural Resources, Marine and Fishery Studies, and General Studies. The government has several times indicated its intention to move to degree programmes and rename the institution as a university.

The Fiji College of Higher Education was established in 1992, in the initial stages at least to train secondary teachers. Its functions are expected to expand and it will probably become part of a Fiji national university.

The term 'college' is sometimes used for secondary schools in the Pacific, but more commonly for institutions with a particular focus, such as those for teacher training, nursing, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, theology, commerce, aviation, police studies, etc. We find this the most appropriate use for the term.

'Institute' is used for the Fiji Institute of Technology (FIT) which has similar programmes to those of the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education. The Fiji College of Nursing, however, is not associated with FIT. The Divine Word Institute is a degree/diploma-awarding institution. However, Atenisi, in Tonga, calls its secondary school Atenisi Institute and its degree programme Atenisi University. University of the South Pacific (USP) uses the term 'institute' for specialised centres for research, consulting, short courses, publishing, etc., rather than on regular teaching programmes. The 1989 review of Cook Islands education recommended the establishment of a Cook Islands Institute of Higher Education to incorporate the present teacher training, nursing, technical and other programmes. Its implementation is now being planned.

The Government of Fiji is considering changing the name of FIT to Fiji Polytechnic, and raising some of its courses to degree level. The term 'polytechnic' is new in the region, but Western Samoa has recently decided to upgrade its Technical Institute and rename it as a Polytechnic. This term is widely used elsewhere and seems appropriate for such multi-faceted, technology oriented institutions.

The term 'school' is used by some universities and colleges (e.g. USP and SICHE) for a component division, for example, of social sciences or engineering. Others (e.g. UPNG) use the term 'faculty' for such divisions.

Some countries also use their secondary schools to provide adult education courses after hours. For example, Niue High School in 1990 was offering adults courses in English, Mathematics,

Geography, Art, Technical Drawing, Physics, Biology, Chemistry and Economics. The courses offered were at sixth form level (pre-university), and fees were charged, whereas they are not for secondary school children.

All the above terms have been adopted from other countries, but even in the countries they were borrowed from the meanings keep changing. In the Pacific as elsewhere in the world, the names used are politically sensitive and important.

The region covered

There are several 'regions' in the South Pacific, which are becoming ever more complex and over-lapping. Some regions commonly referred to are:

- the culture areas (Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia)
- the area of the South Pacific Commission (the islands nations and territories which come within this are listed in the two boxes below)
- the South Pacific Forum (13 islands states plus Australia and New Zealand for some purposes but not others)
- the University of the South Pacific region (South Pacific Forum countries minus Papua New Guinea, the Federated States of Micronesia, Australia and New Zealand – but plus Tokelau)
- the Asia-Pacific region (this region is important for United Nations agencies, and increasingly for other purposes – it includes all islands except French and American territories plus Asia)
- the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) region (a new and probably very important grouping involving the major countries of the Pacific Rim plus a single representative of the South Pacific Forum in a limited capacity).

Our terms of reference speak of post-secondary education in the islands of the 'South Pacific (with special reference to Commonwealth countries)'. These are, in order of population:

	Population 1991 (est)	Area(sq.km)	GNP per person* 1991 US\$
Commonwealth			
Papua New Guinea	4,013,000	462,243	US\$ 820
Solomon Islands	326,000	29,790	560
Western Samoa	168,000	2,934	930
Vanuatu	156,000	11,880	1,120
Tonga	100,000	700	1,100
Kiribati	71,000	720	750
Cook Islands	17,000	240	1,500
Nauru	10,000	21	10,230
Tuvalu	9,000	26	650
Niue	2,000	259	1,330
Norfolk Island	2,000	34	1,500
Tokelau	1,600	10	n.a.
Pitcairn Islands	60	5	n.a.
Non-Commonwealth			
Fiji	751,000	18,272	1,520
French Polynesia	200,000	3,265	7,840
New Caledonia	155,000	19,103	5,760
American Samoa	40,000	197	5,280
Wallis and Futuna	16,000	255	968

* Gross National Product per person per year is only an indicative figure. The figure changes continually. Various agencies and criteria of assessment show different figures.

(Main sources: Basic Statistical Data on Selected Countries with populations of less than 5 million, Commonwealth Secretariat, 1993; *Education in Small States*, Bray and Packer, Pergamon 1993)

The countries listed above are the states and territories of the tropical South Pacific, i.e. below the equator and above the Tropic of Capricorn. Several non-Commonwealth entities above the equator belong to the South Pacific Commission, the South Pacific Forum and/or other South Pacific organisations, and are relevant to this report. These include:

	Population 1991 (est)	Area(sq.km)	GNP per person* 1991 US\$
Guam	145,000	549	5,320
Federated States of Micronesia	102,000	701	1,500
Marshall Islands	45,000	180	2,500
Northern Marianas	21,000	471	14,000
Palau	14,000	494	3,000

New Zealand

New Zealand is smaller in area (268,000 sq.km.) and population (3,400,000) than Papua New Guinea, but larger than the other islands states. New Zealand is the only Commonwealth Pacific islands state outside the tropics: it has a more complex economy, higher educational standards, a predominantly non-indigenous population (nearly 80 per cent European), and its per capita income (about US\$8,000) is higher than most. New Zealand interacts a great deal in education with other South Pacific islands. The gap between them in income, education levels, political interests and other factors is narrowing. (The increasingly common political and other interests, including education, are elaborated in Henderson, 1990; Crocombe 1992.)

Hawaii

The other relevant group is Hawaii, whose population of 1,200,000 has about the same 20 per cent Polynesian component as New Zealand. The remainder is mainly Asian, secondly European. Though only one sixteenth the size of New Zealand (16,641 sq.km.), the per capita income is higher at US\$14,000. A state of USA, it is a Pacific islands group which interacts a lot with other island groups in education. Commonwealth Pacific countries are making increasing use of Hawaii for post-secondary education.

Fiji

Fiji was a member of the Commonwealth until 1987. It may rejoin, although an official announcement in April 1991 said this is not intended. Fiji became heavily involved in regional post-secondary education while it was a member of the Commonwealth. Had it not been the centre of the United Kingdom's empire in the Pacific, much less would have been concentrated there.