

Multi-Stakeholder Analysis of Fiji's Climate Change Certification Program

Anuantaeka Takinana

Key words: stakeholders, communication, climate change resilience education, higher education

1. Research Background and Objectives

Climate Change Education at Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) is recognized as critical to promote the knowledge and competencies that students and their communities will require to mitigate or adapt to worsening impacts. However, creating effective curricula for courses is considered to be difficult because of the complexity and the multi-disciplinary nature of climate change study. In 2016, after Fiji was devastated by Cyclone Winston, the first category 5 cyclone to be recorded in the South Pacific, Fiji embarked on creating the first tertiary-level climate change resilience course in the Pacific, with the goal of making local communities more climate change resilient. Course development was intended to include local knowledge and contributions from various stakeholders. This research seeks to identify the participating stakeholders, their roles and the impacts they have on the program and other stakeholders. It also seeks to investigate the experience and opinions about the course of the students who are the first cohort to participate in this course. The research includes recommendations for addressing stakeholder inequalities in the program using the multi-stakeholder platform for communication amongst stakeholders in the program.

2. Research Methodology

An online survey was conducted with the first cohort of students for the Certificate 3 and 4 of the Climate Change Resilience programs at the University of the South Pacific. Eighteen out of 22 students in total responded to the survey. The goal of the survey was to obtain the opinions of the students about the contents of the course and its implementation. After the survey, 13 semi-structured interviews were conducted with other stakeholders identified in the climate change resilience program, comprising 8 students, 2 consultants, 1 facilitator and 2 members of the Fiji Higher Education Commission. The interview transcripts were analyzed using Atlas Ti, an analytical software that can highlight word patterns. In addition, participatory observation by allowed the author to observe a similar process of course development (for Certificate 3 and 4) while assisting in the development of the Certificate 1 program for Climate Change Resilience.

3. Results and Conclusion

The results identified inequality amongst the stakeholders in program development and implementation with the business sector being the most influential in deciding course objectives and content. This resulted in a changed focus of the course, from increasing climate change resilience in communities towards helping students to promote climate change resilience in their workplace. Moreover, the inequality amongst stakeholders made it difficult for them to communicate suggested improvements in the course. In addition, it was found that the students and the local community had no involvement in course development. Students felt that the course contained too many assignments and was excessively workplace oriented. This contributed towards their losing motivation in pursuing further studies about climate change resilience at higher education levels. It was suggested that a multi-stakeholder platform be initiated to allow all the stakeholders to discuss improvements to the program.