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**Ripples in the pond: assessing the impact of a growing NFP management programme
in NZ and the Pacific**

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1. Abstract

This paper will report progress on the development of research examining the impact of Unitec NZ's Graduate Diploma in Not for Profit Management (GDipNPM) which began in 1996 as New Zealand's first tertiary sector management programme for not for profit sector managers and leaders. The programme is now offered in seven centres across New Zealand (NZ) and four countries in the Pacific Islands. Students are all in paid or voluntary management roles in not-for-profit (NFP) organisations, and undertake their study part-time over two to five years, in short block courses of interactive, classroom based learning. There is a strong focus in the programme on application of learning to their not for profit organisational challenges and context.

The long term aim is to build a framework, using social accounting and audit methodology for the ongoing monitoring of three major levels of impact of the programme:

- on individual learning for participants in the programme
- on organisational development in the participants' organisations
 - on not for profit sector identity and development

The study draws on research about learning organisations and capacity building and identifies practical ways in which these can be tested with the programme's key stakeholders over an extended period of time. The aim of the study is to inform the ongoing development of Unitec NZ's GDipNPM, and gain understanding of critical factors affecting successful professional development, NFP organisational development and NFP sector capacity building.

2. BACKGROUND

This paper will report progress on the development of research examining the impact of Unitec NZ's Graduate Diploma in Not for Profit Management (GDipNPM) which began in 1996 as New Zealand's first tertiary sector management programme for not for profit sector managers and leaders.

Our programme is like a fast track bachelors degree for people with experience as NFP sector managers and leaders, the equivalent of one year full time study in a final year of an undergraduate or first degree. Students undertake the programme part time over 2- 5 years or more in short block courses of 3 – 5 days of interactive, classroom based learning, followed up by written assignments applying the learning to their current NFP organization context and challenges. We are based in a Community Studies not the Business school, with a clear community development philosophy of working with and for the sector. Started in Auckland 10 years ago, we have now spread to six other NZ cities, with around 250 NZ students involved in any one year. Since 1999 we have had an important development partnership with PIANGO (Pacific Island Association of NGOs) and latterly the Melanesian NGO Centre for Leadership delivering the programme across Melanesia and Polynesia, and developing Pacific capacity to lead and manage this programme in the future.

Our theory of change underlying our programme is:

- transformative learning for individual, reflective practitioners who build their own competencies as managers and commitment to values-based leadership in their organisations and in the wider NFP sector
- this learning transfers to their NFP organisations through the work-based entry criteria for the programme, classroom application of concepts to real issues, promotion of learning organisation approaches, the assessment activities students complete and the personal growth of confidence and networks as practitioners
- NFP sector identity is strengthened through the networking within the classroom that provides a unique forum across the sector's own "silos", the leadership development that the programme supports and the growth of a body of information, knowledge, wisdom and shared language about NFP management in NZ and overseas.

That is, our vision is to have an impact beyond the individual student, in enhancing organisational and sector capacity. NFP sector capacity building has many strategies – training, mentoring, organisational development advice, research, information dissemination, advocacy to name some key ingredients. Our particular focus at Unitec NZ's Graduate Diploma in NFP Management is on providing a quality, relevant, accessible learning community for NFP organisation managers and leaders, and to make accessible the knowledge that is accumulated in the process. Our primary

target audience is small to medium sized not for profit organisation's managers and team leaders. Our core values of access, relevance, process, ownership and partnership are strongly embedded in the culture of our programme, for example:

- Accessibility

- Flexible admission – students don't have to have a prior degree. Experience in the NFP sector is the key entry criteria
- Scholarships available – provides fee subsidy that recognises voluntary and often low paid work in the sector
- Students set the pace for completion – no time limit for how many years to finish. Minimum usually two years. Average is three to five years

- Relevance

- Programme designed with and for the NFP sector
- Students are all in a NFP work context – paid or voluntary
- Every course and assessment is focused on application of the learning to student's organisational and cultural context
- Tutors are all highly experienced NFP managers themselves
 - Balance of theoretical knowledge and practical skills
 - Discussion of current NFP sector issues within the course

- Process

- Student-centred learning
- Supportive, interactive adult learning for a range of learning styles
 - Critical thinking encouraged
 - Reflective practitioner competencies encouraged
- Intellectually rigorous, content rich – fresh, challenging but relaxed
- Inclusive learning community with culture of tutors and students, teaching and learning together

- Ownership
 - NFP sector managers and leaders have power to influence programme content and direction
 - Unitec is ultimately responsible for programme quality
 - Knowledge gained from the programme to be shared with the sector
- Partnership
 - Active partnerships with sector leadership and capacity building organisations to support ongoing feedback about training needs
 - Programme marketing and promotion by sector organisations
 - Joint initiatives on new projects e.g. research clearing house

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of the study is *prove* the impact of the programme and *improve* the effectiveness of what we are doing.

The study aims to build a framework for the ongoing monitoring of three major levels of impact of the programme:

- on individual learning for participants in the programme
- on organisational development in the participants' organisations
 - on not for profit sector identity and development

It will inform the ongoing development of Unitec NZ's GDipNPM, and understanding of critical factors affecting successful professional development, NFP organisational development and NFP sector capacity building.

Key objectives of the research :

- to take programme monitoring and evaluation beyond input, process and output measurements to a focus on outcomes and impact in relation to our vision, mission and values
- to role model what we teach about values based management, social accounting and audit, leadership, organisational change, innovation and reflective practice
- to provide evidence of ongoing investment returns for our external funders, our students, the NFP sector, Unitec senior management and other stakeholders
- to contribute to understanding of what makes for an effective combination of capacity building interventions for NFP organisations
- to provide ongoing live, accurate and honest information about our achievements and areas for improving our performance as a learning organisation, striving to keep our core values and objectives to the forefront
 - to build effective strategies to support NFP sector practitioners as students on our programme in their application of their learning to their NFP organisations
 - to allow stakeholders, especially students and the NFP sector to affect the culture and influence the policy/direction of the programme
 - to stimulate, open and honest, internal and external appraisal and role model this for students as a key part of effective NFP management practice

METHODOLOGY

The monitoring and evaluation frameworks of academic institutions like Unitec typically focus on inputs (e.g. student numbers attending courses), process (e.g. student satisfaction with courses) and outputs (e.g. student retention, completion and graduation data). While there are robust quality assurance processes for moderation, programme review and industry liaison, there are less systematic frameworks in place for the measurement of outcomes and impact. The same is true for most of the NFP organisations that our students work with. We are still focused more on measuring financial bottomlines and more tangible quantitative, immediate outputs whereas mission, vision and values are the long term bottomlines we also need to be monitoring for (often less tangible and qualitative) outcomes and impact.

On our programme we teach social accounting and audit methodology as one approach for grappling with these challenging issues. We say that “an approximate measure of the right things is more meaningful than an exact measure of the wrong things”. Since 2004 we have been slowly building the elements of a more robust social accounting and audit framework for our programme’s monitoring and evaluation. John Pearce (2005) describes what this approach is about :

Social accounting and accounting and audit allows a social enterprise to build on its existing monitoring, documentation and reporting systems to develop a process whereby it can account fully for its social, environmental and economic impacts, report on its performance and draw up an action plan to improve on that performance. Through the social accounting and accounting and audit process it can understand its impact on the surrounding community and on its beneficiaries and build accountability by engaging with its key stakeholders. In this way it can prove its value and improve its performance.

Social accounting is not really like external evaluation. Rather, it is for social and community enterprises themselves to identify their values and their social, environmental and economic objectives and take responsibility for reporting fully on them, including consulting with key stakeholders. Social Accounting and Accounting and audit provides the process for social enterprises and other organisations to measure how well they are achieving their overall objectives and living up to their values. It accurately describes what a social enterprise is achieving and allows it to demonstrate to others what it is and what it does. It assesses social or community enterprises in a holistic way.

The table below provides an outline of the social accounting and audit framework we have developed for our programme to assess the social objectives with qualitative, quantitative and narrative information from key stakeholders and programme data.

Bold italics indicate information not currently collected and unbolded italics information collected by not fully analysed

Objectives (social, environ mental and economy)	Activities	Social Bookkeeping Records/Indicators	
		Quantitative	Qualitative

<p>1 To support a professionally skilled and effective NFP management workforce with a clear commitment to values-based leadership and their own reflective practice.</p>	<p>by: Providing high quality Graduate Diploma programme Providing short courses for key target markets Building ongoing graduate alumni Supporting a highly competent teaching team Actively promoting the programme through sector and other networks</p>	<p>Numbers attending GDip, short courses and graduate events (target = average of 20 per course/event) Proportion of students completing GDip courses (target = 90%) Numbers graduating (target = at least 20 per year) Timetable and scholarship support enables all students to access two courses per year and most students to access three or more courses a year Course evaluations show consistently over 80% satisfaction with course quality and training delivery <i>Students drawn from wide range of NFP sector, and especially small, medium sized organisations.</i> <i>Teaching staff all have strong NFP management background, excellent adult teaching and learning competencies</i></p>	<p>Course evaluations indicate high level of student satisfaction with relevance of content and effectiveness of teaching processes. <i>Scholarship reports from NZ students supported document impact on individuals and their organisations</i> Periodic research with graduates indicates ongoing application of competencies and knowledge learned on programme and commitment to ongoing learning <i>Scholarship reports from employers/Boards provide independent assessment of programme impact</i> <i>Research with Pacific students documents impact on individuals and their organisations</i></p>
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<p>2 To build a body of knowledge and wisdom about effective Aotearoa/Pacific models and practice in NFP management.</p>	<p>by: Encouraging tutor and student critical thinking, debate and research to weave indigenous, academic and practice knowledge and wisdom into models of effective practice. Developing a collaborative clearing house for tangata whenua, community and voluntary sector research for publication and dissemination of this knowledge</p>	<p><i>Number of Aotearoa/Pacific articles in programme</i> <i>Books of Readings</i> <i>Number of student and tutor papers written, presented, published that articulate new models of practice for Aotearoa/Pacific context</i></p> <p><i>Clearing house underway with clear sector ownership of governance structure</i></p> <p>Number of papers published and disseminated through the clearing house</p>	<p>Peer review from academic colleagues internationally indicates programme is keeping well up to date with international models of effective NFP management practice</p> <p>Course evaluations from Aotearoa/Pacific students affirm relevance of programme to their context. <i>Teaching staff demonstrate their own commitment to reflective practice through engagement in research and ongoing professional development</i></p> <p>Student and staff research published receives favourable reviews from students and from NFP and other sector stakeholders on clearing house feedback mechanism</p>
<p>3 To influence NFP sector organisation's investment in effective management capacity and good governance practices.</p>	<p>By: Targeting the teaching programme to current practitioners; classroom and assessment activities applying concepts to current organisational issues Engagement with sector events and activities</p>	<p>Number of students attending courses Number of students completing courses</p> <p><i>Number of invitations to present at NFP sector or organisational events or in the wider news media</i></p>	<p><i>Scholarship reports from NZ students supported and their Boards document impact on individuals and their organisations, and shift in organisational budgets for management, governance, research and professional development</i></p> <p>Develop organisational assessment tool that students complete at beginning and end of programme?</p>

<p>4 To contribute to a clear NFP sector identity built on strong relationships (within and with other sectors), shared values and vision.</p>	<p>By: Providing a learning community where students come together across the sector, share and debate key concepts and issues, learn new skills, develop networks and some shared language Supporting formal advisory structures for the programme (NZ and Pacific) comprised of sector representatives Formal partnerships with capacity building organisations Engagement with and leadership contribution to sector events and activities</p>	<p>Number of students/graduates/staff involved in sector leadership roles</p> <p>Community Studies Advisory Committee (NZ) and Pacific Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting regularly and satisfied their advice is being listened to/acted upon</p> <p><i>Number of formal partnerships with local and regional organisations focused on working with the NFP sector</i></p> <p><i>Number of invitations/roles with sector events and activities undertaken by staff</i></p>	<p>Increasing breadth of sector participation in the programme</p> <p>Advisory groups (NZ and Pacific) confirm current issues facing the NFP sector are being addressed through programme content and processes, or if not, agree ways to ensure they do</p> <p>Students/graduates/staff use programme concepts to inform sector discussions and activities</p> <p>Formal partners and lead sector organisations indicate value of Unitec programme input through annual consultations</p>
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In reviewing the existing monitoring and evaluation data for our programme, it was clear that adequate data is already available to demonstrate inputs (consistent growth of student numbers), process (high student satisfaction with the courses), and output measures (steady growth in graduate numbers, reasonable course completion rates). However very little data was available on outcomes and impacts for the students, their organisations or the wider sector.

As part of our 2004 programme evaluation project (Stafford 2004) a literature search was undertaken to find published work on evaluation of not-for-profit management training. Not surprisingly, very little literature was identified, although more recently an article by Kathleen Fletcher (2005) has added to this body of literature, focusing on the outcomes as perceived by graduates of three US NFP management programmes. This and other research in the wider world of management training evaluation, focus relatively little attention on measurement of impact on organisational learning, as compared to individual learning.

The most relevant piece of research uncovered by this literature search was by our Australian colleagues (Dovey et al 2001) and highlighted the importance of contracting with the student's organisation at a senior management or Board level, if the student and the organisation were to gain the maximum impact from the management training programme. The use of "performance stories" as an "evolutionary approach to organisational learning" through collecting stories of change was also suggested as an effective process for not only documenting the organisational impact but also empowering the organisation and the student to embed their individual and organisational learning. (Davis, R.1998 and Dart, J. 1999)

For the purposes of this study, Popper and Lipshitz's (2000) definition of organisational learning as "a discernable change in the way an organisation undertakes its processes" will be used.

Evaluation research conducted in 2004 with graduates and other students who left after completing a small number of courses, identified initial findings regarding impact on individual and organisational learning. Programme reviews by Unitec (2004) and an external evaluation of the Pacific programme (2005) provide further evidence. An analysis of reports from scholarship recipients from 2004 and 2005 adds to the understanding of NZ student perspectives on impact. A debriefing workshop in 2005 with Papua New Guinea students provides the initial indicators of impact in the Pacific. This paper summarising findings from these sources.

Kaplan's (1999) writing on capacity building highlights the often intangible aspects of capacity (context understanding; vision, strategies, organisational culture) that can be even more important than the more visible, tangible dimensions such as material resources, skills, structures and systems in NFP development. Kaplan's seven levels of capacity have been used to analyse the open ended self reported data gathered to date.

There is potential for research bias with students and their organisations wanting to report only the positive impacts of the programme to their scholarship funder and programme staff. Analysis of scholarship report data to date shows themes consistent with independent research findings by Stafford in 2004, suggesting this bias factor is not a major risk to the integrity of the findings. Furthermore, there is a programme culture of always encouraging constructive feedback on how we can improve as a learning organisation. In our experience, students freely offer honest, open feedback about both positive impacts and issues of concern. The programme reviews and other data sources provide further evidence and data about both strengths and areas for programme

improvement. Social accounting and audit encourages a culture of open reporting and we believe it is useful for us to role model this with our students and the scholarship funders.

SOCIAL ACCOUNTING AND AUDIT FINDINGS TO DATE

Quantitative data on student enrolment, retention, graduation and satisfaction

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
NZ students	26	37	113	138	161	182	179	183	219	247
Pacific students				18	71	84	115	100	96	130
Total students	26	37	113	156	232	267	296	284	315	377
Total EFTS (programme)			16.2	22.2	28.5	33.4	40.8	46.1	53.4	63.5
Total EFTS (short courses)									6.5	6
Graduates			7	6	1	6	7	7	17	23

Student satisfaction feedback scores for courses have been consistently high – rarely below 80% and commonly above 90% - from the end of course evaluations.

High student satisfaction has been confirmed by the independent evaluation research by Stafford (2004). One would expect high student *d*issatisfaction rates with students not continuing on the programme. Instead Stafford found that, 90% those surveyed who had not continued to complete the full qualification and 94% graduates, had their expectations met or exceeded. Of the 29 students not continuing in the programme who were interviewed, 23 said their specific learning needs were met, three said their expectations were exceeded, two said the course partly met their expectations and one left because of dissatisfaction with course quality. Most of their reasons for not continuing with the programme were due to personal circumstances, lack of time or funding, course availability in their area. Many commented that they came to access particular knowledge and skills, achieved that purpose and were not ever intending to complete the full qualification. This group has now been termed by the programme “the dropins” to counter the potentially negative perception of them as “dropouts”.

Of the 18 graduates participating in the 2004 study, 8 graduates said their expectations were exceeded, 9 said their expectations were met and 1 said their expectations were not met. This one graduate referred, as several graduates did, to the beginning years of the programme where some aspects of the programme were below standard. Improvements subsequent to student feedback were noted, with graduate students expressing confidence in this continuing.

Student completion rates for courses are historically in the 80- 100% range, with courses taught in the Pacific more often in the 50-80% range. The timeframe to complete course requirements is longer than ideal for Pacific Island students and we are currently looking at strategies to improve course assessment completion rates.

Graduation numbers are not high in relation to the number of students participating . This is due students taking on average 3- 5 years to complete their studies. There is no time limit and students pace themselves in relation to their workload. Course availability has slowed the pace of Pacific student's graduation due to funding difficulties in previous years but this has now been addressed following the 2005 programme review.

Qualitative data from NZ scholarship recipients' reports on impact on themselves and their organisations .

Scholarship reports from 41 students in 2004 and 54 students in 2005 have been analysed using Kaplan's seven levels of organisational capacity to identify specific outcomes and impacts on personal/professional development, organisational improvement and NFP sector engagement. These reports are provided at the end of the year and provide an opportunity for the students to look back on the application of their learning in a different way than immediate post-course evaluation surveys. Until now, no format has been provided for these reports, apart from a request for a report outlining "how the scholarship has benefited you and your organisation."

Similar, though less detailed comments were made by interviewees in Stafford's independent research in 2004 with graduates and students not continuing with the programme, which suggest that these findings are not unduly biased by any "please the funder" reporting.

Context and conceptual framework

Kaplan describes this as how the organisation makes sense of the world around them, its attitude and relationship to this world. Scholarship report feedback indicates that programme involvement for many students has

- widened their networks and involvement within the NFP sector,

- deepened their understanding of the distinctive nature of the sector and its organisations and its role in Aotearoa/NZ
- clarified understanding of where their organisation fits locally, nationally and within the wider NFP sector
 - supported their engagement with national, regional or local leadership, policy development, advocacy, training and service development roles
- encouraged an approach of “ seeing the national and bigger picture/context” and taking action on key sector issues, such as the new charities legislation

For example:

I have a deeper understanding of the sector and its role in NZ society “which is helping planning, strategy and expectations”

“I now recognise threats to change in funding policy and understand the implications of actions of other funders outside my sector”

So lucky to be doing Legal Issues paper when Charities Bill was accepting submissions. I learnt the skills to enter a submission even though originally the thought terrified me

Opportunity for discussing issues facing other NFP organisations throughout NZ. More often than not these are the same issues facing SLS,, just different circumstances. The discussions which ensue are of immense value and have directly helped my development as a leader within SLS

Clear vision, mission, values

Staff and Board conversations about values, their alignment with vision and mission and getting a clearer sense of organisational purpose were commonly mentioned in student reports:

For example:

The Culture and Values course has had a significant impact on my role in assisting school boards – I am able to guide them in identifying core functions, strengths and weaknesses, values and vision and whether they operate in line with those values in updating their strategic plan

Worked with management and committee to identify core values, linked directly to vision and purpose, and always use our core values as a measuring tool to see whether or not the direction we are going in aligns with our values; also listen carefully to stakeholders' values and feedback

I believe our organisation might very well have folded if I had not embarked on the study through Unitec at the time I did. Our situation was dire and I certainly had lost hope. Now we are growing and there is a sense of new purpose and direction

Strategies for achieving the vision

Students identified practical strategies they have developed as a result of their study, relating to

- funding strategies and methods e.g.

Time and opportunity to reflect on ethics of choosing funders and debate use of gaming trust funds

- developing monitoring, evaluation including social accounting and audit approaches

Developed monitoring tool to report progress towards strategic goals to board on monthly basis

Developed a plan for some evaluation research which I will be undertaking in our area and it could be extended to other areas in NZ

- community needs analysis

Community research course enabled me to plan a community development approach in a formative evaluation and needs analysis to be undertaken by the organisation

- employment policies, job design, training and development initiatives

Helped analyse key areas of the organisation that needed to be addressed, my role and how to split off roles for a new administration officer position

Team building session developed for the Small Team Leadership course is now part of national training programme for 400 volunteers annually

- sorting governance frameworks

Governance course particularly helpful in assisting member organisations when trying to unpack and resolve issues affecting management and governance

- improved stakeholder relationship management

Developed PR strategy for presentation to the Board

Developed process for improving consumer participation in decisionmaking about service provision

Developed new targeted approach to reach families in need of our service but who have not previously had access to it

- organisational reviews and change management,

Helped me to analyse the stage of development that our organisation was at

Enabled me to make sense of my role as a paid worker in an organisation where there has been a major shift from voluntary only to an integrated model of both paid and voluntary staff

Cemented learning about appreciative inquiry in leading organisational change and applying these approaches in internal and inter-sectoral collaboration meetings

Organisation has undergone period of growth and development and programme has been invaluable in assisting me to manage this period of change; networking and learning from other students also valuable as I work in a geographically isolated area. Peer supervision has continued on from management practicum course.

- legal structures

Used legal issues course to review legal areas our organisation needs to update on, and to prepare report for Board on merits of changing from an incorporated society to a charitable trust

- Financial accountability

Establishment of financial accountability measures

- Strategic planning

Was able, through the learning to lead the first strategic planning process for the organisation

Created strategic plan for next three years and re-established the mandate for the organisation through major stakeholder consultation process, informed by Culture and Values course work and Community Research course skills and concepts. This process enabled the organisation to plan for the next three years with confidence and also gave funders confidence to continue to fund the organisation at a point when the funding was in question.

Particularly noticeable in 2005 is a "second generation" of involvement – i.e. more than one student involved from the same organisation and this is adding to the impact

Self review within our team who have all done the Culture & Values course helped us all analyse our management styles, our position within the organisation, our core functions and accountabilities to different stakeholders

Achieving a "critical mass" of four people in the organisation driving forward change with confidence

Organisational culture

Student's comments indicate that the programme has assisted their understanding of their organisation's culture:

Clarified things I had sensed about the culture of my organisation but I had not known there could be alternatives; gave me the tools to analyse my organisation's culture and values in depth and identify structural and management strengths and the weaknesses, which create conflict between the stated values at management level and the unspoken culture at staff level. Use of metaphor was particularly appropriate for our organisation

Came to understand the tensions between myself and the organisation I worked for as I analysed the culture of the organisation

Culture and Values course sent me back to the founding documents of the organisation. As a Management team we re-evaluated our structure and how we work and interact together. We are embarking on an extension programme which will double the area of our premises...We now

have our values displayed on the wall of the reception area....the course has shown me again why we do what we do the way we do it.....has been invaluable.

Gave me an understanding of the differences from the private sector world I have come from, and to better understand my chosen new path, my organisation and enabled me to fully participate in the strategic planning as the organisation moves through change

In some instances the culture itself has been changed or been reinforced through these insights:

Increased understanding of difference in managing a NFP organisation; awareness of what it means to be a value-based organisation and facilitated a process of evaluating and revisiting the values of the organisation

Restructured the way we conduct our team meetings which was of immediate, tangible benefit to our team and the service we provide

Increased willingness of Board to commit to professional development

Introduced 0800 number to reinforce access value

Culture and Values course very timely with new manager coming in and was able to discuss organisational values and how these are reflected in our work practices. Also helped me strategise for my role in working on a collaborative, interagency project

We reinforced the importance of some of our rituals and looked for ways of improving what we do and how we do it

"The Graduate Diploma has added to my workload this year but it has also been the highlight of my year, shining new light on every aspect of the work I am doing. I have been wearing out myself and other staff, putting so many new ideas into practice, but the projects have been relevant, well thought out and badly needed. We are starting to see changes in the culture of our organisation. More hope is evident. We are moving forward....

Structure

The following selection of student comments reflect practical work on reviewing and changing organisational structures and processes as a result of their study including:

- Development and/or improvement of employment policies, performance management processes, job descriptions, performance indicators, employment agreements and health and safety practices,

Employment policies begun and particularly performance review-procedure has been adopted across entire organisation

New policy on employment and payment of tutors and volunteers; indepth clarification of employee vs independent contractor

Elements of peer review and "feedforward" technique used in our virtual team and proved helpful for team communication and support

Prepared draft health and safety policy, associated checklists, drug check procedures, pre-accounting and audit health checks and four staff training sessions of the requirements of the new Act

Series of projects to improve volunteer motivation and retention, including research with volunteering using skills from community research course

- Improved legal structures,

Change in legal structure from incorporated society to charitable trust

Development of constitutions

Review of constitution, making submissions and investigating legal position

- Preparation and/or review of a wide range of policies and procedures to ensure legality and currency

Policies and procedures being reviewed to ensure we and our member organisation have a code of practice that includes adherence to Human Rights Act 1991 and Human Rights Amendment Act 2001

Policies for the national training programme have been developed

New policies adopted by regional organisation

Reviewed our whole structure and now sorting out policies and job descriptions, guidelines, working relationships and strategies within the organisation

- Review and clarification of governance roles, structures and practices

Undertaken organisational review and developed set of financial policies for an organisation I am chair of and applying this process to other community organisations I work with

Helped us define clear roles of governance and management; more effective governance board; more responsible and focused committee

New and more comprehensive board policies and processes, such as succession planning, governance approach and an annual board planning cycle

Formed two governance sub committees – one on policy development; other on finances

Developed Board manual and induction process

Developed our own unique Governance models which are now used more widely as a national model

Meeting agenda system improved and resulted in more focus and achievement at those meetings

- financial systems revised and developed/upgraded policies, procedures, budgets

Financial management systems totally revised and policies re accumulated funds, contingent liability fund and asset replacement fund now in place

Developed financial risk management plan for Board

Computerised accounts and improved accuracy of financial statements

Better accounting policies and procedures to improve our ongoing viability. For example, we have never had policies on keeping 90 days funds in reserve.

Skills/Knowledge

Students comments reflect a sense of growing confidence and competence in professional skills/knowledge around

- accounting and finances,

Understand much more of accounting terminology; order and purpose of the accounting and audit cycle and its relevance; how to read financial statements

More confident as chair to keep eye on financial health of org and ask the right questions to delve deeper

Improved ability to research and analyse financial information to identify trends, inform planning and analyse the impact of decisionmaking

Now able to understand, analyse and question a set of accounts and accounting and audit reports

Able to assist groups undergoing financial problems with much better understanding of issues and options for action

Feel I could engage in a conversation re my organisation's accounts with a reasonable level of understanding

Create and prioritise budgets in line with strategic direction

Understanding the difference between for profit and not for profit accounting and reporting

- how to address funding needs of the organisation,

Immediate practical benefit in making funding applications and accountability reports; understanding government contracting procedures and skills needed to negotiate contracts

Stocktake of organisation's assets and resources a very useful tool

Improved understanding of funder capture, funder expectations, applications, accountabilities and importance of relationship building

Learned why my funding applications weren't successful and how to do them in the proper way; contract development - the pitfalls and potential

Strategic skills with a focus on revenue and building membership, diversification of funding

- managing and motivating staff and volunteers and their development,

Understanding what motivates volunteers and different reward approaches and my own motivation as well

Passed on learning on staff and volunteer development to other organisations in my training role for other organisations

Training sessions for members including supervision, support and advocacy

Better understanding of nature of volunteering

Measuring performance and analysing my personal performance

- internal and external stakeholder communication

Understanding of theory that informs stakeholder relationship management

New skills in promoting the organisation to the media, six thinking hats, able to create an effective promotions plan, planning for a crisis, PR strategy

- effective governance,

I was elected on to the Board of Directors for the northern region, managing membership portfolio, implemented improvements based upon skills and ideas learnt on courses e.g. increase awareness of importance of funding diversity; legal issues, importance of succession planning and governance training

Can speak with greater authority and confidence when assisting member organisation's trustees about the range of models and approaches to governance – not just the Carver model which is promoted by our national organisation; understand strengths and weaknesses of other models too

- social accounting and audit,

Social Accounting and audit knowledge, tools and resources

Understanding of how to work with social accounting and audit concepts

- research,

From the research course I now feel able to do research in a more ordered and structured way

Indepth understanding of the issues, options, techniques for research and importance of undertaking robust ethical research

How to use internet more efficiently

More confidence in legal analysis and research

- facilitation, training, teamwork, making group presentations

Small Team Leadership was one of the most useful, practical and beneficial courses I have ever attended – tools to deal with workplace conflict; hugely increased confidence in facilitating in a

range of settings, enabling me to provide training for other agencies with backup of effective teaching techniques

Role of clear responsibilities, problem solving, consensus decisionmaking in team work

Confidence, methods and frameworks to provide effective training to others

As a result of the skills learnt on Small Team Leadership I have run the most adventurous and successful (as rated by participants) workshop of my career and will be presenting an overview of it at the first ever national summit for our field next year

I think more creatively about difficult, but unavoidable issues where teams are concerned – such as conflict and meetings

Exercises, motivating ideas and skills for my training role and for effective teamwork, facilitation skills

- being lifelong learners

Developed significantly as a reflective learner, using this style in my day to day practice to develop my thinking and use the learning opportunities in everyday situations

Spurred me on to embark on masters of international communication

Sharpening my critical thinking skills

Overcame key barrier for getting started on study

- their role as a manager and leader

Developed my skills as a leader and have become more confident of my abilities

Beginning to understand my own leadership style – what's effective and in need of further development

Knowledge and confidence to contribute to a Board

Gave me new tools to help me look at my own management style from which I am adapting to be a better manager

How to look for and cope with different situations that arise with cultural differences

More organised, more knowledgeable, more confidence, more ability to cope and be more adaptable when situations arise

Peer mentoring – appreciated being “toughened up to be a manager, being challenged to make the hard calls to ensure the organisation comes first. This support has been invaluable and I am not sure I could have received it in any other way.”

Time management - improving own time and work management style/skills

Confidence increased in making decisions, imparting knowledge gained and contributing to organisational growth. I have developed inner resourcefulness and self-critical appreciation of the organisation' practice

For me each paper seemed like discovering a new land. Having finished every new paper I felt my confidence was (and still is) growing stronger....

Strategic thinking and inclusive planning

Time out to reflect, consider relevant research and to see/analyse my situation more clearly, put me in touch with valuable network of people, keeps me up to date with sector issues, use my learning for other community orgs involved with as well

Small, rurally isolated agency – helps to meet other service providers and share experiences. I now know the wheel does not need reinventing People share their knowledge freely and the provision of new services is made a lot easier as people share their knowledge and say what worked for them

Concepts such as social capital has generated a vital change in my approach to the organisation

Material resources

In some instances, students reported having used their study to directly increase the material resources of their organisation, mainly in terms of

- funding,

Developed a programme to have three very strong components to our organisation's funding structure which enables us to achieve financial security through diversification. This fits the organisations bigger picture of the board moving from management to governance and our strategic plan that is currently being developed

Securing funding for administration, salaries and operational costs

Securing funding for interagency collaboration and policy development

Developed comprehensive funding strategy focusing on membership donations

Developed funding plan for organisation and already a key local trust has signalled interest in funding some of the projects since viewing the plan

Used assignment in organising funding and planning very successful training day which will be used again; organisation is chronically underfunded and injection of new approaches and ideas was inspiring and encouraging in what sometimes seems like an uphill job

Worked on long term financial stability of the organisation's funding base

Now have a greater focus on our contract management

- paid and volunteer staff capacity

We have a funding person and an administrative assistant for the first time in 7 years which is a huge boost

Used class exercise on writing an effective recruitment message and got 13 replies (compared to 3 previously) and ended up with 5 new trained volunteer budget advisers, the first successful recruiting campaign in three years

Applied learning from Volunteerism course and increased our volunteers from 5 to 15

Qualitative data from PNG student's reflection workshop July 2005

The report of this gathering of 16 participants commented on the impact of the programme or key concepts that had influenced them and their organisations:

- Ability to distinguish between the culture of the profit making and the not for profit making sector.
- Insight into practical tools needed to manage the organisations, for example: Financial Literacy
 - Insights and tools to assist the governance of organisations For example,

The 10 rules of Governance derived from one of the courses were made available to colleagues who in turn reflected on them and said that the information was very vital to their work as members of the Boards in their respective organisations

- The "Culture & Values" course had made a particularly clear impact on clarifying the values of the individuals and that of the organisation. In some instances this has been taken back and talked about within their organisation to create a shared understanding of personal and organisational values.

The people now understand why they are doing what they are doing. Such key persons in the organisations like the Directors were also able to understand their own values and the organisational values..

- Impact depended on the influence the NGO leaders and Managers had on their staff and stakeholders and how individuals instigate the changes they want to see happen in their organisations.

One participant stated that after the courses, she is now able to see clearly the vision, mission, goals and the objectives and this has helped with the organisation's directions and plans. The course also helped her realise that it was perfectly okay to use traditional Melanesian ways of management in the working environment today. She gave an example of how she had used a traditional sugarcane breaking ceremony to help resolve a conflict in her organisation. This took away the hostility between the two conflicting groups and soon all the people were able to express their concerns and problems objectively without hurting each other.

- Another participant commented on how the "Community funding" course taught him not to be too carried away with the pride of always trying to be financially independent but to tap into places where resources are available.

The course also stressed for me the concept of being accountable to all the stakeholders. The GDP introduced the concept of Funder capture. The students are aware of this so it was stated that the challenge was to educate donors.

The Papua New Guinea (PNG) group then discussed constraints to successful application of the learning from their experience. While participants believed the application of the learning to their different organisations could be successful, there is still a struggle due to the formal and western system of education they have in place in PNG today. In this formal system, the teachers teach the students to think within the box, according to the western theories and practices. The GDipMPM programme is challenging students to both understand often complicated western systems and structures and at the same time work out how to weave what is useful from this world with traditional Melanesian way of management. This requires critical and creative thought which is breaking new ground in both the approach to education and to building new knowledge and wisdom. This is probably the deepest constraint the students and the programme face.

Some of the other constraints identified included:

- The power to influence change from within their role in the organisations
- Busyness – especially after time away from the organisation for the training
- NGOs established by the donors lacking their own focus and direction.

PNG student's suggestions for improvements included:

- Targeting participants for the training programme who can influence change - growth and development for their organisation – directly or indirectly
- Use of NGO internships for short intervals of 6-7 weeks to influence people's thinking in a different way
- Develop a clearer monitoring and evaluation system to identify best practices and gaps in the delivery or the follow-up needed on the GDipNPM programme. A monitoring exercise could also help the students when they are back in their own organisations who are trying to implement what they learnt.
- The public sector was also seen as a potential target audience so that they get an insight into the NGO way of management of the not for profit sector.
- Targeting curricula of local universities and development of the training materials for the upper level of the primary school students, could also assist in creating this wider climate of understanding.
- Proper and effective documentation of the rich lessons being learnt in the GDipNPM. There were very good stories of practices, sound practices that have been used with very positive results – these stories could be shared via the internet once documented.
- Ongoing encouragement of NGO leaders to continue to be assertive and say no to directives from funders.
- Support for students to complete assignments which is often the beginning of concrete plans to apply the learning.

Areas for improvement identified by the NZ programme evaluation and review processes, and a more recent NZ based strategic planning exercise:

Ongoing barriers for access identified were time commitment for small organisations with few paid staff; finance (although a significant pool of scholarship funding goes some way towards addressing this), access for students in remote areas; and the rate at which courses can be accessed in some geographic areas.

Main areas for improvement identified were programme turnaround time for assignment marking; the possible need for a milestone award as early exit option for “dropins”; some content areas for strengthening around leadership, conflict management, financial sustainability; some interest in more web-based learning opportunities; increase reach of programme to Maori, Pacific and minority ethnic groups and parts of the NFP sector not well represented in the student community; improved student communication between courses; maintaining links with graduates; building a greater role in research and finding strategies to increase the leverage of the programme on wider organisational change – especially to support students finding resistance/lack of support for implementation of improvements. Interestingly some students who received scholarship support felt this gave credibility to a board that was resistant. Overall there was a clear acknowledgement that staffing capacity needed to be strengthened for the programme to manage its current growth and these ongoing areas for development.

Areas for improvement identified by the Pacific programme review:

Growing Pacific ownership of the programme promotion, administration and development was a key underlying issue. This was always a development partnership, not a simple “export” of a NZ programme. It is part of a Pacific Indigenous Management Initiative vision of growing leadership and training capacity that can be passed on through lower level courses and mobile teams offering organisational development advice as well. Growing the capacity of PIANGO (Pacific Island Association of NGOs) and its members and the Melanesian NGO Centre for Leadership, to provide this leadership has and will continue to be a key focus. Already as a result of the review, a longer term funding commitment has enabled PIANGO to recruit a programme officer to coordinate this work, administrative guidelines have been drafted and a regional advisory committee re-established to oversee strategy and operations.

This is building a stronger base to address other key programme issues such as:

- Improving Pacific student support to complete assignments;
- Growing Pacific training capacity to eventually lead the programme themselves
- Reducing the length of time for students to complete

- Planning the programme courses further ahead

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The data provides some empirical evidence that our theory of change is grounded in reality. There is evidence of the development of individual's professional competencies, the capacity of organisations at all levels of Kaplan's model and of growing involvement in the wider NFP sector –both passing on learning to the regional and national levels of their organisation and engagement with sector issues like the charities legislation.

Constraints that limit this impact include:

- the student's positional power within the organisation to be able to influence change
- the time commitment needed to fully integrate ideas from a course in writing up a final assignment and then implement change
- the challenge of developing critical thinking abilities and engaging in participatory learning – especially where students have come from a culture with traditions of formal hierarchical learning
- the challenge of paving new ground, developing a new body of knowledge which aims to weave together indigenous and western, personal and professional, not for profit and management models

These findings suggest that as a programme we need to keep looking for ways to leverage more support to students as they engage in organisational change. As a first step, the methodology for the next stage of our social accounting and audit research will use the scholarship funding application process, approval letter and reporting process to increase the communication with and commitment from the student's Board. We are suggesting a similar process for the Pacific programme. If this approach is successful we will look at ways of contracting with all student's organisations – whether or not they are scholarship recipients.

The methodology will involve establishing a dialogue between the student, the Board and their staff discussing the significant changes that have occurred in the organisation, in the student's professional competencies and in their personal or organisational engagement with the wider sector through their time of involvement on the programme. We will also seek feedback about where they feel the programme's effectiveness can be improved and what other key factors have assisted their individual and organisational learning over this period. A format to facilitate this "storytelling" has been provided to all 2006 NZ scholarship recipients who will report back at the end of this year. The aim is to not only serve a monitoring and evaluation role but also to assist the embedding of the learning through the sharing of the stories.

The time commitment struggle for underresourced organisations does not have any easy solutions. However it confirms our policy of having no time limit for students to complete their Graduate Diploma. We are always emphasising to the students that it is not simply a matter of how many courses they can find time to attend during the year, but what pace of change their organisation can sustain as well. We can also continue to be an advocate with the major funding organisations about the vital investment they need to make in organisational capacity not just service delivery outputs, if the ripple effects of this kind of learning are to be maximized.

Overall the feedback from NZ students indicates a significant impact on core professional competencies such as

- critical, generative thinking, analytical skills as individual managers/Boards/staff/teams
- research/enquiry/information literacy skills used to inform organisational decisions
- values based management and leadership with a clear understanding of how this informs the culture of the organisation
- reflective practitioner competencies, including self awareness and relationship management skills

We are actively working on strategies to further grow critical thinking and reflective practitioner capabilities in our students. This is especially important in working with Pacific and other cultures where the critical thinking culture of learning has not been the norm in their educational experience, but is a relevant issue for all our students. We are building in more direct teaching and learning approaches to this during our courses. For some students it is likely to require more student support strategies and communication between courses, to enable the reflection and thinking to continue once they go back to work. Our peer mentoring process which has been successfully applied to a management practicum course has the potential to be applied more widely to student tutorial groups. This also provides a space to further grow the thinking around the development of new knowledge, which students are encouraged to further in their final elective courses through their own self-directed study on specific topics or projects.

The documentation of the learning from this programme is another key step in addressing the findings from this work to date. In growing a new body of knowledge, we need to take the learning and discussion outside the classroom into more writing and publishing about the emerging thinking around what makes NFP management distinctive in Aotearoa and the Pacific. Students and tutors have begun to write up some of this work but little has been formally published. We are currently working with a network of NFP sector and academic organisations to begin a tangata whenua, community and voluntary sector research clearing house as a web-based hub to promote and disseminate research in, by, for and about the sector. This resource we hope will provide another major "ripple in the pond", adding to the relationships and networks that can profile the concepts and strategies for a strong NFP sector, its organisations and workforce.

Ebrahim (2003) provides a very useful discussion of lessons from northern and southern NGOs in terms of what makes for effective capacity building. He argues for the effectiveness of the organisational development approach and challenges the limitations of the training approach. Underlying his findings is a participatory learning approach – where the participants themselves analyse their own organisational challenges and develop their own responses – rather than rely on outside “experts” who, he argues, often deliver limited technical or management training. He highlights the importance of contextual understanding for effective NGO management and the long term iterative process of uncovering and solving problems to build organisational capacity. In doing this work, he argues that the analytical abilities and processes to monitor, assess, respond and adapt are the essential tools that practitioners need – plus patience for the long term work involved! He also encourages “blended solutions” that combine consulting, coaching, training and peer exchange where NFP leaders learn from each other and have space to “encourage reflection and vigorous deliberation” – rather than only working at the individual organisation level.

His findings echo much of the learning about what is working about our NFP programme and where we need to put our energies in continuing to grow this exciting learning community.

The social accounting and audit methodology is providing a useful action research framework for our programme to continue our own reflective practice, assisting students to embed their learning in their organisations, while providing a framework for ourselves as a learning organisation to keep improving our own practice.

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