

**“The state of the art in the Asia/Pacific region :**

**A view from the edge!”**

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E nga mana, e nga reo, e rau rangatira ma, e nga hau e wha, tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa. I greet you in the language of the indigenous Maori people of Aotearoa, the land of the long white cloud – better known to you as New Zealand. This greeting honours your wisdom and experience as chiefs in your own right and the diverse places and languages you come from to this gathering.

I am humbled to be asked to speak to you today about the “state of the art” in the Asia/Pacific region. This region is vast, and culturally and politically extremely diverse. I cannot possibly do justice to representing the depth of that diversity in one short presentation! So this is unashamedly my perspective from the “edge”, the south eastern corner of the region, where I have been involved for the last 30 years in the NGO sector and over the last 10 years in management education especially through Unitec’s Graduate Diploma in NFP Management.

I have learnt over the years not to assume that people even know where New Zealand is or what a large area the Pacific Islands cover. So I have a map to help us do a quick scan of the region

**New Zealand:** Our Unitec programme<sup>i</sup> 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 face to face learning, followed up by written assignments applying the learning to their NFP organization context. We are based in a Community Studies not the Business school, with a clear community development philosophy or working with and for the sector. We started in Auckland 10 years ago and have now spread to six other NZ cities, with over 200 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 in PNG, Vanuatu, Fiji and Samoa, and developing Pacific capacity to lead and manage this programme in the future

Waikato University<sup>ii</sup> has New Zealand’s only postgraduate programme in NFP Management. It is provided solely through on line learning. Based within their Business School, it is currently changing its focus into a qualification in social enterprise.

A few other NZ academic institutions are starting to support NFP strands to business qualifications; or have specific programmes in disciplines like sports/arts/human service management.

Off to the west is **Australia** (and no NZ is not a state of Australia) they have a longer history than us of academic research and teaching in NFP studies with the major players being:

1. University of Technology, Sydney<sup>iii</sup> which is home to CACOM (Centre for Australian Community Organisations and Management), established in 1990 independent of their teaching programme as a centre focused on research, publications, seminars, conferences and now also home to the Asian Third Sector Research Unit. Their business school runs three programmes in Community Management (Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma and Masters of Management). Students can also customise their MBA with a community management focus and other specialist courses are offered in arts, event, sports and tourism management.

2. Queensland University of Technology's Centre of Philanthropic and Nonprofit Studies<sup>iv</sup> is the other major university teaching and research centre with specialist expertise in legal and financial issues. They provide postgraduate education for managers in the philanthropic and nonprofit sector, those who work with these sectors and those with a desire to work in the sector.
3. Swinburne University of Technology<sup>v</sup> in Melbourne is home to the Asia-Pacific Centre for Philanthropy and Social Investment offering professional education and skills development in philanthropy, grantmaking and corporate social investment. Its courses range from Graduate Certificate to Ph D level.

Most other Australian universities have academic staff involved in some aspects of NFP studies but embedded within other programmes such as community development, social policy, citizenship and human rights.

The Australia New Zealand Third Sector Research<sup>vi</sup> group is part of ISTR and has a bi-annual conference of academics and practitioners interested in this field.

**South Asia**<sup>vii</sup> (India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh region) has a reputation for having large numbers of NGOs – and according to the Johns Hopkins study India has the second to largest civil society FTE workforce in the world.<sup>viii</sup> NGOs in this region tend to be highly developed, often very professional and often have a very strong political/structural analysis. They range from very small village based CBOs to reputedly the largest NGO in the world BRAC in Bangladesh<sup>x</sup> which has its own extensive training programme and a special "global partnership" which enables NGO managers to obtain a masters degrees from the School of International Training in the USA. This partnership also offers graduate diplomas through NGO-based education centres in Bangladesh, Zimbabwe, the Phillipines and Peru.

Despite the strong emphasis on tertiary education (in India especially), it is only very recently that University of Mysore<sup>x</sup> has launched India's first fully fledged Masters programme in Management of NFP Organisations. There is an Indian Third Sector Research network and a much longer tradition of NGO-run capacity building organisations, like PRIA<sup>xi</sup> (Society for Participatory Research in Asia). PRIA have what sounds like an interesting partnership with University of Victoria, BC, Canada offering a Certificate in International Perspectives on Participation, Research and Evaluation and have very recently begun their own Postgraduate Certificate in Managing Participatory Development Projects. Bangladesh has a number of academic/NFP sector organizations actively involved in policy research and advocacy. Pakistan also has an NGO resource centre providing management training and also active in researching policy issues affecting the sector.<sup>xii</sup>

**East Asia** (China, Japan, Korea region) has a very different social and political history of civil society organisations, with the extent of their role being very strongly influenced by the political context. For example, the Japanese NGO sector is relatively new, with organisations being small in scale and engaged in voluntary mutual help type activities with a minimal revenue coming from membership fees and personal donations<sup>xiii</sup>. "Nonprofit business" which competes with FPOs (for profit organizations) in the same market segment are emerging in certain areas (e.g., care for the elderly, nursery school) in Japan. The last decade has seen the growth of a number of nonprofit sector organizations committed to empowering and supporting the sector. There are few universities where students can study civil society issues but courses are starting to emerge on the nature of the civil society sector and how to establish, manage and fundraise for NPO/NGO and providing opportunities for internships to students. Osaka University's<sup>xiv</sup> School of International Public Policy has a Centre for NonProfit Research and Information

Japan and Korea both now have Third Sector Research networks.

**South-East Asia** (Thailand, Indonesia, Phillipines region) has a significant level of civil society organizations who would more likely identify as community (development) organizations than nonprofits or NGOs. Like India, the capacity building work is largely based in the sector not in academic institutions. The Centre for Alternative Development

Initiatives (CADI)<sup>xv</sup> in the Philippines is a good example of an organization working on sustainable development, critiquing the globalisation agenda and developing its own “threefolding” model for civil society, business and government collaboration. They are involved in a variety of activities including alternative education approaches that advance cultural renewal and strengthen civil society to engage with sustainable development initiatives. Indonesia’s Civil Society Human Resource Organisation is another example of NGO based management education work in this region.

Reflecting on our own NZ and Pacific experience, and comparing this with other parts of the region, some themes emerge, including:

- **Knowledge or qualification?** There are a wide range of training workshops and programmes for NGOs in the region that meet specific needs for knowledge and skills in the field. The call from our sector in NZ and the Pacific was for a qualification that could assist in gaining recognition of the wisdom and knowledge of the sector. So while the primary driver is still the thirst for knowledge and learning – and some continue to “drop in” for this and never complete the full qualification - there is a role for qualifications in building the credibility of this sector and its leaders in the wider society.

The ongoing nature of the programme over a number of years of study, covering a core curriculum also enables a different kind of learning community to develop which is not always a feature of one-off training workshops.

- **Management education for practitioners** The focus of our NZ/Pacific programme is very much on creating ongoing learning communities for practitioners already working in management or leadership roles within the sector (paid or voluntary) and our teaching methodologies are based around this ..... It is interesting to see a number of the other programmes in the region offering “pre-entry” education for people wanting to get involved in or understand civil society organizations as well.
- **Impact beyond the individual student** Our aim is for impact on three levels - to influence individual students’ professional/personal development; their organisation’s development; and to strengthen the NFP sector itself through the networks and common language/space created.....a community development approach not simply management education for individual professionals. The strong NFP sector relationships built in Australia through their research and teaching work, and the location of much Asian management training within NGO capacity building organizations suggests this is an important goal for others too.
- **Encouraging critical thinking** about western NFP and business management/leadership knowledge and students’ own indigenous management knowledge is a core value of our work. We say that management education must not become the next wave of colonisation, and there is a real danger that capacity building initiatives driven by western donors’ definitions could do just that. We actively encourage students to weave their own wisdom about effective management practice, based on a clear understanding of themselves, the values, mission and vision of their organisation and the cultural context within which they are working. Critical thinking about western and indigenous approaches goes hand in hand with encouraging “reflective practitioner” competencies in our students.

This assumes a highly participatory learning approach and that one size will never fit all. While there are still examples of international corporates being hired to deliver “governance and management training” to community based organizations in parts of our region, there are even more encouraging examples of locally driven NGO capacity

building organizations and initiatives – like CADI, raising awareness of the role of culture in sustainable development.

- **Encouraging understanding of the wider social, political, cultural and economic context** of the sector, its relationships with the state, business and tangata whenua (the indigenous people of the land) and strategies to increase the impact and confidence of the sector in these relationships is another strong theme .....so we create space for discussion of the reality of the environment within which students are applying their learning. Networks like ISTR conferences show clear evidence that agendas such as globalisation, regulatory and governance frameworks, relationships with government and business sectors, empowerment and equity are to the forefront of research and teaching conversations.

We say that managing in the NFP sector is like swimming towards the horizon ... so what is out there in the water ahead? From my perspective, on the “edge” of the region, some of the challenges for the future decade include:

- **Managing the power dynamics to ensure ongoing NGO "ownership" of the programme agenda** in relation to the potentially different agendas of academic institutions...does the future lie in NGO based education providers, academic institutions and/or effective partnerships between the two? We are exploring this issue very carefully as we work with our Pacific Island partners to train Pacific trainers and work towards handing over the programme to Pacific ownership. It is interesting that the leading institutions in NZ and Australia in this field are Universities of Technology. For us that means a strong emphasis on real world learning, with practical application of theory to real issues our students face everyday, and a strong sense of accountability to the “industries” that our qualifications serve.
- **Growing our body of research unique to our own cultural contexts**, including more postgraduate work. The growth of NFP research centres across various parts of the region over recent years is very exciting as a basis for developing an indigenous knowledge base in each country, testing concepts and developing new understandings relevant to each context.
- **Maintaining and protecting the culture** of accessibility, relevance to practice, and participatory, inclusive learning and teaching processes. There are interesting contrasts of teaching methodologies in working cross-culturally in the Pacific, where more teacher-centred delivery has been the norm. It is exciting and challenging to work through the most effective learning environment for Pacific learners as we grow our Pacific training team.
- **Harnessing the opportunities of technology** to share information, research, knowledge and learning beyond the current programme and supporting community-based research and education. We are currently working on a collaborative tangata whenua, community and voluntary sector research centre concept and a key first project will involve a digital Clearing House as a hub for finding and supporting community research. It is interesting to see organizations such as the Commonwealth of Learning working across South and South East Asia on open and distance learning technologies to take, for example, materials for training NGO managers into open schooling systems.<sup>xvi</sup>
- **More collaborative partnerships with other sectors** as our vision takes us further into community development and capacity building initiatives. Such work has exciting potential for cross-sectoral work and putting NFP wisdom and knowledge on the map as leading edge management and leadership thinking.

The NFP sector will continue to challenge us to adapt our delivery and use our knowledge base to drive sector, organisational and individual learning. We have to make sure that we are governed in such a way that the sector will always have their voice heard in shaping relevant, accessible and effective learning. Beyond this period of strengthening our own knowledge base, there is an exciting journey with the sector, with government, with private sector, with tangata whenua as we make more visible this wisdom to gain greater respect and strength for the vital role of civil society organisations.

Finally I would like to leave you with a metaphor for the journey – it's a double hulled canoe – given by a Pacific Island student who is about to be our first graduate from our Pacific programme. And it symbolises the bringing together of the western and the indigenous knowledge – the two hulls, necessary for this journey. May you travel well in a strong canoe and if you ever sail to Aotearoa, we would welcome your input into further carving our own unique canoe.

### References:

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- <sup>i</sup> See [www.community.unitec.ac.nz](http://www.community.unitec.ac.nz) for more information
- <sup>ii</sup> See [www.waikato.ac.nz](http://www.waikato.ac.nz)
- <sup>iii</sup> See [www.business.uts.edu.au/cacom](http://www.business.uts.edu.au/cacom)
- <sup>iv</sup> See [www.bus.qut.edu.au/research/cpns](http://www.bus.qut.edu.au/research/cpns)
- <sup>v</sup> See [www.sisr.net/philanthropy](http://www.sisr.net/philanthropy)
- <sup>vi</sup> See [www.anztsr.org.au](http://www.anztsr.org.au)
- <sup>vii</sup> For more detailed information about Asian NFP sector see [www.asianphilanthropy.org](http://www.asianphilanthropy.org)
- <sup>viii</sup> [www.jhu.edu/cnp/pdf/table301.pdf](http://www.jhu.edu/cnp/pdf/table301.pdf)
- <sup>ix</sup> Ebrahim, Alnoor (2003) *Building Analytical and Adaptive Capacity: Lessons from Northern and Southern NGOs* Paper presented to ARNOVA conference, Denver, Colorado November 20-22 2003
- <sup>x</sup> See [www.teresearch.org](http://www.teresearch.org)
- <sup>xi</sup> See [www.pria.org](http://www.pria.org)
- <sup>xii</sup> [www.ngorc.org.pk](http://www.ngorc.org.pk)
- <sup>xiii</sup> Email correspondence with Sachiko Nakagawa, University of Keio University
- <sup>xiv</sup> See [www.osipp.osaka-u.ac.jp](http://www.osipp.osaka-u.ac.jp)
- <sup>xv</sup> See [www.cadi.ph](http://www.cadi.ph)
- <sup>xvi</sup> [www.col.org/regional/COLinAsia.htm](http://www.col.org/regional/COLinAsia.htm) describes aspects of their work in India partnering with Indira Gandhi National Open University and National Institute of Open Schooling and their work across the wider region supporting distance learning and knowledge exchange