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The Potential of Professional Learning Communities for Teacher Learning
in the Community High Schools in the Solomon Islands

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Education at Massey University (Manawatu), New Zealand

By

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Abstract
The rapid growth of community high schools throughout the Solomon Islands, since the 1990s, has put pressure on the government to provide trained teachers, together with school curriculum materials and resources. Moreover, the Solomon Islands are expected to experience a shortage of trained teachers over the next decade. An effective approach that could be used to address the shortage of trained teachers is the establishment of professional learning communities. This study explores the pre-existing ‘cultures’ of teachers within two community high schools, in order to illuminate the formal and non-formal learning experiences of teachers (together with other significant contextual factors related to these community high schools), which could be built upon, to develop effective professional learning communities that would lead to quality teacher learning.

This study draws on qualitative research methods and uses a case study approach. Ten teachers in two community high schools participated in semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. A reflective journal was also used to gather data. The research question that guided the data collection was:

What are the formal and informal learning experiences of teachers in community high schools that may provide the basis for developing professional learning communities for teachers’ learning?

The key findings of this research include the potential teaching and learning experiences of the teachers in these two community high schools, which could be further improved, in order to develop effective professional learning communities. Shared values and norms; collaborative practices and structures; reflective practices; and a focus on student learning lend support to professional learning communities. The findings also highlight existing obstacles and hindrances to teachers’ learning experiences and practices that need to be addressed, in order for professional learning communities to be established successfully in these schools. This study suggests six recommendations for the establishment of professional learning communities in community high schools which includes: shared responsibilities; sharing information and ideas; active leadership roles; frequent departmental staff meetings; staff devotions; and support from all stakeholders.
Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to God for with You and through You all things are made possible in my study journey.
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