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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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**2013**

## 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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## Acknowledgement

I wish to acknowledge a number of individuals and institutions, that without their support this research study would not have been completed.

Firstly, I am greatly indebted to my first supervisors, Gloria Slater and Dr. Marg Gilling, who have supported and encouraged me to pursue my research interest. I also thank them for guiding me in developing a deeper understanding of my research topic and the qualitative research methods and processes needed for my field study. I would also like to express my sincere thanks and acknowledgement to my later supervisors, Associate Professor Tracy Riley and Jodie Hunter, who willingly agreed to supervise the writing stage of my study. I am most grateful for their encouragement, guidance and advice.

Secondly, I would like to thank Dr. Jenny Poskitt, Director of the Graduate School of Education, for providing me with sufficient time to complete my study.

Thirdly, my deepest gratitude goes to the New Zealand Government for providing me with a scholarship and the opportunity to study at Massey University. My sincere thanks go to the Manawatu Campus International Support Staff, the Pasifika Student Services, Karilyn Andrews and Lynley Hayward for their advice, encouragement and support. Special thanks to Jasmine Waleafea for the transcription of the interviews. I acknowledge the professional help and advice of Christine Beach in my writing and for being a mentor to me. Justin Grayson has also provided assistance with figures and tables. Thanks to Nguyen Buu Huan, lecturer in English (Vietnam) for his advices in my writing. My appreciation also goes to Lar Sau for some financial assistance.

Fourthly, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to Jane, Peter, Andrew, Paul, Dorcas, Mary, Anna, Matthew, Dennis and Luke, who have devoted their time to willingly participate in this study and to share their ideas on the research topic. *Barava big tagio tumas lo ufala everiwan nao.*

Fifthly, I would like to thank the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development of the Solomon Islands for granting me permission to conduct my research in the Solomon Islands. I am also thankful to the Education Authorities – Honiara City Council Authority and the South Seas Evangelical Church Authority – for allowing me access to the Sunshine Com-

munity High School and the Roadway Community High School for data collection. My sincere thanks go to the principals and administrators of Sunshine Community High School and Roadway Community High School for accepting me into their schools and providing time for me to meet with their teachers.

Sixthly, I would like to express my appreciation to Salumata Tanito for her company during the fieldwork at Roadway Community High School. My humble thanks also go to Sharon Phillip for providing me with accommodation whilst in Honiara.

Seventhly, I would like to acknowledge the support and prayers of all my colleagues and friends whom I cannot name them all. I owe much gratitude to Raynier Tutuo and family, Tozen Leokana and family, Adi Galokepoto and Samson Kakadi for their friendship, support and prayers. Also, my sincere thanks go to the members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Palmerston North for their prayers and support during my study in New Zealand. I also thank Meryl Strawbridge for her continuous kindness and support during my stay in the Blair residence.

Next, I would like to convey my uttermost thanks to my dear parents, Pastor Newton Galokale and Ruth Galokale. I thank them for faithfully encouraging me to pursue my dreams and goals in my academic life. I thank them for nurturing in me this motto: "If somebody can do it, why can't I?" which has kept me focused on what I wanted to achieve in life, no matter how challenging this journey has seemed to be. Their teachings and advices have helped me to understand the value of my learning. Without their prayers, guidance and understanding, I would not have reached my academic goals. I also would like to thank my siblings: Karen Bari Galokale, Karlrick Galokale, Gaby Zeff Tanakaka Galokale, Zarren Sabazu Galokale and Zillaren Chrizelno Pezagu Galokale, for their prayers and support. Also, thanks is extended to Derek Futaiasi (though far) for keeping me awake during the final stages of my writing, when energy is waning and motivation is fading.

Finally, all glory, honour and praise is accredited to God for knowledge, wisdom and understanding. I praise God for never ever leaving me alone to walk this journey. I thank God for His faithfulness, His love, mercy and grace in providing me with all my needs throughout my study, so that I can fulfil His plans for my life.