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## Tourism's place in the school curriculum: A case study from Tonga

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### **Abstract**

This paper identifies that the option to study tourism is not accessible to secondary school students in Tonga. It argues that, if it was possible to include tourism studies in the curriculum, this could potentially stimulate interest for students in this industry, in a Pacific island that is heavily dependent on tourism. It could also encourage and help retain students who are disengaging from secondary school education. This could potentially increase students' confidence and at the same time provide an appropriate entry level qualification for the tourism industry. The paper compares the curriculum that New Zealand and Australian counterparts offer for secondary school tourism students. It reports from the perspective of major stakeholders in Tonga, recent regional studies on tourism subjects for schools in other parts of the South Pacific, and concludes by suggesting strategies and a pathway to commence the introduction of tourism subjects that would benefit both the students and the tourism industry of Tonga.

**Keywords:** secondary school curriculum, tourism, Tonga, education

### **Introduction**

Auckland Institute of Studies (AIS), through its longtime relationship with Tonga, established a "sister school" arrangement with the Tonga Institute of Higher Education (TIHE), initially under the entity of the National Centre for Vocational Studies (NCVS) in 2006. The arrangement was the transfer of intellectual material for the delivery of diploma courses in Business, Information Technology, Tourism and Hospitality (in 2015). AIS supply

moderation and quality assurance assistance, textbooks and computers as well as teaching and research support. This "sister school" arrangement has been running successfully over the past nine years resulting in hundreds of diploma graduates now working in various government and private sector businesses in Tonga, thus lifting the level of efficiency and productivity in those organisations that employ the diploma graduates. At the same time the staircasing pathway to a degree qualification at the AIS campuses, being very affordable and accessible, over the past few years has enabled hundreds of Tongan students to gain a New Zealand degree qualification. These graduates are able to work in New Zealand in those fields and some have gained permanent residency status. Due to current close ties with their families, they are thus helping the economy of Tonga through remittances or a paying for the education of other members of their families.

### **Literature review**

The literature on students studying tourism at secondary school level and the tourism curriculum at this level is limited. The majority of studies are focused on students at tertiary level.

The motivation of students choosing to study a tourism programme is primarily based on self-actualisation that is characterised by aspirations to encounter different people from diverse cultures (Lee, Kim & Lo, 2008). A career in the tourism industry has an image of an enjoyable and potentially glamorous lifestyle (Zagonari, 2009) with global travel that appeals to a vast number of teenagers (Kim, McCleary & Kaufman, 2010), which seems to match the career prospects of most teenagers (Hjalager & Andersen, 2000). A further study shows that secondary school students have a positive perception of the industry, such as "exciting, enjoyable nature, "perceived prospects for career opportunities," and "interesting experiences" (Ogden, 2007).

The tourism industry's insight into the effectiveness of the curriculum will affect the students' view of the value of the curriculum. If the industry identifies that students graduating from tourism courses are not well prepared, the students' evaluation of the value of the curriculum will be low, resulting in them having less motivation to learn (Cole, Cole & Ferguson, 2006). To be able to achieve a tourism curriculum that is a balance between

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the vocational and academic elements is the main concern of educators (Inui, Wheeler, & Lankford, 2006). Research suggests that the “policies on tourism education and training should provide a balance between professional skills, basic knowledge and thematic specialization” (Zagonari, 2009, p.4). Hence the tourism industry should be in consultation regarding the curriculum design and what they envisage it should include that would meet their needs. Students should have an understanding of the operational aspects of being employed in a tourism business and they should also gain an understanding of the type of attributes and skills that are required by the industry. These components could be included in the curriculum so that the students gain a sense of whether the industry would be suited to them and matches their career goals.

Andreassen & Roberts (2016) state that, in a recent analysis of feedback questionnaires completed in New Zealand by tourism teachers attending a four-year symposium, some themes developed with regard to how tourism as a career choice could be stimulated in terms of its perception to secondary students. One of the emerging themes was that there needed to be “more visits from providers which offer Bachelor degrees as opposed to certificates” (p.873).

Another theme which has emerged from symposia feedback in New Zealand is that of the perception of tourism as a viable career. When asked how tourism could be better promoted as a career option to secondary students, the majority of respondents over the four years indicated the need for stronger links with both tertiary institutions and industry. Also a strong theme was secondary school students' need of links with industry that could act in an advisory role in promoting tourism as a career.

Another theme that arose from the feedback questionnaires was the dissatisfaction of the content of the curriculum and the teaching material for the delivery of tourism as a subject. This was emphasised with comments in the recent study (Andreassen & Roberts, 2016) such as “revamping the course to be more credible” (p.874) together with “making it an academic subject, opening opportunities for further study” (p.871). On reflection on these comments, there is a significant feeling that you cannot attract more academically able students to tourism until it is established as an academic subject with a credible tertiary pathway.

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Several participants in the feedback questionnaires indicated that there needed to be better support from secondary school management teams and a shift in attitude towards tourism as a subject. The participants saw a need for the status of the subject to be improved in its promotion from school teachers and management (Andreassen & Roberts, 2016).

New Zealand Government Aid, (n.d.) has been proactive in establishing support programmes for the Tonga education sector and established a partnership between the Government of Tonga, New Zealand and the World Bank. The key goal of the programme is to ensure that all children have access to quality education.

The programme has focused on improving the standard of primary education by laying the foundations for improved learning achievement through the development of a new primary school curriculum and a professional development framework for teachers. This culminated in 2011 with the nationwide delivery of an updated curriculum, learning and teaching materials for all primary school years in the four core subjects (Tongan, English, mathematics and science). Minimum service standards were also introduced to ensure all primary schools are delivering an equitable standard of education.

The next phase of support will build on this foundation with a focus on further curriculum development in the primary and secondary sector, improved teacher training, and better managed and equipped schools. A number of scholarships are provided each year to New Zealand, Tonga and Pacific regional institutions to help school-leavers obtain tertiary qualifications.

An inaugural partnership was also established between Manukau Institute of Technology (MIT) in Auckland and six Tongan high school students as a distance learning programme for some technical and vocational training such as building and plumbing. This also had the support of the Tonga Institute of Science and Technology and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The introduction of these subjects to the secondary school curriculum to help students who are disengaged in other academic subjects has had a successful first year with 200 15-year-old students graduating with a technical and vocational trade qualification and the students are now getting

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better results in their other school subjects. Dr Stuart Middleton (Director of MIT External Relations) states, "We saw a real opportunity for us to offer to Tonga a programme that would give their students the advantages of earlier access to applied learning in the trades. The number of students disengaging from college education is of international concern" (Manukau Technical Institute, 2015).

As in New Zealand and Australia, one of the most successful ways of engaging young people in education is through vocational and technical training, which increases their performance in school in other subjects too.

Students who are disengaged often develop a pattern of inconsistent attendance and poor academic performance that perpetuates adverse school experiences. They have more negative interactions with adults, perceive their academic classes as irrelevant, and report a lack of satisfaction and discontent during their high school years (Bridgeland et al., 2006).

In the Tonga Tourism Sector Roadmap 2013 Draft, one of the objectives for the tourism sector has been identified as Human Resource Development (HRD) which is to develop and implement a coordinated approach to HRD planning and training delivery which meets industry, government and community needs.

Church-based and government funded vocational training institutions provide skill-based tourism and hospitality training and refresher training for industry employees and want to set curriculum for training for industry (Tonga Tourism Roadmap, 2013).

However, Tonga as a country has some significant economic development challenges including Tonga's small domestic market, skill shortages, high costs associated with business practices and high youth unemployment. These new initiatives to the secondary schools were introduced to support students who are disengaging themselves from traditional academic subjects at the secondary and post-secondary levels.

The majority of research on tourism education in the Pacific Islands focuses on tertiary level study. This paper focuses on introducing tourism education at secondary school level into the curriculum in Tongan high schools.

Consultation with key stakeholders was carried out in Tonga from 2013 to early 2016. The study analysed the range and relevance to the Tonga tourism setting of tourism subjects taught in Australian and New Zealand secondary schools. It also reviewed recent literature and regional studies on human resource training needs of the tourism industry. The study outcomes reinforced the need for tourism studies to be incorporated into the secondary school curriculum in Tonga. Strategies and a pathway to commence the introduction of tourism subjects to secondary schools are suggested.

### **Tonga's economic dependence on tourism**

Figure 1: Location of Tonga



The Kingdom of Tonga consists of 175 islands and is situated approximately 2,000km north east of Auckland, New Zealand (see Figure 1).

Tourism has been identified as the major economic development opportunity for the Kingdom of Tonga, with potential to provide broad based employment and income generation, as well as support the retention of cultural traditions and the sustainable management of the nation's environmental assets.

*(Ministry of Tourism Report, 2013)*

At present, tourism in Tonga provides both full-time and part-time employment for approximately 2,500 Tongans (Table 1).

Table 1: Tonga tourism key indicators 2013-2015

	2013	2014	2015
<b>Air visitors</b>	48,200	55,000	65,000 (est)
<b>Excursionists</b>	9,400	12,000	14,000 (est)
<b>Air arrivals (visitors, VFR and returning residents)</b>	59,700	70,200	88,185
<b>Yacht arrivals</b>	2,000	2,200	2,400 (est)
<b>National hotel room occupancy</b>	45%	45%	45%
<b>Tourism/Travel receipts (TOP in millions)</b>	83.3	64.4	100.0 (est)
<b>Number of Tourism and Hospitality establishments</b>	125	140	160 (est)
<b>Jobs (est) (Direct and indirect employment)</b>	2,050	2,100	2,500
<b>Estimated economic benefits from the tourism industry to Tonga (TOP millions) (economic multiplier of 1.6)</b>	133.0	103.0	160.0
<b>Travel &amp; Tourism GDP Total contribution</b>	15%	17.2%	20%

Source: *Tonga Tourism Authority Report, 2015*; Taumoepeau, 2015. For definitions of terms, see the glossary at the end of the article.

The objectives stated in the Tonga tourism roadmap tourism sector are that by 2020 tourism in Tonga will be the foremost resource with a forecasted TOP 100 million for the economy. Tourism will be an increasing sector of the economy with an anticipated 30% of national GDP.

The tourism segment will provide employment for a projected 4,000 residents in Tonga for 2020. This is demonstrated in handicrafts, retail, services, transport and food production. About 10% of Tonga tourism industry employees are expatriates who either own their own business or hold senior positions. The majority of Tongan businesses are family owned and managed, and recruitment is typically done through family connections.

Tourism in Tonga is number one in terms of foreign exchange earnings (*Tonga Tourism Authority Report, 2015*). More than 65,000 air visitors to Tonga

were recorded during 2015, with more than 70% from New Zealand and Australia, an 18% increase from the 2014 level of 55,000 international visitors. The average length of stay is seven days and the estimated spend per visitor TOP 1,500 (Tonga Tourism Statistics, 2015).

Tourism has been identified by successive governments' national economic plans, the private sector and many communities in Tonga as providing the major economic development opportunities for the future of the country, with potential to provide broad-based employment and income generation (Tonga Tourism Authority, 2015). Tourism maintains and enhances the cultural traditions and the physical and natural environment of the island kingdom (Tonga Tourism Roadmap, 2013). As well as tourism development, the sustainable management of the nation's environmental natural resources is another priority for Tonga, given the current impact of climate change and global warming effects on low-lying islands.

### **The Tonga Education Policy Framework (2004-19)**

*"Ko e hakau 'o e 'aho ni, ko e fonua ia 'o e 'apongipongi"*

(The reefs of today will be the islands of tomorrow)

This policy framework adopted by the Ministry of Education was formulated after they recommended several quality and quantitative strategies, objectives and issues to be implemented and achieved between 2014 and 2019. In reviewing this framework, it is apparent that not all objectives were achieved due to several reasons, with the financial reasons and emphasis being changed as required by respective governments. However, 2 areas that made some progress as outlined were in the area of creating initiatives to develop more technical/vocational provision within the secondary and tertiary level and also the "transformed" education sector to be flexible and capable of quickly responding to the needs of the economy and of a quickly changing global environment. The system will be capable of responding to "market signals" and to move from a "supply-driven" to a "demand-driven" basis.

Despite the identification of these 2 initiatives by the Tonga Education Policy Framework (2004-19) during the past 10 years development along these lines were slow. With the way the economy of Tonga is developing it seems that

the tourism growth is the only sector that potentially offers a significant benefit, and a move to strengthen training and upskilling would therefore be very beneficial for Tonga.

### **Overview of education in Tonga**

The first school in Tonga was started by a Wesleyan missionary in 1828, and in the following years the missions expanded the school system (based mainly on English education) until in 1876 the first Act of Parliament was passed regulating education in Tonga. It made education compulsory for all children from 7 – 16. In a report in 1969, the Minister of Education stated that about 27% of the students who pass through primary schools proceed to intermediate or secondary schools.

The Ministry of Education in Tonga manage the education system in Tonga, which is governed by the Education Act 1974 (with subsequent amendments and additions up to the revised Act of 2013) and is separated in four levels: early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary. The secondary school curriculum is set out according to the education regulations adopted from time to time. The national curriculum framework for secondary school students in Tonga includes the key subjects of science, mathematics, English and Tongan.

Tonga's Vision for Education is that "The people of Tonga will achieve excellence in education that is unique to Tonga." The mission of the education sector is "To provide equitable, accessible, relevant, and sustainable quality education for all Tongans that will enable Tonga to develop and become a learning and knowledge society" said Dr 'Ana Taufe'ulungaki (Nexus Strategic Partnerships Limited, 2016).

Therefore, over the last ten years Tonga has embarked on an ambitious educational reform programme, which began with the development of a series of planning documents:

- *Tonga: Education Sector Study* (2003)
- *Strategic Plan for Education in Tonga* (2003-13)
- *Tonga Education Policy Framework* (2004-19)

All of these were aligned to Tonga's Strategic Development Plan 8 (2006-10), the Pacific Education Development Framework (2009-15), the Education for All Goals, and the Millennium Development Goals.

The education development programme that emerged from these documents was the Tonga Education Support Program (TESP). The main goals of TESP I were to:

(Ministry of Education, 2003, 2004-2019, 2003-2013, 2009-2015, 2006-2010)

- Improve equitable access and quality of universal basic education up to Year 8
- Improve access and quality of post-basic education
- Improve the administration of education and training

The Ministry (2013-2017), has developed a new Tonga Education Lakalaka 1 Policy Framework, which has become TESP II. Australia has donated AU\$10.5 million and New Zealand NZ\$9 million to fund TESP II for the next three years. TESP II focuses on three key policy areas (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, n.d.):

- Students' outcomes at all levels, especially in literacy and numeracy, in the early years of basic education
- Teachers' competencies at all levels, which include both pre- and in-service professional development
- Teaching and learning environments, which include teaching and learning resources, equipment, and physical facilities

As with all reforms and plans, they are only as good as the capabilities of those who implement them. The Lakalaka Policy Framework is only a tool to guide the ministry in performing its core functions and responsibilities. The ministry, in their attempt to improve education, vision and mission, processes and outcomes, by uses the Lakalaka Framework to aid it in this exercise. It sets the context in which education occurs, the purposes for which it is performed, the processes that are used, the performers, the resources they need and the operational matters that must be considered to achieve excellence in the dance, which will generate *malie* (relevancy and worthwhileness) and *mafana* (application, transformation and

sustainability), the transforming qualities of education, that can leave a legacy of excellence (Thaman, 2003).

Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling

	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Status</b>
2.1	<i>Net enrolment ratio in primary education</i>	91.6	-	89.4	88.4 (2006)	93 (2008)	97 (2013)	100	On target
2.2	<i>Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach last grade of primary</i>	-	84 (1996)	93 (2001)	88.9 (2006)	90 (2007)	91.8 (2013)	100	On target
2.3	<i>Literacy rate of 15-24 year-olds, women and men</i>	98.8	99.3 (1996)	-	99.4 (2006)	99.5 (2011)	-	100	On target

Source: Ministry of Education and Training 2015, Statistics Department 2015

Tonga has made good progress towards the Millennium Development Goals with relatively high levels of access to basic education. Despite universal access to basic education, inequities exist in the quality of education. This is particularly prevalent in the secondary system where there is a distinct disparity between government and non-government providers (*Tonga Millennium Development Goals Report, 2015*)

In Tonga, after primary education, students sit the Secondary Entrance Examination (SEE) to qualify for entrance to secondary education. Students attend secondary schools in Tonga from ages 11 to 18 years old. Secondary education is neither compulsory nor free in Tonga.

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According to the 2011 census, approximately 78% of the population aged 15 years and over had attended secondary schools (Statistics Department, 2012). In 2011, there were a total of 55 secondary schools in Tonga; the number of government-run schools was 15, with the remaining schools provided by various church organisations (Ministry of Education, 2011).

Tonga secondary schools, over the years, have both a high repeat rate and high dropout rate. Tatafu, Booth, and Wilson, (1997) identified some of the main reasons for high failure rates as lack of concern for the needs of less successful students; schools being inadequately resourced; and offering a narrow curriculum which was inadequate for most students and where academic failure was the norm.

In 2002, a total of 1,230 students (approximately 45%) repeated Form 7. Most repeats were in Form 5 (44%) and Form 6 (36%) (Ministry of Education Report, 2005).

One of the main challenges at the secondary school level is reducing the dropout rate, for both boys and girls. The Education Act 2013 has raised the compulsory education age to 18, which effectively means everyone has to complete secondary school education. A large number of students, 78% of all secondary school enrolment, are under church-based and privately-run school systems. They lack an effective tracking system to trace those who have left school, find out where they are and deal with them. Presently, there is no central database or complete statistics available for policy-making.

The Ministry of Education (2003) introduced technical and vocation training into secondary schools, in 2010 as a trial strategy to deal with students at risk of dropping out. The Tongan industry advisory group, including stakeholders consisting of representatives from the education providers, government and non-government, with assistance from the Australian government, coordinated the task of providing the secondary schools with training equipment and funding the writing of course materials (based on vocational and technical courses unit standards), and training of the course instructors. This had created alternative pathways of learning for students. After one year, reports from secondary schools indicated that this trial had a positive effect in reducing the drop-out rate, for both boys and girls.

This work still continues as a partnership between the secondary schools under the church-based and privately-run school systems, the post-secondary technical institutes and the Tonga Association for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TATVET). The courses that are run at the secondary school level qualify students to either enter the workforce or to proceed to undertake courses at the higher vocational and technical institutes. Courses introduced into secondary schools include catering, hospitality, business, carpentry, automotive engineering and so on. These are alternatives choices for those at Form 3 and Form 4, where the drop-out rate is higher.

### **Secondary school education**

Globally primary and secondary education are different in terms of curriculum offered and the age of the students. The boundary between each type of education will vary among educational systems; however, in the majority of global education systems, primary education encompasses the first six to eight years of a child's education, with secondary education comprising the adolescent years.

Beck and Earl, (2003) state that secondary school differs from primary education in that it is very centred around subjects with specialisations promoted from age 14. This allows for the provision of additional options to students, typically introducing science subjects for those deemed to possess higher-level capabilities while prevocational options are provided for the less academic.

The Tongan secondary school curriculum currently does not cater for the students interested in tourism, or engage them at this level. Tourism subjects are not part of the secondary school curriculum in the secondary school level, and thus there are limited opportunities in the many different careers open to students in the airline, travel and tourism industry, which is in effect the number one earner for Tonga as a country.

In New Zealand, the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) offers an introductory course at Level 2 to travel and tourism secondary school students, and thus recognises the knowledge and skills required as a base for further training in the tourism industry. The course is

unit standard based and leads to Level 2 and 3 travel and tourism certificates. Some universities, polytechnics and private training providers accept Level 3 qualifications as prerequisites to some of their tourism and hospitality diploma and degree courses (Lifelong learning for Tourism Cuffy/Tribe/Airey NZQA, n.d).

In New Zealand (NCEA) and Australian secondary schools (SSSC), the curriculum offers traditional academic subjects and vocational subjects under their respective national education systems. They both offer introductory courses at Level 2 to travel and tourism secondary school students (Australian education system, n.d.).

### **Tourism industry and regional training**

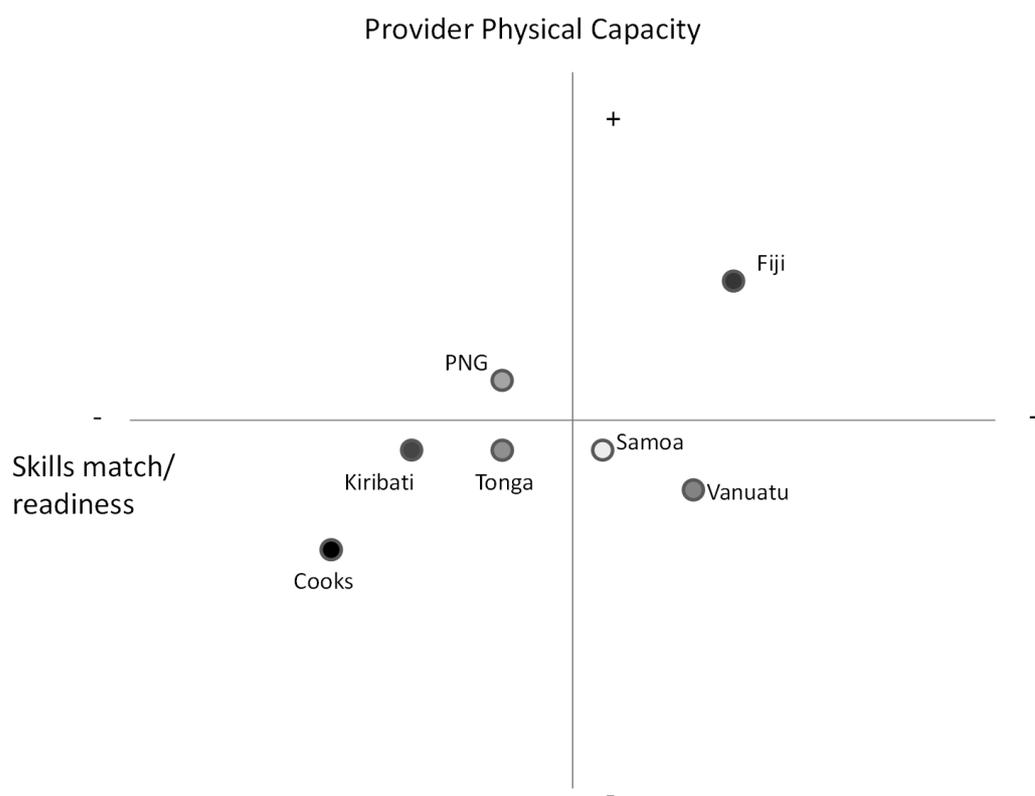
Engaging secondary school students and working with stakeholders is another way of immersing students in an active collaborative learning environment that would help the students become interested in tourism within the destination, as Ryan (2015) found out in his United Kingdom community study.

Milne et al (2013) identified HRD as lying at the heart of attempts by South Pacific nations to develop tourism industries that can bring sustained economic opportunities to their people. Efforts to increase visitor yield and enhance the sustainability of the industry will come to nothing if there is not a base of skilled labour for industry development to rest on. HRD and well-targeted training boosts tourism industry profitability, increases work retention, and enhances the ability of business and government to meet labour needs.

Training service industry providers help to maintain service standards and greatly improve the benefits from tourism to the local community. The tourism industry in the region requires constant training of unskilled and semi-skilled employees. Similarly, skills improvement training is required for managers of larger businesses and the owners of small and medium enterprises. Such training is vital as it enables higher operational standards and has a direct impact on the competitiveness of destinations in the region.

A series of “gaps” between demand and supply were highlighted in some of the islands in the region (Milne et al., 2013). A regional comparison of some of the core issues affecting tourism HRD development (Figure 2) was presented as a prologue to the strategy.

Figure 2: Physical and human capacity to meet industry training needs



In reviewing several tourism training reports in the South Pacific, it was apparent that there is a relative lack of tourism in school curricula throughout the region. While tourism dominates many economies in the region, there are often few resources and limited class time dedicated to tourism in the school curriculum at both primary and secondary level. The major challenge lies in the fact that there is a shortage of qualified teachers, and a curriculum that overlooks tourism, and this inevitably restricts opportunities to offer the programmes at secondary school (Milne et al., 2013).

The Pacific Regional Tourism and Hospitality Human Resources Development Plan (Milne et al., 2013) highlighted the following examples from the Cook Islands, Samoa and Fiji on the issues of introducing tourism studies to the students.

The Cook Islands provides a good example of the perceived gaps that emerge as a result of a lack of tourism exposure in schools. As one relatively large business owner noted: "There is simply not enough tourism education happening in school – the industry is too important to not invest in ..." In an example of how one person and a limited amount of funding can make a difference, NZAID has helped to fund a teacher from New Zealand to develop the tourism curriculum and raise the quality of teaching. Resources from the World Tourism Organisation, together with assistance from Cook Islands Tourism, have enabled the teacher to aim for NZQA accreditation for his Level 1, 2, 3 (certificate) papers (Lifelong learning for Tourism Cuffy/Tribe/Airey NZQA, n.d).

Several countries are exploring integrating tourism and hospitality related Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) more effectively into their school system. Fiji has advanced furthest down this pathway. Catering is now offered as an option in 40 of the 86 schools offering TVET. The Quality Vocational Centres programme is designed to help upgrade some of the schools that lack adequate training facilities. The one-year certificate Level 2 Programme involves 3 weeks of practical experience. Each year 800 students complete the certificate 2 programme. A new initiative – Vocational Mainstreaming – will mean that by 2014 all secondary schools in Fiji will offer 3 modules a year over the last three years of school (9 modules will equate to Certificate 2). To ensure a seamless progression to Level 3 and 4 programmes the developers of this programme have worked closely with local training providers including Fiji National University (FNU) and Australia-Pacific Technical College (APTC).

A number of issues were highlighted by both tourism industry and education providers relating to the important "no-man's land" between an incomplete or disrupted school education and the commencement of further education at a tertiary level. Some of the key themes to emerge from the interviews and survey were (Taumoepeau, 2015):

- There is a genuine lack of effective foundation programmes that can bring school leavers or those with limited educational attainment through to tertiary level studies. It is a positive sign that the University of the South Pacific (USP) plans to introduce a Foundation Programme (General Introduction to Tourism and Hospitality).

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- Trainers face real challenges in trying to cater for the needs of students who do not have a strong educational background. In many cases, providers must try to cover for educational gaps on the part of their students, in effect often reducing the teaching to the level of lowest common denominator.

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) systems have a series of tourism and hospitality unit standards as part of various Level 2 and Level 3 certificate qualifications on offer for the early introduction of tourism studies to Level 2 and 3 school students. Both New Zealand and Australia start introducing vocational training in schools and it is part of their national qualifications framework. A list of possible subjects and unit standards was compiled to highlight new subjects recommended for the schools in Tonga. This list is also based on consultation carried out during the short period of compiling this study with stakeholders in the Ministry of Education in Tonga and with various tourism businesses. We have also taken information from the Milne et al. Human Resources Development Study (2013).

Taumoepeau (2013), in his Training Needs Analysis of the Tonga Tourism industry, identified several areas after visiting most schools and running consultation workshops with the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour Commerce and Tourism staff, and separately with the Nuku'alofa Tourism industry stakeholders. The areas included upskilling in front office, work ethics tour guiding, handicraft merchandising, whale-watch operators, and marine tour guides, website construction and social media management, customer service and small hotel management. In order to successfully deliver these areas, the students at secondary schools need a foundation level tourism class and hence the case for the introduction of tourism subjects at the secondary school level first.

After reviewing and analysing these reports and findings, we compiled the list below (Table 2) of suggested topics to be covered (as the equivalent of the New Zealand Level 2 and 3 standards to be incorporated into the Tonga secondary school curriculum.

Table 2: Tourism subjects or standards recommended for secondary schools

<b>Standard/subject</b>	
1	Demonstrate knowledge of Pacific countries as a tourist destination
2	Demonstrate the oral and written English communication for tourism study
3	Demonstrate knowledge of the history and features of tourism
4	Demonstrate and analyse the economic significance of tourism
5	Demonstrate and compare social and cultural impacts of tourism
6	Describe and compare impacts of tourism on the physical environment and natural resources
7	Describe and promote a Tongan tourist destination
8	Demonstrate knowledge of and produce arts and crafts and other traditional skills for tourism
9	Understand what tourists expect from a Tongan visit or experience
10	Identify opportunities for businesses tourism
11	Linkages between tourism and other sectors of the economy such as agriculture and fisheries and marine resources
12	Customer service and tourism businesses
13	Use of the internet in a tourism workplace
14	Practical internships in a working environment
15	Real engagement in tour guiding such as on cruise ships
16	Practical setting up/operation of a tourism related event/cultural event
17	Working in a conservation project, cultural heritage and environmental sustainability initiatives

Vocational training schools in Tonga (up to four schools have attempted to introduce some tourism and hospitality subjects).

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## **Methodology**

Towards the end of 2015, we conducted consultation meetings with Tonga tourism stakeholders and senior staff at the Ministry of Education and AIS's sister school on the feasibility of introducing tourism-related topics. Focus groups with the secondary school educators were also conducted. Tourism and hospitality unit standards that are offered in the New Zealand and Australian secondary school system curriculum were considered. These unit standards were a good model to evaluate and discuss the possibility of delivering similar unit standards in Tongan secondary schools. The outcomes and views from these consultation meetings reconfirmed the view that both tourism and hospitality subjects need to be incorporated to the national curriculum. They also stressed the necessity standard that included the Tonga's cultural heritage. The focus groups considered aspects of their unique culture that should be showcased for the tourist in terms of tourist attractions, activities and hospitality were very important to be included in the curriculum.

The major stakeholders agreed in principle that tourism should be taught as a distinct subject as part of the secondary school curriculum in Tonga. A further review of specific tourism training needs and analysis will be continued in 2016.

## **Findings**

The research findings showed that for Tonga as a tourist destination, the introduction of tourism as a high school subject is appropriate. It recognises the need to try and engage Tongan high school students who are not performing in other traditional academic subjects, and offer them an alternative subject that could provide an entry-level industry qualification, and help retain Tongan students at a secondary school level where there is a significant number of high school students leaving without completing secondary school. In terms of structure, the paper provides the theoretical background to secondary school education and learning along with an indication of relevant tourism issues in Tonga, followed by details of the research context.

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## **Recommendations**

It is envisaged that the strategies and recommendations that would need be to be employed prior to a curriculum and delivery of tourism subjects to secondary school would be a variety of initiatives. These initiatives include workshops with relevant groups in the education and tourism sector; determining a completed list of tourism unit standards and credit values to be offered in the Tongan secondary school curriculum; and establishing delivery methods and the resources required to ensure it meets the same standards as its counterparts in New Zealand, Australia and the Pacific.

Some pilot schools would need to be selected for the first delivery and these would need to be audited on an ongoing basis in terms of standards and quality. An agreement would need to be reached on the overall approval to teach tourism subjects in secondary school in Tonga.

At each level, an effective tourism education programme must be relevant to its context (Smith & Cooper, 2000) giving careful consideration to the existing social, cultural and economic setting (Sheldon & In Hsu, 2015)

The limitation of this research is that it is only an exploratory study based on a literature review, analysis of secondary data and stakeholders' consultation. Following this, it would be useful to do qualitative and quantitative surveys with a larger population to gain an overall understanding and assess other areas such as teacher capacity and availability, resources and other areas that may be included in an overall national curriculum development.

The difficulty for Tonga is in ascertaining the most effective approach in the possible introduction of tourism to the secondary school curriculum that will satisfy the interests of various stakeholders.

To be able to be a Pacific Island that is a competitive island for tourists, Tonga needs to address the tourism training deficiency and raise the profile of the tourism sector and what it is able to offer in terms of long-term careers in the industry.

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## Conclusion

This paper concludes with some fundamental recommendations that are central in trying to give Tongan high school students the possibility of being able to choose to study tourism as a high school subject. Public funds should be allocated in an equitable manner, and skills provided to these children should contribute to national development and enable students to obtain marketable skills.

The Tonga tourism industry would benefit more from the introduction of travel and tourism and related subjects to the secondary school curriculum. This would help the Tongan tourism industry as it moves forward in providing more services and further capacity increase both in air services and also in the accommodation service. The Tanoa International Dateline Hotel, a four-star property with 125 rooms, is due to open in September 2016 and complementing this is the recent announcement by Air New Zealand of its B777-200 weekly service to complement its Airbus 320 five services a week. This would boost the total aeroplane seat capacity from Auckland to Tonga to 60,000 seats a year.

## Glossary

Air arrivals are all international passengers who disembark in any airport, and consist of air visitors and returning residents.

Air visitors, as defined under the UNWTO, include air visitors arriving in Tonga for leisure, business, visit friends and relatives and for other purposes but not for permanent employment or migration in Tonga

Excursionists are visiting passengers on cruise ships and staying for less than 24 hours (they normally do not use accommodation facilities but they utilise facilities and services).

TOP: Tongan pa'anga, or dollar.

Tourism/Travel receipts are defined and provided by the Reserve Bank. An economic multiplier ratio of 1.6 has been used (Milne, 2013) to give estimates of the economic impact of tourism based on official tourism expenditures data.

VFR: Visiting friends and/ or relatives

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