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Chapter · October 2014

DOI: 10.3920/978-90-8686-802-5_20

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Chapter 20

Reflecting on climate change education at the Pacific Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development

Elisabeth Holland, Sarika Chand, Keith Morrison, Andra Whiteside, Fetalai Gagaeolo, Matthew Kensen, Judith Beverly Giblin and Kilateli Epu Falenga

The Pacific Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development (PaCE-SD) operates with a vision to strive for excellence in sustainable development for Pacific Island people. As such, it is a centre of excellence for teaching, training and research based capacity building for climate change and sustainable development in the Pacific Island region. Based at the University of the South Pacific, which serves 12 Pacific Island countries, PaCE-SD offers postgraduate level education in Climate Change and also works on climate adaptation projects in the Pacific.

With 100 postgraduate students, 20 Masters students, eight PhD research students and alumni of 100+, the Centre provides a realm of learning that enables researchers to obtain scientific knowledge in the classroom and traditional knowledge at grassroots level in the community. The student's learning experience is further enhanced by the diversity of their own numbers, with the student's age range of between 22-45 years old, from different backgrounds hailing from as far as Tuvalu to Tonga in the Pacific. Their exposure to students, researchers and educators on exchange visits from Europe, Hawaii and other parts of the world further advances the richness in their learning. Along with this intergenerational learning, the students also have various opportunities to work in regional communities and international institutions, further strengthening their knowledge base and confidence to take on leadership roles in the Pacific.

Scholarship and training under the AusAID Future Climate Leaders Project at PaCE-SD as well as its collaboration with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP) through the Pacific Emerging Environment Leaders (PEEL) Network have also helped the Centre raise the calibre of its students.

The Centre focuses on building capacity, and building relationships, fostering partnerships and strengthening the wide web of networks that exist through the islands, working together on their sustainable futures. PaCE-SD has been able to foster a generation of leaders who are already working on protecting the future sustainability of their communities, and as one student puts it, on 'making informed decisions for the future of my country.'