

Harnessing power users' skills to create culturally-relevant educational technology in the South Pacific

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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines methods for harnessing power users' skills to customize educational technology for the South Pacific. These methods were developed during a yearlong research and development project on educational multimedia funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and conducted by the University of the South Pacific (USP) Media Centre. In the project, we captured the views of Pacific educationists through a series of interviews and a review of regional academic literature covering indigenous pedagogies and technology in the South Pacific. We conducted interviews, questionnaires and usability tests with staff and students from the 12 member-nations of USP (Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu), and built an example educational multimedia project to audit and illustrate the findings.

The project's main focus was on creating culturally inclusive educational multimedia in the South Pacific; this paper focuses on aspects related to power users that were developed during the project. In this paper, I discuss how educational technology can be designed so that both novices and power users can participate in the process of customizing materials to their own cultural contexts. Specifically, I outline how open file-structures have enabled power users to customize educational multimedia for use in the South Pacific.

The role of Oceanic cultures is prominent in these solutions, as this paper aims to demonstrate how properly developed educational technology can help power users provide some of the glue between the cultures of their home countries and those of their educational institutions and technology-developers.