“A framework for small business support services in Pacific island countries based on experiential claims in Fiji”

Asaeli Tamanitoakula Tuibeqa
Dip. Education (SPac, Fiji), BA Economics (SPac, Fiji),
MA Development Economics (UKC, Kent)

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

College of Business
VICTORIA UNIVERSITY
MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA

April 2015

Declaration of Authenticity

I, Asaeli Tamanitoakula Tuibeqa, declare that the PhD thesis entitled "**A framework for small business support services in Pacific island countries based on experiential claims in Fiji**" is no more than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

Signature:

Date: 7 April 2015

Abstract

This research is predicated on the view that if small business were a medical condition, it would lie in the same 'high risk' category as cardiovascular disease, cancer and diabetes and that small business failure is endemic because their support structures and the systems for their care are not working. This issue of failure of support structures becomes the focus of the research - where failure refers to the lack of appropriateness and responsiveness of products and services offered to small businesses in the market. As such, most small businesses are dying. The overarching aim of this research is to, therefore, develop a workable solution to minimise the risks associated with failure in the early stages of business start-ups.

The literature on small business support services is typically focussed on growth. This narrative is, however, informed by discourses in developed countries and there is a paucity of knowledge regarding the experience of small business support services in developing countries. To address this gap in knowledge, this research, set within the context of Fiji, is focussed on understanding the phenomenological experience through the eyes of small business operators (SBOs), external service providers (ESPs) and local business experts (LBEs). An interpretative phenomenological analysis approach was blended with a culturally acceptable data collection method, *talanoa*, to capture the experiential claims of 19 SBOs, ESPs and LBEs working in Fiji.

The findings of the research lend support to the proposition that small business support services are not working in the Fijian context. Factors attributed to this failure include: cultural misfit, limited sources of capital, lack of markets, inadequate information and inappropriate products. The main issue for failure was found to be a lack of preparation before businesses actually start-up. The findings also suggest that assistance has been inappropriately directed and support services provided to the market were also inappropriate.

With this knowledge, a small business development framework was developed. The framework promotes the idea that persons seeking support services must be assessed in terms of their business readiness. Those who are not deemed to be 'business

ready' should be offered a pathway to develop their core competencies in small business prior to start up. Similarly, what is offered to the market must be relevant and value-adding.

List of Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
AAP	Affirmative Action Program
CEFE	Competency based Economies through Formation of Enterprises
ESP	External Service Provider
FBoS	Fiji Bureau of Statistics
FDB	Fiji Development Bank
FTIB	Fiji Trade and Investment Board
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gross National Income
IHRDP	Integrated Human Resources Development Program
LBE	Local Business Expert
MFI	Micro Finance Institution
MPI	Ministry of Primary Industries
MTIT	Ministry of Trade, Investment and Tourism
NCSMED	National Centre for Small Micro Enterprises Development
NDP	Northern Development Programme
NGO	Non-Government Organisations
NZAID	New Zealand Agency for International Development
PIC	Pacific Island Country
PMO	Prime Minister's Office
RBF	Reserve Bank of Fiji
SME	Small Micro Enterprise
SSAP	Support Services and Assistance Program
SBO	Small Business Owner
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Acknowledgements

Bless the Lord, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name!

I started a journey many years ago; a journey back to my roots: to walk on the ground among the poor and the voiceless in rural Pacific island communities. I sincerely believe this was my calling and destiny. I am motivated by the wise saying of King Solomon "He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, and He will pay back what he has given" (Proverbs 19: 17). Payback is not the motivating factor here but the heart to act on behalf of the poor and powerless. A PhD in my view provides a genuine platform in the preparation work. I am not there yet. The walk on the ground is just beginning.

At this juncture, I acknowledge each and every one who believed in me from my early formative years. I was taught early in life not to trust anyone, as I would be disappointed if I did. But, to everyone who I trusted and who reciprocated that trust by way of giving their time, wealth and care, I am greatly indebted to you. May God pay you back for the seeds you sow in kindness and with a generous heart!

Specifically, I wish to acknowledge the upbringing of my uncle and aunty Mr and Mrs Joe Koroivueta who literally became my parents during the early years of academic training. I learnt to persevere despite going through desert 'dry' times. They gave me a vision that without a good education, it would be difficult to come out of the wilderness.

My deepest appreciation goes to my paediatrician wife, Dr Ilisapeci Tuibeqa. You gave up an opportunity at Mercy Hospital for the sake of pre-term babies at CWM Hospital, Suva. At first I could not understand because I was thinking about the payment of my tuition fees at the university. Words cannot express my thankfulness to you for looking after our two children, Eleni and Hannah. Many times you have not heard or seen my covenant but I can still hear yours: "Complete your study and come pay the bills".

My appreciation also goes to the Fijian Affairs Board (FAB) and the Tertiary and Loans Scholarship Board (TLSB) in Fiji for taking over sponsorship of my studies at Victoria University, Melbourne, when I was financially down (but not out). With few places available for scholarship I am humbled to have been chosen. I did not have a very 'colourful' academic record but the Ministry saw a genuine 'colour' in my vision for a doctoral degree.

Finally, I extend my sincere gratitude to my two supervisors: Professor John Breen and Professor Anne-Marie Hede. You placed me in the crucibles on day one and continue to blow heat to purify my native thinking and paradigm. I am more shiny now (on the head especially) than when I first arrived. Professor Breen, one of the reasons I chose Victoria University was your expertise in the field of small business. I can truly say that I am honoured to have been under your tutelage. To Professor Anne-Marie Hede, I suggested that we rope you into the project because of the 'smartness' you carry as a professional. Both of your contributions to the grounding of the study, research analysis and presentation have been invaluable. I am reminded by what the great physicist Albert Einstein once said: "What a person does on his own, without being stimulated by the thought and experiences of others, is even in the best cases rather paltry and monotonous". This research would not have seen a space in scholarly literature without your guidance and instructions.

Thanks also to Dr Emma Curtin for her professional editing of the thesis in accordance with the Australian Standards for Editing Practice and the staff of the Graduate Office for their technical assistance and on-going learning support.

Table of Contents

DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY I
ABSTRACT II
LIST OF ACRONYMS IV
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS V
LIST OF FIGURES XI
LIST OF TABLES XII
PROLOGUE XIV

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION 1

1.1 In the beginning 1
1.2 Research background 3
1.2.1 What are SSAPs? 3
1.2.2 Who are the providers of SSAPs? 4
1.2.3 Problems of practice in Fiji 6
1.2.4 Extant knowledge of the problem 7
1.2.5 Gap in the extant knowledge 9
1.3 Statement of the research problem 10
1.4 Research objectives, approach and outcome 12
1.4.1 Aim and objectives 12
1.4.2 Research approach 12
1.4.3 Outcomes of the research 13
1.5 Research context and setting 14
1.5.1 The physical and socio-economic environment of PICs 14
1.5.2 Fijian setting and background 16
1.6 Thesis structure 19

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW 20

2.1 Introduction 20

2.2 Understanding small business....20
2.2.1 A 'road map' and broad fields....20
2.2.2 Distinctiveness in small business....23
2.2.3 Characteristics of small business in PICs....32
2.3 Understanding SSAPs....36
2.3.1 Rationale for seeking support....37
2.3.3 Nature of support services and structure....38
2.3.4 Evaluation of SSAP performance....42
2.4 Are small business SSAPs working?....45
2.4.1 Experience in the UK and Europe....46
2.4.2 The Canadian and US experiences....51
2.4.3 The Australian experience....53
2.4.4 The African experience....54
2.4.5 The World Bank experience....56
2.4.6 The Fijian experience....57
2.4.7 Synthesis of the international experiences....60
2.5 Factors contributing to SSAPs failure....62
2.5.1 Contextualising the 'not working' phenomenon....62
2.5.2 The cultural view....64
2.5.3 The financial view....67
2.5.4 The educational and training view....70
2.5.5 The market view....73
2.6 Theoretical Framework....74
2.6.2 Needs assessment approach....76
2.6.2 Expectation-based approach....77
2.6.3 Market orientation theory....79
2.6 Conceptual framework....81
2.7 Summary and conclusion....83

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODS....84

3.1 Introduction....84

3.2 Philosophical assumptions 85
3.2.1 Constructivism (or interpretivism) paradigm 86
3.2.2 The researcher's position and experience 88
3.3 Strategies of inquiry 89
3.3.1 Restating the research objectives and question 89
3.3.2 Qualitative research approach 90
3.3.3 Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach 90
3.4 Data collection process 93
3.4.1 Pacific islands research 94
3.4.2 In-depth interviews 95
3.4.3 The mixed 'talanoa' method 96
3.4.4 Sampling for the mixed 'talanoa' method 99
3.4.5 The process used for the mixed 'talanoa' method 102
3.5 Data analysis and interpretation 107
3.5.1 Transcription of raw data 107
3.5.2 IPA data analysis 107
3.6 Ethical considerations and limitations 110
3.7 Summary and conclusion 111

CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS 112

4.1 Introduction 112
4.2 Profile of research participants 112
4.2.1 Identifying the SBOs 113
4.2.2 Identifying the ESPs 114
4.2.3 Identifying the LBEs 115
4.3 Data organisation and coding in QSR program 116
4.4 Research participants' accounts and meanings 120
4.5 Synthesis of participant content descriptions 143
4.6 Interpretations and link to the research 145

4.6.1 Understanding the research participants' claims 145
4.6.2 Contributing factors to SSAP failure 152
4.7 Summary and Conclusion 155

CHAPTER 5 RESEARCH OUTCOMES, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.... 157

5.1 Introduction 157
5.2 Research Outcome – A framework 157
5.3 Research summary and conclusion 162
5.3.1 Thesis statement and intent 162
5.3.2 Summary of research approach and methods 162
5.3.3 Summary of findings in the literature 163
5.3.4 Summary of research findings in Fiji 165
5.3.5 Key contributions of the study 167
5.3.6 Research limitations and future research 168
5.3.7 Final conclusions 170
REFERENCES 172
APPENDICES 205
Appendix 1 206
Appendix 2 208
Appendix 3 210
Appendix 4 211
Appendix 5 214
Appendix 6 216

List of Figures

Figure 2-1 A ‘road map’ of current research 21

Figure 2-2 Selected measurement dimensions of SSAPs 44

Figure 2-3 UK Business Link system 47

Figure 2-4 Conceptual framework 82

Figure 3-1 Research framework 85

Figure 3-2 Framework for IPA data analysis 108

Figure 4-1 Factors contributing to failure 152

Figure 5-1 A small business oriented development framework 158

List of Tables

Table 1-1 Nature of SSAP in Fiji..... 5

Table 1-2 Key socio-economic indicators of PICs 15

Table 1-3 Fiji Economic Indicators, 2006-2010 16

Table 2-1 Functional definition: entrepreneur versus small business operator 24

Table 2-2 Differences between indigenous and non-indigenous businesses 27

Table 2-3 Relevant studies in small business and entrepreneurship in PICs 33

Table 2-4 Samples of support for small business in Fiji..... 40

Table 2-5 Selected studies in SSAPs in the UK: post Business Link 42

Table 2-6 UK Lessons of experience: 1991-2004 49

Table 2-7 Selected studies on small business 58

Table 2-8 Synthesis of developed and developing countries exepriences…….61

Table 3-1 Matching research objectives and questions 89

Table 3-2: Husserlian versus Heideggerian phenomenology 93

Table 3-3 Comparative paradigms in three indigenous research methods 98

Table 3-4 Sample of coding in NVivo 109

Table 4-1 SBOs involved with the *talanoa* 113

Table 4-2 ESPs involved in the *talanoa* 115

Table 4-3 LBEs involved with the *talanoa*..... 116

Table 4-4 Selected thematic areas: General and specific categories 117

Table 4-5 Themes from ALL participants' 'talanoa' descriptions 118

Table 4-6 Research participants' nodes and references..... 119

Table 4-7 Reduction and integration of participant's experiences 144

Table 5-1 Summary of SSAP failures and framework solution 166

Prologue

My PhD journey in the field of small business began as a young native boy growing up in a small rural village: in a thatched house, no paved roads, no electricity and no running water. I could not recall whether those things were considered a problem to us. Not a single family owned a swimming pool; yet, the whole village had access to large rivers and ocean. None had electricity for lighting but every day there was sun, moon and stars to light up our days. We had plenty of food from our gardens and fish from the sea. We shared and cared as one big family. In my mind, we were the happiest, just as the early European explorers described it – an earthly paradise in the Pacific.

Today, I watch with interest how my own village has transformed almost overnight from a caterpillar into a butterfly. New ways of doing things have replaced our harmonious ways of caring and sharing. We are no longer a village but a market. Money and capital have become the 'village chief', the principal means of exchange. Apparently, without the village chief, people would not be able to trade in the market. Unfortunately, not many in our village were ready for a societal transformation. There was no advanced warning and preparation.

I left my village in 1983 on a mission - to learn the nature and impact of change and to seek ways of surviving the 'tsunami' waves of economic transformation. I have never stopped – I am just beginning. With formal learning in economics and accounting, I entered the field of small business in 1985. For almost 30 years now, I have assumed the role of a small business trainer, banker, consultant, business planner, educator, policy advisor, program designer and a small business owner.

One of my own experiences, which influenced this PhD research, was my involvement in the monitoring of the Fiji government 29 affirmative action programs in the Office of the Prime Minister. I was specifically assigned to a small business program (Program 7) which enabled indigenous people to start a new business. Whilst government had the political will, the legal, policy and budgetary support, the take up rate by the target group was unexpectedly low. This raised several questions:

What went wrong? Did the program fail? Why did it fail? How could the program be improved? These questions brought me to, and kept me motivated, in this PhD research.

Small business is an overly researched area. However, very little account is documented on small Pacific island countries in terms of their support structure and systems of care. Not many researchers have ‘walked on the ground’ or sailed the uncharted waters of the South Pacific Ocean. I dare to take this journey albeit with a lack of navigational instruments - the lack of statistical data, limited small business literature on Pacific islands countries and limited research funding. After all, the research journey is about my own folks, in the land of Fiji, my country of birth.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 In the beginning

The failure experience of small businesses is well established in the literature (Curran 2000; 1994; Storey & Greene 2010) although differences exists in conception and measurement dimensions (Watson, J & Everett 1992, 1999). Most small businesses are born today for a burial tomorrow. In the UK for example, approximately one third of new business start-ups collapse and die without going past the first three years of business operation (Storey 1994; Storey & Greene 2010). In the US, about 50% of small businesses would not survive the first four years of operation (Headd 2003). Given the importance of small business in economic development (Acs 2006; Naudé 2010), such failure experience warrants government and donor interventions for the purpose of improving the growth and survival rates.

This study however is not about small business births and deaths, rather it is focussed on the provision and management of care to service providers aimed at minimising the risks associated with new business start-ups and their growth in the Pacific island region. In addition, the study draws attention to the performance of government (PMO 2006) and donor sponsored support programs (AusAID 2012, 2014; Hughes 2003) in livelihood creation projects and community enterprises common in Fiji.

The Pacific island region is targeted in this study because of its high dependency on donor support funds for regional and national development interventions (AusAID 2012, 2014; Pacific Plan Review 2013). Despite over US$50 billion in donor funds being poured into the region since 1970 (Hughes 2003) for various purposes and interests, most island countries are still suffering from poor economic performance, bad governance, political instability, increasing poverty and lack of employment opportunities (AusAID 2010, 2011c; Chand 2003; Duncan & Chand 2002; Prasad, N

2008). Yet development funds are still flowing into this region[1] despite the call for restraint (Hughes 2003).

This study is premised on the belief that small businesses in this region are dying because the support structures and systems of care are not working (Hughes 2003). The failure in performance of small businesses in Pacific island countries may be high because they do not have the financial resources, technical expertise and support structures compared to developed and other developing countries. Key research questions driving the study are: what do the stakeholders of small business perceive to be the factors that contribute to the failure of existing small business support services and assistance programs (SSAPs) and how can the problem of failure be addressed to improve the effectiveness of SSAP?

There are a number of perspectives that could help to explain the research problem. Among them, there are cultural, financial, educational and market perspectives. This research is focussed on a market perspective to reflect a customer-oriented and interactive SSAPs development process. The market perspective assumes a mismatch in the demand and supply of SSAPs. From a demand side, it assumes that the expectations and needs of small business owners (SBOs) do not match the current suite of SSAPs offerings (Bennett 2007, 2008; Dana 2001). From a supply side, SSAPs offerings are driven to the market through the influence of service providers including donor agencies without the involvement of SBOs (Boter & Lundström 2005; Hurmerinta-Peltomäki & Nummela 1998). As such, either the market offerings are not satisfying the needs of SBOs or there is no special interest to buy the offerings.

Having a better understanding of SBOs lived experiences and perceptions will lead to a more effective design and an appropriate delivery mechanism. Furthermore, it will lead to a more appropriate policy and strategic direction for those delivering the support assistance. In addition, it could also mean the reinvigoration of donor agencies', such as the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID),

[1] For example, one of the major donors, AusAID announced a spending allocation of AUS$197 million in the 2014/2015 financial year for the Pacific region.

the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID), who are experiencing donor fatigue due to poor program performances in Pacific island countries (AusAID 2012).

In this thesis, Fiji is chosen as a surrogate for the Pacific islands small business population given Fiji's advanced level of entrepreneurial development. There is also a strong presence of Western and indigenous business environments which mean that if a small business development framework is to be relevant and meaningful, then Fiji provides a 'laboratory' to develop such initiatives. Additional background on Fiji's small business sector is presented in Section 1.5.

1.2 Research background

1.2.1 What are SSAPs?

The concept of SSAPs has been expressed in various terms in the literature; for example, 'hard and soft' services (Wren & Storey 2002), 'professional services' (Nooteboom, Zwart & Bijmolt 1992), 'external assistance' (Smallbone, North & Leigh 1993), and 'business services' (Jones-Evans & Kirby 1995).

In this study, the term 'support services and assistance programs' is used bringing together two components of help: (1) support services and (2) assistance programs. Support services include business consultancy, market research, accounting, legal counselling, mentoring and networking, financial and business management advisory, skills training, and the dissemination of best practice. Assistance programs include those focussing on direct financial assistance and infrastructure development such as new venture capital, small business loan, export and trade facilities, letter of credit, grant funding, credit guarantee, interest subsidy, tax incentive, infrastructure development and so forth (Breen & Bergin-Seers 2002; Nooteboom, Zwart & Bijmolt 1992).

The rationale behind the establishment of SSAPs is to encourage new start-ups and assist in the management of existing small businesses. The support can be sourced

internally from the owner's personal resources and externally from public (including semi-public organisations) and private service providers (Ramsden & Bennett 2005). The UK Business Link network and the US Small Business Development agency are examples of SSAPs where business advice, assistance and solutions are provided to assist new business start-ups and existing small businesses. The concept of business incubators, managed enterprise centres and technology parks in China, India and Brazil are other examples of packaged SSAPs support but in more specialised areas.

Overall, these external support services are sought by SBOs with a specific need in mind and an expectation of responsive SSAP offerings (Elena-Yusuf 2010). There is also another form of support received from individuals, service organisations including government and donors with special knowledge and skills which may or may not be sought by SBOs. Such support services are often created and launched in the market by large provider organisations as part of their corporate social responsibility activities, to recapture lost share of the market and/or to increase earnings (Bennett 2007; Hurmerinta-Peltomäki & Nummela 1998).

1.2.2 Who are the providers of SSAPs?

In essence, the nature of support and the sources of support are determined by the needs of those seeking support (Gibb 2000; Jay & Schaper 2003). Depending on the availability of support, small businesses often receive support from two possible sources: public support and private support (Bennett 2007; Ramsden & Bennett 2005; Robson & Bennett 2005). For example, a SBO looking for management assistance may turn to accountants for professional advice and not to a university sponsored program or a government sponsored institution (Peterson 1984). Providers of public support include government ministries, donor agencies, corporate organisations or statutory bodies receiving partial or full budgetary provisions of government. More often than not, government sponsored programs are driven by political influences (Smallbone & Welter 2001). Whether such programs represent the 'voice' of the people in the constituency or the personal views and influence of political leaders is debatable.

On the other hand, private sources of support include commercial banks, private financial institutions (debt and equity), business consultants, lawyers, accountants, training providers and technical support experts. In the case of Fiji, there are a number of small business support organisations established privately and by the Fijian government to provide both financial and non-financial services (refer to Table 1-1).

Table 1-1 Nature of SSAP in Fiji

PURPOSE	NAME OF ORGANISATION	SPONSOR
Business registration: name and tax	Registrar of companies, Income tax office	Government
Business license	Municipal councils	Para-government
Training: ideas generation, business planning, budgeting	NCSMED, government departments and universities	Para-government
Advisory Services	Private consultants, bankers, lawyers and accountants	Private sector
Small business grants, guarantee, and concessional loans	NCSMED, NDP, IHRDEP and FDB	Government and semi-government
Micro credit and savings	NCSMED, NGOs and local micro financial institutions	Para-government, civil societies and community groups
Small business loans: working capital and term loans	Commercial banks and FDB	Private and semi-government
Networking and mentoring	None in particular	Private
Export support services	Fiji Investment, RBF, FDB and commercial banks	Private and semi-government

Key: National Centre for Small Micro Enterprises Development (NCSMED); Northern Development Program (NDP); Integrated Human Resources Development and Empowerment Program (IHRDEP); Fiji Development Bank (FDB); Reserve Bank of Fiji (RBF); Non-government organisation (NGO).

Most of these support organisations operate independently or in direct competition with other provider organisations for government funding, clientele and recognition. For example, although the National Centre for Small Micro Enterprises Development (NCSMED) is a semi-government organisation, it competes directly with the Department of Cooperatives, the Centre for Appropriate Technology and Development and other government ministries for small business training grants. In

this instance, the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing; often resulting in double dipping by those who are well versed in the system.

1.2.3 Problems of practice in Fiji

Small business SSAPs provide an important source to fill the resource gap in small business development (Elena-Yusuf 2010, 2012). However, the effectiveness of external service providers to design and deliver appropriate SSAPs in developing countries has been criticised (Dana 2007; Gibb & Li 2003; Torri 2011, 2012). In the context of Fiji, not a single 'high growth' (Shane 2009) business has been developed despite resources poured out annually for the establishment of provider institutions and the development of support programs (PMO 2006).

In 2001, the Fijian government launched 29 affirmative action programs (AAP) and 42 blueprint activities for various purposes targeting disadvantaged communities, women, youth and disabled persons (PMO 2006). One such program[2] was the reservation of 50 per cent of capital purchases, licenses, permits and contracts to indigenous Fijians. The primary purpose of the program was to narrow the economic gap between indigenous Fijians and other races (PMO 2006; Ratuva 2000). Creators of the AAP believe that unless the economic gap was reduced, the racial tension and political instability in the country would remain. However, a 2006 monitoring report by the Office of the Prime Minister showed that despite the preferential treatment, the political will of government and annual budgetary provisions[3], indigenous Fijians were not able to secure more than one per cent of the total value of contracts awarded annually (PMO 2006).

The findings suggest that either the target group had no interest in being involved in the program or there was an elite group within the target group manipulating the selection process, thus eliminating those with little information (Ratuva 2000). Also, the findings suggest that because the program was promoted by politicians there was

2 Program 7 under the Social Justice Act 2001
3 Over FJD$249million was allocated to the operationalisation of the AAP between 2002 and 2005. Fiji Parliamentary Paper 83, 2006 (PMO 2006).

the perception that it was a politically motivated creation, bearing no resemblance to the needs, interests and demands of the target group (White 2001).

Furthermore, Fiji's entrepreneurial environment is heavily influenced by the government both as a regulator and as an important player in the industry. For example, in small business training, where the government not only provides funding for the conduct of training by other provider organisations, it is also directly involved in business training through its Ministry of Women and the Department of Cooperatives. Yet, there is little evidence of sustainability and growth despite resources being poured into operationalising provider institutions and the maintenance of support programs (PMO 2006).

There is also the belief in government that successful SSAPs of developed countries could be easily transferred to developing countries. This thinking is flawed from several perspectives. Among others, there are socio-cultural conditions that are embedded in the entrepreneurial environment that influence the norms and values of SSAPs adaptation (Smith, BR & Stevens 2010; Thornton, Ribeiro-Soriano & Urbano 2011). This makes it difficult to transfer and adapt ideas across countries with different geographical, socio-cultural, economic and financial conditions.

1.2.4 Extant knowledge of the problem

A review of the extant literature in small business SSAPs reveals four key factors contributing to the failure of support programs. These include cultural misfit (Gibb & Li 2003; Irwin 2011), limited sources of capital (Berger, A & Udell 2002), and deficiency in the knowledge and learning capacity of those managing SSAPs (Henry, Hill & Leitch 2005).

First, the failure of support programs in developing countries highlights the difficulty of fitting western entrepreneurship models into different cultural settings (Dana & Anderson 2007; Gibb & Li 2003; Irwin 2011; Saffu 2003). Indeed, in the case of Fiji, the support programs offered do not fit the geographical and local socio-cultural conditions (Farrelly 2011; Gibson 2012). The contention in the social entrepreneurial literature is that western entrepreneurial models, which emphasise capital

accumulation, asset growth and independence, contradict the values of communal living, cultural preservation and social support in indigenous environments (Saffu 2003; Thornton, Ribeiro-Soriano & Urbano 2011). These contradictions make it difficult to transfer successful ideas and concepts to developing countries (Irwin 2011; Urbano, Toledano & Soriano 2010).

Second, the capital-raising alternatives in small developing countries are limited (Berger, A & Udell 2002; Clarke, Cull & Martinez Peria 2006; Smallbone & Welter 2001) because of under-development of the financial system. In the Fijian context, small business financing through the capital market is not a viable option due to stringent listing requirements and asymmetric information (Berger, A & Udell 2002) arising from the lack of professional advice and the institutions' preference for large scale enterprises. For this reason, small businesses are forced indirectly to use the debt market (Berger, A, Rosen & Udell 2007). However, the local financial climate is such that large commercial banks are known to be driving the market with their own inventions of products and services (Blumberg & Letterie 2008; Ministry of Finance 1999; Smallbone & Welter 2001). In addition, a large proportion of their offerings are imported from their international offices outside Fiji with no direct link (or relevance) to local needs and environmental conditions (Ministry of Finance 1999; Williksen-Bakker 2002).

Third, there is a problem of deficiency in the knowledge and capacity of service providers (Eakin & Lemos 2006) to adapt new ways of doing things to replace the old systems and practices as they become obsolete (McCraw 2007). A case in point here is the establishment of the AusAID sponsored Fiji Community Development Program of 2011. The program design report recognised the lack of capacity within local implementing agencies to train their own field workers and managers (AusAID 2011a). This capacity problem was further compounded by the local program managers' inability to engage with recipient communities on the ground to verify their community needs and demand (AusAID 2011a).

Finally, there is a mismatch between the needs of those seeking support services and the actual SSAP offerings in the market (Bennett 2007, 2008). This is associated with a knowledge gap in this research, which is discussed in the next subsection.

1.2.5 Gap in the extant knowledge

Current academic research in the area of SSAPs is shared across all social science disciplines, but substantive work emerges from those with interests in geography and sociology. Since the 1990s, a significant increase in support services research has developed, particularly in the UK, following the establishment of the Business Link networks in 1992 (Bennett & Robson 1999; Bryson, Daniels & Ingram 1999; Gibb 2000; Smallbone, North & Leigh 1993). Such interest was justified by the need to minimise the failure rates of small businesses during their first three years of operation (Storey 1994; Storey & Greene 2010). The general belief is that when small business grows there is a spiralling effect on employment, productivity and national income (Acs 2006; Acs & Szerb 2007).

Despite this growing interest, the knowledge in the extant literature has been "substantially shaped by Western concepts and practice … drawn heavily from the recent and past development experience of the so called 'modern' (western) economies" (Gibb & Li 2003, p. 404). According to Gibb and Li (2003), knowledge construction is grounded on concepts, paradigms and ideologies such as capitalism – the so called 'gold standard' in entrepreneurial development. As such, there is little knowledge of how developing countries such as the South Pacific region with limited resources and indigenous ways do business with these gold standards.

In the Pacific island countries (PICs) context, small business research has been limited. Although the seminal work of Hailey (1986, 1987) and Fairbairn (1988b) shed some light on this issue, it was directed towards understanding the characteristics of island countries and their potential to adapt modern entrepreneurial polices to support economic growth and development. Other researchers in small business ventured into areas such as trade, regulatory environment (Nand 2014), barriers to growth (Reddy 2007; Yusuf 1998), strategic management (Singh, T et al. 2007) and the psychological factors of failed business (Van Gelder et al. 2007). However, none of these studies specifically examined issues related to small business SSAPs.

In addition, there is another gap in knowledge concerning the expectations of small business operators, as advocated by Bennett (2007). In his assessment of the UK Business Links networks, Bennett (2007) observes that since the establishment of the Business Link model in 1993, only one study had used the expectation approach from the viewpoint of small business operators. He posits that (Bennett 2007, p. 438):

> … there remains, therefore, a significant gap in current evaluations of Business Link and its management, because expectations are not systematically researched and fed into service design and delivery.

He further suggests that (Bennett 2007, p. 454):

> … [there are] important insights to be gained from an expectations based dimension to Business Link evaluation…and its further research should be a high priority.

Using a qualitative dataset in Fiji, this current study addresses these research gaps relating to the paucity of small business SSAP knowledge in PICs grounded on a market based expectation approach.

1.3 Statement of the research problem

This research asserts that a mismatch exists in the demand and supply of SSAPs in the Fijian market thus rendering SSAPs to not function effectively. From a demand side, it is assumed that the expectations and needs of SBOs do not match the SSAP suite of market offerings. Either the SSAP offerings are not satisfying the needs of SBOs or there is no special interest to buy the products and services offered in the market. From a supply side, SSAP offerings are driven to the market through the influence of policy-makers, financiers, program designers, evaluators and program managers. There is no input from small business owner-managers, who are the key buyers and users of SSAP offerings.

There are a number of theories linked to the market perspective; for example, the market orientation theory (Jaworski, Kohli & Sahay 2000; Kohli & Jaworski 1990), the resource based theory (Barney 1996, 2001; Wernerfelt 1995), the expectation

disconfirmation theory (Oliver, RL 1977), and the agency theory (Eisenhardt 1989) among others. However the market orientation theory (Jaworski, Kohli & Sahay 2000; Kohli & Jaworski 1990) offers a genuine framework of knowledge and grounding for the current study. Previous studies on small business SSAPs have been carried out from an end-user perspective, that is, after the utilisation of a known product or service. For example, a road has been constructed and travellers are asked about their experience after using the road. There is little consideration of the expectation of SBOs before the actual 'construction of the road', that is, before the design, development and delivery of SSAPs.

In this research context, the voice of customers is deemed to be no longer important and the offerings of the SSAPs are merely to drive the market (Jaworski, Kohli & Sahay 2000). The few large service providers that operate in Fiji take advantage by reshaping the needs and preferences of customers in the market. Even if needs assessments have been carried out on existing support programs, they have been either inadequate, incorrect, or not taken into account in the designing process and policy formulation (Audet & St-Jean 2007; Bennett 2007).

Small business SSAPs have been evaluated on the basis of participation/usage, satisfaction, referrals/reuse, effectiveness, tangible and non-tangible benefits (Chrisman & McMullan 2004; McMullan, Chrisman & Vesper 2001) but the expectation of SBOs have not been considered in the evaluation literature. Bennett (2007), however, proposed that without expectation in subjective-based assessments, the results will be imperfect "since there is no control for prior client experience or wants/desires for the type of service required" (Bennett 2007, p. 435) is considered. Hence, this research proposes the use of SBOs' expectation and needs as a basis for evaluating the effectiveness of SSAPs offerings in the market.

1.4 Research objectives, approach and outcome

1.4.1 Aim and objectives

The overarching aim of this study was to develop a small business development framework that takes into consideration the input of small business stakeholders in the design and delivery of SSAPs. In the construction of this framework, two specific objectives were proposed:

(1) To develop an understanding of the experiential claims of SBOs, external service providers (ESPs) and local business experts (LBEs) in Fiji and to make sense of their claims regarding SSAPs;

(2) To explore for issues that contribute to the failure of SSAPs from the research participants' perspectives and to construct a workable framework that meets the needs of those seeking assistance.

1.4.2 Research approach

This thesis embodies a phenomenological approach to understanding a community of people (mostly indigenous) undergoing societal transformation and using small business as tools for what Schumpeter called 'creative destruction' (discussed in Chapter 2). Phenomenology is a branch of philosophy that investigates how people perceive or experience themselves and their life world. Moustakas (1994, p. 65) described the phenomenological investigation as:

> … the only way I can truly come to know things and people is to go out to them, to return again and again to them, to immerse myself completely in what is there before me, look, see, listen, hear, touch, from many angles and perspectives and vantage points, each time freshly so that there will be continual openings and learnings that will connect with each other and with prior perceptions, understandings, and future possibilities.

Learning is based on the experience of real people having encounters either with other people, things or objects as they appear or come to being – the so called

phenomena. An experience in the phenomenon, say, for example, healing can only be real if the phenomenon is grasped from the viewpoint of the person healed. Likewise, a person cannot talk about a phenomenon such as charity, micro finance, poverty or support services unless he or she had an encounter with such matters. Otherwise, the sharing of that encounter would be considered hearsay – which is the absence of a lived experience.

Using a qualitative approach, this study focused on building a structure that is grounded on the views, experiences and perceptions of SBOs, ESPs and LBEs. Instead of an 'institutional' and a secondary data gathering technique, the research pursued an in-depth interview approach with this selected group of informants. Themes guided audio-recorded interviews, such as attitudes, behaviours, motivations, satisfaction, impact, aspirations, culture and needs. These are more or less open and subjective areas of interest that cannot be explored through quantifiable statistics.

Since this research is about meanings of Fijian experiences, an interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used. While IPA is a new approach in qualitative design (Curran 2000; Curran & Blackburn 1994; Hurmerinta-Peltomäki & Nummela 2004), it has become common in the fields of psychology, education and health; yet, it is rarely used in the small business field. Since IPA explores meaning and knowledge constructions of the lived experience of research participants (Smith, JA, Flowers & Larkin 2008), it was therefore considered appropriate.

1.4.3 Outcomes of the research

The proposed research endorses the idea of walking on the ground to hear the voice of SBOs, ESPs and LBEs in Fiji. There is vast local knowledge, experience, and networks within the community (Morrison 2008) which are not documented as yet in the extant literature. Talking to people on the ground minimises the risks of using template solutions and guesswork about real problems and their underlying causes. The primary data collected are useful for modifying existing programs, re-prioritising needs and providing for better use of resources. Through this process, it was

expected that a more responsive and appropriate program could be delivered, improving the chance of small business survival and growth. If businesses grow, there will be an upward spiralling effect on employment, income and living standards.

The development of a small business SSAP framework for Fiji is needed for private and government support program designers, evaluators, policy-makers, resource planners and donor agencies to improve the delivery of small business support services in Fiji and potentially other countries in the South Pacific region.

Donor organisations that have been experiencing 'aid fatigue' and the continuous failure in their past development programs are likely to take a special interest in this study. A workable development framework grounded on careful needs assessment may re-ignite donors' interest. More importantly, it will provide a meaningful and effective approach to the design and distribution of aid funds targeting rural livelihood and poverty alleviation programs.

1.5 Research context and setting

The purpose of this section is to provide a brief background on issues and challenges affecting PICs and to introduce the concept of small business in the Fijian context.

1.5.1 The physical and socio-economic environment of PICs

The PICs consist of a grouping of 'small islands' in the South Pacific region. A 'small island' is defined in terms of land size, population and total income (Crowards 2002). Papua New Guinea is by far the largest in all categories with a population of over 6.5 million, while Tuvalu and Nauru represent the other end of the spectrum each having a population of around 10,000 and a combined land area of 47 square kilometres. This makes them among the smallest islands in the world (see Table 1-2).

Table 1-2 Key socio-economic indicators of PICs

COUNTRY	LAND AREA (SQ KM)	POPULATION 2011)	GNI PER CAPITA CURRENT 2011 (US$)	GROWTH GDP % CONSTANT PRICES 2011
Papua New Guinea	462,840	6,473,910	1,062	11.3
Fiji	18,272	839,324	3,170	1.9
Solomon Islands	28,370	517,455	1,100	10.6
Vanuatu	12,190	233,026	1,908	1.4
Samoa	2,935	183,900	3,160	1.2
Federated States of Micronesia	701	110,443	2,183	2.6
Tonga	650	102,724	1,874	2.9
Kiribati	811	97,231	656	3.3
Marshall Islands	181	53,236	2,851	0.8
Palau	444	20,279	8,423	6.6
Cook Islands	237	15,537	10,007	1.0
Nauru	21	10,163	2,820	14.2
Tuvalu	26	9,729	1,563	8.5
Niue	259	1,549	5,854	n/a

Key: n/a – not available. Source: ADB Report, 2011, 2013

Smallness in size creates a number of development challenges. Most small islands are scattered and physically isolated, making market accessibility difficult and transportation expensive (Fairbairn 1988b). Besides, the islands have no critical mass to drive consumption expenditure and stimulate increasing production. Common characteristics of small islands include their high economic exposure, remoteness, insularity and their proneness to external forces such as natural disasters (Briguglio 1995, 2003).

AusAID describes the region as being "a complex and difficult development environment" (AusAID 2010, p. 4) because of limited resources, isolation from the rest of the world, diseconomies of scale, shortage of critical infrastructure and high vulnerability to external shocks (AusAID 2010, 2012). Dibb (2005) describes the region as an "arc of instability" considering the corruption, coups and crises happening in some of the countries, for example, the civil unrest in Tonga, Vanuatu

and the Solomon islands and the coups/attempted coup in Fiji and Papua New Guinea respectively (Larmour 2012).

1.5.2 Fijian setting and background

Geographic and demographic: This study is set in the Republic of Fiji, a small island country in the South Pacific. It has a land area of 18,272 square kilometres and consists of 332 small islands one-third of which are still uninhabited[4] (Singh, S et al. 2013). The topography of the islands differs but they are mostly arable, mountainous and rocky. There is little flat land to carry out mechanised farming, although agriculture is the main livelihood. The population estimate in 2012 was 858,038, comprised of indigenous Fijians (57%), Indians (37%) and minority groups (6%) (Fiji Bureau of Statistics 2007). About 50% of the population live in rural settlements and communal villages, and the other 50% in urban areas.

Economic and political environment: Table 1-3 shows Fiji's economic performance for a five-year period between 2006 and 2010.

Table 1-3 Fiji Economic Indicators, 2006-2010

KEY INDICATORS	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
GDP Growth (% change per year)	1.9	-0.9	0.2	-3.0	0.1
Per Capita GDP (FJD$ current prices)	5,478	5,583	5,849	5,801	6,153
Consumer Price Index (% change per year)	2.5	4.7	7.8	3.7	7.8
Fiscal Balance (% of GDP)	2.9	-1.8	-1.5	-3.0	-3.6
Export Growth (% change per year)	-2.6	9.4	19.9	-28.4	25.0
Import Growth (% change per year)	12.1	0.3	25.2	-36.9	2.3
Current account balance (% of GDP)	-16.3	-11.3	-15.1	-4.2	-4.4
External debt (% of GNI)	14.8	7.7	8.7	8.3	n/a

Key: provisional (p), estimate (e). Source: RBF Quarterly Report December 2013

[4] About 80% of the Fijian land is communally owned by indigenous Fijians.

Table 1-3 highlights a consumer driven economy based on the growth of imported goods[5] fuelled by significantly large remittances from Fijians in diaspora[6] and tourism dollars (Pratt, Gibson & Movono 2013). Sugar export is the major source of foreign exchange earnings. However, the loss of preferential access in the international market is real and could cripple the entire sugar industry. In addition, natural disasters such as cyclones, flooding and droughts have not helped local cane production levels and other agro-based industries. The implication of such happenings means a deteriorating current account deficit, widening balance of trade and erosion of Fiji's economic power to meet external debt obligations (ADB 2011). Overall, the ability of the government to provide for its citizens is reduced enormously.

On the political front, the undemocratic intervention of the Fijian military in the 1987, 2000 and 2006 coups has virtually pushed Fiji fifty years backwards (Chand 2007) in all aspects of the economy. While politicians continue to point fingers at each other, racial tension escalates on the ground between the two major groups - indigenous Fijians (natives) and Indo Fijians (of Indian descent). One of the political strategies to diffuse the tension came in the form of the 2001 Affirmative Action Program (AAP) (Fairlie & Marion 2012; Reddy & Prasad 2002; White 2001). The main purpose of this program was to encourage indigenous Fijians to actively participate in the area of commerce (Ratuva 2000; Williksen-Bakker 2002).

Entrepreneurial environment: The Fijian entrepreneurial environment is constructed on a dual economic system: traditional versus more modern capitalist (Farrelly 2009). A traditional structure involves land-based entrepreneurial activities (for example, agricultural and fishing) using traditional methods – which are labour and low capital intensive. Many of the land-based activities are carried out by indigenous Fijians in a village or communal setting, as this community communally owns 80% of Fijian land (McGregor et al. 2011).

[5] Imports consist of food, beverages, tobacco, electrical items and transport equipment.
[6] Personal remittances had grown from $50 million in 1999 to $321 million at the end of 2005.

An entrepreneurial person wishing to undertake commercial farming on native land will be subject to the communal village structure and a government lease arrangement under the native land regulatory framework (Williksen-Bakker 2002). Outsiders who are not members of the landowning unit can occupy native land for farming and housing through traditional means such as the giving of gifts to the head of the landowning unit.

A more modern capitalist structure has been established closer to urban centres with an organised and formal way of doing business (registered and licensed). Manufacturing, wholesale and retail services are examples of activities under this structure. There is a significant variation in the choice of activity between indigenous Fijians and other races within the structure (Williksen-Bakker 2002). While other races diligently pursue business in a formal structure (as both a private employee and an employer), indigenous Fijians generally opt for much safer economic activities, organised by the government, as a salaried staff (ESCAP 2007; Taylor 2002).

This research, however, is focussed on small business operators and community enterprises that move between the traditional and the more modern structure. It is important to look at such businesses because of their unique position in moving between two economic structures and enjoying the free government support services and assistance programs that are offered in both rural and urban centres. This is a unique target group, which the Fijian government is promoting in order to stimulate new economic activities in the northern parts of Fiji.

Small business position: Fiji's small business sector is still rudimentary. Its contribution to economic development is insignificantly low by dollar value but the number of people involved in business start-ups is growing. The Fiji Bureau of Statistics economic survey of 7,061 registered businesses highlighted that 72% of these are in the Small Micro Enterprise (SME) category (Fiji Bureau of Statistics 2004). It should be noted that in Fiji, the acronym SME stands for small and micro enterprises and not small medium enterprises as in other countries like Australia, and New Zealand. By definition, micro enterprise refers to any business activity with less than five employees and not more than US$17,000 annual turnover. Small enterprise

on the other hand refers to any business activity employing between 6 and 20 people, with no more than US$57,000 annual income (NCSMED 2006).

1.6 Thesis structure

This thesis is divided into five chapters, as follows:

Chapter 1 has provided an introduction to the study, outlining the research problem, its significance and specific aim and objectives. The research context and setting has also been discussed.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the current literature related to small business SSAPs. It focuses on understanding their nature, rationale and performance. Special attention is given to the empirical evidence regarding the failure of SSAPs to satisfy the needs and expectations of small business owners. A theoretical framework underpinning the research problem is also discussed.

Chapter 3 outlines the philosophical assumptions underlying the research approach, the method of data collection and how the data were analysed.

Chapter 4 is a presentation of results and interpretation of findings from the data collection work in Fiji. The three research questions developed from the outlined objectives are formally addressed.

Chapter 5 summarises the research findings and recommends a small business SSAPs framework for the purpose of improving service delivery. The research journey also comes to a conclusion with a confirmation or otherwise of the research thesis. Practical contributions of the study and possible implications are presented, including directions for future research work.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The thesis advanced in Chapter 1 is that SSAPs are not working in the Fijian context. The problem of 'not working' and that of failure is predisposed to a mismatch between what is actually offered in the market and the needs of those seeking assistance. In this chapter, the literature review considers this problem in developed and developing countries, including a search on factors attributing to failure.

The review chapter is presented in six subsections. Section 2.2 presents current knowledge in the literature regarding the broad fields of entrepreneurship and small business. It delves into the general characteristics of the small business sector including an understanding of the internal and external barriers to survival and growth. Understanding these issues is fundamental to a review of the SSAPs literature (Section 2.3) on early reasoning about support services, nature of support programs and measurement dimensions. Section 2.4 is a response to the question: 'are support programs working?' looking at the experience in selected developed and developing countries. Section 2.5 presents possible factors contributing to SSAP failure. The theory underpinning such failure is outlined in Section 2.6 and finally the summary and conclusion is presented in Section 2.7.

2.2 Understanding small business

2.2.1 A 'road map' and broad fields

Being a new traveller[7] in the field of small business necessitates the creation of a 'road map' (refer to Figure 2-1). This map is presented in a three-layered frame: the outer core, the inner core and the most inner core. The outer core covers the broad research fields of entrepreneurship, where an entrepreneur is in pursuit of

[7] A new traveller refers to the researcher.

entrepreneurial activities. The inner core covers the area of small business in PICs and the most inner core is the research area focussing on small business SSAPs in Fiji.

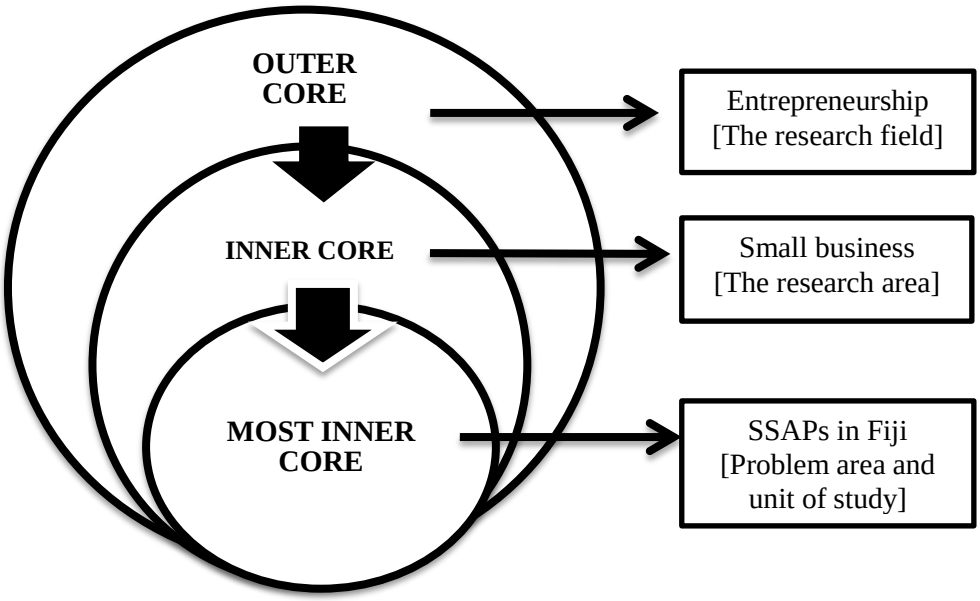

Figure 2-1 A 'road map' of current research

Before the research is driven into a narrow pass of small business SSAPs, one has to cross two very 'slippery' grounds: entrepreneurship and small business (Storey & Greene 2010). Although the two fields are closely connected, there are some distinguishing features that separate them (Thurik & Wennekers 2004). According to Thurik and Wennekers (2004), entrepreneurship is the phenomenon associated with the generation of new ideas, products and processes; but Thurik and Wennekers (2004) believe that small business:

> can be a vehicle both for Schumpeterian entrepreneurs introducing new products and processes that change the industry and for people who simply run and own a business for a living (Thurik & Wennekers 2004, p. 140).

A review of the literature indicates that there is a tendency to equate the person behind entrepreneurship with small business owners (Drucker 1993; Gibb 1996). While the entrepreneur focuses on business for the purpose of maximising profit, a small business owner engages in business to further personal interests and needs

(Carland et al. 1984). In some cases an entrepreneur may be operating a small business but a small business operator is not the same as an entrepreneur (Kirby 2004).

Instead of focussing on the entrepreneur or the small business owner, some authors, for example, Drucker (1999), Gartner (1988), Shane and Venkataraman (2000) and Timmons and Spinelli (1994), place greater emphasis on the entrepreneurial process – the combination of personal and entrepreneurial attributes such as need for achievement, need for control, persuasive powers, among others (Gibb 1993a). Drucker (1999) describes entrepreneurship as a process of innovation that involves endowing existing resources with new wealth producing capacity. Gartner (1988) succinctly defines it as a process by which new organisations come into existence.

The development literature attributed the two fields to the early economic transformation of the 1960s and 1970s following the oil crises and global economic recessions (Landstrom 2009; Storey & Greene 2010). During these crises, large-scale establishments were faced with severe economic difficulties leading to mass unemployment and redundancies. Consequently, large firms became disoriented because of uncertainty regarding the future and crisis resolutions. This marked the beginning of a new era (Landstrom 2009). Small firms became the engine of economic transformation (Acs & Audretsch 1993; Storey 2000c) – in the spirit of Schumpeter's 'creative destruction' – eliminating old and obsolete ways and ushering in new technological improvements, effective labour inputs and production systems (Agarwal, Audretsch & Sarkar 2007).

Today, scholarly interest in entrepreneurship and small business associated with economic growth and development continues to grow (Acs et al. 2005; Acs & Szerb 2007; Prahalad & Hammond 2002). In particular, attention is focussed on the small business sector which has now emerged as a real economic stimulant and generator of employment (Acs et al. 2005; Acs & Szerb 2007; Naudé 2010). The benefits to the owner of a surviving business in terms of wealth and self-fulfilment increases with local employment (Dobbs & Hamilton 2007). Therefore, as indicated earlier, if productive and innovative small businesses grow, there will be a spiralling effect on the local economy (Agarwal, Audretsch & Sarkar 2007).

Participation in small business and entrepreneurship worldwide is estimated to represent 388 million people in active engagement (Kelley, Singer & Herrington 2011). In the UK alone, about 4.9 million businesses or 99.9 per cent of all private sector businesses are in the SME sector and create employment for approximately 24.3 million people (DBIS 2013). These statistics are compatible with participation rates in most developed and developing countries (Storey & Greene 2010). Today small business and entrepreneurship has become one of the most powerful economic tools used to restructure and develop local economies (Naudé 2010).

2.2.2 Distinctiveness in small business

This section moves into the inner core of the 'road map' presented in Figure 2-1 and draws upon Carland et al. (2002), Gibb (2000), Storey and Greene (2010) on the distinctiveness of small business. The purpose here is to understand the characteristics of small business and practice in an indigenous environment.

(a) Different from an entrepreneur

Who is an entrepreneur? According to Herbert and Link (1989), an entrepreneur is a person – not a system, team or an organisation. It was Cantillon[8] who first brought this person to life recognising him or her as the entrepreneur[9] and "a central figure in the market place" (Hébert & Link 2006, p. 589) who bears the risk associated with uncertainty in the market. The entrepreneur is someone "who specialises in taking responsibility for and making judgemental decisions that affect the location, the form, and the use of goods, resources or institutions" (Hébert & Link 1989, p. 40). The entrepreneur becomes the founder, innovator, manager, creator, decision maker and coordinator of factors of production in pursuit of profitability, new opportunities, business expansion and long-term entrepreneurial growth (Begley 1995; Hébert & Link 1989, 2006; Penrose 2002).

[8] Cantillon, R. 1755/1931. Essai sur la Nature du Commerce en Général. London, UK: MacMillan
[9] The word entrepreneur itself derives from the French verb entreprendre, meaning – "to undertake".

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) views entrepreneurs as "those persons (business owners) who seek to generate value, through the creation or expansion of economic activity, by identifying and exploiting new products, processes or markets" (OECD 2007, p. 4). However, for a long time, there has been a confusion regarding the entrepreneur in entrepreneurial activities and a small business owner doing small business (Landstrom 2009). Carland et al. (1984) offer a distinction between an entrepreneur and a small business owner, as presented in Table 2-1.

Table 2-1 Functional definition: entrepreneur versus small business operator

Entrepreneur: an individual who establishes and manages a business for the principal purposes of profit and growth. The entrepreneur is characterised principally by innovative behaviour and will employ strategic management practices in business.	Entrepreneurial venture: one that engages in at least one of Schumpeter's four categories of behaviour; that is, the principal goals of an entrepreneurial venture are profitability and growth and the business is characterised by innovative strategic practices.
Small business owner: an individual who establishes and manages a business for the principal purpose of furthering personal goals. The business must be the primary sources of income and will consume the majority of one's time and resources. The owner perceives the business as an extension of his or her personality, intricately bound with family needs and desires.	Small business venture: any business that is independently owned and operated, not dominant in its field, and does not engage in any new marketing or innovative practices.

Source: Carland et al. (1984, p. 358)

A small business could be owned and operated by an independent person who is not engaged in any new innovative products or services (Carland et al. 1984; Gartner 1988; Storey & Greene 2010). The main motive of business for the owner is personal income and self-interest – where time and resources are devoted to fulfil personal goals. The entrepreneur on the other hand is focussed on maximising profit from entrepreneurial ventures (Carland et al. 1984; Gartner 1988).

Hailey's (1987) seminal work in PICs reflects some of the early confusion in the use of the term entrepreneur – a reflection of Hailey's own western ideologies. His definition, while academically sound, has little connection to the PIC context and realities. For Hailey, entrepreneurs are:

> …people who show a practical creativity and managed ability in effectively combining resources and opportunities in new ways so as to provide goods and services appropriate to island communities and yet still can generate sufficient income to create new opportunities for themselves, their families, and the community (Hailey 1987, p. 3).

The above phrase lacks recognition of the two distinctive schools of thought – an entrepreneur in a western entrepreneurial system versus an entrepreneur in an indigenous system. Being a non-Pacific islander, it is believed that Hailey (1987) could not reconcile the two entrepreneurial dispositions. This could be attributed to the economic development lens Hailey (1987) used and the political correctness demanded by his research organisation and the sponsors of the research. Surprisingly, Fairbairn (1988b) came a little later from the same research organisation based in Hawaii but he acknowledged the difference between a western entrepreneur and indigenous business enterprises. Unlike in mainstream entrepreneurial societies, small business in a Pacific island environment is very different in terms of the ways of doing business.

In summarising the distinct identities of entrepreneur and small business operator, it can be deduced that:

(1) they are two different individuals who can be operating in the same environment;

(2) their goals and motivations determine the nature of activities they are engaged in;

(3) an entrepreneur can be a small business operator but a small business operator may not be an entrepreneur – the entrepreneurs' learning and task structure may require additional competencies for the small business owner and, for that, a training and skills upgrade is required (Gibb 1999).

(b) Differences in small business definitions

The use of a single definition of small business has yet to be recognised (Storey & Greene 2010). Curran et al. (1991) argue that "the use of single size criterion leads to

an exceptionally heterogeneous collection of businesses being included as small" (cited in Storey 2000c, p. 14). The diverse economic structures, firm size, number of employees, sales figures, industry classification, organisational patterns and assets make the exercise of a single definition a complex task (Curran 2000).

To some extent, the use of a single definition may not be practicable in PICs (Fairbairn 1988b). When one talks about small business in an indigenous environment, there is a possibility of referring to micro enterprises scattered in peri-urban, squatter settlements and rural villages (Fairbairn 1988b). Small businesses in such areas would be characterised as unregistered, involving a self-employed person in subsistence farming, fishing, woodcarving or weaving for the purpose, for example, of getting cash to meet family expenses (Cahn 2008; Fairbairn 1988a, 1988b). They would be very different from small businesses who had legally registered names, occupied an office space and engaged in commercial enterprises for the purpose of making profit (Fairbairn 1988b; Hailey 1987).

Small business in Fiji is described as a single basket comprising two interrelated components: small and micro enterprises under the synonym SMEs[10]. The definition is based on the number of people employed and annual turnover or total assets (NCSMED 2006). As outlined in Chapter 1, micro enterprises mean any business transaction or activities employing 5 or fewer people and earning income of up to US$17,000. Small enterprises include business activities employing 6 to 20 people and with a turnover between US$17,000 and US$57,000. Any business activities outside this scope are defined as either medium or large enterprises (NCSMED 2006). Some examples of activities in small and micro enterprises include hairdressers, taxi operators, internet shops, farmers, restaurant operators, market vendors, tourist support services, tax agents and many more. The management control of small and micro enterprises lies with the owner-manager or under partnership arrangement with families and friends. The presence of these small businesses in depressed economic regions is perceived as an important contributor to the achievement of poverty alleviation goals (Yunus & Weber 2007).

[10] Most countries use SMEs to depict small and medium enterprises.

(c) Different from non-indigenous environment

The small business and management literature focusses on issues related to business financing (Storey 1994; Vos et al. 2007); marketing (Carson et al. 1995; Weinrauch et al. 1991); policies (Gibb 1993a, 1993p); innovation (Quinn 1985); cognitive behaviour (Simon, Houghton & Aquino 2000); and entrepreneurial orientation (Lumpkin & Dess 2001; Wiklund & Shepherd 2003) among others. Yet, there is little knowledge in the areas of small business start-ups and management in the indigenous PIC environment. The fact that such knowledge is missing in this context does not mean that indigenous knowledge is non-existent (Dana & Anderson 2007; Peredo & Anderson 2006). Neither does it imply a homogeneous environment - where both western and indigenous entrepreneurial societies share the same stories and models.

How different is small business in an indigenous environment from those in western entrepreneurial societies? Several distinguishing features, including social capital, business cannibalism and property rights are presented in Table 2-2.

Table 2-2 Differences between indigenous and non-indigenous businesses

INDIGENOUS BUSINESS	WESTERN OR NON-INDIGENOUS BUSINESS
Social capital, gain and satisfaction	Financial capital, profitability and economic satisfaction
Social gain or satisfaction	Financial profit, capital accumulation, wealth
Communal (non-transferable) property rights	Transferable and individually owned
Dependency: communal social network and government support	Individualism: independence and business autonomy
Business cannibalism – no new creation	Creative, innovation products and services
People focus and factor driven.	Profit focus, innovation and efficiency driven
Running a business is a necessity.	Running a business is an opportunity.
Employment and income focus	Exploitation of opportunities
Consumption oriented and reciprocity	Savings and acquisitiveness

Source: Extractions from Cahn (2008), Fairbairn (1988b), Farrelly (2009), Hailey (1988) and Rao (2004).

Pretty and Ward (2001, p. 211) describe social capital as "the structure of relations between actors and among actors" and as central to any indigenous and community enterprise discourse (Farrelly 2009; Nainoca 2011). The term carries deep rooted social norms and networks that govern the way individuals and village communities interact within one another (Pretty & Ward 2001). These norms and networks become valuable resources particularly in poor developing countries (Woolcock & Narayan 2000).

Woolcock and Narayan (2000) use a common saying - "It's not what you know, it's who you know" - to describe their conventional thinking on social capital. They emphasise membership, contacts and/or identification within a certain group or network that can be "leveraged for material gain" (Woolcock & Narayan 2000, p. 226). This might include, for example, the use of friends in government ministries to secure government contracts or calling on friends at the time of financial crisis. Such networks develop into trust relations, friendly exchanges, connectedness and bonding under common rules. There is no progress or development in communities without these components (Pretty & Ward 2001).

In addition, Woolcock and Narayan (2000) describe social capital from four different perspectives: (1) the communitarian view; (2) the institutional view; (3) the synergy view; and (4) the network view. The most relevant perspective for small business development is the network view. This view stresses the importance of vertical and horizontal relationships between small business operators within a cooperative system of support and among coordinators of support within a community (Woolcock & Narayan 2000).

But how does the network view of social capital affect small business? Experiences in Fiji point to the presence and recognition of social capital in the delivery of small business support programs. One case in point is the Fiji national micro finance program – a Fijian version of the Grameen Bank model that provides microcredit and saving products to poor household for the purpose of generating new employment opportunities through microenterprises (Conroy 2003; Rahman & Milgram 2001). The presence of social capital is based on the assumption and recognition of strong social bonds among existing solidarity groups in village communities (for example,

the mothers' clubs, and the church women's ministry) (Woolcock & Narayan 2000). The women's solidarity groups become an important source of social capital (Pretty & Ward 2001). They are a valuable asset to business learning, the generation of business ideas, the identification of needs and the development of micro finance institutions (MFIs) at the village level (Conroy 2003; Rahman & Milgram 2001). Program managers delivering micro finance services recognise the presence of social capital and use them to extend their micro finance outreach and to build new village MFIs (Pretty & Ward 2001).

The survival and sustainability of the village MFIs is dependent on the strength of the bond within the existing solidarity groups in terms of the interconnectedness, the communication and exchanges and the commitment of the group to community rules (Pretty & Ward 2001), so too is their failure. Distrust among members is a common weakness that could erode positive benefits and the value of social capital (Pretty & Ward 2001; Singh, G, Pathak & Naz 2010). Instead of a large group going together to the market, only a few are going individually thus increasing transportation costs; and an increase in cost reduces income and the ability of the business owner to meet family expectations, repay micro loans and increase micro savings (Pretty & Ward 2001). Consequently, surviving micro finance members are forced to exploit natural resources, break common village rules and sanctions; for example, overfishing, using illegal fishing methods or fishing in protected environments so as to fulfil their own personal agenda (Nainoca 2011). Successful owners could be forced to leave their own village community and move to another village or migrate to urban squatter settlements when the bond in social capital is eroded (Woolcock & Narayan 2000).

Turning now to the issue of property rights, in an indigenous study in Samoa,[11] Morrison (2008) observed two interconnected issues that differentiate Samoan business enterprises from neoclassical business models. First, tradeable property rights commonly found in mainstream economic systems do not operate in Samoan villages because of customary laws that forbid alienation of indigenous land. This is not unique to Samoa as it is applicable in most PICs (Morrison 2008) Land is sacred

[11] Located in the South Pacific and a member of the Pacific island countries.

to the indigenous people because of its connection to their past, present and future (Williksen-Bakker 2002); and those wishing to start a business on indigenous land must seek consent from the members of the landowning unit.

One of the reasons entrepreneurs go into business is to take advantage of market opportunities, such as the attraction to buy properties or operating businesses at current prices with an intention to resell later for capital gain (Carland et al. 1984; Gartner 1988). If that tradeable property right is not acceptable in indigenous societies, then what really motivates people to go into business? This is the second area highlighted in the Samoan case. Morrison (2008) was surprised that despite the presence of tradeable activities such as fishing, farming, transport and village stores, their motives for business were based on equitable distribution of wealth, unity, respect and social harmony. In other words, small indigenous business came into being to fulfil specific cultural, communal and family objectives. To a large extent, indigenous businesses become a valuable tool for local entrepreneurs to reinforce power and influence among their own community members and kinship (Prescott 2011; Vaioleti 2006).

The Fijian experience captured in an ethnographic study of a community eco-tourism project resonates with the Samoan observation (Farrelly 2009). The study reaffirms the distinct nature of running a small business in an indigenous environment and the importance of understanding the ecological system before any intervention program is implemented. Farrelly (2009) coined the phrase 'business v*a'avanua*' to denote the existence of an indigenous entrepreneurial system embedded within a community and confined to a specific place that might be different from other indigenous environments. According to Farrelly (2009), starting and running a business in the *va'avanua* style can be challenging because of two competing goals: commercial principles and profit on one side and customary laws[12] on the other. Unless there is a middle ground to capture, mix and fit the two value systems in a hybrid business *va'avanua*, there are bound to be problems for entrepreneurs using western

[12] Customary laws might include, business closure on Sundays, restriction on the sale of certain products and participation in traditional ceremonies and obligations; for example, funerals, weddings, church fundraising, school activities and village/district meetings.

entrepreneurial systems, as well as the development of support structures that fail to understand the indigenous way of living (Farrelly 2009; Morrison 2008).

(d) 'Smallness' associated with failure

The literature attributes small business failures to both external and internal factors. Common internal factors include limited formal education; lack of management skills; poor financial discipline; inadequate business funding; poor quality products; and a general lack of ability and motivation to succeed (Gibb 1987a; Storey 1994; Storey & Greene 2010; Walker & Brown 2004). Factors external to the business could be related to competition, customs duty, government policies, bank inflexible conditions, infrastructure, supply chain and utilities (Storey & Greene 2010). These factors to some extent justify government intervention in the market because of the important role and contribution of the small business sector in economic development.

Small business failure, in the PICs context, is associated with smallness in land size, remoteness and the wide dispersion of islands (Baldacchino 1999; Fairbairn 1988b). Such physical conditions tend to restrict production levels because of high costs, diseconomies of scale and difficulty in marketing and transportation. In reality, there is no competitive advantage in the international market in the absence of appropriate technology and entrepreneurial skills. There is also a claim by Briguglio (1995) that small islands are doomed because of their structural vulnerability to external shocks and physical isolation from the rest of the world.

In addition, the 'islandness' style of doing business (Fairbairn 1988b; Farrelly 2009), based on traditional and communal values, contradicts concepts of self-interest and independent decision making as evident in western entrepreneurship models (Dana 2007; Dana & Galbraith 2006; Yunus & Weber 2007). Fairbairn (2006) points out the risk of failure of small island businesses, attributed to customary obligations. There is constant pressure to fulfil such obligations in terms of donations, offerings and gifts to community schools, churches, weddings, birthdays and funerals. These commitments are usually kept separate from modern entrepreneurial practice. But the dilemma is real, as Morrison (2008) observes in his participatory study in Samoa;

and failure to financially contribute or participate in community projects can be a sign of disrespect (Morrison 2008).

(e) 'Smallness' associated with limitation and uncertainty

There is a further extension to the failure view linked to 'smallness' (Curran 1991, 2000; Gibb 1993a). Smallness in business is associated with limitations (Carland et al. 1984) – limited access to capital, knowledge and technical skills to compete in the market (Gibb 1993a; Storey 1994). Smallness also involves limits to the capability of small business owners to expand and/or keep the business afloat (Fairbairn 2006).

While an operational link exists between smallness and limitation, Gibb (1993a) associates smallness with uncertainty, where movement from paid employment "to self-employment or indeed any form of independent business ownership in fact sets himself/herself a task structure which exudes uncertainty" (Gibb 1993a, p. 18). There is uncertainty in decision making, such as knowing who to hire and fire, finding a market outlet and adapting an appropriate business system, among others (Gibb 1993a). According to Gibb (1993a), an uncertain task environment can create a learning environment. Here the learning is usually one of 'learning by doing' – through problem solving, customer feedback, personal interaction, mistakes committed and by taking opportunities - rather than learning in a formal structure. It is through an environment of uncertainty and learning that 'enterprising' behaviour and skills are stimulated (Gibb 1993a).

2.2.3 Characteristics of small business in PICs

Understanding the PIC entrepreneurial environment is strategic to winning 'wars' and 'battles' (Tzu 1963) of recognition, resourcing and relevancy (Hailey 1987) within the corridors of donor and research agencies. However, the 'battle' has shifted to the economic and political fields of China, India and the South East Asian countries (Chand 2003; Duncan & Chand 2002; Prasad, BC 2008). These are territories where entrepreneurial opportunities and transformative experiences are taking place. Small business research in PICs is more or less non-existent. The only

valued footprint was that of Hailey (1985, 1986, 1987). However, he used an economic development lens to construct knowledge of the entrepreneurial field.

Following Hailey's seminal work, studies have considered other subject areas such as cultural values (Saffu 2003); export trade (Singh, G, Pathak & Naz 2010); psychological factors (Van Gelder et al. 2007); and success factors (Fairbairn 2006; Yusuf 1998) but none has specifically focussed on small business support programs. The purpose of this section is to highlight the research focus of the existing PIC literature and the gap in the area of SSAPs.

There are two notable strands of the discourse within the literature. These are summarised in Table 2-3 and discussed in the sections that follow.

Table 2-3 Relevant studies in small business and entrepreneurship in PICs

AUTHOR	COUNTRY AND RESEARCH FOCUS	KEY FINDINGS
Hailey (1985)	PICs – role of enterprise support organisations	Policy Review: Encourage new and existing indigenous entrepreneurs by offering management advice, business training programs, the preparation of feasibility studies to assist in finding financial support and in offering technical and market support.
Hailey (1986)	PICs – role of small business in economic development	An air of optimism around the Pacific that indigenous enterprise can play an important role in a balanced economic development.
Hailey (1987)	PICs – indigenous business and local entrepreneurs	Pacific entrepreneurs play an important role: - Catalyst for growth; - Create new economic opportunities; - Generate new employment; - Redistribute wealth to the community.
Fairbairn (1988b)	PICs – emergence of entrepreneurship, characteristics of entrepreneurs, common obstacles and weaknesses.	Successful entrepreneurs have above average education and some overseas experience; sound employment record; largely of mixed ethnicity; women are less successful and there are some social inhibitions to business.

Table 2-3 (Cont'd)

Yusuf (1995)	PICs – critical success factors for small business	Individual factors (skills and character) and environmental factors (government support, traditional and political demand) are critical to small business success.
Schaper (2002)	PNG – assess country failure to fully develop an entrepreneurial class necessary for growth.	Development is thwarted by a complex mix of western and traditional ways of doing things.
Saffu (2003)	PICs – role and impact of culture in entrepreneurship.	Cultural dimension considered as a moderating influence on entrepreneurship characteristics in an indigenous environment.
Rao (2004)	Fiji – role of cultural values and entrepreneurial disposition.	Collectivism supports indigenous culture and individualism supports Western entrepreneurship.
Reddy (2007)	Fiji – SME performance and problems	Small business plays an important role in employment creation and income generation. Lack of security, capital and skills/education often impede growth and income potential.
Singh, T (2007)	Fiji - development of a competency framework.	Small business managers are to be more strategically oriented; implement business performance measures; manage risk and uncertainty; and to become more aware of regulatory stipulations.
Cahn (2008)	Samoa – relationship between micro enterprises and Samoan traditional way of life.	Samoan way of life strongly influences local business operations. However, if blended well there could be success.
Farelly (2009)	Fiji – local business models mix with western entrepreneurial approaches.	Fijian entrepreneurship is inhibiting the growth of business built on commercial objectives. The solution is to build a hybrid structure.
Morrison (2008)	Samoa – Samoan economic systems, community values and innovation in face of globalisation.	Community values are incorporated into business activities within Samoan villages. Also, indigenous entrepreneurship can function without the creation of tradable property rights.
Gibson (2012)	Fiji - cultural challenges faced by indigenous-owned budget small medium tourism enterprises.	Success for indigenous businesses is valued differently compared to western countries and focuses more on using profits for community development, social and traditional obligations.

First, there is a strand of thought pursued by Hailey (1987) and adopted by others, such as Fairbairn (1988b), Reddy (2007) and Yusuf (1995). This strand concerns itself with the important contributions of the small business sector in economic growth and development. The motive of writing is to increase awareness among Pacific island leaders, policy makers and donor agencies regarding global economic progress infused through innovative work and increased production (Fairbairn 1988b; Hailey 1987; Reddy 2007).

In addition, policy implications from surveys and case studies point to the importance of designing an effective and appropriate entrepreneurial policy aimed at encouraging new business start-ups, growth of existing businesses and the promotion of local business exports (Hailey 1987, 1992). The key to such thinking is the learning from donor countries which had gone through economic transformation using small business tools (Fairbairn 1988b).

The second strand in the literature, woven by Cahn (2008), Farrelly (2009), Morrison (2008), Rao (2004) and Saffu (2003), has a strong human and socio-cultural disposition. Among others, one of the key assumptions made by this group is that people in pursuit of small business belong to a heterogeneous group. This group of researchers view small business as a cultural activity that connects a certain group of people living and surviving in a community (Saffu 2003). Small business is about people, resources and relationships with real people, employing indigenous ways of doing business (Saffu 2003). The main theme in this strand is that without consideration and understanding of indigenous culture and customs it would be difficult to assimilate external systems and practice (Farrelly 2009; Gibson 2012).

With the exception of Hailey's (1987) remarks on the need to capture small business needs, no other studies have directly focused on SSAPs in PICs. Authors such as Yusuf (1998), Singh et al. (2013), Nair (2012) and Nand (2014) gave considerable space to the study of small business constraints and challenges but fell short of any constructive thinking to resolve those small business issues. It is argued here that such unresolved small business issues are sufficient evidence that something is not working.

The direction of the research hereafter is to examine the small business support programs that exist on the ground by engaging in detailed personal interviews with those who are in involved in the small business sector. The rationale for this research is that without understanding the needs and expectations of small business operators, SSAPs will be difficult to deliver, resulting in failures, inappropriateness and dissatisfaction. While there is little evidence relating to the relationship between small business performance and support programs, there are accounts in the literature that indicate some changes in small business performance among previous SSAP participants. Such accounts indicate that if SSAPs are working then there is a likelihood of better performance for those in small business (Hurmerinta-Peltomäki & Nummela 2004).

2.3 Understanding SSAPs

This section now moves to the most inner core of the road map presented in Figure 2-1 – the area of small business SSAPs. Small business SSAPs are best understood through an analogy of a doctor-patient relationship (Peacock 1985; Sachs 2005). Such a relationship is established on trust, dialogue and information exchange to establish the correct patient diagnosis by ruling out other possibilities linked to their condition (Sachs 2005). Without a proper needs assessment and pre-diagnostic tests (identify underlying causes) any diagnosis carried out by the service provider would be based on guess work and inappropriate 'template' solutions (Kaufman & English 1979).

One of the arguments posited in this research is that the process of consultation and needs assessment is not happening in the context of SSAPs. Presumably, business advisors are 'short circuiting'(Kaufman & English 1979) the process, resulting in a mismatch and/or inappropriate SSAP treatment. Furthermore, provider organisations that do not have the services of experienced and qualified business consultants often resort to importing template solutions without undertaking the necessary due diligence process to establish needs, expectations and the underlying causes of the problem. According to Gibb & Li (2003), such external solutions are often constructed from the viewpoint of developed countries, with rules and practices

unmatched to the local entrepreneurial environment. As a result, most external programs fail to reach targets and when the project term finishes, the whole project collapses. Needs assessment is often missing from the small business SSAP theory and practice.

2.3.1 Rationale for seeking support

Starting and managing a small business can be challenging (Storey & Greene 2010). The task structure for starting, growing and sustaining a business is such that it requires an appropriate mix of competencies and internal resources (Gibb 1997; Gibb & Scott 1985). When small business owner-managers cannot find an appropriate mix of factors for production they will venture out, seeking external support to fill identified gaps (Elena-Yusuf 2010).

One of the supporting arguments for government intervention is market imperfection – the failure of the market to provide small business needs. This emerges through discrimination against small businesses: by way of withdrawing accessibility to support and/or the refusal of private providers to design and deliver appropriate products and services because of low returns and high risk factors (Curran 2000; Gibb 1987a, 1993p; Storey 2000a; Wren & Storey 2002). Government intervention is also seen as a necessary step to reduce the failure rate of small businesses during their first two years of start-up – the period in which they are most vulnerable (Watson, J. & Everett 1996). In addition, the establishment of service provider organisations is justified on the basis of the role and contribution of the small business sector in new technological innovation, increased rural employment, poverty alleviation and the revitalisation of depressed rural economies (Gibb 1993p; Smallbone, Baldock & North 2003).

From a developmental perspective, Sachs (2005) argues that the needs of poor people on the ground are not well understood or addressed appropriately by institutions wielding economic power and those engineering support programs. It is on this understanding that need and needs assessment are brought to the fore as a precondition to the discourse on SSAPs. The rationale behind needs assessment is

that it provides stakeholders with invaluable inputs and informed decisions on whether to intervene (Darcy & Hofmann 2003). There are grounds for relevancy, justification and accountability based on data and information (Briggs 1991).

Smallbone et al. (2003) define small business needs as outside resources which small business owners could draw upon in order to fulfil their own business goals. They are the gaps within internal resources that drive small business owners to seek help (Elena-Yusuf 2012). While support needs of businesses in rural regions of England include "access to appropriate finance, management skills, labour, premises, information, and competencies" (Smallbone, Baldock & North 2003, p. 828), in the context of PICs, according to Nair and Chelliah (2012) gaps lie mostly in the area of finance. Thus resource gaps or support needs may be different for geographical regions, entrepreneurial conditions and social-cultural environments (Gibb & Li 2003).

The needs assessment process begins with an evaluation of 'what is' and 'what should be'. It is the process of identifying small business needs (Altschuld & Witkin 2000; Kaufman 2005, 2006; Moore, Brethower & Kaufman 2008); analysing the underlying causes of needs (Altschuld & Witkin 2000; Kaufman & English 1979); and recognising the conditions of a current situation and the desire to change that situation (Gupta 2007, 2011). The assessment process emanates from the link it provides to improving business performance, resource planning and program modification (Altschuld & Witkin 2000; Kaufman & English 1979).

2.3.3 Nature of support services and structure

The project evaluation literature defines support programs as an organised response; a package of intervention (Weiss 1972) involving the conduct of preliminary investigations, diagnostic tests, approval of prescriptions, implementation of plans and ongoing management of care within a specific set of objectives, targets and focus (Patton 1994, 2008). In the business context, support services refers to any form of financial and non-financial services (Ramsden & Bennett 2005) provided by both private and public service providers such as banks, accountants, lawyers, consultants,

business organisations, government organisations, media and friends (Bennett & Robson 1999). In this regard, financial services include access to debt and equity capital, grant funding, tax incentives, waivers of duty, government guarantees and interest subsidies, among others (Gibb 2000; Jay & Schaper 2003).

Access to finance is the main type of assistance under financial services (Freel et al. 2012) that can be sourced internally (from friends or venture 'angels') and externally (from banks, corporate organisations and governments) for business start-ups, financing of existing operations and future expansions. Funds sought could be used as a resource to support a planned course of action (Berger, A & Udell 2002), for example, purchase of stock, securing a letter of credit with a bank, purchase of equipment, product development work, quality training, consultancies and export promotions. Unless sufficient capital is available, the business will not be able to achieve its strategic goals and objectives (Berger, A, Rosen & Udell 2007).

Non-financial services include business consultancy, mentoring and networking, financial and business management advisory assistance, the dissemination of best practice, technological transfer, business skills training and so forth. The main type of support is not capital but some kind of support service that is aimed at improving the knowledge and competency level of the small business owner and the actual business operation (Berger, A, Rosen & Udell 2007).

A sample of small business SSAPs in Fiji is presented in Table 2-4. Two main government sponsored organisations specifically respond to the needs of SMEs - the National Centre for Small and Micro Enterprises Development (NCSMED 2006) and the Fiji Development Bank (FDB 2012). The NCSMED was established as an arm of government for the purpose of facilitating small business start-ups, including training and micro finance support (NCSMED 2006). Apart from Conroy's (2003) critical assessment of micro finance, there is not a single independent report on the ground in Fiji that specifically reviews the performance and impact of the organisation[13].

[13] Recently, there has been some audit reports on NCSMED with regard to its handling of microfinance grant funds from government.

Table 2-4 Samples of support for small business in Fiji

SSAP INSTITUTION	TARGET GROUP	TYPE OF SUPPORT
NCSMED	Nascent entrepreneurs and new business start-ups.	New venture creation training (business planning); business incubation and generation of business ideas.
IHRDEP	Community groups	Government grants, business advice
Commercial Banks	SMEs classified under value of loan	Small business loans, financial services and professional advice.
FDB	New start-ups, SMEs and agro-entrepreneurs	Small business loans, interest subsidy, government guarantees, and advisory services
Ministry of Trade	Export firms, Tourism operators, SMEs	Business training, trade facilitation, licensing, and registration
Micro finance Institutions	Women and community groups, unbanked	Micro credit and savings, business training, and financial literacy
Donor Agencies	Community groups and NGOs	Grant funding, technical support, and training
Chamber of Commerce	Corporate organisations and private enterprises	Business networks, advocacy, and policy advice
Northern Development Program	SMEs	Grant funding
Ministry of Agriculture	Agro-entrepreneurs	Extension services

Source: Reserve Bank Quarterly Reports (2013), FDB (2012), and NCSMED (2006)

With reference to small business training, the NCSMED conducts an eight day venture creation program imported from the Philippines called Competency based Economies through Formation of Enterprises (CEFE) (NCSMED 2006). This is an experiential learning and competency development program targeting new business start-ups and focused on the improvement of small business performance. A cadre of trainers is engaged by the Centre to take the training to rural communities (NCSMED 2006). A quick review of CEFE materials indicates a lack of contextualisation on the subject and the high level of education required to understand the materials. Either a CEFE participant must have a good secondary school background or there has to be some bridging programs in place to transition CEFE learning. Now that CEFE is one

of the prerequisites for a SME loan from the FDB, questions arise about the readiness of new start-ups and their level of competence to manage a viable small business operation.

One of the claims made by both academics and practitioners is that finance is a problem for both new and existing businesses (Deo 1999; Hailey 1988; Nair & Chelliah 2012; Reddy 2007). In this regard, the Fijian government sets aside an annual budgetary allocation of FJD$3 million through the FDB for small business loans (FDB 2012). However, accessing this small business fund has not been easy for SMEs. The bank follows a very stringent loan processing system that is subservient to the owners of the bank and in line with international lending policies and practices (Berger, A & Udell 2002; Irvine & Deo 2006; Reddy 2007). A necessary part of a loan application is the submission of annual cash flow forecasts, past financial statements, three-year financial plans, personal financial history and one-third equity contributions towards the total cost of the new business set-up. If this is not stringent enough, collateral security is added as a policy requirement to protect the bank from high credit risks in SME lending (Conroy 2003; Ministry of Finance 1999).

Most of the SME support organisations operate independently or in direct competition with one another (Bennett 2008) – possibly to justify existence and attract government and donor funding. Unless the small business owner (seeker of support services) knows his/her business needs, there is no structured support system, similar to the UK Business Link, acting as a 'one stop shop' to guide and provide people with necessary information (Summon 1998). Two problems can arise from such a situation. First, small business owners may end up receiving support which does not meet their needs and, second, they can 'double dip' – as there is little collaborative work between service providers (Hurmerinta-Peltomäki & Nummela 1998; Smallbone, Baldock & North 2003; Summon 1998). One would therefore expect government-sponsored organisations to take a lead role in coordinating a common delivery platform to minimise wastage of resources and create synergies in an effective delivery of SME support services (Bennett 2008).

2.3.4 Evaluation of SSAP performance

Previous knowledge on SSAPs came from the work of Gibb (1993a, 1993b), Westhead and Storey (1996), Smallbone et al. (1993), Bryson and Daniels (1998), Bennett and Robson (1999), and Priest (1999). However, these studies and those that followed (see Table 2-5) centred mainly on the experience of small firms utilising the business consultancy services program established under the UK Business Link networks.

Table 2-5 Selected studies in SSAPs in the UK: post Business Link

AUTHORS	RESEARCH FOCUS
1. Smallbone, North & Leigh (1993)	Extent of use and role of public and private sectors.
2. Westhead & Storey (1996)	Evaluation of firm performance and participation.
3. Bryson & Daniels (1998)	Utilisation of external expertise and the location of external advisors.
4. Priest (1999)	Provision of support, extent of use, satisfaction, impact and intensity.
5. Shaw & Bennett (1999)	Policy review of delivery mechanism.
6. Bryson Daniels & Ingram (1999)	Evaluating impact of business links.
7. Bennett & Robson (1999)	Use of external business advice.
8. Sparrow (1999)	Establish small medium enterprise support needs.
9. Mole (2000)	Growth or survival dilemma of the advisor.
10. Curran (2000)	Evaluating small business policies and support.
11. Shaw &Blackburn (2000)	Critical review of small business service.
12. Robson & Bennett (2000)	Small medium enterprise growth and use of external business advice.
13. Bennett, Bratton & Robson (2000)	Usage and distance between client and advisor.
14. Bennett, Robson &Bratton (2001b)	Location influence on the use of external advice.
15. Bennett, Robson & Bratton (2001a)	Assessment of the influence of local context on Business Link use, impact and satisfaction.

Table 2-5 (Cont'd)

16. Wren & Storey (2002)	Effect of soft business support on performance.
17. Bennett & Smith (2002)	Influence of location and distance on services.
18. Mole (2002c)	Street-level technocracy in small business support.
19. Mole (2002b)	Agency Theory: Business advisors' impact
20. Bennett & Robson (2003)	Changing use of external business advice.
21. Bennett & Robson (2004)	Relationship of the type of franchisee with propensity to charge fees, market penetration, impact, and customer satisfaction.
22. Ramsden & Bennett (2005)	Role of external business advice and overall satisfaction.
23. Bennett & Robson (2005)	Client relationship and level of impact and satisfaction.
24. Berry, Sweeting & Goto (2006)	Effect of business advisors on performance.
25. Bennett (2007)	Expectations base approach to service evaluation.
26. Mole (2007d)	Diagnosing small business clients by advisors.
27. Bennett (2008)	Lessons from SME policy support.
28. Mole, Hart, Roper & Saal (2008)	Nature of companies using advisory support and those that highly benefit.
29. Mole & Keogh (2009)	Implications of public sector : small business advisors becoming strategic sounding boards.
30. Robson & Bennett (2010)	Paying fees for government business advice.
31. Mole, Hart, Roper & Saal (2011)	Broader or deeper intervention
32. Spence, Agyemang & Rinaldi (2012)	Accountants as trusted advisors
33. Ram**,** Trehan, Rouse, Woldesenbet & Jones (2012)	Ethnic minority business support, challenges and developments

It is noted here that most of the studies were undertaken either from an outcome or performance perspective, in which objective and subjective measurement criteria are

established. For example, Bennett and Robson (2005) used both objective and subjective criterion (see Figure 2-2) when studying how impact, satisfaction and outcome are related in the client-advisor relationship in a Business Link network. The same measurement dimensions (impact and satisfaction) were used to examine the 'sense of value' (Robson & Bennett 2010, p. 37) of fee income on Business Links advisory services. For the same target group, Wren and Storey (2002) used growth and survival to measure the effectiveness of Business Links networks in their provision of advisory services.

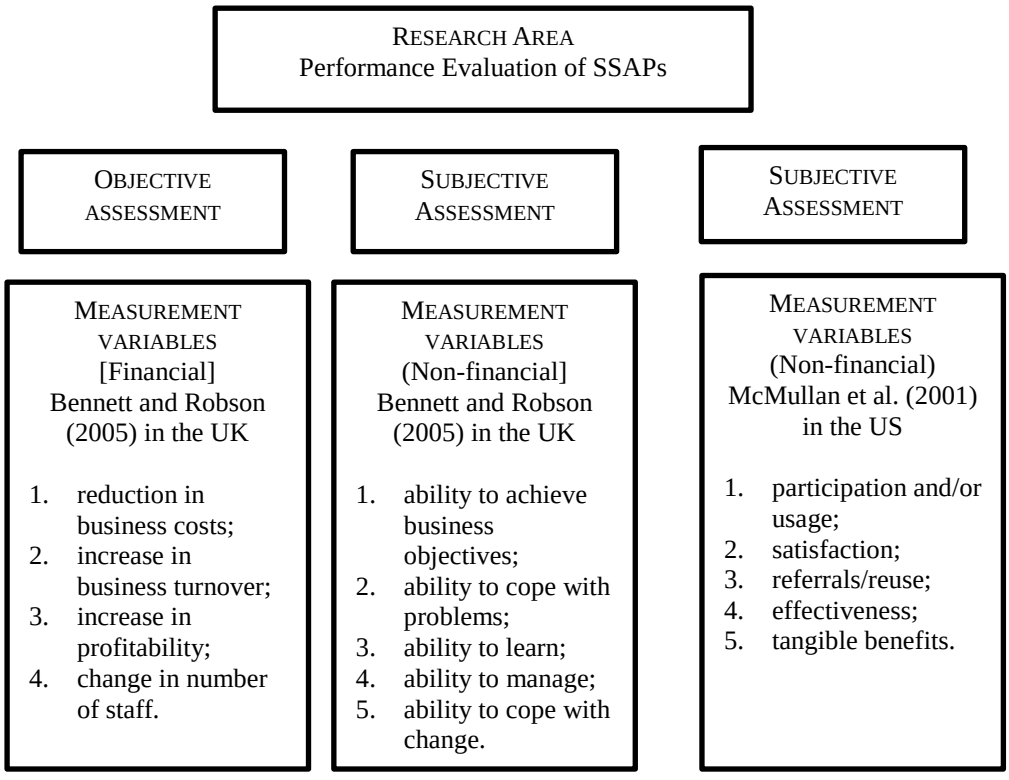

Figure 2-2 Selected measurement dimensions of SSAPs

In an evaluation of the effectiveness of nascent entrepreneurs' assistance programs in the US, Elena-Yusuf (2010) used three of McMullan et al. (2001) dimensions: participation, entrepreneurs' satisfaction, and program effectiveness. Elena-Yusuf's (2010) study concluded that 74 per cent of the time assistance programs were ineffective in addressing entrepreneurs' support needs. Ineffectiveness, in this

context, is more to do with the mismatch between entrepreneur's latent and expressed needs (Elena-Yusuf 2010).

One strand of research is concerned with the design and development of SSAPs that capture the needs and expectations of those seeking assistance (Gibb 1997, 1999; Irwin 2011; Mole 2002a; Storey 1994). Many of these studies are taken from the viewpoint of institutions and agencies delivering the support program, rather than from the expectations of those requiring the support. A few studies examine the needs of small business operators and their expectations before the implementation and utilisation of support services (see, for example: Priest (1999); Elena-Yusuf (2010); Bennett (2007); and Bennett and Robson (2005)).

Notwithstanding the use of both objective and subjective assessments, Bryson and his colleagues took exception to the overuse of performance indicators such as sales turnover, employment, profitability, and the use of mean and growth rates (Bryson, Daniels & Ingram 1999). In their view, average statistical figures do not reveal the true position of a company (Bryson, Daniels & Ingram 1999). For example, in a situation where there was a significant decrease in employment following an engagement with a business advisory consultant; while this may be perceived negatively in objective assessment, it could suggest an increase in productivity, which is a good indicator of business performance. In addition, the use of sales turnover as a measure may be misleading, particularly where sales are decreasing but profitability is increasing (Bryson, Daniels & Ingram 1999).

2.4 Are small business SSAPs working?

This section reviews the small business SSAP experience in selected developed and developing countries. The review is driven by the question; are small business SSAPs working with reference to the UK and other parts of Europe, Canada, the US, Australia, Sub-Saharan Africa and Fiji. In addition, given the World Bank's experience in the use of intervention programs, their experience in SME support programs is also reviewed.

2.4.1 Experience in the UK and Europe

The UK experience in this review revolves around the impact of the Business Links network[14] which was set up by the Conservative government in 1992 (Bennett 2008). The initiative was developed in recognition of the role of small business in the national economy and the need to provide facilities and support structures to address problems confronting them (Priest 1998, 1999), especially during their early stage of start-up (Curran 2000; Mole 2002c). The setup of the Business Links network was also in response to a government policy review which recommended the increased involvement of the private sector in public-private partnerships (Mole & Keogh 2009). Importantly, the review highlighted that "existing support schemes (prior to the Business Link) lacked customer orientation with the result that services were too narrowly defined and more supplier than customer driven" (Priest 1998, p. 187).

A revised model of the Business Links network[15] from the initial 'one stop shop' is shown in Figure 2-3. This reflects a more decentralised system where local regions could set up a Business Link franchise under the explicit guidelines of the Regional Development Agencies (in the case of England) – being the government franchisor issuing contractual agreements (Mole & Keogh 2009).

[14] Business Link provide a single point of access for business support services – a national network of local partnership between Training and Enterprise Councils, Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise Agencies, Local Authorities, Department of Trade and Industry and other providers of business support (Summon 1998)

[15] At the heart of Business Link are "an efficient, reliable and comprehensive business information service, providing detailed and specific research, or a fast stream focused response, depending on the business's needs; personal reliable advice from independent Personal Business Advisors (PBAs) trained to help identify and pursue business opportunities; events, promotions, conferences, seminars and networking opportunities where businesses can work …; specialist advice and services" (Summon 1998, p. 58).

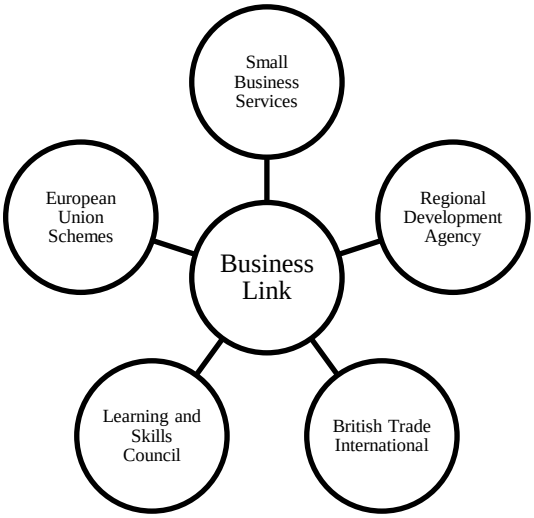

Figure 2-3 UK Business Link system

Source: Mole and Keogh (2009, p. 85)

Instead of Business Links delivering the support services, local business consultants or advisors were recruited to take up this responsibility, which included: "(1) signposting, where the adviser points the client in the direction of sources of advice; (2) diagnosis, where the adviser and the client consider the business development needs; (3) brokerage, where the adviser helps the process of managing consultants; (4) delivery, where the adviser delivers a service to improve the position of the business" (Mole & Keogh 2009, p. 83).

Prior to the setting up of the Business Links network, Gibb (1987a) was already talking about reviewing the policy framework in the UK to ensure that policies, programs and support services were appropriately designed to improve business survival and growth, rather than building networks for the sake of increasing employment and regional development. Gibb (1987a) argues that small business survival rate and growth is improved if consultants and training providers consider matching the needs of small businesses with the level or stage of growth they are in. Further, he argues that small businesses, for example in the stage of generating and validating business ideas, have different learning and development needs which cannot be ignored in 'one stop' business solutions (Gibb 1987a; Storey 2000a).

One of the early studies to measure the impact of Business Links was carried out by Ernst & Young[16](1996). Major findings included (see Summon 1998, p. 52):

- Over 70% of firms (between 10-20 employees) found Business Links easy to contact;
- Around 40% of the cases interviewed (from 300 firms) demonstrated 'significant degree of impact';
- Business Links clients claimed personal business advisors (PBA) added considerable value;
- The intention of each Business Link to integrate existing support services and rationalised with a single point of access was emerging;
- Business Links are very proactive in reaching out to SMEs; and also succeeding in eliminating confusion about their service provider role including the quality of services provided.

The study concluded that since establishment in 1992, the Business Links network was able to distinguish itself as a provider and, working with other development partners, deliver SME support services. However, evidence of rationalisation could not be established, suggesting tensions with some partners relating to proposed mergers (Summon 1998). The UK Trade and Industry Select Committee (Department of Trade and Industry 1996) did a follow up to the Ernst & Young (1996) study, examining the quality of advisory services; the viability of Business Links; and the extent of relationships with partner organisations. Their findings confirmed the widespread support for Business Links but concerns were raised about the low utilisation of 5% of Business Link from a sample of 303 firms and about the quality of public sector advice. In addition, there were problems emerging between partner groups which prevented the rationalisation of services (Bryson, Daniels & Ingram 1999; Department of Trade and Industry 1996).

Although there were other studies relating to Business Links (see Table 2-5 in subsection 2.3.4), with various intentions, the one by Bennett (2008) is offered

[16] Evaluation report of 1996 by Ernst & Young on behalf of the UK Department of Trade and Industry

because of his line of inquiry: 'what have we learnt' since the establishment of the Business Links network in 1992. Bennett's (2008) analysis was based on a four wave survey by the Centre for Business Research (CBR) in the time periods 1991, 1997, 2002 and 2004. The lessons of experience from this study are presented in Table 2-6.

Table 2-6 UK Lessons of experience: 1991-2004

FINDINGS	IMPLICATIONS
1. Little evidence of major market failures.	There is no service gap to warrant government intervention and if gaps had existed in the past, they had now been filled.
2. SMEs found most of their important sources of support from the private sector.	The preference for private sector advice from bankers, accountants, solicitors suggests the value and quality of advice, which cannot be established in Business Links networks.
3. Government source of finance is important in public sector programs but achieve only 5% usage among SMEs.	To be effective, Business Links needs to focus on broad support such as infrastructure, transport, energy availability, skills, education and a stable financial environment. In addition, the structure of the various government interventions is complicated by program brands, targets and purpose.
4. Frequent restructuring of Business Links has negative influence on take up rate and effectiveness.	It might suggest that Business Links were targeting declining businesses.
5. Multivariate suppliers and modes of delivery.	This suggests different types of experience, different impacts from different suppliers.
6. Little evidence of the value of geographical targeting.	It implies that Business Links networks are targeting certain places for reasons of social or policy benefits and not based on presenting needs, in addition marketing of government programs need to be strengthened.

Source: Compiled from Bennett's (2008, pp. 378-82) analysis of CBR surveys in 1991, 1997, 2002 and 2004

Bennett's (2008) main finding was that the service gap or market failure, which was the justification for the government intervention, was no longer there. This suggests that the gap had either been filled or that the SBOs were getting help from outside the Business Links network. The results, to some extent, contradicted other assessments during the same period on the use and impact of government support

services through Business Links network. For example, Wren and Storey (2002), when assessing the impact of business advice on the performance of SMEs, found that government advisory services were effective in the mid–range SMEs increasing survival rates by about 4% and growth rates in surviving firms by up to 10% per annum.

The positive impact was strong, particularly in the marketing advice provided by outside consultants engaged through the Business Links networks (Wren & Storey 2002). Similarly, Deakins and his colleagues investigated the performance of 45 clients engaged in two start-up programs (mentor and advisor) in the West of Scotland region (Deakins, Sullivan & Whittam 2000). The results showed that the mentoring and business advisory services were highly valued by the clients. Although any value added cannot be measured directly, the perception was that better competitiveness and survival rates were expected as a result of using support services (Deakins, Sullivan & Whittam 2000).

Turning now to other studies (from Europe), the proliferation of public support services came out of the European Charter for Small Enterprises (European Commission 2002). It emerged that support services and the need to create effective small business support were vital for small business growth (Lambrecht & Pirnay 2005). In an evaluation of public support services in the Walloon Region of Belgium, the researchers (Lambrecht & Pirnay 2005) found that: (1) there was a profusion of support services in the market, leading to confusion; (2) there was a lack of integration with other service providers; (3) the exclusion of certain sections of the target community; (4) selection bias where consultants were pushing their own products and services; and (5) the probability of using private consultancies (as opposed to public consultancies) was high for educated SBOs operating in industry and low for SBOs with limited education and working in trade services (Lambrecht & Pirnay 2005). Overall, the findings are comparable with the UK results (Bennett 2008), with private consultants (first choice advisors) having a positive impact on small business but with no confirmation of a positive impact on quantitative indicators such as turnover, liquidity and profitability.

Another important finding came from an evaluation of the support initiatives focusing on entrepreneurial training programs in the Netherlands (De Faoite et al. 2004). The study showed that access to finance was one of the most frequently used support initiatives but it was not as frequent as networking and mentoring. The findings suggest the importance of financing in business start-ups. However, the preference for informal mentoring and networking, as opposed to formal or structured training, could be related to costs and tangible outcomes (De Faoite et al. 2004). In addition, entrepreneurs engaged in the interviews were not satisfied with the entrepreneurial support programs because of their lack of practicality. This suggests a mismatch between entrepreneurial support and the needs of entrepreneurs (Dana 2001; De Faoite et al. 2004). Further, it could also imply a misfit in having academics involved in entrepreneurial support (De Faoite et al. 2004; Dunsby 1996).

2.4.2 The Canadian and US experiences

Moving to the Canadian experience, Audet and St-Jean (2007) used three instruments to investigate factors affecting the use of public support services. Their application focused on owner-managers' attitudes towards requesting outside help; owner-mangers' perceptions of public support agencies and their services; and owner-managers' knowledge of support agency services (Audet & St-Jean 2007). From a survey of 70 SME owner-managers, the findings showed that about a third of respondents had negative perceptions towards support agencies in terms of their usefulness. This implies that either SME owners do not understand the nature of support services or there is no desire to seek assistance. Such negative perceptions could be attributed to factors such as hierarchical based structures; overlaps in service delivery thus making support choices difficult; stringent program criteria; and the long processing time required to make a decision (Audet & St-Jean 2007). In addition, SME owners perceived that advisors attached to support agencies did not understand much of the business reality on the ground (Audet & St-Jean 2007) – a message that, according to Curran (2000), is very common in government funded institutions and sponsored programs.

On the basis of the findings, many respondents were of the view that services offered by support agencies were not relevant (Audet & St-Jean 2007). They indicate that support agency managers responsible for devising support programs are applying predetermined programs centrally planned and governed by conditions, criteria and requirements that do not reflect the SME field of operation (Audet & St-Jean 2007). In other words, the agency managers are civil servants who may not have the expertise and the authority to adjust support programs according to individual needs, which may differ between businesses in the cities and those in the peripheries. Therefore, the evidence that support services are not being utilised by SMEs is sufficient to believe that they are not working (Audet & St-Jean 2007; De Faoite et al. 2004).

In the US, Elena-Yusuf (2012) argued that low utilisation of external support is because it is perceived as support of last resort. The hypothesis made by Elena-Yusuf (2012) is that within a hierarchical support system, entrepreneurs will first seek assistance from within start-up teams and personal networks before venturing outside. However, statistical tests, using a sample of 564 nascent entrepreneurs from the US Panel Study of Entrepreneurs Dynamics (PSED), did not support this hypothesis. There are other factors at play which attribute to under-utilisation of support programs (Elena-Yusuf 2012). Low utilisation could be due to the hesitation of owner-managers to seek help, in case they are perceived as incompetent (Audet & St-Jean 2007). In addition, support utilisation is determined by the owner-manger's perception of the usefulness of the support and the kind of support offered by providers (Bennett 2008).

What type of support did entrepreneurs receive and did the support match the needs cited by entrepreneurs? These were the questions raised by Elena-Yusuf (2010) in a study to measure the effectiveness, participation and satisfaction of support programs. The study[17] showed that 73% of the time support programs were ineffective in meeting the support needs of entrepreneurs (Elena-Yusuf 2010).

[17] Data from the U.S Panel study of Entrepreneurs Dynamics (PSED), a sample of 564 nascent entrepreneurs were used to evaluate the effectiveness of support programs

The findings suggest a disconnection between the entrepreneur's needs and the entrepreneurial support programs. Disconnection was also found when comparing the top four support needs and the top four support programs (see Elena-Yusuf (2010, p. 301). Theoretically, if support programs are driven by entrepreneur's needs (De Faoite et al. 2004) then the results should show a 100% match between the top four entrepreneurs' needs and the top four support programs. However, the Elena-Yusuf study showed that only two support programs - learn about starting a business and networking - had satisfaction levels of 35.7% and 45.5% respectively, indicating the existence of a service gap or disconnection (Elena-Yusuf 2010). The study however did not consider a match between the entrepreneur's support needs and the knowledge and skills of staff administering the support programs (Gibb 1987a).

Shanklin and Ryans (1998) conducted a similar study to test the effectiveness of support programs in the US. The objectives of the study were to obtain evidence to assess whether cities, towns and commercial banks delivered support programs that met the needs of small entrepreneurs. The findings showed that entrepreneurs view access to SME finance and securing loans as the two most valuable support programs that directly satisfy their needs (Shanklin & Ryans 1998). Other support programs on offer, such as business incubators and international trade, were of little value, especially in the early start-up period. Service providers on the other hand viewed venture capital and international trade assistance as valuable (Shanklin & Ryans 1998). The findings indicate differences in the value placed on support programs between small entrepreneurs and service providers. This therefore confirmed the study hypothesis that support programs offered to small entrepreneurs had failed to meet the needs of small business owners. However, differences in opinion could lie in the program objectives which often reflect the broad interests and agenda of the government (Gibb & Li 2003).

2.4.3 The Australian experience

Is there really a discrepancy or a disconnection between needs and service provision? (Elena-Yusuf 2010; Shanklin & Ryans 1998) – the so called 'service gap'(Breen & Bergin-Seers 2002). Breen and Bergin-Seers (2002) believe that a service gap does

exist in the market for support services. This service gap emanates from a mismatch between the learning opportunities of services providers and the learning needs of small business owner-managers.

Through two small projects in Australia, Breen and Bergin-Seers (2002) tested the existence of service gaps and offered policy guidance on reconciling the differences (and reducing the gap) between programs and needs. The first project involved the use of print advertising and brochures to introduce and sell services related to workplace injuries. The second was a more focussed project involving personal visits to business premises and face to face interviews (Breen & Bergin-Seers 2002).

The findings showed that when service providers are involved in communication with small business operators, there is a better understanding of needs and the nature of support to match the needs - using a more personalised method. As a result, service providers are able to modify existing support offerings or redirect small businesses to other providers where better support is available (Breen & Bergin-Seers 2002). Furthermore, it was found that the service gap was reduced when service providers used a small business needs approach by way of personal visits and face to face communication (Breen & Bergin-Seers 2002).

According to the study, the service gap lies with the people and organisations driving the support programs (Breen & Bergin-Seers 2002). It suggests that unless the organisation delivering the programs shifts to a middle ground, where it can see and act on the interests of the service providers on one side and the interests of small business operators on the other, the gap will remain unabated. What Breen and Bergin-Seers' (2002) study concluded was that reconciliation is possible if there is a referee or an intermediary between the need seeker (buyer) and the program provider (supplier). Otherwise, the disparity in needs and service delivery will render SSAPs as ineffective.

2.4.4 The African experience

Central to the review of the African experience in SSAPs is the perception that SMEs are relevant to addressing unemployment problems, reduction in poverty and

increasing income and GDP growth (Ladzani & Netswera 2009). Irwin (2011) made general but important observations to explain the small business reforms and decision making in Africa. First, there is a danger in assuming that small business operators in Africa belong to one homogeneous group. Although problems such as lack of access to finance, lack of business skills and lack of market information may be similar across regions of Africa, there are factors associated with entrepreneur's capability to recognise and take advantage of business opportunities (Irwin 2011). For example, a small business operator in Tanzania may be making leather belts but his business strengths and weakness will be very different from someone directly exporting leather. A small business in Kenya may also differ from those in Uganda, Tanzania, Cameroon and other parts of Africa and so might their needs influenced by tribal, lineage and family differentials (Irwin 2011). Therefore, to assume homogeneity, as Irwin (2011) highlighted, is a risk.

It is also erroneous to assume that planned and workable intervention programs in Ghana, for example, will function in Uganda. This assumption has links to the erroneous belief in the homogeneity of African small business communities. In addition, it is assumed that recommendations from country reports could be shared as standard prescriptions (Irwin 2011). There is also a tendency by researchers and consultants to bring in preconceived ideas of addressing small business needs without working with local communities and SBOs. Any support programs that are imposed on locals often failed – as reflected by the low take up rate (Irwin 2011). However, although success in quantitative terms is noted from the study, the result cannot be generalised from the case of one single organisation delivering the same support in four different countries (Irwin 2011).

Another small business study, in the city of Johannesburg, by Netswera (2001) sets out to assess the perceptions of small business owners towards the provision of SSAPs and to ascertain the significance of each SSAP offered in the market, including their accessibility. Data collection was through telephone interviews with 60 randomly chosen SMEs and through the use of questionnaires. The findings showed that government ministries were the most sought after service providers for SME training, simply because training is subsidised and there is greater accessibility

to the program. However, accessibility does not guarantee availability of the service because of the need to find qualified trainers who are willing to offer their services at a much reduced rate. For that reason, the perception that training is the most responsive or effective in meeting SME needs is a false hope, as other factors are at play in the actual delivery or utilisation of support.

Behind training, Netswera (2001) found that access to finance was the second most sought after support service. Despite this accessibility and encouragement by the government, SME owners have been turned away due to stringent and bureaucratic requirements (Ladzani & Netswera 2009; Netswera 2001). Alternative sources of finance offered by commercial banks and other private financiers did not attract SMEs due to their lack of collateral security and aversion to service fees and charges.

Notwithstanding the above, the most important support service sought by SBOs was information. However, costs associated with advertising and publication tends to limit their usage. Training was also perceived to be important but business information and knowledge about support systems were vital (Ladzani & Netswera 2009). Overall, although these findings were significant, they did not provide enough evidence to prove or disprove the success of support services. One could only imply from the findings that since perceptions did not match experience, dissatisfaction was associated with the support service offerings and their providers (Venkatesh & Goyal 2010).

2.4.5 The World Bank experience

The Economic Development Institute of the World Bank (WB) conducted several studies over a span of 20 years to establish responsive and appropriate policies, external assistance and institutional arrangements that could yield effective export support services in WB sponsored countries (Hogan, Keesing & Singer 1991). The support services examined included export promotion, marketing assistance, consultant advice, and provision of export related information. One of the titles of a series of papers produced from the findings was: “Development assistance gone

wrong: Failures in services to promote and support manufactured exports" (Hogan, Keesing & Singer 1991).

Following a review of government documents and interviews with experienced people in the field, the authors concluded that assistance in the support services "has had little discernible impact on exports and has rarely been effective in expanding them" (Hogan, Keesing & Singer 1991, p. 17). This lack of impact was due to a combination of several factors, such as the misfit of assistance towards helping exporting firms overcome their problems and needs; donors providing support have little concern about the impact of their assistance; support assistance has been delivered through an inappropriate delivery mechanism (Hogan, Keesing & Singer 1991).

Similar impact assessments were carried out by Batra and Mahmood (2003) in 30 small firms in developed and developing countries to assess the effectiveness of WB credit lines and connectivity with firm growth. According to their findings, the association is weak when institutional infrastructure lacks the capacity to support high growth initiatives. In other countries, performance is based on input indicators such as new loans and disbursement rates rather than on impact indicators. Where input indicators are used, the result is inconclusive (Batra & Mahmood 2003). This means that low disbursement of loans can be attributed to other factors such as economic instability, the availability of cheaper lines of credit and cumbersome procedures associated with WB credit lines. Output assessment, based on employment levels, sales output, export volume and rate of return, showed positive results (an association between credit lines and output) during the period of evaluation but justification of resources for the results achieved cannot be ascertained.

2.4.6 The Fijian experience

In 2008, the NCSMED commissioned a three-year study to review the status of small business laws in Fiji. The reasoning behind the study was the common belief that small businesses play an important role in employment growth, national income and

poverty alleviation. Two academic papers originated from the NCSMED study (Nair & Chelliah 2012; Nand 2014). These are summarised in Table 2-7.

Although their results are not unique to Fiji's small business environment, the fact that the problems still persist today, despite the various SSAP initiatives implemented, indicates that SSAPs are not working. This is confirmed in one of the paper's concluding remarks: "lack of access and use of business advice and financial services is an issue for owners" (Nair & Chelliah 2012, p. 181).

Nand's (2014) contributions can be assessed in a number of areas. In the main, he raised the importance of rational thinking in the design and development of small business policies. He also argued that a top down approach to policy design has failed to consider changes in the environment and to recognise the innovative human spirit within organisations (Nand 2014). In a top down approach, small business policies released by policy makers often create a disenchanted view because they lack the participation and contributions of the community. A more rational approach to policy design is suggested based on the ideologies of equal participation, problem solving and community exchanges, during both the planning and implementation stages (Nand 2014).

Table 2-7 Selected studies on small business

	Nair & Chelliah (2012)	**Nand (2014)**
Research focus	Challenges faced by small businesses.	Regulatory impediments to small business particularly complaints and access to services costs.
Methodology	Survey using semi-structured interviews.	Survey and semi-structured interviews.
Sample	Primary data: 164 mostly micro enterprises (93%) and small businesses (7%). Secondary data: FBoS survey on 7,061 enterprises	Primary data: 80 SMEs Secondary data: 164 SMEs mostly micro enterprises (93%) and small businesses (7%). FBoS survey on 7,061 enterprises.
Results	√ 95% think of micro businesses when starting a business. √ NCSMED services usage (11%)	√ 88% not aware of business rules and regulations. √ 70% recommend decentralising NCSMED support

	√ Other support services (about 3%) except for financial institutions (21%).	√ Lack of legal literacy √ SMEs choose to remain informal √ Policies designed in isolation and do not harmonise with rural needs. √ Too many laws and regulations not suitable for SMEs and high burdens.
Implications	Lack of access to finance, lack of imagination, lack of access to business support services.	Lack of information on know-how in complying with statutory requirements; a one-stop shop checklist on regulatory compliances; streamlining of current legislations.

Key: SME – Small and Micro enterprises (Fijian context); FBoS – Fiji Bureau of Statistics

Several other support programs have been established in Fiji, but the one that draws a lot of political and academic interest is the AAP (Chand 2007; Gounder & Prasad 2005; Puamau 2001; Ratuva 2000; Reddy & Prasad 2002). Citing similarities to the situation in South Africa and Malaysia, the newly elected government of 2001 proposed the introduction of an AAP to diffuse the racial tension between indigenous Fijians and Indians (Van Gelder et al. 2007). It was important, according to the government, to bridge the economic disparities existing between the two major racial groups and to encourage the participation of indigenous Fijians in commerce.

The AAP includes government grants, small business loans, buy back of ancestral lands, housing assistance, scholarship funds and employment in state services (PMO 2006). Many political commentators and academics view the program as discriminatory in nature (Gounder & Prasad 2005; Reddy & Prasad 2002; Sunil & Biman 2004). One particular program (Program 7) explicitly stipulates the reservation of 50 per cent of government capital purchases, licenses, permits and contracts to indigenous Fijians (PMO 2006). A program report of 2006 shows that between 2000 and 2005 indigenous Fijians were only able to secure less than one per cent of the FJD$50 million value of contracts awarded annually (PMO 2006). In addition, the seed capital revolving fund, administered by the FDB, was well over the sectoral limit and it was argued that it could take over 20 years to fully recover the debt (PMO 2006).

Similarly, the NCSMED development program established in 2003 did not achieve the desired outcome (NCSMED 2006). The objective of the program was to inculcate a savings culture amongst the rural poor. The savings collected would form a pool of funds that small micro businesses could access as seed capital. While modelled on the success of the Grameen Bank 'social network', the program had very little impact on small businesses and on the living conditions of owner-managers in Fiji. Their savings could not be converted into productive investment and much was in fact withdrawn for consumption expenditure (NCSMED 2006). Overall, the actual program performance measured by grant participation rate was below 15% per annum (PMO 2006) .

2.4.7 Synthesis of the international experiences

There is evidence from international experience about the increasing role and usage of SSAPs. This signifies the value placed by small businesses on using public and private service organisations for business advice, networks, and grant funding, among other services. However, the impact of support services in the selected countries, based on objective and subjective measurements, is somewhat mixed[18] (Refer Table 2-8). While there is hype about the nature and extent of services provided, the impact and satisfaction levels are unexpectedly low, particularly in public sector organisations. While associating with support services provided by accountants, lawyers and banks in the private sector, small businesses steer away from public sources of support. The reasons for this include lack of awareness and scepticism about the value of support services; the costs involved in using professional services; the relationship between the small business owner and the business advisor; and the quality of services provided (Priest 1999, Bennett & Robson 2005).

[18] "Mixed refers to the perception of small business owners after their experience or encounter with SSAP. Whilst some countries experienced satisfaction in SSAP meeting small business needs, others perceived otherwise".

Table 2-8 Synthesis of developed and developing countries experiences

Country	**SSAPs performance: findings based on selected country studies**	
	Positive	Negative
Developed Countries	BL personal advisors added considerable value (Summon 1998). BL easy to contact and 40% demonstrated 'significant degree of impact' (Summon 1998). Service gap no longer existed – BL is working (Bennett 2008). Government advisory more effective – increases survival rates by 4% and growth rates of firms by 10% (Wren & Storey 2002). Communication between services providers and small businesses improves understanding of needs and nature of support (Breen & Bergin-Seers 2002).	Lacked customer orientation (Priest 1998); irrelevant and did not understand reality on the ground (Audet & St Jean 2007). Government support not very attractive to SMEs – only 5% usage in UK (Bennett 2008) and one-third perceived usefulness in Canada (Audet & St Jean 2007). Disconnection between entrepreneurs needs and support (Elena-Yusuf 2010, Breen & Bergin-Seers 2002). Preference for private sector support services over government services (Bennett 2008). Too many restructuring within BL – negative influence on take up rate and effectiveness (Bennett 2008). Confusion because of too many providers (Lambrecht & Pirnay 2005). Lack of integration and selection bias – advisors push own products and services (Lambrecht & Pirnay 2005). Lack of practicality and preference for informal support services (DeFaoite et al. 2004).
Developing and least developed Countries	Attraction to assist low-income countries through development aid and best practices (Irwin 2011).	Erroneous belief in the homogeneity of African small business communities (Irwin 2011). Misfit of intervention programs and inappropriate delivery mechanism (Ladzani & Netswera 2009). Lack of qualified personnel and bureaucratic requirements (top down approach) to access services (Nand 2014). Lack of participation and contribution to communities (Nand 2014).

Source: constructed from country experiences in subsections 2.4.1 – 2.4.6

The experience of failure in SSAPs in Fiji is stark. Not a single high growth small business has been developed, despite the annual resources poured out to sustain small business programs. The question is, why are they not working? What are the possible factors contributing to the failure of SSAPs in Pacific island countries? How can we address these failures?

2.5 Factors contributing to SSAPs failure

This section situates the phrase 'not working' into context for a better understanding of its usage in the area of SSAPs. This is followed by a discussion that addresses the obvious question: 'what factors contribute to the failure (not working) of SSAPs?'

2.5.1 Contextualising the 'not working' phenomenon

The phrase 'not working' has different connotations. For example, if ten people were asked what they understood about the term there is a possibility of receiving ten different responses. In this research context, the phrase could mean failure, inappropriateness and/or ineffectiveness:

(a) Not working as 'failure'

In his early theory of failure, Davis explains a non-reaction or confirmation of a system to a given set of inputs or stimuli, stating: "Any reaction of the system which does not lie within the prescribed limits of response constitutes a failure and the absence of failure during a period of observation is termed success" (Davis 1952, p. 113). In the research context, failure means the mismatch or disconfirmation between performance expectation and actual performance to a given system (McKinney, Yoon & Zahedi 2002; Oliver, RL & Burke 1999). Extending this theory, Clifford (1984) built a mathematical notation to depict failure (F) as the ratio between performance (P) and goal (G). The event failure is achieved if the ratio between performance and goal is less than one. If the ratio is more than one, then the performance outcome is a success. A major drawback of this model, is the assumption that success is driven by performance, thus ignoring the motivational factor to perform through better understanding and description of goals. Clifford

(1994) however pursues an anti-failure agenda in which she suggests that the effects of failure should not be equated with the detrimental effects of psychological, political, cultural and social forces.

(b) Not working as 'lacking appropriateness'

Not working is linked with inappropriateness in the context of misfit and or the lack of practicality with regards to changes in community versus institutional support and development programs (Hughes 2003; Moyo 2009). The relevant question asked could be: 'Have development support programs reached or hit the targeted problems identified by local communities? According to Brown (2003a) there are complexities within local ecosystems that cause misfit, such as in the makeup of rules and laws of the land, the political and socio-economic framework, cultural and behavioural attitudes of people towards development and changes. Often the misfit can be between the package of support versus local community needs; institutions delivering the support program versus the general target community; local ecosystems versus the institutional processes; and institutions delivering the change or support programs versus other stakeholders (Brown 2003a). However, when differences between these interest groups are not reconciled and/or managed properly, any change programs for the community will be viewed as lacking fit (Brown 2003a, 2003b).

Lack of fit or inappropriateness in development programs was how Moyo (2009) described the international support programs for the continent of Africa. In her view, financial recovery packages had little impact on the lives of ordinary people. In addition, the success of such programs in western European countries did not guarantee similar success in Africa (Moyo 2009). There are differences related to local capacity, systems and practices apart from tribal, geographic, cultural, language and leadership issues. The same sentiments were shared by Hughes (2003) whilst describing the inappropriate fit of donor funds[19] going to small PICs (AusAID 2006, 2010; Feeny & McGillivray 2008). After years of support there was nothing to show

[19] Since 1970 the Pacific island region has received US$50 billion and A$100 billion in donor funds (Hughes 2003).

except for a decreasing average per capita income of less than 1% per annum (Hughes 2003).

(c) Not working as 'lacking effectiveness'

The concept of program effectiveness is sometimes referred to as program success or goal attainment and a judgement is made as to whether the support program is meeting its goals. As a result, strategic decisions are made (disband, expand, reduce or change) on program planning, budgetary provisions and the rationalisation of program policies (Weiss 1972). Such decisions cannot be made in a void or through informal means, they must be established based on detailed analysis and reporting (Patton 1994, 2008).

The use of evaluation research makes sense in this context. Generally, the purpose of this approach is to measure the effects (positive and negative changes) of support programs. For example, someone evaluates SSAPs which are initially designed to improve the performance of small businesses and reduce their chances of failure in the early stages of operation. Outcomes from program activities are then compared with the approved goals (set criteria). An SSAP is said to be effective if the program goals have been attained. Similarly, it is considered ineffective if delivery fails to meet the specific goals and needs of the program.

The next section expresses views attributed to SSAP failure, inappropriateness or ineffectiveness. Among others, such views cover cultural, financial, educational, and market perspectives, each of which is discussed.

2.5.2 The cultural view

SSAPs failed because of divergent positions related to indigenous versus Western entrepreneurial culture. At a global level, a country's past and present policies, programs and services are influenced by western philosophies. Information and communication technologies are helping resource poor countries to transfer and assimilate ideas and models of the western world under foreign aid development programs (Moyo 2009). Embedded in the transfer are the western ways of doing

things, ideologies and 'best practice' that took place during training and skills development and institutional arrangements (Farrelly 2009; Gibb & Li 2003).

The western entrepreneurial movement (Landstrom 2009) became a real solution for countries desiring to transform (or modernise) their rural agrarian economy. It was a movement committed to economic growth and progress through assimilation of financial and structural reforms of large industrialised economies: the relaxation of state control, removal of trade barriers and increased engagement with the rest of the world (Sachs 2005). Despite economic restructuring and redirection of state resources,[20] observers in poor developing countries, such as sub-Saharan Africa, criticised the poor outcome of the western entrepreneurial movement in host countries (Collier 2008; Easterly & Mueller 2008; Moyo 2009). According to Moyo (2009), development assistance has failed to change the poor state of the sub-Saharan Africa economies. Several of the recipient countries are now suffering from conditions such as increasing debt, poverty, corruption and uneven distribution of economic wealth (Easterly & Mueller 2008; Moyo 2009; Sachs 2005).

How could this failure be explained? Is it the program that has failed or the host country that has failed to assimilate the program? Farrelly's (2009) observation, following her thesis work in Fiji, attributes failure to the lack of consideration of existing and embedded indigenous ways of doing things (in the case of PIC). Often indigenous knowledge and ways of doing things (Morrison 2008) are kept out of formal government and organisational structures, yet they have very strong influence on the implementation of programs on the ground (Gibb 2006). It can be implied that those designing and planning the support programs either failed to consider the embedded indigenous ways of doing things or underestimated its influence.

It is in this context of western ways of doing things that culture is considered. The principle here is to understand and be aware of cultural differences between western and indigenous groups – in terms of knowledge, values, attitudes, belief and customs (Ford, Connelly & Meister 2003; Youngdahl et al. 2003). The indigenous Fijians for

[20] Including the imposition of policies, programs and decades of development aid (Moyo 2009).

example have their own collective ways of thinking, organisation and behavioural attitudes. Therefore, culture is a manifestation of the ability of people to converge, to think and act together as a matter of importance for human survival (Hofstede 1983). The literature covers this aspect well in terms of influence in politics, economics and social environments.

Cultural implications have been explored in the evaluation of customers' participation (Chan, Yim & Lam 2010), service quality (Ladhari et al. 2011), satisfaction and purchase behaviours (Van Birgelen et al. 2002; Youngdahl et al. 2003). As Gibb and Li (2003) observe in their study in China, cultural influences in the operating environment and the conduct of local businesses are so different from mainstream western market systems. It is safe therefore to assume that the success of Chinese entrepreneurs does not come from learning the lessons of western countries but from building internal networks of people within families, industries and regions based on trust – meaning that word is law within networks operating outside government regulatory boundaries. While the use of the court system is common in mainstream economic systems (for settling disputes and for recourse against failed business transactions), a 'Guanxi' system (personal relationships and networks) operates in China which distinguishes itself from the rest of the world (Gibb & Li 2003). Gibb and Li (2003) attributed the success of entrepreneurship in China to the 'Guanxi' culture infiltrating the way Chinese entrepreneurs conduct their business. It is quite different from the normative Western entrepreneurial models (Gibb & Li 2003; Li & Matlay 2006).

The failure of western entrepreneurial models suggests the difficulty of fitting the system into different cultural settings (Dana & Anderson 2007; Dana & Galbraith 2006; Irwin 2011; Saffu 2003; Torri 2009, 2012). As Torri noted, "It is discouraging to observe, however, the general lack of success in support programs"(Torri 2012, p. 237). According to Saffu (2003), cultural differences between the West and PIC could render integration and transferability irrelevant (Farrelly 2011; Saffu 2003). The western entrepreneurial models were constructed in industrialised and capital intensive environments (Gibb & Li 2003), with business values driven by wealth creation, profit making, independence, social advancement and prestige (Yunus &

Weber 2007). These values are in direct conflict with the indigenous 'modus operandi' (Farrelly 2009; Maiava 2001).

A study on one single organisation delivering business support programs in four African countries[21] (Irwin 2011) highlights the difficulty in transferring successful ideas and concepts between regions because of tribal, lineage and family differentials. It is dangerous to assume homogeneity, particularly in African societies, because of these differentials. The importance of careful assessment of entrepreneurs' expectations goes a long way to satisfying customer needs and changing the output/outcome of small business enterprises (Irwin 2011).

In the Fijian context, indigenous businesses are built on cultural values, societal networks and spiritualism. Any transformation to monetisation and commercialisation will mean tearing down the Fijian communal and organisational structure (Farrelly 2009). Farrelly's (2009) unpublished thesis fell short of condemning the traditional value systems in Fiji for their contradictory nature with contemporary entrepreneurial practices of saving and value creation.

In a study of six PICs, Fairbairn (1988) observes two contrasting accounts in the way small business is structured and supported between foreigners (European and Asian) and indigenous business operators living in PIC. It is argued that foreigners are more skilful and resourceful. They have easy access to capital funds from formal financial institutions, better networks and good marketing links. Their organisation structure is more formal and legal (Fairbairn 1988b, 2006). The indigenous operator on the other hand remains on the outskirts by engaging in small primary based activities (low capital and labour intensive) – many are unregistered.

2.5.3 The financial view

SSAPs failed to satisfy the needs of small business operators because of a misfit in financial products and services. The gap in government sponsored financial programs is reviewed from the standpoint of small business owners-managers who are looking

[21] These are Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Cameroon.

for sources of funds for business growth. Small business owners use banks as second on the list as providers of business capital – the first being their own equity (Blumberg & Letterie 2008). Before approaching the bank, an experienced western business owner-manager gathers information on credit availability in terms of providers, products, costs, benefits, terms and conditions. Unfortunately, this cannot be said for most small business owner-managers in both developed and developing countries who may lack research skills, knowledge and the confidence to make proper credit enquiries (Berger, A & Udell 2002; Blumberg & Letterie 2008; Craig, Jackson & Thomson 2008). Thus accessing credit by small business owner-managers is limited (Beck & Demirguc-Kunt 2006) on the basis of information asymmetries (Craig, Jackson & Thomson 2008). Does this mean that financial assistance and services are not appropriate merely on the basis of lack of utilisation?

To address this query, the focus is turned towards banks, venture capitalists, stock markets and other financial brokers who are generally in the business of providing financial services. According to Blumberg and Letterie (2008), one of the factors restricting utilisation of financial services, especially among small businesses, is credit rationing by providers of financial services. Credit rationing is about restricting the supply of credit to an identified group for reasons other than doubt, fear, hesitation and speculation (Blumberg & Letterie 2005, 2008; Freel 2007; Freel et al. 2012). This credit rationing stems from two possible sources: lack of understanding of the business and owner and the 'failure' experience of those seeking credit (Blumberg & Letterie 2005, 2008).

First, a lack of understanding of the person (business owner-manager) in terms of social background (especially work experience) and the nature of business tend to create doubt and hesitancy among bank managers and decision makers on the credibility of the person applying for financial support (Blumberg & Letterie 2005, 2008). The problem is compounded by the unwillingness of financial providers to gather new social and financial indicators from their own networks and through market research. While there is increased use of information from the credit data bureau (Falkenheim & Powell 2001; West 2000), the problem remains, since data

bureau systems do not normally capture personal skills development apart from basic social indicators and past financial transactions.

Second, credit rationing also results from the failure of small business owner-managers to provide quality loan documentation when applying for a business loan (Blumberg & Letterie 2005, 2008). This is an area in which small businesses fail either because they do not understand lending policies and credit requirements, or they do not have the necessary skills to complete technical loan application forms (for example, collateral security, mortgage, debenture, crop lien, and assignment), as well as provide the necessary supporting documents (such as feasibility studies, cash flow forecast, business plan and financial statements). When small business owner-managers cannot provide good quality project papers and feasibility studies, they create an element of doubt and hesitancy in the minds of bank managers in approving the loan application. In contrast, large businesses usually engage solicitors, accountants and/or investment consultants to negotiate and prepare credit documentation on their behalf (Blumberg & Letterie 2008).

Given the existence of information asymmetry and credit rationing within banks, it is not surprising that the take up rate of financial services amongst small business is low. There are two possible implications. First, if banks are providing financial products and there is little or no incentive to access the same, then this could imply that the bank products are costly and that accessing them is complicated (in terms of documentation), or simply they do not fit the expectations and financial needs of small business owner-managers. Second, financial providers have little interest in servicing the needs of small business operators because of risk factors and reasons associated with portfolio profitability. This implies that financial products and services offered in the market may only be appropriate for large corporate customers and do not fit the small business landscape. In other words, small businesses that have managed to access credit are subjected to financial products and services usually targeted for large and thriving businesses in advanced countries.

As discussed in the justification of SSAPs (see subsection 2.3.2), the key concept of ‘need’ is often missing in SSAP delivery, with criticisms directed at providers for not taking a keen interest in what their customers want (Stretton 2009, 2010, 2013).

When financial needs are not well defined, there is a tendency to use template solutions that often have no relevancy to small business conditions. It becomes a case of corporate financial solutions looking for willing customers/buyers – a marketing strategy common in new IT development projects (Stretton 2013; Wang, Tang & Tang 2001).

In the PIC context, sources of financial services are very limited and restrictive in terms of accessibility (Conroy 2003; Hailey 1985). Apart from government sponsored development banks (for example, the Tongan Development Bank, the Vanuatu Development Bank and the Fiji Development bank), major sources of external finance include commercial banks, NGOs, donor organisations and government ministries. Since capital markets are very limited in most developing countries, debt financing seems to be the only option available, although this mostly discriminates against small businesses (Berger, A & Udell 2002; Clarke, Cull & Martinez Peria 2006). Lack of influencing power and capacity to provide detailed financial information often put small businesses at the mercy of large banks (Berger, A & Udell 2002). In the case of Fiji, small business lending is influenced by three large foreign owned banks who dictate what the market should have rather than what customer wants. This is where the misfit lies – customers are no longer driving the market.

2.5.4 The educational and training view

SSAPs failed because of the design of entrepreneurial training programs are not tailored to meet small business needs. Changes in the global economic environment present a greater need for an effective SSAP response (Dana 2001; De Faoite et al. 2004). Globalisation together with advanced communication networks, transport system, and information technology provide more business opportunities and challenges (Henry, Hill & Leitch 2005). Accompanying these developments are new rules of engagement and business practices that demand a free movement of tradeable goods and services in the market (Gibb & Li 2003). It is therefore apparent that the response at corporate and individuals levels require a high-level education

and training to take advantage of the new opportunities and to meet global challenges (Henry, Hill & Leitch 2005).

The literature on entrepreneurial educational and training is well established. Entrepreneurs with high levels of education tend to seek support services (Gibb 1993a) that correspond to their personal and business requirements (Storey 2004). High levels of education also increase the likelihood of success since the owners are more familiar with their strengths and weaknesses (Gibb 1993a). In addition, entrepreneurs' educational level has important links with business planning, sourcing of finance, operational management, networking, and administration (Gibb 1993a, 1997). Dana (2001) attributes education and training to the high level of competitiveness and product innovation in Asia. Similarly, education and training is recognised as an important factor to increasing global entrepreneurial activities (Bosma & Levie 2010). While acknowledging these contributions, the demand for innovative and responsive entrepreneurial programs remains – one that will increase the entrepreneurial skills and capabilities of small business owners. How do we organise such innovative and responsive entrepreneurial programs?

Several learning organisational frameworks have been developed in the literature (Gibb 1987a; Henry, Hill & Leitch 2005; Hill & O'Cinneide 1998). Gibb (1987a) constructs a training framework grounded on four building blocks: ability, resources, ideas and motivation. These building blocks are vital for the success of any business. So, any person starting or growing a business is assessed on these success factors and based on their current development stage (Gibb 1987a). For example, at the resource level, a person will be assessed on the availability of physical and financial resources. Training programs related to business planning and business knowledge are then designed to fill the resource gap. In this way, the training needs of individual businesses are accurately identified, and matched with specific training programs (Gibb 1987a). Sadly, practices in the market do not correspond to the above systematic process; and often the training programs are not tailored to meet the needs of participants (De Faoite et al. 2004).

The common belief is that participants to training programs are introduced to generic approaches that bear no resemblance to participant's needs (Gibb 1987a). In addition,

based on the experience in Asia, training providers are admonished to consider context-specific programs that are geared towards improving owners' chances of success; and not pushing for standard and/or westernised training models (Dana 2001; Gibb & Li 2003). Furthermore, it is still valid to assume that small businesses cannot break into the high knowledge, high value added and high-tech end of the business continuum because of their choice of business (Henry, Hill & Leitch 2005; Hill & O'Cinneide 1998). All these ideological positions, however, contradict with Henry and her co-author's push for program uniformity. In their view, effectiveness of training programs can only be achieved under common purpose, content, and delivery methods (Henry, Hill & Leitch 2005).

Success in terms of business survival and growth is dependent upon an owner-manager's learning ability. Fairbairn (2006) highlights the serious lack of technical skills and entrepreneurial knowledge among small business owner-managers. The transfer and application of business information, models and practices of the international market are not producing successful outcomes. The failure experiences of those entering and exiting small business have, to some extent, discouraged the interest of educated school leavers and university graduates to become business owners (Puamau 2001; Taylor 2002). The educational system[22] also fails to provide an appropriate pathway and attractive incentive to encourage young learners to choose a career in small business. So, those entering the small business sector are often those who are disengaged from the formal employment market and/or have failed to progress in the local educational system (Singh, G, Pathak & Naz 2010).

In the PICs context, considerable learning and imitating takes place among grassroots communities (Fairbairn 1988b). While training courses may be attended, it is through the advice, views and feedback of stakeholders that much learning takes place (Gibb 1993a, 1997). Fairbairn (2006) suggests learning from neighbours - the foreigners and successful entrepreneurs already operating in the islands. These entrepreneurs have a wider business network and the experience in business

[22] The educational system is also linked to other economic sectors so there are underlying conditions emanating from this other sectors

management. Those Pacific islanders in diaspora exposed to advanced business and management could also be encouraged to contribute to small business development.

2.5.5 The market view

SSAPs failed because of differences in expectation - the mismatch in needs and support programs. The market perspective offered in this section is focussed on the expectation and needs of small business operators. Peltomaki and Nummela (1998, p.69) argue that service providers "often look at small firms and their problems from their own perspective"; there is no input in the design from small business owner-managers, who are the key buyers and utilisers of SSAPs. In such situations, the voice of customers is deemed as no longer important and the offerings of service providers are merely to drive the market.

Underlying the market perspective are issues of demand and supply - the two main factors controlling the design and delivery of SSAPs in the market. First, from the demand side, it is assumed that the expectations and needs of small business owners do not match the SSAP suite of market offerings. Either the SSAP offerings are not satisfying the needs of small business operators or there is no special interest to buy the products and services offered in the market.

Second, from a supply side, SSAP offerings are driven to the market through the influence of policy makers, financiers, program designers, evaluators and program managers. As pointed out earlier, there is no input in the design from small business owner-managers, who are the key buyers and utilisers of SSAPs (Hurmerinta-Peltomäki & Nummela 1998, 2004). In such a situation, the voice of customers is deemed to be no longer important and offerings of service providers are merely to drive the market. The few large service providers that operate in Fiji take advantage by reshaping the preferences of customers and their perceived value towards new products and services. Even if needs assessments are carried out, including requesting feedback on existing support programs, they were either inadequate/incorrect or not taken into account in the design process and policy formulation.

Emerging from the field of program evaluation is the issue of small business expectation. It is believed that small business support programs are not working because of a mismatch in the providers' offering in the market and the expectation of small business operators (Breen & Bergin-Seers 2002). The mismatch is assumed to be linked to incorrect assessment and diagnosis of small business operator needs and expectations (Breen & Bergin-Seers 2002). Recent studies in the US (Elena-Yusuf 2010) and Africa (Irwin 2011) highlight the importance of small business expectation as a measurement of satisfaction in support services and in changing the performance of small business outcomes. An international expert in the field of project management has argued that there is a general lack of attention given to 'customer needs determination' before commencing work on new products and programs (Stretton 2010, 2013).

There are a number of theories linked to the market perspective. In the main, the market orientation approach (Jaworski & Kohli 1993; Jaworski, Kohli & Sahay 2000) offers a genuine framework of knowledge and grounding for the study. Previous studies on small business SSAPs have been carried out from an end-user perspective, that is, after utilisation of a known product or services. In other words, customer perception (and or experience) is based on products and services that already exist in the market. Yet, there is little consideration of the expectations of small business owners/operators before the design, development and delivery of SSAPs.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

Several theoretical frameworks have been used in this research to ground the problem of mismatch in the demand and supply of SSAPs in the market. On the whole, a market-oriented approach fits with the market or customer centric view advanced in this study. Other building blocks contributing to the grounding of the SSAP problem of mismatch come from insights in the resource-based view, expectation approach and needs assessment. Although these have some close links with the idea of need identification and consultation before assistance, the market-

oriented approach is used because of its focus on both small business needs and service delivery.

2.6.1 Resource-based view

There are two ways of analysing firms: the product-based view and the resource-based view (Wernerfelt 1995). While the product-based view is focussed on product positioning in the market using economic tools, the resource-based analysis focusses on the strengths and weakness of the firm to handle resources (Barney 1996). In terms of finding a theoretical basis for analysis of SSAPs, the resource-based view was considered appropriate. Bennett and Robson (2005) and Chrisman and McMullan (2004) suggested using the resource-based view as a theoretical unpinning for the evaluation of SSAPs. This approach assumes that firms with access to bundles of resources which are rare, valuable (Barney 1996), not easily replicated and capable (Newbert 2007), and the ability to combine such bundles, would create competitive advantage and improved performance (Wernerfelt 1995). Further, it assumes that in order for firms to sustain competitive advantage over time, their possessed bundle of resources must be inimitable and non–substitutable (Newbert 2007). In addition, these resources should continuously go through transformation in the manner of 'creative destruction' to realise their full organisation potential (Newbert 2007).

Can the problem of SSAP misfit be explored through a resource-based view? Since the usage of internal resources is central to the resource-based view, there may be some link to the theory. The link comes when small businesses venture out to seek additional resources in order to remain competitive. These resources generally refer to material and immaterial assets such as physical, organisational capital, internal knowledge, skilled personnel, financial, reputation and technological resources (Barney 1996). The focus of this thesis lies in the external support and assistance which small business owner-managers seek in order to remain in business. Here it is assumed that the external support may not be appropriate and/or effective. If external resources are to be put to productive use then designers and planners of resources should engage people who are facing problems. At present, decisions about the

mixing of resources in the market rest with those wielding economic power[23] in terms of pricing, and how the resources are designed and delivered (Rubin 1973).

In addition, although the resources available to business are heterogeneous, valuable and rare, as associated with the resource-based view, there is still a homogeneous perception by SSAP providers who influence the ability to have an effective combination of resources. Supposedly, the capabilities and core competencies of small businesses should be at different levels in order to ensure entrepreneurship. When capabilities and competencies are absent, providers of SSAPs cannot attain full potential - to organise resources, attain an appropriate structure, and effective control systems and policy frameworks (Barney 1996; Wernerfelt 1995). Simply put, SSAPs would not be working because the development process fails to gain the input of those using the support programs. What is achieved as output and outcome is an unbalanced, non-participatory and irrational view of those influencing the SSAP designing process (Barney 1996; Wernerfelt 1995).

2.6.2 Needs assessment approach

Viewed from a demand perspective, the concept of needs assessment is derived from evaluation research which focuses on problem identification and how the problem could be addressed (Patton 2008; Weiss 1972, 1998). According to Kaufman (2005), when analysing an issue, there is often confusion about what the problem is, what is needed and the underlying causes. When needs are not well defined and assessed, there is a tendency to short circuit the assessment process, thus resulting in an incorrect diagnosis and inappropriate intervention policies (Darcy & Hofmann 2003).

Needs assessment as a concept is complex (Triner, Andre & Watkins 1996). Depending on the lens one is using, views can be confusing when juxtaposed with terms such as gap, outcome, problems, improvement and solutions (Kaufman, Rojas & Mayer 1993). It is further complicated in the context of culture, time, values, experiences and socio-economic conditions.

[23] In the case of PICs, the power rests with donors, the elite in government and large foreign financial institutions.

Needs assessment is the recognition that a certain condition or situation has created a negative response and needs to be changed (Gupta 2007, 2011). The process of identifying needs is about hearing the voice of key stakeholders about challenges, needs and service demands. Stretton (2009) pointed out that there is limited material in the literature to guide the identification process, as well as a lack of attention on 'customer needs determination' before commencing work on product specification. Too often, projects churn out facilities and products with no direct contribution to customer needs (Stretton 2009, 2010, 2013). The rationale behind needs assessment is that it provides stakeholders with invaluable inputs and informed decisions on whether to intervene (Darcy & Hofmann 2003). There is ground for relevancy, justification and accountability based on data and information (Briggs 1991; Darcy & Hofmann 2003). Further, support on the assessment process emanates from the link it provides to improving business performance, resource planning and program modification (Kaufman 2009; Kaufman & English 1979; Kaufman, Rojas & Mayer 1993).

Kaufman and English (1979), among others (Gupta 2011; Leigh et al. 2000), view needs as a gap in the result (end) - between current condition (what is) and desired condition (what should be); not something we want to do (Triner, Andre & Watkins 1996). To identify this gap, individuals and organisations are admonished to recognise the value of needs assessment in the process of identification, priority setting, resource planning and interventions (Kaufman 2010). Kaufman (2010) cautions that intervention programs or solutions to fill the gap should not precede needs assessment otherwise this will result in solutions searching for problems.

2.6.2 Expectation-based approach

Expectation as a concept is a difficult term to define because of its multiple usage and meanings. The lack of conceptual definition in the literature makes this discourse a challenging one. Elena-Yusuf (2010) uses the terms 'expressed needs' and 'latent needs' in reference to small business expectation. Expressed needs are needs expressed in action while latent needs are what people say they need (Altschuld & Witkin 2000). There is a wide application of the term to denote needs, desires,

beliefs, motives, interests, demand, values, preferences and interests. In the small business context, needs and requests could be related to finance, marketing support, new technology, business licence, networking, legal advice, skills training and accounting.

Expectation is often perceived as the satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction of small business operators towards the service they receive (Bennett 2007). Consider an example where a business owner-manager wants to apply for a small business loan from a bank. The rejection of his loan application at first point of contact makes him dissatisfied with the services offered and the institution providing the service. However, this assessment is made on the basis of products and services already existing in the market. What is missing is the expectation of the business owner-manager prior to the loan application (Bennett 2007). Before utilising or consuming a product or service, customers use their prior experience or external information to form standards, which are often used to form prior expectations (McKinney, Yoon & Zahedi 2002).

McKinney et al. (2002) suggest three types of expectation: the 'should expectation', the 'ideal expectation' and the 'will expectation'. However, Bennett (2007) argued that these expectations are difficult to control because they are based on past experience and information (Bennett 2007). As an alternative, a series of standards or standards of performance is preferred and set as targets to gauge the performance of service providers. Small business operators provide feedback to service providers on what they perceive as the desired service standard. Other stakeholders, including governments, donors, politicians, and community leaders, can provide the standards from an industry perspective (Bennett 2007).

The expectation approach assumes that support programs modelled on western 'market' systems are not workable in small developing countries. Apart from the economic and socio-cultural misfit, a 'service gap' exists between service providers and small business operators. The gap lies in the demand and supply of products and services in the market (Breen & Bergin-Seers 2002). Either the market offerings are not satisfying the needs of small operators or there is no specific interest to 'buy' the products and services offered in the market. There is no communication link between

the service provider and the small business operator - the two main players controlling the supply and demand of products and services (Breen & Bergin-Seers 2002).

A personalised method harmonises with the small business expectation approach. It is about 'walking on the ground' and talking to small business owners/operators and local business experts. Through this approach, program designers and providers will have a better understanding of the conditions and the immediate needs of those seeking assistance. Unfortunately, the 'walk on the ground' method is viewed by many program evaluators as a costly exercise (Patton 2008). This may be valid in small island countries of the South Pacific because of their wide dispersion and isolation. Donor agencies sponsoring the programs have strict timelines and guidelines which may limit national consultation to high level public officials and community leaders (AusAID 2011c; UNDP 2009). In this regard, secondary assessment and 'prototype' small business models are viewed as a sufficient guide to program implementation in developing countries (Irwin 2011; Torri 2009).

2.6.3 Market orientation theory

The market orientation theory is grounded in an operational marketing concept based on three key constructs: intelligence, dissemination and responsiveness (Kohli & Jaworski 1990). The gathering of marketing intelligence refers to the analysis of external factors (for example, technology, competitors, regulation and other environmental factors) that influence customers' expressed needs and latent needs and preferences. Dissemination refers to the communication, transfer and exchange of marketing intelligence to all functional areas of an organisation. The idea is to get all people within the organisation to be fully aware of their customers' needs, personality and characteristics. Responsiveness is the "action taken in response to intelligence that is generated and disseminated" (Kohli & Jaworski 1990, p. 6). Organisations that are driven by customer needs and wants will gather information, design and develop new products and services before promoting them in the market (Jaworski & Kohli 1993; Jaworski, Kohli & Sahay 2000; Kohli & Jaworski 1990).

The market orientation theory assumes that profit, competitiveness and industry leadership are relevant motivational factors that will draw organisations to information gathering, dissemination and responding to intelligence information (Narver & Slater 1990). For whatever reason, unless the service provider or implementing agency is pursuing the gathering of information and acting on it, there will be no change in program performance or in the delivery outcome. However, when the power of influence in the market rests on a few large organisations delivering the support programs, the views and demand of the organisation will override all other interests (Jaworski, Kohli & Sahay 2000; Narver & Slater 1990).

When the organisation is driving the market, the perception of customers is no longer important. This is referred to as a 'driving the market' approach (Jaworski, Kohli & Sahay 2000), in which large organisations or service providers attempt to reshape the preferences of customers in the market and modify their perceived value towards new products and services. There is an intention to eliminate old ways of doing things and create new preferences, players and market structures (Jaworski, Kohli & Sahay 2000). This parallels Schumpeter's widely accepted principle of 'creative destruction' – destroy old ways because they are obsolete and create new means and methods (Schumpeter 1942). 'Driving the market' is no longer about 'hearing the voice of people' and adapting programs in response to need (Jaworski & Kohli 1993; Jaworski, Kohli & Sahay 2000).

Hallberg (1999) proposes a framework for assessing the effectiveness of World Bank SME projects based on a market oriented strategy. The strategy was about increasing the market accessibility of small business products and services, factor inputs and range of programs to support small business growth and competitiveness. The framework promotes a private sector led growth where the public sector intervention is redirected towards developing market structures and networks (Hallberg 1999, 2000). The revolutionary work in micro finance movements is a good example of market oriented strategy. Government involvement is limited to building micro finance institutions, technical capacity of program administrators, and facilitation through policy and regulatory frameworks.

In addition, the market oriented strategy is also about growing SMEs and increasing their competitiveness. It encapsulates the important role of small business in economic growth (Hallberg 1999, 2000). For this reason, public intervention in the small business sector can be justified on the basis of economic benefits, dynamic efficiency and a faster rate of firm growth. There is sufficient evidence on the ground about market failures, imperfect competition and asymmetric information (Hallberg 2000) that warrants public intervention in the market.

2.6 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework (see Figure 2-4) focusses on small business SSAPs as the unit of study. Underlying this framework is the need to understand the SSAP phenomenon as perceived and/or lived by those experiencing, or who have experienced, an SSAP. A key assumption in this framework is that SSAP experience in developing countries may be different from the experience of those in the social-cultural and indigenous environment of small PICs. The provision of public and donor sponsored SSAPs in small PICs are considered to be a failure: referring to a lack of appropriateness, effectiveness and satisfaction on the basis of empirical evidence in the literature.

This study advances the belief that small business SSAPs are not working because of a mismatch between supply and demand. A market-based view, rooted in market orientation theory, is offered to investigate the problem. Key concepts associated with market perspective include needs and needs assessment. In the marketing literature, needs and needs assessment take the form of market intelligence gathering and customer surveys as a basis of product and services development and enhancement.

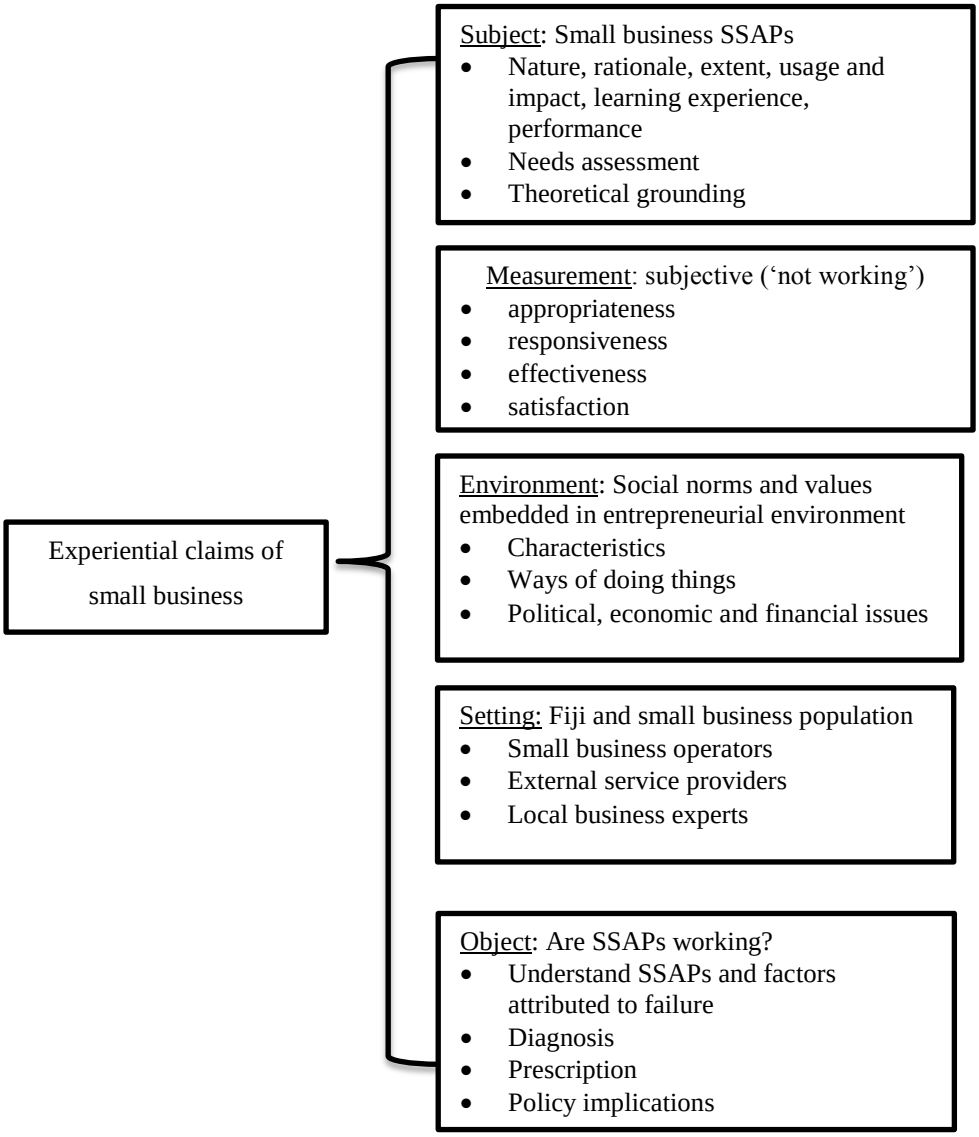

Figure 2-4 Conceptual framework

In this study, the task of gathering market information to investigate the mismatch problem in Fiji was based on an IPA approach. This is a branch of phenomenology that emphasises the importance of personal perspective and interpretation. It provided the platform from which to understand SSAP subjective experience (or experiential claims), gaining insights into the motivations and actions of small businesses that are often overlooked in conventional SSAP development work. By engaging with small business stakeholders in a deeper and co-constructed knowledge gathering, issues pertaining to the SSAP phenomenon emerged without the influence

of the literature. Such information was then analysed, interpreted and communicated on the basis of the goals and objectives of the research.

2.7 Summary and conclusion

The review of literature focussed on understanding the small business sector and the subject areas of SSAPs. It was important to understand the boundaries of research in entrepreneurship and small business as a basis for understanding the nuances in SSAPs as experienced in the UK and other parts of Europe, the US, Canada, Australia, Africa and Fiji. The questions directing the review were (1) are small business SSAPs working and; if not (2) what are the possible factors causing the failure (not working) of SSAPs?

The literature espoused the importance of SSAPs in business start-ups as evidenced by an increased utilisation, especially in the UK and the US. However, there were mixed results in the impact of SSAPs owing to differences in delivery mechanisms, goals and objectives, geographic conditions and measurement dimensions. In general, the review suggests the phasing out of public support services in advanced countries because of a lack of value perceived by small businesses. Countries with poor resources are still struggling to find the appropriate fit as more and more 'international best practices' are imported under development aid.

Several factors attributing to the inappropriate fit of SSAPs were offered in the literature, such as cultural disparities, deficiency in skills and appropriate training and inadequate sources of funding, among others. Another key focus for this research is the mismatch between needs and supports services. There was space in the market orientation theory to ground this problem, with some links established with the expectation approach, needs assessment and the resource-based view.

Chapter 3 Research Approach and Methods

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed the literature on small business and its distinctive characteristics in PICs. The rationale for the establishment of SSAPs to support the growth of small businesses was also highlighted. A key question posed in the review was directed to the performance and impact of SSAPs – are they working? The evidence in the literature was mixed. While there were traces of increased usage and positive impact of SSAPs on small business performance in developed countries, the experience in developing countries showed a lack of fit in SSAP offerings and gaps in meeting the needs of those seeking assistance.

One of the intentions of the current study was to investigate the working or otherwise of SSAPs in Fiji using an appropriate research approach and methodology. To this end, this chapter is specifically devoted to the selection and justification of the approach and methods adopted, including the criteria for selecting the three cohorts of research participants: small business operators (SBOs); external service providers (ESPs); and local business experts (LBEs) in the provision of SSAPs.

Using the research framework illustrated in Figure 3-1, the chapter begins by identifying the philosophical assumptions underpinning the research approach (Section 3.2). Following this, the chapter proceeds to identify the strategy of inquiry (Section 3.3) rooted in the qualitative approach and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) methodology (Smith, JA 1996; Smith, JA, Flowers & Larkin 2008). The interview process selected for data collection is presented in Section 3.4, including the selection of research participants and guidelines for the conduct of a mixed *'talanoa'* (story telling) data collection method applicable in the PIC context (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba 2014). The framework for data analysis and interpretations are discussed in Section 3.5. The ethical considerations and limitations of the research are presented in Section 3.6 and finally the summary and conclusion in Section 3.7.

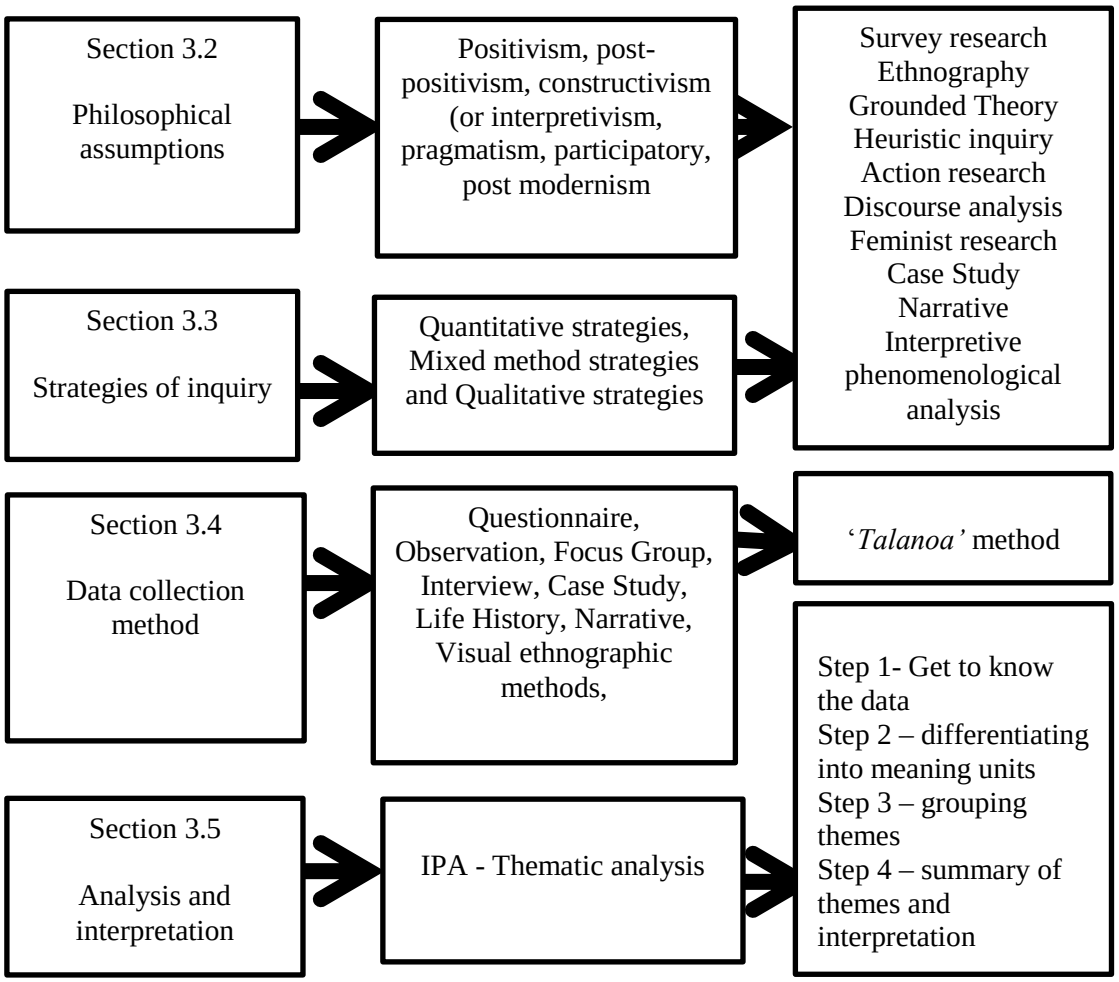

Figure 3-1 Research framework

Source: Adapted from Crotty (1998, p. 5) and Creswell (2009)

3.2 Philosophical assumptions

In the early days of western civilisation, world reality became an agenda of discourse among philosophers and natural scientists. Both approaches assume that world reality can be viewed objectively and separate from the object or being (Mapp 2008). World reality can also only be verified through sensory observations and experiments that can be measured and accepted as universal truths (Denzin & Lincoln 2011). Thereafter, the sensory viewing process became the 'gold standard' (Maxwell 2012) in traditional scientific inquiry. However, dissatisfaction arose because of the lack of consideration relating to human life. Thus, alternative views emerged, such as the one expressed here by Polkinghorne (1983, p. 103):

> All knowledge is relative to one's perspective; there is no absolute point of view outside of one's historical and cultural situation. Neither pure sense data nor formal logic can provide an absolute foundation for knowledge. The character of one's knowledge, the categories according to which experience is formed, what is considered as reasonable, and so on – all of these are functions of one's world outlook. One never has access to reality: one can only look through the opaque spectacles of the cognitive apparatus of one's historically given world view.

According to Polkinghorne (1983), it is impossible to have a single reality because of the cultural, social and historical influences on the person viewing the world. Reality therefore is relative and subjective depending on an individual's view of the world (Polkinghorne 1983). Constructivism is an example of an alternative lens that denies the existence of a single reality.

3.2.1 Constructivism (or interpretivism) paradigm

The researcher's interconnectedness with the target population and research environment suggest the use of a human approach to knowledge where meanings are constructed from real or lived experiences. In this context, constructivism was considered an appropriate paradigm for the current research investigation. Constructivism came to light through the works of Berger and Luckmann (1966), Guba and Lincoln (1994) and was further advanced in the writings of Polkinghorne (1983), Crotty (1998) and Neuman (1997). It is an alternative view of the world (Gelo, Braakmann & Benetka 2008), a set of beliefs (Creswell 2009) and a school of thought (Polkinghorne 1983) which focuses on the existence of human life and its description, influence and account of world reality (Polkinghorne 1983, 1989). Further, constructivists claim that individuals seek to understand the world they live in through subjective experiences and sense-making. Within this school, the researcher looks for deeper meanings through interactions with people using open-ended and unstructured questions. The fact that meanings are socially and culturally constructed gave the school its constructivist name (Denzin & Lincoln 2011).

In the current study, constructivism and interpretivism are treated as a single concept because they share the same foundational belief rooted in phenomenology and

hermeneutics. Phenomenology is the study of lived experience within the consciousness mind while the interpretation of that lived experience is hermeneutic (Giorgi 1997, 2010; Wertz 2011). As a single concept of belief, hermeneutic phenomenology involves a phenomenological content description of participant's lived experience and the construction of 'meaning units' (Moustakas 1994) of that same phenomena. The hermeneutic process, which is an interpretative activity, develops after the construction of meaning units to identify the essence or core meanings of the lived experience (Neergaard & Ulhøi 2007) .

While the researcher's position and experience plays an important role in influencing the researcher's philosophical position (Guba & Lincoln 1994), the choice of philosophy in itself is subjected to three fundamental questions: the ontological question, the epistemological question and the methodological question (Guba & Lincoln 1994). These questions represent the researcher's lens through which to view a phenomenon (Tronvoll et al. 2011), which theoretically cannot be disputed or challenged (Guba & Lincoln 1994).

The question of ontological position deals with the existence of reality - what is the nature of reality to be investigated and what is there that can be known about it (Denzin & Lincoln 2011; Guba & Lincoln 1994)? For instance, reality about small business SSAPs is based on multiple accounts of small businesses going through the SSAP experience and is only valid in the context of Fijian businesses. Thus, the ontological position is one of relativist - meaning that the researcher believes in co-constructed world realities relative to the setting in which a study is based that cannot be true in other cultural settings, for other individuals, and or other groups (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004).

Epistemology, however, is the study of knowledge that addresses questions such as: "what is the nature of the relationship between the knower and would be knower and what can be known" (Guba & Lincoln 1994, p. 108)? The answer, according to Guba and Lincoln (1994), is dictated by the stand made in the ontological position. It follows from this stand that a knower who assumes no single reality will take an epistemological position that values social interactions with subjects and their subjective descriptions of the real world. The ultimate question then is how the

researcher conducts the task of constructing knowledge about the lived world. This is the methodological question, which is again constrained by the answers to the ontological and epistemological questions raised above.

3.2.2 The researcher's position and experience

First, being indigenous Fijian[24] suggests that the researcher assumes an 'insider' (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba 2014) position in his native land of Fiji. An 'insider-researcher', according to Nabobo-Baba (2006), is more of a hybrid research position in which the researcher performs dual functions as a researcher in western ideologies and as a member of the researched group using an indigenous world view. The insider-researcher uses the 'interconnectedness' and 'interrelatedness' (Farrelly 2010; Nabobo-Baba 2006; Nainoca 2011) of the *vanua*[25] as foundation for knowledge construction. Also, it is from an insider position that one can understand the social-cultural conditions and its influence on the local entrepreneurial environment. In other words, understanding the experience and expressions of people in an indigenous environment can only be gained through embedding in the v*anua* (Farrelly 2009); for example, understanding the lived experience of fishing can only be caught (not taught) by embedding in a fishing experience.

Second, Creswell (2009) identifies personal experience as another significant factor influencing the foundation of research. For over 20 years, the researcher has been professionally involved in the Fijian small business sector. Prior to the commencement of the study, the researcher was directly monitoring a government sponsored sub-program[26] for the participation of indigenous Fijians in commerce. This particular sub-program explicitly stipulates the reservation of 50 per cent of capital purchases, licenses, permits and contracts for indigenous Fijians (PMO 2006). Part of the package is a seed capital revolving fund, which enables indigenous Fijians

[24] Indigenous Fijians are the land resource owners registered under the Fijian registry of births.
[25] 'Vanua' literally means land but also symbolises the cultural and socio-political traditions of the people (Clark 2008).
[26] State policies including legislative guidelines were put in place to govern the working of 29 Affirmative Action Programs (AAP) under the Social Justice Act of 2001 targeting all disadvantaged groups including women, unemployed youths and disabled groups. However, such policies/programs were viewed as discriminatory because they focussed mainly on indigenous Fijians.

to borrow from the FDB at subsidised rates. However, a monitoring report of 2006 showed that despite the preferential treatment, the political will of government and annual budgetary provisions, indigenous Fijians were only able to secure less than one per cent of the total value of contracts awarded annually (PMO 2006). It is from this experience that the researcher developed a special interest in small business SSAPs.

3.3 Strategies of inquiry

3.3.1 Restating the research objectives and question

Table 3-1 highlights the relationship between the research objectives and key research questions.

Table 3-1 Matching research objectives and questions

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	RESEARCH QUESTIONS
1. To develop an understanding of the experiential claims of SBOs, ESPs and LBEs in Fiji and to make sense of their claims regarding SSAPs.	■ What are the research participants saying with regard to the working of SSAPs in meeting small business expectations?
2. To explore issues from the research participants' claims that contribute to the failure of SSAPs and to consider effective and appropriate support that meets the needs of those seeking assistance.	■ What are the potential factors contributing to the failure of SSAPs from the participants' claims? ■ How could we address this problem in order to provide an effective and appropriate support that meets the needs of those seeking external assistance?

The research objectives regarding the failure of small business SSAPs, which were posed in Chapter 1, drive the above research questions. The reasoning behind the problem provided the direction in an exploratory research in Fiji. Selected small business stakeholders were involved in the knowledge construction process using a qualitative research approach.

3.3.2 Qualitative research approach

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), qualitative research emphasises the viewing of things in their natural settings and making sense of the phenomenon in the context of people living it. Qualitative research involves exploration and sense-making of peoples' attitudes, behaviours, or values without being experimental or objective (Creswell et al. 2003; Denzin & Lincoln 2000; Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2010). In the small business literature, a qualitative approach has been used in the evaluation of small business performance and support programs (Curran 2000; Mole & Keogh 2009). Previous studies on support services programs have also used a qualitative approach to subjectively examine policy and practice, including support needs (Smallbone, Baldock & North 2003); the usefulness of support services (Audet & St-Jean 2007); and evidence of service use, fee impact and satisfaction (Bennett & Robson 2005). In this regard, the use of a qualitative approach was deemed appropriate and relevant to the nature of the investigation regarding the perceptions and experiences of research participants in Fiji.

In support of a qualitative approach, Bryson, Daniels and Ingram (1999) argue against the use of quantifiable data to measure the impact of SSAPs on small business. As highlighted earlier, the use of average figures in quantitative data tends to hide things such as improvements in productivity as a result of increase/decrease in labour and production costs (Bryson, Daniels & Ingram 1999). Also, a reduction in sales turnover, which on the face value may mean that the business is not doing well, could still be associated with an increase in profitability (Bryson, Daniels & Ingram 1999). In addition, the relationship between profitability and the influence of business advisors in quantitative analysis can be difficult to measure because of unreliable profitability figures. It is for these reasons that a qualitative approach was chosen to explore the workings of SSAPs in Fiji.

3.3.3 Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach

This section discusses the use of IPA (Smith, JA 1996) from the field of psychology as the methodology for this study. IPA is commonly used in health, clinical and

social psychology research (Annells 1996; Koch 1995; Smith, JA, Flowers & Larkin 2008), however, the value of IPA in other human and social sciences is growing[27]. Although it is a 'young' methodological position (Larkin, Watts & Clifton 2006), IPA is appropriate for the current study because it is concerned with the detailed examination of small business stakeholders' experiential claims in SSAPs and the meanings attached to their claims (Smith, JA 2010).

There are two fundamental issues that need to be considered in this IPA research. First, an IPA goal is to examine, understand and communicate the lived experience of small businesses in their encounters with external service providers delivering SSAPs in the market. However, access to the lived experience is not simple in the sense that the account "cannot ever achieve a genuinely first-person account" (Larkin, Watts & Clifton 2006, p. 104). Second, the IPA researcher engages in meaning construction of participants' lived experience captured in their own social and cultural environment. Meaning-making is central in IPA because it "…make(s) possible the world as such, not in the sense that it makes possible the existence of the world, but in the sense that it makes possible a significant world" (Drummond, 2007, p. 61 cited in (Smith, JA, Flowers & Larkin 2008) . It is a process of interpretative activity (Osborn & Smith 1998). It begins with the researcher in his own consciousness mind trying to 'get inside' the participants' minds through engagement and interpretation (Smith, JA, Flowers & Larkin 2008) - to make sense of what the participants are trying to make sense of from their own phenomenological experience (Smith, JA 2011).

Smith (1996, 1999) retraces his thinking to the early work of Husserl in 1927 who argued that the experiential content of consciousness of a specific thing (the phenomenon) is possible by engaging in the experience rather than the psychical activity. The researcher is phenomenological when self-consciously reflective on the particular object or thing (Smith, JA, Flowers & Larkin 2008). For example, a researcher can be looking out of a window and see a tree. But instead of seeing the leaves, the trunk and the branches, he/she can be self-consciously reflecting on how

[27] IPA studies between 1996 to 2008 increased from 1 to 293 (Smith, JA 2011).

trees can contribute to climate change or the potential of creating organic waste from wood chips. In Husserl's terms, that conscious connection or memory between the person and a given phenomenon – in this case between the person and the tree - is intentional[28] although the tree is not there in sight (Smith, JA, Flowers & Larkin 2008).

From Husserl's 'phenomenological attitude'[29], Smith (1996) uses Schleiermacher and Bowie's (1998) and Heidegger's philosophical lens on hermeneutics to ground the second part (sense-making) of his IPA approach. The interpretative process in Schleiermacher and Bowie's (1998) view involves a combination of the use of language and the skills of the researcher. In Schleiermacher and Bowie's (1998, pp. 8-9) words:

> Every person is on the one hand a location in which a given language forms itself in an individual manner, on the other their discourse can only be understood via the totality of language. But then the person is also a spirit which continually develops, and their discourse is only one act of this spirit of connection with the other acts.

What this means is that there is a connection between the interpreter and the text which forms the basis of interpretation. Interpretation cannot operate simply by following certain methodology; it is an 'art or craft' (Smith, JA, Flowers & Larkin 2008, p. 22) that invokes personal demonstration of cognitive skills and learning. So, IPA is about understanding the individual person constructing the language and the language itself used to construct meanings and interpretations.

Heidegger, on the other hand, supported Husserl's holistic view of world reality but distanced himself from the notion of bracketing. These views are summarised in Table 3-2. Heidegger's main contention lies in the appearance of what is out there (ontology) in the "pre-existing world of people and objects, language and culture"

---

[28] The technical term is 'intentionality' to describe the "the relationship between the process occurring in consciousness, and the object of attention for that process" (Smith, JA, Flowers & Larkin 2008, p. 13)

[29] This "Involves and requires a reflective move, as we turn our gaze from, for example, objects in the world, and direct it inward, towards our perception of those objects" (Smith, JA, Flowers & Larkin 2008, p. 12)

(Smith, JA, Flowers & Larkin 2008, p. 29) that cannot be detached from meaning-making. However, without analytical thinking, as Heidegger claimed, we cannot fully grasp the thing manifested in our sight and/or concealed. Further, analytical thinking cannot be "pre-suppositionless" (Smith, JA, Flowers & Larkin 2008, p. 25) - in the sense that prior experiences, positions and conceptions cannot be independent from sense-making. They are tied together and cannot be understood by bracketing. Freshly baked cookies may not be our own creations but meaning is formed through our memory of previous encounters which had come to light because of the fragrance of the cookies (Neergaard & Ulhøi 2007).

Table 3-2: Husserlian versus Heideggerian phenomenology

	HUSSERL	HEIDEGGER
Metaphysical focus	Epistemological	Ontological
Description of the individual	Person living in a world of objects.	Person exists as being in and of the world.
Knowledge	Ahistorical	Historical
Enabling the social	Essences are shared	Culture, practices and history are shared
Method for gaining knowledge	Bracketing affords access to true knowledge.	Cultural interpretation 'grounds' any knowing.

Source: Neergaard and Ulhoi (2007, p. 80)

In summary, the IPA approach adopted in this study is linked to phenomenology in terms of trying to understand the lived experience of participants from their own descriptions. It is linked to hermeneutics in the area of interpretation which the researcher and the research participants are involved in to make sense of their lived experiences. In this study, IPA was used to explore the research participants' perception and experience of SSAPs in Fiji.

3.4 Data collection process

This section describes the process of data collection in an indigenous island environment. While in-depth interview methods would have been applicable

(including focus groups) to capture the experiential claims of research participants, this study used a *talanoa* approach - a more culturally appropriate data collection technique in PIC research (Farrelly 2011; Nabobo-Baba 2011; Prescott 2011; Thaman 2009; Vaioleti 2006).

3.4.1 Pacific islands research

Data collection in the small business sector in PICs is a challenging task. First, most PICs (Fiji included) do not have a national small business database (Hailey 1987; Nair & Chelliah 2012; Narube 2008) and there is still a lot of guesswork on the ground. The semi-subsistence nature in the industry does not justify investment in a more robust information system. If there are data available, it is either out-dated or inaccurate (Narube 2008). Second, to venture into the small business field is like sailing in uncharted waters. It is a 'no go' zone unless one knows the terrain. For the less informed, the environment is interwoven with socio-cultural diversities split along provincial and landowning boundaries bearing their own social networks, norms and values. Third, data collection in indigenous island environments, according to Vaioleti (2006), would be impossible if it followed mainstream academic research methods. The social-cultural conditions in an indigenous environment are so different that the collection and mining of meaningful data can only be reliable and trustworthy using a PIC research paradigm (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba 2014; Nabobo-Baba 2006).

One of the key principles guiding PIC research is trust. Research participants may not engage in deep conversations unless they trust the person conducting the research (Prescott 2011; Vaioleti 2006). In addition, the setting of academic research boundaries, such as time, line of questioning, and length of response do not often work. Pacific islanders have very little respect for time (Prescott 2011) and it is acceptable for conversations to be joined by others, often going deep into the night if food, drinks and kava are involved. Also, it is proper to deviate from the research topic to maintain the interest and flow of information between the researcher and the research participant (Farrelly 2009; Nabobo-Baba 2006; Prescott 2011).

3.4.2 In-depth interviews

The three most common qualitative data collection approaches are participant observations, in-depth interviews, and focus groups (Flick, U. et al. 2007; Powell, H et al. 2008). In knowledge construction or meaning-making of the research participants' worlds, the most appropriate data collection approach is the in-depth interview. This approach is also an effective way to collect information in a co-constructed manner with the researched (subjects) (Kvale 2008; Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). This approach is useful for learning about the perspectives of individuals (their feelings and experiences), as opposed to, for example, natural behaviours and cultural norms for which participation observation and focus groups, respectively, are more appropriate (Patton 1990; Powell, RA & Single 1996).

An in-depth interview is an activity that produces knowledge (Denzin & Lincoln 2011; Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). The activity is embodied in a 'special conversation' between the knowledge seeker and the subjects (Liamputtong 2012). Through conversation, knowledge is produced from answers to questions about the lived world and the subjects' experiences (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009; Liamputtong 2012). Increasing the proximity of the knowledge seeker and the subject is key to uncovering reality from an 'emic' or an insider view of the lived world (Morris et al. 1999; Patton 1990). Interview knowledge becomes a co-constructed and subjective view of the natural environment (Flick, U. et al. 2007; Kvale 2008).

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) use two metaphors to deepen our understanding of the relationship between the knowledge seeker and the subject. The knowledge seeker (researcher or interviewer) is likened to a 'miner' and a 'traveller' (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). Like a miner, the knowledge seeker tries to unearth "knowledge nuggets out of the subjects' deeper experiences and perception" (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, p. 48). Like a traveller on a journey to an unknown land, the 'traveller' meets and converses with people – asking questions about their dreams, fears, values, perceptions, and how people view and understand their world (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009).

According to Farrely (2009), data collection in Fiji favours personal contact more than mail survey or telephone interview because it fits the local culture of knowledge creation and exchange. Previous experience in past surveys shows low response rates from small business operators (Nair & Chelliah 2012; Nand 2014) thus the use of in-depth interviews seemed to be appropriate. However, this study used a PIC brand of in-depth interview called mixed '*talanoa*' to reflect story telling between two people outside the *Vanua* Research Framework (VRF) (Nabobo-Baba 2006). There is no village protocol to observe and it takes place in an urban environment.

3.4.3 The mixed 'talanoa' method

Most indigenous Pacific literature in the fields of education and sociology endorses *talanoa* as an appropriate research method (Farrelly 2011; Nabobo-Baba 2006; Otunuku 2011; Prescott 2011). *Talanoa* literally means story telling (Nabobo-Baba 2006), a vehicle to account for people, events, places and actions (Koch 1998), a frank expression without concealment (Halapua 2000), and an open dialogue, a chat or gossip (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba 2014). Nabobo-Baba (2006) describes *talanoa* as a process within the *vanua* framework "in which two or more people talk together, or in which one person tells a story to an audience of people who are largely listeners" (Nabobo-Baba 2006, p. 27). It is an embodiment of indigenous protocols, values and beliefs (Nabobo-Baba 2006, 2011).

In line with Nabobo-Baba's (2006, 2011) cultural foundations in *talanoa*, Otsuka (2006, p. 2) made the following observation with regard to research methods from an outsider - researcher[30]perspective:

> *Talanoa r*esearch is the most culturally appropriate research design in the ethnic Fijian community in Fiji. *Talanoa* asks researchers to establish a good interpersonal relationship and rapport with ethnic Fijian participants. *Talanoa* research expects researchers and participants to share not only their time and interests but also emotions. Researchers need to use culturally appropriate procedures in conducting *talanoa* research effectively. For this purpose,

[30] The researcher does not belong to the community targeted for research (Minkler 2004). He is therefore considered as an outsider – researcher.

> researchers should be aware of ethnic Fijian cultural values and beliefs in sharing, giving and typical ethnic Fijian transactions of discussion including their non-verbal communication cues. If protocols are ignored, research results are most unlikely to be reliable, since many ethnic Fijian participants may end the *talanoa*.

In Nabobo-Baba's work (2006, 2011) there are two types of *talanoa*. First, there is a *talanoa* which involves an audience and one story-teller. This is more or less a *vanua* method of communication where a chief and his/her clan members are engaged in a communal dialogue (Nabobo-Baba 2006). Often, this is not an open and frank conversation but very restrictive – only the voice of the chief can be heard. It is the chief's voice that becomes the voice of the people (Nabobo-Baba 2006). Even before entering the village traditional space, there are 'taboos' related to dress code, manner of approach and protocols to observe which both an insider- and outsider-researcher are bound to perform in order to obtain approval of entry (Nabobo-Baba 2006).

The second part of *talanoa* in Nabobo-Baba's (2006) definition is a more contemporary method where two people engage in chat or gossip. This may be similar to the kind of *talanoa* held outside the village space in an informal conversation without fear and concealment (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba 2014; Halapua 2000). This method of *talanoa* was assimilated in this study, referred to as mixed *talanoa* - to reflect a mix of contemporary interview and indigenous *talanoa* methods (without the protocols and formalities) in which an insider researcher engages with his own people in an unstructured conversation (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba 2014).

Table 3-3 presents the philosophical assumptions, ontological, epistemological and methodological positions to reflect key differences between the Nabobo-Baba's (2006) VRF, the mixed *talanoa* and mainstream informal interview methods. The philosophy behind mixed *talanoa* is friendship and relationship. It assumes freedom of expression, trust and respect for one another, producing a rich ground for information exchange deemed to be 'straight from the heart' (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba 2014).

The emic researcher gains data accuracy and validity through connections as 'friends' (Farrelly 2011). While some reservations have been articulated about the use of 'friends as subjects' because of the risk of bias, this position can be challenged

simply on the basis of cultural context (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba 2014). In this context, a 'friend' relationship is established first before engaging in the *talanoa* hence the use of the word 'friends' to identify research participants. Therefore, one cannot use an IPA approach to get meaningful and rich content descriptions of the phenomena unless one is in a 'friend' relationship.

Table 3-3 Comparative paradigms in three indigenous research methods

PARADIGM	VANUA RESEARCH FRAMEWORK (VRF) *TALANOA* METHOD	MAINSTREAM INFORMAL INTERVIEW METHOD	CULTURALLY ACCEPTED MIXED *TALANOA* METHOD
Philosophy	Researcher submits to *vanua* protocols and exercises respect and strict observance of traditional customs, values and beliefs.	Researcher observes mainstream ethical standards of maintaining confidentiality and respect for human life.	Researcher builds friendship as a way of getting to connect with the people.
Ontology	Researchers' *talanoa* is subjective and varies among participants.	Researchers' interview is subjective and multiple.	Researchers' *talanoa* is subjective and varies among participants.
Epistemology	Researcher gains knowledge by listening to traditional fables and narratives either through traditional means or by embedding or connecting with that being researched.	Researcher attempts to lessen distance between himself or herself from the being and uses interpretive approaches to construct meanings.	Researcher attempts to build relationship as 'friends' in an insider-research where experiences are shared openly and meanings established because of understanding as friends.
Methodology	Researcher uses an ethnographic approach to organise *talanoa* sessions in formal and informal settings.	Researcher uses any qualitative approach – face to face interviews or focus groups.	Unstructured and informal *talanoa* where there is no protocol, or ritual to restrict a conversation between two newly met friends.

Source: from materials in Nabobo-Baba (2006); Denzin & Lincoln (2011); Vaioleti (2006)

The ontological position is subjective and there are multiple versions of knowledge from friends being researched. The epistemological position is that experiences and meanings are mutual and openly shared and constructed by the researcher and his friends. There is no fear of being misunderstood, neither the fear of avoidance and retribution as in a restrictive VRF setting (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba 2014). In the

mainstream interview method, although it is a face to face dialogue, knowledge is also constructed from the researchers' understanding of the meanings of participants' experience.

In indigenous settings, unless the researcher is either an insider or embedded in the community, experiences and meanings may not reflect what is demonstrated by the research participants. Unless there is an emphatic connection in terms of cultural, political, religious, kinship, socio-ecological and personal interests (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba 2014), the accuracy and reliability of information gathered on the ground may not be coherent, accurate and reliable. An unstructured methodological position therefore harmonises with a mixed *talanoa* method where the story telling and the sharing of experiences becomes a two way process (Prescott 2011).

3.4.4 Sampling for the mixed 'talanoa' method

Sampling procedure: The sampling scheme and size provide the boundaries in which data collection is actually carried out (Leech & Onwuegbuzie 2007). They define the population, individuals, time period, setting or context of the study aligned to the research aims and objectives (Leech & Onwuegbuzie 2007). By defining these boundaries, the research satisfies the notion of internal generalisability - not so much to the outside world but within the local setting and among the group studied (Maxwell 1992).

This study adopted purposive and snowball sampling procedures. The two procedures are concurrently used in most IPA studies (Mapp 2008) for the purpose of identifying and selecting the right people as research participants. However, the use of the two procedures in the current study was justified due to limited number of LBEs in Fiji who could provide relevance and depth to the *talanoa*. Further, the idea of stratifying across the small business population was to gain maximum variations from people who could deeply express their views, needs and experiences. An important consideration in purposive sampling is the 'who' question – who is the knowledgeable person (the experts in the research area) who can articulate and is willing to contribute to the understanding of the research problem?

In the context of mixed *talanoa*, snowballing is about connecting with 'friends'. The idea is to find the first friend, build a friendship and connect with the friend's network (Berg & Lune 2004). The assumption is that each individual has his or her own social network of friends. The advantage of this procedure is that there is a high chance of selecting the right people compared to random sampling of unknowns. Again, the intent of the study about the richness of small business experiences dictated the appropriateness of the snowballing procedure.

The 'old boy' social network of friends was one the researcher used to identify the first friend. This is a network of past students from an elite government boarding school, many of whom hold leadership and management positions in government, corporate organisations and private businesses. The network is not localised in Fiji but extends to other parts of the world where old scholars are either residing permanently or are engaged in professional activities. Since the researcher is an 'old boy', getting into the network was more logical than technical. The first friend came from this network and five other members willingly agreed to participate in the study.

Target group and sample size: As indicated earlier, three cohorts of research participants were identified to participate in the study: SBOs, ESPs and LBEs. The sample size of at least 15 was controlled by the content of the *talanoa*, which was based on conversations reaching a saturation point. Previous studies on support services by Audet and Jean (2007) involved 13 personal interviews, while Mole and Keogh (2009), in assessing the UK Business Links networks, conducted 18 in-depth interviews.

(a) **Small business owners (SBOs)**

SBOs for the *talanoa* were selected from both the informal and formal sectors in Fiji. Small businesses in the informal sector are characterised by their orientation and high regard for indigenous values, beliefs and practices. Small businesses of this type only engage actively in agro-businesses especially when there is a demand for cash for such things as school fees, purchase of imported food items, church contributions, and other customary obligations. In contrast, other small businesses are recognised

for their modern ways of doing business. These small businesses have a low regard for traditional and communal ways of doing business. Small businesses of this type operate formal registered businesses and include taxi operators, travel agencies, product distributors, restaurant owners, hairdressers, dairy shops, internet cafes and coffee houses.

There is, however, a group that sits in the middle - perhaps established within a traditional structure yet employing modern or western business principles and practices. Small businesses in the 'middle group' emerged as the result of a stronger push from both ends of the spectrum. They could be a very powerful group who use their position (perhaps as a landowner) and expertise to follow government sponsored programs that involve grant funding and technical support services.

The general characteristics of small businesses involved in this middle group are: (1) they are professionals, retired civil servants and/or educated people with skills and knowledge; (2) they have good networks and rapport with other communities and racial groups, as well as large businesses; (3) they know where to go for assistance and can exert influence to obtain government support services and grant assistance; and (4) they are landowners whose village boundaries are not far from urban and peri-urban centres. Some examples of such businesses include hot-bread shops, grocery stores, money lenders, transport operations, logging, agro-production and retail, and fishing. Landowners might be producing taro from their own communal land and at the same time operating an export business in partnership with other people from outside.

(b) **External service providers (ESPs**)

This target group includes organisations providing small business external support services, livelihood creation and poverty alleviation programs to individuals, groups or communities. The NCSMED, the FDB and Government Ministries were key targets within this group as they were directly involved with small business policy development, entrepreneurial training, micro credit, grant funding and small business loans. At least five from this group were considered for initial *talanoa* sessions and two more were included on the basis of availability of key people to be interviewed.

(c) Local business experts (LBEs)

The purpose of having LBEs was to allow for real time access to contemporary expert opinion, both from practical and institutional perspectives, and to fill in the gaps in understanding between the experiential claims of SBOs and ESPs. The involvement of LBEs also gave a more balanced and independent view of the small business sector.

The profile of LBEs included the following: (1) they had to have a high level of education and qualification; (2) they had to manage their own company or hold an executive position in a corporate organisation; (3) they had to be well respect in the higher echelons of government, private sector organisations, large companies and civil societies; (4) they had to understand the dichotomy between western and indigenous entrepreneurship and give counsel on reconciling the two ideological positions; and (5) they had to have knowledge and practical experience in starting and growing a small business. In this respect, at least three LBEs were considered initially and more were included until the data reached saturation.

3.4.5 The process used for the mixed 'talanoa' method

This study adopted four foundational steps to collect data using the mixed *talanoa* method: (1) bracketing and reconnecting; (2) establishing a network of friends; (3) engaging in *talanoa* in the spirit of friendship; and (4) cooling and giving space. These four steps reflect an urban indigenous environment applicable outside the *vanua* based structure promulgated in Nabobo-Baba (2006, 2011).

(a) STEP 1: Bracketing and reconnecting

The notion of bracketing at the beginning of the data collection process is central to Husserlian thinking (Moustakas 1994). It suggests that the researcher temporarily sets aside western philosophical positions, including presuppositions about the research population. Bracketing, according to the Husserlian school involves the suspension of prior experience and knowledge so that a renewed view of the

phenomenon under study could be constructed without influence on the meaning from past involvement (Smith, JA, Flowers & Larkin 2008).

However, being an insider-researcher, the idea of bracketing from past experiences might not be possible (Tufford & Newman 2012). The insider-researcher's social capital network carries a real advantage to understanding words used in friendly conversations and the meanings attached to *talanoa*; even silence is significant and carries meanings (Nabobo-Baba (2006). Bracketing in this case runs the risk of diminishing the richness, quality, reliability and accuracy of data from the *talanoa* research method.

A rich and more accurate *talanoa* cannot take place unless the researcher is willing to be embedded in local pedagogy (Nabobo-Baba 2006, 2011). Although an insider-researcher may have an advantage, localisation is a way of reconnecting, embracing, interrelating and validating the person in the community. Embedding allows the researcher to live in the space of the locals by being involved in communal and daily social activities (Farrelly 2009, 2010) - something that cannot happen in telephone interviews, online surveys and in mailed questionnaires. The reconnection may not necessarily involve research *per se* but in any activity that allows the researcher to participate in conversation and learning. It is through this localisation process that the researcher hears 'gossip' of the *vanua* (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba 2014; Nabobo-Baba 2011), the church and the government - three key institutions influencing indigenous entrepreneurial transformation.

(b) STEP 2: Establishing a network of friends

The purpose of this process is two-fold: first, to establish contacts with key stakeholders and leaders within the organisation; and second, to identify research participants and establish 'friendships' through the snowballing method. Connection is essential for the purpose of building friendship. As already outlined, the intention was to use the researcher's existing 'old boys'[31]network to identify a lead candidate for snowball sampling. This would mean visiting the old boys' club house and

[31] The Queen Victoria School 'old boys' often meets at the club house during the week for '*talanoa*' sessions.

getting a list of participants drawn up to be later reconciled with a list drawn from an existing small business network. The main targets included key executives, both in private and public sectors, such as the chamber of commerce, financial institutions, government ministries, corporate organisations and small business advocacy groups. Availability of the identified friends and the timing of interviews were key factors that determined the success of the process.

(c) STEP 3: Engaging in *talanoa* in the spirit of friendship

Before and during talanoa: The main objective of the research was to capture the perspectives of research participants with regard to SSAPs. Within this scope was a question as to whether SSAP offerings in the market satisfy the needs of those seeking assistance. For this reason, the researcher prepared a very loose list of themes[32] for the *talanoa.* But this did not in any way influence the *talanoa* approach of an open dialogue (without any structured line of questioning) – meaning the content and the direction of the *talanoa* were co-constructed between the researcher and research participants.

The introduction of a list of themes to prompt the conversation was not intended as a means of overriding the participant's desire to lead the conversation (Prescott 2011). Since the conversation was between two or more friends (treated as one interview), the language used was not restrictive but mostly in contemporary Fijian English (a mixture of Fijian and English language).

Place of talanoa: In a contemporary Fijian setting *talanoa* can be held in any place agreed to by the interviewer and the participant. The intention is to minimise interruptions to the participant's normal routine. It is only the topic of conversation that the researcher is trying to influence.

After the talanoa: At the end of each *talanoa* session, recorded data was transferred to the researcher's computer for storage purposes. A preliminary review was undertaken by listening to the verbatim, focussing on the: (1) depth and breadth of

[32] Such themes included service providers and nature of services; delivery mechanisms; usage of SSAPs, satisfaction towards current service; cultural influence; and business start-ups etc.

the conversation; (2) the appropriateness of the language when dealing with technical terms; (3) whether the conversation was pre-empting the participant's response; and (4) the flow of conversation. From this preliminary review, the researcher made decisions on issues for further clarification with the participant; the validity of the response to the questions; and whether the interview could be accepted.

Participant's consent: While there is respect for academic research ethical guidelines, indigenous Fijians have their own way of approaching people (similar to other Pacific islanders) to obtain consent and means of information exchange (Farrelly 2009; Nainoca 2011). Nabobo-Baba expresses a culturally approved view about the 'authority', versus 'consent forms', in *vanua* based research. This is "…not to say that institutional ethics and standards of research are undermined; indeed, good *vanua* research actually ensures that the knowledge produced reflects the knowledge of the people of the *vanua*" (Nabobo-Baba 2006, p. 25). Furthermore, she claims that: "In the village, I found that there was a general refusal to sign consent forms" (Nabobo-Baba 2006, p. 32). Nabobo-Baba (2006) argues that the traditional ceremony performed on arrival in the village renders the consent form unnecessary. In the case of the mixed *talanoa* method, a participant's consent is built on a trust relationship (as friends) and the use of digital recording is sufficient evidence of that consent.

(d) STEP 4: Cooling and allowing space

Cooling was the fourth stage of the mixed *talanoa* method during which the researcher goes away (either to transcribe or seek new 'friends') to give space to the participant. This 'time off' is necessary for reflection. This is also a time where the collected data that is being turned into narrative form benefits from cross-checks with respondents, clarifications, additions made and deletions as well, in terms of the researcher getting the message right. Follow up interviews either through *talanoa* or phone calls could then take place if need be. Participants could also get an email version of their interviews so they can ascertain 'truths' about what they had said in the initial *talanoa* sessions. The cooling-off period could be between one to three months in duration.

The timing of the cooling is arbitrary but the reconnection is necessary. In the current study, the cooling-off period was three months, after which the researcher returned to meet with 'friends'. In the Fijian context, avoidance of friends and kinship relations is usually frowned upon and could lead to unwanted gossip. Since most of the research participants were in one location during the return visit, it was logical to organise group meetings. Timing and costs were the two contributing factors influencing this decision.

The return visit also coincided with a regional micro finance conference in Fiji. Participants in the conference included regional and local small and micro service providers and micro business operators from other PICs. *Talanoa* was applied for information exchange and networking among conference participants, thus allowing the researcher to engage in dialogues to validate the findings from the initial group of interviews.

Challenges to mixed talanoa method: One of the challenges during the period of data collection was the Fijian government public decree[33] which outlaws people making seditious statements against leaders of government. The element of fear among those approached was real[34]. As a coping strategy, gifts and money were considered as a genuine way of generating interest. However, due to budgetary constraints, the idea was shelved and the introduction of food and drinks as a way of creating a friendly environment was pursued. This also harmonised with a Pacific island belief that participation in community services increases when free food and drinks are involved (Prescott 2011). However, current experience in Fiji suggests the use of such a method would be as a last resort, as large consumption could increase costs.

[33] The Fijian government Public Order (Amendment) Decree 2012 prohibits people from making statements and actions that may be deemed seditious.
[34] Media stories (including gossip) were told about people hauled to the military camp and police stations for making comments against members of the military government.

3.5 Data analysis and interpretation

This section describes the process involved in the handling of the research participants' *talanoa* in Fiji. The main purpose is to understand the experiential claims of research participants regarding their encounter with SSAPs and the meanings attached to their experiences.

3.5.1 Transcription of raw data

Transcription could be described as one the most challenging tasks in the management of qualitative data (Oliver, DG, Serovich & Mason 2005). It involves the transformation of verbal texts (or recorded interviews) into written text in a prescribed data language – in this instance English. The transformation was carried out in a denaturalised form "in which idiosyncratic elements of speech (for example, stutters, pauses, non-verbals, involuntary vocalizations) are removed" (Oliver, DG, Serovich & Mason 2005, p. 1273).

The first version of the transcription is a 'natural' one where every word spoken was recorded. A cleaner version was created, in which texts irrelevant for coding and analysis were removed without losing meanings and raw data (Oliver, DG, Serovich & Mason 2005). The transcripts were then reviewed through reflection, assessing the goals and objectives of the research and identifying any issues before carrying out further interviews (Oliver, DG, Serovich & Mason 2005).

3.5.2 IPA data analysis

Smith JA's (1999) four analytical steps were slightly modified (see Figure 3-2) as follows: (1) the reading of the text for a sense of whole; (2) codifying themes; (3) grouping themes together as clusters; and (4) summarising and presenting the themes.

STEP 1 *Reading of the text*: The purpose of close reading and re-reading of the text is to understand the content of the participant's descriptions (Smith, JA 1999; Smith,

JA, Flowers & Larkin 2008). According to Smith JA (1999), the researcher at this stage takes notes of recurring ideas, phrases, questions and make comments on any thoughts or reflections that occur while reading the transcript.

STEP 2 *Identifying thematic areas:* The process of identifying themes was a coding process carried out in QSR program, NVivo 10 (Bandara 2006; Flick, Uwe 2014). Coding involves the breaking down of paragraphs and texts into major categories or themes and placing them in baskets called nodes (Basit 2003; Miles & Huberman 1994). The basket containing the parent node represents major themes, while sub-themes are called child nodes (Miles & Huberman 1994).

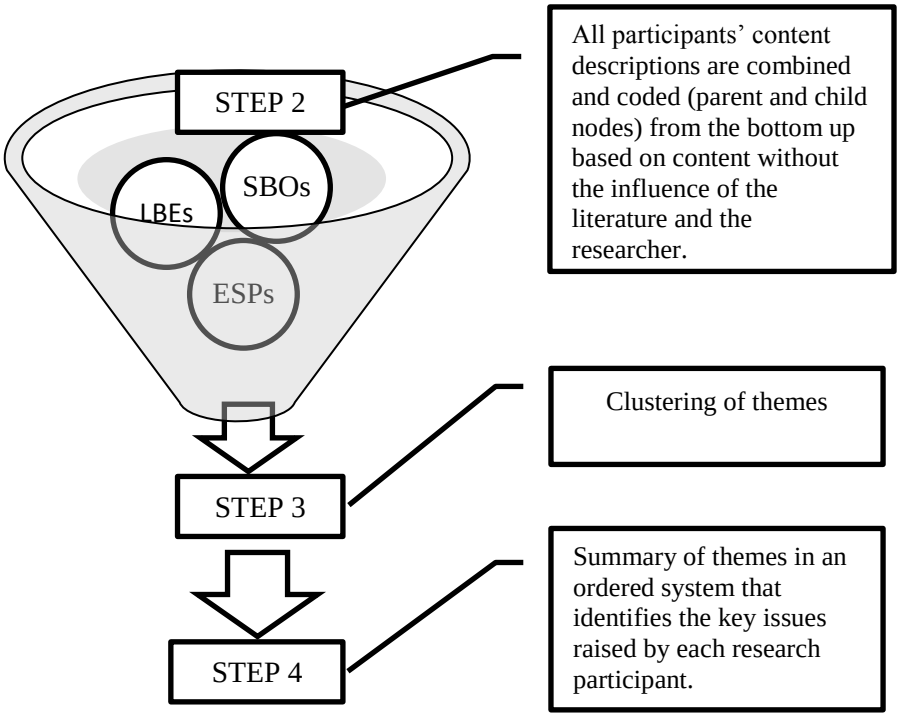

Figure 3-2 Framework for IPA data analysis

A sample of coding in NVivo is provided below in Table 3-4. Without the influence or use of themes from the literature, identification of thematic areas was from the ground up, based on the content of the *talanoa* descriptions. The process began with an importation of word documents containing the participant's transcripts, creating source documents in a NVivo project (Flick, Uwe 2014). Other source materials pertaining to the project, such as web pages, journal articles and audio recordings were also imported and coded.

STEP 3 *Grouping themes to form clusters:* The grouping of identified themes into clusters provides a structure for data analysis. The aim of clustering is to identify a superordinate of words, phrases and texts that may suggest a major group theme (Smith, JA 1999; Smith, JA, Flowers & Larkin 2008).

STEP 4 *Summary and presentation of themes:* The framework for the presentation of findings is provided in Figure 3-2. First, the transcribed data was organised in NVivo with all the participants' transcripts grouped as one single data source and coded on the basis of the content from bottom up, without the influence of the researcher and the literature. What was produced at the end was a cluster of key thematic areas with lists of connected sub-themes. The intention was to summarise the themes in an ordered system that identifies the key issues raised by each research participant. These key thematic areas are presented as evidence using quotations that best describe the participant's emotions and thoughts about the experience of the phenomenon being studied (Smith, JA 1999; Smith, JA, Flowers & Larkin 2008).

Table 3-4 Sample of coding in NVivo

INTERVIEW PARAGRAPHS	PARENT NODE	CHILD NODE
You think of people going to Universities and coming back to wrong jobs. When I was at the Ministry of Regional Development, there were no real economists there, yet people were assuming economist positions. When you have wrong people and Government did not have the ability to identify development trends at both regional and global levels.	Education	Personal inability and lack of qualification
We do not have formal training sessions but the weekly meetings I make sure that it is enriching for the staff. Information I collected from the Web I shared with them and I also learnt happenings on the ground. I think it is this exchange of information that builds us and has become a key strength of our service delivery.	Education	Developing capacity and capability of locals

Source: extracted from a *talanoa* transcript in Fiji

One of the core benefits of this framework is that from this summary table interpretation, the core or essence of the subjective experiences is identified. However,

the downside is that unless one shifts back and forth to the raw data, the 'voice' of each individual participant could be lost in the combined coding and summaries.

3.6 Ethical considerations and limitations

The research fulfils the requirements of Victoria University's Human Research Ethics Committee in the conduct of fieldwork outside Australia. However, the consent of each research participant was sought in the local manner of information exchange, as some of the potential research candidates shied away from the formal approach of a letter and consent form. The political influence of the military government is such that people are afraid of talking because of the public decrees that prohibit anyone from criticising government leaders. Nonetheless, the fact that participants engaged in an audio-recorded conversation is sufficient evidence of their consent. As indicated, this was achieved through the use of *talanoa* as a culturally appropriate data collection method.

As discussed earlier, the use of 'friends' in the *talanoa approach* runs a risk of selection bias. From an insider-researcher perspective, the approach was necessary for two reasons: (1) to be able to attract the right research participant; and (2) to engage in rich and meaningful conversations in a friendly manner. That friendly relationship has to be developed to gain the trust, respect and a better understanding of the person. For these reasons, those that engaged in the *talanoa* were called 'friends'. In addition, because of his prior involvement in the Fijian small business sector and connections in existing social networks, the researcher was known professionally[35] by most of the research participants. Given these factors, the conventional criterion, which discourages the use of friends as research participants, was considered unsuitable.

Similarly, the quality of the research may be threatened from a phenomenological viewpoint because of violation of the bracketing rule. The idea of temporarily setting

[35] The researcher was involved in three of the government provider institutions for over 20 years and is well connected on the ground in terms of small business training, project monitoring, rural enterprise development, market research and arrears collection.

aside presuppositions is not possible because of the insider-researcher's connectedness to the environment. One cannot feel, breathe or understand the lived experience of the local population unless one is embedded in the social-cultural activities. Therefore, the use of bracketing may work against the research intention of securing quality, reliable and accurate data.

3.7 Summary and conclusion

This chapter has presented the philosophical assumption that underpins the current research. Other research strategies, methodologies and methods that flow from the identified philosophy have been justified on the basis of the research problem and question. The researcher's position and experience provide the rationale for a constructivist philosophical position. The constructivist paradigm assumes that world reality is socially-constructed through interaction with research participants, understanding their accounts of a specific phenomenon and the meaning attached to their experiences.

Common in the constructivist (or interpretivist) school of thought is the use of qualitative research design justified by the belief of the subjective construction of knowledge ascribed by research participants. IPA is an experiential qualitative approach that directs the process of data collection, analysis and interpretation. However, a mixed data collection method was employed because of its cultural fit in indigenous methodologies. The next chapter presents the results obtained from the in-depth mixed *talanoa* method across the three cohorts of research participants. This is followed by a composite construction of themes and a synthetic analysis of major findings using an integrated framework of data analysis.

Chapter 4 Research Findings and Interpretations

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the use of an IPA approach as opposed to other genre of phenomenology. An important consideration in the selection of IPA was to gain an understanding of research participants' experiences towards SSAPs and the meanings attached to their encounters. Information as to what contributes to the failure of SSAPs was derived from the participants' account. In addition, materials from participants' accounts were used towards constructing a workable small business framework.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of the investigation in Fiji, which was guided by two research questions (restated in Chapter 3), using a culturally appropriate data collection method called *talanoa* (story telling). The findings are presented in five sections. Section 4.2 presents a profile of the three cohorts of research participants: SBOs, ESPs and LBEs and section 4.3 presents the results of thematic coding in NVivo10. The content of each research participants' *talanoa* is presented in 15 general categories (major themes) in Section 4.4. This section also provides a response to one of the research questions in terms of understanding the claims of SBOs regarding their encounters with SSAPs. A synthesis of all the participants' descriptions and interpretations is given in section 4.5. Section 4.6 is the discussion linking the research findings to the two research questions. The summary and conclusion is in section 4.7.

4.2 Profile of research participants

Using a snowball sampling technique, a total of 24 research participants from the three cohorts agreed to engage in the mixed *talanoa*. From this sample, only 19 transcripts – nine SBOs, seven ESPs and three LBEs were accepted on the basis of their content descriptions, completeness and depth of the *talanoa*. The profile of each cohort is presented in Tables 4-1 – 4-3; however, their names are coded to protect their identity.

4.2.1 Identifying the SBOs

Table 4-1 presents the profile of the nine SBOs whose *talanoa* transcripts were included in the later analysis (see Section 4.4).

Table 4-1 SBOs involved with the *talanoa*

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT	DATE OF INTERVIEW	BUSINESS LOCATION	REGISTERED STRUCTURE	RACE/GENDER /INDUSTRY
SBO 101	11 May 2013	Rakiraki	Sole	IF/M/Bakery and retail shop
SBO 102	22 April 2013	Suva	Sole	IF/M/Retail of agro products, capital goods
SBO 103	16 April 2013	Suva	Sole	IF/M/Retail office stationaries
SBO 104	15 April 2013	Suva	Sole	IF/M/Fishing and transport
SBO 105	1 July 2013	Suva	Sole	IF/F/Retail of traditional handicrafts
SBO 106	9 May 2013	Suva	Company	O/M/Apiculture and honey processing
SBO 107	8 May 2013	Suva	Company	IF/M/Retail of capital goods
SBO 108	15 April 2013	Suva	Charitable	IF/M/Eco-tourism services
SBO 109	17 April 2013	Nasinu	Charitable	IF/M/Computer training services

Key: SBO – Small Business Owner; M – male; F- female; IF – indigenous Fijian; O – other ethnic groups

In addition to the information provided in Table 4-1, about six of the SBOs were still involved directly and indirectly in the management of existing businesses while three had temporarily ceased operations to pursue advanced academic training. From this cohort, six SBOs had university level degrees – satisfying the need of having knowledgeable research participants – those who could articulate issues related to small business and SSAP. In terms of resourcing, three of the SBOs started business using their own internal sources of finance (via friends, families and their own personal resources). The rest had experienced some form of external support services

from both public and private sources by way of marketing support, grant funding, small business loans and business training.

The businesses involved were mostly agricultural or services[36] established within informal and formal business structures. None of those interviewed had involvement in light manufacturing or heavy industrial activities. Informal businesses are common among micro business operators where there are minimum pre-start up requirements and little capital outlay, at approximately US$25 (NCSMED 2006). Many of these micro businesses operate in municipal markets and on the roadside. Formal business structures on the other hand are those[37] operating mostly in the urban centres, holding a registration certificate, a tax identification number and a formal business licence. This group is generally an educated one with previous business experience and some basic market information.

In hindsight, did this cohort of research participants meet the criteria profiled in Chapter 3 (section 3.4)? Without being criticised for self-selecting participants, seven of the SBOs fulfilled the selection criteria of being a landowner/small business operator, but all of them were residing permanently in the city of Suva. Connection with those in rural areas was difficult due to communication and transportation problems. However, the inclusion of program managers in rural community enterprises in the *talanoa* provided the opportunity to hear broader and specific issues related to SSAPs.

4.2.2 Identifying the ESPs

Table 4-2 presents the profile of the seven ESPs whose *talanoa* transcripts were included in the analysis. The *talanoa* was arranged with heads of the provider organisation and senior staff directly involved in the planning, design, and implementation of small business SSAPs.

---

[36] Such as honey production, retail of agricultural products, live fish exports, eco-tourism and the sale of handicrafts.

[37] For example those in the retail of capital and consumer goods such as computers, stationery, photocopiers, fishing equipment, second hand cars and general imported food items.

Table 4-2 ESPs involved in the *talanoa*

EXTERNAL SERVICE PROVIDER (ESP)	DATE INTERVIEWED	BUSINESS LOCATION	INDUSTRY
ESP 201	15 May 2013	Suva	Micro financial services
ESP 202	17 May 2013	Nasinu	Regional technical services
ESP 203	11 May 2013	Rakiraki	Women community services
ESP 204	12 May 2013	Suva	Private sector business support services
ESP 205	30 April 2013	Suva	Tourism support services
ESP 206	16 April 2013	Suva	Government programs
ESP 207	1 May 2013	Suva	Non-government legal advisory services

Of the seven ESPs, four were established through public funding and maintained via the Fijian government annual budgetary allocations; and three were donor-funded organisations with roles in PICs' regional development. However, the three organisations had direct involvement with small business development, livelihood creation and rural empowerment projects at both national and regional levels. The heads of these organisations were locals and possessed knowledge and experience in the delivery of SSAPs in Fiji, thus making them good candidates for the *talanoa.*

In terms of the nature of the SSAPs offerings, core products and services included capacity building, business training, and grant funding. However very little evidence was available to indicate the marketing of these products and services through local news outlets apart from the organisation's profile in web based information systems. Although the researcher still had reservations regarding the number of organisations involved in the research, there was no question regarding the suitability of the seven ESPs identified and selected through the researcher's social network.

4.2.3 Identifying the LBEs

There were three LBEs selected for the *talanoa* (see Table 4-3). Although more people would have increased the number of the narratives, it was deemed that the

credibility of the three people selected was sufficient for the purpose of moderating the *talanoa* responses of the SBOs and ESPs.

Table 4-3 LBEs involved with the *talanoa*

LOCAL BUSINESS EXPERT	DATE INTERVIEWED	BUSINESS LOCATION	INDUSTRY
LBE 301	31 May 2013	Suva	Leasing, wholesale and retail
LBE 302	6 June 2013	Suva	Capital investments
LBE 303	11 June 2013	Suva	Chain of bakery businesses

All three LBEs were pre-selected on the basis of the criteria presented in the methodology (see section 3.4). They were highly esteemed individuals and qualified to speak on Fijian small business issues. Although their involvement at the time of interview was mostly in large corporate and private companies, the size of these companies was small by international standards. In addition, two of the LBEs began as sole traders and had grown their businesses into large successful Fijian liability companies. One of the LBEs had featured in an early research project on PIC entrepreneurship (Donaldson 1991; Fairbairn 1988b). The third LBE held a senior executive position in a capital investment company and had held previous management positions in large corporate organisations.

4.3 Data organisation and coding in QSR program

The first part of the data management process involved the importation of all 19 *talanoa* transcripts and the creation of source files in QSR program, NVivo10. NVivo identifies these source files as case nodes (or containers) where coding of individual research participants' *talanoa* transcript are kept (Bazeley 2009; Miles & Huberman 1994). The coding process began following the reading and re-reading of all transcripts (see STEPs 1–4 in Chapter 3 sub-section 3.5.2). Here sections of the data, paragraphs or texts were sorted according to a set of categories, themes or basic organisation of ideas (Flick, U. et al. 2007; Miles & Huberman 1994; Smith, JA, Flowers & Larkin 2008). Descriptors were given to these categories to reflect the

understanding of the research participants' voices as they emerged from close reading of the transcripts. The results of this thematic coding are presented in Tables 4-4 and 4-6.

Table 4-4 presents the results of thematic coding (see STEP 2 in subsection 3.5.2) in NVivo 10.

Table 4-4 Selected thematic areas: General and specific categories

GENERAL AND SPECIFIC CATEGORIES	SOURCES	REFERENCES
SMALL BUSINESS FAILURE	12	50
Failure due to jealously, ill feeling and mismanagement	3	7
Failure due to lack of preparedness e.g. export	3	7
Failure due to low take up rate	2	3
Failure due to poor quality advice	5	6
Implication of business failure, loan foreclosure	1	1
Inability to see need and development is pushed	6	14
Reasons why donors support failed	3	12
GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS	15	68
Delivering programs to the community	3	9
Government changing policies affect stability	3	7
Implementation of government sponsored programs	5	8
Influence of political instability on business	6	13
Programs offered at regional level	1	1
Regional project monitoring system	1	1
Seeking support of government	8	14
Success due to government start up programs	4	15

Source: extracted from the NVivo matrix framework of the project

The table shows two general category of themes: 'small business failure' and 'government programs' at the top (also called parent node) (Bazeley 2009; Miles & Huberman 1994). Also, below the broad categories are more specific categories (or child nodes); for example, under the general category of small business failure, there

are seven specific categories. Although, a total of 15 general categories and 79 specific categories were produced from thematic coding, space did not allow the presentation of all results, thus the selection of the two categories including their specific categories in the table above.

Table 4-5 Themes from ALL participants' 'talanoa' descriptions

GENERAL CATEGORIES	NO. OF SOURCES	REFERENCES	NO. OF SUB THEMES
Disconnect between needs and support	17	189	4
Requirements for business start ups	17	99	7
Need to have proper motivation	18	87	6
Factors identified for success	13	72	5
Not satisfied with government programs	15	68	8
Opposing cultural influence	14	64	4
Challenges linked to small business failure	12	50	7
Appropriate skills training and education	12	43	5
Relevancy of spiritualism in business	7	32	3
Perspectives on the way forward in business	8	30	6
Inflexibility to accommodate financial needs	9	17	6
Need to understand the nature of small business	6	14	6
Risks related to agro-business	6	13	5
Business constraints and challenges	4	10	6
Lack of innovation and creativity	2	3	1

In Table 4-5, the general categories are set out in descending order of frequency (i.e. according to the number of times the theme and its sub-themes were mentioned (or made reference to) by the *talanoa* participants). For example, the first key theme of 'Disconnect between needs and support' was referred to by 17 of the interviewees (sources), with four sub-themes and a total of 189 different references to this theme.

On the other hand, only two interviewees (sources) mentioned 'Lack of innovation and creativity' and only three times they mentioned one sub theme during the *talanoa* sessions.

Table 4-6 Research participants' nodes and references

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT	NODES	REFERENCES
Small business owner (SBO)		
1. SBO 101	42	92
2. SBO 102	23	70
3. SBO 103	33	84
4. SBO 104	27	50
5. SBO 105	20	68
6. SBO 106	25	130
7. SBO 107	24	72
8. SBO 108	30	104
9. SBO 109	5	20
External service provider (ESP)		
10. ESP 201	20	82
11. ESP 202	26	78
12. ESP 203	27	112
13. ESP 204	31	108
14. ESP 205	25	110
15. ESP 206	39	140
16. ESP 207	3	50
Local business operator (LBE)		
17. LBE 301	33	78
18. LBE 302	27	66
19. LBE 303	30	110

Source: Results from the NVivo thematic coding

Without showing the thematic areas, the same results as above were presented according to the nodes and references made in each participant's coded transcript (see Table 4-6). The results show, for example, that in the case of SBO 101 there were 42 nodes and 92 references. To some extent, the number of nodes (or themes),

reflect the richness of the participant's *talanoa* and the significance of the thematic area as perceived by the participant.

However, fewer nodes do not necessarily imply insignificance of the theme. For example, SBO 109 was the only one talking about computer training yet information technology in the literature is positively linked to small business performance (Fielden, Davidson & Makin 2000). Furthermore, the column on references in the case of SBO 101 indicates the texts were coded 92 times. Nonetheless, because of double counting (overlap in coding), references should only be read as indicative of the depth of the *talanoa*.

4.4 Research participants' accounts and meanings

The first research question was focussed on understanding the experiences of research participants with respect to SSAP provision in meeting small business expectations. The purpose of this section is to communicate these experiential claims in a meaningful way using a summary of the top eight themes from Table 4-4. These were the areas where a lot of interactions took place between the researcher and the research participants. The actual summary of what each individual participant shared in the *talanoa* is provided in Appendices 3 - 6.

(a) **Disconnect between needs and support**

This theme embodies the research participants' experiences regarding their encounters with SSAPs. The disconnect lies in the lack of understanding between the users and providers of SSAPs in terms of business needs, nature of support services, and cultural context, among others. The views and voice of research participants on this issue of disconnect are presented below:

(1) *Lack of understanding by government service providers.* The claim made here was that government officials and staff administering support programs did not have the appropriate knowledge and skills to deliver effective support programs. "It is a problem of government failing to recognise what the people need" (ESP 206). It then translates to the government's inability to "identify projects and programs needed for

the people and prioritising them according to availability of funds, skills and other support machinery" (ESP 206).

The lack of understanding small business was a key concern highlighted in the SBOs accounts. According to a SBO, the government officials "know the programs in detail…but they do not understanding what we want" (SBO 104). They often "think that they know business simply by reading" (SBO 104) but they have little understanding of business needs because "…they are not listening to us" (SBO 104). However, since the Fijian market had limited sources of support funds, small businesses continue to seek support from the government because "…we trusted government in the first place and they provided finance" (SBO 104).

An ESP appointed by the government to administer a community enterprises program reiterated this claim about their lack of understanding in business. He said:

> When we did the International Labour Organisation (ILO) sponsored Integrated Human Resource Development Program (IHRDP), we realised that none of us had gone through the rigorous process of managing businesses. By the book, we were able to give business advice. But that advice did not have any backbone. It was difficult for us to share or relate to others what we have not gone through … (ESP 206).

Another ESP perceived that the problem of lack of understanding lies in the policy and strategic directions of the program. With little input in the policy formulation process, "we [program managers] are expected to deliver programs and report back" (ESP 202) to the government. Since these programs were expected to deliver results within a short project period, "some of the development projects … were more or less pushed to people to accept without their input" (ESP 202). This was more a "top down approach of government" (SBO 104) that often failed to achieve its desired outcome.

Much of the program delivery and performance "…was dependent on the attitude of people receiving support" (ESP 202). For example, in the case of a women's program, the government provided sewing machines and freezers "which we did not ask" (ESP 202) to kick start women into income generating activities. "At the beginning it was

okay…but then the women started to argue or dispute among each other" (ESP 202). According to the leader of the women's program, there was learning to be made that "…any new initiative for community enterprises…must be communicated and understood by the target group" (ESP 202) if they were to stand any chance of succeeding. It was important to consult the village community "to understand what is working or has worked before rather than blindly starting something new without consultation with the people" (ESP 202).

(2) *Lack of understanding by financial institutions.* When it came to accessibility to finance, the SBOs perceived a lack of understanding by the banks regarding the nature of their business and needs. SBOs claimed that bank financial products and services were not responsive to their needs and demands. For example, one SBO said:

> They are so rigid with all their terms and conditions. Where is their concern, or the care to ensure that we succeed? I will emphasise the need to understand the business, the industry and the supply chains within the business including the market … The support at the moment is not fulfilling what we small business operators want…The bank seems to think that the solution they provide fits all business types and problems. But they do not realise that our conditions vary and that we need solutions that will match our own individual problems and needs (SBO 107).

Another commented on the same issue: "You will see that the bank products are geared to meeting the policies and national objectives of government instead of the local business needs" (SBO 104).

An indication of the lack of understanding of business needs was the use of standard lending products by the banks, such as traditional asset lending where collateral security is offered to fully secure the loan. These products were offered to both large and small firms entering new businesses. There is no product differentiation except for higher interest charges on small business loans. This, according to the SBOs, was not effective since the needs of individual business owners differ at different levels. In the Fijian context, since the source of business finance was limited and controlled by a few large operators, the SBOs had little choice but to adjust their needs to match the banks' offerings. Such adjustments sometimes bordered on false declarations by

business owners and suspected collusion with bank staff to tamper with financial projections in order to meet funding requirements, as cautioned by a LBE:

> There has to be some honesty as well from the side of the recipient. If their proposal is not viable in the first place, they should not tamper with the projection or the cash flow in order to improve the financial picture (LBE 302).

One of the SBOs shared his experience about the banks' lack of understanding to waive the collateral security requirements of his loan. As a new business owner, he did not have collateral security but had a contractual agreement that could guarantee sales. "If banks were concerned with small business growth then consideration should be made to accept the owners' contract in lieu of collateral security" (SBO103). Unfortunately, the bank became too rigid with its policy guidelines as claimed below:

> If banking is about lending to business, then banks should learn the business rather than learn lending only … Some of us do not have collateral security and the value of our assets is insignificant. I could not understand why banks cannot take our contractual arrangements as security for the loan. The bank should understand that we came to them because we do not have anything. If we do have assets or capital we would not have come in the first place. Most of our business expansion in farming was put on hold because of inadequate security (SBO 103).

Apart from the collateral security requirements, small businesses were often subject to high interest charges and fees. As perceived by a SBO, such a situation could be detrimental to their business growth and survival, as stated:

> …for us small business operators are on the losing end… I guess we are treated as high risks. We have been strangled by interest rates. Unless services providers understand the nature of our business, we will still be evaluated on the same standard as that of large businesses. We have things like service fee, maintenance fee, tax fee etc. (SBO 107).

Another view demonstrating the banks' lack of understanding related to their false assumptions about small businesses making money in the first year or within the first three months of business. Hence, any business that did not make money in one or two years was considered a failure, as contested here by this SBO participant: "A lot

of people would think if the company did not make money in the first year or two years it was a failure" (SBO 106). However, according to this SBO, those businesses involved with large capital investment needed time to make a turnaround. In addition, small businesses involved in seasonal production (for example, teak production, tuna long-line fishing and long-term crops) made losses during their off seasons.

(3) *Lack of understanding by donor agenci*es *(development partners).* The problem of lack of understanding by donor agencies was perceived to be a major drawback with community development projects and programs such as the IHRDP[38] program and the Te Kakano Fund[39], among others. One of the senior executives in a donor sponsored agency explained how donors approach development assistance in small PICs:

> …they come in with their own development conditions – conditions that are very much applicable in their own country. When we talk about appropriateness, the needs on the ground should be verified first. It should be noted that the management of resources and our way of living (life styles) are very different from the Western ways of doing things (ESP 205).

According to this ESP, donors came to Fiji with genuine motives of support. But many of the development initiatives were externally induced and managed. There was little connection with the host community about what they needed. For example, external consultants are often used to conduct reviews and manage local projects as conditions for the release of donor funding. These conditions do not sit well with local counterparts because " either the donors do not recognise local expertise or they assume whatever programs, models and experiences they had in previous countries would work in the new region" (ESP 205).

---

[38] IHRDP is an ILO engineered program that the Fiji Government adopted to prepare unemployed youths in the job market as well as providing employment in rural communities through community enterprises. Examples of some community enterprises are eco-tourism, bakeries, poultry, piggery, food processing, and other agro based projects.

[39] The Te Kakano Fund is a NZAID initiative modelled on the success of the New Zealand Bee keepers' cooperatives. The intent is to set up a similar scheme with rural women by giving funds for the purchase of boxes and hives including accessories.

In addition, donor programs were driven from the top without any participation or involvement of the community" (ESP 207) in the early stages of project development. Often, projects start with a policy decision by the government in collaboration with a donor agency. It then identifies an implementing institution and the work of this institution is to deliver and appease those that made the policy decision. However, from a human rights perspective, one of the ESPs questioned the appropriateness and effectiveness of such an approach if the target community did not participate in project development meetings. His view was:

> From a giver viewpoint, my giving is usually not because of what you need, but because of what I want you to do. We have heard criticisms such as "Oh no wonder it is donor driven". When it is donor driven it is not actually what you want but is based on what I want. Where is the ownership… in terms of appropriateness and effectiveness (ESP 207)?

The outcome of a top down program approach was a failure to deliver sustainable programs that directly meet the needs of the target group which ESP 205 attributed to "…differences in geographical make up, economic potential, cultural and population sizes" (ESP 205). As a solution, one of the ESPs suggested an intermediary to manage the transfer of resources, including the identification of needs, prioritisation and the development of intervention programs:

> … you need someone on the ground that is knowledgeable about the environment – social, economic, cultural, financial and political environment so that the passing on of the assistance from the donor to the community is a gradual and a learning process (ESP 204).

In summary, the theme regarding disconnection between needs and support focussed on the lack of understanding by government service providers, financial institutions, and donor agencies. Disconnection arises when those providing support services failed to hear the 'voices' of those seeking assistance and/or underestimate the influence of the social-cultural conditions embedded in the local environment.

(b) Factors needed for business start-ups

Perceptions on business planning and preparation. Preparation for business start-up, according to an ESP, was about:

> … identifying where people are at in terms of knowledge and what level they are able to grasp things like business planning, profit loss and balance sheets. Many people wanting to try out in business have no clue at all. As much as we want them to know things, the fundamentals of business are poorly lacking (ESP 206).

It is an important stage in small business development. "Anyone in business will realize that there are financial plans to guide and direct business on daily basis" (SBO 101). Preparation for business start-up would mean ensuring that the new person is ready with appropriate knowledge and skills, resources and motivation. "It is a juggling act whereby the owner needs to watch his expenses…The bills need to be paid irrespective of sales or not" (SBO 101). Preparation involves deep thinking and planning in terms of finding the right business type, assessing internal and external resources and matching resources with skills. "We operate today with the intention to continue the next day; and we build that up for a month and for one year" (SBO 101). However, in the context of this study, research participants claimed that planning and preparation were detached from the target group, particularly in externally induced development initiatives. According to one ESP, "there was no system in place to prepare and/or test people in terms of business readiness" (ESP 203).

In the Fijian context, there is an expectation that business preparation should be the responsibility of the initiators of the program. This was the attitude carried by participants of support programs and it was not unusual for locals to behave in such a manner as they had been depending on government and donor agencies for their past and future development programs. In contrast to individual targeted support, the preparation for business rests with the individual person wanting to start a business. In reality, a lack of preparation could mean either the service provider[40] did not

[40] Particularly access to finance which is dominated by a few large foreign owned banks.

perceive that such work was their responsibility or they had little commercial interest in supporting small businesses. In any case, this preparation gap could only be resolved through constant dialogue between the two parties. However, as indicated above, service providers may see little value in engaging in conversations with small businesses. One of the reasons was expressed by a SBO:

> … many times I aired my views both written and oral in government sponsored workshops and forums. But it was difficult for government to understand because they do not know what is going on in the industry. For that we assume they are not listening (SBO 104)

Another SBO shared that because of ESPs' (particularly banks) power of influence, they tend to dominate discussions in the market place and the agenda. "Perhaps he who has the money drives the conversation" (SBO 104). In this respect, SBOs are no longer driving the market. The expression that the 'cart is before the horse' reflects this view and implies that service providers are now operating independently without the influence of customers' demand in the market.

Supposedly, the customer is the 'boss' and dictates what should or should not be produced in the market. Here is the irony; SBOs can only take a lead role in the market if they are supported appropriately. For that reason, any SBO wanting to use SSAPs in the market must abide by the rules and practices imposed by financial institutions – and that, as alluded to previously, could mean 'cooking up' business needs to match the current offerings. The outcome, as one of the LBEs rightly said is that "you have people running after funds rather than wanting to start a business" (LBE 302).

(c) Need to have proper motivation

Motivation, as expressed by research participants, is about 'drive'; 'desire to succeed'; 'passion'; and 'confidence'. These, however, reflected motivation at different stages of business start-ups and the management of existing businesses. Specifically, motivation at business start-up included factors such as the need for income after retirement, need for employment, seeing an opportunity to own a business and the desire to improve living conditions. But motivation alone does not

guarantee success; there are other personal issues (for example, personal attitude and competency skills, among others) at play. As ESP 206 reflected:

> You need to have the passion, dedication and confidence in people and community. You have your own strengths and you leverage the business on local strength and continue to 'massage and manoeuvre' the local strength until you get the right mixture for the environment (ESP 206).

The experience of SBOs, however, showed that entering business was largely in response to the opportunities presented by the government through its affirmative action program. In this respect, SBOs were motivated to start a business. The government support programs provided a real opportunity for SBOs to own and operate a business. This became the motivating factor.

One of the SBOs shared his experience on this:

> I went into business because I saw a potential to grow as a person in terms of economic benefits rather than working for government or in a private sector. I want to explore opportunities that were knocking at my door at that point in time (SBO 104).

When the government support programs did not produce the expected outcome, this SBO 104 questioned the level of motivation of peers who were equally enjoying the benefits of government support. He claimed a lack of entrepreneurial orientation because of other SBOs desire to get funding without proper planning:

> Some people go into business because of handouts by government or because of the incentives provided by funding agencies and service providers. There was no careful thought on the business itself and the capability of the person. I am not sure whether there was any drive or passion in them (SBO 104).

One of the long surviving indigenous SBOs voiced his belief that indigenous business owners lacked the mental toughness to withstand the trials and adversities from internal and external sources. For example, he said:

> Fijians do not have the mental toughness to achieve or succeed. It is about the mental attitude of people to buckle to the pressures of the environment. I am not going to throw in the towel …I am also talking about being able to withstand all the gossips, curses and threats (SBO 107).

(d) Factors identified for success

Research participants referred to a number of success factors including: (1) attributes of the founder; (2) willingness to learn; (3) change in management; (4) response to market changes and needs; and (5) proper use of internal resources, as discussed below.

(1) *Attributes of the founder*. Success was perceived to be driven by the founder/owner of the business. One of the LBEs spoke about the success of large family companies in Fiji who had started small during the colonial era. They built on the tenacity of the founder/owner despite external and internal challenges. According to this LBE:

> You have seen some businesses have grown and others remain small and die. A lot of the big corporate companies like Tappoos, Punjas, Motibhai, Patels were once running small businesses. As for me, I attribute it to the person. They have the drive to do things and do better; that makes the difference in an entrepreneur (LBE 301).

(2) *Willingness to learn.* Success was also attributed to the owner's willingness to learn the business and the required skills. One of the SBOs in bee-keeping shared his thoughts that:

> Success in the real world does not necessarily come down to financing or availability of funds. It comes down to individual desire to manage honeybees - the desire to learn what you need to learn and to keep bees alive. You put in the required work and the sweat to make it work, to make it grow (SBO 106).

The owner's willingness to learn is certainly relevant in a beekeeping venture. Unless the beekeeper learns the necessary skills of keeping bees alive, he will not succeed. The SBO gave a very practical example of this:

> [T]o be a successful beekeeper you need to learn the skills necessary to keep the bees alive … The beekeepers' job is not to make honey. His job is to keep the bees alive, healthy and strong. The bees' job is to make the honey. The beekeeper is rewarded for keeping the bees alive by taking the honey from the beehives (SBO 106).

(3) *Willingness to change by management.* Success from an organisation perspective was related to the willingness of the organisation to change old ways of

doing things. One ESP stated that; "we want to deliver products and services that directly meet the needs of our customers. Further, we want to offer something that will attract our target group" (ESP 201). However, the ability to change is driven by those in management who are expected to influence staff in implementing new organisational changes in customer services. The ESP executive described the change in this manner:

> The most important thing is leadership…We cannot see micro finance as a form of employment but an avenue to show skills and talent to serve people who may be struggling in the community. That is the value that I need to build into the organisation…For us it has to be service despite the harsh conditions we face as we move from village to village (ESP 201).

(4) *Responding to market changes and needs.* One SBO who started a handicraft business[41] attributed her survival in a highly competitive environment to being different. Without any financial support she learnt to develop her own products in order to reduce her costs. Her account is given below:

> When I started the business…I had no cash but the mats. I cannot go to the bank because of their requirements. I produce my own handicrafts…I used prior knowledge passed down by watching and learning from my mother (SBO 105).

This SBO recognised that more school leavers and the unemployed were entering the handicraft business because of low market entry and start-up capital. In her quest to remain in business, she attended a government sponsored start your own business (SYOB) program to complement her learning by doing. The program addressed gaps in understanding factors affecting demand and supply in the market, production and pricing. She explained:

> The SYOB training helped me to understand demand and supply. The idea of producing what the market wants – not what I am good in making. I was taught about pricing of products and how to position my products in a supply driven place. I now have a regular customer base that is keeping me happy (SBO 105).

[41] The retail of traditional handicrafts is a highly competitive business involving women at a micro level. There is not much difference in pricing because of the homogeneity in products traded.

(5) *Use of internal resources to start the business.* A project manager of a community eco-tourism project highlighted the use of internal resources as a key to success. The manager described his use of a community concept - '*solesolevaki*', meaning one project, one heart, one people for a common goal - to develop a low cost community ecotourism project:

> I use the *solesolevaki* concept. Our approach is to design a community ecotourism business that rejects outside support and influence. It is built by the local community for the purpose of building a local business structure that will be part and parcel of daily living. Some businesses are created for the purpose of making money but this one is built by the community using local resources, knowledge, and skills to blend with the village system (SBO 108).

The manager's success story began by spending time with the community to understand them and develop a working relationship with them. According to this manager, this takes a lot of time - long hours of problem solving, building trust and information exchange, as evident in the following quote:

> I have to build a network of trust. It is important when dealing with community projects. The local people will not transfer their problems unless they trust you. I first establish that from day one and work with them. Every day I face problems of disagreements etc. I do not walk out of the problem. I walked into it. We address these at village meetings, night kava sessions and leaders meeting (SBO 108).

In return, the community contributed voluntary labour and local materials for the building of traditional thatched accommodation and the use of land to grow organic food. Support also came in terms of tourist activities, such as mountain treks, fishing and snorkelling; "There is a big market and good opportunity at the lower end. When you have the resources, you can build a supply system that is low cost but effective" (SBO 109).

(e) Not satisfied with government programs

While government programs, such as the Affirmative Action Program (AAP) were criticised for their special interest and benefits towards indigenous Fijians, even those that utilised the facility were not satisfied with the lack of preparation before accessing the support services. One of the SBOs commented:

> To transit from farmers to community business, is a big transition. So the preparation work and support should be conducive to the capability of the people. What the Government and other service providers are doing – they are killing everybody (SBO 107).

SBOs from a traditional farming background had little knowledge and accessibility to market information and were dependent on the advice of government officials administering the AAP. Several SBOs accepted grant funding and debt through external advice without properly weighing the costs and benefits, including an analysis of market competition. According to one of the SBOs, such an arrangement was like a 'debt trap':

> I was driven by the carrots which government had dangled in front of us. Now I am thinking back it was more or less a debt trap. At that time, I trusted government more because the problem was engineered and financed by them (SBO 104).

The 'carrot' dangled by the government included a seed capital revolving fund administered by the government owned development bank. The seed fund allows indigenous Fijians to borrow their equity contribution[42] on the condition that the debt component of the project cost is secured through the development bank. The following quotes provide further insight into this matter:

> Getting into the program in fact was a killer: it killed all the foundational work built over the years...It is painful to think about it now (SBO 104).

> They entice you to their new products and friendly customer service. You come in wanting to survive but in fact they are killing you with stringent terms and conditions. There is a lot of killing medicine (SBO 108).

The government AAP attracted mostly educated indigenous Fijians. Apart from seed funding, there was an offer of a credit guarantee for the entire project cost including subsidised interest rates and a lower security realisable value[43]. However, the '*debt*

[42] This is applicable only for those going into fishing and logging.

[43] If a truck costs $100,000, the sale realisable value is taken at 50% or 60% because of depreciation. If debt is about $100,000, then clients are required to offer additional collateral security (house, car, etc.) to cover the full debt amount. Under the scheme for indigenous Fijians this requirement was somewhat relaxed (Deo 1999; FDB 2012; PMO 2006).

trap' which SBO 104 mentioned, came after the government unexpectedly reduced its equity contribution. Here a 15% reduction in equity would mean a 15% increase in total loan exposure; and that could be the reason why SBOs expressed their feelings with words such as '*killer*', '*killing*' and '*painful*'.

The SBO who used the term '*killing medicine'* was further asked what he meant by his statement. His response was:

> … these are foreign ideas by people who do not know about the Fijian society. Their ideas are incomplete and not very reliable. Loans need to be repaid yet new businesses are still in a growing up phase and could not meet the monthly payments ... Now the system is trapping everyone (SBO 108).

The response suggests the program was a foreign idea and the models and practices failed to accommodate local context and culture. For example, the use of traditional asset lending products where collateral security is a part and parcel of credit terms and conditions. In the Fiji context, most small businesses do not have a financial history and asset backing to qualify them for traditional loan products. In addition, the fixing of repayments on a monthly basis failed to consider seasonal industries such as fishing and farming.

Another example of a foreign idea cited by a LBE is the Fiji national micro finance program. The implementation "will not work in Fiji" (LBE 301). Unlike in Bangladesh where the program was initially developed, "there is no peer pressure to repay the loan" (LBE 301). In Bangladesh, the pressure mounts "…on the individual to pay on time and not to bring the group to shame. However, it works in reverse in Fiji" (LBE 301). If someone wants to pay early, other members will scorn at the person for "showing off" (LBE 301) and that may lead to the collapse of the program.

The real attraction to the micro finance movement in Fiji was the success stories of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh and its benefits for poor rural women in terms of savings, poverty alleviation and economic empowerment. However, the two main pillars of micro finance success in Bangladesh were the presence of a large critical

mass and extreme levels of poverty (UNDP 2009). Neither of these factors were present in Fiji.

While on the same subject of government support programs, SBOs were asked about their perceptions toward government AAP during the course of the *talanoa*. These were the views expressed:

> … AAP was a good responsive program. It opens doors which has been very hard for small business to enter especially among the Fijian community … I say the government AAP in terms of the reservations of 50% of Government contracts, licenses and permits to Fijians allowed us to surface amongst the big boys (SBO 102).
>
> I feel that the program [AAP] should be continued. Despite the twist in terms of racial discrimination propagated by others, the program has helped small businesses to start up and grew exponentially. … We have thrown out the baby with the baby water – that is pathetic (SBO 103).

However when SBOs were asked about their overall satisfaction with government programs on a Likert scale of 1 – 5, where 1 means 'extremely dissatisfied' and 5 means 'extremely satisfied', their ratings were as follows:

> For me it is either 1 [extremely dissatisfied] or less than 1. I was really not satisfied (SBO 104).
>
> I would consider 2 as I have said before, there is still a lot the bank could do in order to improve its service delivery (SBO 102).
>
> My rating will be 2. There is service available so a rating of 1 would be unfair ... I put my rating on a lower scale because most of the services by service providers are not seen (SBO 103).

The reasons for their low ratings can be attributed to lack of preparation, poor program delivery and visibility, inadequate of information, poor program experience and general dissatisfaction with the people administering the program. As far as the SBOs were concerned, inappropriate delivery mechanisms, such as the use of traditional lending approaches, were '*killers*'. Traditional lending requires loan repayment after one or two months following the loan drawdown. For new business start-ups, the first six months are critical to establish market links and build up

sufficient cash flow. To demand debt repayment during this time could be detrimental in the short and long term business growth and survival.

(f) Opposing cultural influence

Opposing cultural influence is an indigenous perception of starting and growing a business in two conflicting entrepreneurial environments. While modern business requires the adoption of western entrepreneurial culture, local indigenous systems still have a major influence on how businesses operate. Some of the areas still viewed as problematic are described below.

(1) *Differences in attitude.* According to one of the LBEs, while other ethnic groups are determined to succeed in business in any new environment, indigenous Pacific islanders have other interests - and business is not one of them. He stated:

> When people of Chinese and Indian origins migrated to countries like Australia, the US, Canada and even Fiji, what they saw on the ground were opportunities … and were determined to succeed in their adopted country (LBE 301).

(2) *Contentment and social security.* Another critical area differentiating indigenous people is that they are easily contended. As one LBE stated:

> The Pacific islanders are satisfied with little small things and may be frightened to venture into big things. If you try and force people to go into business when they are already satisfied or content with what they got from the community it will be a real struggle (LBE 302).

Another LBE commented; "They [Pacific islanders] most probably laugh at the Asians for working too hard and not enjoying life" (LBE 301). A relaxed way of living and contentment for little things could be explained by the social and caring attitude within indigenous and communal living. People are satisfied with things they receive and learn to look after others in the community. He further added:

> …if something goes wrong in the city or with the business, they can always go back to the village … Security is not in wealth. Our security is in the social networks and capital within an indigenous environment (LBE 301).

(3) *Culture of giving and caring.* In the Pacific context, small business owners make money and whatever is earned is shared. This act of sharing grows and continues even when the business collapses. This is evident in the following statements:

> In the Pacific islands context, profit is also targeted but not with the kind of intensity shown in developed countries. It is profit with limits – the limit being sufficient or satisfied. The profit is not only for the family but is shared by the community in terms of contributions to the church, school association, social functions, clubs, weddings, birthdays etc. (ESP 204).

According to the above participant, the indigenous culture of sharing may not make business owners rich, yet there is happiness among community members. He continued by saying:

> Businesses operate for the wellbeing of the community. Whatever values and skills that is in the Pacific islands we want to build on that…If we are to stick with the capitalist model, there will be a lot of poverty (ESP 204).

With this in mind, an indigenous person starting a business will make key decisions regarding which values to adopt. It is not a simple decision to make. In many respects, Fijian culture is totally opposite to the western entrepreneurial system. Can there be a mix? This is what research participants said:

> Fijian culture and modern business culture do not blend. They are two opposing poles – one is black and one is white. Can we have a black and white culture? It is easy to say and think about. But in reality, one will have to give up its position and take sides with the other. You cannot have both (SBO 101).

Decisions are not so difficult for other nationalities, like the Chinese who have business embedded in their culture, as alluded to here:

> Commerce has been part of their [Chinese] culture. Starting a business in that environment is much easier. The societal need is so wide and broad because of a huge population (LBE 301).

However, for many indigenous Fijians, going into business was like going to war, as one SBO remarked:

> There is a war of survival in the market place and a war of values, ethics and belief system – the cultural war. While some may be able to win battles in the competitive field, the war on culture is one which Fijians are normally at the receiving end (SBO 103).

(4) Fragmentation in the 'vanua' system. In the Fijian context, the *vanua* system refers to the indigenous ways of doing things including their behaviour, attitude and cultural beliefs. According to a government program manager, fragmentation of the *vanua* reflects disunity, jealousies, aggression and hostility among members of the community and towards those delivering the support programs. One ESP shared his experience on this issue:

> In my own observations and experience working with the rural community, there is hardly any village without its own differences. If it not over title, it will be on land. If it is not on land then a portion of the sea. If not, the differences will be on those that have succeeded in business enterprises or the lack of it (ESP 206).

These problems were inherited from the past and now restricting community developments. "It has been deliberately kept alive within the community … It almost raises the question of what is there in culture that we want to preserve and for what purpose" (ESP 206).

(g) Challenges linked to small business failure

The failure experience in this context refers to the inability to survive and grow after the start-up phase. Challenges to growth and survival, as highlighted by research participants, are discussed below.

(1) Lack of market assessment. There is a false assumption that, according to the LBE below, is related to business viability and availability of government grants. Here the LBE said "there is a tendency to ignore the need for market assessment and or feasibility studies even though funding is readily available" (LBE 302). If an assessment was actually carried out, it would have captured the views of the organisation sponsoring or conducting that assessment. However, the assessment would be questionable without any contribution from program users and consumers. In addition, there are other success factors at play which research participants

consider important. For example, market research, branding, the desire to succeed, responsive products, creativity, learning by doing, staff training and business networks.

(2) Political push for indigenous in business. The participation of indigenous Fijians in business forms a core of the Qarase government blueprint for a peaceful and stable economy. The rationale behind the policy is to reduce the perceived economic gap between indigenous Fijians and other races; hence the legalisation and policy endorsement to finance the government blueprint in seed funding, soft small business loans, government guarantees and interest subsidies. While the indigenous SBOs benefitted from the program, one of the LBEs believed that assumptions made about the policy were flawed.

First, it is assumed that unemployed people will be employed and obtain income from running a small business. Second, policy makers believed that small business was easy to start and one could find success in it; and that was "the craziest thing to do" (LBE 301). According to this LBE, the government should offer paid employment to the youth rather than driving them to small business start-ups. He further added; "small business is an art and not everyone can succeed - people involved are a special kind of breed" (LBE 301). Lastly, the idea of economic revival in depressed rural economies through the establishment of small businesses was also *'crazy'*. People think that "start-up companies are a magic bullet" (LBE 302) which could perform "all sorts of economic wizardry" (LBE 302). In reality, according to this LBE, "they need to be attached to large businesses" (LBE 301). For example, small mini markets, taxi operators and food sellers operating close to large supermarkets.

(3) Frequent changes in government policies. The change in Fijian administration and leadership in 2006 came in the form of a military takeover. That change also removed the indigenous business policies and programs following criticisms of racial discrimination. Indeed, many indigenous businesses collapsed, as they were dependent on government for contracts and capital grants. Now; "the

current government has removed all that...our road…has become difficult and tough" (SBO 107). According to one local expert, continuous change in leadership does not augur well for long-term sustainable development. His views were:

> Look at Singapore, one man had the vision and got people to support him. When he stepped down development continued. Malaysia had a government in power for over 50 years. You need that type of consistency in leadership. What can you achieve in 5 years? (LBE 302).

(4) Implication of smallness. Being small has many disadvantages. With a small population of approximately 850,000, there is no critical mass to drive consumer demand. The local market is small and "there is no point in putting more players" (LBE 302). In addition, small businesses do not have the bargaining power or the capacity to influence market orders where volume discounts are offered. For example, "If they advertise in the local newspaper, a corporate company will get a discount for a full page but a small business will cop the full charge of paid advertising" (LBE 301). Similarly, if SBOs are supplying goods and services to corporate customers, "they will wait for 30 days before payment is received. That would be too long for a small business start-up" (LBE 301). The implication of such a system could be detrimental, putting a lot of strain on the SBOs' cash flow and ability to effect monthly loan repayments.

Furthermore, small businesses do not "attract the ears of decision makers like big corporate customers" (LBE 301). Simply, they do not have a strong provocative and well-structured reasoning in their voice to attract attention, although they may be voicing important industry or sectoral issues. Also, because of their smallness in size "their views and economic contribution are insignificant" (LBE 301) and they are "rarely invited to important functions" (LBE 301). In addition, commercial banks treat small businesses as high risk and use processes and conditions to eliminate them. However, if they do lend, "the interest charged to small business loans will probably be 40% more than large businesses" (LBE 302).

(5) Unfriendly municipal regulations and bylaws. One of the LBEs voiced the difficulty in starting a business within the municipal boundaries because of strict requirements. "The Suva City Council is one of the most unfriendly places to start off

a business" (LBE 301). They [Suva City Council] are strictly enforcing their bylaws and regulations. For example, a small business applying for a shop licence would need to comply with Occupational, Health and Safety (OHS) laws, health requirements and zoning by-laws. All these could be expensive to comply with thus "deterring small business operators to be registered and licensed formally" (LBE 301).

(6) Lack of business ideas. One of the problems associated with business and community projects was the lack of business ideas. People were entering small business with limited ideas and were just copying others in the market. The same issue was highlighted by Fairbairn (1988) when he identified that entrepreneurs in PICs do not create or motivate – they are followers. As SBO 108 noted "…no one was coming up with new innovation or products that could fill the gaps" (SBO 108). For example, "if one village makes virgin coconut oil, everybody will copy it" (SBO 105). Sadly, when they do not make enough money, "…they quickly become discouraged and move out" (SBO 105).

This virgin coconut oil example is not unique to one particular place or commodity. It is a reflection of indigenous ways of running community based enterprises. However, one SBO saw a different light to this problem. He said that; "the problem is a good one. You helped one person with a job and you end up with 10 people creating jobs" (SBO 105). The real problem however, when the business operator "failed to do the next thing – the next move" (SBO 105). It is the move to a new location, new products and markets. One cannot remain stagnant and become "satisfied with the income from the business. If you are not moving you are going to go down" (SBO 105).

In a similar copycat situation involving micro entrepreneurs selling socks in the city, the same SBO participant had this to say:

> You as an advisor to the socks trader, he must take the next step … You will be considered as a failure ... to advise him to keep his sights on the next level moving forward. You started something good because you proved to ten other people that they can do their own

> business and they are doing their own business, otherwise they will be sitting at home doing nothing. Now they are making money. The advice to all of them is what is next (SBO 105).

(7) Poor attitude towards business culture. While others suggested the transformation of and/or alienation from the indigenous system in order to achieve business growth (such as Yusuf (1998), and Hailey and Rao (2004)), this ESP suggested a change of the business paradigm rather than a physical relocation away from communal living:

> Look at Fijian Holdings, which is so successful at the corporate level and one of the biggest in the Pacific island countries. Those running it are still Fijian and have proven that business can be successful if the mindset is changed to suit the business culture. The former Prime Minister wears Fijian attire and lives a Fijian lifestyle but when it comes to business, he is able to uphold himself in the new culture. They speak the language and conduct themselves in all the business etiquettes (ESP 206).

To support his views, this ESP shared a recent experience:

> The other day, someone called me and wanted a market for sea cucumbers. I told him we will meet the investor at 3.00pm the next day. The following day, I arranged everything. At about 4.00pm, this guy called on the mobile and said "can we still meet them?" I said, "No they have gone". He then asked me; "what am I going to do with the beech de mer?" I told him to eat it all; that is the kind of culture one has to adapt. I met him later and told him, if you want to do business, you must understand that business has its own culture. The *vanua* mentality will need to go (ESP 206).

(8) Relevancy in spiritualism. Spiritualism is closely connected to indigenous business. It shapes and identifies the entrepreneurial person in a social-cultural environment. There is relevance in this area in terms of ethics, values and standards. "We get our morals from our faith" (ESP 204). For example, "we do not give customers expired products or damaged good" (ESP 202). When people lose morality, "good governance and ethics become meaningless" (ESP 204). Societies can have all the legislation and regulations but if people do not have the respect and moral values then "it will be just sin and punishment continuously (ESP 204). According to this ESP, the Pacific islands have failed because of "lots of corruption

and mismanagement…which affects our credibility and genuineness in helping people (ESP 204).

(h) Lack of appropriate skills and education

In this theme, the response from research participants was mixed. While the perception of some was that formal entrepreneurial training is necessary because of the need to understand changes in the external environment, others perceived a lack relevance and/or practicality for business start-ups. In this context, lack of appropriate skills and education refers to: (1) entrepreneurial education not preparing entrepreneurs, but paid employees; (2) the unwillingness of small business operators to learn new creative and innovative skills to improve their processes and products; and (3) training providers not fully equipped and confident to deliver effective training modules because of their lack of knowledge and business experience. In addition, their classroom type of delivery, such as seminars, conferences and workshops are not effective compared to on-site field training and one to one mentoring by very experienced business managers.

Education is very relevant now in the business world. It is more relevant "before starting a business than what I used to think" (SBO 102). This SBO related his experience starting an importation and consumer goods retail business. He was totally reliant on the 'learning on the job' since he had no formal business training. However, he said that if his children were going to follow him in business "then they need to undergo some basic business training and/or formal education" (SBO102) in order to understand international trade issues related to his business including entrepreneurial rules and practices.

However, one of the SBOs operating a small bakery business mocked those aspiring to higher levels of education; "Can a PhD student make better dough?" (SBO 101). One of the LBEs even referred to a statement by a former US President who said that "The world is full of educated derelicts" (LBE 302). According to this LBE, what is important is the "passion and persistency of the person in entrepreneurship" (LBE

302). In her views, this was one of the "reasons why DBAs and MBAs were introduced…a lot of PhDs could not be operationalised" (LBE 302).

Another SBO was critical of the training programs organised by the government. To be effective, government must move away from the classroom approach, including seminars and workshops, and consider a more practical or hands-on approach to business. Having a one or two day seminar in the case of a new beekeeper starting a honey production business is impractical. This is like somebody "filling your arms with firewood and they just keep on piling it up" (SBO 106). However, when the person reaches home "all the pieces of firewood will fall…and only a small amount is left" (SBO 106).

The best way to address this is to have "a farmer to farmer training" (SBO 106). In the case of beekeeping, mentoring could be provided by an experienced beekeeper working with a new one. Although, it could be very expensive, this method of training is very effective. Alternatively, instead of a mentor going to a farmer, "the farmer can go to the mentor: which should probably happen with most of the successful beekeepers" (SBO 106).

4.5 Synthesis of participant content descriptions

Following the analysis of 19 *talanoa* transcripts, 15 major themes (see Table 4-5) were identified from the ground up using thematic coding. However, only the top eight themes were selected for presentation because of their high number of sources and references. Although the bottom seven themes did not receive much attention, an attempt was made to incorporate these findings where overlaps occurred in the presentation of sub-themes.

The first column in Table 4.7 is an integration of the 79 sub-themes (specific categories) referenced in Table 4.4, though only a selection was presented because of space limitation.

Table 4-7 Reduction and integration of participant's experiences

SUB-THEMES	MAJOR THEMES	KEY THEMES
Lack of understanding by government service providers, financial institutions, and donor agencies.	Disconnect between needs and support.	
Perception on business preparation	Requirements for business start-ups	
Passion, dedication, attitude and desire to succeed.	Need for motivation	1. Disconnect between needs and support programs.
Attributed to the founder, willingness to learn, acceptance of change, responding to markets, and use of internal resources.	Factors identified for success	
Lack of market information, top down approach, and lack of quality advice.	Not satisfied with government programs	2. Inadequate planning and preparation.
Differences in attitude, contentment with life, culture of giving and caring, and fragmentation of the *vanua.*	Opposing cultural influence	
Lacked market assessment, political influence, changes in government policies, implication of smallness, unfriendly municipal regulations and bylaws, lack of business ideas, poor attitude, and spiritualism.	Challenges linked to small business failure.	3. Unwanted barriers and constraints.
Not preparing entrepreneurs, unwillingness to learn new creative and innovative skills, and providers inability to deliver effecting training programs.	Appropriate skills training and education	

By way of reduction, these 79 sub-themes were reduced to 27 items, which were discussed individually in Section 4.4. The second column represents eight groups of major themes drawn out from the 27 sub-themes. Following this, a further reduction and integration of the eight thematic areas were made to draw out key messages from the research participants' *talanoa.* The third column represents these key messages (themes) with close links to the research questions.

These messages include:

1. A disconnect between the needs of those seeking assistance and the nature of support provided to meet those needs;

2. Inadequate planning and preparation for business start-ups including the assessment of needs, its prioritisation, the development of intervention programs and on-going support for existing businesses;

3. Unwanted barriers and constraints to starting and growing a business (for example, in the areas of finance, business education and training, and marketing, among others).

These three key areas are discussed separately in the next section.

4.6 Interpretations and link to the research

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiential claims of research participants in the provision of SSAPs and to make sense of their accounts. On the basis of these accounts, the study explored evidence supporting the claims relating to SSAP failure, identifying factors attributed to failure and how these factors could be addressed. To this end, the perceptions and experiences of three cohorts of research participants were explored and, using thematic analysis, several key findings were identified. This section discusses the implications of what each cohort of participants perceived and/or experienced from their SSAP encounters in relation to the two research questions.

4.6.1 Understanding the research participants' claims

On the basis of the findings, this section addresses the first research question:

Research Question 1: What are the research participants saying with regard to the workings of SSAPs in meeting small business expectations?

A. **Perceptions of SBOs:** While the SBO content descriptions vary, reflecting heterogeneity in the sector, convergent issues from the narratives are used here as building blocks for the construction of solutions to address the divergent issues. First, the lack of understanding of business needs by those delivering SSAPs is not new. It is comparable with the work of Bennett (2007) and Smallbone et al. (2003) in the UK and Elena-Yususf (2010) in the US. However, inaction and/or the lack of appropriate responses to small business needs are matters of concern. In the contemporary marketing literature, understanding customers and their needs is fundamental to effective customer service delivery. However, the lack of understanding in the Fijian context suggests the workings of a large monopoly driving the SSAP market in the midst of small and micro businesses. There is little consideration or understanding of what the target group wants. The satisfaction rating by SBOs that equated to less than 2 on a Likert scale is therefore not surprising.

Second, the lack of planning and preparation claimed by SBOs is consistent with the findings of Smallbone (1990), Pratten (2004) and Pathak and Kumar (2008). According to Pratten (2004), the closure of British public houses can be attributed to a lack of suitable preparation by licensees in terms of getting the right trade skills, understanding basic financial concepts and customer services. Pathak and Kumar (2008) also claimed that the Fiji co-operatives movement failed because of inadequate planning. They concluded that "the ideas were thrust upon the people without first preparing them fully about the ideas, concepts and principles of co-operatives" (Pathak & Kumar 2008, p. 690). Furthermore, the lack of preparation perceived by Ropega (2011); Thornton et al. (2011) and Smallbone et al. (2003) was not just the lack of ideas, knowledge and competence, but a failure by support providers to prepare small businesses in their transition from embedded social-cultural conditions.

Why would people jump into a small business without first learning the art? In the co-operatives context one can understand the 'bandwagon' effect since people were led by undemocratically elected leaders (the so called chiefs) who became the voice

of the people (Nabobo-Baba 2006). However, the difference between this group and the SBOs in this study is that the latter were mostly professionals with a high level of education. Hence, their claim of being unprepared before utilising SSAPs is ironic. The finding suggests that this well-educated SBO group are the 'wrong group' to receive small business support. They might be the smart ones with social capital and networks, including the technical skills to submit grant applications, but they were not the right group (not ready) for business start-ups. In other words, the SBOs could have been running after grant funding without really having the right motivation, ideas and preparation for entrepreneurial activities.

Third, SBOs perceived the influence of government in the provision of small business SSAPs in the market apart from its policy and regulatory work. What this means is that government is the engine of small business sector development in Fiji, not the private sector[44]. The justification for government intervention, as identified by Smallbone and Welter (2001), is that intervention is necessary given the potential of small business to contribute to economic development combined with the fact that such businesses are impacted by small size disadvantages.

There are two implications of the above SBOs accounts. First, continuous government support erodes the confidence in the private sector to provide for small business needs and increases dependency of the public on government funds and incentives. According to Hughes (2003), people receiving support lost the drive and the fighting spirit to remain afloat amidst economic crises and were reduced to begging, particularly in projects where international donor funds are involved. When government support is withdrawn, projects and programs collapse, as evidenced in the termination of the government affirmative action in 2007. Most of the indigenous businesses could not sustain themselves without the visible hand of government (PMO 2006).

[44] The small business program (Program 7) under the Social Justice Act of 2001 is evidence of government influence in the sector.

Second, the findings suggest an over-dependency on external resources provided by the government. This is a hangover of the colonial past and a reflection of large power distance (Saffu 2003) in indigenous communities where subordinates are dependent on community leaders for their share of resources and guidance (Puamau 2001; White 2001). There is a spill over of such a system in the small business sector where those in the lower strata of the community continuously depend on the government for business growth and survival. While hand-holding is encouraged to enable new business start-ups to develop, the institutional support system of learning for SBOs to survive independently may not be readily available.

B. **Perception of ESPs:** Cultural conflict emerges as one of the key concerns from the ESP descriptions. Such conflict exists between the SBOs pursuing personal interests and the social-cultural conditions of the operating environment. Saffu (2003) described such conflict as a paradigmatic war between individualistic versus collectivistic entrepreneurial dispositions. The SBOs' decision to shift to personal interest could be culturally viewed as a defiance of customary practices – the very fabric that builds social cohesion and harmony within family units and clans (Farrelly 2009; Nabobo-Baba 2006; Smith, BR & Stevens 2010; Thornton, Ribeiro-Soriano & Urbano 2011). The findings suggest that success in terms of profitability and asset accumulation may not be possible in collectivist or communal enterprises. However, there are culturally specific dimensions, such as social harmony, networks and values that exist in communal environments where social entrepreneurship thrives (Gibb & Li 2003; Granovetter 1992, 2005). This is one of the key areas identified by Yunus and Weber (2007), driving people to start a business – it is about making an impact on the lives of people.

Adding to the cultural concern is the mechanism to resolve the conflict. This was also highlighted by Farrelly (2009) in an ethnographic account of a community ecotourism project in Fiji. According to Farrelly (2009), cultural differences inhibit growth and sustainability of community enterprises. Therefore, if donor agencies and government institutions fail to recognise the internal mechanism of resolving cultural differences then any intervention in the community is likely to deepen rifts already

existing within the community social networks. The presence of cultural differences suggest that unless initiators of support programs understand the history as well as the socio-cultural, economic and political conditions of the local environment, there is a likelihood of project failure.

Furthermore, cultural differences suggest the lack of participation of target communities and or beneficiaries in communal development planning. To promote certain policies or political agenda, government and donor agencies often initiate planning meetings and while there might be little participation or contribution from the community in them, they may be asked to take ownership of development initiatives. Moyo (2009) and Hughes (2003) condemned such a top down approach as it is ineffective in improving social interconnectedness and relationships. Such an approach only breeds corruption, unequal distribution of resources and the enrichment of the elite in the community (Hughes 2003; Moyo 2009; Ratuva 1999).

Another key issue described by the ESPs is their own recognition of inadequate business management skills and experience to deliver appropriate business advisory services. Farmers in the agricultural sector cited cases where members of the community were advised to plant a certain crop because of the demand in the market. While the advice may have been sound, it encountered two fundamental problems. First, other farmers in the vicinity followed the same course because of the availability of government support, including seedlings, fertilisers and technical services. This led to an exponential increase in supply in the market. Second, farmers did not realise that as supply increases the price of the commodity drops, thus resulting in low income and, eventually, losses. The findings suggest that staff and program administrators may have the knowledge but their offerings have little value. In addition, those seeking support do not normally trust the source of advice particularly from staff administering government programs. When that happens, the provider organisation loses its purpose and relevancy and, therefore, cannot continue to exist because of the availability of grant funding from the government.

Consistently SBOs demanded an understanding of their business needs in ways similarly expressed by Smallbone and Welter (2001). It suggests the need to have the

'right person' with knowledge and competency to understand these demands. The right person is also tasked to communicate with and build relationships with SBOs. Here, there is a demand to be heard – implying the absence of the right person. Alternatively, it may point to the existence of a loose system of exchanges between the SBOs and ESPs. Without a communication platform it would be difficult for the two parties to progress; and when communication stops all systems that are supposed to work collapse. A lack of communication in this regard restricts any formal and informal exchanges required for building customer relationships. The analogy to the human system provided by Sachs (2005) is that because of the interconnectedness of the systems there will be a spiralling effect on other systems when one fails.

The ESPs also highlighted another significant issue concerning the lack of creative and innovative ideas among SBOs seeking support services. This observation is consistent with Fairbairn's (2006) explorations about the lessons of successful entrepreneurs in selected PICs. There are two implications of this finding. First, the finding suggests the absence of specialist advisory services and/or the failure of SBOs to seek specialist advice to guide the choice of business that matches their level of competence. Large firms in this respect often hire accountants, lawyers and business consultants to provide advice and conduct feasibility studies. Also, large firms have access to global information systems and networks on new technologies, products and services, unlike small businesses. Today, SBOs still turn to their friends and families within their own social networks for business advice.

Second, the finding also suggests the prevalence of business cannibalism - an appropriate term to describe business copycats among small businesses. This is also consistent with Fairbairn's (1988b, 2006) observation that island businesses are market followers. Business cannibalism emerges as a negative outcome following the government's stirring and incentives for business start-ups. Pushing people to start a business, without the necessary supporting mechanisms, only encourages the wrong kind of competition. The much publicised ethanol project in Fiji is a case in point. Farmers were encouraged to move to cassava or increase their cassava production for the ethanol project. Many farmers who followed the advice lost out when the project did not take off. They could not get any compensation because they were simply

following what other farmers were doing. To some extent, business cannibalism may not be about the lack of business ideas *per se* but about the lack of accessibility to the creative and innovative ideas held within research and academic institutions in Fiji.

C. **Perception of LBEs:** Among others, the two key issues emerging from the LBE narratives were: small business policy and the elimination of barriers to business start-ups and growth. First, the small business policy in the Fijian context came out on the strength of the affirmative action entrenched in the 1997 Fijian constitution. The constitution directs the government to develop policies and allocate funds to encourage the participation of the indigenous population in business. Such a policy, as perceived by LBEs, will not have a positive impact on the economy and is most likely to fail. This perception aligns with Shane's (2009) claim that encouraging more people to become entrepreneurs is bad public policy. The implication of such policy is that government funds could be wasted on new business start-ups that are unlikely to grow or make substantial contributions to the economy. The types of business chosen are likely to be low growth businesses (and primary based) with little value adding. Also, the broadening of support assistance by encouraging more people reduces the effectiveness of support staff delivering assistance and the amount of resources allocated per person. In addition, the findings suggest that the small firm policy framework may be based on broader economic objectives, such as increasing the number of people assisted and the value of assistance or the number of people trained and outreach. These indicators are common in government-sponsored programs and could also suggest the lack of expertise in the development of measurement indicators to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the support assistance. Furthermore, the LBEs' concern about small business policy lies in the short tenure of leadership in government. Fiji has a history of military coups and frequent changes in leadership do not allow time for SBOs to develop unless the small business policy remains unchanged. For example, the discriminatory view claimed by government opposition about the affirmative action program was one of the grounds for a forceful takeover. Despite the good intentions underlying the policy initiative to target indigenous Fijians, the implication for small business is that these are lost.

Another issue arising from the LBE narratives was the elimination of barriers and constraints to small business growth and development. Apart from a claim of out dated municipal council regulations governing business establishment and licensing, there are other key areas inhibiting growth, such as the lack of market outlets; selection bias and rigidity in sources of finance; limited warehouse facilities; poor infrastructure; lack of access to information technology; poor packaging and quality control; and an indigenous entrepreneurial culture. Despite the existing knowledge regarding these barriers, the facilitation work is weak. This suggests the lack of an apex body to coordinate small business needs with existing support services networks. In addition, the findings suggest the lack of a small business educator and/or a champion to lead small business advocacy in national and regional forums.

4.6.2 Contributing factors to SSAP failure

This section specifically addresses the second research question and provides an opportunity to summarise the findings gathered from the research participants.

Research Question 2: What are the possible factors contributing to the failure of SSAPs to provide effective and appropriate support that meets the needs of those seeking assistance?

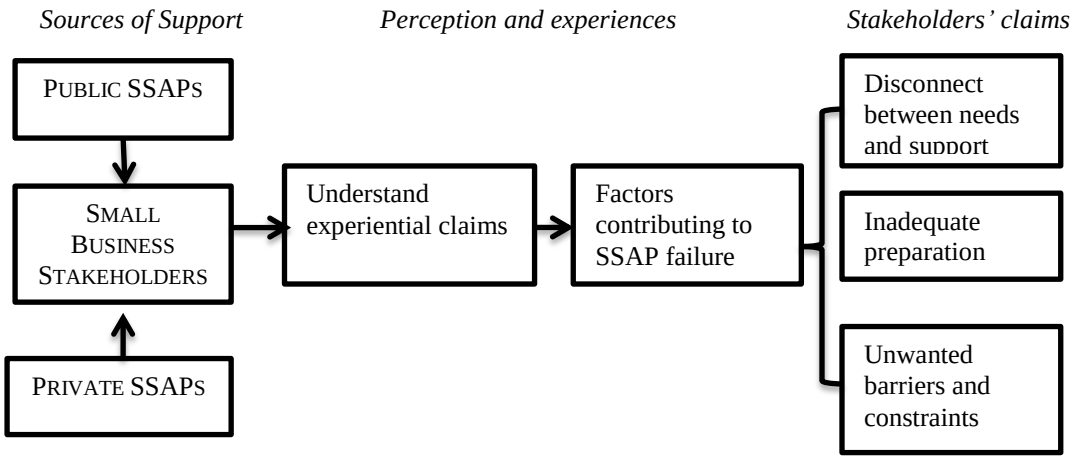

Figure 4-1 Factors contributing to failure

From the findings, all three cohorts of research participants attributed SSAP failure to three interrelated factors (see Figure 4-1). First, the findings suggest a

disconnection between the needs of those seeking assistance and the nature of support services offered in the market. Disconnection in this regard implies the inability of the service provider or the producer to deliver products and services that satisfy the needs of customers. However, according to Sachs (2005), disconnection is not a problem but a symptom of underlying and interconnected conditions. In the context of this study, disconnection suggests the lack of consultation and/or needs assessment by service providers to justify the nature of support and types of services offered. In addition, disconnection also implies the lack of capability of the person or the business consultant to hear and accurately diagnose presenting business conditions before prescription and treatment (Mole 2002c, 2007a).

As said earlier, an incorrect diagnosis often leads to a mismatch between the products and services demanded and the actual SSAP offerings in the market. Therefore, the role of the business advisor is critical to the correct diagnosis and treatment of business ills (Mole 2007a). In the UK Business Link experience, Mole (2007a) alludes to the difficulty faced by business advisors when using tacit knowledge to make judgements on complex conditions presented by small businesses. Similarly, a strong association is perceived between personal business advisors and business consultants and the overall satisfaction of advisory services. This perception reflects the high selection criteria of advisors and business consultants who are often contracted out to people with extensive knowledge and business management experience (Bennett & Robson 2005). Disconnection occurs if personal business advisors fail to understand small business needs and resort to selling solutions with which they are familiar rather than redirecting the small business to other specialists experts for correct and responsive solutions (Robson & Bennett 2005; Smallbone, North & Leigh 1993).

Furthermore, disconnection suggests a strong and powerful monopolistic service provider group influencing the demand and supply of SSAPs in the market. Instead of SBOs driving the market, as in a customer centric system, these clusters of service providers use production and/or products to target certain sections of the economy using information technology. In this way, market demand for SSAPs is created from the introduction of new products and services, not by customers' needs. Such

conditions reduce SBOs to a non-participatory role where their views, needs and demands are not captured in new product development systems. The implication of such a system is that powerful service providers would tend to: (1) discriminate against small businesses by charging high fees and interest to match credit risks; (2) purposely offer prefabricated SSAPs or generic solutions from outside with little relevance and connection to local conditions and needs; (3) offer support services which precipitate a vicious circle of debt among SBOs; and (4) attract opportunist and seekers of SSAPs who are able to use their own social networks to access support services.

The other possible factor contributing to failure is inadequate preparation. From the SBOs' perspective, lack of preparation implies the failure of service providers to prepare SBOs in areas such as: (1) the preparation of loan applications and documentation; (2) advice on alternative sources of finance and providers; (3) awareness of service costs and benefits; (4) training on financial management; (5) identification of market outlets; and (6) understanding of the local environment. On this basis, the findings suggest a lack of front-end training and awareness before an SSAP is sought. It also suggests a weak support system that fails to assess the readiness of people at pre-start-up stages. There is no critical pathway to direct the preparation of small businesses to a next level of growth until it reaches a diversification stage. It then begs the question: what kind of SBOs have been assisted in the past and what sort of motivation do they have? Here the findings suggest that past assistance could have attracted people who were not business ready but were chasing after grant funding and other support services in the belief that such assistance would satisfy their unemployment and income needs.

From the ESPs' perspective, a lack of preparation implies a lack of understanding of small business needs and the entrepreneurial culture embedded in a social-cultural environment. It also reflects the low competency level of program managers and administrators, including their inability to understand their roles in the support services market. To offset the skills deficiency, service providers often resort to generic information and solutions transferred to poor resource countries as 'international best practices' (Gibb & Li 2003). Such assumptions diminish the value

of needs assessment as a basis of change in the small business sector. In addition, the lack of preparation reflects two opposing entrepreneurial cultures: western versus indigenous. The findings suggest the failure of ESPs to systematically guide new start-ups in their transition to a western entrepreneurial system. While SBOs may want to maintain the indigenous ways of doing business, there would be implications and potential conflict with service providers. Furthermore, the lack of competence among program administrators is a serious one. The claim by SBOs is that ESPs are too inward-looking and that they fail to hear and understand the changes in the entrepreneurial environment.

The third factor contributing to SSAP failure is related to unfriendly barriers and constraints. The fact that this area of need has been highlighted consistently in past studies (Nair & Chelliah 2012; Reddy 2007; Yusuf 1998) suggests a lack of coordination and leadership in small business development. It is believed that the co-development links between academic research and small business policy and practice is weak and that there is a lack of infusion of research-based solutions in small business policy formulations. In addition, the findings suggest weak organisational institutions (North 1990) to influence changes in the market. Although the NCSMED was mandated to provide such a leadership role, the organisation does not have the influencing power. Findings also suggest that either SBOs do not have the belief and mental attitude to operate in the formal structures, or there is strong preference to use informal rules as in the Chinese 'Guanxi' (Gibb & Li 2003) business approach.

4.7 Summary and Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to present the findings from an investigation focussed on understanding the research participants' phenomenological experience about their encounters with SSAPs in Fiji. From a constructed list of 15 thematic areas describing the perceptions and experiences of research participants, three key areas emerged (see Table 4-7 in Section 4.5). These were: (1) a mismatch between needs and support; (2) a lack of planning and preparation; and (3) the removal of barriers and constraints in small business. The implications of these findings point to the small business need to have the right people with the right support, within a

favourable operating environment. The interpretation of these findings point to one key message: support services in the past may have gone to the wrong people (not business ready) who were provided with the wrong support services (do not match the needs). On the basis of this knowledge, the construction of a workable development framework is discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 5 Research Outcomes, Summary and Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This study was premised on the belief that SSAPs had failed in the context of Fiji. Failure in this research context was associated with the lack of understanding of needs and expectations of those seeking support services and their overall dissatisfaction with the current suite of SSAP market offerings. The research questions posed at the beginning were focussed on exploring possible factors that contributed to the failure of SSAPs; and what learning could be drawn from the findings in terms how to address the problem of SSAP failure. The study then set out to explore and understand the phenomenological experience of small business operators (SBOs), external service providers (ESPs), and local business experts (LBEs) in Fiji. The content and the essence of the research participants' descriptions regarding their encounter with SSAPs were the key focus of the previous chapter. On the basis of these research findings, a small business SSAPs framework was developed.

The next section of this chapter (Section 5.2) is dedicated to the SSAP framework development. It is presented as a strategic framework cascading from a vision of a customer centric and market driven approach. The second part of the chapter (Section 5.3) presents a summary reaffirming the thesis and evidence from the literature and the exploratory work in Fiji. Finally, the conclusion of the study with claims regarding its significance and implications for future research are presented in subsections 5.3.5 – 5.3.7.

5.2 Research Outcome – A framework

Following the identification of factors contributing to the failure of SSAPs, this section addresses the third research question:

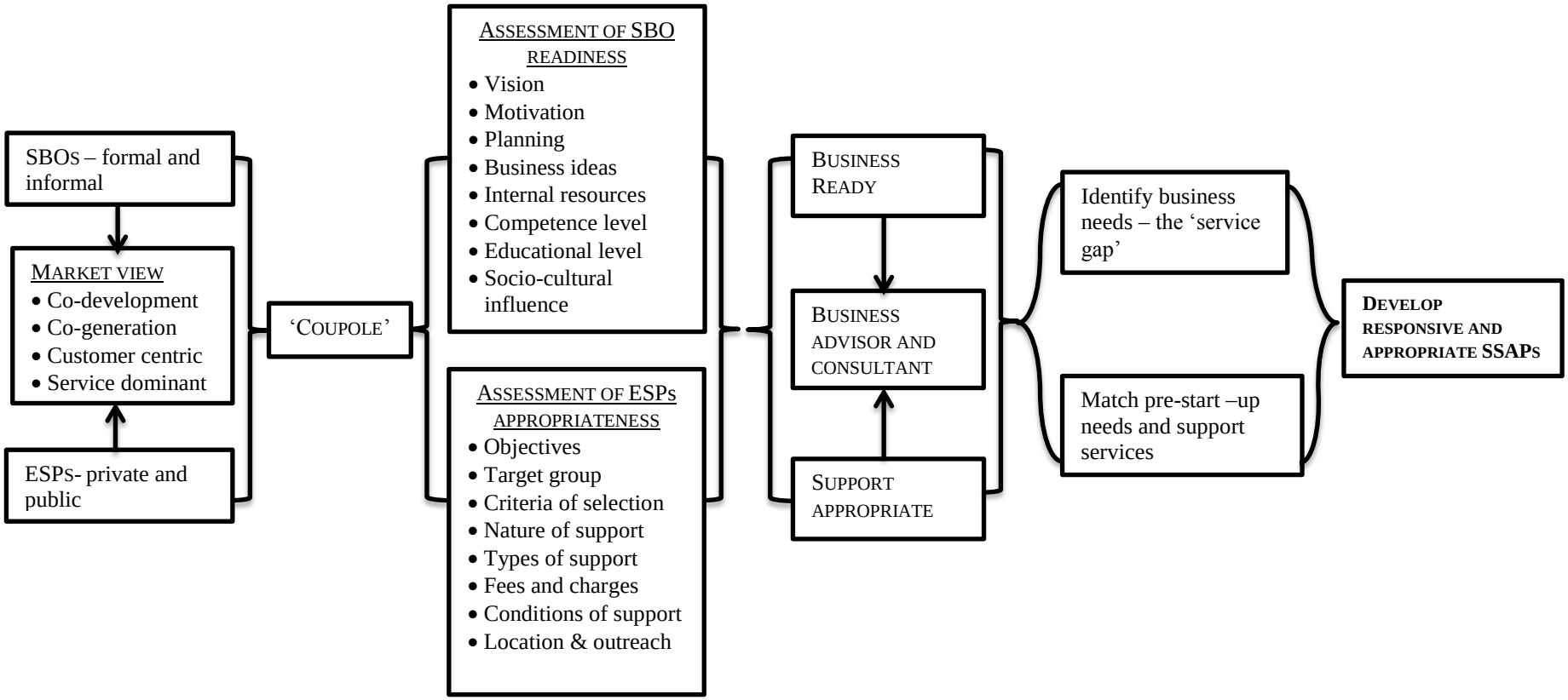

Figure 5-1 A small business oriented development framework

"*How could we address the problem of failure and provide an effective and appropriate support that meets the needs of those seeking external assistance?"* To this end, a small business development framework is offered (see Figure 5-1), based on the findings in the previous chapter.

Beginning in the 2000s, a number of small business frameworks were introduced in Fiji emanating from both macroeconomic and political interests. One of these was the subject of political and scholarly debates - the '50/50 by 2020' small business development plan operationalised under the 29 AAP and 42 blueprint programs (Chand 2007; PMO 2006; Ratuva 2000). A key learning outcome from this development framework, as perceived by research participants, was the lack of consultation and participation of the target group in the actual construction of the program.

The new framework proposed in this study is designed on a SBO centric view of the market. The participation of small business is vital to the confirmation of business needs and the generation of appropriate SSAP solutions to match that specified need.

The SBO centric view of the market assumes a similar ideological position to the service dominant logic (or service logic) approach in the services marketing literature (Lusch, Vargo & O'Brien 2007; Svensson & Grönroos 2008; Vargo & Lusch 2004, 2008). The service dominant logic is a model of exchange where the focus is centred on the customer and not the goods produced by the firm (Vargo & Lusch 2004). There are two assumptions underlying this approach. First, customers create value for themselves through utilisation of goods and services; and second, there is an opportunity for firms delivering goods and services to participate in the creation of customer value (the idea of co-creation of value) (Svensson & Grönroos 2008). Here, the two important learning concepts on which the SBO centric model is built are participation and co-creation.

The focus of the small business framework presented in Figure 5-1 is the SBO (or the customer) - the person in need and seeking assistance in the market. In this framework, SBO needs, created by business owners themselves while in formal and informal exchanges with service providers (the producer), should be the starting

point. Need is a service gap (Breen & Bergin-Seers 2002); a discrepancy (Elena-Yusuf 2010); a gap between current condition (what is) and the desired condition (what should be) with conviction to change the situation (Altschuld & Witkin 2000; Darcy & Hofmann 2003; Gupta 2007; Leigh et al. 2000).

On the basis of the research findings, three key areas of need were identified and co-constructed by three cohorts of research participants. These areas of need included: (1) the matching of what the SBOs need and the SSAPs offerings in the market; (2) adequate preparation and planning before utilisation of SSAPs; and (3) the removal of barriers and constraints to allow growth in the small business sector. These SBO needs are not static and they may be context-specific depending on the local entrepreneurial environment. Continuous dialogue and interactions are encouraged between the bearer of the need and services providers to correctly identify and prioritise the level of business needs, including an analysis of the underlying causes of needs.

Following confirmation of needs, the framework suggests the establishment of a single integrated organisation, the 'coupole' (Mole & Keogh 2009), where the program is administered but not involved in the actual delivery of the program. The rationale for a single office is that potential confusion and competition among providers is eliminated (Bennett 2008). In addition, a single office is easier to deal with than multiple organisations that differ in products, brands, target groups, objectives and delivery mechanisms. One of the main functions of the organisation is to provide small business data, the gathering of market information and to mediate between SBOs and service providers during the co-creation process. Needs identified through this process are further assessed by the organisation in light of changes and influences in the socio-cultural, political, and economic environments. Such information is fed into the monitoring process and key learnings disseminated to small business stakeholders.

In addition, the coupole organisation could be tasked to undertake initial diagnostic tests to determine the readiness of a person before seeking expert advice. There is an opportunity here for private service providers to be contracted with the coupole organisation under service agreements to provide expert advice. A professional list of

private and public experts with proper accreditation who are tasked to conduct diagnostic tests should be supplied to leading service providers. The decision to accept or reject requests for assistance should be based on the results of the diagnostic tests. This process eliminates the wrong and unmotivated people from business start-ups and encourages new businesses that are more likely to succeed. However, those that fail the diagnostic tests should be referred to the coupole organisation for alternative pathways to help them reach the readiness stage.

The key to the success of the framework is the willingness of ESPs to engage with SBOs. Simply put, this is about the 'big people' meeting the 'small people' in an indigenous context. Unless there is regulation or coercion by government, the idea of collaboration and co-creation to establish needs could be challenging. Moral suasion in this instance should be used with caution as it might give the wrong signals to potential foreign investors. In addition, countries in the early stages of economic development might experience a much deeper and wider service gap because of resource deficiency. Expertise in the area of small business may also be lacking in terms of business management experience, despite qualified business personnel being available.

While the framework is designed specifically to address the concerns of small business stakeholders in Fiji, there are practical implications that can be drawn by other countries with similar socio-cultural and economic conditions. However, a key learning outcome is that without the participation and inclusion of SBOs in the design and development of SSAPs, there will be a lot of guesswork and/or generic solutions in the support services market. As a result, the needs of SBOs will not be captured in the design and delivery mechanism, thus leading to a continuing mismatch between needs and support services.

5.3 Research summary and conclusion

5.3.1 Thesis statement and intent

This study assumes small business SSAPs are failing in small island countries where resources and the system of support and care are not as advanced as those in large developed countries. The assumption of failure is grounded in the belief that there is a disconnect between those seeking assistance and the providers of support services. Empirical evidence suggests that those seeking assistance are not buying or utilising (low take up rate) the SSAP offerings in the market. While explanations for this phenomenon vary country wide, it is believed that the needs and expectations of SBOs in the Fijian context are either not captured and/or not considered in the design and delivery of SSAPs. The assumption is that service providers are short-circuiting the needs assessment process by implementing imported 'template' prescriptions. This results in the delivery of SSAPs that do not meet the needs of SBOs.

The rationale behind the study lies in the need to support small business during their start-up and growth stages. Generally, small business plays a critical role in the early economic transformation of industrialised societies. To sustain that dynamic and influencing role in the economy, many state governments have seen fit to establish small business SSAPs for that particular purpose. The development of SSAPs can be justified for economic, social and political reasons; there is also evidence in the literature about the value of support services at different stages of business growth. Whilst SSAPs are not a panacea of small business struggles, they can however fill the competency gap among SBOs and boost their business performance and survival.

5.3.2 Summary of research approach and methods

The first part of this research focussed on a review of the extant literature. The aim of the review was to understand the characteristics of SSAPs and the experiences of selected countries regarding SSAP performance. In addition, the literature review aimed to situate the SSAP problem within the ambit of current knowledge; and to identify the gap in existing knowledge that this research sought to address.

The second part involved fieldwork driven by the research goals and objectives, that is, to understand the perception and experiences of research participants and to identify factors attributing to SSAP failure. To achieve this, the study adopted an IPA approach – a research methodology commonly used in the fields of psychology, health and education. Since the research is concerned with understanding the experiential claims of research participants and making sense and meaning of their experiences, IPA can be a powerful tool in small business research.

Using datasets in Fiji, the study set out to understand the specific concerns of three cohorts of research participants: the SBOs, ESPs and the LBEs in their encounters with SSAPs. The actual data collection used a more culturally appropriate technique – a mix between a mainstream interview method and the Fijian *'talanoa'* (story telling). This is a means of communication and information exchange between two people outside traditional village boundaries. The main difference with informal interviews is that the study is carried out from an insider-researcher position, with the researcher building a relationship, as 'friends', with his own people before asking for interviews.

5.3.3 Summary of findings in the literature

The review of the extant literature was directed by two key questions: are small business support services working? (see Section 2.4) and what are the possible factors contributing to SSAP failure? (see section 2.5). Three key findings emerged from the experience of SSAPs in selected countries. First, the use of SSAPs increased significantly in both developed and developing countries. An analysis of the UK Business Links networks, which forms the basis of early knowledge, revealed that the usage and value of SSAPs increases during the early stages of business and it plateaus as the business matures (Bennett & Robson 1999; Ramsden & Bennett 2005). An increase in SSAP utilisation means a better chance of survival compared to small businesses that do not seek support. However, Curran (2000) and Bennett (2008) dispute this, saying that it was only a matter of time before a small business collapses since support services were too broad and not specifically targeted to high growth businesses.

Second, the market for small business advice is skewed towards private service providers such as accountants, lawyers and bankers (Ramsden & Bennett 2005; Smallbone, Baldock & North 2003). The findings suggest a lack of confidence in public advisory support systems. There is still scepticism in the use of public support services because of SBOs' lack of trust in consultants and personal business advisors, and their aversion to paying support fees for little in return. In addition, there is a general belief that seeking support is an indication of weakness and the geographic distance between support provider and the location of small businesses does not help the cause.

Finally, contrasting accounts emerge between developed and developing countries. There is a profusion of support providers in developed countries – a reflection of the availability of resources and strong policy directives towards small business. However, that profusion of support creates more confusion in the support market where there are already wide variations in support type, delivery mechanisms and market brand. On the other hand, in developing countries, like Fiji and the African nations, governance and leadership problems precipitate the failure of small business and SSAPs. Many of the support programs are created and incentivised by government through grant funding, subsidies, tax incentives and flexible loans. However, the 'wrong' group of people (the elite group) are attracted to the programs. They are mostly educated, have the ability to access grants and extensive social networks (Hughes 2003; Moyo 2009), yet, and they have no real desire to operate a small business.

In terms of the factors contributing to failure, several emerged from the review, including: social-cultural conditions (Gibb & Li 2003); limited sources of finance and selection bias (Beck & Demirguc-Kunt 2006; Blumberg & Letterie 2008); limited knowledge and skills (Fairbairn 2006; Gibb 1987l; Singh, S et al. 2013); and disconnection between business and support services (Bennett 2008; Breen & Bergin-Seers 2002; De Faoite et al. 2004). Theoretical approaches and market-based solutions to address such problems abound. However, the concern of Irwin (2011) and Gibb and Li (2003) is that there is an erroneous belief that solutions working in

advanced countries will also work in less developed countries where the geographic, economic and social-cultural conditions are vastly different.

5.3.4 Summary of research findings in Fiji

The first research question was focussed on understanding the accounts of three cohorts of research participants; SBOs, ESPs and LBEs, in terms of their encounters with SSAPs. The SBOs claimed, among others, a disconnection between business needs and SSAPs; the lack of preparation of program developers and participants; and the influence of government in business start-ups and SSAP delivery. The ESPs on the other hand perceived difficulty in adapting externally designed SSAPs to the Fijian context, due to cultural diversity and the lack of management expertise among staff administering SSAPs. The LBEs were of the view that pushing people into business represented a misguided policy because of the small Fijian market, the communal disposition of the indigenous community and issues related to infrastructure, IT support, warehouse facilities, marketing network, and so forth. These inhibited growth and development in the small business sector.

On the basis of the participants' accounts, the intent of the second research question was to examine the problem of SSAP failure, focussing on factors contributing to failure. While the three cohorts of research participants had divergent views regarding SSAP failure, there were 15 major problems identified from 19 *talanoa* transcripts (see Table 4-5, Section 4.3). These are reproduced below with operational solutions (see Figure 5-1, Section 5.2) to address the problem of SSAP failure in Fiji.

Specifically, the study points to three interconnected and interrelated areas contributing to SSAP failure:

1. Disconnection between business needs and SSAP offering;
2. Inadequate planning and preparation by both the SBOs and the ESPs; and
3. Unfriendly entrepreneurial environment inhibiting small business survival and growth.

Table 5-1 Summary of SSAP failures and framework solution

MAJOR PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED FROM THE FIJIAN DATA	FRAMEWORK SOLUTION
Disconnect between needs and support Requirements for business start-ups	Consultation and needs assessment: identification of needs, prioritisation of needs, identifying causes of needs, correct diagnosis of business problems and prescriptions.
Need for motivation Factors identified for success Appropriate skills training and education	Pre-start up planning and preparation which involves basic business and skills training including business practise under the auspices of professional experts.
Not satisfied with government programs	Stakeholders' consultative meetings and SSAPs design and implementation.
Opposing cultural influence Challenges linked to small business failure	Removal of barriers and constraints in the small business sector and the establishment of 'coupole' organisations and the engagement of private and public sector business experts.

First, disconnection between business needs and support services suggests that the 'voices' of SBOs are not heard or considered in the designing process. This resulted in a low utilisation of SSAPs. Furthermore, if their voice was captured, it was either in a tokenistic manner or misrepresented in the development process. In addition, disconnection suggests the working of a monopoly power in a poorly resourced country where the commercial interests of the provider overrides any other views or interest in the market. Needs are no longer driving the market, it is the creations of service providers that dictate control.

Second, in the Fijian context, SBOs were emphatic that service providers should initiate pre-start-up learning and coaching before commencement of the business. The findings show the absence of this process and suggest that support services were thrust upon people without inclusion and participation in determining needs or value generation activities. Lastly, the entrepreneurial environment is still underdeveloped. The NCSMED organisation tasked to lead the development work was believed to be weak and unable to influence changes among other small business stakeholders. The

findings suggest that stakeholders in the market do not accept rules thrust upon them and preferred to practice old traditional ways of doings things in the formal sector. Such business attitude is restricting the infusion of new creative ideas that will advance appropriate and responsive SSAP delivery systems.

5.3.5 Key contributions of the study

This study makes three important contributions. First, the study has addressed a gap in knowledge and experience in small Pacific island countries that has been missing from the mainstream small business SSAP literature. Previous knowledge in SSAPs has been advanced by the work of researchers in large developed countries where the geographic, socio-cultural, political, economic and financial conditions are so different from that encountered in Fiji. In addition, the research adds to the knowledge of small business in indigenous environments, where entrepreneurial culture and the decision-making processes are influenced by the social-cultural environment. With similarities to the Chinese 'Guanxi' model (Gibb & Li 2003), indigenous communities have their own ways of doing business built on their own set of rules and networks. It is important that donor agencies and program managers do not overlook or underestimate such social-cultural influences when adapting SSAPs modelled in western entrepreneurial environments.

Second, the study has developed a framework that positions the SBO at the centre of the SSAP product development work, rooted in a market oriented and/or customer centred approach (Jaworski, Kohli & Sahay 2000; Slater & Narver 1994). The emphasis on the customer being the central figure in SSAP development harmonises with the service dominant logic paradigm pursued in the services marketing literature (Vargo 2006, 2008). Intrinsically, it is an ideology that puts the customer at the starting point of any value creation activity. Simply put, it is an area of needs and needs assessment that often appears in the concluding remarks of small business research yet its learning and applications are not explored fully. Academic research has yet to learn from current practice in which the World Bank takes a lead role in the development of market oriented solutions for its client country.

Finally, the study identifies and clearly articulates the mismatch between needs and support services in the context of Fiji. The study attributes the mismatch problem to the lack of preparation, cultural misfit, inadequate sources of finance and the lack of management expertise. Although these problems were not unique to Fiji, similar experiences in developed and developing countries were identified in the extant literature. However, variation lies in the process and delivery of SSAP suite of products and services based on sectoral objectives, policy directions and target group.

In the Fijian context, the building blocks for a small business solution came from the experiential claims of research participants gathered through a process of co-construction. These are important learnings in SSAP research that could be shared with other countries, particularly those in a similar stage of development to Fiji, that are involved in private and public support services. Without an understanding of the problem in its specific context, any small business growth approach to address local need could be erring towards irrelevancy and ineffectiveness, as evidenced in the literature. In addition, understanding the local knowledge and underlying business conditions can only be possible if SBOs, that is, those carrying the problem, are included in consultative *talanoa* sessions. Prescriptions and treatment for business ailments are also constructed through the same process. However, the findings from the research alluded to the need for preparation in terms of training and capacity building so that the person participating in a SSAP can make meaningful contributions. In this manner, there is a better chance of small business survival and growth than the top down generic business solutions offered by service providers.

5.3.6 Research limitations and future research

As pointed out in Section 3.6, one of the real challenges faced by the researcher whilst undertaking data collection in Fiji was the reluctance of potential interview candidates to engage in the research. An element of fear had gripped every potential small business candidate following a decree that barred people from criticising the military government and the media reports of physical abuse of people caught and/or reported to the military. One of the interviewees had an encounter with the military

before he was approached for the study. Although he participated in the *talanoa* sessions, his perceptions about the SSAP phenomenon could have been influenced by the military actions and the media decree. Therefore, the notion of openness or free expression expected in phenomenological research was to some extent limited and thus the co-construction of knowledge becomes difficult. Now that a Fijian democratically elected government is in place, the selection of another participatory group in small business research could be considered in the immediate future.

Since IPA is a new methodological tool, but commonly used in psychology, health and education (Chapman & Smith 2002; Smith, JA 2004), its use in small business research is not without limitations. First, the sample size is typically small (Smith, JA, Flowers & Larkin 2008). In the case of the current study, 19 research participants were chosen. The findings are context-specific, thus ruling out the possibility of transferring the research findings to other research settings. Second, IPA has its roots in phenomenology and symbolic interactionism (Chapman & Smith 2002; Smith, JA 1999) which excludes objective assessments of reality, but is focussed rather on how human beings perceives reality from their own self-reflection and understanding of the object in view.

Given this, a mixed research methodology is suggested to take advantage of the objective and subjective measurement dimensions used in quantitative and qualitative research respectively. A possible research area is to measure the change in small business outcomes after the utilisation of external support services. Here change in small business is treated as a function of small business expectation and small business satisfaction. Alternatively, two controlled groups could be selected for a mixed study where the performance of supported SBOs are compared with the performance of non-supported SBOs, using measurement dimensions suggested by Bennett and Robson (2005).

The use of ‘friends’ in the *talanoa* approach is another area of limitation because of risks associated with selection bias. The mixed *talanoa* approach advanced in the study is based on the view that meaningful and rich content descriptions of the SSAP phenomenon could only be possible if there was trust, respect and understanding between the researcher and the research participants (Nabobo-Baba 2006; Prescott

2011). For this reason, a 'friend' relationship was initially established away from the research to connect with the research participants' lived world and environment. The establishment of friends in this manner may be deemed as a violation of the bracketing rule, as suggested in phenomenological research (Giorgi 1997, 2010; Smith, JA, Flowers & Larkin 2008). Connections with friends was, however, necessary given the context of the study and its appropriateness and usage in Pacific research (Farrelly 2011). Furthermore, such connections or embedding in the socio-cultural environment does not necessarily mean bias because care is taken to validate the contents of the *talanoa* descriptions, as described under Step 4 of subsection 3.4.5.

5.3.7 Final conclusions

This study commenced with the thesis: SSAPs are not working in Pacific island countries. Whilst the evidence in the literature was mixed because of differentials in SSAP product type, objectives, support structure and delivery mechanisms between selected countries, the findings in Fiji lend support to the thesis proposition based on the phenomenological experiences of research participants. The findings suggest a lack of market coordination between those demanding support services and the providers of SSAPs, as evidenced by a mismatch of needs and SSAP offerings. It also suggests the working of large and powerful service providers driving the SSAP market who may see little value in talking to small and micro businesses unless through moral suasion. For this reason, a development framework grounded in market orientation and a service dominant logic paradigm is offered as a basis for pursuing a co-creation and co-development SSAP approach.

Central to this framework is the understanding of small business needs in terms of problem definition, identifying the causes of the problems, the development of prescriptions and the design of appropriate solutions, including on-going management of care. If this framework does work, there will be improvement in the delivery of small business support services in Fiji and other developing countries with similar environmental conditions. Further, it could also mean the reinvigoration

of donor agencies' interest, particularly among those that have experienced donor fatigue due to poor program performance in the past.

In conclusion, the purpose of the research was to capture the support services experience in a Pacific island country and to fill the knowledge gap in the delivery of small business support services in deeply embedded socio-cultural conditions. A better understanding of the socio-cultural conditions and its influence has a lot to offer in understanding the needs and expectation of small businesses now pleading for context specific support services and assistance programs.

References

Acs, ZJ 2006, 'How is entrepreneurship good for economic growth?', *Innovations: Technology, Governance, Globalization*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 97-107.

Acs, ZJ, Arenius, P, Hay, M & Minniti, M 2005, *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM): Executive Report*, London Business School, UK and Babson College.

Acs, ZJ & Audretsch, DB 1993, *Small firms and entrepreneurship: an East-West perspective*, Cambridge University Press.

Acs, ZJ & Szerb, L 2007, 'Entrepreneurship, economic growth and public policy', *Small Business Economics*, vol. 28, no. 2, pp. 109-22.

ADB 2011, *Workshop Report: "The Millennium Development Goals in Pacific Island Countries" - Taking stock, emerging issues, and the way forward*, Asian Development Bank, Philippines.

Agarwal, R, Audretsch, D & Sarkar, M 2007, 'The process of creative construction: knowledge spillovers, entrepreneurship and economic growth', *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, vol. 1 no. 3-4, pp. 263-86.

Altschuld, JW & Witkin, BR 2000, *From needs assessment to action: Transforming needs into solution strategies*, Sage Publications.

Annells, M 1996, 'Hermeneutic phenomenology: Philosophical perspectives and current use in nursing research', *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, vol. 23, no. 4, pp. 705-18.

Audet, J & St-Jean, E 2007, 'Factors affecting the use of public support services by SME owners: evidence from a periphery region of Canada', *Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship*, vol. 12, no. 02, pp. 165-80.

AusAID 2006, *Pacific 2020: Challenges and Opportunities for Growth*, Australian Government Agency for International Development, <www.ausaid.gov.au/publications>.

—— 2010, *Australia's regional aid program to the Pacific: 2011 - 2015*, Australian Government Agency for International Development.

—— 2011a, *Fiji Community Development Program (FCDP): Program Design Document*, Australian Government Agency for International Development, <www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/pubout.cfm?ID=4063_3633>.

—— 2011b, *Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness*, Australian Government Agency for International Development.

—— 2012, *Pacific Regional Program: Annual Program Performance Report 2011*, Canberra.

—— 2014, *Aid Program Performance Report 2013-2014*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian Government.

Baldacchino, G 1999, 'Small business in small islands: A case study from Fiji', *Journal of Small Business Management*, vol. 37, no. 4, pp. 80-4.

Bandara, W 2006, 'Using Nvivo as a research management tool: A case narrative', in *Quality and Impact of Qualitative Research: Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Qualitative Research in IT & IT in Qualitative Research*, Griffith University, Brisbane.

Barney, JB 1996, 'The resource-based theory of the firm', *Organization Science*, vol. 7, p. 469.

—— 2001, 'Resource-based theories of competitive advantage: A ten-year retrospective on the resource-based view', *Journal of Management*, vol. 27, no. 6, pp. 643-50.

Basit, T 2003, 'Manual or electronic? The role of coding in qualitative data analysis', *Educational Research*, vol. 45, no. 2, pp. 143-54.

Batra, G & Mahmood, S 2003, *Direct support to private firms: Evidence on effectiveness*, The World Bank.

Bazeley, P 2009, 'Analysing qualitative data: More than 'identifying themes'', *Malaysian Journal of Qualitative Research*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 6-22.

Beck, T & Demirguc-Kunt, A 2006, 'Small and medium-size enterprises: Access to finance as a growth constraint', *Journal of Banking & Finance*, vol. 30, no. 11, pp. 2931-43.

Begley, TM 1995, 'Using founder status, age of firm, and company growth rate as the basis for distinguishing entrepreneurs from managers of smaller businesses', *Journal of Business Venturing*, vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 249-63.

Bennett, R 2007, 'Expectations-based evaluation of SME advice and consultancy: an example of business link services', *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 435-57.

—— 2008, 'SME policy support in Britain since the 1990s: What have we learnt?', *Environment and Planning: Government & Policy*, vol. 26, no. 2, pp. 375-97.

Bennett, R, Bratton, W & Robson, P 2000, 'Business advice: the influence of distance', *Regional Studies*, vol. 34, no. 9, pp. 813-28.

Bennett, R & Robson, P 1999, 'Business Link: use, satisfaction and comparison with Business Shop and Business Connect', *Policy Studies*, vol. 20, no. 2, pp. 107-31.

—— 2003, 'Changing use of external business advice and government supports by SMEs in the 1990s', *Regional Studies*, vol. 37, no. 8, pp. 795-811.

—— 2004, 'Support services for SMEs: does thefranchisee'make a difference to the Business Link offer?', *Environment and Planning : Government and Policy*, vol. 22, pp. 859-80.

—— 2005, 'The Advisor-SMF Client Relationship: Impact, Satisfaction and Commitment', *Small Business Economics*, vol. 25, no. 3, pp. 255-71.

Bennett, R, Robson, P & Bratton, W 2001a, 'Government advice networks for SMEs: an assessment of the influence of local context on Business Link use, impact and satisfaction', *Applied Economics*, vol. 33, no. 7, pp. 871-85.

—— 2001b, 'The influence of location on the use by SMEs of external advice and collaboration', *Urban Studies*, vol. 38, no. 9, pp. 1531-57.

Bennett, R & Smith, C 2002, 'The influence of location and distance on the supply of business advice', *Environment and Planning*, vol. 34, no. 2, pp. 251-70.

Berg, BL & Lune, H 2004, *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* Pearson Boston, MA.

Berger, A, Rosen, RJ & Udell, G 2007, 'Does market size structure affect competition? The case of small business lending', *Journal of Banking & Finance*, vol. 31, no. 1, pp. 11-33.

Berger, A & Udell, G 2002, 'Small business credit availability and relationship lending: The importance of bank organisational structure', *The Economic Journal*, vol. 112, no. 477, pp. F32-F53.

Berger, P & Luckmann, T 1966, *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*, Allen Lane.

Berry, AJ, Sweeting, R & Goto, J 2006, 'The effect of business advisers on the performance of SMEs', *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 33-47.

Blumberg, BF & Letterie, WA 2005, 'Which Business Starters Experience Limited Access to Bank Funds?', in *Jahrbuch Entrepreneurship 2004/05*, Springer, pp. 177-93.

—— 2008, 'Business starters and credit rationing', *Small Business Economics*, vol. 30, no. 2, pp. 187-200.

Bosma, N & Levie, J 2010, *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2009 Executive Report*, Global Entrepreneurship Research Consortium (GERA), Babson College and London Business School.

Boter, H & Lundström, A 2005, 'SME perspectives on business support services', *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 244-58.

Breen, J & Bergin-Seers, S 2002, 'The small business assistance dilemma: is the disparity between the offerings of support agencies and the needs of businesses irreconcilable?', *Small Enterprise Research*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 49-58.

Briggs, LJ 1991, *Instructional design: Principles and applications*, Educational Technology Publications.

Briguglio, L 1995, 'Small island developing states and their economic vulnerabilities', *World Development*, vol. 23, no. 9, pp. 1615-32.

—— 2003, 'The vulnerability index and small island developing states: A review of conceptual and methodological issues', in *AIMS Regional Preparatory Meeting on the Ten Year Review of the Barbados Programme of Action: Praia, Cape Verde*.

Brown, K 2003a, 'Integrating conservation and development: A case of institutional misfit', *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, vol. 1, no. 9, pp. 479-87.

—— 2003b, 'Three challenges for a real people centred conservation', *Global Ecology and Biogeography*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 89-92.

Bryson, J & Daniels, P 1998, 'Business Link, strong ties, and the walls of silence: small and medium-sized enterprises and external business-service expertise', *Environment and Planning*, vol. 16, pp. 265-80.

Bryson, J, Daniels, P & Ingram, D 1999, 'Evaluating the impact of business link on the performance and profitability of SMEs in the United Kingdom', *Policy Studies*, vol. 20, no. 2, pp. 95-105.

Cahn, M 2008, 'Indigenous entrepreneurship, culture and micro-enterprise in the Pacific Islands: case studies from Samoa', *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 1-18.

Carland, J, Carland, J & Hoy, F 2002, '" Who is an entrepreneur?" Is a question worth asking', *Entrepreneurship: Critical Perspectives on Business and Management*, vol. 2, p. 178.

Carland, J, Hoy, F, Boulton, WR & Carland 1984, 'Differentiating entrepreneurs from small business owners: A conceptualization', *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 354-9.

Carson, D, Cromie, S, McGowan, P & Hill, J 1995, *Marketing and entrepreneurship in SMEs: An innovative approach*, vol. 1, Prentice Hall, London.

Chan, KW, Yim, CK & Lam, SS 2010, 'Is customer participation in value creation a double-edged sword? Evidence from professional financial services across cultures', *Journal of Marketing*, vol. 74, no. 3, pp. 48-64.

Chand, S 2003, 'Economic trends in the Pacific island countries', *Pacific Economic Bulletin*, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 1-15.

—— 2007, '50/50 by 2020: poverty and redistributive politics in post-independence Fiji', *Pacific Economic Bulletin*, vol. 22, no. 2, pp. 22-35.

Chapman, E & Smith, JA 2002, 'Interpretative phenomenological analysis and the new genetics', *Journal of Health Psychology*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 125-30.

Chrisman, JJ & McMullan, W 2004, 'Outsider assistance as a knowledge resource for new venture survival', *Journal of Small Business Management*, vol. 42, no. 3, pp. 229-44.

Clark, PA 2008, 'Social Capital and Vanua: Challenges to governance development in a community-based natural resources management project in Cuvu Tikina, Fiji islands', Masters of Science in Resource Conservation, International Conservation and Development thesis, The University of Montana, Missoula, <files.peacecorps.gov/multimedia/pdf/learn/whyvol/masters/.../Clarkp.pdf>.

Clarke, GRG, Cull, R & Martinez Peria, MS 2006, 'Foreign bank participation and access to credit across firms in developing countries', *Journal of Comparative Economics*, vol. 34, no. 4, pp. 774-95.

Clifford, MM 1984, 'Thoughts on a theory of constructive failure', *Educational Psychologist*, vol. 19, no. 2, pp. 108-20.

Collier, P 2008, *The bottom billion: Why the poorest countries are failing and what can be done about it*, Oxford University Press.

Conroy, J 2003, *Fiji Microfinance Policy Review*, Financial & Private Sector Development Unit, East Asia & Pacific Region, World Bank.

Craig, BR, Jackson, WE & Thomson, JB 2008, 'Credit market failure intervention: Do government sponsored small business credit programs enrich poorer areas?', *Small Business Economics*, vol. 30, no. 4, pp. 345-60.

Creswell, JW 2009, *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks.

Creswell, JW, Plano Clark, VL, Gutmann, ML & Hanson, WE 2003, 'Advanced mixed methods research designs', in *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioral Research*, pp. 209-40.

Crotty, M 1998, *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*, Sage Publications

Crowards, T 2002, 'Defining the category of 'small' states', *Journal of International Development*, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 143-79.

Curran, J 1991, *Paths of Enterprise: The Future of Small Business*, Routledge.

—— 2000, 'What is small business policy in the UK for? Evaluation and assessing small business policies', *International Small Business Journal*, vol. 18, no. 3, pp. 36-50.

Curran, J & Blackburn, R 1994, *Small firms and local economic networks: the death of the local economy?*, Paul Chapman.

Dana, LP 2001, 'The education and training of entrepreneurs in Asia', *Education and Training*, vol. 43, no. 8/9, pp. 405-16.

—— (ed.) 2007, *Toward a multidisciplinary definition of indigenous entrepreneurship*, International Handbook of Research on Indigenous Entrepreneurship, Edward Elgar Publishing Massachusetts

Dana, LP & Anderson, RB 2007, *International handbook of research on indigenous entrepreneurship*, Edward Elgar, Northampton, MA.

Dana, LP & Galbraith, CS 2006, 'Poverty, Developing Entrepreneurship and Aid Economics in Mozambique: A Review of Empirical Research', *International Research in the Business Disciplines*, vol. 5, Emerald Group Publishing Limited, pp. 187-201.

Darcy, J & Hofmann, CA 2003, *According to need?: needs assessment and decision-making in the humanitarian sector*, Humanitarian Policy Group, Overseas Development Institute.

Davis, DJF 1952, 'An analysis of some failure data', *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, vol. 47, no. 258, pp. 113-50.

DBIS, 2013, *Statistical Release: Business population esdtimates for the UK & Regions 2013*, Department for Business Innovation and Skills (DBIS), Sheffield, <https://www.gov.uk/>.

De Faoite, D, Henry, C, Johnston, K & Van Der Sijde, P 2004, 'Entrepreneurs' attitudes to training and support initiatives: evidence from Ireland and The Netherlands', *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 440-8.

Deakins, D, Sullivan, R & Whittam, G 2000, 'Developing business start-up support programmes: evidence from Scotland', *Local Economy*, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 159-67.

Denzin, NK & Lincoln, YS 2000, 'The discipline and practice of qualitative research', *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, vol. 2, pp. 1-28.

—— 2011, *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Sage Publications.

Deo, HD 1999, 'A Foucauldian analysis of development banking lending practices: a case study of the Fiji development Bank (FDB) 1967-1997: ' A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree Doctor of Philosophy thesis, University of Wollongong.

Department of Trade and Industry 1996, *Business Link Bulletin special edition*, Sheffield, UK.

Dibb, P 2005, *The Arc of Instability and the North of Australia: Are They Still Relevant to Australia's New Defence Posture?*, The State of the North: A Selection of Papers from the 2003 Charles Darwin Symposia, Charles Darwin University Press, Darwin.

Dobbs, M & Hamilton, RT 2007, 'Small business growth: Recent evidence and new directions', *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research*, vol. 13, no. 5, pp. 296-322.

Donaldson, M 1991, 'Te'o IJ Fairbairn, ed., Island Entrepreneurs: Problems and Performances in the Pacific', *Pacific Studies*, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 197-202.

Drucker, PF 1993, *Management: Tasks, Responsibilities and Practices*, Harper Paperbacks.

—— 1999, *Innovation and entrepreneurship: Practice and principles*, Butterworth-Heinemann Oxford.

Duncan, R & Chand, S 2002, 'The economics of the 'arc of instability'', *Asian Pacific Economic Literature*, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 1-9.

Dunsby, B 1996, 'Small firms policy proposals-meeting the needs of start-ups and micro-businesses', in *19th ISBA National Small Firms Policy and Research Conference*.

Eakin, H & Lemos, MC 2006, 'Adaptation and the state: Latin America and the challenge of capacity-building under globalization', *Global Environmental Change*, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 7-18.

Easterly, W & Mueller, RAE 2008, 'The White Man's Burden', *Quarterly Journal of International Agriculture*, vol. 47, no. 1, p. 75.

Eisenhardt, KM 1989, 'Agency theory: An assessment and review', *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 57-74.

Elena-Yusuf, J 2010, 'Meeting entrepreneurs' support needs: are assistance programs effective?', *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 294-307.

—— 2012, 'Why do nascent entrepreneurs use external assistance programs?', *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Public Policy*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 166-82.

Ernst & Young 1996, *Evaluation of Business Links: a report prepared by Ernst & Young for the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)*, London.

ESCAP, PO 2007, *Improving employment opportunities in Pacific island developing countries*, United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Suva.

European Commission 2002, *A study of business support servicess and market failure*, Foundation for SME development at the University of Durham viewed 7/02/2015, <C:/Users/.../Downloads/business_support_services_and_market_failure_4160.pdf>.

Fairbairn, TIJ 1988a, *Indigenous entrepreneurship and business development in the Cook Islands*, East-West Center Honolulu.

—— 1988b, *Island entrepreneurs: problems and performances in the Pacific*, East-West Center, Honolulu, Hawaii.

—— 2006, 'Entrepreneurship and small business development: A pacific perspective', *Journal of Small Business and Entrepreneurship*, vol. 19, no. 4, p. 355.

Fairlie, R & Marion, J 2012, 'Affirmative action programs and business ownership among minorities and women', *Small Business Economics*, vol. 39, no. 2, pp. 319-39.

Falkenheim, M & Powell, A 2001, *The use of credit bureau information in the estimation of appropriate capital and provisioning requirements*.

Farrelly, TA 2009, 'Business va'avanua: cultural hybridisation and indigenous entrepreneurship in the Bouma National Heritage Park, Fiji: a thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Social Anthropology', Massey University.

—— 2010, *Reimagining 'environment' in sustainable development.*, Institute of Development Studies Working Paper Series 1/2010, Institute of Development Studies Massey University, Palmerston North, N.Z, 1179-2973, <http://hdl.handle.net/10179/1473>.

—— 2011, 'Indigenous and democratic decision-making: issues from community-based ecotourism in the Boumā National Heritage Park, Fiji', *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, vol. 19, no. 7, pp. 817-35.

Farrelly, TA & Nabobo-Baba, U 2014, 'Talanoa as Empathic Research', *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, vol. 55, no. 3, pp. 319-30.

FDB 2012, *Annual Report of the Fiji Development Bank (FDB) for the year 2010/11*, Fiji Development Bank, Suva, Fiji, <http://www.fdb.com.fj/pages.cfm/quick-links/annual-reports.html>.

Feeny, S & McGillivray, M 2008, 'Do Pacific countries receive too much foreign aid?', *Pacific Economic Bulletin*, vol. 23, no. 2, pp. 166-78.

Fielden, SL, Davidson, MJ & Makin, PJ 2000, 'Barriers encountered during micro and small business start-up in North-West England', *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, vol. 7, no. 4, pp. 295-304.

Fiji Bureau of Statistics 2004, *Current Economic Survey*, Fiji Bureau of Statistics (FBoS), Suva Fiji.

—— 2007, *Fiji National Census Report*, Fiji Bureau of Statistics (FBoS), Suva, Fiji.

Flick, U 2014, *An introduction to qualitative research*, Sage Publications.

Flick, U, Kvale, S, Angrosino, MV, Barbour, RS, Banks, M, Gibbs, G & Rapley, T 2007, *The Sage Qualitative Research Kit*, Sage Publications, London.

Ford, DP, Connelly, CE & Meister, DB 2003, 'Information systems research and Hofstede's culture's consequences: an uneasy and incomplete partnership', *IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management*, vol. 50, no. 1, pp. 8-25.

Freel, M 2007, 'Are small innovators credit rationed?', *Small Business Economics*, vol. 28, no. 1, pp. 23-35.

Freel, M, Carter, S, Tagg, S & Mason, C 2012, 'The latent demand for bank debt: characterizing "discouraged borrowers"', *Small Business Economics*, vol. 38, no. 4, pp. 399-418.

Gartner, WB 1988, 'Who is an entrepreneur? Is the wrong question', *American Journal of Small Business*, vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 11-32.

Gelo, O, Braakmann, D & Benetka, G 2008, 'Quantitative and qualitative research: Beyond the debate', *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, vol. 42, no. 3, pp. 266-90.

Gibb, A 1987a, 'Designing effective programmes for encouraging the business start-up process: lessons from UK experience', *Journal of European Industrial Training*, vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 24-32.

—— 1987b, 'Enterprise culture—its meaning and implications for education and training', *Journal of European Industrial Training*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 2-38.

—— 1993a, 'Enterprise Culture and Education Understanding Enterprise Education and Its Links with Small Business, Entrepreneurship and Wider Educational Goals', *International Small Business Journal*, vol. 11, no. 3, pp. 11-34.

—— 1993b, 'Key factors in the design of policy support for the small and medium enterprise (SME) development process: an overview', *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 1-24.

—— 1996, 'Entrepreneurship and Small Business Management: Can We Afford to Neglect Them in the Twenty first Century Business School?', *British Journal of Management*, vol. 7, no. 4, pp. 309-21.

—— 1997, 'Small firms' training and competitiveness. Building upon the small business as a learning organisation', *International Small Business Journal*, vol. 15, no. 3, p. 13.

—— 1999, 'Creating an entrepreneurial culture in support of SMEs', *Small Enterprise Development*, vol. 10, no. 4, pp. 27-38.

—— 2000, 'SME policy, academic research and the growth of ignorance, mythical concepts, myths, assumptions, rituals and confusions', *International Small Business Journal*, vol. 18, no. 3, pp. 13-35.

—— 2006, 'Making markets in business development services for SMEs', *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 263-83.

Gibb, A & Li, J 2003, 'Organizing for enterprise in China: what can we learn from the Chinese micro, small, and medium enterprise development experience', *Futures*, vol. 35, no. 4, pp. 403-21.

Gibb, A & Scott, M 1985, 'Strategic awareness, personal commitment and the process of planning in the small business', *Journal of Management Studies*, vol. 22, no. 6, pp. 597-631.

Gibson, D 2012, 'The Cultural Challenges Faced by Indigenous-Owned Small Medium Tourism Enterprises in Fiji', *The Journal of Pacific Studies*, vol. 32, no. 2, pp. 102-26.

Giorgi, A 1997, 'The theory, practice, and evaluation of the phenomenological method as a qualitative research procedure', *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, vol. 28, no. 2, pp. 235-61.

—— 2010, 'Phenomenology and the practice of science', *Existential Analysis: Journal of the Society for Existential Analysis*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 3-22.

Gounder, N & Prasad, BC 2005, *What Does Affirmative Action Affirm?: An Analysis of the Affirmative Action Programmes for Development in the Fiji Islands*, School of Economics Working Paper 2005/27, University of the South Pacific, Suva

Granovetter, M 1992, 'Economic institutions as social constructions: A framework for analysis', *Acta sociologica*, vol. 35, no. 1, pp. 3-11.

—— 2005, 'The impact of social structure on economic outcomes', *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, vol. 1, pp. 33-50.

Guba, EG & Lincoln, YS 1994, 'Competing paradigms in qualitative research', *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, vol. 2, pp. 163-94.

Gupta, K 2007, *A practical guide to needs assessment: Updated and expanded by Catherine M.Sleezer and Darlene F. Russ-Eft*, 2nd edn, Pfeiffer.

—— 2011, *A Practical guide to Needs Assessment*, John Wiley & Sons.

Hailey, JM 1985, 'Enterprise Support Organisations in the South Pacific', *International Journal of Manpower*, vol. 6, no. 4, pp. 28-31.

—— 1986, 'Pacific business: Small indigenous business in the Pacific', *International Small Business Journal*, vol. 5, no. 1, p. 31.

—— 1987, *Entrepreneurs and Indigenous Business in the Pacific*, PIDP East West Centre, Honolulu Hawaii.

—— 1988, 'Fijian entrepreneurs: Indigenous business in Fiji', *Island Entrepreneurs: Problems and Performance in the Pacific, PIDP. Honolulu, East-West Center*.

—— 1992, 'The politics of entrepreneurship affirmative-action policies for indigenous entrepreneurs', *Small Enterprise Development*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 4-14.

Halapua, S 2000, 'Talanoa process: The case of Fiji', *East West Centre, Hawaii*.

Hallberg, K 1999, 'Small and medium scale enterprises: A framework for intervention', *The World Bank*.

—— 2000, *A market-oriented strategy for small and medium scale enterprises*, World Bank Publications.

Headd, B 2003, 'Redefining business success: Distinguishing between closure and failure', *Small Business Economics*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 51-61.

Hébert, R & Link, A 1989, 'In search of the meaning of entrepreneurship', *Small Business Economics*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 39-49.

—— 2006, 'The entrepreneur as innovator', *The Journal of Technology Transfer*, vol. 31, no. 5, pp. 589-97.

Henry, C, Hill, F & Leitch, C 2005, 'Entrepreneurship education and training: can entrepreneurship be taught? ', *Education and Training*, vol. 47, no. 2, pp. 98-111.

Hesse-Biber, SN & Leavy, P 2010, *The Pactice of Qualitative Research*, Sage Publications.

Hill, S & O'Cinneide, B 1998, 'Entrepreneurship education–case studies from the Celtic tiger', in *Proceedings of the Enterprise and Learning Conference*, pp. 3-19.

Hofstede, G 1983, 'National cultures revisited', *Cross-Cultural Research*, vol. 18, no. 4, pp. 285-305.

Hogan, P, Keesing, DB & Singer, A 1991, *The role of support services in expanding manufactured exports in developing countries*, vol. 28, World Bank Washington, DC.

Hughes 2003, 'Aid has failed the Pacific', *Issue analysis*, vol. 33, pp. 1-32.

Hurmerinta-Peltomäki, L & Nummela, N 1998, 'Market orientation for the public sector providing expert services for SMEs', *International Small Business Journal*, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 69-83.

—— 2004, 'From temporary support to systematic resource development: expert services from an SME perspective', *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 233-43.

Irvine, H & Deo, H 2006, 'The power of the lens: A comparative analysis of two views of the Fiji Development Bank', *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, vol. 19, no. 2, pp. 205-27.

Irwin, D 2011, 'Learning from business support in Africa', *Management Research Review*, vol. 34, no. 2, pp. 207-20.

Jaworski, BJ & Kohli, AK 1993, 'Market orientation: Antecedents and consequences', *The Journal of Marketing*, vol. 57, no. 3, pp. 53-70.

Jaworski, BJ, Kohli, AK & Sahay, A 2000, 'Market-driven versus driving markets', *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, vol. 28, no. 1, pp. 45-54.

Jay, L & Schaper, M 2003, 'Which advisers do micro-firms use? Some Australian evidence', *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 136-43.

Johnson, RB & Onwuegbuzie, AJ 2004, 'Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come', *Educational Researcher*, vol. 33, no. 7, p. 14.

Jones-Evans, D & Kirby, DA 1995, 'Small technical consultancies and their client customers: an analysis in North East England', *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 21-40.

Kaufman, R 2005, 'Defining and delivering measurable value: A mega thinking and planning primer', *Performance Improvement Quarterly*, vol. 18, no. 3, pp. 6-16.

—— 2006, 'Failure: What it is and how to invite it?', *Performance Improvement*, vol. 45, no. 7, pp. 9-12.

—— 2009, 'Mega thinking and planning: An introduction to defining and delivering individual and organizational success', *Performance Improvement Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 2, pp. 5-15.

—— 2010, 'The power of ones', *Performance Improvement Quarterly*, vol. 49, no. 3, pp. 31-4.

Kaufman, R & English, FW 1979, *Needs Assessment: Concept and Application*, Educational Technology Publications.

Kaufman, R, Rojas, AM & Mayer, H 1993, *Needs Assessment: A user's guide*, Educational Technology Publications.

Kelley, DJ, Singer, S & Herrington, MD 2011, *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) 2011 Global Report*, Babson College, Babson Park, MA, United States.

Kirby, DA 2004, 'Entrepreneurship education: Can business schools meet the challenge?', *Education and Training*, vol. 46, no. 8/9, pp. 510-9.

Koch, T 1995, 'Interpretive approaches in nursing research: The influence of Husserl and Heidegger', *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, vol. 21, no. 5, pp. 827-36.

—— 1998, 'Story telling: is it really research?', *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, vol. 28, no. 6, pp. 1182-90.

Kohli, AK & Jaworski, BJ 1990, 'Market orientation: The construct, research propositions, and managerial implications', *The Journal of Marketing*, vol. 54, no. 2, pp. 1-18.

Kvale, S 2008, *Doing Interviews*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks.

Kvale, S & Brinkmann, S 2009, *InterViews: learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*, Sage Publications, Los Angeles.

Ladhari, R, Pons, F, Bressolles, G & Zins, M 2011, 'Culture and personal values: How they influence perceived service quality', *Journal of Business Research*, vol. 64, no. 9, pp. 951-7.

Ladzani, W & Netswera, G 2009, 'Support for rural small businesses in Limpopo Province, South Africa', *Development Southern Africa*, vol. 26, no. 2, pp. 225-39.

Lambrecht, J & Pirnay, F 2005, 'An evaluation of public support measures for private external consultancies to SMEs in the Walloon Region of Belgium', *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 89-108.

Landstrom, H 2009, *Pioneers in entrepreneurship and small business research*, vol. 8, Springer.

Larkin, M, Watts, S & Clifton, E 2006, 'Giving voice and making sense in interpretative phenomenological analysis', *Qualitative research in psychology*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 102-20.

Larmour, P 2012, *Interpreting corruption: culture and politics in the Pacific islands*, 9780824835149, 082483514X, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, <http://vu.summon.serialssolutions.com/link>.

Leech, NL & Onwuegbuzie, AJ 2007, 'An array of qualitative data analysis tools: A call for data analysis triangulation', *School Psychology Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 4, p. 557.

Leigh, D, Watkins, R, Platt, WA & Kaufman, R 2000, 'Alternate models of needs assessment: Selecting the right one for your organization', *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, vol. 11, no. 1, p. 87.

Li, J & Matlay, H 2006, 'Chinese entrepreneurship and small business development: an overview and research agenda', *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 248-62.

Liamputtong, P 2012, *Qualitative research methods*, Oxford University Press, South Melbourne, Vic.

Lumpkin, GT & Dess, GG 2001, 'Linking two dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation to firm performance: The moderating role of environment and industry life cycle', *Journal of Business Venturing*, vol. 16, no. 5, pp. 429-51.

Lusch, RF, Vargo, SL & O'Brien, M 2007, 'Competing through service: Insights from service-dominant logic', *Journal of Retailing*, vol. 83, no. 1, pp. 5-18.

Maiava, S 2001, *A clash of paradigms: Intervention, response and development in the South Pacific*, Ashgate Publishing Ltd, Aldershot UK.

Mapp, T 2008, 'Understanding phenomenology: the lived experience', *British Journal of Midwifery*, vol. 16, no. 5, pp. 308-11.

Maxwell, JA 1992, 'Understanding and validity in qualitative research', *Harvard educational review*, vol. 62, no. 3, pp. 279-301.

—— 2012, *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*, vol. 41, Sage.

McCraw, TK 2007, *Prophet of innovation: Joseph Schumpeter and creative destruction*, Belknap Press.

McGregor, A, Tora, L, Banford, G & McGregor, K 2011, *The Tutu Rural Training Centre: Lessons in non-formal adult education for self employed in agriculture*.

McKinney, V, Yoon, K & Zahedi, FM 2002, 'The Measurement of Web-Customer Satisfaction: An Expectation and Disconfirmation Approach', *Information Systems Research*, vol. 13, no. 3, pp. 296-315.

McMullan, E, Chrisman, JJ & Vesper, K 2001, 'Some problems in using subjective measures of effectiveness to evaluate entrepreneurial assistance programs', *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, vol. 26, no. 1, pp. 37-54.

Miles, MB & Huberman, AM 1994, *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*, Sage.

Ministry of Finance, F 1999, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Financial Services*, Fiji.

Minkler, M 2004, 'Ethical challenges for the "outside" researcher in community-based participatory research', *Health Education & Behavior*, vol. 31, no. 6, pp. 684-97.

Mole, K 2000, 'Gambling for growth or settling for survival: the dilemma of the small business adviser', *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, vol. 7, no. 4, pp. 305-14.

—— 2002a, 'Business advisers' impact on SMEs', *International Small Business Journal*, vol. 20, no. 2, p. 139.

—— 2002b, 'Business Advisers' Impact on SMEs: An Agency Theory Approach', *International Small Business Journal*, vol. 20, no. 2, pp. 139-62.

—— 2002c, 'Street-level technocracy in UK small business support: Business Links, personal business advisers, and the small business service', *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, vol. 20, no. 2, pp. 179-94.

—— 2007, 'Tacit knowledge, heuristics, consistency and error signals: How do business advisers diagnose their SME clients?', *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, vol. 14, no. 4, pp. 582-601.

Mole, K, Hart, M, Roper, S & Saal, D 2008, 'Differential gains from Business Link support and advice: a treatment effects approach', *Environment and planning. C, Government & policy*, vol. 26, no. 2, p. 315.

Mole, K, Hart, M, Roper, S & Saal, DS 2011, 'Broader or deeper? Exploring the most effective intervention profile for public small business support', *Environment and Planning-Part A*, vol. 43, no. 1, p. 87.

Mole, K & Keogh, W 2009, 'The implications of public sector small business advisers becoming strategic sounding boards: England and Scotland compared', *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 77-97.

Moore, SL, Brethower, D & Kaufman, R 2008, 'Learning objects: Solutions in search of problems?', *Performance Improvement*, vol. 47, no. 1, pp. 5-8.

Morris, MW, Leung, K, Ames, D & Lickel, B 1999, 'Views from inside and outside: Integrating emic and etic insights about culture and justice judgment', *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 24, no. 4, pp. 781-96.

Morrison, K 2008, 'Indigenous entrepreneurship in Samoa in the face of neo-colonialism and globalization', *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy*, vol. 2, no. 3, pp. 240-53.

Moustakas, C 1994, *Phenomenological Research Methods*, Sage.

Moyo, D 2009, *Dead aid: why aid is not working and how there is another way for Africa*, Allen Lane, London.

Nabobo-Baba, U 2006, *Knowing and learning: An indigenous Fijian approach*, The University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji.

—— 2011, 'Decolonising framings in Pacific research: Indigenous Fijian Vanua research framework as an organic response', *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 140-54.

Nainoca, WU 2011, 'The influence of the Fijian way of life (bula vakavanua) on community-based marine conservation (CBMC) in Fiji, with a focus on social capital and traditional ecological knowledge (TEK): a thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Resource and Environmental Planning ', Doctor of Philosophy thesis, Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand.

Nair, R & Chelliah, J 2012, 'Understanding Key Impediments to Small Businesses In South Pacific Island Nations: A Case of Fiji', *Journal of Global Business Management*, vol. 8, no. 1.

Nand, SS 2014, 'A Study of Small And Micro Enterprise Regulatory Impediments in Fiji', in *Urbanization in Asia*, Springer, pp. 199-211.

Narube, S 2008, *Microfinance, the economy and challenges in Fiji*, Suva, Fiji.

Narver, JC & Slater, SF 1990, 'The effect of a market orientation on business profitability', *The Journal of Marketing*, vol. 54, no. 4, pp. 20-35.

Naudé, W 2010, 'Entrepreneurship, developing countries, and development economics: new approaches and insights', *Small Business Economics*, vol. 34, no. 1, pp. 1-12.

NCSMED 2006, *National Centre for Small Micro Enterprises Annual Report, 2003 - 2005*, Ministry of Trade & Commerce, Suva, Fiji.

Neergaard, H & Ulhøi, JP 2007, *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods in Entrepreneurship*, Edward Elgar Publishing.

Netswera, F 2001, 'Perceptions of Johannesburg small business operators about their small business support systems', *South African Journal of Business and Management*, vol. 32, no. 4, p. 4.

Neuman, L 1997, *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, Allyn and Bacon.

Newbert, SL 2007, 'Empirical research on the resource-based view of the firm: an assessment and suggestions for future research', *Strategic Management Journal*, vol. 28, no. 2, pp. 121-46.

Nooteboom, B, Zwart, P & Bijmolt, T 1992, 'Transaction costs and standardisation in professional services to small business', *Small Business Economics*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 141-51.

North, DC 1990, *Institutions, institutional change, and economic performance*, Cambridge University Press, New York.

OECD 2007, *A Framework for Addressing and Measuring Entrepreneurship*, Paris.

—— 2008, *OECD Framework for the Evaluation of SME and Entrepreneurship Policies and Programmes*, OECD Publishing.

Oliver, DG, Serovich, JM & Mason, TL 2005, 'Constraints and opportunities with interview transcription: Towards reflection in qualitative research', *Social Forces*, vol. 84, no. 2, pp. 1273-89.

Oliver, RL 1977, 'Effect of expectation and disconfirmation on postexposure product evaluations: An alternative interpretation', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 62, no. 4, p. 480.

Oliver, RL & Burke, RR 1999, 'Expectation Processes in Satisfaction Formation A Field Study', *Journal of Service Research*, vol. 1, no. 3, pp. 196-214.

Osborn, M & Smith, JA 1998, 'The personal experience of chronic benign lower back pain: An interpretative phenomenological analysis', *British Journal of Health Psychology*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 65-83.

Otsuka, S 2006, 'Talanoa research: culturally appropriate design in Fiji', in *Proceedings of the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) 2005 International Education Research Conference: Creative Dissent-Constructive Solutions* Melbourne, Australia.

Otunuku, M 2011, 'How can talanoa be used effectively an an indigenous research methodology with Tongan people?', *Pacific-Asian Education*, vol. 23, no. 2, pp. 43-52.

Pacific Plan Review 2013, *Report to Pacific Leaders*, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Suva, Fiji.

Pathak, RD & Kumar, N 2008, 'The key factors contributing to successful performance of cooperatives in Fiji for building a harmonious society', *International Journal of Public Administration*, vol. 31, no. 6, pp. 690-706.

Patton, MQ 1990, *Qualitative evaluation and research methods (2nd ed.)*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA, US.

—— 1994, 'Developmental evaluation', *American Journal of Evaluation*, vol. 15, no. 3, pp. 311-9.

—— 2008, *Utilization-focused evaluation*, Sage Publications.

Peacock, R 1985, 'Finding the causes of small business failure', in *Management Forum*, vol. 11, pp. 77–89.

Penrose, ET 2002, *The Theory of the Growth of the Firm (2nd ed.)*, Oxford University Press.

Peredo, AM & Anderson, RB 2006, 'Indigenous entrepreneurship research: Themes and variations', *International Research in the Business Disciplines*, vol. 5, pp. 253-73.

Peterson, RA 1984, 'Small business management assistance: Needs and sources', *American Journal of Small Business*, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 35-45.

PMO 2006, *Opportunities for All*, Office of the Prime Minister, Parliamentary Paper No 83/06, Suva, Fiji.

Polkinghorne, D 1983, *Methodology for the Human Sciences: Systems of Inquiry*, University of New York Press, Albany: State.

—— 1989, 'Phenomenological research methods', in *Existential-phenomenological perspectives in psychology*, Springer, New York: Plenum, pp. 41-60.

Powell, H, Mihalas, S, Onwuegbuzie, AJ, Suldo, S & Daley, CE 2008, 'Mixed methods research in school psychology: A mixed methods investigation of trends in the literature', *Psychology in the Schools*, vol. 45, no. 4, pp. 291-309.

Powell, RA & Single, HM 1996, 'Focus groups', *International journal for quality in health care*, vol. 8, no. 5, pp. 499-504.

Prahalad, CK & Hammond, A 2002, 'Serving the world's poor, profitably', *Harvard business review*, vol. 80, no. 9, pp. 48-59.

Prasad, BC 2008, 'Institutions, good governance and economic growth in the Pacific Island countries', *International Journal of Social Economics*, vol. 35, no. 12, pp. 904-18.

Prasad, N 2008, 'Growth and social development in the Pacific Island countries', *International Journal of Social Economics*, vol. 35, no. 12, pp. 930-50.

Pratt, S, Gibson, D & Movono, A 2013, 'Tribal tourism in Fiji: An application and extension of Smith's 4Hs of indigenous tourism', *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, vol. 18, no. 8, pp. 894-912.

Pratten, JD 2004, 'Examining the possible causes of business failure in British public houses', *International journal of contemporary hospitality management*, vol. 16, no. 4, pp. 246-52.

Prescott, SM 2011, 'Using talanoa in Pacific business research in New Zealand: Experiences with Tongan entrepreneurs', *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, vol. 4, no. 1.

Pretty, J & Ward, H 2001, 'Social capital and the environment', *World Development*, vol. 29, no. 2, pp. 209-27.

Priest, S 1998, 'Business Link: A method for examining customer satisfaction, dissatisfaction & complaining behavior', *Journal of Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction and Complaning Behavior 11*, University of Cambridge, pp. 186-97.

—— 1999, 'Business Link services to small and medium-sized enterprises: targeting, innovation, and charging', *Environment and Planning*, vol. 17, pp. 177-94.

Puamau, PQ 2001, 'A post-colonial reading of affirmative action in education in Fiji', *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 109-23.

Quinn, JB 1985, 'Managing innovation: controlled chaos', *Harvard Business Review*, vol. 63, no. 3, pp. 73-84.

Rahman, A & Milgram, BL 2001, '[Women & Microcredit in Rural Bangladesh: An Anthropological Study of Grameen Bank Lending]', *Anthropologica*, vol. 43, no. 2, p. 281.

Ram, M, Trehan, K, Rouse, J, Woldesenbet, K & Jones, T 2012, 'Ethnic minority business support in the West Midlands: Challenges and developments', *Environment and Planning*, vol. 30, no. 3, p. 504.

Ramsden, M & Bennett, R 2005, 'The benefits of external support to SMEs:"Hard" versus "soft" outcomes and satisfaction levels', *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 227-43.

Rao, D 2004, 'Culture and entrepreneurship in Fiji's small tourism business sector', Unpublished Thesis thesis, Victoria University.

Ratuva, S 1999, 'Ethnic politics, communalism and affirmative action in Fiji A critical and comparative study', Doctor of Philosopy thesis, University of Sussex, UK.

—— 2000, 'Towards multiculturalism and affirmative action: a case for Fiji ', in *Educating for Multiculturalism, Citizens' Constitutional Forum*, Suva, Fiji.

Reddy, M 2007, 'Small Business in Small Economies: Constraints and Opportunities for Growth', *Social and Economic Studies*, vol. 56, no. 1/2, pp. 304-21.

Reddy, M & Prasad, B 2002, 'Affirmative action policies and poverty alleviation in Fiji: an examination of post-coup policies and programmes', *Development Bulletin*, vol. 60, pp. 58-61.

Reserve Bank of Fiji 2013, *Quartely Reports*, Suva, Fiji, <http://www.rbf.gov.fj/Publications/Quarterly-Reviews.aspx>.

Robson, PJ & Bennett, RJ 2000, 'SME growth: the relationship with business advice and external collaboration', *Small Business Economics*, vol. 15, no. 3, pp. 193-208.

—— 2005, 'The Advisor - SME Client Relationship: Impact, Satisfaction and Commitment', *Small Business Economics*, vol. 25, pp. 255 - 71.

—— 2010, 'Paying fees for government business advice: an assessment of Business Link experience', *Applied Economics*, vol. 42, no. 1, pp. 37-48.

Ropega, J 2011, 'The reasons and symptoms of failure in SME', *International Advances in Economic Research*, vol. 17, no. 4, pp. 476-83.

Sachs, J 2005, *The end of poverty: Economic possibilities for our time*, Penguin Press, New York.

Saffu, K 2003, 'The role and impact of culture on South Pacific island entrepreneurs', *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research*, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 55-73.

Schaper, M 2002, 'The future prospects for entrepreneurship in Papua New Guinea', *Journal of Small Business Management*, vol. 40, no. 1, pp. 78-83.

Schleiermacher, F & Bowie, A 1998, *Schleiermacher: hermeneutics and criticism: and other writings*, Cambridge University Press.

Schumpeter, JA 1942, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy.*, vol. 3rd Edition, New York: Harper and Brothers.

Shane, S 2009, 'Why encouraging more people to become entrepreneurs is bad public policy', *Small Business Economics*, vol. 33, no. 2, pp. 141-9.

Shane, S & Venkataraman, S 2000, 'The promise of entrepreneurship as a field of research', *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 217-26.

Shanklin, WL & Ryans, JK 1998, 'Stoking the small business engine', *Business Horizons*, vol. 41, no. 1, pp. 27-33.

Shaw, JC & Blackburn, RA 2000, *Panacea or white elephant? A critical examination of the proposed new small business service and response to the DTI consultancy paper*, 0034-3404.

Shaw, PJ & Bennett, R 1999, 'Central government support to SMEs compared to business link, business connect and business shop and the prospects for the small business service', *Regional Studies*, vol. 33, no. 8, pp. 779-87.

Simon, M, Houghton, SM & Aquino, K 2000, 'Cognitive biases, risk perception, and venture formation: How individuals decide to start companies', *Journal of Business Venturing*, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 113-34.

Singh, G, Pathak, R & Naz, R 2010, 'Issues faced by SMEs in the internationalization process: results from Fiji and Samoa', *International Journal of Emerging Markets*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 153-82.

Singh, S, Pathak, R, Shee, H, Kazmi, A & Parker, D 2013, 'Interplay between entrepreneurial characteristics, organisational structure, corporate culture and SME performance: empirical results from Fiji Islands', *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, vol. 18, no. 2, pp. 229-46.

Singh, T, Pathak, RD, Kazmi, A, Sharma, B & Terziovski, M 2007, 'An Empirical Study of Small Business Organizations in Fiji Using a Competency-based Framework', *South Asian Journal of Management*, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 7-35.

Slater, SF & Narver, JC 1994, 'Market orientation, customer value, and superior performance', *Business Horizons*, vol. 37, no. 2, pp. 22-8.

Smallbone, D 1990, 'Success and failure in new business start-ups', *International Small Business Journal*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 34-47.

Smallbone, D, Baldock, R & North, DJ 2003, 'Policy support for small firms in rural areas: the English experience', *Environment and Planning, Government and Policy*, vol. 21, no. 6, pp. 825-41.

Smallbone, D, North, D & Leigh, R 1993, 'The use of external assistance by mature SMEs in the UK: some policy implications', *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, vol. 5, no. 3, pp. 279-95.

Smallbone, D & Welter, F 2001, 'The role of government in SME development in transition economies', *International Small Business Journal*, vol. 19, no. 4, pp. 63-77.

Smith, BR & Stevens, CE 2010, 'Different types of social entrepreneurship: The role of geography and embeddedness on the measurement and scaling of social value', *Entrepreneurship and regional development*, vol. 22, no. 6, pp. 575-98.

Smith, JA 1996, 'Beyond the divide between cognition and discourse: Using interpretative phenomenological analysis in health psychology', *Psychology and Health*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 261-71.

—— 1999, 'Identity development during the transition to motherhood: An interpretative phenomenological analysis', *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology*, vol. 17, no. 3, pp. 281-99.

—— 2004, 'Reflecting on the development of interpretative phenomenological analysis and its contribution to qualitative research in psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 39-54.

—— 2010, 'Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Existential Analysis', *Journal of the Existential Analysis*, vol. 21, no. 2.

—— 2011, 'Evaluating the contribution of interpretative phenomenological analysis', *Health Psychology Review*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 9-27.

Smith, JA, Flowers, P & Larkin, M 2008, *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research*, Sage Publications, London.

Sparrow, J 1999, 'Using qualitative research to establish SME support needs', *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 121-34.

Spence, LJ, Agyemang, G & Rinaldi, L 2012, *Beyond the limits of accountants as 'trusted advisors' for small and medium sized enterprises: Environmental sustainability advice*, School of Management, Royal Holloway University of London Surrey

Storey, DJ 1994, *Understanding the Small Business Sector*, Routledge, London.

—— 2000a, *Six steps to heaven: evaluating the impact of public policies to support small businesses in developed economies*, Centre for Small & Medium Sized Enterprises, Warwick Business School.

—— 2000b, *Small Business: Critical Perspectives on Business and Management*, vol. 2, Taylor & Francis.

—— 2004, 'Exploring the link, among small firms, between management training and firm performance: a comparison between the UK and other OECD countries', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 112-30.

Storey, DJ & Greene, FJ 2010, *Small Business and Entrepreneurship*, Financial Times Prentice Hall.

Storey, DJ & Wynarczyk, P 1996, 'The survival and non survival of micro firms in the UK', *Review of Industrial Organization*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 211-29.

Stretton, A 2009, 'Classifying program/project customers/clients?', *PM World Today*, vol. 11.

—— 2010, 'Identifying and classifying program/project stakeholders', *PM World Today*, vol. 12.

—— 2013, 'Involving program/project managers in organizational strategic planning?', *PM World Journal*, vol. 2, no. 10, p. 1.

Summon, P 1998, 'Business Link impact and future challenges', *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 49-59.

Sunil, K & Biman, P 2004, 'Politics of race and poverty in Fiji: A case of Indo-Fijian community', *International Journal of Social Economics*, vol. 31, no. 5/6, p. 469.

Svensson, G & Grönroos, C 2008, 'Service logic revisited: who creates value? And who co-creates?', *European Business Review*, vol. 20, no. 4, pp. 298-314.

Taylor, M 2002, 'Enterprise, embeddedness and exclusion: business and development in Fiji', *Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie*, vol. 93, no. 3, pp. 302-15.

Thaman, KH 2009, 'Towards cultural democracy in teaching and learning with specific references to Pacific Island Nations (PINs)', *international Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, vol. 3, no. 2, p. 6.

Thornton, PH, Ribeiro-Soriano, D & Urbano, D 2011, 'Socio-cultural factors and entrepreneurial activity: An overview', *International Small Business Journal*, vol. 29, no. 2, pp. 105-18.

Thurik, R & Wennekers, S 2004, 'Entrepreneurship, small business and economic growth', *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 140-9.

Timmons, JA & Spinelli, S 1994, *New venture creation: Entrepreneurship for the 21st century*, vol. 4, Irwin Boston.

Torri, MC 2009, 'Community Entrepreneurship Among Lower Castes In India: A Grassroots Contribution Towards Poverty Alleviation And Rural Development Under Conditions Of Adversity And Environmental Uncertainty', *Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship*, vol. 14, no. 4, pp. 413-32.

—— 2011, 'Livelihoods, social capital and small-scale indigenous enterprises in rural India: embeddedness or social exclusion?', *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, vol. 13, no. 4, pp. 429-44.

—— 2012, 'Community gender entrepreneurship and self-help groups: a way forward to foster social capital and truly effective forms of participation among rural poor women?', *Community Development Journal*, vol. 47, no. 1, pp. 58-76.

Triner, D, Andre, G & Watkins, R 1996, 'Training Needs Assessment: A Contradiction in Terms', *Education Technology*, Nov/Dec 1996, pp. 51-5.

Tronvoll, B, Brown, SW, Gremler, DD & Edvardsson, B 2011, 'Paradigms in service research', *Journal of Service Management*, vol. 22, no. 5, pp. 560-85.

Tufford, L & Newman, P 2012, 'Bracketing in qualitative research', *Qualitative Social Work*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 80-96.

Tzu, S 1963, *The Art of War: Translated by Samuel B. Griffith*, Oxford University Press, New York: Oxford University.

UNDP 2009, *Fiji Financial Services Sector Assessment*, Pacific Financial Inclusion Programme, UNDP Pacific Centre, Suva Fiji.

Urbano, D, Toledano, N & Soriano, DR 2010, 'Analyzing social entrepreneurship from an institutional perspective: evidence from Spain', *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 54-69.

Vaioleti, TM 2006, 'Talanoa research methodology: A developing position on pacific research', *Waikato Journal of Education*, vol. 12, pp. 21-34.

Van Birgelen, M, de Ruyter, K, de Jong, A & Wetzels, M 2002, 'Customer evaluations of after-sales service contact modes: an empirical analysis of national culture's consequences', *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 43-64.

Van Gelder, JL, De Vries, RE, Frese, M & Goutbeek, JP 2007, 'Differences in Psychological Strategies of Failed and Operational Business Owners in the Fiji Islands', *Journal of Small Business Management*, vol. 45, no. 3, pp. 388-400.

Vargo, SL 2006, *The service-dominant logic of marketing: dialog, debate, and directions*, ME Sharpe.

—— 2008, 'Customer integration and value creation Paradigmatic Traps and Perspectives', *Journal of Service Research*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 211-5.

Vargo, SL & Lusch, RF 2004, 'Evolving to a new dominant logic for marketing', *Journal of Marketing*, vol. 68, no. 1, pp. 1-17.

—— 2008, 'Service-dominant logic: continuing the evolution', *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, vol. 36, no. 1, pp. 1-10.

Venkatesh, V & Goyal, S 2010, 'Expectation disconfirmation and technology adoption: Polynomial modeling and response surface analysis', *MIS Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 2, p. 281.

Vos, E, Yeh, AJ-Y, Carter, S & Tagg, S 2007, 'The happy story of small business financing', *Journal of Banking & Finance*, vol. 31, no. 9, pp. 2648-72.

Walker, E & Brown, A 2004, 'What success factors are important to small business owners?', *International Small Business Journal*, vol. 22, no. 6, pp. 577-94.

Wang, Y-S, Tang, T & Tang, JE 2001, 'An instrument for measuring customer satisfaction toward web sites that market digital products and services', *Journal of Electronic, Commerce Research*, vol. 2, no. 3, pp. 89-102.

Watson, J & Everett, J 1992, 'Small business failure rates: conflicting evidence', *Small Enterprise Research*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 53-7.

—— 1999, 'Small business failure rates: choice of definition and industry effects', *International Small Business Journal*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 31-47.

Watson, J & Everett, JE 1996, 'Do Small Businesses Have High Failure Rates?: Evidence from Australian Retailers', *Journal of Small Business Management*, vol. 36, pp. 45-62.

Weinrauch, JD, Mann, OK, Robinson, PA & Pharr, J 1991, 'Dealing with limited financial resources: A marketing challenge for small business', *Journal of Small Business Management*, vol. 29, no. 4, p. 44.

Weiss, CH 1972, *Evaluation Research: Methods for Assessing Program Effectiveness*, Prentice-Hall Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.

—— 1998, 'Have we learned anything new about the use of evaluation?', *American Journal of Evaluation*, vol. 19, no. 1, p. 21.

Wernerfelt, B 1995, 'The resource-based view of the firm: Ten years after', *Strategic Management Journal*, vol. 16, no. 3, pp. 171-4.

Wertz, FJ 2011, *Five ways of doing qualitative analysis: Phenomenological psychology, grounded theory, discourse analysis, narrative research, and intuitive inquiry*, Guilford Press, New York.

West, D 2000, 'Neural network credit scoring models', *Computers & Operations Research*, vol. 27, no. 11, pp. 1131-52.

Westhead, P & Storey, D 1996, 'Management training and small firm performance: why is the link so weak?', *International Small Business Journal*, vol. 14, no. 4, pp. 13-24.

White, CM 2001, 'Affirmative action and education in Fiji: Legitimation, contestation, and colonial discourse', *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 71, no. 2, pp. 240-69.

Wiklund, J & Shepherd, D 2003, 'Knowledge-based resources, entrepreneurial orientation, and the performance of small and medium-sized businesses', *Strategic Management Journal*, vol. 24, no. 13, pp. 1307-14.

Williksen-Bakker, S 2002, 'Fijian Business—a Bone of Contention. Was it One of the Factors Leading to the Political Crisis of 2000?', *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 72-87.

Woolcock, M & Narayan, D 2000, 'Social capital: Implications for development theory, research, and policy', *The World Bank Research Observer*, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 225-49.

Wren, C & Storey, DJ 2002, 'Evaluating the effect of soft business support upon small firm performance', *Oxford Economic Papers*, vol. 54, no. 2, p. 334.

Youngdahl, WE, Kellogg, DL, Nie, W & Bowen, DE 2003, 'Revisiting customer participation in service encounters: does culture matter?', *Journal of Operations Management*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 109-20.

Yunus, M & Weber, K 2007, *Creating a world without poverty: Social business and the future of capitalism*, Public Affairs, New York.

Yusuf, AB 1995, 'Critical success factors for small business: Perceptions of South Pacific entrepreneurs', *Journal of Small Business Management*, vol. 33.

—— 1998, 'Small business development and survival in the South Pacific: barriers and strategic responses', *Journal of Entrepreneurship*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 49-65.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

1.0 YOU ARE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled "A framework for small business support services in Pacific Island Countries based on experiential claims in Fiji". This project is being conducted by a student researcher Asaeli T Tuibeqa as part of a PhD study at Victoria University under the supervision of Professor John Breen from the College of Business.

2.0 PROJECT EXPLANATION

The aim of the study is to develop a framework that takes into consideration the input of small business operators, support providers and international experts in the delivery of small business support programs. It is assumed that the input of small business operators has not been considered in past design and delivery of support programs; thus rendering such programs to be less appropriate and effective.

The research will follow a qualitative approach by 'walking on the ground' to gather the views, feelings and perceptions of individuals who are either starting or already operating a small business venture. By walking on the ground, the researchers will have a better feel and understanding of the conditions and the immediate needs of those seeking assistance. The data and information collected will be useful in the construction of a framework to support the delivery of a more responsive and appropriate small business support programs. Having an appropriate program and an effective delivery mechanism will mean better chances of survival and business success.

3.0 WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?

The interview should not take more than 60 minutes. Participant's response will be recorded via digital voice recorders to ensure that the views are accurately captured. Such information will be kept confidential throughout the period of research and at no time the names of individuals and his /her opinion is shared with any other participants or institutions apart from those directly related to the research. Also, no interviews will be conducted unless the participant gives his/her approval (either verbal or written) including the use of recording equipment.

4.0 WHAT WILL I GAIN FROM PARTICIPATING?

Every participant's contribution to the project is valued. This is an opportunity whereby small business operators can truly take charge of their destiny in terms of their business needs. Small business operators know their conditions better. They should decide on the types of products and services and or an appropriate intervention for their business needs.

5.0 HOW WILL THE INFORMATION I GIVE BE USED?

Information collected via the digital recorders and field notes will be analysed together with the information collected from other participants. Data and information collected will be further analysed in terms of themes, meanings and or interpretations as captured during the interview. A small business development framework is expected to emerge from the analysis. This is the targeted outcome of the project.

6.0 WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL RISKS OF PARTICIPATING IN THIS PROJECT?

There is no risk envisaged at this stage that will directly impact interview participants. In fact, there is more to be gained in terms of the participants' contribution. Their views and perceptions will help the researchers to construct a workable framework for the delivery of small business support programs in Fiji. If the framework succeeds, a more responsive and effective products and services is expected - one that meets the needs of small business operators.

7.0 HOW WILL THIS PROJECT BE CONDUCTED?

A number of participants have been identified through contacts with local small business development agencies. They will be contacted over the phone or personally visited to arrange for necessary appointments/interview. In a one to one interview method, participants will be asked to respond to questions that will address a number of themes.

8.0 WHO IS CONDUCTING THE STUDY?

The following people will be involved in the research:

Professor John Breen (Chief Investigator)
College of Business
Victoria University
Phone: (03) 9919 4641
Mobile: +613 407097179
Email: john.breen@vu.edu.au

Professor Anne Marie Hede (Associate Investigator)
Director of Research and Research Development
College of Business
Victoria University
Phone: (03) 99195147
Mobile: +613 466153838
Email: anne-marie.hede@vu.edu.au

Asaeli T Tuibeqa (Student Researcher)
C/- National Centre for SME Development
82 Robertson Road
Suva

Phone: + 679 3312991
Email: asaeli.tuibeqa@live.vu.edu.au

Appendix 2

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS:

We would like to invite you to be a part of a study into the small business support programs in Fiji. The aim of the study is to develop a workable framework that takes into consideration the input of small business operators, support providers and international experts in the delivery of support services and assistance programs. It is assumed that the input of small business operators has not been considered in past support programs; and hence, rendering such programs to be less effective and responsive to small business needs.

Using a qualitative research method, the approach will be to talk to people [those who are planning, starting or already operating a small business venture] on the ground and gathering their views, feelings and perceptions. The idea of interviewing people on the ground provides a better feel and understanding of their conditions and immediate needs. The data and information collected will be useful to modify existing programs, re-prioritisation of needs, better understanding of business problems, and better usage of resources. A more responsive and appropriate program is expected to be delivered through this process. Having an appropriate program and an effective delivery mechanism will mean better chances of survival and business success. If businesses grow, there will be a spiralling effect on employment, income and living standards.

In an in-depth interview approach, participants will be asked to respond to questions that will address a number of themes. Responses will be recorded to ensure that the views and opinions are accurately captured. Such information will be kept confidential throughout the period of research. At no time the names of individuals and his /her opinion are shared with any other participants or institutions apart from those directly related to the research.

CERTIFICATION BY SUBJECT

I, ……..of ……certify that I am at least 18 years old and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the study "A framework for small business support services in Pacific Island Countries based on experiential claims in Fiji" being conducted by Professor John Breen, College of Business, Victoria University.

I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks and safeguards associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by Asaeli T Tuibeqa (student researcher) and that I freely consent to participation involving the below mentioned procedures:

- Research introduction;
- Explanation of research aims, procedures and potential risks;
- Signing of the consent form;
- Conduct of interview (questions and participant's response) and duration;
- Consent to use digital recorders;
- Feedback and clarification on issues raised;
- Conclusion

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way.

I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

Signed: …… Date: ……

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher:

Professor John Breen
College of Business
Victoria University
Phone: (03) 9919 4641
Mobile: +613 407097179
Email: john.breen@vu.edu.au

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Research Ethics and Biosafety Manager, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001 or phone (03) 9919 4148.

Appendix 3

Interview Checklist

Before the interview

❑ Draw up the list of participants (names, contacts) to be interviewed

❑ Prior arrangement for a meeting for those that can be contacted over the phone

❑ Private setting for a place of meeting/interview

❑ Arrange transportation of participant to interview site (if necessary)

❑ Refreshments for participants if interview is held in an arranged place

What to take to the interview

Equipment
❑ 1 digital audio recorder
❑ Field notebook and pens

Interview packet
❑ 1 large, brown envelope
❑ 1 copy of interview guide on issues for story telling
❑ 2 participants consent forms (1 for interviewer, 1 for participant)
❑ 2 information to participants (1 for interviewer, 1 for participant)

What to place in the envelope after the interview

❑ Signed consent form (signed only by interviewer if oral, by participant and interviewer if written)
❑ Information to Participants
❑ Labelled interview guide
❑ Field notes
❑ Transcribed interview

Appendix 4

Small Business Operators (SBOs): what they say

SBO 101	SBO 102	SBO 103
Income after retirement, income is the driver, paid employment is preferred, still paid when sick	Family in business, learn from village set up	Started due to government support – AAP for Fijians
Saw a need, friends help, learn by doing	Started on own savings, FDB helped growth and expansion,	AAP should continue, help Fijians participate in business, compete with large businesses
Capital from bank	Government assistance to Fijians: policy and grant funds	Critical pathways for SMEs and support structures
Bank understanding needed	Education relevant now, learning on the job, listen to people, attend seminars, personal networks	Trust on government and officials to deliver
Personal visit required before demand for payments	IT relevant, assist communication and connection	Business training and learning model, build networks
Satisfied with bank, dedicated staff, move if staff changes	FDB scheme boosted start-ups, lacked understanding for growth	Model to match capability and financial resources
	Longer processing time, poor decision making	Fijians culture not same with others, we are not born or made for commerce
Education not necessary, learn on the job	Lack of collateral, bank statements, poor records: need understanding by banks	Values, beliefs and ethics must change to survive
Fijian lazy, low productivity, culture supports a person	Financial discipline/ budgeting and understanding of markets	Localise ideas rather than follow
	Business needs understanding from banks when sales is low, cannot demand full payments	Collaboration amongst service providers
	Government needs to listen, go to ground level for dialogue	Poor quality service, advice, preparation, training,
	Fijian culture do not blend with commerce, need to draw the line in order to survive	Need to develop sound policies and efficient environment including IT support

Small Business Operators (SBOs): what they say (Cont'd)

SBO 104	SBO 105	SBO 106
Family had a business, desire to do better and bigger, saw the opportunity and jumped into it	Learn the trade from home, was involved when in school, family support was crucial	Desire to learn the business
Local competition and change in policy killed me, business risks, understanding needed	Did not start with capital but from family handicrafts	Must not go into business because funds is available
Large business benefit, government wants to be regulator and player, foreign competition	Attended SYOB training, learn sales, pricing, quality and market	Training must go beyond classroom style. Need to learn from others – Chinese and Indians
FDB assistance was a mistake, a killer, a debt trap. We were guinea pigs	Need to produce what the market wants	One to one mentoring is required. Seminars, conference may need to change
Led by the carrot dangled in front by government programs	Business is not all about cash. We start from own talents: sewing, carpentry and fishing for those without education: Good with hands not head	Business must be led by one person and not groups of people. Only one boss
FDB needs to understand us business people, they think they know business	Treat business as fulltime jobs, need to be active, and work hard. Use initiative to creative new things	Cooperative led by a group of successful people. Then and only can we have a successful cooperative enterprise
Need to learn the industry, market and needs and not just lending policies	Special training and preparation for those into micro finance and government programs	Government should not be allowed to run the business for the community
Very disappointed with program, service delivery	Training system that will support skills of individuals	Advice from government needs to be sensitized well. Correct information and advice for farmers
Need to have a voice in the bank, policy – a lot of lip service; Need to create an environment for SMEs to grow new model of financing for small business		Business copycat; Need to be moving forward. Cannot be satisfied with what you have
Culture identifies Fijian: communal activities and caring. One will have to find the dividing line to survive		Profit will not always come in year 1. It may take 4 or 5 years. So service providers esp. banks need to understand this
Education geared towards employment not entrepreneurship businesses		

Small Business Operators (SBOs): what they say (Cont'd)

SBO 107	SBO 108	SBO 109
Fijians will always fall short in business unless we become like them	Ecotourism suits communal enterprises. Transition from subsistence farmer to commercial enterprise.	Opportunity to provide certified system training. Opens door to outside world
Politics provides stability – needed for growth	Locals have the resources and can provide the experience for tourist market	Opportunity for school leavers to learn the trade at their pace and in their village
Success for Fijians only if you adjust business ways of doing things to entrepreneurial culture	Cost of establishment is low because of local resources including labour	Need to be aware of changes in current technologies and systems – internet and networking
Mental toughness to achieve and succeed	SMEs can thrive at the lower end of the market	Government has stopped assistance for school fees
Competition develops you – personally and business. Unless you have a good foundation, drive and desire competition will pull you down	Build a supply system that is cost effective using family labour and supply chain	Struggling to keep the school and business afloat
Not satisfied with bank service – divergent in what we think and what the bank thinks	Difficult working with locals. Problem of disagreements, jealousies and local politics.	Students migrate and can continue further studies with their certificate or
Solution provided suits all business types but not the needs, capability, local conditions	I do not run away from problems. I go through it	Not enough teachers and trainers in the system
Government AAP helps Fijians – interest subsidy, guarantee, seed funds and open door to FDB	Spend time to understand the community. Build trust, connection, patience and character before they will relate needs and problems openly	I coach students to be certified
Small business subject to high interest, fees and discrimination in terms of banks services	Start small using local land and resources without government support or debt. Debt is a killer	Door opened for street kids and unemployed school leavers.
Low take up rate means irrelevancy	Leadership in community project. Training and on the job skills training. Must be good in handling people. Tourism is about people	Help needed in terms of advice and way forward
Banks know little about business	Government program created out of desperation. Create income generating activities	IT improves business communication, exchange and marketing, Fiji is not taking advantage of advancement in technology
Micro businesses promoted for income. They will needs support to grow	Business copycat leads to completion with one another. No new innovation, new products	
Business failure is part of growth and development. It is healthy and provides practical lessons	External environment not favourable and supports large businesses. No one understands what we do. Foreign ideas by people not very reliable.	

Appendix 5

External Service Providers (ESP): what they say

ESP 200	ESP 201	ESP 202
Micro finance for poor in the community; dependent on government grant; sustainability lacking	Focus on national priority areas; develop priority list with stakeholders	Short term interest. Enthusiasm dies quickly; Shrink back to old ways (status quo). Bad attitude
Focus changed to those already helping themselves	Culture is an impediment but can be used to foster business. Pursue passion and not social demands	Spirit of jealousy towards leadership; women cannot work together; false accusations, disputes and mismanagement
Outreach campaign to individuals already doing micro business; Work in partnership to solve problems	Gaps in growing the business – no pathways; lack of research; problem identification; lack of data to convince policy makers	Donor assistance not sought but given. Now it is affecting our relationship.
Loans for consumption, education and expansion: no product differentiation	Policy makers tied to the needs and demand of bigger players	Past projects pushed to the community. No project preparation. Funds could be well utilised if community consulted
Desire to deliver responsive products	United voice in small business development; need to influence government and donors agencies	Humans rights affecting community leadership; disrespect of village customs
Do not deal with securities; operate on trust relationship with customers	Commerce Chambers for big businesses; mobilise to get support of other organisations and not government	Best to work on individual basis. Fragmentation at community level; target activities which women are more familiar with
Compulsory basic training before services, micro finance training for staff	Documentation is a bureaucracy; small business overwhelmed by the requirements and technical documents	Lack of business management- recording, planning, decision making
Brainstorming exercises to exchange views, ideas and information from the ground	Develop clusters, cooperatives for a unified voice; develop leaders who can make decision makers listen	Village way of life is about helping one another. So if business is working people should help not pull down
Leadership vital in micro finance. Staff recruitment to be professionals not volunteers	Program to consider capacity and capability of local administrators, sustainability of the project	Lot of business copycat; jealousies still involved
Build confidence, capability and capacity of staff	Longer project term to allow cultural integration	
Passion to serve the poor; service is more than employment – concern for the people	Plan discussed at industry level with monitoring, Christian values, build character	

External Service Providers (ESP): what they say (Cont'd)

ESP 203	ESP 204	ESP 205	ESP 206
Low take up for the program, business not ready; not aware of the facility	Imbalance in the global economy; economic and humanitarian grounds	Collaboration with ministries lacking; reactionary approach to development; beneficiaries and agencies not trained or prepared for development	Consider human rights approach to development
Redesign of program to match the level where businesses are at	Appropriateness of support programs.	Problem identification and priority setting to match funds, skills and other support mechanism	Inclusiveness and participation
No connection with need and program	Recognise needs on the ground, Life style of people, cultural conditions, capacity and capability	Community not aware of their needs – follow others; Local curriculum prepares people coming back to wrong jobs, Alignment of people, needs, capabilities	Develop capability and capacity of the local to meaningfully contribute
Lack of testing facility	Intervention should be long term and not a 'parachute' type of assistance	Vanua fragmentation; must know the vanua mentality and way of doing things. They dictate implementation	Program developed with the participant
Training covering supply chain	Administrators, middlemen to manage transfer of resources, recognise cultural beliefs and values	Training to identify people's needs and their level of attainment. Business ideas must match the person	MDG did not come from the people
Culture can foster entrepreneurship	High level of technical jargon and documentation.	Quality is different from that of a provider or large business	AAP is a good program but lacked consideration of people's needs
Philanthropy begins with the huskiness. It defines us in a cultural context	Handholding before local can sustain themselves.	Benefits not explained and youth sabotage the project: lack of patience	
Capitalist model promotes poverty – individualism, absence of care	Slow weaning using educated and skilful people.	Culture is positive. It defines a Fijian. But which ones kills the entrepreneurial spirit	
Spiritualism produces morals, faith. It is the people who develop regulation, policies, programs	Due regard of social and environmental conditions. May be different from that of donors and project developers.	Cannot take people to where you have not been; competition brings out the best in business but worst in humans	
Over studied and over consulted. Little financing and support	Implementing agencies deliver because of funds available	Implement individually and target women. Good in business management	
Existence driven by a purpose not availability of finance	Must be genuine; Have understanding of local conditions;	Patience required in business; community development is tearing down relationships	
Contextualisation of foreign ideas, programs. Development must involve all stakeholders		Business fundamentals are lacking.	
Identification of needs			

Appendix 6

Local Business Experts (LBEs): what they say

LBE 300	LBE 301	LBE 302
Subsistence/sleep wake cycle/life comfortable/satisfied	Fijians lack of commercial experience and knowledge/business participation	Success built on freedom/make money and pay tax
Low expectation/contentment/life too easy	Government policy geared towards bridging the economic gap	Entrepreneurship is hard work/Fijian can succeed/incentives to start up
Social network & capital/kinship relationship	policy set at national level for further development at board level	Price control restricts community expansion and charity
Cultural obligations/financial demand	Market need assessment left with agencies/feedback of customers	Passion/desire/belief for success/genuineness/heart thing
Do not depend on wealth or wealth accumulation to survive	Products and services developed from a bankers perspective	Education made people see opportunities
Vision/opportunity/desire for growth	Proposal must be feasible and meet bank lending guidelines	Product differentiation/market segmentation/branding/ability to penetrate market/trade and not aid
Risks in agriculture/land not transferable/exports not guaranteed	Policy directives and availability of funds should not guarantee approval	Spirit led entrepreneurship/values/morals/principles
Critical path way to grow small business missing/facility/location/equipment/regulations/OHS/health and licensing	Fiji small market/businesses struggling so no pint in pushing for more players/micro finance	Development bank experience/business planning/consultants
Disadvantaged by the payment system/buying power/influence in government	Not interested in wealth creation/social obligation/caring/consumerism culture	
Attitude of founders/stereotype/entrepreneurs	No land pressure and food pressure	
Fijians too much talk and planning without action/concern about market before planting/lack innovation and ideas	Support for one single producer	
Target entrepreneurs/remove roadblocks/incentive to increase income rather than tax	Allow the private sector to take over	
Training geared towards entrepreneurs not employees	Longer term in national leadership/stability	