

## **Teacher Education and Globalisation: Challenges for Teacher Education in the Pacific during the New Millenium**

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### **Introduction**

Today's topic takes me back to a story I used to tell my students in a course on curriculum development called 'Sabertooth Curriculum'. An article (Peddiwell 1939) talks about a tribal people who lived on a fish and meat diet through fish-grabbing with the bare hands and horse-clubbing, among other things. They had perfected the art of fish-grabbing and horse-clubbing to the point where they lived a reasonably comfortable life. The young members of the tribe were taught these important arts of survival but one day there was a sudden break in the weather pattern which altered the lives of the group.

The clear water of the rivers and creeks where they lived became murky and it was difficult to grab the fish because they could not be seen in the murky water. As hard as they tried, even the most agile fish-grabbers in the tribe (I imagine those that we might call the 'matua', or the 'kaumatua' among Maoris) found their well-honed tribal skills ineffective in the new environment. Also, the woolly horses which they once hunted for meat became more agile and evaded the best horse-clubbers in the tribe. It became evident that unless the members of the tribe developed new techniques of fishing and hunting, they would be wiped out.

Fortunately, so the story goes, they found new techniques for fishing and hunting and the tribe was able to survive through the period of change.

An important point in the story, which my students found engaging, was the debate that took place amongst the elders

of the tribe on acceptance of change. There were those who argued cogently for the teaching of the old skills – irrelevant as they were under the new conditions – and those that favoured the teaching of new skills appropriate for survival under the new conditions. The debate for conservation of their way of life, and for change, and the various reasons given in the story are clearly recognisable. I find many of the points raised in this debate pertinent to some of the issues that will be highlighted in my talk today.

In this talk, I will focus on the experience of Pacific states under globalisation and its associated neo-liberal policies, highlighting some implications on education generally and more specially on teacher education. I hope to explore at the end of the paper some ideas for a new agenda that might contribute not only to our understanding of the major changes occurring around us but also to how we could address these.

### **A New Orthodoxy Takes Hold**

A new phenomenon or 'orthodoxy' has been increasingly transforming the socio-economic and political landscape in the Pacific since about the late 1980s and is described as globalisation. The term encompasses a variety of features like structural adjustments, trade liberalisation, market economy etc. and these, as a whole, act to intensify our interconnectedness – meaning those of us here in the Pacific and the world beyond – towards a 'one world' or a 'global village', so to say. Globalisation is described as 'simply the intensification of global interconnectiveness [which] is transforming the existing world order most conspicuously through its direct challenge to the primacy of nation states. In its present form ... it defines a process through which events, decisions and activities in one part of the world can come to have significant consequences for individuals and

communities in quite distant parts of the globe' (McGrew 1992: 63-65).

Globalisation is associated with neo-liberal policies of the New Right and its socio-economic and political agendas. I have referred to these sets of policies as an 'orthodoxy' because many governments and institutions like the World Bank have embraced its policies with almost fervent commitment but its claims, in my view, have yet to be adequately substantiated.

As I read the literature and discuss with academic colleagues on both sides of the Tasman about the new orthodoxy, if I can lump globalisation and its associated neo-liberal ideology together, I get a sense of resignation and helplessness among academics on how this has taken hold and transformed the economic, social, political and educational landscapes in both Australia and New Zealand.

I get the feeling, as I listen to academic colleagues, that this issue, irrespective of their reservations, is beyond debate. If an issue is beyond debate, I take it, it is no longer of major interest to academics and scholars except perhaps to follow up the impacts of some of these policies.

The implementation of the new orthodoxy and the manner with which it was done, in both Australia and New Zealand, is of interest to educators in the Pacific because of the increasing influence of these countries at least on educational policies in the Pacific, particularly after the Second World War. After the interests of Britain in the Pacific waned as its colonial possessions gained independence after the 1960s, Australia and New Zealand consolidated their interests and their influence in the region. They influenced not only the curriculum of secondary schools through external examinations such as the New Zealand School Certificate and the University Entrance up to the 1980s, but they also influenced higher

education's policies through aid and allocation of tertiary scholarships for study, both within the region and in their own universities and comparable institutes. Without these scholarships especially those tenable in their universities and institutes, many Pacific professionals, scholars and educators would not have received tertiary education. The influence of Australia and New Zealand on the Pacific in the field of education cannot be underestimated.

As Australia and New Zealand embraced the new orthodoxy in the mid 1980s, interestingly both under Labour Governments, the scene was set for the Pacific islands to follow suit. The first indication of a new shift towards the new orthodoxy was the re-organisation of the universities under the Dawkins Report (1988), the re-organisation of Federal Ministries where Trade and Education were lumped in the same portfolio under Dawkins, and other associated re-organisations within Australia denoting that the new orthodoxy had taken root. I observed some of these transformations early and warned educators of the implications of Australia aid policies on the Pacific (Baba 1987) and on the implications of treating education as an exportable commodity (Baba 1989).

The New Zealand transformation was no less colourful, following the paper by the New Zealand Treasury (1984) on Economic Management. It provided the technical rationality for the new orthodoxy and associated changes which transformed the educational landscape of New Zealand: the re-alignment of the authority of School Boards (Picot Report 1988); the funding of universities; the shift in the use of New Zealand aid along similar lines as Australia; and its new allocation of scholarships based on New Zealand's interests the Pacific and Asia.

Of particular interest to the Pacific Islands was the re-aligning of the Pacific Islands Education Office, later known as the International Education Office, from the Ministry of Education to the Foreign Affairs Ministry. For over 30 years this office had

provided expert advice to the Pacific Islands through an inspectorial system not only for New Zealand teachers teaching in the Pacific but also for Pacific schools and teachers following the then New Zealand School Certificate and the New Zealand University Entrance examination.

The shift in New Zealand and also Australia's foreign aid and foreign policy as discussed above, were clear indications to the Pacific Islands that a new orthodoxy in the form of neo-liberal ideology, otherwise described as economic rationalism (Pusey 1991), had taken hold.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Pacific states – through membership of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and other financial and commercial institutions like the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the United Nations and its affiliated institutions – encountered the same message, that of the almost inevitability of the new orthodoxy. In the 1990s, Pacific nations are learning to adapt to a new 'crosswind'. But more on this later!

### **Features of Economic Rationalism in Education in the Pacific Islands**

Despite different emphases and slight variations in details of the strategies adopted in different Pacific states, the following general features could be observed, namely:

- Reduction of education budgets and setting up of cost sharing arrangements;
- Greater emphasis on basic education and literacy skills;
- Greater stress on quality of outcomes through efficiency and productivity measures;

- Greater emphases on development of scientific, agro-technical skills for economic development (within a globalised economy);
- Reduction in growth and in funding of tertiary education
- Increasing use of foreign aid to fund projects in line with donors' interests;
- Greater reliance on community to fund schools and the promotion of self employment through community education projects.

As can be seen from the above, the basic features of the strategies adopted are consistent with other neo-liberal policies, except perhaps in some systems in the Pacific Islands where governments cannot divest too much authority to non-government organisations, especially in education where schooling had already been very much a matter for community involvement. The options for the governments are not many but the main thrust of the policies in education involve: a reduction in the budget, either in real terms or in proportion to the total budget allocated to education; a redirection of focus to basic education and agro-technical education; a restraint in the growth of tertiary education; and a greater reliance on foreign aid and community groups to take over what hitherto had been in the concerns of governments, such as job creation.

The main by-words in education were and are 'efficiency' and 'quality', and consultants are hired usually through willing aid sources to demonstrate the lack of 'quality' in the current system (see for example, Gannicot 1990) or the high level of illiteracy at primary level, to point to the need for change. One of the aspects of the current UNESCO funded Basic Education Project in the Pacific, known as BELS, focuses on literacy testing at primary school level in the Pacific schools, which illustrates the new focus under this new orthodoxy.

The reduction in budget which went hand in hand with provisions for cost sharing arrangements at tertiary level was not without opposition in view of the fact that a very small proportion of Pacific Islanders have access to tertiary level education. The proportion in Fiji, which is the biggest, is about 5 percent. The figures for other island groups is between 1 and 2 percent. The capacity for families to support a tuition level of about \$3,000 at the University of the South Pacific, let alone boarding and book fees, is a tall order, when the average income per capita of most countries is below \$2,000 a year. In neighbouring Papua New Guinea, this led to demonstrations and a student strike, when introduced in 1996.

The reduction of focus to basic education and agro-technical education was met with mixed reactions; basic education was highlighted in a UN sponsored conference on Education in Jomtien, Thailand, in the early 1990s. But basic education in the Pacific was really a revamping of primary education with a strong focus on literacy. In a region which had a very high school attendance level and a relatively high adult literacy level – excepting for Solomon Islands – this strategy was difficult to explain except perhaps to provide a justification for redirecting attention away from tertiary education which was consuming a lot of resources. The work of Psacharopoulos (1987) on the rates of return, showing the highest rate for primary level, was often quoted to justify this policy. Another interpretation, which related to the need for a more docile workforce and certainly a cheaper alternative to a more qualified workforce for foreign industries which were to be attracted to the region, was also mooted by the critics of the orthodoxy.

The re-focussing of emphasis on agro-technical skills was an area of concern in the 1970s and 1980s and led to the establishment of agro-technical secondary schools that provided alternative options to students. However, wherever these schools were established, parents did not support them

because they were perceived not to be as good as the academic type of secondary schools, since they did not provide access to high status jobs in the public services of the region. The justification of this policy was in relation to a preparation for the type of jobs that were likely to be abundant in a highly technological world where a lot of jobs are in the services area, such as in the so-called knowledge industry.

A heavy reliance on foreign aid was a strong feature of the changes. Bilateral aid arrangements from metropolitan countries, including Australia, New Zealand and the European Community, were expected. In fact, aid organisations responded quite willingly, but not without their own agendas. Consultancies and projects which were funded were carried out as a requirement by citizens and institutions of donor agencies. In the case of some, a high proportion of aid money never left the shores of the donor countries. In the case of Australia, nearly 80% of aid funds was spent in Australia (Baba 1989). The proportion for New Zealand is in the vicinity of 60% (Coxon 1998) and is expected to increase. This has been referred to by critics as a new colonialism (Baba 1989) or neo-colonialism (Altbach and Kelly 1978).

Another important aspect of the new policies puts a greater burden on community groups in the running and funding of schools. Already in the Pacific, most schools are owned and built by community groups and they meet a large proportion of school-funding. The governments enter a partnership with these community groups and provide teachers, curriculum and, in some countries, per capita grants, as well as enhancing the legislation for the control of these schools.

As government puts pressure on school committees to assume greater financial responsibility for their schools, the burden often falls on teachers, who are required by the School Board to organise fundraising activities. Consequently, teachers,

especially those in secondary schools, take on additional non-teaching responsibilities. In some urban secondary schools in Fiji, teachers spend a significant proportion of their time on non-teaching responsibilities. This adds a significant burden on teachers in a situation where already 40% of teachers are untrained.

### **National Strategies for Development**

However, it needs to be understood that the above set of policies in education are part and parcel of the overall national policies of development embodying the new orthodoxy. In the Pacific Islands, the important components of these overall policies include: the liberalisation of trade; structural adjustments; introduction of indirect tax on goods and services; limitation of the power of trade unions; and registration of journalists and media personnel.

The overall set of policies which embody the new orthodoxy was predictable enough but there were some that received major criticisms from some sections. Structural adjustments which entailed downsizing the public services, and the corporatisation or privatisation of statutory organisations, such as telecommunications and government shipyards in Fiji, attracted a lot of opposition from the trade unions. Structural adjustments also took place in private organisations, which led to the loss of many jobs. Little or nothing had been done to protect the interest of workers.

Trade liberalisation entailed the reduction or removal of tariffs to encourage open competition of goods and services. Emphasis was placed on exporting goods as against import substitution.

The introduction of indirect tax on goods and services has added an extra burden on everybody, and the associated re-

duction of personal tax has proved to be not as attractive as promised. One of the most publicised policies was aimed at reducing the power of trade unions by putting in place elaborate procedures for union elections, strikes and other legitimate union activities. However, trade unions continue to be strong in some of the countries in the region, especially in Fiji, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Kiribati. Sadly, in some countries in the Pacific, trade unions are not allowed to exist and leaders of workers' associations like teachers' organisations and public service associations are often co-opted or appropriated by governments as a means of control.

One of the sources of contention for Pacific governments as they developed their new set of policies embodying the new orthodoxy was the resistance provided by the media people, especially journalists. This has led to expulsion and imprisonment of journalists, and many governments have adopted a policy of registration of journalists. This is seen as a clever device to muzzle the media (Robie 1995). The last two provisions with respect to trade unions and the media, reflect the degree of authoritarianism of some, if not, most of Pacific Island governments.

### **Higher Education, the School and the Teacher's Work**

The nature of higher education institutions, the school itself and the changing nature of teachers' work will have implications on teacher education. All the above are being impacted upon by the new orthodoxy. Let me discuss each of these in turn.

The teachers' colleges and universities in the Pacific region train the bulk of Pacific teachers. A fair proportion are also trained overseas, especially in Australia and New Zealand.

The bulk of the teachers' colleges are under the control of their respective ministries of education, except for independent institutions run by the churches, and autonomous institutions which at the moment are limited to universities and a few colleges. A few colleges are being reconstituted as part of universities such as the Samoan Teachers' College (now the Faculty of Education at the National University of Samoa) and the Tonga Teachers' College which is planned to be part of the new University of Tonga (Heimuli 1998).

Colleges and universities in the region are being affected by neo-liberal policies with these features:

- Reduction in their overall funding;
- Adoption of corporate versus academic ethos in management;
- Increasing use of aid funds;
- Greater control on staffing policies, and
- Directions in education are determined by demands of the market as against needs and visions.

The reduction in overseas funding will force institutions to adopt a 'user pay' approach and other cost-sharing arrangements. This means that there will be a reduction in the proportion of students who come in on full scholarships. Private and corporate sponsorships are on the rise and institutions become engaged in commercial activities to generate revenue or even to try and reach a 'break-even' situation.

The adoption of a corporate ethos will have major implications on universities which have prided themselves on academic freedom, democratic governance and collegiality. Corporate management, with its centralisation tendencies and efficiency procedures, will be seen to be undermining many cherished values of universities and colleges.

The increasing use of aid for programmes, projects and/or budget support is going to create greater dependency on metropolitan countries (Nabobo 1996). This dependency will create many disadvantages for local institutions and corresponding advantages for aid donors.

In terms of staffing policies, increasing use is going to be made of contracts, staff appraisal techniques and other instruments of quality control, which will also have implications for staff security, morale and productivity.

The increasing reliance on market demands on the development of institutions would mean the ultimate control by the market of the future of institutions, a significant hallmark of neo-liberalism or economic rationalism. Because market forces are reliant on external factors, there is a danger that higher education institutions will give too much importance to these at the expense of local and indigenous traditions.

Most of the above market values and ethos are contradictory to the development of a teacher educator who is charged with fostering human values of democracy, collegiality, co-operation and so forth. The development of what Hoyle (1995) call 'collaborative professionability' can best take place where members of the profession develop through collaboration and collegiality what they regard as important codes of practice to govern them, instead of having to be governed by bureaucratic codes and procedures imposed from the top down. This is important when neo-liberal orthodoxy and its ideas permeate the management's ethos of higher education institutions.

The school itself is similarly going to be affected by its own market or globalised environment in terms of preparing students for the so-called 'new market'. This would alter its focus, its curriculum and consequently its teaching force.

The schools under the new orthodoxy are expected to be reconstituted with greater powers devolved by the government to its School Board. The re-constituted School Board is expected to accept a greater role in the funding and running of schools. This includes accepting greater financial responsibility for the school; greater responsibility in the hiring and firing of teachers and in overseeing the ability of schools to compete with each other in the 'education market place'. If the school competes effectively, so the argument goes, it will attract more and probably better students and also better teachers. So schools and teachers will see themselves in competition and those who cannot compete will be relegated to the backwaters of education.

The poor communities, including many rural communities, will certainly be relegated to the education backwaters. Their students will underachieve and their teachers will move to more competitive schools. The teachers in the schools of poor communities spend a large part of their teaching time in fundraising activities. The well-off schools, like Veiuto Primary which takes in children from well-to-do homes in Suva, are hardly involved in fundraising activities compared to other Suva schools (Pareti 1998). These well-off schools are able to charge the parents \$120.00 a year per child as book charges, not fees, because primary schools are supposed to be 'fee free' as the Fiji Government pays primary schools a per capita grant in lieu of fees.

These types of inequalities affect not only the children but also the teachers. As the School Boards gain greater power and authority they could impose other conditions which could make it difficult for children from poor homes to attend. It could even impose other work conditions on teachers. Thus, the teachers would have to negotiate their contracts with the School Boards which employ them and, as a result, greater inequities in conditions of teachers would emerge. In fact,

early research on this issue has confirmed this trend in professions dominated by women (Harbridge and Moulder 1993; Bennet 1994).

Where the curricula of schools is concerned, a greater demand will be placed on them in terms of the new job market place; this is expected to be interconnected or global. This in turn will call for a high level of literacy and numeracy which will include adequate facility with computer and related technological devices. It is argued that those with job skills can take up employment at the international job market as it becomes increasingly globalised.

But how can teachers and their students envisage finding jobs outside their own localities when they see around them high unemployment rates as in the case of most Pacific countries; a result of restructuring policies of their governments? Hardly a day passes in Fiji when the media do not report some examples of jobs being lost, or some sections of government being privatised or corporatised, or being sold off, usually to a foreign company or transnational corporation (TNC). This is taking place in a country with an unemployment rate of about 20% and where the majority of school leavers simply cannot find work. In such a context, which is a common experience for many Pacific nations that have adopted the new orthodoxy, one cannot help asking even the most optimistic teacher whether one has caught the wrong end of the stick, so to say. If so, who has caught the right end, if there is a right end at all for third world communities and developing countries?

The demands on the schools in the light of the requirements of the international work market are bound to be excessive and intended for the preparation of 'the few select', who might be successful but at the cost of alienating the majority of students.

The new orthodoxy with its focus on economic development is bound to raise a number of challenges to the status and work of teachers.

The devolution of authority to community groups such as school boards, not only increasing their powers in the running of schools and having a greater say in matters relating to teachers' conditions, could leave teachers in a vulnerable position. These bodies in the Pacific are generally ill-equipped to handle these responsibilities without clearly defined parameters or frameworks for action, and without some orientation. School committees in Fiji are steeped in local politics which inevitably are linked to national political issues of race, religion and group rights etc., and these could influence decisions about teachers and teachers' work. As schools are largely owned by various ethnic, religious and sectarian groups, their school boards reflect these entities; this puts another complexion on the issue.

In fact many of the existing inequalities in school achievement of various groups, their relative access to education and their inequitable representation at the various areas of work has been the result of an educational system where education was left in the hands of each community. After about a century of increasing government control, Fiji has evolved a system of partnership in education where more uniform and more equitable conditions have prevailed. All these achievements could be lost if this trend is reversed. This would be true also for many other countries in the Pacific.

As in other countries, there is an increasing feminisation of the teaching profession in the Pacific. At least 50% of the teachers are women, and this trend is notable. Furthermore, although women have now taken up many leadership roles in teacher organisations, the great majority of them are not as actively involved as men. These teachers' organisations play an important role in negotiations with governments and one

can only hope that the increasing feminisation of teaching will not negatively affect the status of the profession.

The teachers in the Pacific have also been subjected to various management devices to assess their effectiveness. The most recent example in Fiji is the Performance Management System (PMS) which is applied to all sectors of the Public Service. There are a number of assumptions about this device that need to be questioned but the whole issue of its appropriateness to gauge the effectiveness of the teachers' work needs to be canvassed. Any device developed to provide information on the effectiveness of a teacher needs to be appropriately determined with input from the teaching profession. Anything short of this would undermine the professional status of teachers and, worse, it could be used by the bureaucracy to enhance its control. In Fiji, the PMS is a part of the structural adjustment policy – an essential core of the new orthodoxy.

### **Teacher Education and Teacher Empowerment**

The new orthodoxy is going to undervalue the importance of the human services areas of education, health and social services. It is important that professionals in these areas understand what the orthodoxy entails and charter their actions appropriately.

In terms of teacher education, great stress must continue to be placed on maintaining the highest possible standard in all aspects; in recruitment of intake, in pre-service training, in in-service education, and in certification.

It is important for governments, especially in developing countries, to give priority to teacher education projects, including the use of flexible approaches such as distance education, multi-media teaching and resource development for teachers.

There is a need to ensure that teacher education programmes are appropriately designed in view of the tasks teachers are called upon to do and this would vary according to the context. In the context of the Pacific, some attention need to be given to at least four types of skills for teachers; an ability to think critically, an ability to understand and conduct research, an ability to understand and appreciate the context of development which impinges on education, and an ability to understand human values, and approaches to teaching these.

As teachers are going to be in the vanguard of development work of which teaching is a central part, the above areas would enable them to understand the changes around them, and address these accordingly. The recognition of their own values system and human values generally, and an ability to take appropriate approaches in facilitating these in their work would provide an important counter to values of economic materialism such as those implicit in the new orthodoxy.

Last but not least, it is important to ensure that teacher education is conducted in institutions that provide for academic autonomy. This ensures that teacher educators have control over all aspects of teacher education; otherwise these institutions would not be committed to appropriate professional ethos and values. Such autonomy is to be found largely in university type institutions in the Pacific. Training in these institutions would ensure a high level of professionalism and would counter the moves to undermine the professional training and development of teachers, and the enhancement of the status of teachers.

It is also important for teachers and their organisations to maintain their connections – industrial and professional – with overseas, international and global organisations. These organisations enable teachers and teacher educators to have access to advice and expertise not available locally. In an effort to resist the new orthodoxy, they would have to rely on

international assistance and solidarity; otherwise they would be no match for the power of governments and other financial/commercial organisations which support them. It is not enough merely to resist the new orthodoxy in developing countries, given the unequal power relations that exist there. What is called for is the development of a 'counter ideology' (Baba 1992) which provides a coherent and comprehensive rationale to that resistance

Teachers and teacher educators need nothing less in the light of what is at stake in education and in the overall development of the small island states in the Pacific.

### **Conclusion**

The whole environment for education and teacher education in the Pacific is going to be significantly impacted upon by globalisation and its neo-liberal policies. As indicated earlier, we cannot merely await its impacts because these are already with us even as we speak. It seems there is room for creative resistance, creative adjustments and responsive actions at all levels, including the schools. This is a strategy that has been well established in the Pacific and if we keep at it, we might even weather the storm, be it globalisation, tsunami or whatever else.

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