

Quality teachers for indigenous students: an imperative for the twenty-first century

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This paper argues that all learners need teachers who are not only professionally qualified but also culturally competent. This is particularly so with teachers of indigenous students, who face the conflicting expectations of schools and those of their home cultures. References to Pacific students will be used to illustrate some of the conflicts as well as attempts to address teaching and learning issues in Pacific Island Countries (PICs).

Keywords: Pacific indigenous knowledges, teacher education, Pacific research frameworks, wisdom, culture.

Quality education for indigenous peoples means that our education in principle is based on our own culture, our knowledge, our own languages and learning/teaching traditions. From this platform indigenous peoples will be able to reach for the best in the global garden of knowledge (Ole Henrik Magga, President of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, cited in King & Schielmann, 2004, p.10).

This article is about the need for cultural competence among the attributes of those who are going to become teachers in Pacific Island Countries (PICs), a region that is arguably one of the most culturally diverse regions on earth and where indigenous people usually make up the majority of the region's populations. Consequently the term 'indigenous' is problematic when it is used in the context of PICs because of the United Nations' definition (of indigenous people) as those who are minorities in their own countries and reflected in the absence of any case studies from the Pacific region in a UN publication on 'The challenges of indigenous education: practice and perspectives (King and Schielmann, 2004). For the purposes of this article, indigenous people refer to (first) people of the land, irrespective of whether they constitute majority or minority populations.

Although Pacific indigenous people's right to formal education is not denied, many, especially those who live in rural areas and remote islands are disadvantaged in that they have limited access to formal education, especially high school and tertiary

education. This is particularly so in countries of Melanesia such as Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu. Furthermore, the education that is provided in most PICs in the form of schooling is often culturally undemocratic in that it does not take into consideration the ways in which Pacific people are socialised, learn, and communicate with one another (Ramirez & Castaneda, 1974). Today, an important challenge for Pacific education, especially formal education, is how to prepare people to live in an increasingly globalised world and at the same time, develop systems of education that will ensure the survival and continuity of their (Pacific) cultures. This is the hidden message in all educational plans and an important part of the underlying principle in the Pacific Education and Development Framework 2009-2015. In order to make progress towards this end, Pacific education must first acknowledge the values and knowledge systems of Pacific peoples in order to ensure their survival and continuity, in the face of what UNESCO has called the increasing globalisation of foreign cultures, their languages, knowledge systems and communication networks.

For the purposes of this article, education is simply defined as ‘worthwhile learning’. Formal education would refer to organised, institutionalised, worthwhile learning as in schools; non-formal education to organised, non-institutionalised, worthwhile learning; and informal education, to worthwhile learning that is not organised and not institutionalised. Indigenous education refers to the education systems of indigenous peoples that was, in relation to Pacific Island communities, the dominant system of education before the introduction of schools, but now exist only outside of schools mainly in rural areas. Culture is defined as the way of life of a people that includes their values and knowledge systems expressed through their language(s). Of all the definitions of culture that exist, the UNESCO one is the closest to the way indigenous people themselves see culture. UNESCO recognises that culture is inclusive of spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional considerations, and provides the foundation for education for sustainable development (UNESCO, 2005). This view is different from the way culture is perceived by many Westerners, or expressed in various formal documents where it is often seen as a variable and separate from others such as economy, environment. I distinguish between culture and ethnicity. Whereas ethnicity, like race, is a notion based on biology and shared gene pools, culture is a social concept, based on shared values, behaviour, and performance. Membership of an ethnic or racial group is determined by biology; whereas membership of a cultural group is determined by behaviour and performance. People may belong to a particular ethnic group but do not identify culturally with that group. Pacific people did not have a notion of ethnicity before European contact but they had a concept of culture in that they were aware of people who were different from them because they behaved differently towards one another as well as towards others (Linnekin and Poyer, 1990). The distinction is of particular interest to educators in that while a person’s ethnicity cannot be changed, culture is learned and a person may later choose which cultural group(s) s/he may wish to be identified with and/or belong to. Indigenous education is used here to refer to a system of worthwhile learning associated with the cultures of indigenous peoples. In this article, I shall outline the main features of

Pacific indigenous education, and how they differ from schooling, in order to draw out so called strengths and weaknesses in each, in light of the cultural contexts and learning needs of Pacific people. I will then outline examples of what Pacific scholars and researchers are currently trying to help improve learning not only for indigenous students but also prepare future teachers to recognise the special learning needs of indigenous school children.

EDUCATION BEFORE SCHOOLS

Before schools were introduced to Pacific Island communities in the early part of the 19th century, (indigenous) education was the joint responsibility of extended family members and the community. In today's expression, we would say that learning was mainly non-formal and informal, underpinned by shared values derived from culture, aimed at cultural survival and continuity. The content of learning was sourced from life itself and drawn from a knowledge system and epistemology that had existed for thousands of years. Cultural values underpinned the processes of teaching and learning and through observation, imitation and practical activities, the accumulated knowledge, skills and values of the culture were transmitted to the next generation, using the vernacular language, by appropriate persons, usually elders, to future generations. Successful learning was judged through people's behaviour and performance and a person's failure to behave appropriately (to know what to do and do it well) was largely a reflection of poor teaching, because teachers were supposed to model the (appropriate) behaviour expected of young people. Indigenous education may be said to occur in an eco-cultural environment where learning was facilitated by those who themselves had mastered the worthwhile knowledge, skills and values that were expected to be passed on (Thaman, 1985; 1988).

When Christian missionaries established schools in various Pacific island communities less than two hundred years ago, no one asked how Pacific people conceptualised wisdom, learning, teaching or knowledge or what values were emphasised. Missionaries introduced schools complete with introduced conceptual frameworks, sets of practices and values which were supposed to offer Pacific people opportunities for enlightenment, civilisation, and later cash employment. The main aim of schools and the newly established religious bodies that introduced it was conversion of learners to a new religion and a new way of life, amounting to a transformation of Pacific peoples, their cultures and communities. The content of schooling was in the form of subjects, sourced from books, which contained what was considered worthwhile based on a different (European) epistemology. Christian values provided the rationale for teaching and learning and the teachers were foreign missionaries who had learned and transcribed the language of the people. Learning was confined to special places called schools and special people (teachers) were required to teach the new subjects to those who attended school. Learning was mainly through rote as much of it did not relate to real life; it was assessed through pen and paper tests and those who failed dropped out of school and did not proceed to the next level of learning. Thus it is probably safe to say that schooling has largely resulted in the destruction and/or the devaluing

of Pacific indigenous educational systems together with the values and knowledge that underpinned them. The assumption then, as it is now, was/is that whatever was deemed worthwhile to learn and to teach in Europe (or now in the U.S.A., Australia and New Zealand) was important for the livelihoods of Pacific people as well. The content and processes of schooling was (and is) assumed to be 'universal' and culture-free. However, during the past two decades, and encouraged by the UN World Decade for Cultural Development (1987-1997), and now The UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD), an increasing number of Pacific people and communities have been asking questions of their education systems and some are trying to put culture back into the formal education process as a way of addressing the deteriorating quality of school education in most parts of the region or just because it is important for its own sake (Thaman, 1992; Pene, Taufe'ulungaki, & Benson, 2002; Lini, 2002; Thaman, 2010). The implications of this trend for teacher education has been a major concern of several educational initiatives in the region, including those associated with the UNESCO Chair in teacher education and culture, located at the regional university of the South Pacific and PRIDE.

CULTURE, TEACHING AND LEARNING

Western social scientists tell us that culture matters because of the way it shapes people's beliefs and attitudes, their roles and role expectations as well as the way they interpret and make meaning of their own and other's behaviour (Eagly and Chaiken, 1998). Sociologists in particular assert that role expectations, learned and internalised through the process of socialisation, help guide people's behaviour and social interactions, and when people from different cultural backgrounds use their own individual cultural cues to define and interpret role expectations of others, role conflicts often result. Similarly, communication problems often arise from a lack of knowledge and understanding of cultural norms and cues, deemed important for interpreting the behaviour and conduct of those involved in the communication process, such as, for example, between teachers and students (Riley, 1985; Widdowson, 1987; Ninnes, 1991; Taufe'ulungaki, 2000). Central to the teaching/learning process and among the things that usually influence and affect teachers' and learners' role expectations is what has come to be known as role boundary, which, when breached and unfulfilled, often results in conflict situations (Coleman, 1996). The notion of role boundary seems to be akin to the pan-Polynesian concept of *va/wah*, which in many Polynesian cultures commonly refers to both a physical as well as a metaphorical space that defines and sanctions inter-personal as well as inter-group relations (Thaman, 2002). Pedagogy however, mediates role boundary although pedagogy itself is shaped by the cultural values and ideologies of the society in which it originates and teachers transmit and reinforce the cultural values that are embedded in their teaching approaches (Barrow, 1990; Leach, 1994; Kelen, 2002). Where indigenous students are concerned, teachers must be qualified professionally as well as be culturally sensitive (Thaman, 1999a).

A CULTURALLY DIVERSE REGION

Members of a Pacific cultural group share a cultural history, sustained and maintained by its own language, epistemology and way of seeing the world. The Pacific Island region has over a thousand unique cultural groups each with its language, knowledge and value systems underpin the indigenous education of group members. Most Pacific cultures have existed for thousands of years, and it has been suggested by writers such as Linnekin and Poyer (1990) that Pacific peoples' different responses to the onslaught of outside forces such as colonialism (and now globalisation) was, and continue to be, a function of their cultural differences. In PICs the relationships between culture and education are usually expressed in two ways: the first relates to the conflicting emphases of formal education (schooling) with those of most learners' 'home' cultures resulting in what Little (1995) 'cultural gaps'; and, the second relates to the role of schooling in the development of cultural and/or multi-cultural literacies along the lines that Hirsh (1988) suggests. Both are important considerations in the mover to re-examine Pacific education by Pacific researchers and scholars especially in the last two decades, reflected in the activities of the Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative (RPEI).

Schooling and indigenous education

The RPEI was partly the result of a concern for the continuing dominance of mainly European based knowledge, skills and values in the curriculum of Pacific Island schools and how they have helped transform not only the structures and processes of Pacific indigenous education systems but also the way Pacific people see themselves, their environments, as well as the way they think and communicate with one another. The early 1990s saw an increasing number of Pacific-based educators expressing concern about the school curriculum and called for a more concerted effort to create more culturally inclusive curriculum for PICs (Teasdale and Teasdale, 1992). Many have embarked on theorising their own education as well as their education systems, in an attempt to clarify for themselves the differences between their received wisdom (from their formal, mainly Western education) and the wisdom of the cultures in which they grew up and were socialised, and from which they gained important knowledge, skills and values (Thaman, 1993; Nabobo and Teasdale, 1995; Taufe'ulungaki, 2000; Bakalevu, 2000; Thaman, 1988; 1992; 1993). This has been a welcome development especially given the argument that the difference between these two (sources) is small for those students whose home cultures are attuned to the culture of formal education but large for those (students) whose home cultures are vastly different from the culture and expectations of schooling (Little, 1995) and the continuing trend of Pacific learning environments to be culturally undemocratic (Thaman, 1993; 2000).

Teaching and learning in a foreign language, characteristic of most classrooms in PINs is probably the most obvious example of a culturally undemocratic learning environment. Language is often seen as a key player in the development of thinking and understanding as well as the transmission of these to future generations. The way

schools transmit knowledge is based on the assumption that knowledge has distinct irreducible forms which provide the basis for subject divisions and competence in a subject is gained serially while learning is seen as an ordered progression through a hierarchy of knowledge and skill, mediated through language. The point to emphasise here is that it is from value and belief systems that cultural groups develop rules of behaviour including those of communicative conventions, and teaching and learning strategies which are consistent with their own values and beliefs (Taufe'ulungaki, 2002, p.18). My study of Tongan teachers reflected the importance of Tongan values and beliefs in their perceptions of the goals of schooling in Tonga – which it ought to prepare students to be *poto* – knowing what to do and doing it well, within the context of Tongan culture. Unfortunately the structure as well as the processes of schooling does not reflect the value emphases of the culture, which include: consideration of the spiritual; respect for authority; kinship and interpersonal relationships; restraint behaviour; concrete and specific contexts; traditions and customs; and 'ofa (compassion) (Thaman, 1988).

In relation to learning and thinking styles, Taufe'ulungaki (2000) argues that thinking of Pacific islanders is mainly right-brain dominated emphasising creative, holistic, circular, and people focused, with the main learning strategies being observation and imitation rather than verbal instruction; trial and error rather than oral instruction; behaviour and performance in real life situations rather than practice in a simulated or contrived setting; mastery of context-specific skills rather than learning of decontextualised and generalisable principles; and, people and process oriented rather than issues or objectives oriented.

For millennia, Pacific cultures provided the framework and the lens through which most people see themselves and their world. Today Pacific peoples share worldviews that comprise intricate webs of inter-relationships, providing meaning to, and frameworks for, daily living and cultural survival. Generally manifested in various kinship relationships, such frameworks not only define particular ways of being and behaving but also ways of knowing, types of knowledge and wisdom, and how these were/are passed on and/or communicated to others. Many Pacific people today believe that for the sake of cultural survival and continuity, schools (and in turn teachers) should have a role in the transmission of the best of Pacific cultures, especially their languages, to future generations of Pacific people (Pene, Taufe'ulungaki, & Benson, 2002; Johannson-Fua, 2006). This is particularly important today as the global market ideology pervades the lives of even the smallest and most isolated Pacific community. With globalisation, education is increasingly seen as a commodity (to be sold) in the global market place and developed countries such as Australia and New Zealand have been proactively marketing their educational services everywhere including in PICs making issues such as cross cultural transfer, globalised curricula and appropriate teaching and learning strategies important for Pacific people (Mathewson and Thaman, 1998).

CHALLENGES TO TEACHING AND TEACHER PREPARATION

Given the degrees of conflict between the expectations of Pacific indigenous cultures and those of schooling, teachers in Pacific schools face the difficult task of mediating the interface between the different cultural systems of meanings and values that continue to exist in schools. Teachers' professional role demands that they interact with students as well as their parents but often there are conflicts in the classrooms many of which are communicated to teachers indirectly by the behaviour of their students as they move between their home cultures and that of the school. It is important therefore that teachers know the differences as well as commonalities between different Pacific cultural perspectives. Moreover, they need to understand and continually re-think their role and theorise their own education in order to find ways of integrating the different cultures, which have contributed to their own development. For Pacific education systems, the role of teachers in revitalising learning cannot be overemphasised. This has serious implications for the institutions that train teachers.

Another reason why it is important for higher education institutions to focus on cultural competence as important attributes for graduate teachers has been the fact that in some countries, there are high push out rates and therefore wastage despite over three decades of donor-assisted educational reforms (Sanga & Taufe'ulungaki, 2005). The quality of schooling had therefore increasingly become a concern of Ministries of Education as well as aid donors not to mention students and their parents (ADB, 1996). Universally, schools had been expected to fulfil three main agendas, namely the promotion of economic progress, the transmission of culture from one generation to the next and the cultivation of children's intellectual and moral development. The assumption here is that children would be helped to grow intellectually and morally by expanding their knowledge and understanding of their cultural heritages. This personal growth would empower them to build upon their heritage through discovering improved ways of managing themselves and their environment, and generating greater wealth for their society. However, schools in both developed as well as developing countries have fallen short of this ideal synthesis mainly because the economic and cultural agendas of schooling have increasingly come into conflict (Serpell, 1993). In PICs the problem has been further complicated by the existence of differing perceptions about children's intellectual and moral development and their relationship to the type of socialisation practices that exist in different Pacific societies, one embedded within (Pacific) cultures and vernacular cultural traditions on one hand, and a European-based perception that informs teaching and learning in school and higher education institutions, on the other. In this scenario teachers occupy an important but culturally ambiguous position. Whilst their professional training commits them to the rationale and practices of a western-derived school curriculum, their personal identities are often rooted in their own cultural traditions, values and norms. Furthermore, while their training makes them part of intellectual elite, their early socialisation occurred within a vernacular/indigenous culture that is very similar to that of many of their students. In most Pacific communities, school children's relationships with their parents and other elders continue to be negotiated within the terms of reference of local cultures and

vernacular or indigenous education systems that have their own ideas about cognitive development, interpersonal and social responsibility, as well as the development of wisdom.

At school however, the values of the students' home cultures are usually neglected and/or de-emphasised and discouraged because they often conflict with the values that the school is trying to promote (for example, competition versus collaboration). For example, schooling and the educational bureaucracy rely on universalism and impersonality, indigenous education systems rely on specific contexts and interpersonal relationships. And while schooling and higher education promote individual merit, indigenous education is based on the primacy of the group. Today, the extent to which the school and university represent the cultures of Pacific communities is minimal (Sanga, 2000). At best schooling offers the lucky few (less than 5%) access to the modernised, monetised sector; at worst it is a recipe for student failure and the destruction of the best of Pacific Island cultures and communities. Today as the global market ideology pervades the lives of Pacific peoples and their Pacific education, it is important for those involved in the preparation of teachers to continue to re-think and re-examine their work. This is vital as we are now witnessing a resurgence of the cultural deficit model not only in relation to schooling but also to students and the communities that send them to school who are often blamed for students' underachievement in school (Fiji TV, Local news/ 12.7.06)

The recent focus of higher education institutions on graduate attributes in general and teacher attributes in particular is a welcome sign to those who have been working towards ensuring cultural sensitivity and inclusiveness among the Pacific's teaching force. This may be seen as a culmination of nearly two decades of advocacy beginning with the 1991 UNESCO sub-regional workshop held in Rarotonga, Cook Islands which had reaffirmed the need for Pacific ownership of the school curriculum if improvement in student learning outcomes were to occur. The Rarotonga declaration had noted the vital contribution of teachers in such a process (Teasdale and Teasdale, 1992), shortly after; the Pacific Association of Teacher Educators (PATE) was formed with the aim of re-examining their curriculum of teacher education. This work was further strengthened by the establishment, in 1998, of the UNESCO Chair in teacher education and culture at the USP tasked with advocacy, teaching, research, and publications, of the centrality of cultural considerations in teacher preparation and curriculum development in the Pacific region.

Review of the teacher education curriculum

With funding from the UNESCO Office for the Pacific States located in Samoa, a major collaborative research project which was undertaken to find out the extent to which the curriculum of teacher education reflected and/or incorporated elements of Pacific cultures and their Knowledge and Value systems. The Project itself helped raise awareness among teacher educators in the various training institutions, about the importance of Pacific cultures in the education of teachers both as a pedagogical

tool as well as an important topic of study. The project also provided an example of partnership between the University of the South Pacific's Institute of Education, the UNESCO Chair in teacher education and culture, PATE and staff of seven regional teacher education institutions: three in Fiji, and one each in Samoa, Tonga, Cook Islands, Kiribati, and Solomon Islands. The information gathered helped in the development of educational material aimed at enhancing the ability of teacher educators to better contextualise their own teaching and thus provide better role models for trainees since it was clear from the survey results that many college staff were either unable or unwilling to seriously take into consideration the cultural backgrounds of their students in the selection of course content, methods of teaching as well as assessment techniques (Thaman, 2000).

An important outcome of the above project was the publication in 2000 of several Teacher Education Modules targeting teacher educators as well as trainee teachers. The authors of these Modules are Pacific researchers and educators who were concerned with the need to make teaching and curriculum more culturally inclusive. Using the general theme of Cultural Democracy in Teacher Education, six Modules were produced and authored by Pacific scholars. They included:

- Thaman's Towards culturally democratic teacher education;
- Taufe'ulungaki's Vernacular languages and classroom interaction in the Pacific;
- Nabobo's Incorporating local knowledge in teaching about education and society;
- Tupuola's Making sense of human development: beyond western concepts and universal assumptions;
- Bakalevu's Ways of mathematising in Fijian society; and
- Sanga's Learning from indigenous leadership.

As well as the production of teacher education material, the UNESCO Chair together with staff and students in tertiary institutions in the region collaborated in carrying out research into various indigenous educational ideas of several Pacific cultures, as a way of providing basic information about Pacific Knowledge Systems. An important outcome of this partnership has been the publication of Educational Ideas from Oceania (Thaman, 2003, revised in 2009) a collection of essays, authored by staff and students from around the Pacific region. The book is being used as a text for undergraduate and postgraduate students at the USP as well as some tertiary institutions elsewhere in the region. A culmination of the advocacy for Pacific cultures and knowledge systems in the curriculum of formal education was the endorsement by Pacific Forum Education Ministers in 2010 of the Pacific Regional Strategy for Culture and Education whose vision is 'Culturally Inclusive Education for All'. A lot of work remains to be done, especially in relation to the preparation of teachers, in order to realize the goals of this framework.

RETHINKING PACIFIC EDUCATION INITIATIVE (RPEI)

The concern about ownership and relevance of Pacific education together with the need for cultural democracy in the school and higher education curricula provided the rationale for the Re-thinking Pacific Education (RPEI) held in 2001, at the USP. Co-hosted by the USP Institute of Education and the School of Education, Victoria University Wellington, the initiative provided an opportunity for Pacific educational researchers and educators to evaluate educational progress in their own countries and called for a re-focus of educational planning on Pacific values and knowledge systems. A specific goal of this initiative was teacher education and the need to ensure cultural competence among graduate teachers through helping them theorise their education as well as developing and using culturally inclusive content and pedagogies in the classroom. Culturally inclusive teacher education was seen as central to the achievement of the objectives of RPEI. The 'Tree of opportunity: re-thinking Pacific education' contains the papers presented at this symposium and it too is a useful resource for Pacific and non-Pacific educators in the region and beyond.

The 2001 symposium, together with other RPEI initiatives was financially assisted by the government of New Zealand for whom RPEI members are grateful. In particular funding from NZAID enabled several education research projects to be completed in New Zealand, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu. The findings of these researchers were seen as important for the re-thinking process in the country of the researchers. As well as research, RPEI has also jointly organised and hosted several educational conferences aimed at raising awareness of the need to re-think and reclaim Pacific education by Pacific people. These included the Re-thinking Vanuatu Education, Port Vila (2002); Re-thinking Educational Aid in the Pacific, Fiji (2003); Re-thinking Teacher Education, Samoa (2004), Rethinking Education in Micronesia, Majuro (2004); and Towards Culturally Inclusive Curriculum Development in Fiji (2006); and Future Directions in Fiji (2010). RPEI continues to be a network of Pacific educators who are passionate about and committed to the improvement of teachers and teaching in Pacific communities, be they in the Pacific Islands or in developed countries such as Australia and New Zealand. It is important that these educators and researchers are encouraged and supported so that they can continue to make a difference to the education of their fellow islanders, especially teachers. The focus of RPEI on indigenous cultures and their knowledge and value systems have resulted in both positive outcomes as well as challenges.

The emphasis on Indigenous Education (IE) is due to our belief that:

- IE will help Pacific countries in developing culturally inclusive curriculum and instruction and thereby move closer to achieving many of their educational goals, especially those associated with EFA, Decade of Literacy, Decade for a culture of peace, and Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. In 2010, Pacific Education Ministers endorsed the Pacific Regional Strategy for Culture and Education whose main aim is culturally inclusive education for all;

- IE will enhance the status of research and development of Pacific epistemologies and knowledge systems;
- IE will bring about a sense of ownership of education systems by Pacific peoples (Teasdale & Teasdale, 1992);
- IE will result in more relevant and culturally appropriate and meaningful curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment methods in formal education in PICs;
- IE may reduce failures and push-outs in schools;
- IE allows Pacific teachers and tertiary students to study and research their own cultures, knowledge systems and languages and better contribute to the development of their own countries;
- IE will help decolonise education and empower Pacific peoples to develop their own models and frameworks for development especially for teaching and learning and thus reduce the dependence on the ideas and skills of people who often do not understand the cultural contexts of the communities in which they work.

Despite the advantages of focusing on indigenous education, there continue to be serious challenges to the work that is being carried out in the region. These include:

- Lack of relevant and appropriate resources, both human and material, to assist those who wish to better contextualise their work, be it in teaching, curriculum planning or policy development
- Over-dependence on foreign finance, technical assistance, and personnel, and their educational ideas and theories, making it difficult for Pacific people to openly critique the processes as well as the planned outcomes of the assistance that they receive
- Failure of many indigenous as well as non-indigenous people to acknowledge and/or value indigenous knowledge and the people who produced that knowledge;
- Until recently, the marginalisation of Pacific cultural knowledge and values in institutions of higher learning teaching and research. (USP has now included Pacific Cultures and Societies as a priority area in its Research agenda and Strategic Plan 2013-18)
- The continual appropriation of Pacific knowledge by some individual and organisations often claim ownership of the knowledge of Pacific peoples
- The continuing epistemological silencing of attempts to centre teaching and learning upon the values and knowledge systems of Pacific peoples. (Focusing on Pacific cultures and their knowledge systems, characteristic of the work of many Pacific educators such as those at USP, has been labelled by some as ‘culturalist’, motivated by personal yearnings for an era gone by (see Burnett, 2005)

- The strong force of globalisation, which discourages Pacific teachers and students from recognising, valuing and studying their own indigenous knowledge systems for fear of being branded as old fashioned, romantic or even racist.

TOWARDS A SYNTHESIS OF INDIGENOUS AND WESTERN EDUCATIONAL IDEAS IN TEACHER PREPARATION

There have been some positive signs in relation to the struggle for cultural democracy in higher education, including teacher education. The inclusion of ‘Pacific consciousness’ in a list of desirable graduate attributes for the regional university (USP) is an example although ‘consciousness’ has not been adequately defined for curriculum purposes. There is now a compulsory course, Pacific Studies, for USP undergraduates but it does not specifically deal with indigenous education or indigenous knowledge. The only Education undergraduate course on indigenous education was deleted in order to make way for two generic courses for second year degree level studies as part of the ongoing Strategic Academic Review. There are, however, some postgraduate courses that include indigenous and traditional knowledge and indigenous education in disciplines such as Geography, Pacific Studies and Education. Furthermore, an increasing number of postgraduate and thesis students are choosing indigenous or traditional knowledge systems as areas of research, thus adding to the store of knowledge that can be made available to those who teach Pacific students especially in higher education institutions in the Pacific region. More specifically, at the School of Education which offers teacher education programs from Early Childhood to Tertiary, the following are examples of what is being offered:

- In pre-service as well as in-service programs, students have been encouraged to study and research indigenous education and knowledge systems: in particular, indigenous educational ideas and processes. One of the outcomes of this opportunity has been the publication of Educational Ideas from Oceania, consisting of essays on different conceptualizations of teaching, learning, knowledge and wisdom, from around the Pacific region. It provides useful information about indigenous education in the countries concerned and is a useful text for both undergraduate and postgraduate students;
- An increasing number of Pacific students are choosing to study Pacific indigenous education, in universities in Australasia, including at the School of Education, taking up the challenge of researching their own cultures and epistemologies. The launching of Dr. Nabobo-Baba’s book ‘Knowing and Learning: an indigenous Fijian approach’ in July 2006, and Sereima Naisilisili’s PhD study on Traditional Knowledge of Cu’u (Vanua Levu, Fiji, 2011), are testimonies to the courage and determination of such scholars;
- For teacher educators, a series of Teacher Education Modules on the theme ‘Towards culturally democratic teacher education’ have been made available from the USP’s Institute of Education since 2000. These, together with other publications, including conference papers and student theses, form the core

of resources on Indigenous education available for use by those who may so choose;

- In the area of curriculum development, a major focus of the work of the UNESCO Chair in teacher education and culture has been advocacy for indigenising the curriculum of teacher education by incorporating local and indigenous knowledge, and encouraging teacher educators as well as trainees to do the same. This is done through the teaching curriculum courses (for example, Advanced Curriculum Study), as well as through advocacy as a curriculum consultant and founding member of the Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative (RPEI). In 2006, the RPEI and the USP Institute of Education (IOE) hosted curriculum planners from around the region in a conference to discuss and re-think the curriculum of their respective nations and how they might be changed in order to make it more culturally inclusive. Indigenous resource persons from PICs, New Zealand and Australia provided useful suggestions as to how the school curricula as well as school examinations might be changed in order to provide for a more culturally democratic learning environment in Pacific schools. The resulting publication, *Rethinking the Pacific Curriculum* (Sanga & Thaman, 2009) is now used by undergraduates as well as post-graduate students at the USP;
- In 2004, Pacific Knowledge Systems was included in a list of research priority areas for USP but was deleted four years later when a new PVC Research took over. A policy on Pacific arts and culture was also accepted by the University Council in 2004 that required, among other things, the mainstreaming of Pacific cultures, their arts and knowledge systems in the courses and programs offered by USP. Although a course on Pacific Studies is now compulsory for all undergraduate students at USP, and Pacific cultures and societies has been restored as a research cluster, there is an urgent need to embed Pacific-ness in all aspects of the university's work, especially in relation to improved focus on interpersonal and inter-group relationships, as it is in this area that potential conflicts are bound to occur. With the endorsement by Pacific Education Ministers of the Regional Framework for Culture and Education in 2010, the regional university is duty bound to assist its staff as well as future Pacific educators make the vision of the Ministers, for culturally inclusive education for all, a reality.

Research: combining indigenous and global knowledge

Research is an important consideration in Indigenous Education, especially research conducted by Pacific peoples who are working in Education and/or training teachers. In this area, what most Pacific scholars have found was the absence of any serious challenging of the unilateral assumptions of a universal model of research, with the Academy being the central authority in knowledge production. Although some university researchers had noticed that something was amiss, many were probably too afraid to say anything for fear of being ridiculed and/or victimised. Some realised that European-derived systems and frameworks of research did not have the concepts

by which their experiences and realities could be appropriately represented, named, described, and understood. If indigenous knowledge was included in some courses, as in Education for example, it tended to occupy a marginal position compared to those of Western or Global knowledge. Pacific scholars who joined the staff of universities sometimes noticed that what they thought to be appropriate for their research as well as those of their students needed to be within existing colonial frameworks even though political decolonisation had already occurred in many Pacific countries. More importantly, some realised that the tools that they were using belonged to those very models that they were trying to deconstruct and they realised that they were in danger of becoming equally oppressive themselves. They decided that it was time to look towards their cultures for appropriate frameworks/spaces in which they could begin to create and theorise their own indigenous knowledges and education (Thaman, 1992). For nearly two decades now a number of pioneering works by Pacific scholars are beginning to be recognised and accepted as relevant resources for teaching and research in higher education in the Pacific region, and many more are being developed and critiqued (see for example, Thaman, 1992; Tamasese, Peteru & Waldegrave, 1997; Smith, 1999; Bakalevu, 2000; Manu'atu, 2000; Maua-Hodges, 2002; Nakata, 2001; Taufe'ulungaki & Johannson-Fua, 2005; Nabobo-Baba, 2006; Naisilisili, 2011).

In many of the efforts to decolonise teaching and research frameworks, the work of indigenous educators in Aotearoa, New Zealand is here acknowledged. Since the 1990s, Maori researchers have been working towards creating a more appropriate interface between indigenous knowledge and global knowledge, and between formal education and indigenous education, through developing Maori education and Maori research frameworks (Smith, 1999). Today, there are conscious efforts to encourage and nurture researchers within higher education institutions as well as in Maori and Pasifiki communities. The increase in Maori and Pasifiki students who are studying for higher degrees in universities in Oceania is testimony to a determination of Maori and Pasifiki people to reclaim their education and knowledge production processes. Formal organisations have also been created to assist in this work, such as the Maramatanga Research Centre of the University of Auckland (www.arts.auckland.ac.nz/sites) and the Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative in the region. It is obvious that research into indigenous knowledge has become more urgent than ever because the people who may hold this knowledge are the elders who may not be around to share their knowledge.

Pacific research frameworks

I wish to briefly discuss here some of the Pacific research frameworks that have been useful in the decolonising process. The Kakala Framework was recently applied in a research project in Tonga on Sustainable Livelihood. Developed by the author in 1992, Kakala is sourced from the Tongan metaphor of the same name – which means a garland of fragrant flowers. Kakala has equivalents in other Pacific cultures, for example, salusalu (Fiji), lei (Hawaii) and hei (Cook Islands), and in some Asian cultures (for example, hanawa in Japan). The processes involved in kakala making

are similar to those used in the research process and comprised of *toli* (materials selection), *tui* (making of a *kakala*) and *luva* (presentation of a *kakala* as a sign of respect and love). In the presentation of a research report, it is important that the researchers respect the communities in which research was conducted and researchers are accountable to them. A more detailed description of the *kakala* framework may be found in Thaman (1997) and Johansson-Fua (2006). The framework was critiqued and enhanced in 2005 with the addition of two more steps: *teu* (preparation) and *malie* and *mafana* (evaluation) by Taufe'ulungaki, Johansson-Fua and Vanuatu. This expanded *kakala* framework was adopted in a multi-country research project on Education and Sustainable Livelihood which was piloted in Tonga and funded NZAID.

The Fa'afaletui framework was developed by Tamasese, Peteru and Waldegrave (1997) and is of Samoan origin. It is based on three major emphases in the consideration of (three) vantage points in respect of an event or issue, namely: i) people looking down from a mountain top; ii) people looking down from a tree; and iii) people in a canoe (who are close to the action). Researchers are said to be the people in the canoe, who are closest to the action while policy analysts are like the people on the mountain top who critique the research and help analyse the different perspectives from the information gathered.

The Tivaevae framework was developed by Cook Islander Maua-Hodges (2002) and is particularly important for teamwork among researchers. Tivaevae refers to the communal art of quilt making (*tivaevae*) and has been applied to individual researchers conducting interviews with people in their communities, collection data and contributing to the design of the overall research project. This model reflects and respects the ethnic diversity of Pacific researchers and their communities while maintaining an overall structure for the research. The *tivaevae* model when used, ensures coherence since all the different patterns and parts of the *tivaevae* are sewn or woven together in an appropriate way (Koloto, 2002, p.9).

The Vanua framework was developed and used by Nabobo-Baba in her study that documented Fijian epistemology in the *vanua* of Vugalei. *Vanua* is that holistic conception of people, land, genealogy, life, place, knowledge, clans all wrapped into one, and central to all indigenous communities and worldviews. Nabobo-Baba is now using her framework to teach research Pacific Research Methodologies at the University of the South Pacific.

Kakala, Fa'afaletui, Tivaevae and Vanua have been successfully used in research studies in the Pacific region including in New Zealand in the past decade by scholars such as Koloto (2000) and Johansson-Fua (2006) who claimed that their research was important because it was the first time researchers used Pacific theoretical frameworks and methodologies in a major research project in the region. As principal researcher, Koloto for example, found that all three models provided useful frameworks for her team who found the work exciting and a good opportunity for a team of Pacific researchers from different PICs to come together and conduct research within their

own communities and enhanced their skills. It was also an opportunity to further test the effectiveness of Pacific theoretical frameworks and validate them for other Pacific scholars and researchers.

Taking advantage of opportunities to further re-think Pacific education and improve teaching, learning and research outcomes in the region is something that a recent web-based network of Pacific educators (NOPE) hopes to realise. NOPE provides a forum for educators to share knowledge and experiences through the use of new technologies. Many of these educators are teachers and/or teacher educators, and some have been working in the area of indigenous education for some time, trying to learn more about it, promote it and basically re-claim it for themselves and their communities. NOPE also is evident of the fact that Pacific people are adapting to new challenges and taking advantage of the globalisation of technologies to stay connected with one another. The goods that many value, such as cars, TVs, computers, et cetera, are being used to restore and facilitate traditional knowledge and information. This is evident through the many sites on the WWW that attest to the fact that Pacific peoples are keen to recognise their shared history, culture, language as well as religion. The Internet is being used to emphasise unique characteristics of particular Pacific identities as well as a Pan-Pacific identity.

The growing interest in Pacific Studies and Pacific epistemologies was evident in the number of Pacific people who presented at a curriculum conference in Fiji in 2007. It is also increasingly evident among university research students in Australia, New Zealand, Hawaii as well as the US mainland who have cultural links to Pacific cultures (Kiste, 2002). New information and communication technologies (ICTs) are also allowing Pacific people around the world to increase their profile in mainstream society without infringement of autonomy – thus offering potential for greater security for indigenous values and knowledges as well as greater sharing with other indigenous peoples elsewhere while maintaining their core relationships with their own cultures (Thaman, 2010).

Valuing and using the wisdom of indigenous education

Although some progress have been made in the Pacific region towards reclaiming Pacific indigenous education and using it to strengthen and improve the learning outcomes of formal education, we have a long way to go and a lot of work remains to be done. The following are suggestions for consideration by teacher educators based on our experience in teaching and learning about IE in the Pacific. They include:

- Encourage and develop studies of indigenous educational ideas among trainees. This is particularly important for multi-cultural contexts where teachers are often culturally different from the students that they teach;

- Conduct and encourage research into Pacific knowledge systems as a way of acknowledging and respecting the knowledge of indigenous peoples. Develop and/or use where possible Pacific research frameworks;
- Include community elders and community members in decision-making especially in relation to teaching and resource development in the areas of culture and languages. Ownership of knowledge and learning is an important consideration in indigenous education;
- Demonstrate and encourage cooperative and participatory methods of teaching and promote the use of these in classrooms;
- Encourage students to take courses in vernacular languages, if these are offered; better still, make these compulsory for teacher trainees;
- Encourage teacher educators to contextualize their teaching and develop culturally meaningful resource materials and assessment in their courses;
- Offer opportunities for teacher educators to learn more about the home cultures and languages of the students that they teach;
- Work towards developing synergies between teacher training institutions and curriculum development units so that information and experience are shared among those who are responsible for curriculum reform and teacher education;
- Encourage and support the use of vernacular languages in the classroom;
- Develop courses and teaching materials that recognise and value Pacific cultural knowledge and ways of thinking and being;
- Demonstrate the use of a variety of methods of teaching and promote the use of culturally inclusive curriculum and pedagogies;
- Use a variety of assessment methods and work towards more continuous assessment rather than dependence on final examinations.

CONCLUSION

The case for valuing, addressing, and integrating indigenous knowledge into the curricula of Pacific schools and higher education institutions cannot be overemphasized. This is particularly so because the reasons for the lack of education in some parts of the Pacific (especially in rural and remote areas) go beyond access to schooling, affordability and lack of resources. Furthermore, when prior knowledge or indigenous knowledge is integrated into the classroom or learning environment, students better connect to the material taught and can become the major knowledge sources for their communities' sustainable development (World Bank, 2005).

For those of us who still call the Pacific Islands home, but who were or are being educated in higher education institutions outside of our home countries and cultures, our newly acquired worldviews may represent our flight from our cultural roots, from

nature and from one another. Perhaps it is time that we more closely examine our own (cultural) ways of thinking and knowing in order to explore what might be changed in our teaching and learning, so that we can create for ourselves and for those under our care, an educational environment that is not only sustainable but inclusive in its processes, contexts and outcomes.

I end with a passage from Motarilavao Hilda Lini, of Vanuatu, who provides a rationale for Indigenous Education in PICs that is difficult to counteract. She says:

Conflicts between indigenous cultural values and foreign values have become ongoing issues since the wave of European contact first hit the Pacific Islands . . . Like a Pacific woman in pain, sometimes the pain becomes unbearable and the Pacific spirituality cries out loudly for attention... These are warning signs to re-examine our past, re-define our peaceful co-existence with others who share the same mother earth and to pay our respect where it is due. This must be accepted as an ongoing process in order to heal the past damage and restore the natural peace elements needed for future generations to inherit their natural human rights in a safe environment (Lini, 2002, p.4).

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