RE-THINKING AID
RELATIONSHIPS
IN PACIFIC EDUCATION

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EDUCATION FOR NATION BUILDING

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It is a cliché to say that colonialism entailed divide and rule. This dictum was well recognised by the Romans and widely practised by all colonialists. It is difficult to identify a single former colony that has not suffered as a result of the divisive practices of the colonial power. In the post-colonial period ethnic and other divisions have been reinforced by continued uneven development of constituent regions and people(s). This in turn has been further exacerbated by the capture of the state apparatus in some post-colonial countries by a dominant ethnic group and the ascendance of ethnic politics.

For many such former colonies political independence has been invariably followed by decades of internecine conflicts. Indeed, intra-state conflicts have superseded those involving states (Rupesinghe, 1992): artificial state boundaries splitting up ethnic communities; coercive unreformed state apparatus; electoral systems owing their origins to the competitive and combative, 'winner takes all' Westminster model; uneven development and differential treatment of citizens; differential perceptions of citizenship itself; and mobility of people in countries characterised by peripheral capitalism. These have all resulted in grave problems of national construction. In the South Pacific, the independent states of Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu have experienced traumatic periods in their recent past of ethnic competition and conflict as well as secessionist movements based on such differences.

The notion of nation building, popular in the early phase of political independence in post-colonial countries is not in wide currency these days. Thus nation building, "long heralded as the main political process in the post-colonial world, has lost much of its appeal for numerous people who see themselves excluded or marginalised from it, or worse, who see

nation building as a type of juggernaut under which their own cultures and identities will be squashed" (Stavenhagen, 1996, p. 7). I have chosen, however, to address nation building because it remains central to both statehood and development in ethnically diverse post-colonial countries. Without more inclusive and participatory forms of nation building, disputes and violent conflicts within them will seriously impede the functioning of state institutions and jeopardise long-term development. Development in the context of this paper is defined as human development, "a process of expanding human choices by enabling people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives" (UNDP, 1998, p. 16). Education, better health, and access to resources are enablers and yardsticks for a decent standard of living. They make human choices possible, but these are only feasible when there is political, social, and economic freedom. Such freedoms are crucial "for being creative and productive, and enjoying personal self respect and guaranteed human rights" (UNDP, 1990, p. 10). Without stability and in the absence of political freedom, there is little likelihood of human development. A stable national state that is inclusive of all ethnicities that comprise it is a critical foundation for sustainable human development.

A significant force in nation building is a country's educational system (Cottrell, 2000; Gundara, 2000). Given the failure to nurture a sense of national identity and belonging during the colonial period, this should have been a significant area for policy and action (Qalo, 1982; Premdas, Steeves, & Larmour 1983). This chapter will briefly examine colonialism in the Pacific and its consequences for multi-ethnic island countries of the region. It will argue that very deliberate measures need to be taken in creating national symbols, modifying school curriculum to incorporate civic education, and establishing an educational system that is integrative. A national language policy, as well as mechanisms and processes to accommodate minority concerns and interests, is needed in these multiethnic states. Without very deliberate consultative measures for nation building, it is likely that movements based on sub-national identities will continue to threaten the integrity of these states and

undermine their development. Obviously, deliberate educational policies for nation building require wide consultation and adequate resources.

However, education is but one of several agencies that need to work in concert if ethnic divisions and narrow nationalisms are not to undermine post-colonial states in the Pacific. Improved physical infrastructure, transport, and communication, particularly the media; an acceptable constitutional framework; inclusive government policies cross-sectorally; equitable development; and the inculcation of broader national identities are critical. The challenges of ethnic merchants and out bidders* will have to be met effectively. Fr John Momis, a widely respected Bougainvillean leader and member for Bougainville in Papua New Guinea's Parliament, sounded a word of caution on less than inclusive nation building at a recent multicultural workshop in Fiji. Speaking on the post-colonial experience of his province, which had been reduced from "the premier province" to "basic humanity," Momis (2000) said,

> That is why we are in a very difficult situation because of those people who are driven by the zeal to create a united nation adopting a strategy which is alienating the people, people who belong to a highly diversified society. As you know, PNG is a very big country, in terms of diversity of languages, diversity of cultures, even geography — to think that we can effectively and meaningfully create a democratic, united nation, by imposing uniformity and regimentation, is a big mistake, because it kills initiatives, it stifles peoples' creative participation and makes them totally dependent and thus, vulnerable to manipulation by a neo-colonialist government which itself is in turn manipulated by external forces like the tycoons of Malaysian companies and American, British and Australian companies (pp. 101-102).

Given the authoritarian nature of many of the institutions that form the post-colonial states in the Pacific, the forms and processes by which people are able to participate at all levels of decision making is a critical ingredient to nation building. The capture of the machinery of the state by a dominant ethnic group and the institutionalised exclusion of other ethnic groups and categories have engendered ethno-nationalism, 'us and them' politics, opening the gates to overt conflict.

Pacific States Are Recent Colonial Creations

While some pre-European Pacific societies had tendencies towards state formation in the centralised chiefdoms of the Pacific and on some occasions a powerful ruler was able to conquer a whole archipelago and combine various titles (for example, in the cases of Hawai'i, Samoa, and Tonga) centrifugal forces always impeded the long-term sustainability of the centralised hierarchical systems of eastern Pacific (see Sahlins, 1970). Tonga and Hawai'i were the only countries that had more or less 'national unity' when Europeans arrived in the Pacific; indeed, the process of securing rulership archipelago-wide was fostered by the barrel of the gun and the Bible (Koskinen, 1953). The facts of sharing a common language and culture in Polynesia contributed to the consolidation of wider allegiance. By contrast in the western Pacific, the polities were much smaller and, although hereditary chieftainships existed, the big-man system of acquiring leadership through one's achievements and the distribution of resultant largess predominated. These were acephalous (headless) polities in which people's support depended on what benefits accrued to them. Hundreds, if not thousands, of more or less independent polities existed in Melanesia. Often conflict and trade relations brought together diverse peoples who lived in physical proximity together, and in some instances long-distance trade contributed to broadened horizons and alliances. The 3,000 kilometre Kula trade in archipelagic Papua New Guinea was an especially celebrated example of this (Shutler & Shutler, 1975).

Imperialist competition led to the scramble for and the partition of the Pacific among Britain, France, Germany, Holland, and the United States in the late 1800s. Direct colonial rule was maintained by the threat and use of force. There was a degree of collaboration by local elders, big men, and chiefs. Late in the colonial period a category of Western-educated Islander bureaucrats, pastors, and political leaders emerged. Often times these people were drawn largely from particular regions that may have been exposed earlier to proselytism and other Western influences. Thus

in Fiji, chiefs and their allies from the eastern part of the archipelago took up the mantle of political leadership. Elsewhere, on larger islands where contact was coastal from the beginning, there is a division along this line between salt-water people and those from inland areas. They inherited the colonial state apparatus minus the resources and the forces that the former metropolitan rulers could muster. While they inherited the broader territorial boundaries of the former colonies, the nature of colonial capitalism left very uneven development of peoples and places. The need to address issues of national integration and more equitable development were at the heart of the challenges facing the newly constituted independent states (for Fiji, see Sutherland, 1992). The war in Bougainville, the near anarchy in Guadalcanal, the coups in Fiji and the periodic instability in Vanuatu reflect the difficulties faced by these island countries to deal with these challenges.

Culturally Diversity Is Not a Problem

The world today, which is said to be seamless and borderless and regarded as a 'global village' on account of the massive revolution in transport and communication propelled by global capitalism, is culturally very diverse. A good 99 per cent of the world's countries are multi-ethnic. Most liberal democracies, including the United States, profess multiculturalism and celebrate diversity. At the same time there are continuing and new conflicts in which ethnicity is perceived to be a major factor. Since the Second World War, a majority of conflicts have been intra-state rather than inter-state, usually involving violence between ethnic protagonists (Rupesinghe, 1992). In each of the cases, linguistic, religious, and cultural differences are not the causes of the conflict but are used to mobilise support for the leaders and factions involved. Usually, conflicts have emerged from competition over resources and access to opportunities and real and perceived inequalities and disadvantage. Politicisation of ethnicity is apparent when a strong sense of relative deprivation is

felt by those who are not benefiting from development. Affirmative action policies are conceived and implemented for groups that have suffered historical disadvantages and continue to be marginalised in the contemporary period (Ratuva, 2000).

More problematic is the issue of political centralisation in the context of culturally diverse peoples who have been compelled to share the same 'national' territorial space. Thus far it has been assumed that the making of a 'national' constitution, the adoption of a 'national' flag, a 'national' anthem, and the paraphernalia associated with the Westminster system were sufficient to create a nation. Where a 'national' élite emerged and agreed to cooperate in the 'national' interest, the territorial integrity of the post-colonial state was maintained. Invariably, however, fissures and splits have occurred in such élites and people have resorted to articulation of interests along ethnic lines, including the mobilisation of those kith and kin whose adherence to the broader 'national' symbols has been tenuous and whose interest in the 'national' project has waned as a result of not previously obtaining any benefits and indeed being further impoverished (Stavenhagen, 1996).

Uneven colonial development has had the consequence of creating a relatively large urban centre, usually the administrative capital with an élite school or two, a large hospital as well as other services. The primary town is the centre of commerce, transport, and communication with a range of other amenities including social facilities (Bellam, 1970). Colonial enterprise also contributed to enclave economies of plantation areas, mines, forestry, and tourism (Brookfield, 1972). The prospects of employment and access to services, and generally improved living standards have led to internal population mobility and migration (Chandra, 1988). Resident land-owning groups have faced increased pressure of migrants on their land and other resources. Without effective land-tenure arrangements and dispute-settlement mechanisms, disagreements between these groups have spilled over into open conflicts. There is a need for candid discussion of issues of land ownership, control, and use as well as ideas about citizenship in a modern state (Yabaki, Dakavula, & Naidu, 2002).

This is the broader context of the problem of nationhood in the western Pacific. Currently, economic and political agencies and processes tend to be competitive and divisive. Under these circumstances, very deliberate vehicles and programmes of nation building need to be put in place and regularly monitored (Premdas, 1978).

The Role of Education

Education has an extremely significant role to play in inculcating, among citizens of a country, the crucial sense of identity and belonging to their country. This is especially so when communities are ethnically fragmented, insular, and parochial, and the country does not have a long tradition of being united. Using education as an agency for nation building and as a foundation for building bridges between groups and categories, is a complex multidimensional process.

Language Issues

Consider the use of vernacular language. Among the many most useful recommendations that emerged from the Re-thinking Vanuatu Education Together Conference in October 2002, were a number that addressed the language issue: overcome prejudices through language learning; promote awareness of the value of languages and develop language policy; have Bislama as a language of instruction; include vernacular languages at least through year 6 and integrated culture and history curricula through year 12; require vernacular, then French, then English, education; emphasise play and first language in pre-school; research two mediums of instructions in an institution (Van Peer, St John-Ives, Green, & Cao, 2003; Sanga, Niroa, Matai, & Crowl, 2004). These language-related recommendations have numerous implications, including the obvious one of resourcing.

Vanuatu has inherited a dual educational system that has been divisive (Lini, 1980). Furthermore, there are more than 100 indigenous languages and the non-recognition of Bislama, the lingua franca for most Ni-Vanuatu (Lynch & Mugler, 1996). The use of local language in early childhood and primary education will be important to ensure that the mother tongue is learnt and appreciated together with local culture. The issue of which language is, or languages are, used next is not very clear. What role will Bislama, English, and French have? With the bulk of the children dropping out from primary school, what language skills will they have? To what extent will there be opportunities to inculcate in the child allegiances and wider loyalties to the country as a whole?

It is critical for Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu to adopt a language policy on the basis of widest possible consultations. In Papua New Guinea, Motu and Tok Pisin as lingua franca need to be recognised and promoted. This can also be said for Pijin and Bislama in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, respectively. Official national language(s) will have to be dovetailed with local languages. In Fiji, insufficient attention has been given to local dialects in schools, and the status of Bauan Fijian as an official language does not give it the attributes to generate national identity. With English and Hindi as the other two official languages, it is not mandatory for all people of Fiji to learn Bauan Fijian (Madraiwiwi, 2002).

Papua New Guinea, with its more than 800 languages, poses an even bigger challenge with respect to a language policy. Countrywide participatory consultations would provide useful directions. Bislama, Pijin, and Tok Pisin not only allow people to communicate on a countrywide basis, but also allow them to communicate on a regional basis. It is feasible for citizens to speak several languages and have multiple identities without detracting from the wider goals of nation building.

Desegregated Schooling

In all of these countries, the colonial state did not commit itself until very late in the colonial period to educating island people. 'Native' education was initially an anathema to the colonial settler and admininistrator. Education became primarily the preoccupation of Christian missions and local communities. Islanders now also divide along denominational and

religious lines. Solomon Islanders, for instance, are Anglicans (45 %), Roman Catholic (18 %), United (Methodists and Presbyterian, 12 %), Baptists (9 %), Seventh-day Adventists (7 %), and other Protestants (5 %), and have indigenous beliefs (4 %) (CIA, 2003). With the distribution of culturally different people in separate localities, primary schools tend to reflect local church and island groups. In Fiji, this is likely to take an ethnic Fijian or Indo-Fijian character. These schools are likely to reinforce local identities or ethnic identities rather than contribute to a sense of national belongingness (Burns, 1963).

It is pivotal that young people accept the legitimacy of the broader 'nation' if such an entity is to have a stable future (see Naidu, 2003). Educators and national educational policy makers will have to reflect on how best to create opportunities for children from locality based, diverse cultural and religious communities to interact, learn, play, and share experiences together. Such sharing may provide the basis for the generation of shared values and loyalties beyond the local. In this regard, are a number of regional centres of learning and teaching feasible? These would allow children from different backgrounds to come to these institutions not only to share their diversity but also to live and learn together about their common interests in the country of their common citizenship. Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands have had some experience with this in the national secondary school and provincial secondary school systems. The failures of these experiences have been due partly to the élitist nature of the schools. Increased capacities should allow for more children to participate. Beyond the regional centres at the tertiary level, national institutions of higher learning in a range of fields need to be established and strengthened to foster, among other things, a stronger sense of national identity and belonging.

International donors may assist countries by providing opportunities whereby educators and policy makers can learn of and from successful initiatives and experiences elsewhere in the region. There is a need, however, to avoid the top-down 'experts know all' approach. The Re-thinking Pacific Education Initiative and Re-thinking Vanuatu

Education Together have shown quite clearly that if Pacific people, and especially the stakeholders, are given the opportunity to deliberate on educational matters, including language policy and nation building, there is considerable scope for identifying appropriate options and strategies. Participatory approaches inclusively involving all stakeholders equitably in identifying and analysing issues and deliberating on ways of moving forward have been recognised as a most effective development strategy (Chambers, 1997; Mohan, 2002; Sanga et al., 2004).

Teacher Training and Intercultural Education

Among the national tertiary institutions, enjoying a pride of place would be teacher-training institutions. A professional category of teachers well versed in the countrywide standards of teaching and learning is vital for quality education. Besides the content and pedagogy of teaching standard subjects, considerable emphasis would have to be placed on teaching intercultural understanding. This would include intercultural communication and deep understanding of the cultures of the country. Teachers would be sensitised to stereotypes and prejudices, the in-group and out-group basis for inter-group relationships, and how to deal effectively with ethnic exclusiveness in various situations within and beyond the school community. Teachers would become vital agents of national integration, conscientised of their role in nation building.

International donors work across national jurisdictions and are therefore able to exert influence on regional and national teacher-training institutions towards the teaching of intercultural understanding. As well, donors can directly support the development and strengthening of such initiatives as supporting workshops and training attachments to centres of intercultural communication. Intercultural communication specialists could be supported to offer periodically to teachers and students region training programmes to enhance intercultural understanding. For such programmes to be effective they need to critcally examine the content of what is being taught, especially in history and the social sciences.

Curriculum Changes

Hitherto, the school system has inherited colonial subjects, content, and processes for constructing curricula. Still practised are pedagogies that are reminiscent of a generation ago. The history and geography that have been taught were not about local people, their interaction and relationships with their environment and other people; 'national' histories were not taught or if taught, the history did not recognise the contribution that ancestors of the people may have made. Likewise, mathematics and the natural sciences were taught as if the island people used no science. Exam orientation ensured that critical issues outside the curriculum were not discussed in the classroom.

Alien curriculum, 'academic and white-collar-oriented' curriculum, and an educational system designed to produce an élite by systematic exclusion, have contributed to an estranged relationship between those who have spent some time in school and the wider community. Schools will need to address the issue of building pride in children in their own cultures and heritage and their people's contribution to the wider 'nation' (Taufe'ulungaki, 2002). They will also need to address the challenges that are faced by young people inside and outside the educational system: challenges of livelihood, survival, and being culturally 'in-between' people with multiple identities.

It is worth reiterating that curriculum development processes need to be put in place that are participatory and not left to the 'experts' alone. The content of education has to make the difficult links—made in everyday reality for many Islanders—between the local, the national, and the global. The full range of life skills needs to be addressed systematically as one moves up the tree of opportunity (Pene, Taufe'ulungaki, & Benson, 2002).

As an area of involvement, curriculum development in all countries of the Pacific is supported by international donors. Rather than continuing to support current processes, donors may need to support a more fundamental 're-think' of curriculum policies, processes, and issues. The resounding success of the Re-thinking Vanuatu Education Together project highlights the great potential of this approach (Sanga, Niroa, Matai, & Crowl, 2004).

Promoting the 'Nation' as Part of Public Education

It has been said that Vanuatu is a 'nation of villages.' Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands can be similarly described. These villages are very differently integrated into the mainstream economy, society, and national political processes. In the case of Solomon Islands, a number of observers have said that the predicament of the central government in Honiara is that it has no relevance to the remoter provinces and villages. Central government has been ineffectual and there is now a call for some form of federal government as a panacea (Kabutaulaka, 2003). However, decentralisation may reinforce tendencies towards separation, secession, and ultimately fragmentation unless adequate care is taken to ensure that the interconnectedness between different levels of government is properly understood. The current loyalty to the village, the district, the province, and to *kastom* (traditional) elders and chiefs, needs to be combined with allegiances to the wider 'national' entity.

The media, institutions such as religious denominations, visits by senior government officials, celebrations of 'national day,' national dance theatre, sports teams, and other national events, as well as the disbursement of financial and other support to local levels, are some agencies and modes of delivering the 'national' message. Regular sporting fixtures featuring the national side (in soccer, rugby or netball, for instance) and teams from neighbouring countries can stimulate national consciousness in a very significant way. The recent successes of the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu soccer teams against Australia and New Zealand respectively contributed enormously to national consciousness and national pride. International donors can play multiple roles, including the facilitation of Solomon, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, or Pacific debates and discussions on key issues and strategies. In particular, donors may wish to engage

the participation of Islanders living outside their home countries in such deliberations.

A combination of external and internal forces has challenged the complacency relating to the continued stable reproduction of the island states of the western Pacific. These states are colonial creations imposed on people who until three or four generations ago were not part of a centralised political system. To promote a sense of wider 'nationhood' and a sense of national identity and national belongingness, a multi-pronged and widely inclusive approach to nation building must be fostered. Education for nation building can contribute enormously to this strategy but only if international donors support it rather than working against it by supporting inherited systems. As in most other human endeavours, the processes put in place to move towards greater national identity and integration are as important as the outcome of successful nation building.

Note

* The terms ethnic merchants and out-bidders derive from the writings of conflict pluralist writers. Ethnic merchants refer to opinion leaders and political leaders who dwell exclusively on ethnicity and ethnic ideologies as an explanation of all events, thereby mobilising support based on their ethnic group identity. Out bidders denote those individuals or political parties that seek to take the more extreme position on matters affecting inter-group relations compared to moderate leaders (see Stavenhagen, 1996, Chapter 2: The Pitfalls of ethnicity and ethnic conflicts in *Ethnic conflicts and the national state*).

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