

Pacific Pride

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The PRIDE Project (Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of basic Education) is implemented by the Institute of Education at USP and is jointly funded by the European Union and New Zealand AID through the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.



PRIDE serves

Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.



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From the Director: A new vision for IOE

First things first—the needs. The smiling Melanesian child, waving to passers-by is unschooled. The devoted primary school teacher of two decades has not had a refresher course since initial training. The language learnt at school is English; the geography taught is of hot springs in Rotorua, the history lesson is about European explorers of the Pacific, and the curriculum framework used is from the US mainland. The iron-roofed classroom constructed under a donor project a decade ago remains without improvement or repair. The draconian headmaster uses his cane often, not knowing that the policy on corporal punishment has changed. The ex-teacher villager remains on the government payroll three years after he received his letter of retirement. School and village are separated by more than a fence; parents and the community are excluded from sharing in their children's education. The national education plan, all three versions approved by two Cabinets, is gathering dust on the shelf, and so on...

It would seem that the needs in basic education as described above remain; exerting a constraining effect on Pacific Education capacities. These scenarios are repeated in varying degrees across the region; affecting access to and quality of basic education. In recognition of this, the PRIDE Project was initiated as a regional strategy to assist countries.

As implementers of the project, the USP-Institute of Education, the project team, the national project coordinators and national ministries of education want to keep these realities in sight all the time. The priority is not the available funding or the regional workshop or this newsletter.



Photographs courtesy Edgar Tari, Zone Curriculum Advisor, Tafae province, Vanuatu

Rather, it is the demonstration by Pacific countries of enhanced capacity to improve the quality of basic education, by minimising these constraints.

Reflective questions for Pacific stakeholders to consider: How well have Pacific stakeholders (ministries of

education, USP-IOE, project committees, project teams) used the resources of the PRIDE project? With less than two years remaining, how might key stakeholders of the project utilize what is left? And how might Pacific countries enhance their capacities so that at the end of the project, they are able to sustain support for their needs in basic education?

These and other questions are necessary. It is important that consideration is given to the long term benefits, rather than a quick fix.

Renewed perspective: I am suggesting that Pacific stakeholders adopt a perspective that prioritises sustainability. Such a view forces them to adopt a philosophy of stewardship; they will hand on to others something which is vibrant and relevant.

At USP-IOE, as managers of the PRIDE project which is entering its final phase, we recently re-clarified our vision, mission and ways of working, in line with this focus on sustainability. We have identified how to use the remaining resources to respond to the needs of the region in a way which will ensure that member countries will have the capacity to provide education that enhances the social, spiritual, economic and cultural development of their communities. ■

Dr Kabini Sanga,
Director,
Institute of Education and
PRIDE Project

Dr Sanga has been seconded from Victoria University of Wellington where he holds the position of Associate Professor in the School of Education Studies. He has been the director and chief executive officer of the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education. He has negotiated and managed aid projects, advised donors on aid policy, and supervised and conducted research. ■

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Workshop



Students performing at ECCE Workshop in the Solomon Islands
Photo courtesy Richard Wah, SPBEA

Twenty-one early childhood care and education (ECCE) participants, representing government and non-government organisations from the 15 Pacific Island countries (PICs) met at Honiara, Solomon Islands over a five day period (26–30 March, 2007) to share and reflect on current practices in ECCE.

PRIDE, SPBEA, UNESCO, UNICEF, PREL, PIFS and the Solomon Islands government were partners in organising what was a dynamic and powerful workshop. This was in recognition and support of the importance of the early childhood years by

regional and international organisations.

The theme was “Supporting Learning from 0-8: Creating the future”. The inclusion of seven Pacific Island ECCE experts and three non-Pacific islanders provided a fusion of local and global ECCE practices and issues.

Keynote addresses included: current research on brain-wiring; ECCE curriculum and policy; early learning development standards; ECCE assessment; regional and global perspectives; ECCE databases; language and culture; and the past, present

and future of ECCE practices in the Pacific.

Participants presented country reports, visited three early childhood centres and engaged in panel discussions. There was a lot to learn from one another. However, it was generally felt that the same issues and concerns were common throughout the region.

Participants emphasised the importance of a cross-sectoral approach, involving the education, health, social welfare and environment authorities of both government and civil society organisations.

An outcome of the workshop was the drafting of four resolutions to be presented at the 2007 Pacific Island Forum education ministers’ meeting in Auckland later this year.

Furthermore, countries expressed an interest in reactivating the Pacific Pre-school Council, to provide a voice for young children in the Pacific at international and regional forums.

The Solomon Islands Minister for Education, the Hon. Dr Derek Sikua, officiated at the opening ceremony. He made a commitment to be the ECCE advocate at the ministers’ meeting. Unless there is political commitment to ECCE by

PIFCs leaders, all efforts to mobilise poverty alleviation will be short-lived.

This means articulating ECCE in all government policies, corporate and strategic plans, and allocating funds in annual budgets. PICs Islands countries are aware of the focus on ECCE in international conventions and initiatives such as Education for All, the Millennium Development Goals and the Convention of the Rights of the Child. Therefore, we are obliged to give ECCE the priority it rightly deserves; the

Ufemia Camaitoga
Lecturer ECCE
Lautoka Teachers’ College
Critical Friend, ECCE workshop



Our Resource people at the ECCE Workshop
Photo courtesy Richard Wah, SPBEA

Resources for Early Childhood Care and Development

The Waka Story Book editors, designers and illustrators. Many of the now published titles were developed at these workshops.

A unique feature of the Waka books is the fact that some of the stories have been written in the vernacular languages of the Pacific. Languages available include Fijian, Kiriwalian, Samoan, Niuean, Bislama, Solomon Islands Pijin, Tuvan, Nauruan, Hindi and Urdu.

It was argued at the time that the Waka story books would boost literacy education efforts at the primary school level in the sub-region.

The Waka Story Book Series began with the support of the Asia/Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO and the Asia-Pacific Co-operative Programme in Reading Promotion and Book Development.

In the beginning there was a series of training workshops for Pacific writers, included the distribution of 1000

posters to school and public libraries in Fiji. (See image right). The first poster in the campaign features Ateca & MG from the TV show Get Set reading *Butterfly and Ant*, by Reijeli Racule (Junior Fellowship, IOE).

The FLA hopes that showing role models and popular personalities reading will create awareness of literacy and reading issues in Fiji. By providing the posters to schools and public libraries the FLA is also trying to demonstrate the value of libraries as sources of reading material and information especially for Pacific children. This extensive range of story books for all age groups of children has been widely distributed around the region.

In 2006 a Waka story book title appeared in a Fiji Library Association (FLA) Series catalogue can be accessed online at www.usp.ac.fj/ioe or contact devi_an@usp.ac.fj.

The Waka Story Book Series and other IOE publications can also be bought online from the USP Book Centre www.uspbookcentre.com.



What can the Internet do for education in the Pacific? Many people believe that the Internet and the World Wide Web offer the most important development in education since the printing press.

For the first time, anyone anywhere can contribute to globally-shared knowledge creation, instantly communicate with teachers and learners worldwide, and benefit from the Web's vast library of resources on virtually any subject.

But the Web also presents many challenges and obstacles. For example, many learning materials online are not available in local languages or local contexts. Many people are not aware of what the Web has to offer, and many in the Pacific have no access because they have no electricity, let alone a computer with Internet access.

But a number of initiatives in the Pacific are working to tackle these problems. The Pacific Internet Society (www.picisoc.org) has recently formed a Special Interest Group for Education to address the

needs of educators and learners using the Web across the Pacific. The SIG conducts research on the needs of the region, designs solutions to local problems, and will deliver workshops and training at the upcoming annual conference in Honiara in August '07.

At the same time, a number of Pacific nations have begun to form national 'School Nets' – that is, networks of schools that collaborate online on administrative, educational and learning issues. Samoa and Fiji are two examples, and Solomon Islands has benefited from the Pipol Fastaem network of low-cost eco-friendly rural Internet stations.

Meanwhile, a team at the University of the South Pacific is investigating the feasibility of a Pacific-wide School Net, to encourage schools to make the most of the Web's communication, creation and knowledge resources, with special emphasis on Pacific cultures and learning styles.

But how can learners in the region benefit from what the Web has to offer when the cost of access, computers and software can be so high, and while electricity and Internet connectivity often does not go beyond urban areas?

To help address this problem, the



Primary school students from the Vunato Squatter settlement, Lautoka, Fiji receiving basic ICT training.

Photo courtesy Joe Veramu, USP Centre Lautoka

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and Secretariat of the Pacific Community have been studying proposals to join the One Laptop Per Child initiative, also known as the \$100 Laptop project (www.laptop.org).

These specially-designed laptops use open source software and feature long-life, manually-charged batteries and built-in communication and Internet connection. The plan is to distribute several hundred thousand laptops to learners across the region, and connect them to the Web through a new satellite.

USP, including staff from IOE and the PRIDE Project are working on a pilot study, including designs for the right kind of learning materials, and planning for the impact of the laptop on teacher training, school curricula and student life.

Through these initiatives and others, education in the Pacific is opening a new chapter of globally-connected, next-generation teaching and learning. ■

Dr Robert Whelan
Instructional Designer,
DFL Support Centre, USP

ICT in teacher education—the Pacific experience

Consistent with the world-wide trend, the Pacific Island Countries (PICs) are faced with the introduction, development and maintenance of information communication technologies (ICT), in their education, including teacher education. This is done in light of the potential that ICT has in the life-long learning process of an individual, says Associate Professor in Education at USP Dr Akhila Nand Sharma.

Dr Sharma made the comments at a recent Forum on ICT Teacher Training in Japan recently. He pointed out that owing to the scattered nature of PICs, financial constraints and underdeveloped infrastructure, communication has always been difficult. Nevertheless, ICT does have the capacity to cope with these factors, enabling students and teachers to study from where they are and at their own pace, collaborating and co-operating with their counterparts and other members of the stakeholder families.

Dr Sharma informed those attending the forum that USP was a key player in ICT in PICs. USP owns its own satellite



TVET Teachers learning Internet based tuition at St. Stephen's Centre, Pamua, Makira, Solomon Islands. Photo reproduced with permission from the Solomon Islands' People First Network <http://www.peoplefirst.net.sb>

network, provides Internet, phone and data links, video and audio conferencing, and video and broadcast services to students and teachers in the its members countries.

"At USP, ICT-driven pedagogy can be identified in three teaching and learning styles: the traditional one where students and teachers are present in a classic classroom;

distance teaching using a variety of multimedia; and face-to-face tutorials and virtual."

Dr Sharma pointed out that while education was a key to development, education infused with ICT pedagogy was the 'master key' that could provide a powerful backing to the Education for All move, and on going learning, especially to teachers who are responsible for facilitat-

ing in their respective schools and communities. "It is, therefore, important to re-orientate ICT in education, especially in teacher education, to support sustainable learning and development.

"Information and communication technologies have been basic to USP's teaching through distance education since the early years. From six courses in 1971, DFL courses have grown steadily to 340 in 2006. About 9000 students study by the University's DFL mode of teaching, coordinated satisfactorily by USP campuses located in its member countries.

The PRIDE Project has assisted the School of Education at USP in the development of distance and flexible learning courses in Special Education and Early Childhood Education.

Courses developed include, Play and Early Childhood, Maths, Science and The Environment in Early Childhood Education and Educational Programming for Students with Learning Disabilities. The courses are currently being developed, with the first intake of DFL students expected to commence their online studies in 2008. ■

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Farewell Bob

Over 60 people came together to say their goodbyes to Bob and Jennie Teasdale on 2nd March. Guests included project donors the European Union and New Zealand Aid, the regional authorising authority the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), staff of the USP, members of the diplomatic corp, three National PRIDE Project Coordinators (NPC), the PRIDE Team and friends of the couple. The occasion was the farewell function for Bob, PRIDE Project Director for the last three years.

Seven people, representing key stakeholders of the Project, paid tribute to Bob's able leadership and his significant contribution to PRIDE's high profile in the region. The night included several special features. Firstly, there was an audiovisual presentation of Bob and the Project, followed by speeches by the donors, PIFS and USP. Guests enjoyed a Pacific Islands banquet, with many taking the opportunity to say farewell to the couple. A final gesture was the presentation of a commemorative *masi*, that guests had signed with words of thanks. This was presented to Bob at the closing of the evening, by the Project assistant, Isireli Qionimua (pictured right)



Bob and Jennie with Isireli Qionimua,

Bob is enjoying a well deserved retirement on Kangaroo Island and is making up for lost time with his family, including two very special grandchildren. ■

Education news from the Pacific

✉ A team of education officials from Papua New Guinea visited Samoa to study the Sector Wide Approach (SWAp) in the Samoa Ministry of Education, Science and Culture from 9–13 April 2007. The PNG Department of Education has been very keen to adopting a (SWAp) model by working towards a home-grown model which it believes will eventually reduce service duplication, encourage donor harmonization and rationalise the flow and allocation of funds.

✉ Marshalls not taking advantage of UNESCO

United Nations program officials say that the Marshall Islands is not taking advantage of its programs—a concern that a high-level government official in Majuro acknowledged “is very serious indeed.” But officials at the Ministry of Education, which coordinates activities with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), say they put a priority on managing United States-funded education programs because the U.S. is injecting much higher-levels of assistance than the United Nations agency.

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✉ The seminar on Technical and Vocational Education and Training “From School to Work: Contemporary Regional Experiences” was convened by the National Institute for Educational Policy Research (NIER) of Japan from 23 – 30 January 2007 in Tokyo. The seminar was co-organised with the UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (UNESCO-UNEVOC). The Pacific was represented at this seminar through the attendance of Epeli Tokai, education adviser at PRIDE.

✉ Education Awareness Week took place in Palau, 19–23 March 2007. The week strengthened collaboration and partnerships with students, parents, other agencies, and the community.

✉ Cook Island principals, teachers and school administrators continue to receive basic ICT training. Implemented with the support of PRIDE. The training aims to ensure that schools are better able to use ICT equipment to provide the Ministry of Education with information and

that all Ministry staff are able to develop student learning resources through the use of ICT.

✉ The University of the South Pacific's Dr Unaisi Nabobo-Baba was invited to speak at the 2007 AGM of the American Education Research Association 2007 in April. The focus of her talk was *Knowing and Learning: An Indigenous Fijian Approach*. This is also the title of the publication that is the outcome of Dr Nabobo-Baba's doctoral studies undertaken at the University of Auckland. The publication is available from the USP Book Centre www.uspbookcentre.com

✉ Tokelau's National Curriculum Policy Framework was finalised in March 2007. The development began with a series of consultations with the Taupulega and community of each *nuku*. The consultation feedback was very clear about the type of society the people of Tokelau desired; the relationship between education, culture and development; what should be continued and what should be changed in education to promote those aspirations.

Rethinking education in RMI

The first Rethinking Education conference in the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) was convened at Majuro from February 26 – March 2, 2007, by the RMI Ministry of Education, the National Training Council and the Pacific Resources for Education and Learning. The objectives of the conference were to:

- rethink the purpose of education in the Marshallese context
- develop a human resource development//TVET framework that realigns educational efforts toward stronger connection with cultural and community-based issues and values
- identify strategies to strengthen "passion" for education among Marshallese people
- review the proposed Education Strategic Plan 2006–2011.

While the workshop had many outcomes, an important one was the communiqué developed by participants. The communiqué states that Marshallese culture and tradition must be at the centre of education, but also prepare students with global knowledge for the 21st century. The communiqué also detailed five other human resource development principles for RMI.

1. Education must be relevant, efficient and effective.
2. Education must be holistic.
3. Education is a collective responsibility.
4. Accountability for results.
5. Education must be equitable, gender sensitive and inclusive.

The communiqué decided that the purpose of education is “to guide the survival, transformation and sustainability of Marshallese People and Society, with its outcome measured in terms of values, performance and appropriate skills and behaviours in multiple contexts in which they have to live “



PRIDE NPC Brenda Alik Maddison with conference participants
Photo courtesy Brenda Alik Maddison