

Heart, Soul and Spirit Knowledge in Pacific Schools: The Spiritual Dimension of Schooling¹

Priscilla Puamau
Education Advisor, PRIDE Project, University of the South Pacific

Introduction

The Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century (Delors, 1996) emphasised the need for a more holistic approach to education, balancing the four pillars of learning: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be. It makes the point that “Formal education systems tend to emphasise the acquisition of knowledge to the detriment of other types of learning” and recommends that education be conceived in a more holistic fashion and should “inform and guide future educational reforms and policy, in relation both to contents and methods” (Delors, 1996: 37).

A decade has passed since the publication of the Delors Report and yet this concern regarding an imbalance in the four pillars of learning, with the main emphasis still being on the acquisition and application of knowledge (learning to know; learning to do), is still true for formal schooling in the Pacific region. It is my contention that the last pillar of learning is particularly neglected in Pacific education systems and must be seriously reconsidered by Ministries of Education and stakeholders in order to raise its significance in policy and practice.

The paper explores how the spiritual, moral and ethical development of children is addressed in schools. What values and whose values predominate? How can the spiritual dimension of learning be more effectively nurtured? Drawing on my personal experiences as an indigenous Fijian woman firmly grounded in Christian values and ways of thinking and doing, and working on the Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of basic Education (the PRIDE Project) in 15 Pacific countries, I explore answers to these questions. In particular, the spiritual and cultural dimensions of schooling are addressed where I discuss two aspects: first, the need for Pacific educational systems to be firmly grounded in their local/indigenous cultures, values and epistemologies; and secondly, the need for a more effective implementation of the last, but not the least, pillar of the Delor’s Report – learning to be.

In this paper, I take a ‘strategic essentialist’² (Spivak, 1990, 1995) position as an indigenous Pacific Islander. In using essentialism as a strategy, I contend that the Pacific is basically indigenous and Christian to validate the lived experiences of the indigenous peoples of each Pacific country in order to strengthen my argument for their cultural and spiritual values to underpin formal education. My treatment of the Pacific region seems to assume homogeneity when this is clearly not the case. I acknowledge the heterogeneity, complexities, specificities and

¹ Paper presented at the Pacific Epistemologies Conference, July 3-7, 2006, USP, Suva, Fiji.

² The term ‘strategic essentialism’ refers to the use of essentialism as a strategy to effect agency or voice for disadvantaged or marginalised groups. In the case of Pacific Islanders disadvantaged in profound ways by the processes of colonialism and neocolonialism, postcolonial theorists writing in academia or indigenous people can use this strategy of being essentialist, totalising or deterministic in order to effect voice and agency for themselves in order to recover the voice, space and the dignity of ‘knowing themselves and of themselves by themselves’ (Puamau, 1999: 51).

multiplicities of contexts and situations of the 15 Pacific countries covered in the paper. As well, if there are any contradictions or ambivalences, this will demonstrate that there are no easy answers to the issues confronting education in the Pacific region.

Clarification of some terms

For the purposes of this paper, the Pacific refers to 15 independent countries in the Pacific region which are part of the PRIDE Project³. This includes four larger nations: Fiji, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Solomon Islands and Vanuatu; seven not so large nations: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Kiribati, Palau, Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI), Samoa and Tonga; and four small island nations: Niue, Nauru, Tokelau and Tuvalu.

In each of these countries, the dominant populations are indigenous peoples, those who inhabited the land before conquest by colonial powers. Invariably, in each of these 15 countries, their people own the bulk of the land and much of its natural resources, unlike their indigenous cousins who became marginalised minorities in countries like New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and the United States. There is no formal universal definition of the concept of indigenous peoples. However, indigenous peoples have been given the 'right', both collective and individual, "to maintain and develop their distinct identities and characteristics, including the right to identify themselves as indigenous and to be recognised as such" (United Nations, 2004: 2) as well as their right to self-determination.

It is interesting that Pacific societies, by virtue of their dominant position numerically and politically, do not fit into this UN definition as they are definitely not minorities but they are identified and defined as the indigenous peoples of their countries. Unlike minority indigenous populations in metropolitan countries, the Pacific countries are blessed in that they are in control of their own destiny, mediated as they are by the influence and impact of development assistance, globalisation and their relatively small economies of scale.

I have mentioned earlier that the majority of people in each of the 15 Pacific countries covered in this paper have internalised Christianity as the main religion in the region. A comprehensive definition of Christianity, interestingly provided on a Science website is:

The religion stemming from the life, teachings, and death of (J)esus (C)hrist; the religion that believes in (God) as the (F)ather (A)mighty who works redemptively through the (H)oly (S)pirit for men's salvation and that affirms (J)esus (C)hrist as (L)ord and (S)avior who proclaimed to man the gospel of salvation. (capitals my emphasis). (<http://www.biology-online.org/dictionary/Christianity>)

For me, and I understand that this is contested, a Christian is any person who has accepted Jesus Christ as his/her personal lord and saviour, attempts to follow the commandments and teachings in the word of God, the Bible, and attempts daily to live a holy and blameless life. This person loves God with his/her whole heart, mind, soul and might and tries to make his/her life a witness and testimony for Jesus. It follows then that a Christian is a person who follows the values, precepts, ordinances and commandments of the Bible, particularly those written in the New Testament. Christian values, beliefs and attitudes that are biblically grounded would be the guidelines for living and life.

³ PRIDE, an acronym for the Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of Basic Education, is a project funded by EU and NZAID, contracted to the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, and managed by the University of the South Pacific. More details on the project can be obtained on <http://www.usp.ac.fj/pride>.

Learning to be: what does it mean?

The pillar – learning to be - has posed particular challenges for educators as it is the least understood, and the least represented in most curricula. Basically, this pillar of learning “has to do with the formation of identity, both individual and collective, and with the achievement of self-knowledge, self-understanding and self-fulfilment, and ultimately with the development of wisdom” (Teasdale, 2005: 8). The development and nurture of spirituality, not just in a religious sense, is deeply embedded in this conception as are issues surrounding personal and cultural identity, including “the broader quest for meaning in life and for explanations of reality, both individual and communal” (Teasdale, 2005: 9). Learning to be, then, is to do with learning who one is, where s/he comes from, how s/he relates to others, to God and the environment, and how s/he fits into the scheme of life. It is to do with personal, social, cultural and spiritual identity formations in the process of being and becoming.

My concern to ground Pacific education in the indigenous culture, including spirituality, of each country resonates with Edmund O’Sullivan’s argument that contemporary western education lacks a comprehensive cosmology and “must take on the concerns of the development of the spirit at a more fundamental level” (1999: 259). He observes that both traditional wisdom, particularly of indigenous cultures, and an emergent form of knowledge coming from the ecological sciences provide a radical view of the earth community. He notes that western cultures have much to learn from indigenous world views regarding a balanced relationship between humans and nature that the traditional western scientific perspective has failed to do.

It is the ‘development of the spirit at a more fundamental level’ as O’Sullivan so succinctly expresses it that I am advocating for Pacific schools, particularly for those whose students are predominantly Christian. In Fiji, many Muslim and Hindu managed schools have successfully internalised their religious values and protocols in the way their schools are run. There are already some Christian schools which are grounded firmly in Biblical principles and values. I would like to suggest that in rethinking schooling in the region, the secular and spiritual ought to meet in the schools – a rebalancing of priorities needs to take place. Western countries, like the United States for instance, have pushed God right out of schools and are attempting to push Him right out of public spaces. It is my contention that we in the Pacific are in a special position to make sure this does not happen in our countries. I am, in fact, arguing for the spiritual development of students to be brought to the local and national consciousness.

Teasdale (2005: 9) notes that secular education discourse internationally, such as that of UNESCO for example, “is starting to emphasise the spiritual and to advocate a role for education in the spiritual development of children and youth”. The Delors Report (1996: 18) in its discussion of seven tensions facing the 21st century, stresses the perennial tension between the spiritual and the material, where “

often without realizing it, the world has a longing, often unexpressed, for an ideal and for values that we shall term ‘moral’. It is thus education’s noble task to encourage each and everyone one, acting in accordance with their traditions and convictions and paying full respect to pluralism, to lift their minds and spirits to the plane of the universal and, in some measure, to transcend themselves.

Delors further emphasises (1996: 95) that ‘individual development, which begins at birth and continues throughout life, is a dialectical process which starts with knowing oneself and then opens out to relationships with others.’

The colonial legacy

What and whose values, philosophy and belief systems have Pacific education systems been grounded in? This question can be answered in terms of our colonial past. With the exception of Tonga, the Pacific region has been colonised by various ‘western’ countries over the last three centuries. The primary instruments of control of colonised subjects were (and still are) written history (texts), education and language. Colonial practices – including the historical, imaginative, material, institutional and discursive – have significantly transformed Pacific ways of knowing, being and doing. The ideological, political, economic and social structures currently in place today are manifestations and hybrid versions of the colonial project. Colonial ways of knowing and doing, together with ‘western’ values, attitudes and cultural practices, permeate the lived experiences of the colonised to such an extent that they have become part of the postcolonial landscape. At the point of decolonisation, if there is no deliberate effort to resist, overthrow, even transform these colonial legacies, then inherited structures and systems will become normative and hegemonic fixtures of national life.

Because every education system is shaped by its national history and socio-cultural, political and economic contexts, the education systems in the Pacific region are manifestations of their colonial histories. For instance, the educational structures in Fiji are modelled on the British system. Similarly, Palau, RMI and FSM continue to maintain strong ties with the United States of America; the Cook Islands, Tokelau and Niue have close ties with New Zealand; while Vanuatu faces the challenge of dual Anglophone and Francophone systems. The curricula, teaching methods, assessment and evaluation methods, languages of instruction, administration and management models, and organisational cultures of schooling in the Pacific continue in hegemonic forms, usually closely resembling those in place during the old colonial days.

The most insidious element of neocolonialism, defined as “the highest form of colonialism” (Altbach, 1995: 452), is that relatively little change to the education system occurs after former colonies attain political independence (Puamau, 1999: 40). As Ashcroft et al. (1995: 424) put it, “Education is perhaps the most insidious and in some ways the most cryptic of colonialist survivals, older systems now passing, sometimes imperceptibly, into neo-colonial configurations”. In the case of the Pacific, educational apparatuses can be described as hegemonic because once structures such as curriculum assessment and school organisation become entrenched and institutionalised, they have a totalising effect on society. Education deeply saturates “the consciousness of a society” (Williams, 1976: 204) and becomes unquestionably what parents want for their children.

Thaman (1998: 2) stresses that “colonialism interrupted the development of meaningful and recognisable educational systems in many societies of our region. In the Pacific Islands, it devalued indigenous cultural values and institutions and regarded as hindrances in building the new ones”. She adds (Thaman, 1998: 3):

the majority of Pacific Island people continue to practise and value their cultures and traditions and are still very much influenced by them, despite years of schooling and exposure to an education that is often diametrically opposed to their own, an education in which they have continued to learn to more about other people and other cultures; to do things that are often detrimental to themselves and their environments; and, worse still, in the case of an increasing number of people in urban areas and migrants to metropolitan countries, to even lose their cultural identities”.

Pacific countries, because of their colonial legacy, also face the deeper challenge of decolonising colonial mindsets inherited from centuries of colonial subjugation, oppression and power play.

Stepping out of the colonial box into postcolonial⁴ conditions must start where it counts most – in the mind. A psychological/mental deconstruction must take place – an interrogation of the colonial past and postcolonial present in order to renegotiate the way to a more effective syncretism of local and global worlds. Pacific Islanders need to find a constructive and practical way to “deconstruct the concept, the authority and assumed primacy of the West” (Young, 1990). They must analyse the insidious effects of their colonial past not with the purpose of criticising or blaming the colonisers but with the goal of transforming their mindsets in order to reclaim or restore the best of what was lost, subverted or ignored in the colonial era and its aftermath.

Whose values underpin formal education in the Pacific?

It is obvious from the above discussion that Western values, ideologies and beliefs inherited from colonial times or part of neo-colonial configurations, despite decolonisation and political independence, have continued to colonise the minds of indigenous Pacific children, capturing them firmly in strongholds difficult to escape from and contributing to failure for many young people in the formal school system.

As Thaman (1998: 6) put it:

Perhaps one reason why schooling is resulting in failure for so many young people in our region is that when schools were introduced to our region, no one asked, ‘How do Pacific peoples conceptualise learning, knowledge and wisdom?’ The assumption was that we had no education; that our values were primitive and worthless; that we needed to learn values of the West in order to become really human, to be civilised – to be *poto* (wise – my inclusion) within the context of Western cultures.

The *Rethinking Education Colloquium* held in Suva, Fiji in 2001, the first of many activities under the Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative for and by Pacific People (RPEIPP) began with the assumption that more than three decades of extensive educational reforms in Pacific education and significant investments by national governments and donor agencies have not succeeded in providing quality human resources needed to achieve national developmental goals. The regional representatives at the Colloquium were concerned that educational reforms have focused too narrowly on improving various aspects of the quantification of education with little attention given to questioning the values and assumptions underpinning formal education. As Taufe’ulungaki (2002: 15) puts it, “The failure of education in the Pacific can be attributed to a large degree to the imposition of an alien system designed for western social and cultural contexts, which are underpinned by quite different values.” A continuing interrogation then needs to take place about the values, beliefs, assumptions and ideologies that underpin ‘neo-colonial’ Pacific educational systems.

The Colloquium agreed on the *Tree of Opportunity* as the most appropriate metaphor for rethinking Pacific education. In this reconceptualisation, education is firmly rooted in the cultures of Pacific societies – in their values, beliefs, histories, worldviews, philosophies, processes and skills, knowledge, arts and crafts, institutions and languages. The *Tree of Opportunity*:

⁴ The term ‘postcolonial’ is a hotly contested one and much theorizing revolves around it. A useful definition is given by Leela Gandhi (1998: 4) who defines postcolonialism as “a theoretical resistance to the mystifying amnesia of the colonial aftermath. It is a disciplinary project devoted to the academic task of revisiting, remembering and, crucially, interrogating the colonial past”.

encapsulates the new vision for Pacific education based on the assumption that the main purpose of education in the Pacific is the survival, transformation and sustainability of Pacific peoples and societies, with its outcomes measured in terms of performance and appropriate behaviour in the multiple context in which they have to live. The primary goal of education, therefore, is to ensure that all Pacific students are successful and that they all become fully participating members of their groups, societies and the global community. (Pene, Taufe'ulungaki & Benson, 2002: 3)

It is clear that it is **not** indigenous values, epistemologies and wisdoms that underpin Pacific education systems but those of the West, inherited from colonial times and continuing in hegemonic forms. Currently, learning and what happens in schools is disparate and disconnected from the daily lives of students. It is mainly abstract, too academic and fragmented. Very little attention has been given to interrogating curriculum, school culture, structure and organisation, including the values that underpin evaluation and assessment of learning. The “values and belief systems that underpin the behaviours and actions of individuals and institutions, and the structures and processes they create” need to undergo fundamental change (Pene, Taufe'ulungaki & Benson, 2002: 1).

Heart, soul and spirit knowledge: the neglected dimension

The paper is based on the following premise: since the peoples of each Pacific country are predominantly indigenous and Christianity has been internalised as the dominant religion in each country, then first and foremost, indigenous ways of thinking and doing and Christian values should permeate the structures, administration, management, processes, pedagogies and content of formal schooling in each country as one way of privileging indigenous cultures, values and epistemologies.

In the Pacific, I believe it is necessary for education to take a more subjective and spiritual approach, and to include local values, ethics, morality and wisdoms. As in Western schools, however, the spiritual – heart, soul and spirit knowledge - is largely absent from Pacific schooling. Because of the spiritual nature of Pacific Islanders where the Christian faith is an integral part of their lives, this dimension needs to be valued and brought into schooling processes, including the curriculum. A commitment to building a strong foundation for Pacific education in the cultural values and spirituality of each country would contribute particularly to the ‘learning to be’ pillar of learning that the Delors Report (1996) advocates.

The dominant faith in the Pacific is Christianity, a legacy of the evangelising work of missionaries who came in the wake of colonial expansion, or perhaps even drove it. The missionaries, together with traders and beachcombers, became colonial agents, working with colonial governments to annex and transform Pacific islands. They developed orthographies for some indigenous languages, translated the Bible into the vernacular, and established rudimentary schools to teach the ‘natives’ how to read so that they could study the Bible. Christianising most of the Pacific through these means allowed formal schooling to be introduced in the colonies.

Most indigenous Pacific Islanders were (and still are) deeply spiritual. They found significant resonance between their traditional spiritualities and the newly introduced Christian faith, and rapidly syncretised their own values and beliefs with it, such that some groups have indigenised Christianity and made it their own. For example, Christian values already embedded in indigenous cultures include respect, honour and esteem for those in authority; a communal Christianity where relationships are valued, including both familiar (e.g. family and friends) and the unfamiliar (e.g. visitors); cooperation so that people help each other bear their burdens;

hospitality in sharing food, home, and possessions; and their pre-Christian heritage of being aware of the spirit world has made it easier for them to be responsive to the Holy Spirit or the Spirit of God. As a consequence Christian discourse became well established in social and political life. For example, in Tonga today, everything comes to a halt on Sunday which is officially and legally declared the national day of rest for everyone, resident or visitor. There is no commercial activity – airports and wharves are closed, shops are shut, no taxis or buses are allowed to run on the roads and no one is allowed to play any sports. Similarly, one will usually not find Christians playing local or national sports on Sunday in Fiji and Samoa as this is revered as the Sabbath. As all Pacific constitutions are founded on the values and principles of Christianity, it makes sense therefore that these principles and values should underpin the reform of education.

In my own view the Pacific needs citizens who are not only strongly rooted in their traditional cultures, languages and epistemologies but who are equally strongly grounded in their Christian faith, confident to take their place on both local and international stages. This will be in keeping with the overall objective of the PRIDE Project: “to expand opportunities for children and youth to acquire the values, knowledge and skills that will enable them to actively participate in the social, spiritual, economic and cultural development of their communities and to contribute positively to creating sustainable futures” (PRIDE Project, 2003: 6).

Are there inherent contradictions in the fact that many Pacific Islanders who critique the impact of colonialism at the same time deeply value Christian beliefs and principles? Why have Pacific Islanders embraced Christianity and made it their own yet are looking for alternatives to their education systems? The answer lies in the ownership principle. The wholehearted acceptance of Christianity has enabled it to permeate the lived reality of many Pacific societies. People have taken ownership of it, internalising its values and principles. On the other hand, formal schooling is still viewed as foreign, abstract, meaningless and irrelevant by many people. Because the culture of schooling generally is not synchronous with the culture of the students, high failure rates and underachievement are the norm for many Pacific Islanders (Puamau, 1999b). Indigenous communities have successfully integrated Christianity into their cultural practices, yet view schooling to be outside their ambit of control and something difficult to understand.

Most Pacific Islanders express a close affinity with their Christian God, land, nature, village and kinspeople. They value and maintain their social and religious relationships. It is the intricate network of social, family and church relationships that helps to ensure the survival of the group through interdependence and cooperation. The interests of the group and not of the individual are important to them. Their thinking is based on mutuality, not separateness.

Manulani Meyer (2001), in reflecting on Hawaiian epistemology, noted that most of her informants – she calls them mentors – spoke on the theme of spirituality as their main source of knowledge. Her mentors drew on spiritual forces, including environment, family members long passed, God, the many gods, and ancestors to “substantiate spirituality as “a domain of experience” that validates and strengthens a cultural understanding of how we know and experience the world” (Meyer, 2001: 127).

What values, then, should underpin Pacific educational systems? It is my contention that Christian values should underpin the curriculum and permeate the organisation, structure and culture of Pacific schools. A balance needs to be struck in the notion that education and religion are separate entities and should not merge. A thread underlying this paper is the principle that

Pacific values and ways of thinking and doing should become a hegemonic feature of everyday life and underpin Pacific education systems. Educational and political leaders need to deliberately analyse and unpick the current content, practices and organisation of schooling to see where more emphasis can be placed on the spiritual development of students. After all, a holistic, balanced and inter-connected approach would mean a good balance in the academic (mental), social, physical, cultural and spiritual development of each student.

I have taken a strategic essentialist position in arguing for indigenous cultural values and Christian values to underpin education in all Pacific countries covered in this paper. In Fiji, however, where there is a sizeable non-Christian population, and in other countries where non-Christian organisations have set up schools, I must make the point that their freedom to practise their religion or culture is never in question. I admire Muslim, Hindu and other religious organisations in Fiji where their schools are solidly built on their religious and cultural values and beliefs which are respected by people of other religions who choose to attend these schools. This is the very principle and model that I draw on for predominantly indigenous state and Christian schools to be founded on.

The issue of making moral and ethical decisions is significant in these new times of rapid social, cultural, political, economic and technological change. As mentioned earlier, students will need to be guided into making sound moral and ethical choices in everything they do, whether in or outside the classroom. While the family as the basic social unit of society, and the church, can play a significant role in this area, their impact is neutralised by the changing dynamics brought about by urbanisation, globalisation, changing economic structures including high levels of poverty and the like. It is therefore imperative that schools also take the lead in ‘teaching’ and ‘practising’ sound moral values. The building of character through moral education should be strongly emphasised in school organisation and curriculum so that upright, law-abiding citizens are produced who can live lives of moral significance.

As emphasised already, Pacific schools should also be underpinned by Pacific indigenous values, principles, beliefs, ideologies, knowledges and wisdoms. As indicated earlier, there is no logical inconsistency between indigeneity and Christianity because Pacific Islanders have so successfully integrated their Christian faith into their cultures. The cultural values of Pacific Islanders should saturate their individual and collective consciousness so that they permeate the educational system and become hegemonic features of the educational landscape. For example, the underlying values and beliefs that guide local Pacific planning processes include: cooperation; unity; reciprocity; respect for authority, each other and the environment; maintaining culture and traditions; maintaining family and community relationships; sharing and caring; religious or spiritual nurturing; moral character development; and capacity building (Puamau, 2005).

Spirituality in Pacific schools

How do we bring the ideas on an inclusive spiritual pedagogy espoused in this paper into reality? How do they translate into practice in Pacific schools? Here are some suggestions for consideration:

- (i) Bring God into the school and make Him central in Christian schools and in those where the majority of the population is predominantly indigenous and Christian. I envisage schools beginning each day with prayer, praise and worship either in individual classes or collectively as a school, where staff and students consciously commit each day to the Lord and the whole school compound resounding in beautiful

- singing, praising and exalting the true living God. This could take from 5 to 30 minutes at the most.
- (ii) In Fiji, for example, revise and redevelop the current Religious Education curriculum with the help of church organisations, the Fiji Christian Teachers Fellowship and the community. Christian values of love, forgiveness, concern for others, compassion, kindness and service, for example, can be covered through Bible study and practice, and the concepts of God's divinity, God's word, sin, righteousness, truth, faith, salvation, trust, peace, the Holy Spirit, servanthood and discipleship can be systematically covered.
 - (iii) Alternatively, the teaching of these Christian values and concepts could be interwoven into all subjects in a fully integrated way. This will need fully committed Principals and teachers to make this work.
 - (iv) Teachers themselves need to be exemplars and role models in these areas. Their own behaviour, attitudes and relationships ought to reflect Christian principles and values.
 - (v) Teaching methods ought to reflect Christian values, for example, 'smart' children can be encouraged to help the weaker ones in class in a spirit of cooperation and helping each other.
 - (vi) Schools ought to be encouraged to reach out to the community around them with Christian acts of love, kindness and compassion such as helping clean up the neighbourhood, visiting sick classmates, visiting orphanages and old people's homes, to name some activities.
 - (vii) Teachers can help students to redesign the classrooms so that spiritual elements can be brought into the classroom. For example, a cross may be placed at the front (like in church), a Bible could be placed in a prominent place for students wanting to read it, students' favourite scriptures could be artistically decorated and placed on walls.
 - (viii) School administrators have significant responsibilities to ensure that the organisation of the institution, and all relationships within, are reflective of good Christian practices.
 - (ix) Teacher training institutions need to rethink their structures, processes, curricula, pedagogies and organisational culture to bring about the expected transformation at the level of the learner.

Conclusion

Because formal schooling is largely derived from foreign value systems, there is a serious cultural gap between the lived experiences of most Pacific Island students and what is offered in schools, including the way schooling is organised and structured, the culture and ethos of schooling, its pedagogical practices and the assessment of learning. And because the outcomes of schooling continue to be measured in terms of examination passes, many Pacific Islanders fail to succeed in school.

The spiritual development of the child currently is missing from most educational discourse in the Pacific. This is a serious gap that needs to be rectified. An emphasis on spiritual development or moral education needs to occur in Pacific schools. The region has successfully internalised Christianity as the dominant religion. Because the bulk of a child's waking hours are spent at school, and because of changing economic and social conditions which weaken the role of the church and families, I believe schools and their teachers now have a crucial role in building morally strong citizens for the future. The teaching of Christian values and principles therefore should be incorporated into the curricula of Pacific schools. At the same time, however, an

inclusive environment strongly suggests that the spiritual needs of non-Christian students also be taken into account.

A holistic approach to education will also necessitate a culturally inclusive curriculum where cultural and linguistic literacy is part of what is offered in schools (Thaman, 1992). It is critical that every child learns the language, culture and traditions of the particular human society into which s/he is born. This is particularly so for indigenous cultures. It is important that the curriculum is grounded in the local cultural systems of knowledge and wisdom. The cultural identity of indigenous peoples must be reaffirmed at school, beginning with a culturally inclusive and democratic curriculum which halts the “cultural and environmental bankruptcy” that is “an affliction which has been an obstacle to sustainable development in much of the modern world” (Thaman, 1995: 732). It is envisaged that curriculum development for schools (Thaman, 1992) and teacher training institutions (Thaman, 1996) will focus on making the curriculum more culturally democratic at these sites.

Learning to be, particularly the moral and cultural dimension of schooling, needs to be made pre-eminent, needs more discussion and debate first at local sites such as schooling institutions, teacher organisations, Ministries of Education and communities. It also needs to be widely discussed by educators, policy makers and other key stakeholders so that policy decisions are made in this area.

References

- Altbach, P.G. 1995. Education and neocolonialism. In Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G. & Tiffin, H. (Eds). *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 452-456.
- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G. & Tiffin, H. (Eds). 1995. *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. London: Routledge.
- Delors, J. (Chair). 1996. *Learning: the Treasure Within*. Report to UNESCO of its International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century. Paris: UNESCO.
- Meyer, M.A. 2001. Our own liberation: reflections on Hawaiian epistemology. *The Contemporary Pacific*, spring 2005. Hawaii: Hawaii University Press, 124-148.
- O’Sullivan, E. 1999. *Transformative Learning. Educational Vision for the 21st Century*. London: Zed Books.
- Pene, F., Taufe’ulungaki, ’A. & Benson, C. (Eds). 2002. *Tree of Opportunity: Rethinking Pacific Education*. Suva: USP.
- PRIDE Project. 2003. Financing Agreement for Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of Basic Education (PRIDE). Suva: USP.
- Puamau, P.Q. 1999. Affirmative Action and Racial Inequalities in Education: The Case of Fiji. PhD thesis, The University of Queensland, Brisbane.

- Puamau, P.Q. 1999b. Understanding Fijian under-achievement: an integrated perspective. In *Directions* 31(2), December issue, 100-113.
- Puamau, P. 2005. Principles and processes of educational planning in the Pacific. In Puamau, P. and Teasdale, G.R. (Bob). *Educational Planning in the Pacific: Principles and Guidelines*. Suva, USP: The PRIDE Project, Pacific Education Series No. 1, 24-44.
- Spivak, G.C. 1990. *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*. Ed. S. Harasym. NY: Routledge.
- Spivak, G.C. 1995. Can the subaltern speak? In Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G. & Tiffin, H. (Eds). *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 24-28.
- Taufe'ulungaki, 'A. 2002. Pacific education at the crossroads: are there alternatives? In Pene, F. Taufe'ulungaki, 'A. & Benson, C. (Eds), *Tree of Opportunity: Rethinking Pacific Education*. Suva: USP, 5-21.
- Teasdale, G.R. (Bob). 2005. International perspectives on education for planning. In Puamau, P. and Teasdale, G.R. (Eds). *Educational Planning in the Pacific: Principles and Guidelines*. Suva, USP: The PRIDE Project, Pacific Education Series No. 1.
- Thaman, K.H. 1992. Cultural learning and development through cultural literacy. In B. Teasdale & J. Teasdale (Eds). *Voices in a Seashell. Education, Culture and Identity*. Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, USP, 24-36.
- Thaman, K.H. 1998. Learning to be: a perspective from the Pacific Islands. Keynote Address, Delors UNESCO Conference. <http://www.dfat.gov.au/intorgs.unesco/unescf/thaman.htm>
- Thaman, K.H. 1995. Concepts of learning, knowledge and wisdom in Tonga, and their relevance to modern education. *Prospects: Quarterly Review of Comparative Education*, 96, XXV(4), 723-733.
- Thaman, K.H. 1996. Towards a cultural democracy in teacher education. Keynote Address, New Zealand Teacher Education Conference, Dunedin, June 25-28, 1996.
- United Nations. 2004. Workshop on data collection and disaggregation for indigenous peoples, New York, 19-21 January 2004, PFH/2004/WS.1/3.
- Williams, R. 1976. Base and superstructure in Marxist cultural theory. In Date, R., Esland, G. & MacDonald, M. (Eds). *Schooling and Capitalism: A Sociological Reader*. London: RKP, 202-210.
- Young, R. 1990. *White Mythologies. Writing History and the West*. London: Routledge.