

Education for Development in Context: Solomon Islands and Tonga

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Abstract

In this chapter, an overview of the 'education for development' context for each of the two interventions under discussion, Solomon Islands and Tonga, is provided. Although both are island archipelagos in the south-west Pacific, and both fit the definition of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), there are marked differences between them in cultural, educational, and 'development' terms. The chapter takes as a starting point the contention of some comparative educationists that education in any context cannot be understood, and interventions aimed at improvement cannot be effective, if researcher-practitioners are not informed by the development of education within the particular socio-historical and political contexts concerned. Accepted is that the interplay of culture and education is central to the operations of systems, schools and classrooms, and that social structures, values and practices shape and enable teaching and learning within a specific context. Importantly, in tracing the historical development of schooling in each context, the chapter is informed largely by writers indigenous to that country. When the discussion moves to 'education for development' in the post/neo-colonial period, a focus is the aid relationships that continue to shape education policy and practice in context, particularly those between New Zealand and the two countries concerned. Today's system in each country is summarized and the intervention for each country context introduced.

Keywords

historical – socio-political – indigenous – culture – tradition – missionary – (post/neo) colonial – aid relationships

1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to inform the readership, within the limitations of the space available, of the development of education within the historical and socio-political contexts of the countries in which our two case study interventions—the Literacy and Leadership Initiative (LALI) in Tonga, and Temotu Literacy Support (TLS) in Solomon Islands—were located. As indicated in Chapter 1, from the very start of the intervention program's conceptualization, a rich understanding of context was considered essential to the design and implementation of teaching and learning initiatives in 'developing' country settings. Also accepted was the need to counter the tendency of the international development agencies to either de-historize 'development' contexts generally (Spratt, 2012) or generalize the history of diverse Pacific contexts specifically (Coxon & Munce, 2008). For those research-practice team members who, either as 'insiders' or informed 'outsiders' (see Chapter 3), already had knowledge of the historical underpinnings of the education systems in the context(s) they were engaged in, their understandings of how history shapes contemporary education politics within the wider social system, and the educational expectations and aspirations of school community members, were further refined during the life of the interventions. For the outsider team members new to the intervention contexts, efforts were taken to ensure they gained the knowledge and understanding necessary for contextually effective research-practice.

Although brief mention is made of education processes prior to European contact, the key focus is the development of formal schooling which, for each country context, has followed a sequence common in the 'developing' world. The historical processes of missionization, colonialism, and post/neo-colonialism, and the educational aims associated with each, followed the same general patterns in Tonga and Solomon Islands as elsewhere. This chapter takes the view, however, that the actual working out of these processes, and their educational consequences, depended very much on socio-political and cultural structures specific to the context in which they occurred. Also contended is that it should not be assumed that Solomon Islands and Tongan people and their existing institutions were overwhelmed by externally introduced processes—resistance, negotiation and accommodation meant that subsequent social, political and economic changes were not just imposed. This has held true in more recent decades also, with developing states such as Tonga and Solomon Islands needing to engage with the agenda of the international development agencies which fund much of the education development that takes place in their countries. The need for the communities concerned

to continually exercise their collective agency in articulating cultural continuity within change, and particularly their mediation of the global process of schooling, demonstrates well the interaction of local 'tradition' and global 'modernization' (Coxon, 2007).

Further to the sentence immediately above, we uphold the ongoing significance of the concept of 'culture' to life in Pacific Islands countries. The meanings and values which inform Solomon Islands and Tongan peoples' social relationships and everyday material practices continue to be shaped by distinct local 'traditions' and culture histories. In recognizing the interplay between culture and education as central to the operations of systems, schools and classrooms, and that socio-cultural structures, values and practices shape and enable teaching and learning, we espouse the broad definition of Stuart Hall (1986) of,

... 'culture' as *both* the meanings and values which arise amongst distinctive social groups... on the basis of their given historical conditions and relationships, through which they 'handle' and respond to the conditions of existence; and as the lived traditions and practices through which those 'understandings' are expressed and in which they are embodied. (p. 39)

This chapter explores the dynamics of each country context (albeit in summary form) so as to give greater insight into the enablers and challenges presented within the intervention experiences of both countries as detailed in subsequent chapters. This is consistent with the aim of case study research to explore the wider context of the research focus in order to understand how things happen and why. Each country context is addressed in turn—Solomon Islands and then Tonga—beginning with a brief geographic-historic-demographic profile, followed by a history of formal schooling outlined within the wider socio-historical development of the country. In the case of Solomon Islands, specific attention is given to Temotu Province, the site of all the TLS schools. Although most of what is presented below as history comes from written accounts, also recognized is that Pacific people have their own explanations of how they came to be where they are as recorded through their oral traditions and these combined with more recent scientific sources (e.g., linguistics, archaeology) have informed the story of original human settlement in the Pacific (Coxon, 2007).

We are mindful that what is documented here barely scratches the surface of the complexities and richness of each context, historically or contemporaneously. However, as far as possible within the limitations of space and given the inherent challenges of summarizing a 'context' (see Chapter 10), the chapter

aims to familiarize the reader with elements of the 'thick' description which informed the process of 'learning *from*' the contexts in which our interventions engaged.

2 Solomon Islands

2.1 *A Brief Profile*

Solomon Islands is an archipelago consisting of 900 islands, of which less than a third are inhabited (Solomon Islands Government, 2010). The first Papuan-speaking inhabitants of these islands are believed to have arrived about 10,000 years ago from South-East Asia, with further migrations of Austronesian language speakers about 4000 years ago (Kabutaulaka, 1998, p. 11). The first known European arrival was in 1567 when Spanish explorer Mendana 'discovered' and named the archipelago Solomon Islands. Solomon Islands' total land area of 28,369 square kilometers within approximately 1.35 million square kilometers of ocean. From north to south the islands cover 900 kilometers and from east to west over 1800, with about 87% of the land in customary ownership through which rights to land are vested in descent groups (Maebuta, 2011, p. 83).

According to current estimates, the fast-growing population of Solomon Islands stands at just over 680,000 (compared to 516,000 in 2009). Approximately 12% of the total population live in the capital city of Honiara located on the large island of Guadalcanal. Honiara, which had been an important base for U.S. servicemen during World War Two (WW2), became the capital after the previous capital, Tulagi, was destroyed by Japanese forces. Solomon Islands is relatively rich in natural resources such as timber, fisheries and minerals compared to other Pacific Islands countries. Approximately 80% of the population continue to live on customary land in rural areas, largely in communities of less than 200 people, relying on subsistence farming and fishing with limited employment or cash-generating opportunities (Solomon Islands Government, 2010). Infrastructure, particularly transport and communication, is poor. The population is highly scattered and relatively isolated with only 17 people per square kilometer (*ibid.*). These features impact substantially on the delivery of social services including education. Solomon Islands ranks fourth in the world for vulnerability to natural disaster and climate change is a major impediment to the sustainable development and wellbeing of Solomon Islands communities.

Politically, Solomon Islands has a parliamentary government system shaped by the British colonial administration it was ruled under from 1893 until

independence in 1978. At independence, a national government was established as the supreme structure able to devolve administrative functions to the nine provinces into which the country was divided. Despite efforts to expand government services in the decades following independence, the Honiara-centered state continues to have minimal influence beyond its boundaries, resulting in recurring challenges to government legitimacy and national unity (Maebuta, 2011, p. 91). The disconnect between the introduced 'Westminster' government system, and existing local governance systems underlies these challenges (Kabutaukala, 2008). A more fundamental and authentically Solomon Islands form of political and social organization which developed in pre-colonial times and maintains an extremely strong presence in contemporary politics, is the kinship based 'big man system'. The 'big man' is a meritocratic and highly personalized system by which leadership is ascribed, frequently through community consensus and based on criteria such as a proven ability to advance community welfare and lead collective enterprises, leadership in settling tribal disputes, and the accumulation and redistribution of material wealth (Maebuta, 2011). A feature of the 'big man' system as it developed, is that across the archipelago there was no one leader nor one site of power, and neither did the system reinforce a sense of national unity; rather, these "shifting clusters of significance, not hierarchies, characterized Solomon Islands' political and social geography" (Bennett, 2002, p. 3, cited in Spratt, 2012, p. 7).

Although 95% of Solomon Islands' inhabitants are Melanesian, there is a vast diversity of cultures and languages. Seventy-one indigenous languages are still spoken, English is the official language of education, government administration and media, and Pijin (Solomon Islands pidgin) is the lingua franca (see Chapter 6 for elaboration). With the majority of the population Christian, the Church plays a major role within communities and in the provision of education. However, culture and tradition, referred to as *kastom*, continues to play a central role in the lives of most Solomon Islanders (Maebuta, 2011; Spratt, 2012), and is defined in contrast to modern institutions such as the state, church and schools which are seen as "belonging to the whiteman way of life" (Kabutaulaka, 1998, p. 18). Also central to contemporary social relationships is *wantok* (one-talk), a word developed to express connection in contexts where laborers from various Melanesian language groups worked together on plantations. Overtime *wantok* has become, "a method for creating society in urban locations as well as a reflection of the reality of village existence" (Sanga, Reynolds, Paulsen, Spratt, & Maneipuri, 2018, p. 6) so that the relationality that underpinned family and village-based life has been "purposefully transformed" (Repič, 2011, cited in *ibid.*); in such contexts *wantok* implies the need

for co-operation, allegiance and reciprocal relationships amongst those who have a sense of shared identity (Spratt, 2012, p. 5).

Following independence, economic growth was limited and from the late 1980s the country experienced a period of chronic political instability, with highly uneven development across the nation, leading to an essentially bankrupt and barely functioning government by the late 1990s. These factors contributed to a period of civil conflict from 1998–2003, locally known as the Tensions. Following extensive regional consultation, the intervention of an Australian-led regional assistance mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) worked in partnership with the Solomon Islands Government to restore peace, reestablish law and order, and rebuild the machinery of national government (Kabutaulaka, 2004).

Since the end of the Tensions national economic growth has been strong; this has largely been fueled by unsustainable natural resource extraction (particularly logging), the revenue from which has not been widely distributed and the environmental and social costs of which have been high (World Bank, 2017). Therefore, in conjunction with weak state institutions, the national economy of Solomon Islands is considered fragile (*ibid.*). Human development indicators for Solomon Islands are low, both internationally and for the Pacific region. On the 2007 Human Development Index (HDI) Solomon Islands rated 129th of 177 countries and in 2017 was 152nd of 189 countries; for each of these measures Solomon Islands held the second lowest ranking for the Pacific Islands region.

Education for development is seen as a key component of Solomon Islands' broader economic and social development strategy and is characterized as in urgent need of improvement. Common indicators of formal education in Solomon Islands have improved significantly since the end of the civil conflict in 2003, particularly in terms of school enrolment. However, indicators of the quality of the formal education system are relatively poor, and access to secondary and post-secondary education remains very low. As of 2017, the net enrolment rate for primary school was 92% with near gender parity but the survival rate¹ for primary is only 54%. Net enrolment at junior secondary (Year 7–9) is 38% and senior secondary is just 30%, with minimal difference between boys and girls. There are high rates of over-age students and high rates of repetition particularly at primary level (MEHRD, 2017).

2.2 *Brief History of Formal Schooling in Solomon Islands*

2.2.1 Missionary and Colonial Schools

Formal schooling in the Solomon Islands was first established by the Anglican Church's Melanesian Mission in the late 19th century. By the early 20th century,

boys' boarding schools had been established on a number of islands and the first boarding school for girls began in 1917. The Melanesian Mission and other Christian churches also operated many village schools (Boutilier, 1974, p. 39).

Because of the colonial administration's need to involve Solomon Islanders in lower level public service and commercial employment, thus the need to expand accessibility to and raise the level of education, from 1926 grants to foster mission education programs were provided. Post WW2, the British Administration made some attempts to address nearly 50 years of educational neglect; in 1946 an Education Department was established which by 1952 had set up five elementary schools on Malaita employing local teachers, including one which by 1959, as King George VI, had become a secondary boarding school (Kenilorea, 2008, pp. 47–48). In 1966, the school was moved to Honiara as the first National Secondary School (NSS) and the next year, although only five of the 159 students who relocated to Honiara were female, it became fully co-educational. Although a small number of government primary schools were opened in other parts of the country during the 1960s and '70s, by the time of Independence in 1978, the education system inherited from the British colonial administration by the new Solomon Islands Government comprised a rather ad hoc collection of differing school types, with fragmented management systems (Pederson & Wasuka, 2010). This system was enshrined in the 1978 Education Act.

2.2.2 Post-Independence Schooling

There has been considerable growth in the formal education system in the decades since independence. As well as many more primary schools across the country and additional NSSs, Provincial Secondary Schools (PSS) were introduced in the 1980s under a World Bank supported initiative, and in the 1990s community high schools (CHS) evolved, driven largely by community demand and funding (Pollard, 2005).

In 2017 there were approximately 216,000 students enrolled across all stages of the school system, just under 1,000 schools and nearly 9,000 teachers in total (MERHD, 2017). The education system is managed through the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD) based in Honiara, Provincial Education Authorities (PEAs) based in each Provincial Government, and private (often church-based) Education Authorities (EAs). MEHRD is the largest government ministry in Solomon Islands and currently receives a little over 30% of recurrent budget from the government. The churches continue to play a significant role in education service delivery at all levels, with approximately 25% of primary and secondary schools being church-owned and managed.

The rapidly expanded system has created both considerable management demands and rising expectations of education's role in the 'development' of the country (Pederson & Wasuka, 2010). Educational aspirations have grown greatly since independence, and increasingly schooling is being seen as something that should be accessible for all (Pollard, 2005). However, symptomatic of the weak relationship between the citizens of Solomon Islands and their national government, there is often a disconnect between schools and their communities, in part as a result of the disconnect between schools and indigenous knowledge systems and languages (Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2002).

The education sector receives significant support from a range of international aid donors. Following the Tensions, a sector-wide approach (SWAp) with a focus on basic education (Years 1–9) was established between Solomon Islands Government, the European Union and the New Zealand Government. As the first SWAp in the region, and the first time sector budget support had been provided by donors to Solomon Islands Government, this was a significant initiative and testament to the strong leadership shown by the Minister and senior staff in the Ministry at the time (Pederson & Coxon, 2009). The SWAp, and particularly the efforts made to strengthen MEHRD leadership and donor coordination, has been credited with the significant improvements of the last 15 years (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade [DFAT], 2018). Although New Zealand and Australia are currently the largest donors, more than 20 other donor partners are actively engaged in the sector (MERHD, 2018). Because donor funding pays for the bulk of MEHRD's development and reform activities and is accompanied by significant amounts of technical assistance and engagement in policy dialogue, donors have a notable level of influence in the sector (*ibid.*).

2.3 *Temotu Province*²

In terms of proximity to the national capital of Honiara, Temotu Province, located at the most easterly point of the country is the most remote of Solomon Islands' nine provinces. The population of Temotu is close to 25,000 and the province comprises 12 islands across an area of 895 square kilometers. Temotu is very vulnerable to natural disasters such as cyclones, coastal flooding, earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanic eruptions (Maebuta, 2011, p. 115). Nendo (also known as Santa Cruz) is the largest island in the province, and the location of the province's capital, Lata, where the Provincial Government's headquarters, including the Provincial Education Authority (PEA) office, are located. In Nendo and its neighboring islands, the 'Big Man' system of leadership, with its traditional role of overseer of cultural norms and overall well-being of the community, is still in place.

According to oral history passed on through generations, Temotu Nendo descendants originated from two tribes called *noubu* and *noubebula*. *Nou* means tribe while *bu* and *bebla* are names of fish. It is believed that when the *bu* and *bebla* were washed ashore they were transformed into human beings. The *bu* became a man and the *bebla* turned into a woman. They married and their children populated the island. Traditional stories and legends such as this provide the foundation for *kastom* practices, values, and beliefs which ensure the island culture is very much protective of relationships between the peoples of the island, and between them and the environment.

Nendo's traditional way of life was disrupted in 1595 with the arrival of a fleet of four Spanish ships carrying about 400 people intent on setting up a colony. The Spanish King's interest in colonizing Solomon Islands was because of perceived economic potential and its strategic location between other Spanish colonies in the Philippines and South America (Allen & Green, 1972). The leader and purported governor of the colony was the explorer Mendana, who 30 years previously, had been the first European to 'discover' other parts of Solomon Islands which he had named at that time. On arriving at Nendo, which he named Santa Cruz, the ships entered what became known as Graciosa Bay which is where they settled. However, it was not long before conflict between Mendana's soldiers and the indigenous people led to many deaths on both sides. Many more of the Spaniards, including Mendana himself, died from tropical illnesses and are buried in unmarked graves near their Graciosa Bay settlement. The survivors abandoned the settlement in November 1596 (Maebuta, 2011, p. 114).

The next notable 'outsider' arrival was that of the Anglican church missionaries which led to the subsequent evangelization of Temotu. Between 1856 and 1871, the first Anglican Bishop of Melanesia, John Patteson, visited a number of times aboard the mission vessel 'Southern Cross' leading to Anglican missionaries establishing a mission station in Nendo. It is reported that schooling began there soon after.

When the British colonial administration extended their rule over Solomon Islands in 1898, the Temotu islands became one of the 12 administrative districts making up the Protectorate. However, because of ongoing resistance to colonial rule, there was very little 'official' presence until the early 1920s when the colonial government, with the support of an armed escort, began to survey the islands. In 1925 a permanent government presence including a District Officer was established after which it took about five years to impose colonial control. During WW2 the administration's representatives were withdrawn from Temotu; they returned post-war to continue their low-level presence until independence in 1978 (ibid.).

The cultural practice of living in extended families, clans, and tribes continues to be a significant feature of social life in Temotu. It gives people a sense of identity and unity and has a significant bearing on issues such as land and ownership of other resources. It is the entire extended family, line, clan and/or tribe and not the individual who owns the resources. As with many Melanesian societies, in Nendo the religious and traditional significance of land makes it their most highly valued heritage and resource.

The provincial government depends on the National Government Grant to deliver basic services in the province but, given the extreme geographic isolation and additional cost of goods and services this imposes, most rural people are unable to afford to pay the cost of basic necessities not met by the government grant. Because of their livelihood struggles some land-owning groups have agreed to foreign-owned companies undertaking logging or mining on their land, which has led to tribal conflicts. Churches continue to play a very important role in the lives of the people of Nendo. They help give people a sense of belonging and are central to nurturing positive attitudes and in reconciling warring parties so that peaceful coexistence is maintained between the different cultural groups within the island.

Today, most of the province's population live on Nendo, the majority of whom are Melanesian and indigenous to Nendo. The most common language spoken on Nendo is Natgu, with Nalrgo, Äiwoo and Taumako-Vaeakau being other vernaculars in use, as well as pijin. The 16 schools included in the Temotu Literacy Support program were all located on Nendo and included teachers and students fluent in all these languages, many of them in more than one (see Chapter 6).

2.4 *Brief History of Formal Schooling in Temotu*

2.4.1 Missionary and Colonial Schools

As reported above, after Anglican missionaries were successful in establishing a mission station in Santa Cruz/Nendo mission schools were also developed, but because of the lack of documentation about that and subsequent developments, one of the authors of this chapter engaged in a *tok stori* with a Nendo elder, renowned educator Mr. Ben Menivi, who shared his knowledge of the development of schooling in Temotu. *Tok stori* is a relational mode of communication, widely practiced in a variety of Melanesian contexts (see Chapter 9). Sanga et al. (2018, p. 5) argue that *tok stori* offers a counterpoint to decontextualized and dehumanized knowledge production; that *tok stori* “offers opportunities for researchers and others to follow a relational path in their investigations, one which recognizes the connectedness of humanity...[and]

is likely to yield learning which serves the interests of communities precisely because the methodology is ontological”.

According to Mr. Menivi, schooling in Temotu, and more specifically on Nendo was developed from a humble beginning at mission schools. From his recollection of what he had been told, he reported that in the mid-1800s a Mr. Forest from England was sent by the Church to establish a school on Temotu Neo Island. It was around that era that the Bishop of New Zealand (whose diocese included Melanesia), George Selwyn, saw the need to educate girls, and a local girl by the name of Monica Ipwir was sent to Norfolk Island to be trained as a teacher. When Monica returned, she started the first co-educational school at Nelua on the north coast of Nendo. Mr. Forest was then sent to another part of Temotu, to start a school there. This initiative failed, however, and many of the people who had become Christian went back to paganism. Christianity was later re-established during and following Bishop John Patteson's mission in the 1870s and '80s, which also saw the reestablishment and expansion of mission schools.

One of the schools that was established after the Patteson era was called Bo'o Primary. Mr. Menevi recalls that after the Second World War a school by that name was located at the northern end of Graciosa Bay. It was a boys' only school with two local teachers by the names of Mr. Simon Meabir and John Mark Niada. Later the school was relocated to Mnaim, but this was short-lived as Mr. Menevi held a meeting in 1961 in his community which decided to move the school to Naban where Mona Community High School is today. The move onto Menivi's own land was at his initiative because he saw the need to bring schools closer to where people were, thus enhancing their children's access to schooling.

Another, historical development was that of the establishment of Luesalemba Senior Primary school. This school was established in the early 1960s under the headship of Mr. Shadrack Sade from Nagu village on Nendo. One of the first students of the school was Dr Joanna Daiwo, the first Solomon Islands female to hold a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). She is currently a Senior Lecturer in Early Childhood Education at the Solomon Islands National University.

2.4.2 Post-Independence Schooling

According to Menivi, all the schools of Temotu were operating under the Anglican Church until 1963 when they were handed over to the Government. A key development after the Government's taking ownership was in the mid-1970s when Luesalemba Senior Primary became the new Temotu Secondary School, providing a two-year secondary education program. In 1979 the school

was upgraded to a PSS offering three years of secondary education. The author of this section of the chapter is a product of the Temotu PSS, and now holds a PhD and a senior position at Solomon Islands National University.

Today a total of approximately 7,500 young people of Temotu Province are served by 27 primary schools, 14 Community High Schools and one PSS. The Net Enrolment Rate for primary is 99% for both male and female students but this falls to 30% for junior secondary level and 22% at senior secondary (MEHRD, 2017). Of 272 primary classroom teachers, only 169 (62%) are certificated; for secondary teachers 70.3% (90 out of 128) are certificated (MEHRD, 2018).

2.5 *Temotu Literacy Support (TLS)*

Agreement on where the early-grade (Year 1–3) literacy and leadership intervention should be located was determined through a process of consultation between MEHRD and the University of South Pacific and University of Auckland team that had won the contract for the program. The Permanent Secretary for Education's proposal that Temotu Province was a suitable location was based on a number of factors: that the participant schools included in the intervention design should be based in only one province; that the schools should be reasonably accessible from the Provincial center and geographically suitable to the proposed 'cluster' intervention approach; that MEHRD data demonstrate a clear need in those schools for the literacy improvement focus of the intervention; that there be no other early-grade literacy initiatives operating in the province; and that delivery of an aid-funded initiative to Temotu primary schools would redress the relative neglect of remote provinces in receiving such assistance. Of particular interest was the intervention design's inclusion of PEA officers and school principals as leaders of literacy improvement, and the design-based research approach for building a strong evidence base as for what works to increase literacy achievement in Solomon Islands schools (see Chapter 4).

What was required before Temotu could be confirmed as the intervention location, however, was agreement from the Provincial Government and the Provincial Education Authority. A visit involving two of the authors of this chapter was undertaken to Temotu where an extremely well-attended meeting with a high level of engagement by the Provincial Minister of Education and key members from Provincial Government and the PEA resulted in a unanimous decision in favor of proceeding with the proposed Temotu Literacy Support intervention. Fifteen Nendo/Santa Cruz schools were identified, one in Lata township, ten being accessible by road from Lata, and five being accessible only by boat. Issues identified through this key meeting, further consultations

and school visits, included: the understaffing of the PEA office; the complex language context and potential for vernacular literacy (see Chapter 6); the fact that most Year 1–3 teachers are untrained; the high rate of teacher and student absenteeism; meagre school resourcing; and low community participation in schools.

Despite these challenges, however, the very positive response to what was being proposed from all groups met—provincial government officials, school principals, teachers, students, community members—indicated the scope for positive change and the potential for TLS to make a difference.

3 Tonga

3.1 *A Brief Profile*

The small Polynesian state of Tonga is an archipelago of 169 islands, 36 of them inhabited, comprising a total land area of approximately 450 square kilometers within 50,000 square kilometers of ocean. The islands are divided into three main groups stretching along 800 kilometers from north-south: Vava'u in the north, Ha'apai in the center, and Tongatapu and 'Eua in the south. About 70% of the total population of approximately 105,000 reside on the main island of Tongatapu, with about half that number living in or nearby the capital of Nuku'alofa (Johansson-Fua, 2015).

The vast majority (about 95%) of the population are indigenous Tongans and complex traditional social stratifications, in which status and rank play powerful roles in formal and personal relationships, are still adhered to. In the past 30–40 years, however, a secondary classification based on relative wealth, education and politics has given rise to a middle-class elite which cuts across the traditional ranking system (*ibid.*, p. 298). The Christian faith continues to feature strongly in everyday life and Tongan is the official language of the country, along with English. This cultural and linguistic homogeneity, plus the long-standing existence of a 'strong' centralized state have had significant educational effects (Fusitu'a & Coxon, 1998).

Politically, the Kingdom of Tonga occupies a unique position among Pacific countries having had continuous monarchical rule for over 1000 years and being the only Pacific Islands state to have avoided direct colonization (Coxon, 1988). Under today's constitutional monarchy the government is headed by a Prime Minister appointed by the King according to Parliament's recommendation. Tonga is governed by a constitution which has been in place since 1875, making it the third oldest constitution in the world (Johansson-Fua, 2015, p. 297).

the *Tu'i Tonga* then became *'eiki Toputapu*, sacred and highest-ranking ruler (Lātūkefu, 1974, p. 2). The first incumbent of the third dynasty, *Tu'i Kanokupolu*, was appointed early in the seventeenth century. He began the process of taking over the privileges and responsibilities of the *Hau* to the extent that by the end of the eighteenth century the *Tu'i Ha'atakalaua* had been absorbed into the *Tu'i Kanokupolu*, from which today's royal family is descended (Hingano, 1987, p. 7).

Throughout these centuries the *hou'eiki* (chiefs) exercised absolute power over their *tu'a*—commoners who lived on their estates; this period is considered to have been generally stable, however, with a chief/commoner relationship characterized by reciprocity (Lātūkefu, 1974, p. 9). Such observations were recorded at the time of European 'discovery' of Tonga—by Dutch explorers Shouten and Le Maire in 1616 and Tasman in 1645—followed by Captain James Cook's three visits between 1773 and 1777. The journals of Cook and those who accompanied him excited great interest among missionary societies in Europe leading to the arrival of the London Missionary Society in 1797, the first of a number of attempts to missionize Tonga over the next 30 years, prevented mainly because of the civil wars that had broken out (Coxon, 1988, p. 63).

3.2.2 Missionary Schooling and the Rise of Tāufa'āhau

In the late 1820s, although they continued to be opposed by some chiefs, traditional priests and other Europeans already in Tonga (e.g., whalers, traders and beachcombers) Wesleyan missionaries finally succeeded in establishing themselves on Tongatapu (*ibid.*). Their insecure foothold encouraged them to seek a champion among the Tongan chiefs and fortuitously for them there had emerged from the political turmoil an ambitious and politically astute member of the *Tu'i Kanokupolu* clan, Tāufa'āhau, who had already asserted his rule over Ha'apai and Vava'u and was keen to extend it further. In 1826 Tāufa'āhau defeated the incumbent *Tu'i Tonga* in battle and soon after he and the missionaries recognized their mutual interests in defeating political rivals and establishing Christianity. In 1831 he was baptized into the Wesleyan church and by 1845 he had become *Tu'i Kanokupolu* and the sole ruler of all Tonga. Calling himself King George Tupou 1, he founded the Tupou dynasty which rules the Kingdom of Tonga today (Helu, 1981).

For the 30 years following his accession, Tāufa'āhau, with the help of Wesleyan missionaries, worked to secure Tupou dynastic rule and international recognition of Tonga as a sovereign state. European concepts of law, *lao*, and civil government, *pule'anga* (Rogers, 1975) were adapted to the Tongan context and, combined with Christian principles and monarchical authority, these laid the groundwork of an ideology which became institutionalized fully in

the 1875 constitution under a constitutional monarchy with supreme power divided between executive, legislative assembly and judiciary. The western powers were duly impressed and within a short time recognized Tonga as an independent nation (Coxon, 1988, p. 70).

The political rise of Tāufa'āhau was accompanied by the establishment and expansion of formal schooling. His conversion to Christianity led to the consolidation of missionary endeavors in opening schools focused on reading, writing and religion and constructing a Tongan orthography. The arrival of a printing press in 1831 led to many publications in the Tongan language which were eagerly read by locals. Christianity and the schooling that went with it spread further and the need for trained teachers resulted in a rudimentary teachers' training institution being established in 1841 with the support of Tāufa'āhau (Lātūkefu, 1974, p. 75). The improved education of teachers led to more efficient teaching and additional subjects such as maths, history, geography being taught (Kavaliku, 1966).

3.2.3 From Church to State Control of Schooling

The link between knowledge and power perceived by Tāufa'āhau enabled his becoming King George Tupou 1. In laying the foundations of a 'modern' independent state he recognized the need for educated people to run the state (Fusitu'a & Coxon, 1998). Combined with his desire to pre-empt the intentions of the colonial powers, in 1862 this resulted in Tonga becoming one of the first countries in the world to declare education compulsory. That the state was able to make schooling compulsory even though the church, not the state, owned and controlled the schools, indicated the unity between them (Kavaliku, 1966, p. 129). In 1866, the provision of a higher level of education became available when, at the King's request, a secondary school, Tupou College, was established by Wesleyan missionary and classical scholar, Dr Moulton. The aim was to provide an academic education comparable to that available elsewhere in the world. The first male-only enrolment included the King's grandson, sons of chiefs and some commoners who had passed an entrance exam. In 1869, enrolment was opened to young women (*ibid.*, p. 118).

The Education Act of 1882 signalled an explicit shift from church to state control of education with all existing primary schools becoming government schools and the establishment of the first government (boys only) secondary school, Tonga College, with the prime objective of the provision of state officials. The King's commitment to the new educational forms and practices was because he recognised that in order to assert Tonga's sovereignty in the face of the encroachment of westernization it was necessary to have control of western knowledge; not as a substitute for Tongan knowledge but as well as Tongan

knowledge (Fusitu'a & Coxon, 1992). The literature on the historical development of formal schooling in Tonga indicates a strong desire within wider Tongan society for the credentials offered by 'western' education (see for example, Kavaliku 1966; Lātūkefu, 1974; Helu, 1981) while still upholding Tongan knowledge and ways of knowing.

3.2.4 Into the 20th Century

During the first decades of the twentieth century Tonga's school system came under the influence of New Zealand officials,³ and a more typically 'colonial' education policy was introduced with a focus on what the authorities perceived to be more relevant to the "education of native races" (Kavaliku, 1966, p. 151). In contrast with the 'academic' notion of education introduced by the first King under the influence of Moulton, the type of schooling that could best meet the 'needs of society' was considered to be that in which practical subjects, seen as most useful in preparing children for their existing environment, prevailed (Helu, 1981). This was consistent with wider political and social changes of the time under the reign of Queen Salote, whose emphasis on preserving Tongan culture and strengthening the existing social hierarchy led to some withdrawal from external forces and less focus on the outside world.

3.2.5 Post World War Two

The 1943 appointment of the Crown Prince (who ruled as King George Tāufa'āhau Tupou IV from 1966 to 2006) as Minister of Education, on his return from Sydney University, marked "a new spirit of education" (Kavaliku, 1966, p. 153) with a renewed emphasis on the importance of an internationally recognized standard of education. In 1947 he established Tonga High School as the preeminent coeducational secondary school providing the most academically able students in the Kingdom with an education on a par with that offered in New Zealand; many New Zealand teachers were employed to deliver New Zealand's curriculum and examinations. A scholarship system for Tonga High graduates to pursue higher secondary and tertiary education in New Zealand was also established. With King Tupou IV's 1966 accession to the throne and the establishment of policies aimed at economic expansion and modernization, the upgrading and expansion of education became a priority, requiring not only a higher overall standard of education but also the education of many more students at higher secondary and tertiary levels within Tonga and overseas (Fusitu'a & Coxon, p. 3). Also required was increased centralization of Ministry of Education control over what was offered in both primary and secondary schools; the 1974 Education Act laid down a national syllabus to which all schools had to adhere.

During subsequent decades, while the government continued to own and manage almost all primary schools, much of the expansion and upgrading of secondary education was through the churches. Education was seen as a cornerstone of national development and a key priority for the national budget, particularly for buildings, teacher training and curriculum development. The succession of five-year development plans that Tonga undertook in the final decades of the 20th century, with support from international aid donors and overseas advisers, all highlighted investment in education as crucial to the country's economic and social development (Helu, 1999). However, despite its early and continuing investment in education, 'development' in Tonga was unable to keep pace with the needs of an increasing population. This resulted in high levels of emigration, an increasing dependency on aid and remittances, and growing youth unemployment (Tolley & Coxon, 2015, p. 184).

3.2.6 Into the 21st Century

Early in the new millenium, the government of Tonga recognized the need to address social inequalities and improve living standards for all Tongans. This included the need to align the education sector with the demands of the 21st century. Consistent with the global education agenda and Tonga's commitment to the MDGs, improving the quality of universal basic education was a key strategy for this, as promoted by the 15 year education policy framework (2004–2019), the development of which was led by international consultants. Also indicated was a move towards a sector-wide approach (SWAp). In 2005 Tonga became the second Pacific Islands state to introduce a SWAp for education aid delivery, with the World Bank and New Zealand as the main 'development partners'. Its aims in doing so were to coordinate and align all official aid to education in accord with the policy framework and to harmonize government and non-government systems (Tolley & Coxon, 2015, p. 185). Although over its two five-year periods the SWAp was reasonably successful in achieving the latter, it was less so with the former. Perceived micro-management by the development partners, and their failure to recognize and build on Tonga's historically developed educational strengths and local educators strong sense of ownership of their system, contributed to "a sense of imposition" rather than the locally led partnership arrangement envisaged by a SWAp (ibid., p. 187).

3.3 *Today's System of Schooling*

Today education in Tonga is free and compulsory for all young people from the ages of six to 14 years old. Although provision of education at primary and secondary levels is shared with church and other non-government groups, the Tonga Ministry of Education and Training (MET) has legal oversight of all

systems and schools in the country, and maintains a centrally controlled management structure to which all schools must adhere. Government provides about 90% of the primary schools, while non-government education systems own and operate 40 of the 55 secondary schools (Johansson-Fua, 2015, p. 298).

Primary education in Tonga is from Year 1 to Year 6 with the usual school entry age of six years old. The government's long-standing policy of ensuring that no child shall have to walk more than two miles to a primary school has resulted in an access rate to primary education of 100%. (Johansson-Fua, 2015). About 85% of the total primary school enrolment of over 17,000 students (MET, 2015) attend one of the 105 government primary schools spread across the archipelago with a school in almost every village and on every island, thus a high number of very small schools. The remaining 15% of students attend private or church schools. Schools are staffed by close to 800 teachers, over 70% of whom are female, in classrooms with limited teaching and learning resources (*ibid.*; Johansson-Fua, 2015). The medium of instruction for the first three years is Tongan, with English being gradually introduced through the subsequent three years; the aim is for primary school leavers to be reasonably bilingual. Since 2012 a new outcomes-based curriculum focused on strengthening Tongan culture, literacy and language has been central to teaching and learning in all primary schools (Johansson-Fua, 2015, p. 304). At the end of Year 6, all students sit the national secondary school entrance examination (SEE) in Mathematics, Science, Tongan Language and English, with the total marks for each child determining entry to the secondary school they hope to enter (*ibid.*, p. 299). All government operated primary schools are fee-free and the government also provides grants for maintenance of facilities, equipment and other school supplies. However, each school community plays a significant role in the development of their village schools, providing financial aid for renovations, building of fences and supplying additional teaching materials for the children (*ibid.*, p. 301).

Secondary education in Tonga is from Year 7 to Year 13. In 2014 there were a total of 14,961 students enrolled in secondary school taught by a total of 116 teachers. Church systems enroll approximately 70% of the secondary student population (MET, 2015). Three national external exams are included in the secondary school program in Years 11, 12, and 13. Achievement in the first two of these allows students to enter post-secondary vocational training courses while the Year 13 examination determines entry to university and other tertiary institutes in Tonga or overseas (Johansson-Fua, 2015).

The main teacher education provider, the Tonga Institute of Education, developed from the government owned teacher's training college which began

training Tonga's teachers in the 1940s. The Institute offers a Diploma in Education for both primary and secondary teaching, a Certificate in Teaching for untrained teachers and Post-graduate Certificate in Teaching for teachers with a degree but no teaching qualification. The fewer than 10% of untrained teachers are mainly working in non-government systems. The University of the South Pacific's Tonga Campus offers teacher education programs ranging from the Diploma in Education to Master of Education and Master of Arts in Education (ibid.).

As noted by former Minister of Education, Dr 'Ana Taufē'ulungaki (latterly, LALI senior literacy and language advisor), because of the shared belief in education as an instrument for development, the government of and communities within Tonga have invested substantial resources in the provision and maintenance of school systems, "However, quality education in terms of appropriate and beneficial outcomes, both within the formal school contexts and in larger society, has continued to be elusive" (2005, p. 46). Identified by Dr Taufē'ulungaki as a "critical issue" was primary school underachievement in basic literacy. This concern has been reiterated many times since, including in the Tonga Strategic Development Framework (TSDFI) for 2015–2025. TSDFI's commitment to inclusive, sustainable and empowering human development highlighted a strong foundation in literacy as foundational to education for development in Tonga (AUL, 2019).

3.4 *The Literacy and Leadership Initiative (LALI)*

LALI was developed in response to a perceived weakening of literacy teaching and learning in primary schools, which was partly attributed to inadequate school leadership. Although used here as an acronym, *lali* is a Polynesian word referring to a slit drum of a type still used in Tonga as a way of calling people together for collective action. The decision to abandon the generic name for the intervention program, as attributed by the New Zealand aid program which was funding it, and come up with a meaningful Tongan-specific name was made at the initial meeting called to discuss the intervention. The meeting was attended by a large and enthusiastic number of key stakeholders from across the ministry and non-government systems. Members of the University of South Pacific and University of Auckland teams also participated and received clear messages about expectations for the intervention's focus and approach. With an overarching goal of improved literacy outcomes for primary students, the key features of LALI were agreed as: a school and classroom-based intervention working with principals and teachers to build understanding of existing strengths and challenges; an integrated literacy and language focus

including the home/community role in language development; support for school principals to become 'literacy leaders'; and the development of both monolingual (Tongan) and bilingual (Tongan/English) teaching and learning resources.

Agreement was also reached on the 15 schools to be included. Criteria for their selection included: outer island schools as far as logistically possible; geographical suitability for a 'cluster' approach; the need to avoid schools already involved in aid-funded interventions. Three clusters were identified comprising all six schools on the southern island of 'Eua, five schools on the northern island of Vava'u, and four schools in close proximity to the USP campus on Tongatapu. Although initially it was proposed that, as for the other countries involved, the focus would be on Years 1–3 students, a request from the then Minister of Education that LALI include students from Years 1–6 was accepted, as was the Minister's suggestion that a whole school improvement approach be adopted. Thus, the scope and overall approach of LALI was tailored to meet Tongan priorities.

4 Concluding Comment

As stated in the introduction, this chapter has aimed to provide an overview of the 'education for development' context for each of our intervention sites. The selection of the chapter's content (i.e., what to include) was guided by the notion of 'the context behind the context'—the need to locate the intervention schools within the historically established social relationships in which they exist. Subsequent chapters will elaborate on how the interventions engaged with the social structures and values informing each context.

Notes

- 1 The percentage of a cohort of students enrolled in the first year (Class 1) of the six year cycle of primary education who are expected to reach Class 6.
- 2 Much of the content in this section draws on the first-hand in-depth knowledge of Dr Jack Maebuta, one of the chapter authors, who was born and bred on Nendo and maintains close relationships with Nendo communities.
- 3 Although Tonga retained its sovereignty, the first King's successor had enabled Britain to extend a degree of control over Tonga in areas such as education. Despite being a colony of Britain itself, the New Zealand settler government acted as quasi-colonial administrator for Britain in Tonga.

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