Technical and vocational education and training in peace education: Solomon Islands

Jack Maebuta [a]

[a] School of Humanities, University of New England, Armidale,
Australia

Available online: 29 Jul 2011

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Technical and vocational education and training in peace education: Solomon Islands

Jack Maebuta*

School of Humanities, University of New England, Armidale, Australia

Technical and vocational education and training programs as a form of peace education are examined in this paper. It explores the notion of educating for a culture of peace through refocusing technical and vocational education and training programs on sustainable community development in the Solomon Islands. It further highlights the policy and practice mechanisms that contribute to advancing technical and vocational education and training as a peace education initiative. As a model of the applicability of the program as a form of peace education, the discussion describes a technical and vocational education and training centre in the Solomon Islands that has engaged in post-conflict livelihood projects – bringing about healing and restoration and creating the culture of peace. This is a practical and comprehensive model to peace education that extends beyond the centre and embraces the culture of peace in the community as a whole. The implications point to technical and vocational education and training as a means to achieve co-existence. Technical and vocational education and training as a form of peace education is capable of training people for a productive livelihood, creating a sense of national identity and unity, rehabilitating former militants and moving training programs outside the walls of the institutions. As a result, the pedagogy of technical and vocational education and training as a form of peace education is largely based on learning by doing which incorporates a number of peace activities.

Keywords: Solomon Islands; technical and vocational education and training; peace education; culture of peace; innovative programs; sustainable community development

Introduction

This article discusses issues that are related to technical and vocational education and training (TVET) as a form of peace education. Using a case study approach, the article describes how TVET can contribute to the creation of a culture of peace in post-conflict Solomon Islands. The United Nations General Assembly declared the years 2000–2010 as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World. This article is a timely undertaking as the decade draws to a close. Achieving a culture of peace in the face of recurring violent conflicts and wars is a complex task. Peace and conflict resolution can be achieved in different ways; however, this article argues that TVET is one form of peace education that can contribute to the development of peace into the future.

*Email: jmaebuta@une.edu.au

Definition, context and application

In the field of education, there are different aspects that must be defined: TVET, peace education, a culture of peace, innovation and sustainability are important concepts in peace education and its pedagogy. Defining these terms clarifies the context and applicability of TVET as a form of peace education.

TVET

According to the definition by UNESCO and the International Labour Organization (ILO), TVET refers to:

> . . . aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences, and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupants in various sectors of economic and social life. (UNEVOC 1989, 2)

In addition to technical knowledge and aptitude, increasing emphasis is on 'softer' skills – communication, negotiation and teamwork must also be encouraged. Within the framework of the softer skills, TVET programs need to include skills such as peacebuilding and conflict resolution in the workplace. UNESCO and ILO further stress the need for TVET to be promoted in public and private educational establishments, and other forms of formal or informal instruction aimed at providing all access to lifelong learning resources to all segments of society.

Moving the vision of TVET beyond the acquisition of technical knowledge and practical skills is seen as desirable to the context of the recent global economic crisis. As a consequence of the crisis there are far-reaching changes in the production systems and the labour markets producing increasing unemployment and poverty in many countries. TVET programs could be used as tools to create a culture of peace by emphasizing the acquisition of skills, attitudes, understandings and knowledge relating to peaceful co-existence in turbulent environments.

The contemporary downturn in the global economy presents challenges, stresses and conflicts that need to be dealt with in all feasible ways. Therefore, TVET as a form of peace education must rise to this challenge. Given this background, the purpose of this article is to contribute to the discussion of TVET as an appropriate innovative approach for a culture of peace.

Peace education

Peace education, according to UNICEF, refers to the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behaviour changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural. Furthermore, the implementation of peace education provides a means for individuals to resolve conflict peacefully, and to create conditions that are conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or global levels (Fountain 1999; United Nations 1998). This definition suggests that a convergence of ideas may be developed into different forms of practical peace education programs. It also reflects a theoretical stance in which many peace education programs are targeted to address violent conflicts however; very little attention is paid to the silent psychological stresses of crises such as those arising from the global

economic crisis. Hence, peace education must permeate all forms, levels and systems of education in all societies – it is not only an intervention for countries undergoing violent conflicts. This is because peace as a state of being is affected by turbulence at all levels: an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or global level. Effective peace education is necessarily a long-term process, not a short-term intervention. While often based in schools and other learning environments, peace education should involve the entire community. Later sections will discuss the potential of TVET to break new grounds in taking peace education to an entire community.

Culture of peace

As defined by the United Nations, a culture of peace is:

> . . . a set of values, attitudes, modes of behaviour and ways of life that rejects violence and conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiations among individuals, groups and nations. (United Nations 1999 UN Res A/ 52/13: Culture of Peace)

This definition implies that a culture of peace is also concerned with the solving of known violence and conflicts. However, culture of peace can only truly be part of a culture if it is practiced by citizens in their daily life. Therefore, in a conflict situation the focus is to tackle the root causes. On the other hand, in non-violence contexts, the focus of a culture of peace is to ensure that there are no seeds of conflict. The thrust of this argument is that in order to make peace a cultural characteristic it must be practically taught and lived in all forms of a society's interactions.

Innovation

It is generally agreed that the concept of innovation is concerned with doing something new or doing existing things in a new way (Kearney 2004). Kearney further states that it is only when doing something new can be commercialized or applied in the community that it becomes an innovation. If TVET is a vehicle of peace education, it would be an innovation and would mean value-adding to TVET programs in order to create a culture of peace with special benefits for community development. Curtain (2004) points out that TVET can play an important role in organizational change in order to create a culture of peace as an innovation in TVET programs in the Solomon Islands.

Innovation is more than the generation of creative ideas. It is the implementation of those ideas into real situations. According to Schilling (2005, 37), there are four types of innovation: 'product innovation versus process innovation', 'radical innovation versus incremental innovation', 'competence enhancing innovation versus competence destroying innovation', and 'architectural innovation versus component innovation'. In the context of this article, incremental innovation sounds fitting as the discussion is premised on introducing a culture of peace through innovative approaches to TVET programs.

One of the major post-conflict challenges in the Solomon Islands today, is to find ways to sustainable economic recovery. There has been increasing condemnation towards over-exploitation of natural resources, particularly unsustainable logging. Therefore, changing ideas and behaviours toward sustainable, environmental and community development is one of the challenges for the Solomon Islands and especially for educators. Seeing that TVET is one of the key pathways for socio-economic

development, its providers should engage in innovative approaches to community development, particularly when undertaking post conflict reconstruction initiatives. Sustainable community development and culture of peace are twin goals of peace education. In the Solomon Islands 84% of the population live in rural and isolated communities and they largely depend on the immediate environment for their livelihood. In the absence of sustainable community development-based innovative TVET programs, living a culture of peace in the community would be increasingly unattainable.

Sustainability as a unifying concept in peace education and its pedagogy

Peace education has largely evolved out of the field of peace studies subsuming an array of subfields such as global security, human rights education and environmental education (Bajaj and Chiu 2009). Though these subfields have different conceptual and methodological approaches, a unifying concept is 'sustainability.' Sustainability is a core concept in all forms of peace education with the overarching purpose of maintaining a better future. Therefore it is evident that the UN Decade of Sustainable Development shared the same purposes of achieving sustainability and stability through education (Bajaj and Chiu 2009). Against this common goal UNESCO enacted 'Education for Sustainable Development' (http://www.unesco. org/education) Peace education is regarded as a key instrument for bringing about sustainability and stability (http://www.un.org) The UN has provided an avenue for international dialogue to advance ESD. However, translating the dialogue into workable ESD action plans remains a challenge for many developing nations.
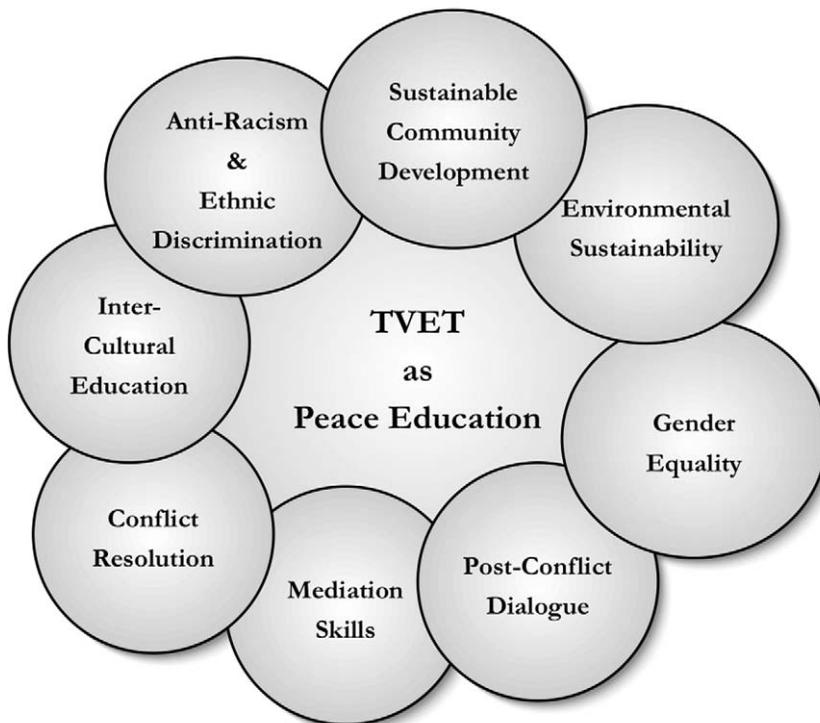

Figure 1.   Conceptual Framework of TVET as a form of peace education.

A conceptual framework has been constructed whereby peace education concepts and perspectives are usefully implemented in the Solomon Islands TVET programs (Figure 1). As conceptualized in this framework, TVET as a form of peace education as practised in the Solomon Islands aims to achieve conflict resolution, mediation skills, intercultural education, post-conflict dialogue, anti-racism and ethnic discrimination, gender equality and environmental sustainability.

The conceptual framework has its roots in literature on well-known areas of peace and ecological education. TVET as a form of peace education resonates with 'education for social responsibility'. According to Bajaj and Chiu (2009, 443), 'the idea of education for social responsibility is not new but an increasingly urgent one among educators and communities alike, as evidenced by many educational organizations seeking to effect change through what is learned in the classroom'. While the key characteristics or co-disciplines continue to emerge and evolve, for the purposes of this article, the most relevant ones to the Solomon Islands TVET programs as a form of peace education are included.

TVET as peace education may serve as the nucleus, but in practice each co-discipline interlinks with others directly. For instance, in the Solomon Islands land disputes are a common form of conflict in the community and TVET students usually find themselves involved in conflict resolution and mediation when their community-based practical projects are disputed. Therefore, a TVET student working on a community-based practical project is not only putting his or her skills into practice but also engaging in conflict resolution and mediation efforts. Similarly, a TVET graduate living in a community that is not his or her original home is able to utilize his or her skills in community projects. In such a situation, TVET as a form of peace education is promoting intercultural education, post-conflict dialogue and anti-racism and ethnic discrimination.

In the Solomon Islands there are island communities that practice matrilineal systems of property ownership and this anchors well in TVET as a form of peace education. For example, a female TVET graduate in agriculture could be influential in decision-making over land resources. There have been cases where women have successfully opposed logging companies operating in their communities illustrating how education programs such as TVET are empowering women to have their voices heard and respected. In this scenario, TVET as a form of peace education is fostering gender equality, environmental sustainability and sustainable community development as shown in Figure 1.

The examples given are a testament that peace education pedagogy, as implemented in TVET programs in the Solomon Islands, is practically oriented towards the co-disciplines of peace and are focused on teaching practical skills for living. The practical aspects of peace education such as conflict resolution and mediation, dialogue and anti-racism and ethnic discrimination, together with gender equality and sustainability are incorporated into the practical teaching of TVET programs in the country. The conclusion is that peace education pedagogy is meaningfully incorporated in the practical teaching and learning of TVET programs.

Background to the Solomon Islands conflicts

Ethnic conflict

The conflict in the Solomon Islands, commonly known as 'the ethnic tension', began in 1998 when a group of militant youths (Guadalcanal Revolutionary

Army – GRA) from the island of Guadalcanal attacked settlements of islanders predominantly from Malaita (a neighbouring island) in Northwest Guadalcanal. Their actions were ignited by the failure of successive national governments to address issues raised by the indigenous people of Guadalcanal. First tabled as bona fide demands in 1988 and again in January 1999, the issues that were listed were rent from the use of Honiara as the capital city; non-payment of compensation for the indigenous people killed by settlers over the years; demands for the review of the Land and Title Act; the squatter settlements; and restrictions on citizens from other provinces from owning land on Guadalcanal. The increasing aggressive behaviour of these Guadalcanal militants resulted in some 25,000 Malaitans fleeing Guadalcanal and an estimated 11,000 Guadalcanal people fled the capital city to the interior of the island (Pollard 2005). The violence escalated in 2000 when a resistance group named the Malaita Eagle Force (MEF), claiming to represent the interests of the Malaitans who had been displaced, armed themselves by raiding police armouries and subsequently took control of Honiara. Small arms battles took place frequently between MEF and Guadalcanal militants around the city area and other key areas on Guadalcanal and neighbouring islands.

Underlying historical factors to the ethnic conflict

There are several historical factors that gave rise to the ethnic conflict. To begin with, there was an inequitable distribution of national wealth and financial resources during the colonial era. The colonial administration created uneven development and a dual economy: a modern export-led economy tied to an overseas market and a traditional agricultural economy. Most of the modern economic activities were on the island of Guadalcanal. The production then was intended to meet the colonial masters' needs. Thus, economic dependence by Solomon Islands has also resulted in political dependence in the post-colonial era.

Following the establishment of Honiara as the capital city after World War II, many people from other islands saw the economic and educational prospects in the city so they started to migrate to Honiara. At that time there were very little or even no development activities in the other islands. As most economic activities were concentrated on Guadalcanal, the inflow of people to the city steadily increased. Malaitans being approximately a third of the country's population; saw a remarkable number in the labour force in the plantations on Guadalcanal and elsewhere in the country. By the 1990s many Malaitan settlements were established on the Northern and Western parts of Guadalcanal. In the colonial period, the Guadalcanal land owners gave permission to other people from other islands to use a portion of their land for temporary settlements. However, as the number of settlers increased, more and larger squatter settlements were established. In most cases, these settlements overstepped the agreed original boundaries (Pollard 2005).

As the illegal squatting on Guadalcanal escalated, the local people felt that they were being culturally marginalized in their own land. This was substantiated by number of murders of indigenous people around Honiara (Pollard 2005). Similarly, the local people felt that they were also economically marginalized because they were not receiving adequate benefits from the major investments on their island. The non-Guadalcanal people were regarded as having exploited the economic opportunities such as jobs and services created by these major economic developments on the island. Such issues and resentment grew over decades and in 1988

formed the basis of the Guadalcanal's bona fide demands to the Government. Failure of the Government to address these demands further aggravated their grievances which resulted in the violent conflict at the end of 1998.

After the ethnic crisis, a riot broke out in Honiara on 18 April 2006. This riot was politically motivated which saw the rejection of the outcome of the election of the new Prime Minister. The claim was that the election of Mr Sydner Rini as the Prime Minister was a continuance of the previous regime and which is controlled by Asian business interests, particularly the Asian logging companies.

The place of TVET in Solomon Islands education: history, trends and development issues

The history and development of TVET in the Solomon Islands suggests that policies were/are driven by several philosophies. Oketch (2007) points out that traditional assumptions toward TVET are:

(1) TVET can be a cure to youth unemployment;
(2) TVET can offer hope to academically less able students to advance through the school system; and
(3) TVET would reduce unemployment and reduce poverty.

These ideologies have shaped a number of TVET innovations in most developing countries.

The community-based TVET concept emerged in the late 1950s when formal education was introduced, entirely developed by the Christian missionaries consisting of formal academic programs and vocational skill training (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development 2005). According to Bugotu (1973) the main purpose of this was to teach Bible studies and to indoctrinate their own denominational beliefs. They also wanted to introduce farming techniques and other skills to improve village living. The missionaries encouraged an attitude to learning based on reading and writing, copying notes and rote learning. Teachers were imparting knowledge which only they had, and which was not usually open to challenge or discussion (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development 2005). Thus as Bugotu (1973) argue education in the Solomon Islands has a formal tradition that suggested that education was about the transmission of knowledge from teachers to students. Such an approach to education offers very little encouragement for creativity or involvement of the students' own ideas or experiences. The purpose was to change traditional beliefs and ideas, so customs, traditions and indigenous knowledge had very little place (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development 2005). This concept of knowledge is still retained by many, and still contributes to the academic, book-based nature of schooling in the Solomon Islands today. Even technical and vocational subjects are often taught through copying notes rather than practical activities (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development 2005).

The second aspect of mission education, however, was to teach practical skills that could then improve villagers' lives. Students and schools were also encouraged to be self-sufficient by growing their own food, building and repairing their own buildings, cooking for themselves and other activities.

The concept of community-based TVET re-emerged in the late 1970s as the core curriculum of the two-year New Secondary School concept (Bugotu 1973).

Later in the 1980s the concept was again introduced into the Provincial Secondary Schools (PSS) curriculum (Maebuta 2008). The aim was to expand basic secondary education to three years (Forms 1–3) and offer vocational subjects. Over the years the PSS system was expanded further to offer Forms 4 to 6 and with continued emphasis on academic subjects. As a result, the vocational subjects were taught theoretically with little or no practical training.

In the 1990s, TVET re-emerged under the banner of 'Community High Schools' (CHS) and this was implanted into the existing primary schools still with few facilities. The number of CHSs has dramatically increased over the years and today there are 120 of them (Maebuta 2008). Most of CHSs are offering secondary education beyond Form 3 and they generally continue to place an emphasis on academic education.

The failure of these secondary schools to adopt style of TVET innovations to achieve their original aim of equipping students with basic vocational skills for community development, calls into question the approach taken to initiate and implement these changes. In any change, the initiation process leading up to its implementation is important. According to Fullan (1991), relevance, readiness and resources (the 3Rs) are essential elements for successful initiation process. Introducing TVET in the PSS and CHS initiatives was certainly relevant to the needs of rural communities. However, according to Maebuta (2008, 96):

> ... it appears that there was no wider consultation on the relevance of the program so when it was implemented most parents rejected it and they pushed for more academic-oriented education. If consultations were part of the initiation process, parents would have understood clearly what the program has to offer and accept the program.

The increasing number of secondary school dropouts is blamed for the youth unemployment and social problems in the country. As a result, the TVET was reoriented into the Rural Training Centres (RTCs) concept in the mid 1990s. This was when the RTCs were supported by EU funds. However, Maebuta (2006) reported that the RTC graduates fail to return to their communities because they see no prospects of gainfully utilizing their skills in rural areas. As such most graduates search for employment in the urban centres or seek admission into further education courses such as TVET programs offered by the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE). Maebuta (2006) further noted that the RTC skill training was not on a par with the technological levels in related industries necessitating TVET institutions to provide more competitive education and training to meet the needs of all industrial sectors in the country.

Another issue of concern is that of low enrolment of females in the TVET programs. Of the total RTC TVET enrolment in 2006, 27% were females and 73% were males (Table 1). Most of the TVET programs are segregated along sex roles therefore Solomon Islands women are culturally bound not to enter training programs which are not directed to their roles. To overcome this cultural barrier, TVET providers and key stakeholders need to encourage women's participation in TVET regardless of gender defined roles. Most women in the Solomon Islands live in rural communities where they have great potential to contribute to the development of their communities if the benefits of all TVET programs were articulated for them by encouraging their participation in such programs.

Table 1. 2006 RTC TVET enrolments by provinces and gender.

Provinces	Male	Female	Total
Central	0	0	0
Choiseul	30	15	45
Guadalcanal	445	149	594
Isabel	86	56	142
Makira/Ulawa	151	110	261
Malaita	490	164	654
Rennell/Bellona	18	8	26
Temotu	50	12	62
Western	477	146	623
Grand total	1747	660	2407

Source: Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (2007, 86).

Table 1 further indicates that there was no enrolment for Central Province because there is no RTC located in the province. The enrolment in the RTCs has only attracted enrolments within their immediate locality because the RTCs are dispersed around the country and travelling is an added cost burden for students. Likewise, residents of provinces that were involved in the ethnic crisis fear being intimidated. For example, Malaitans would not attend RTCs on Guadalcanal as the two provinces were fighting in the ethnic conflict.

Although TVET occupies an important place in the Solomon Islands education and national development, the development of TVET programs indicates that innovations must be undertaken. By refocusing TVET as a form of peace education it is argued that it could harness a culture of peace for sustainable community development. The approaches that could revamp TVET as an education agent for a culture of peace are examined in the next section.

Educating for a culture of peace through refocusing TVET programs on sustainable community development

In the second International Congress on TVET, it was observed that:

> ... technical and vocational education and training, as an integral component of life-long learning has a crucial role to play in this new era as an effective tool to realize the objectives of a culture of peace, environmentally sound sustainable development, social cohesion and international citizenship. (UNESCO 1999, 61)

This Congress focused on innovative paradigms of TVET that encourages and educates people to be productive and competitive in a sound sustainable environment.

TVET as an agent for creating a culture of peace in the community involves ensuring that the basic needs of all people are satisfied. Furthermore, the use of TVET gives individuals opportunities to develop and utilize their skills in ways that enable them to have enriching, healthy and fulfilling lives. While TVET plays an important role in developing the social and human capital needed for a sustainable livelihood, it may take different approaches (UNEVOC 2006). This means TVET providers could exercise flexibility in meeting the needs of the community and adjust their training approaches accordingly.

Reorienting the national TVET policy towards a culture of peace

For any innovations to work changes must start at the policy-making level. The TVET options are incorporated in the Solomon Islands Education Act. Within this legal framework, the TVET curriculum at the secondary level has been developed based on principles that outline the teaching of practical skills. However, the emphasis in academia suggests that TVET is examined theoretically like other academic subjects. This mismatch drew the attention of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD) to develop a national TVET policy framework. Therefore, in 2004 the TVET policy framework was developed under the theme 'Education for Living'. The overall aim of the policy is to place an emphasis on the development of TVET skills within the education system which will help students to:

- develop the communities, both rural and urban, from which they come;
- create self-employment by making effective use of the natural and social resources within their communities;
- gain paid employment; and
- benefit from further studies and training when this is available (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development 2005, 51).

One challenge that hinders the implementation of the TVET policy is the general perception that TVET programs are designed for school dropouts. TVET can be truly for living if people live in peace and harmony. It is therefore important that TVET, as a form of peace education, takes into consideration the perceptions and attitudes held by others. In essence, retrospectively, there should have been a nation-wide consultation prior to the compilation of the policy. This should have been followed by massive publicity to explain the new policy to the public and to educate people about the importance of TVET, not only for skills training for community development but also as a tool to create and foster the culture of peace. This could have enabled people to understand that 'education for living' means the learning of skills and knowledge not just as a means of obtaining employment but for people to live in peace and harmony in the community. The dynamics of a culture of peace must be articulated in the review of the TVET policy as one of the pillars of the policy.

Anchoring TVET on a culture of peace in post-conflict reconstruction

As the Solomon Islands emerge from the ethnic and political crises, many economic recovery programs are being implemented. While this is a step in the right direction, reconstruction initiatives need to be anchored by sound theories and practices. New growth theory suggested that increases in human capital could contribute to economic growth (Hill and Jones 2007). Many literatures seem to support that greater investment in TVET can stimulate growth by increasing labour productivity through the provision of greater skill levels and by giving employees the skills needed to complement new technologies (Kearney 2004; UNESCO and ILO 2008).

There are three primary sources of economic growth that could be utilized in post-conflict reconstruction. The first two are interwoven into the original inputs of capital and labour (Bennett, Brunker, and Hodges 2004). These sources of growth

support the fact that increases in capital and labour inputs lead to increase gross domestic product. The third source of economic growth is 'multifactor productivity' and, in the words of Bennett, Brunker, and Hodges (2004), multifactor productivity encompasses the entire process which ultimately results in the provision of new goods and services, and provision of the same goods and services in a more efficient way. This type of growth includes processes whereby new ideas are generated, proved and adjusted through work, integrated with existing products and processes, tested in markets, and fully utilized for the purpose of development. Multifactor productivity thereby entails TVET innovations that are geared toward sustainable community development and are likely to embrace a culture of peace.

UNESCO's International Centre for TVET (UNEVOC) in its international project on TVET developed the convention on TVET which was adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO in 1989. The convention states that TVET refers to 'all forms and levels of the educational process in addition to general knowledge, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, know-how, attitudes and understanding relating to occupations in the various sectors of economic and social life' (UNEVOC 1989, 2).

In a similar framework, UNESCO and ILO (2002, 7) recommended that TVET be understood as:

(1) an integral part of general education;
(2) a means of preparing for occupational fields and for effective participation in the world of work;
(3) an aspect of lifelong learning and a preparation for responsible citizenship;
(4) an instrument for promoting environmentally sound sustainable development; and
(5) a method of facilitating poverty alleviation.

Anchoring TVET in a culture of peace and community development resonates with these five recommendations. The majority of the Solomon Islands people live in rural communities, which are isolated and remote. Their livelihoods are constrained by poor basic services and thus most people are living in poverty. In this context, when TVET programs are focused on sustainable community development, local Solomon Islanders would be generally educated on issues affecting their lives, participate in community development projects, become responsible citizens, and use their environment in a sustainable way. This is the practicality of living the culture of peace.

Reading through many Solomon Islands policy papers and technical reports, education specialists tend to prescribe TVET as an elixir for jobs for unemployed youth, but experiences around the world tend to show that this is not always true. Oketch (2007) proposes that TVET today should be intrinsically seen as education and training for the future, not as a way to facilitate job entry, but as a way to facilitate vocational-specific skills over a lifetime.

Viewing TVET as an inclusive lifelong training program is a tenet for grounding a culture of peace in community development. TVET systems in any country have the potential not only to support a more flexible labour force, but also to help those not in the formal labour market to participate in community development that is embraced in a culture of peace. TVET as an inclusive lifelong training program has the potential to provide all types of training for people of all ages. It is from this

viewpoint that TVET providers in the Solomon Islands need to broaden their target groups and refocus their training towards community needs such as micro-businesses in the informal sector.

When TVET programs inclusively address the skill training needs of all groups in the community, a culture of peace as a traditional value in Solomon Islands could be further enhanced as a community life style in the post-conflict era.

Re-culturing a culture of peace through TVET providers

As mentioned earlier, most Solomon Islands cultures are founded on the principle of peace and harmony. However, this value was tarnished during the ethnic crisis. What remains as a challenge in the post-conflict reconstruction is to re-culture the culture of peace in the community. One approach that could make this happen is to engage TVET providers to help strengthen community-based competences. Bennett, Brunker, and Hodges (2004, 80) write, 'entrepreneurship training for older workers could be extended to younger workers and the unemployed seeking to explore opportunities provided through small business creation'. Today, businesses are constantly seeking out competitive advantages through innovations. In a post-conflict environment, existing and new entrepreneurs will need to have well-aligned and focused innovations and skills to contribute to economic recovery. Thus, it is very important that TVET institutions are able to provide the support necessary to ensure that new and aspiring entrepreneurs have the appropriate innovation-related skills. This can be done conveniently through partnership between TVET providers, employers and other key stakeholders.

In the 1980s, strengthening community competencies was given a professional boost by the TVET experts of Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE). One of the popular programs at that time was short courses on small engine repairs (out-boat motors and chain saws) in rural communities. This training program engaged higher TVET curriculum in practical skills that were relevant to community needs thereby encouraging closer collaboration between SICHE as the country's premier tertiary TVET provider and rural communities. The initiative has strengthened community competence and benefited enterprises and individuals. For instance, as a result of the small engine repair course, rural communities started fishing and building projects. In one community a rural clinic was built using locally sawn timbers. In another rural community, a few fishermen were getting a daily income from fishing using out-boat motors.

SICHE as the higher TVET provider in the country needs to re-engage in community-based short TVET courses. One method would to send students on local attachments as part of their practical training. As indicated in Table 2, SICHE's enrolment is distributed across the provinces and even to the neighbouring Pacific Island countries. This can make it easy for the students to participate in community training programs when they are on vacation during the semester breaks.

Sending TVET students to work on community projects in rural communities during their vacation could help in the re-culturing of a culture of peace and healing. As a peacebuilding initiative, TVET providers could set up exchange schemes for their students and send them out to work on community projects. For instance, the Anglican Church as part of the church peacebuilding ministry could set up an exchange scheme for students from its TVET centres. This involves sending

Table 2.   2005 SICHE higher TVET enrolment by province/country of origin and school.

Province/country	Education	Finance and admin	Industrial development	Marine and fisheries	Nursing	Natural resource	Total
Unstated	26	8	0	0	0	0	34
Central	35	21	6	3	5	4	74
Choiseul	56	37	15	6	4	7	125
Guadalcanal	83	35	20	3	14	17	172
Honiara	32	0	0	1	0	0	33
Isabel	70	61	24	4	33	12	204
Makira/Ulawa	64	21	7	4	12	5	113
Malaita	246	172	75	7	48	46	594
Rennell/Bellona	15	12	4	0	3	0	34
Temotu	67	30	8	8	5	2	120
Western	77	99	28	3	19	25	251
Fiji	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Vanuatu	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Grand total	771	496	188	40	143	118	1756

Source: Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (2007, 80).

students from Malaita to Guadalcanal and vice versa so that students can engage in community projects like building schools and clinics or installing solar power in the communities. Such initiatives could be called an 'Act of Kindness'. Such acts of kindness bring healing to the communities of these two islands as they were the main opponents during the ethnic conflict.

Engaging TVET in peace education: policy and practice

To engage Solomon Islands TVET providers in community development, Hill and Jones (2007) suggested that a formal strategic planning process has six main steps:

- select the mission and major goals;
- analyze the external competitive environment to identify opportunities and threats; analyze the internal operating environment to identify the strengths and weaknesses; select strategies that build on the strengths and correct its weaknesses to take advantage of external opportunities and overcome threats;
- connect the strategies with the mission and major goals; and
- implement the strategies.

In fostering a culture of peace between TVET providers and the community, as outlined above, the first task to counter TVET's dilemma in Solomon Islands is to re-invent the roles of the program. Secondly, the Ministry of Education and private education authorities have to build innovative TVET pathways, which are responsive to community development needs. Finally, the governance of TVET institutions should provide the mechanisms to create a culture of peace.

Re-inventing the roles of TVET systems

In the Solomon Islands, there is a general academic education system and three TVET programs. Secondary school vocational curriculum offers subjects such as agriculture, business studies, industrial arts and home economics. The goal of secondary vocational curriculum is to educate and to train learners in basic skills for daily living.

Dropouts from lower and upper secondary schools mostly opted to enrol in the RTC TVET courses. Those who graduate from RTCs are expected to have specific occupational knowledge and skills. The higher level of the TVET system is provided by SICHE's schools, particularly, the schools of Finance and Administration, Marine and Fisheries, Industrial Development, Nursing and Natural Resources. The TVET programs offered in these schools train students to become administrators, engineers or technicians in the workforce.

TVET is still regarded as the 'second best' form of education. Most of the students who are in senior secondary schools are more eager to access higher academic programs than higher TVET courses. Furthermore, junior high school students mostly choose academic streams in senior high schools rather than vocational schools and centres.

It can be inferred from Table 1 and Table 2 that RTC graduates will continue to increase and such numbers may not be accommodated in the higher TVET schools at SICHE as most RTC graduates would prefer accessing higher TVET.

In view of the scenario described above, the roles of TVET should be re-invented to clarify the concrete national goals of TVET. Education decision-makers need to re-think the mix of courses and separate functions between general academic education and TVET. If two education systems (academic and TVET) are still needed, then at what early stage should the tracks be separated so that both systems are recognized with equal status? If this issue continues unresolved, TVET will still be treated as education for dropouts and its huge potential for national development and cultivating a culture of peace will be undermined.

Building a culture of peace through innovative TVET pathways

TVET in the Solomon Islands needs to emphasize collaboration between the school system, industry and community development sectors. However, most TVET curriculum designs or qualification pathways are not flexible enough to meet enterprise, community or individual's needs. Therefore, the vocational qualification framework should recognize prior learning, workplace learning and actively promote articulation from school to work in order to provide learners with greater flexibility for accessing TVET courses.

The other innovative pathway is that of professional competencies. The content of TVET curriculum is a key element for its delivery. While trainees need to learn the theoretical knowledge and practical skills, they also need to be aware of the role expectation on specific trades and skills from the community. Professional competence, therefore, encompasses the theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and the competence to play the role expectation of a specific trade. For instance, graduates from building and carpentry are expected by local communities to take the leading role in any community building projects on a voluntary basis. This is one way by which TVET graduates can contribute to community development.

In the spirit of peace, TVET institutions need to embrace the concept of community learning centres (CLC). This entails opening up learning and training at the institutions for all interest groups, and not only for full-time students. This opening would involve running short courses for the community in the evenings or during semester breaks. Where the institutions do not have expertize to provide training, local people such as skilled craftsmen and women or retired professionals can be utilized instead. Such engagement would encourage community ownership of the TVET programs.

TVET providers in the country need to incorporate community leadership skills in their programs. As a practice in the past, most church-run rural TVET centres placed equal emphasis on leadership and skill training. As a result graduates returned to their communities and took up leadership roles in youth groups, women's organizations and sports. Even some of them become church leaders. In post-conflict environments, the training of leadership skills in TVET programs is important in helping to promote a culture of peace.

Establishing peace and reconciliation through the governance of TVET institutions

The sustainability of TVET institutions and programs has been an on-going issue that warrants attention. Maebuta (2006, 222) in his study of the RTCs TVET reported, 'most centres seriously lacked sound management and accounting

practices... resulting in misuse of resources'. The core business of a TVET institution is to provide learning opportunities for its students. Hence, how to create a sound management system that concentrates on the core services is becoming increasingly important. According to ILO (2006), autonomous TVET institutions have internal operational procedures that include, for example, planning and accountability mechanisms, and communicating internal regulations.

ILO (2006) further stresses that an effective TVET institution delivers courses that give graduates the skills to enable them to become employable and so contribute to the desired national economic and social equity objectives. In order to achieve those objectives, an autonomous TVET institution may consist of systems for: financial management, human resource management, student monitoring, records and tracking, quality assurance, appropriate assets and facilities, internal and external information, and risk assessment. In the case of TVET institutions that are located in the rural communities in the Solomon Islands, they have community leaders who serve on the Boards of Governors. While this is encouraged, their roles must be clearly defined and appropriate management training provided. There were a number of incidents, in which board members' involvement with the day-to-day administration of the institutions created tensions between the principal and the teaching staff, a situation which is intolerable.

On a positive note, engaging community experts in the governance of TVET programs has two benefits for cultivating a culture of peace. Firstly, some community members have management experience in running businesses and their service as members of a TVET centre management committee could promote sound governance and relevant decision making for a centre. Secondly, engagement of community members breeds participatory governance and this has been noted to facilitate relationship building, reconciliation and healing (Spence 2007). In the Solomon Islands, organizing activities in TVET centres bring people together for instance; parties to the Solomon Islands ethnic conflict are representatives on the TVET management committees and make mutual decisions about governance of their centres. Similarly former conflicting parties could find themselves working together in centres' fundraising drives. Thus it is evident that the TVET governance mechanism provides a safe environment to re-establish broken relationships. Opportunities for practicing democratic processes provided by the centres are highly likely to make a real contribution to peace, reconciliation and healing in Solomon Islands.

A model program

Transforming innovative TVET programs into avenues for peace education activities may be challenging in post-conflict environments, but it is a worthy undertaking to create a culture of peace. As a model for discussions on TVET as a form of peace education, aimed at creating a culture of peace and promoting sustainable community development, this article concludes with an account of a rural TVET Centre in the Solomon Islands that has engaged in post-conflict livelihood projects.

The Centre is located on the island of Guadalcanal and enrols students within its vicinity. The Centre offers two years skill courses in the areas of:

- Agriculture
- Livestock
- Farm management

- Carpentry
- Furniture making
- Motor mechanics
- Life skills
- Christian education
- Business studies
- Basic English
- Basic mathematics

When students begin their courses, they are given a plot of land each and a loan. The students have to cultivate their plot by growing crops and vegetables as an integral part of their agriculture and farm management courses. The Centre provides a small loan to students as starting capital to run their small farm. The students have to open a bank account and every time they sell produce from their farm, they have to repay the loan and deposit the remaining profit into their bank account. In this way, the students are applying the business management skills they learn in their business studies course in managing their small farm.

Upon completion of two years at the Centre, the students return to their villages with their savings and start their rural income generating projects. This is still part of the Centre's program so that within six months the Centre staff will visit the students in their villages and provide technical advice on their projects. After six months, the students are then issued with a certificate of completion based on their report of their village-based income generating projects and their performance during the two years of studies at the centre. Such follow up visits help the Centre staff to seek community ideas that would help improve their TVET programs. The follow-up visit by the Centre staff is also a check on the previous graduates' income generating activities and are a source of success stories to relate and motivate the current students at the Centre.

What is evident in this case study is the Centre's commitment to train young people with skills in order to generate income in their communities. These are not just skills in formal subjects of studies but practical skills for sustainable community development and leadership. As a community development tool, the graduates were able to pass on their skills to other members of their community. As such, the vision of the Centre is more of a Community Learning Centre founded on developing responsibility and initiative.

Such initiatives in themselves are a practical application of TVET as a form of peace education. Guadalcanal people were directly affected by the ethnic crisis as they were one of the warring parties in the conflict. They have lost quite a number of lives and destruction of properties. The people have been living with the pain and trauma of the crisis and rebuilding their lives has been a difficult task. A number of young Guadalcanal men in the weather coast area were in the militia groups. Rehabilitating former militants to get back to normal life still remains a post-conflict challenge in the Solomon Islands. Part of the challenge is attributed to the types of rehabilitation programs that were being implemented after the crisis. For instance, victims and former militants went through trauma counselling. While this counselling paves the way to living a normal life again, more effort is needed to make victims and former militants take control of rebuilding their own lives. It is this understanding that has convinced this rural Guadalcanal TVET Centre to apply practical skills learned at the Centre in earning a living in the villages. Most of the

students who went through this TVET Centre were victims of the crisis and so rebuilding their lives through the TVET livelihood projects brings healing and restoration and embraces a culture of peace in everyday living in the community as a whole.

Implications

This paper introduces TVET as a form of peace education and provides a critical stance to creating a culture of peace through TVET programs. There are implications derived from the paper that need further discussion.

Firstly, when TVET offers relevant skills in the community, it could help unemployed youth to utilize these skills in making a living. When the community and particularly youth, productively use their skills they are likely to keep out of trouble and contribute to the economic development of their country.

Secondly, the conflict in the Solomon Islands was rooted in ethnic hatred. TVET as a form of peace education can create a sense of national identity and unity. For instance, training students from all over the country in TVET institutions can create national pride. This points to the need for the Government to build national TVET institutions so that student enrolment can come from all the provinces and islands in the country. When students of different ethnicity come together in training institutions they have an opportunity to break the racial divide and feel that they are all Solomon Islanders.

Thirdly, TVET can be an instrument for rehabilitating former militants. When former militants are rehabilitated through TVET programs, a common bond can be built, social network can be extended and relationship between the warring factions re-established. A Guadalcanal former young militant sharing accommodation with a former Malaitant militant in a TVET institution, or doing the same TVET course, can bring healing at the personal level. This atmosphere could create lasting bonds.

Finally, as the case description demonstrates, TVET programs must be taken beyond the institutions and applied to practical skills and developing activities in the community. This could enhance community worth and co-existence. Such a model portrays how TVET contributes to sustainable community development which is embraced within the framework of peace education as conceptualized in Figure 1.

Conclusion

The field of TVET has, until now, been dominated by the conviction that TVET develops skilled, committed and motivated citizens that understand how global changes impact on local opportunities for business, industry and employment, and how these changes impact community development. Research that exists in this field does little in uncovering effective ways of promoting a culture of peace through TVET programs. TVET in its application can indeed be a form of peace education. Creating and embracing a culture of peace in a post-conflict environment through innovative TVET programs and approaches removes potential barriers to community co-existence. Such a context for peace education can only be used effectively when applied to promote sustainable community development.

For TVET to succeed as a form of peace education it must be innovative in responding to community development needs. Using a culture of peace and

education as a framework to design innovative TVET programs that can break new grounds to advance the civilization of peace into the future. TVET programs must meet the needs of all generations, conflicting communities, and not only amongst subgroups such as school dropouts, unemployed youth and other disadvantage groups and individuals in the community. When TVET programs permeate the entire community, they also increase co-existence as everyone in the community will be able to understand and support one another.

This article argued that TVET plays an active role as an agent of community development to advance a culture of peace. The model program as practiced by one of the TVET Centres empowers victims of the ethnic crisis and other interest groups to engage in livelihood projects that address inequalities in the community in a practical and mutual way that instils a culture of peace in the entire community. This model needs to be encouraged in all the TVET centres in the country; however they must be adequately provided with resources by the State in a national post-conflict development project. Preaching peace and unity in words without action will not create a culture of peace. This model project is a real livelihood project because it is initiated at the community level by the community itself. It is empowering when communities take control of their livelihoods in a sustainable way. As a result, it will bring tangible social change, creating a positive social effect that improves the lives of all citizens and increases social justice and social cohesion and this is what it means to create, embrace and live the culture of peace in a practical way.

The implications derived from this paper pointed to TVET as an instrument and solution to co-existence. Particularly TVET as a form of peace education is capable of training people for productive livelihoods, creating a sense of national identity and unity, rehabilitating former militants and moving the TVET programs beyond the walls of the institutions and have the programs focused on the co-disciplines of peace education, namely, conflict resolution, mediation skills, post-conflict dialogues, gender equality, environmental sustainability, sustainable community development, anti-racism and ethnic discrimination and intercultural education.

Notes on contributor

Jack Maebuta was a lecturer at the University of the South Pacific, Fiji. He is currently a PhD candidate in peace studies at the School of Humanities, University of New England in New South Wales (NSW), Australia. His research interests are in the areas of educational policy and practice, curriculum, peacebuilding, technical and vocational education and indigenous knowledge and practices. In 2008 he was awarded the Australian Leadership Award Scholarship and in 2010 he was a recipient of the Prime Minster's Pacific–Australia Award. His PhD research investigates the role of education in peacebuilding in the Solomon Islands.

References

Bajaj, M., and B. Chiu. 2009. Education for sustainable development. *Peace and Change* 34, no. 4: 441–55.

Bennett, B., D. Brunker, and R. Hodges. 2004. Innovation, economic growth and vocational education and training. In *Vocational education and training and innovation*, ed. S. Dawer, 68–83. Adelaide: NCVER.

Bugotu, F. 1973. *Education for what?* Government Printer Honiara1973.

Curtain, R. 2004. Innovation and vocational education and training: Lessons from leading national innovation systems. In *Vocational education and training and innovation*, ed. S. Dawer, 42–58. Adelaide: NCVER.

Fountain, S. 1999. *Peace education in UNICEF*. New York: Education Section Program Division, UNICEF.

Fullan, M. 1991. *The new meaning of educational change*. London: Cassell.

Hill, C.W.L., and R. Gareth Jones. 2007. *Strategic management theory*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.

ILO (International Labour Office). 2006. *Vocational education and training institutions: A management handbook*. Geneva: International Labour Office.

Kearney, G. 2004. How businesses innovate today and what that means for the workforce. In *Vocational education and training and innovation*, ed. S. Dawer, 59–67. Adelaide: NCVER.

Maebuta, J. 2006. *Vocational education and training in Solomon Islands: Policy and practice*. Lautoka: The University of the South Pacific, Lautoka Campus.

Maebuta, J. 2008. Stiudens wearen unifom nating: Examining the quality of learning in Solomon Islands urban community high schools. In *Pacific education: Issues and perspectives*, ed. J. Dorovolomo, J. Veramu, U. Nabobo-Baba, F. Koyavakauta, and H Phan, 92–108. Fiji: University of the South Pacific, Lautoka Campus.

Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development. 2005. *Education for living: Approved policy on technical, vocational education and training*. Honiara: Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development.

Oketch, M.O. 2007. To vocationalise or not to vocationalise? Perspectives on current trends and issues in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Africa *International Journal of Educational Development* 27: 220–34.

Pollard, B. 2005. Solomon Islands education and donor assistance in post-conflict period. In *International aid impacts on pacific education*, ed. K. Sanga, and A. Taufe'ulungaki, 155–96. Wellington: He Parekereke Institute for Research and Development in Maori and Pacific Education, Victoria University.

Schilling, M. 2005. *Strategic management of technological innovation*. New York: McGraw-Hill/Irwin.

Spence, R. 2007. *Education in post-conflict environments: Pathways to peace?* http://devnet.anu.edu.au/timor-beyond%20crisis%20papers/spence.ml.doc

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). 1999. *Final report, second international congress on technical and vocational education*. Paris: UNESCO.

UNESCO. Nd. *Education for sustainable development.* http://www.unesco.org/education

UNESCO, and ILO. 2002. *Technical and vocational education and training for the twenty-first century.* http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/6012/0012601/126050e.pdf

UNEVOC. 1989. *Convention on technical and vocational education 1989.* http://p19035.typo3server.info/fileadmin/user_upload/pubs/conv-e.pdf

UNEVOC. 2006. *Orienting technical and vocational education and training for sustainable development 2006.* http://www.unevoc.unesco.org/publications/

United Nations. 1998. *Mainstreaming the culture of peace.* In UN Resolution A/RES/52/13: Culture of Peace and A/RES/53/243, Declaration and Program of Action on a Culture of Peace.

World Bank. 2005. *Reshaping the future education and post-conflict reconstruction*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.