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A 1997 survey of curricula in teacher education institutions in the Pacific region indicated a need to incorporate elements of Pacific cultures in the curricula. This is intended to help teachers contextualise their teaching so that it is grounded in the cultures that are familiar to students and hence more meaningful.

In response to this need, the University of the South Pacific's Institute of Education, in association with the UNESCO Chair in Teacher Education and Culture, asked experts in the field to write modules for inclusion in teacher education curricula in the USP region. The authors are all highly qualified Pacific Islanders, and they share the desire to cast off the shackles of western educational philosophy, which has hitherto dominated Pacific education systems, and to include Pacific theories and approaches in teacher education curricula.

The modules are intended to stimulate discussion among students. Modules 2 and 6 include suggestions for research.

This article informs readers about the content of the modules which have so far been published. Teachers who missed out when they were trained and other interested readers may want to buy copies. They are available from the IOE at a cost of \$F1.00 each.

Module 1, written by the current holder of the UNESCO Chair, **Konai Helu-Thaman**, is entitled *Towards Culturally Democratic Teacher Education*. This module discusses the need for Pacific cultures to be included in curricula which are predominantly Euro-centric and derive from a western tradition of scholarship. Incorporating Pacific cultures into education courses shows the importance placed on them by Pacific educators as valued sources of knowledge. Rather than studying Pacific cultures as a

separate subject, Helu-Thaman recommends incorporating them into existing subjects, and outlines how this can be done in several subject areas: language and communication studies, the social sciences, the expressive arts, the sciences, mathematics, and human development studies.

Pacific approaches to education tend to impart knowledge in a holistic rather than fragmented way, learning is by exposure rather than in the abstract, and co-operative rather than competitive learning is encouraged. These educational ideas should inform the education courses offered, giving a wider range of alternatives to students.

In **Module 2**, *Vernacular Languages and Classroom Interactions in the Pacific*, **Ana Taufe'ulungaki** discusses the importance of using vernacular languages to improve classroom interactions and consequently the quality of learning. In addition, the use of the mother tongue has the effect of revitalising and maintaining both the language and the culture of its speakers.

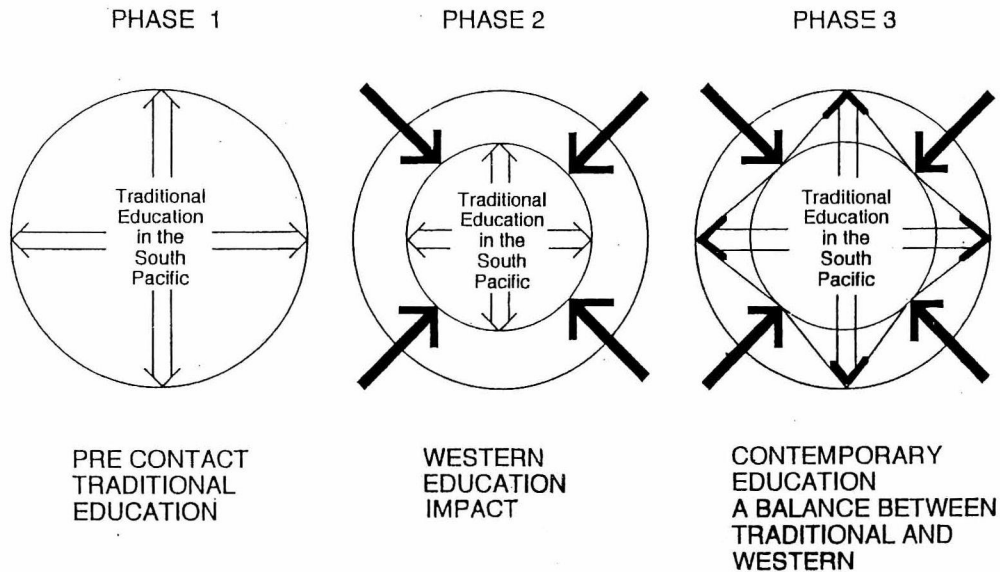
This module discusses the use of the mother tongue in the primary school; the relationship between language use and culture; the differences between the western-style school culture and Pacific cultural practices, including differences of language use; and the implications of all these for teacher training.

The role of the teacher and the school in adopting culturally appropriate teaching/learning strategies is critical. Teachers must establish a basis for communication, they must deal with differences between the cultures of home and school and they must value their students' cultural values, speech rules and learning systems. How can teachers acquire the skills they need? A compulsory programme, Tongan Studies,

taken by all students at the Tonga Teachers' Training College, is described in some detail.

Incorporating Local Knowledge in Teaching about Education and Society: a Fiji case study is the title of **Module 3**, by **Unaisi Nabobo**. Nabobo describes how traditional cultures, from being an integral part of traditional education, have, over the years, become increasingly divorced from education, as schools and training colleges adopted the western style of education. Recently, however, many educators have expressed concern about this. Being in a position to actually do something, Nabobo and her colleague Jennie Teasdale, designed the EDD23 *Education and Society in the South Pacific* course at the then new Fiji College of Advanced Education and included Pacific/Fiji cultures.

Course model for 'Education and Society in the South Pacific'



Nabobo describes this course in some detail, and concludes thus:

At the conclusion of the course, a systematic evaluation was conducted. Trainees almost unanimously affirmed that they felt a greater pride and were more aware and more secure in their

own cultural identity. They also stated that they had gained a new awareness and respect for people from cultures other than their own. Certainly, they felt a deeper commitment to becoming culturally affirming as teachers, striving to bring at least some aspects of traditional learning into Fiji's classrooms. (Nabobo 2000:14)

In **Module 4, Making Sense of Human Development: beyond western concepts and universal assumptions**, **Anne-Marie Tupuola** challenges the universality of western psychological theories of human development. In particular, she examines the 'adolescent' stage and notions of individuality and independence. Are these the same for western as well as non-western societies? Tupuola refers to many recent studies and quotes from her own research into Samoan perceptions of

these concepts, all of which tend to the conclusion that it is inappropriate to interpret human development in Pacific and Samoan cultures using western psychological terms. For example, adolescence is a foreign concept to young Samoans. As one 17 year old says:

I mean if I said I was an adolescent I would be lying cos I don't really have the opportunities to experience all the things, um, adolescents are supposed to. Um, I'd like to but it's like the Samoan culture protects us young ones so we don't get to experience things for ourselves, that's how we learn, um we listen but don't practise things. (Tupuola 2000:10)

Module 5, in preparation, is specifically directed towards the teaching of mathematics. *Ways of Mathematizing in Fijian Society* by **Sala Bakalevu** looks at the problems faced by Fijian students learning mathematics. These problems are caused by a mismatch between the cultural background of the students and that of the school. There is no recognition of Fijian ways of mathematizing in the way maths is typically taught at school. Bakalevu first describes Fijian notions of education and then discusses how Fijians count, measure and practise traditional economy and exchange. The notions involved serve the same mathematical purposes as formal western models of mathematizing. An understanding of Fijian numeracy ideas would help teachers of mathematics. They can encourage their Fijian students to use strategies which derive from their own ways of mathematizing and only

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move on to formal operations, formulae and procedures when they feel their students are ready. In other words, teachers need to build bridges between what the students know from their own culture and language and the formal ways of mathematizing.

While Bakalevu's module discusses the Fijian situation, the same principles can be applied to other cultures, too.

Kabini Sanga is the author of **Module 6** *Learning from Indigenous Leadership*. Defining leadership as 'a purposeful and deliberate influence relationship between leaders and followers towards ethically shared goals', a concept which Pacific Island countries are very familiar with, Kabini discusses how leadership in education is a huge challenge because of the nature of education in the Pacific. Schools do not always reflect the values of the indigenous community they serve. The problem then arises of a situation where 'indigenous cultures are denied ownership of or representation by the school' (Kabini 2000:5). The teacher's leadership responsibility is to help bring about this ownership and representation. Hence, leadership training, and a study of indigenous leadership, should be part of the curricula of teaching colleges. This will empower teachers to be sensitive to the culture of the community they serve and take an active role in bridging the gap between the school and the community.

