



## Values education

### *Hope for a better future in the Pacific region*

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#### **Abstract**

In recent times, there has been an unprecedented increase in the incidence of violence and conflicts around the world. The Pacific region is no exception. Often referred to as a paradise, some island countries have in recent years experienced unrest that has caused huge economic damage and claimed lives. This paper emphasises the need for the education system to respond to these trends in the region. It advocates the teaching and learning of values in schools as a strategy for achieving long-term harmony in the Pacific. The transfer of values in everyday lives requires reorienting the school curriculum to ensure emphasis on education using school-wide approaches.

**Key words:** conflict prevention, curriculum, intervention, nation building, Pacific Islands, peace building, teaching and learning, values education

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## Introduction

In the first decade of the new millennium, the world has witnessed many violent conflicts, some of them national in nature, some global, threatening world peace. Conflict prevention, management and mitigation, and peace building, have become major areas of research and study. Various interventionist strategies have been drawn up and implemented. A multifaceted approach is considered best when it comes to tackling violence. This paper argues that the schools education system should be part and parcel of the interventionist strategy. It advocates starting with the very young child, with education curriculums reoriented to cater for areas such as moral, social, personal and aesthetic values (see Baikaloff & Campbell, 2006; Campbell, 2006; Johansson, 2006). Education is regarded as a significant force in terms of shaping the world, for it can reinforce suitable practices and experiences to bring out the humanist essence in human beings (Delors, 1996; Jarvis, 1992; Marcel, 1976). To aspire to the holistic development of children who will go on to inherit the world, it is not enough for the school to be just a place for academic learning focused on preparing students for the job market to run the engines of the economy. Education that consciously includes the teaching and learning of values is also needed to improve all aspects of national life. Values education as an intervention may help positively with rebuilding our communities and societies. It can play a crucial role in ensuring peace and harmony, which in turn can contribute to the sustainable co-existence of humankind.

First, this paper provides snapshots of the political crises and other forms of social problem that are becoming prevalent in the Pacific region. Secondly, it provides critical reflection on some of the possible causal factors underlying the snapshots provided. This is followed by a section on what Jarvis (1992) refers to as the *Being Mode* of education, as a strategy focusing on the teaching and learning of values. Finally, the paper outlines the initiative taken by the University of the South Pacific in introducing a course to prepare teachers professionally in values education to help children acquire the desired values in order build a peaceful society.

## Snapshots of crisis

### *Political crisis*

In the current picture, some Pacific Islands have projected themselves as synonymous with violent conflict. Fiji, for example, has experienced four coups in the last two decades. The coups were the result of a myriad of deep-rooted problems, of which ethnic tension was one (Kelly, 1988; Lal, 2008). Apart from human suffering, the coups have had a decidedly negative impact on the country's economic and social development. As a result of the political crises, Fiji has experienced a substantial brain drain of professionals, notably among teachers, doctors and nurses. Coups, like other crimes, are considered harmful as they dehumanise human beings (Kelly, 1988; Lal, 2008). Before the 1987 coup, Fiji was described – by itself and others – as '*The way the world should be*', such was the stability of its multicultural life. But this happy era was short-lived and many commentators now label Fiji a failed democracy (Lal, 2008).

Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea and the Kingdom of Tonga have also experienced anarchy and chaos in the recent past. In Solomon Islands, the civil war between Guadalcanal and Mailaitan people, 1998–2004, brought the country to its knees. It caused considerable setbacks to

the development of all sectors of the economy (Kabutaulaka, 2003). In addition, the crisis caused a great deal of human suffering and trauma, and efforts at healing and rebuilding have been slow. In the same vein, the periodic instability in Papua New Guinea and in Vanuatu has likewise caused major setbacks in those nations' development efforts.

In 2006, the Kingdom of Tonga experienced political crisis as people demanded more say in the governing of the country. The protestors set fire to buildings in the capital city of Nuku'alofa, ostensibly an action demonstrating people's discontent with monarchy and a preference for more democratic governance processes, although some critics contend that the rioters were malcontents goaded by politicians with vested interests. New Zealand intervention helped calm down the situation. At the time of writing, Tonga was to go to the polls in November 2010 under what appears on its face to be a slightly more democratic electoral system.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Drugs in schools***

Social problems are also becoming increasingly apparent in Pacific Island countries. Schools in Fiji, for example, are experiencing an increase in drug and substance abuse among children. This is of major concern to all key stakeholders in education and in particular, teachers. To curb the growing problem of drugs and substance abuse, the Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of Basic Education (PRIDE) project at The University of the South Pacific provided FJD\$40,000 to run a series of workshops (Natau et al., 2010; Lingam, 2004). These workshops were aimed at raising awareness on the dangers and risks associated with drugs.

Apart from drugs, there are increases in the reported cases of domestic violence, child abuse, rape, sexual harassment, teenage pregnancies, divorce cases and human rights abuses. In Fiji, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre recorded a total of 1845 cases of domestic violence in 2009. This is an alarming trebling of the 615 cases in 2008 and the 376 for the first half of 2010 suggest that the pattern of increase is continuing (Chand, 2010). These problems are becoming common in at least some other regional countries as well. All these problems show to some extent the weakening of the social institutions such as the family and the escalating social costs of purported development, modernisation and globalisation. If nothing constructive is done, then it is likely that the mushrooming of such problems will continue and in turn further threaten peace and harmony in the region.

### ***Ecological damage***

Ecological damage is another area of concern. If unchecked, it can result in violence, as in Bougainville, where war erupted over the damage caused to the environment by the Panguna Copper Mine project (Post Conflict Explanations on the Bougainville Copper Mine, 2010). The exploitation of natural and mineral resources by developed countries for their own industrial economy has caused massive ecological damage in developing countries, as highlighted by Shiva (2000, 2008). This is a grave concern for the global village, so disturbing are the implications for the lives of future generations. Apart from people's dependence on the natural resources such as forests for their livelihood, the depletion of forests can cause serious repercussions to the weather patterns, water supply and soil retention, in turn affecting human survival. There are already signs of consequent problems in the small island states of the Pacific, such as Kiribati and Tuvalu, where homes and gardens are already being inundated by rising sea levels.

## Reflections on the snapshots

Political crisis has not only fragmented relationships but also divided people along racial lines. Recent political developments reflect the difficulties facing some Pacific governments as they struggle to deal effectively with the complexities of the challenges occasioned by the processes of modernisation. One effect is that some countries in the Pacific are, de facto, becoming more pluralistic. They now consist of people of different races, languages, cultures and religions, not all of whom 'belong' originally to the country where they now live and work. Subramani (1989) says that pluralism is becoming a fact of life in all countries. Some countries in the Pacific, though, are having problems coming to terms with this change. In both Papua New Guinea and Tonga, the Chinese were the target of attacks by some indigenous people, with their businesses and properties destroyed. (This scapegoating may have been a deflection of hostility whose roots lay elsewhere.) In the case of Fiji, for example, commentators, reporters and political analysts suggest racial conflict between ethnic Fijians and Indo-Fijians as one of the major causes of the coups (Kelly, 1988; Lal, 2008) although few would find in this the sole cause.

Among the different racial and ethnic groups in Fiji, there seems to be a lack of appreciation of different cultures and traditions, and the contribution of each in nation building. In the same vein, understanding, tolerance, acceptance and respect for each other appear to be disappearing. Instead, fear, animosity and many forms of prejudice and discriminatory practices have become quite common, for instance in such places as Solomon Islands (Kabutaulaka, 2003).

While improvement in information and communications technology has helped to reduce geographical isolation, it has brought new challenges (Stiglitz, 1997). The influence of mass media, for instance, has had tremendous impact on social institutions such as family and clan relationships. The erosion of respect for families and clan is also a source of conflict.

Are the school curriculums in Pacific Islands changing with the times to equip students for the challenges brought about by modernisation? In traditional education, 'teaching and learning' was seen as an integral part of all learning on a daily basis (Thaman, 1988). The emphasis on the cultural interactive approach of learning enabled interconnection between the individual and the culture, which formed the basis of an individual's development (Shweder, Mahapatra & Miller 1987; Johansson, 1999). However, some have judged formal education systems in the Pacific to overemphasise the teaching and learning of academic subjects and academic achievement (Muralidhar, 1994; UNESCO, 1992). As Muralidhar rightly pointed out (1994: 79), the academic education 'may help us to compete more effectively in the job market, [but] it does not feed the human spirit, it does not make us whole individuals'. The emphasis is on work force preparation and increasing GDP for the purpose of economic development, at the expense of broader issues confronting the Pacific region. Smyth (2001:125) labels this preoccupation of schooling as an 'enterprise culture' and 'deflecting attention away from social issues in schooling' (see Burnett & Lingam, 2007: 308). At the same time the current education does not emphasise the promotion of higher-level needs of human existence (Maslow, 1970). We may need to re-look at our school curriculum to determine whether it is well aligned to the development of a whole person, encompassing affective, psychomotor and cognitive development (Piaget, 1960). We need to develop and put in place educational curricula that 'will empower young people to live well both as individuals with unique potentials worthy of fulfillment, and as responsible members in a very diverse and restless global community' (Campbell,

2006: 3). Thus, in schooling, emphasis should be placed on developing well-rounded persons who demonstrate responsible actions (Bacchus, 2000).

As part of the Re-thinking Pacific Education Initiative by and for Pacific Peoples (RPEIPP), it is vital that we re-examine the Pacific curriculum to determine whether it is well aligned with the futures we desire and the attributes individuals need for the realisation of that future (Luke, 2005; Thaman, 2009). In this regard, Burnett (2004: 3) poses a poignant question: 'Are our societies and all institutions – groups and individuals, including schooling – basically working in harmony towards the common good of all and social cohesion?' This question deserves serious examination, the findings of which may provide a basis for reconceptualising the curriculum to include those aspects that will help us to build a better future for all in the Pacific.

### Values teaching and learning

As mentioned, the curriculum used in Pacific schools is one of the deciding factors in determining the kind of future we want to live in. As Reardon (2000: 113) succinctly and forcefully states:

What education for peace must undertake is the facilitation of the learning that will enable people to understand that war and other forms of physical, economic, political, ecological and gender violence are not on the same order as natural disasters. These are not inevitable eventualities to be prepared for; these are the consequences of human will and intent and can be avoided, even eliminated entirely, if human will and intent so desire. We can prepare for peace as intentionally and systematically as we prepare for potential 'natural disaster'.

In most contexts education is concerned with preparing people for – and at the same time seen as opening a pathway to – employment opportunities. This is fine as people need employment to earn their daily living. However, the one thing that is missing is the education for *being* Reardon (2000). (Reference has already been made to Jarvis's expression of this (1992) as the need to emphasise the 'being' mode of education.) Generally, this refers to an education that caters for the development of the affective domain, that is, the development of different aspects of morality (Kohlberg, 1976; Nucci, 2001). In view of this, we need to re-examine our respective national education systems, especially the school curriculum, to determine what we have left out. As commented by Subramani (1989:20): 'We have left out [certain things] because there are no books about [them]; what we consider untouchable (feelings, emotions, attitudes and values)'. From my many years of work experience in education in the region, I agree with this view expressed by Subramani. Teachers in the Pacific generally teach whatever is in the curriculum materials provided by the education ministry. If something is not in the curriculum, they will barely teach it, if at all<sup>2</sup>.

### Values education

A value is an enduring belief that guides a particular mode of conduct, or a state of existence that is personally and socially desirable for all human beings (Rokeach, 1973). From this explanation one can discern that a value is regarded as 'being more enduring, general, and abstract' (Gilbert & Hoepfer, 1996: 59). With regard to an individual's value system, Darom (1999: 20) suggests that it consists of three interrelated and interactive value components: personal, interpersonal and social

values. From this one can discern that all value components are useful in order to shape a person's life holistically. We all know that values are not the same across the board and as such, a need for critical awareness is vital for all concerned.

Realising the need for values education, the Fiji government, through an important official document for a better nation, *Fiji: The State of the Nation and the Economy* (Government of Fiji, 2008: 7) proposed to make changes to the school curriculum. It emphasised the need to incorporate:

Learning that will promote and encourage social cohesion and national integration; to teach the basic values of truth, right action, love, peace and non-violence; and to promote national symbols (flags, anthem, currency) in schools and offices while also reviewing them to integrate the different languages (*Vosa Vakaviti*, Hindi and English) and music (styles and the national anthem).

The teaching and learning of values such as truth, right action, love, peace and non-violence are important for an individual in terms of living together with people from all backgrounds, especially from different ones. Other regional academics have also emphasised the inclusion of critical core values of the society in the curriculum (Taufe'ulungaki, 2009; Teairo, 2009). To teach values relating to good governance, constitutional democracy, and justice is necessary for peace and stability in each country.

People have advocated the teaching of multicultural education and religious education but these will not have any real impact if people do not change their core values. A change in government or political structure is a small contribution to any positive change. The big contributions are the people themselves. If they adopt suitable values befitting human beings in their daily lives, then all people are more likely to co-exist peacefully. In this regard the emphasis on teaching and learning of values using school-wide approaches is vital in a modern Pacific country.

Schools in some parts of the world have started to realise the importance of values education and they have already begun teaching children core values. For instance, the New South Wales Department of Education, Science and Training in Australia has produced a document entitled *The Values We Teach* for implementation in schools. The schools prefer to teach values such as tolerance, respect, responsibility, social justice, excellence, care, inclusion and trust, honesty, freedom, and being ethical (DEST, 2003). These values transcend all boundaries and as such, it is desirable and necessary to teach them to all children.

Similarly, Fiji's Ministry of Education has developed a document on *Values Education* for use in primary and secondary schools. The Sath Sai Organisation in Fiji teaches human values in all its schools (Chand, Lingam & Devi, 2007). The documents produced in both Australia and Fiji consist of desired core values and they clearly demonstrate values as an integral part of all learning and teaching. Apart from schools, other important organisations such as UNESCO and the Asia Pacific Network for International Education and Values Education (APINEVE) contribute towards the promotion of universally shared values. The values these organisations aim to promote would be good for all human beings no matter where they live (Teasdale & Teasdale, 1996). For a better impact on the lives of children, it is suggested that values teaching and learning should begin at an early age (Johansson, 2006).

Even though other important social institutions such as families, religious groups and organisations contribute towards values education, schools could play a greater role in values education. However, in comparison to the teaching and learning of other subjects, values education is regarded as a difficult area to teach because certain values are contestable (Hindson, 1993). Teachers need to be professionally prepared for this mammoth task if they are to carry out values teaching and learning successfully. Professional preparation of teachers will enable them to be well equipped to take a professional approach and make sound professional judgments in relation to values teaching and learning.

### **The University of the South Pacific initiative**

For the professional preparation of teachers, the University of the South Pacific has introduced a course entitled *Values in Education* aimed at providing teachers with relevant knowledge and pedagogical skills to carry out effective teaching and learning of values education (Lingam, 2004). The course consists of seven units and these are briefly outlined below.

#### ***What are values ?***

This unit introduces the key concept of values and also attempts to clarify what values are. It helps one to learn and understand that values are different from knowledge, beliefs, skills and attitudes. The unit attempts to spell out that schooling and knowledge are not value-free. The unit also attempts to show the need to arrive at a set of core values for the good of all people. These refer to values befitting humanity.

#### ***Values at school***

This unit focuses on values in the school community. The need for schools to nurture values that enhance teachers' work and children's school work is explained. In addition, some of the values children bring to school from their homes, church and so on are described.

#### ***School ethos***

In this unit the emphasis is on creating a pleasant atmosphere in the school in order to enhance not only the teaching–learning of values but also the teaching–learning of different subjects in the school curriculum. At the school level all participants such as classroom teachers, school administrators and children contribute to and partake of the school ethos. In general, it is believed that educational leaders play a significant part in terms of influencing and contributing to the development of the school ethos. Thus school ethos can positively or negatively influence the teaching and learning of values.

#### ***Curriculum and values education***

The unit spells out clearly that values are embedded in the different curriculum areas. Thus curriculum is not values neutral. The different subject areas emphasise certain values that children might learn and these are briefly discussed. Some suitable cultural values are emphasised, and this approach could be adopted by teachers for their school curriculums.

### ***Teaching and learning values***

The need to use an integrated approach in the teaching and learning of values is considered. Teachers need to integrate values into teaching and learning of different subject areas. For example, teachers should promote the learning of values in collaborative group work situations. Teachers are, and they should act as, role models in the classroom by setting an example for children in their own behaviour as well as helping children clarify values and showing their relevance and basis in students' everyday lives.

### ***Are we getting it right ?***

The need to use suitable approaches to undertake assessment of values teaching and learning are discussed in this unit. Various suitable approaches such as the use of portfolio, reflective journal and profiling in assessing students' learning outcomes in the areas of values are explained.

### ***Values in life-long education***

This is the last unit and provides useful suggestions on how to apply the principle of 'learning to learn' to the teaching and learning of values. Also, the unit emphasises the need to incorporate teaching and learning of values in further education and in non-school settings.

The course aims to develop teachers in all the areas indicated, and to equip them adequately to take a leading role in the teaching of values. Overall, the course is based on the view that for the betterment of humankind, it is vital for all people to adopt and exhibit appropriate values at all times. Specifically, the course aims to develop a critical awareness and recognition of appropriate values both within and outside the school context. Some appropriate values are already ingrained in the school curriculum and these values need to be given due attention in the discourses with the children every day in order for them to achieve optimal benefit in terms of their preparation for life. Apart from knowledge and skills, the teaching and learning of values deserve equal attention in the school curriculum. Teachers can also collaborate with various communities, social institutions and agencies in order to promote and at the same time achieve the best learning outcomes in values teaching and learning. Through substantive partnerships, suitable critical values could be identified and taught in school and these in turn would contribute towards a peaceful and sustainable Pacific region.

### **Conclusion**

Political crisis and other forms of social problems are becoming increasingly apparent in the Pacific region. Regional educational systems should face up to the challenge and join conflict prevention and peace-building efforts by devising appropriate curriculums to develop our children and our youth to face up to the challenge and secure a better society. There is a need to focus on people development in terms of values education, something that is virtually absent from school curriculums. Currently, education is primarily geared towards national development in the economic sense. Wealth creation and accumulation are the priority. Such an exclusive focus is unwholesome. The teaching and learning of values is a strategy for attaining peace and harmony. Education, through values teaching and learning for holistic development of persons, is necessary in all contexts, and at all levels of education. Reorienting the school curriculum is vital for this purpose. Values teaching and learning should be made compulsory in all national education systems in the Pacific. As the saying goes, prevention is better than cure.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> After the election, which followed modification of the Constitution, commoner representation had indeed been increased, as also had representation by Pro-Democracy candidates, but the selection of a Prime Minister and the formation of the Cabinet, apparently by more democratic processes, have produced a somewhat more ambiguous outcome. Whether an energised democracy will gradually emerge remains problematic.

<sup>2</sup> This is not to deny that they will, unconsciously or subconsciously, be providing an influential role model; what they do will probably be as powerful a lesson as what they are or are not saying.

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