Travel note: Life’s journey takes us to many unexpected places. My journey into language and literacy education led to a border crossing I had not anticipated. Through a happenstance meeting of minds, I came to see how I had reduced language and literacy to a tool of communication—a linguistic structure of technical correctness—that was and still is a common, unquestioned stance of many language arts and second language teachers. Through an ongoing and difficult struggle to free myself of a comfort zone I had come to know so well, I entered rich and troubling borderlands where mechanical skills of reading and writing, and living processes of languages and literacy(ies) dwell in complexities that are not without conflict and confusion. This chapter is written out of, and beyond, the borders of such a dwelling place.

Literate societies enable the free exchange of text-based information and provide an array of opportunities for lifelong learning. (UNESCO, EFA Global Monitoring Report 2006: Literacy for Life:159)

Becoming literate, as a broad life skill in linguistic, social, cultural, and economic terms, sits at the centre of this important declaration, and those of us engaged
in improving the conditions for basic education in Pacific communities need to take heed. As the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2006: Literacy for Life* (UNESCO, 2005:135) indicates, ‘it is difficult to separate the right to literacy from the right to education or the benefits of literacy from those of education’. Simply put, literacy matters. Our challenge as Pacific educators is to determine how best to address literacy learning in today’s classrooms.

New times are upon us. Profound and fundamental changes in forms of education designed for industrial times are being made as we move into a world of high technology, raising complex and often contradictory crosscurrent questions for education—literacy in particular. In these new times, a view of literacy classrooms around the world captures the shift in emphasis. This includes technical approaches (phonics, drill and skill, look and say), progressive approaches (whole language, process writing, ‘authentic’ literacy), post-progressive approaches (genre and functional linguistic perspectives, intersections of multi-literacies and multi-modality), and post-modern approaches such as border pedagogy.

Such global shifting works toward ‘privileg[ing] meaning over mechanical skills, with ‘meaning’ seen much more in terms of sociocultural processes than as private internal cognitive states or events’ (Lankshear, 2000: 3). Privileging ‘meaning’ from the stance of situated communication requires us to re-think ‘what meanings are, where meanings come from, how meanings get fixed, what authorizes particular meanings’ (ibid). However, these critical and innovative characteristics of literacy seem to be somewhat inactive within a broader push for a literacy economy that brings together education and employment (Spring, 1998).

How do we make sense of literacy in Pacific schools in these complex times? In the introduction to *Educational Planning in the Pacific*, Teasdale and Puamau (2005: xii) call for educators to ‘blend’ the best of the global and local in re-thinking Pacific education in ‘new and culturally appropriate ways’. It is in this spirit that I draw on global perspectives of literacy as a way of contributing to the larger project of reconceptualising education in Oceania.
Living (in) literacy(ies)

In schools, language continues to be the main medium through which literacy events take place. While some view language and literacy learning primarily in technical terms, a Canadian colleague takes an ecological stance and reminds us that learning (in) language wholly requires:

... [e]nvisaging language, not as an inert set of instruments that are at our beck and call, but as something that houses us, something we are in, something which responds to us and something to which we are responsible. We are “in” the community of language. And once we envisage language as a place in which we dwell, the emphasis of whole language on “communication” becomes immediately obvious, communication being the generative case of community. Also, understood as a “community,” language is understood to have a life and a history and a wisdom that both goes beyond the individual and that needs the individual (“the new blood,” to use an archaic term common to the initiation of the new ones into the community) for its own renewal. As a sustainable community or place, it includes both the old/established and the young/new and provides a place for each to find its source and limit, its comfort, in the other (Jardine, 2000: 57).

Philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer (1975: 404) similarly argues that “[l]anguage has its true being only in conversation, in the exercise of understanding: between people…. It is a living process in which a community of life is lived out’.

In new times, this sense of language and literacy as community/communication is taking hold. Understanding language and literacy as spaces of vital and vibrant intergenerational practices pluralises them—languages and literacy(ies). Multiple forms of language and literacy are created and recreated, as readers and writers constitute meaning in everyday community and communication events. Our ability to remain open to, and work within, new languages and literacy(ies) emerging from such ongoing generative efforts ensures the sustainability of the living communities and communication systems in which we dwell.

Within the multiple languages of the Pacific, this stance on languages and literacy(ies) is more profoundly felt. Understanding bi/multi-lingualism as a
dialectic and complementary exchange between worlds, international curriculum scholar and friend Ted T. Aoki (2005: 240) offers this: ‘[l]earners of a second language do not alter their relationship to the world, but rather enrich and extend it through the world of the foreign language’. Such a view of language and literacy highlights the contextual aspect of meaning-making—of living (in) literacy(ies)—which technical or scientific understandings of language and literacy often neglect.

On the need to understand what is going on in literacy

‘Out-of-school’

In new times, a fundamental shift in the way we work has been triggered by an abundant access to technology globally. Recently, we have seen enormous investments in technology (connectivity through undersea cables and satellites, affordable computers, a proliferation of software—chat rooms, email, text messaging, search engines) creating an environment where language is being altered and intellectual work can be delivered from anywhere.

Travel note: Recently, when I was in the Philippines, it seemed everyone had a cell phone. But, you rarely saw the phone near their ear, it was always in their hands, fingers actively engaged in encoding messages. I asked a colleague about text messaging and she said, ‘You leave out the vowels as much as possible.’ A system within a system—first you have to know where the vowels go and then you systematically remove them. An emerging new literacy practice.

Through migration and international exchange—where people of difference occupy space—communities and communication edge each other in new, restless and sometimes disorienting ways. Homi Bhabha (1994:1) locates the question of culture in a moment of transit—‘where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity’. Gloria Anzaldúa (1999),

Text message:
cn u mt tnght
nd wrk on
prjct du fri
growing up between cultures—the Indian Mexican and the colonised Anglo in her own land—writes out of the many complex borderlands of her life. Trinh Minh-ha (1991), a Vietnamese in America, writes from the richness of a hybrid place—where edges overlap, coincide and, at times, conflict. And a student, a Japanese national studying in Canada, refuses to translate the untranslatable. New language practices are emerging from the borderlands, hybrid places, and the untranslatable.

One day, my phone rang. It was my best friend’s mother. She spoke in low tones, so I felt uneasy, and I instinctively knew that she was going to tell me something bad. 予感が的中し, she told me that her daughter had passed away that night. I was shocked and hardly able to believe my ears. 私の心にはほっかりと穴が あいたようになり, emptiness and やるせなさ welled up in me, and I felt as if my heart were bursting.

Ways of ‘reading’ wor(l)ds are also changing. While print has dominated the scene of communication for a long time, there is renewed interest in how other modes of representation—visual, audio, gestural, kinaesthetic, three-dimensional—play key roles in communicative practices (Pahl & Rowsell 2006). For example, on page 7, an image called *bwaninin te reirei* (the completion of education) by Pacific scholar and artist, Teweiariki Teaero, is used to communicate deep-felt meaning—meaning I make sense of in my own way as I bring to the reading other textual encounters I have had, including those with the artist himself. In acts of close reading, Wolfreys (2000: vii) offers:

... what is read is only a momentary recognition. It is perhaps a fleeting response to a certain pulse or rhythm...what is read is never wholly read. Something remains, something is left behind, something is missed altogether, something other is still yet to be read.
And so I read *bwaninin te reirei* (the completion of education) in ‘momentary recognition’ as ‘a fleeting response to a certain pulse’.

Enter at your own risk
the double-folds of different worlds
swollen with complexities
of imposed salvational urges and
delightful surprises in discovering the riches of the other

I read into this time/space of difference
readings of Homi Bhabha, Trinh Minh-ha and Gloria Anzaldúa nearby
listening to the shadows of the unknown and unexpected
witnessing the newness emerging in the
border zones of
connected languaging and shifting identities—
fractured tongues and diaspora—
as postcolonial relations of Oceania life.

Always already working the overlaps, the contours, detours,
roadblocks, unmarked paths of our lives
footprints disappear reappear… yet the textual markings remain.

In the US and Europe, youths are using slam poetry—an intermixing of issues, poetry writing and performance—to speak. Composed and performed poetry set around social, political, and economic issues gives voice to youth (see *The Honolulu Advertiser*, Friday, April 21, 2006: 24). It is a multi-modal practice that has sparked communication, at least for some youth, in powerful ways that traditional learning has not. Personal websites where youth promote themselves, using layout and other visual elements of meaning are, for those with access to technology, intensive after-school activities.

The above serve as a few reminders that the way we ‘do’ everyday literacy is changing. New work contexts are emerging in which literacy is taking place. Outsourcing,

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one dimension of these new times, is a good example of this. Freidman (2006:6-7), in The World is Flat, tells of a company using trademark software to parcel out work. They ‘send one part to Boston, one part to Bangalore [India], and one part to Beijing, making it easy for anyone to do remote development’. Software takes apart, distributes, collects and re-assembles the project. And no one had to leave home.

Borrowing from Brian Street (2001: 2), I use the terms, ‘new orders—work, communicative, epistemological’ to describe the wider context in which literacy work is now taking place. The new work order is centred on the globalisation of production and distribution of work. It requires of its workforce flexibility, adaptability and teamwork—the ability to collaborate and negotiate on the development of ‘products’.

The new communicative order attempts to level out an emphasis on print and speech literacy and recognises key roles of other modes of communication, such as visual, movement and 3-D. A literate future includes not only teamwork literacies such as text messaging, but also competencies with iconic/sign systems such as those used in advertising. Literacy, as community and communication, is now understood as a wider range of semiotic systems that cut across reading, writing and speech. Hence, the use of the term ‘literacies’ recognises multiple ways of reading, knowing and communicating the world.

The new epistemological order comes out of a crisis of knowledge. A shift from seeking (and claiming) one universal ‘truth’ to valuing multiple ways of knowing has taken place. In parts of the world, different ‘knowledges’ have become commodities—textbooks, instructional resources produced and bought and sold in neat packages. In other places, collaborative efforts in the interests of equity and justice are taking hold (e.g. critical literacies, reflective practices, writing out of spaces of difference and identity). Such practices keep the global at bay, giving the local room to breathe and interact with the global on its own terms.
‘In-school’

Bourdieu (1991) claimed that school is a microcosm of the dominant culture. If so, we need to ask what literacy practices are being reinvented and perpetuated through education in Pacific schools? Consider the sidebar text below. What literacy do you see? What literacy do you hear? What are your assumptions about literacy? Are you looking for the writer’s logic, objectivity and rationality of thought? Do you depend on only linguistic cues for meaning? Did you assume the text is addressed to no one in particular, thus making the author essentially anonymous (it does not matter who the author is)? Is the meaning you made precisely what is represented in the sentences? Is the visual for decoration? ‘Yes’ responses to these questions relate assumptions to what Brian Street (1984, 1995) calls an autonomous model of literacy where literacy is understood as a technology and reading as a technical skill.

Reading is a social act. Knowing who the authors are and the context in which it was written (two eight-year-old girls co-authored it as part of their science project on fish in a local lagoon), we understand what they are trying to accomplish and appreciate the complexity. When we detach meaning from its social context, reading becomes technical; we attend to the text’s deficiencies. From a social perspective, even the solitary writer, by the very fact of using words, draws on a shared, social property—a system of communication that is contextually enacted within local and global communities. By producing such a text, these students are continuously referring to other texts they have experienced, engaging in a ‘funds of knowledge’ exchange (González, Moll & Amanti, 2005). And, by sharing it with their teacher, they are deciding that this text, including the visuals, has some worth (social value). In turn, the teacher reading this text is affected by the literacy practices within the particular community to which s/he belongs (e.g. the assumptions s/he makes about literacy).
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The reader or audience (imagined or real) plays a powerful role in the word and image choices the writer makes. Viewing literacy as the interaction between reader and writer acknowledges another social dimension. As communication, literacy becomes more than technical acts of word decoding and grammatical precision. As writers and readers ‘work the text’, they work and re-work who they are (their identities) in their continuous negotiation of meaning. In this pragmatic view of literacy, students not only need to understand the linguistic forms used in a text, but they must also possess, and appropriately apply, background knowledge (in many cases from other texts) and engage in different kinds of reciprocal exchange.

Assumptions teachers make about literacy significantly impacts what goes on in the classroom, the dominant assumption being that meaning resides in ‘the very words of the text’, such as the sidebar example above from an international student implies; another opens to a much greater variety of reciprocal and generative exchanges. Such openness leads to a shift from the autonomous model to a more pragmatic one with emphasis on the social character of literacy, where text is viewed as a social instrument, readers and writers as embodying social identities, and literacy skills as involving contextual sensitivity and social interaction. We must give serious thought to the assumptions that we make about literacy and once again ask ourselves: What literacy practices are being reinvented and perpetuated through education in Pacific schools?

Travel note: As I journey through the Pacific, I witness new literacy(ies) practices emerging in these new times. Earlier this year, I met students at the only internet café on one of the islands I visited. They were sending messages, co-creating personal websites while my impatience with the slow connection ends my time on the internet after checking just three emails. They seem not bothered with time as they chat and create community in person and on the web. The next morning, I enter classrooms where these students learn and find an ‘old’ literacy prominent in schools—in front of them worksheets they must do independently, silently, without community/communication. Disparities resonate between in- and out-of-school literacy practices.
Rather than stand in support of a particular approach to literacy in Queensland, Australia, Luke and Freebody (1990) have taken a different turn. They argue for the inclusion of four types of literacy practices readers must engage in: code breaker, text participant, text user and text analyst. As code breaker, the reader works with the technical and linguistic forms of the written language engaging with the code (e.g. alphabetic principle, concepts about print, decoding the message). As text participant, the reader is activating his/her background knowledge (e.g. local and world knowledge, knowledge of text types and their structure) through connections with the text. This is where structure, content and cultural/contextual knowledge meet in various (dis)orientations (see Shirley Brice Heath’s 1983 account of diverse readers, different reader roles and meaning-making). As text user, the reader participates in the social activities surrounding the text. For example, children interacting around a story that is read to them, learning what questions they can ask, and when, during story time. As text analyst, the reader reads critically, looking for evidence of the assumptions being made by the author and how, intentionally or not, they are being used to manipulate readers.

Each of these reader roles highlights different components of literacy. Luke and Freebody suggest that, while code breaking is a necessary component, i.e. readers need to be able to do it, that alone is not sufficient for readers to develop effective literacy practices. Pauline Gibbons, another Australian, concurs and suggests students need more than code-breaking skills ‘for the successful reading of authentic texts in real social contexts—and the importance of knowing the code does not justify its teaching in contexts devoid of any real meaning’ (Gibbons 2002: 81). Instead, teachers must engage readers in what others call “… “higher-order” or “authentic” literacy practices through “[g]enerous amounts of close, purposeful reading, re-reading, writing, and talking”’ (Schmoker, 2006: 53). In a futures-oriented literacy programme, learning outcomes beyond decoding are key.

Work in Australia, north America, and western Europe has focused on literacy learning through the perspective of Russian researcher Vygotsky’s (1978, 1986) work—a socio-cultural perspective of learning. Learning, it is argued, is the result
of participation with others in external dialogue around goal-directed activity. Gibbons (2002: 10) draws on the metaphor of scaffolding to describe language and literacy learning:

Scaffolding is thus the temporary assistance by which a teacher helps a learner know how to do something, so that the learner will later be able to complete a similar task alone. It is future-oriented: as Vygotsky has said, what a child can do with support today, she or he can do alone tomorrow.

For the Pacific, scaffolding holds promise in that it seems to share similar characteristics to learning in oral cultures. At the same time, its ‘apprenticeship’ elements require high levels of teacher knowledge and skills in the language and content being learned.

A futures-oriented literacy situates itself in goal-directed activity or interdisciplinary/integrated projects, not unlike what was described earlier in this chapter as the ‘new work order’. In learning, students are given various textual experiences within a variety of contexts. They learn ways of handling the communicative requirements of specific situations; they work with groups of students of distributed expertise; they collaborate within and between groups; and they engage in team work that includes the social skills to know when and how to lead and to know when and how to listen.

In a futures-oriented literacy programme of effective global literacy practices, four interlocking dimensions of literacy are embedded in project work:

- technical/linguistic forms or code of the language
- social practices of literacy performance
- resources to match culture, context, and content
- critical ways of untangling textual intentions, however explicit or implicit.

We need to ask if these are being practised in Pacific classrooms and in what ways they are appropriate (or not) for Pacific literacy learners.
Project-based learning

Project-based learning is not new. However, a resurgence in integrated learning is taking place, thanks in part to the growing need to attend to language across the curriculum. For example, recent developments in mathematics education highlight the need to teach the ‘register’ or specialised language of mathematics in second language education where support for English learners is needed in all disciplines. It is also thanks to the attention given to the new work order. Various forms of project-based learning can be found around the world. Yet Queensland, Singapore and Nauru are highlighted as exemplars of creating and implementing, albeit at different stages, project-based or ‘rich task’ curricula that embed language and literacy learning in meaningful ways. (For detailed information see Queensland’s New Basics Project at http://education.qld.gov.au/corporate/newbasics/).

Nauru—teachers gather to develop curricular activities and resources linked to community issues and the curriculum framework. Authentic, relevant, rich tasks hold meaning for the communities of Nauru, for their teachers and their students. Curriculum development is hard work—language issues, cultural concerns and content decisions are not an easy mix, and it requires teachers to have ‘deep’ content and language knowledge and pedagogy. A few examples of specific ‘rich’ projects in classrooms from around the world are described briefly below.

American Samoa—a group of students collaborates to document Samoan history using technology, primary and secondary research, archival photos, role-play captured on video, and voiceover to tell a story of Samoa at the turn of the century using DVD.

West coast of Canada—a group of indigenous students collects stories from their elders on the use of English in early colonial days. They share what they have learned and then each writes their own auto-ethnography (e.g. a critical writing back of one’s life experiences or those of family members). Throughout the project they offer process and content support to each other.

Peru—a group of students participates in a service learning project. They teach games to elders in their village and elders teach games to them. The materials are created, games are recorded, and game packages are exchanged. In the same
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project, students collect cultural stories from the elders, record and illustrate them and reproduce them for use with younger children. Students learn how to animate the stories before telling them to the children and elders. Similar rich tasks occur with the ‘games exchange’ between students.

Hawai‘i—a group of students creates art as participants in a programme called Image-to-word. With their teacher facilitating, they create images important to them and these are then written about in preparation for display and discussion in local hospices/hospitals. The students meet with the patients to discuss the artwork and ideas.

What is important to note here is that there is a shift happening in language education, from language as a subject of study to language as subject and medium of learning, (various approaches include language and content, content-based language learning, sheltered instruction). Project-based learning capitalises on this interest in language across the curriculum, as language, content, process and product outcomes help structure these integrated activities. Project-based learning reminds us that all teachers are language and content teachers. It encourages us to step away from the segregated acts of discipline learning that we have been engaged in for a long time and think more holistically about learning.

Approaching learning through project-based tasks places living and learning (in) literacy at the centre of student work. As students engage in holistic learning, they are encouraged to use literacy practices in multiple and contextually appropriate ways, recognising the interdependency and interconnectedness of texts for communication within the community and beyond. Within this milieu, encoding and decoding print are part of the learning activities, not ends in themselves. In such communicative exchanges, multi-modality challenges the status quo, and print literacy becomes one of many ways to communicate, as illustrated in the examples from Samoa and Hawai‘i. By inviting students to be responsive to the generosity of multi-literacies, we must take responsibility to call into question ways we ask students to demonstrate their learning. Multiple choice testing contradicts the very notion of project-based learning. Ministries and classroom teachers must re-think assessment practices, seeking new and innovative ways that value different ways of knowing.
Rich tasks are taking hold in Queensland, Singapore and Nauru. Pockets of project-based learning happen at teachers’ will worldwide. Those involved believe education framed in this way prepares their students for the new work order globally. In the Pacific, does this holistic approach to learning have the potential to prepare students for a productive life both locally and globally?

**Learning in more than one language**

Language and content approaches in Finland, Canada, the UK, New Zealand, the USA and now the Philippines are concerned with how knowledge gets structured, that is, how scientists classify and describe, how mathematicians conjecture and problem-solve, how value statements and time/order sequencing gets done. They approach curricular work by asking what the language demands of the curriculum are. For example, a grade four class is learning about ants—they observe them every day as they travel in familiar patterns across the classroom. These English learners draw what they see and then write their words next to the images, making conjectures about the predictability of the patterns of movement. In asking students to observe, draw and communicate, teachers not only need to recognise what language resources are required but be prepared to support and extend those resources as part of the learning.

A student may benefit from communicating in his/her first language, learning from the teacher the commonalities and differences between the first language and English so that appropriate structures and vocabulary in both languages can be strengthened (Hornberger, 2003). Using this approach, the teacher skilfully uses both languages to reinforce conceptual understanding, and linguistic and multi-modal competencies. This is another reminder that teachers in all disciplines should be able to address the specialised linguistic and academic needs of diverse learners and disciplines.

In the USA, August & Shanahan’s (2006) *Developing literacy in second-language learners: report of the national literacy panel on language-minority children and youth* highlights a number of research-based findings:

- English learners benefit from the same explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and text comprehension that native speakers need
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- oral proficiency is of critical importance to literacy development for English learners
- first language proficiency (oral and print) facilitates English literacy learning
- current assessments do not adequately determine English learners’ literacy strengths and needs
- language experiences at home impact English literacy learning at school, but little research is available on the role of other sociocultural variables in literacy achievement.

For Pacific contexts and cultures, the role of oral proficiency in both the first language and English is reassuring. Storytelling and other oral communicative practices predominate in local communities. The research findings above strongly suggest that these practices must be embedded in meaningful learning experiences in classrooms (e.g. retelling, reader’s theatre, slam poetry, oral presentations). Teachers are encouraged to integrate rich oral language tasks within the curriculum, recognising the value of oral proficiency in and of itself, as well as its impact on English literacy development.

Recent developments in the USA have also capitalised on research in sheltered instruction (providing explicit language support in content areas) and comprehension for English learners. Two professional development models around English learners are taking hold. One, the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (http://www.siopinstitute.net/), highlights, among other things, the importance of language objectives in the content classroom. The other, Expediting Reading Comprehension for English Language Learners, addresses language across the curriculum with an emphasis on vocabulary and comprehension strategies and advocates for the formation of teacher learning communities at school sites (Calderón & Minaya-Rowe, in press).

Project-based learning and learning in more than one language help us re-think traditional teaching and assessment practices, encouraging us to draw on alternative ways that value the complexity that diverse learners bring to the classroom. As educators interested in futures-oriented literacy education, we must build on this diversity and difference, involving students in authentic problem-posing and problem-solving activities that extend intellectual and literacy engagement and are meaningful to them and their communities.
Travel note: *Journeys through global language and literacy practices in new times bring me to the Pacific, to islands where the local and global have already met. Outside of school, I experience pockets of community/communication where the local and the foreign enmesh to combine and interact in new practices that hold a vitality all their own—where the untranslatable refuses translation, where new possibilities of expression materialise. The borders of local and global languages and literacies are (e)merging—full of the vibrancy and life found within multiple and complex border crossings. These are the experiences students bring to school—already a ‘blending’ of the local and global—already at work in renewal and regeneration of living (in) languages and literacies.*

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2

Between two worlds:

taking control of our destiny through relevant literacy

Lise Taufaga

Introduction

This chapter is an attempt to evaluate literacy learning in the Pacific, identify shortfalls in the system and offer possible alternatives that will enable Pacific Islanders to be competently operational in two worlds: the global and the local. The chapter begins with a rationale for the title, a brief on the role of re-thinking initiatives, followed by a historical account of the introduction of literacy learning in the Pacific. Current practices in literacy pedagogy are then discussed, focussing on the use of vernacular languages in literacy learning. Areas of difficulty in literacy learning are related to differences between classroom practice and home cultures. Finally, the chapter offers some possible pathways Pacific educators may follow for the formulation of a relevant literacy curriculum and pedagogy for the Pacific learner.
The title *Between two worlds* encapsulates what is at the heart of most Pacific Islanders’ aspirations for their children. They want their children to experience the best of two worlds: the high-tech cultures of the western world and the culture and tradition of their Pacific world that distinguish them from the rest of the world. Culture in this context embraces everything that distinguishes us as a people: our languages, histories, epistemologies, myths, legends, dances, art forms, artifacts, world views, histories, values and skills. Thaman (1998 cited in Taufe‘ulungaki 2003:17) expresses it thus:

>culture is a] shared way of life of a group of people, which includes their accumulated knowledge and understandings, skills and values as expressed and constructed in their language, which is perceived by them to be unique and meaningful.

The realisation of our uniqueness as a people should ignite our determination to uphold our indigenous identity. To ensure this happens, Pacific languages need to be maintained. Many Pacific languages have few speakers and are at risk of dying out. If the 9,727 (1996 Fiji Census) indigenous Rotumans, for example, do not speak and maintain the use of their language, then the mat on which they sit will be pulled from under them, for language is intrinsically interwoven with culture. The Rotuman language may slip into oblivion, for no other group of people in the worlds speak it. Curriculum writers, as powerful determinants of literacy curricula in Pacific schools need to reflect on what it means to be small in a big world (Crocombe, 2001: 628). If we value and treasure our roots and identity, we must prioritise their maintenance, and language is central to this.

The second part of the title, *Taking control of our destiny through relevant literacy*, reflects the re-thinking initiatives spearheaded by the Institute of Education at the University of the South Pacific (USP). These initiatives include realigning aspects of our education system in order to integrate our values, our beliefs about knowledge, the way we think, the way we relate to each other and the way we assess and evaluate learning in the formal education system. We cannot stop globalisation, but we can make literacy learning meaningful and relevant to the learner by considering the learner in totality in order to offer a commodity that
empowers learners to lead a productive adult life within their own communities. We need to determine what is relevant literacy to the learner in rural Solomon Islands or the learner in Kiribati, who will need to use literacy to survive in the twenty-first century while remaining on his/her native island. How can classroom learning recognise the needs of Pacific children and make learning feasible, relevant and enjoyable?

**Pacific re-thinking initiatives**

Emmitt, Pollock and Kommesaroff (2003:14) describe the sentiments of the re-thinking initiatives thus:

The more one engages in conscious action to understand and transform the world—one’s reality—through the interplay between reflection and action, the more fully human we become, that is, we have greater control over our destinies. If we accept the world as set by others we allow ourselves to become dehumanised—an object shaped and made by others rather than expressing our uniquely human potential to be involved actively in creating what we become. As human beings our shared vocation is to become active individual subjects engaged on an equal basis with others in the process of creating (or naming) the world. We should create history and culture rather than exist merely as passive objects accepting reality and the world as ready-made by other people. In creating history and culture we create our own beings in the process. This is the great challenge for literacy education.

The social constructivist philosophy of learning which underpins current pedagogical practice regards self-reflection as crucial to effective pedagogy. Self-reflection is internal questioning, a re-examination of the current which bears elements of the past and determines the immediate and distant future. It entails an attitude of critical evaluation and an internal dialogue in search of answers to pertinent questions. In this case, the pertinent questions relate to literacy and numeracy. Literacy teachers could ask: Literacy for what? Why do I teach literacy and why do I teach the way I do? Has my practice had a positive impact on most of my learners, has it met their expectations, fulfilled their aspirations in life or enhanced the quality of life? If my answers are mostly negative, where have I
gone wrong? Where are the gaps in the teaching and learning process? If I have made some headway, what are the contributing factors? These are the questions we should be asking frequently, for they form the underpinning principles of our work as literacy educators—they form the philosophy of our practice. However, my guess is we are so consumed with the perpetual cycle of planning, implementation and assessment that we are unable to see the wood for the trees.

It is imperative that as indigenes of the Pacific, we take up the call to create our world rather than allow others to create it for us. For too long Pacific learners have been coerced into learning practices congruent with their ways of learning and knowing, one of the reasons being the sanctity of conventional schooling (Holdaway, 1979). It is time to liberate Pacific learners.

**A brief history of literacy in the Pacific**

Literacy was introduced some 170 years ago in the eastern part of the Pacific which includes Tonga, Fiji and Samoa, and about 120 years ago in the western Pacific. It was brought to the shores of the Pacific in the early seventeenth century to a people who, for centuries, had survived on an oral culture and tradition. It was introduced by missionaries for evangelistic purposes. In many cases, the missionaries learnt the local language of the people they sought to evangelise. Orthographic systems were subsequently devised in order to translate the Bible into local languages. Literacy was introduced firstly in the mother tongue of the indigenous people to enable them to read the Bible. In the case of Fiji, the first missionaries came from the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Tonga, where literacy had been introduced earlier.

In Fiji, the Catholic mission was established a decade after the Wesleyan Church, and both took an active part in education. While the Wesleyans emphasised the use of Fijian as the medium of instruction in schools, Catholic schools insisted on the use of English as the medium of instruction. This was also convenient in multiracial schools once the indentured labourers from India opted to stay after their contract under the indentured system ceased in 1920. In the 1930s the churches slowly handed over their role as the primary providers of education to the government. The policy initiated by the government required the use of the vernacular, either Fijian or Hindustani, as the medium of instruction in the first
three years of schooling and English took over thereafter. This policy still exists: ‘In Fiji, since the 1926 Review of Education that established the main language policy—the practice of instruction in the mother tongue in the first three years of primary school, and thereafter English replacing the first language—there has not been a major shift in language policy’ (GoF, 2000:290).

Literacy education in the language and learning styles of the coloniser gradually gained prominence. In the case of Vanuatu, New Caledonia and Tahiti, French literacy was introduced. Countries which were colonised by the USA and British featured English as perhaps the most important subject in the curriculum.

This trend has continued until today, especially where English as a second language is concerned. For those island nations where English is the language of education, business and official communication, a pass in English in public examinations is mandatory for promotion and scholarships. This presented a new set of challenges for a people who had lived in an oral culture for hundreds of years.

While literacy use in Fiji at its initial introduction was mainly used for reading the Bible in the Fijian language, writing was used for recording monetary contributions for religious purposes and a few other related matters. The following paragraph taken from Mangubhai (1995: 15) indicates that there was less emphasis on writing:

> Clammer (1976: 164) cites from the report of a commission appointed to investigate certain alleged errors in the 1880 census of the population: ‘We remember them (births and deaths), some of us by writing, but others do not write them down’. And a quote from a scribe who kept a record of births and deaths in books, ‘There are some village teachers that cannot write. Those who cannot write use pieces of reed for the purpose of reckoning up the births and deaths that occur in their villages. They can read, although they cannot write.’

Gradually, competence in writing improved but it was never able to match the competence of reading. Writing was more or less confined to the classroom as its functional use outside was limited. Reading, on the other hand, was for educational
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and religious purposes. Later, writing was used for other purposes such as keeping in touch with relatives who had migrated or gone to seek employment overseas. In the last fifty years or so, reading and writing have been used extensively for a variety of purposes which include education, commerce, government, judicial proceedings, entertainment, and almost all facets of daily life, especially in urban areas. With the introduction of high-speed technology, new forms of multi modal texts have expanded the scope of both reading and writing.

The Pacific community in general regards English as the most important subject in the school curriculum. Most scholarship donors and higher learning institutions require evidence of reasonable proficiency in English (in the form of marks in national examinations). This is the immediate advantage of learning English from the perspective of the community, and this puts pressure on the education planners to prioritise English literacy teaching. Unfortunately this happens at the expense of vernacular literacy.

Current practice in literacy pedagogy in the Pacific

What happens in a language classroom is a reflection of a wider societal web that impacts children’s lives. In discussing literacy pedagogy, it would be preposterous to exclude these intimate connections. A range of societal institutions, such as government and business, as well as a dominant set of ideas or ideologies, such as culture, gender and economic development, may determine what we teach and the way we teach it.

In 2005 the Institute of Education at the University of the South Pacific was commissioned to carry out a study to determine whether the values, attitudes, skills and knowledge currently espoused and expressed in policy documents of the Cook Islands Ministry of Education are actively implemented in the field. After extensive field research it was reported that, while there are several key principles that the Ministry of Education (MoE), parents and principals are in agreement over, there are discrepancies and contradictions when these principles are transferred to the field. Interesting to note was the discrepancy between the MoE’s stated value on culture and language as a basis for learning and how this was transferred to the classroom and the community. Respondents from the
schools revealed that there is lack of systematic support for Maori education from the Ministry. Only 55 per cent of Cook Island students in the study could speak Maori well. The study also showed that there is a low literacy and numeracy rate for both Maori and English. Responses from parents indicate that, despite the Ministry’s stated claim to value culture and language, there is no direct transfer to active student participation (Fua, 2005).

While only one Pacific Island country (PIC) was studied (the Cook Islands), it is likely that the situation is in some way similar for other Pacific countries. While most official policy documents prescribe the use of the mother tongue in the first three years, actual practice sometimes differs. While the reasons for the mismatch may not have been studied extensively in the Pacific context, there are some possible explanations. One is the ‘language ecology’ of the Pacific Island nations. Many countries are multi-lingual and teachers have children speaking different languages under one roof. In Fiji, the teacher usually uses English in this situation, so learners have almost zero competence in the language of instruction at the beginning of formal schooling.

Another reason is due to a general misconception that proficiency in English is improved when the learning of English starts as early as possible. Despite the fact that research has shown that the amount of time spent on first language development is more beneficial to second language proficiency than time spent on second language development (Cummins 1981), literacy in the mother tongue is often regarded as unnecessary for second language learning. Many school principals, teachers and parents usher in English as early as kindergarten and, in doing so, marginalise vernacular literacy. Literacy learning in English is prioritised because it is seen as instrumental in the attainment of academic access.

There is ample evidence that literacy in the mother tongue provides an effective foundation for second language literacy (Taufe‘ulungaki, 2003:15). One such piece of evidence is the study of 17,000 British children learning French in a school context. The study revealed that, after five years of exposure, children who had begun instruction at age 11 performed better on tests of second language proficiency than children who had begun at eight years of age (Dutcher & Tucker, 1994).
The other major justification, and possibly of greater importance, for a good literacy foundation in the mother tongue is cultural identity. Language exists only when its users exist. These users create the code used in communication, and language is always used in relationships. Our values and worldviews are reflected in the kind of language we use. For example, we generally identify ourselves first in terms of our relationship with our kin. In some parts of Fiji, adults who have children and grandchildren are rarely addressed by their first name; as a sign of respect they are referred to as, for example, father of his first born’s name, grandmother of the first grandchild’s name, etc.

Another reason for vernacular languages being marginalised is the public examination system which continues to drive what happens in the classroom. For example, despite studies indicating its benefits, physical education, according to Wright, McNeil and Schempp (2005, cited in Dorovolomo, 2006) ‘carries a stigma of inferiority as it does not match the perceived academic significance of other examination subjects’. Culture and vernacular languages may also carry the same stigma in our school systems.

Furthermore, teachers’ credibility and calibre are measured by students’ public examination marks. This puts pressure on teachers to focus on exams, often at the expense of non-examinable subjects such as vernacular languages. So, while a language policy prescribing vernacular language learning may be in the language curriculum document, some teachers ignore curriculum documents and teach only what is tested in examinations.

In some cases, the transfer of policies from one policy document to another is inconsistent. For example, while the policy appears in the nation’s strategic plan, it is missing from the curriculum document used by teachers. They are therefore ignorant of the fact that they are required to teach (in) the vernacular to certain classes.

**The need for a change from autonomous to ideological**

Where literacy is taught in the vernacular of the children, there needs to be a change in the way education planners, and hence teachers, regard literacy learning. Until the 1970s, it was regarded as the learning of a discrete set of skills such as
comprehension, word attack and word recognition skills. This is an autonomous notion of literacy learning—neutral and universal. The last twenty years have seen a shift to the socio-cultural or ideological perspective: a culturally sensitive view where literacy is rooted within cultural practices and concepts of knowledge, identity and being.

Relevant literacy learning and teaching for the twenty-first century, where both the ideological concept and the new literacies should be fostered, cannot be developed in a classroom where the autonomous concept of literacy is still the norm and discrete skills are still tested in examinations. While some policy documents (e.g. the *Cook Islands Curriculum Framework*, Cook Islands Ministry of Education, 2002) are based on an ideological concept and may even state that all teachers are teachers of numeracy and literacy, actual practice is still skill-based or autonomously perceived and compartmentalised.

The changing notions of literacy have brought about changes in teaching approaches. Lankshear (1997) labels the three stages on the continuum of literacy teaching and learning as (i) traditional (skills-based, phonic based) (ii) progressive (whole language, process writing) (iii) post-progressive (genre-based, critical language awareness, multiliteracies). Where on the continuum is Pacific literacy pedagogy now? I believe we are still in the traditional, autonomous stage, although there have been a few attempts at introducing some ideological post-progressive approaches in certain quarters.

A possible explanation for adherence to the autonomous approach is that in most of the small and struggling economies in PICs, learning resources such as teaching aids, computers, classroom space, library facilities and reading books are scarce or non-existent. Furthermore, the teacher:pupil ratio can easily be 1:45 or worse in urban localities. Teachers who may have undergone in-service training in USP towards a Bachelor in Education, and have changed from an autonomous to an ideological and multi literacies view as a result of their studies, may find themselves reverting to the use of skill-based teaching once they are back in the classroom, due to overcrowded classrooms, lack of facilities and other systems-related factors, such as national examinations and ignorant school administrators.
A comparison between current school practice and indigenous cultural practice

The most recent indigenous perspective in literacy learning and teaching is the emphasis on Pacific ways of learning and Pacific values. This is the move to make schooling in the Pacific more relevant and effective for Pacific students. For the last 170 years or so, Pacific schooling has been heavily influenced by western approaches and this has been identified as causing the loss of culture and identity (Pene, Taufeʻulungaki and Benson, 2002; Thaman, 2003), and also poor learning outcomes (Puamau, 2005).

The ideological concept of literacy learning as a cultural practice calls not only for literacy learning to be done in the vernacular, but also for recognition of Pacific learning styles and the identification and inclusion of Pacific knowledges and ways of knowing into formal schooling. While some argue that to compact all of the seven million people in the Pacific islands, including Hawaiʻi, West Papua and New Zealand, under the one label of Pacific culture is too simplistic, recent studies point to more similarities than differences across the indigenous cultures of Pacific Island nations.

Taufeʻulungaki summarises some differences between school practice and Pacific cultures which can give rise to misunderstandings and communication gaps between classroom teachers and Pacific students. One such difference concerns beliefs about knowledge; in school practice knowledge is ‘validated through tests’ and is an ‘open system with change being a key value’, while among Solomon Islanders knowledge is ‘validated by external sources such as ancestors and dreams’ (Taufeʻulungaki, 2003:21). In other words, one does not create knowledge; it is handed down. When Solomon Island students come to USP, they are prepared to passively take in what the lecturer and other knowledge sources (e.g. books) offer them. However, active knowledge construction is expected at USP, and these students do not know how to do it; nor do they feel comfortable about doing it. This problem is compounded by the fact that most of them are learning in a second language. It is my belief that they cannot maximise their learning unless the mismatch is consciously addressed by both students and lecturers.
We need to devise ways to build bridges in order to help Pacific students ease into the world of academia without alienating them from their culture, so that they can straddle back and forth between the two worlds when circumstances demand. This paper therefore concludes with some basic steps educationists, including curriculum writers, may take to begin to build these bridges.

We need to shift the paradigm of literacy teaching and learning away from an exam-oriented enterprise to one that addresses the needs of the learner who will live in the multiple contexts of Pacific reality. This is possible if curriculum developers are convinced that our culture and tradition are worth preserving and treasuring. They must also be sensitive to the needs of the people they serve. For example, if oral communication is still the main avenue of communication in the Pacific, why are we paying only lip service to oral language development in most classrooms? The most obvious reason is that oral language is not tested in national examinations. We must constantly remind ourselves that it is imperative to assess what is worthwhile, not what is convenient for administration purposes.

Secondly, we need to move from a strictly autonomous concept of literacy and literacy learning to an ideological one, with due consideration to what the learner brings to the learning act, which includes his/her culture and values. Models of literacy used in the Pacific, but originally culled from outside, impose a set of philosophies from their source onto Pacific cultures (See Chapter 1). It is these we must replace with Pacific philosophies. We need to create in our people a sense of ownership of literacy learning which entails researching, documenting and using their Pacific epistemologies, knowledge production, cultural practices and languages in the formal education system. In the 1980s, Papua New Guinea set up some successful vernacular literacy initiatives where the community and local teachers were responsible for the development of the curriculum, resourcing and teaching literacy skills using the mother tongue in the first three years of education. This example should inspire other PICs to attempt something similar.

Further, curriculum developers and teachers must be fully aware of the role of the mother tongue in literacy learning and cultural preservation. Thaman (2003: 78)
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states that: ‘if we delay or fail in our task we will continue to witness the erosion and/or disappearance of the worthwhile knowledge, skills and values that define us as a people, as well as help us to survive in a rapidly changing world, morally bankrupt and environmentally unsustainable world’.

Curriculum writers and teachers must also be at the forefront of policy formulation and implementation. We cannot be on the sideline and allow others to decide how our ball game is going to be played. Unless we make a move to be more informed about our supposed area of expertise, we will play this game from the sideline at the expense of our own identity and being.

Finally, what is urgently needed is the political and personal will and commitment to take up the challenge. I respectfully urge curriculum developers to learn as much as possible from each other and work with a sense of urgency to make a difference in literacy education.

References


Taufaga – Between two worlds: control through relevant literacy


3

Access to language: a question of equity for all children

Upokoina Herrmann

At the outset, it is essential to define important concepts that relate to this paper. Access refers to all children having the opportunity to learn literacy in the languages they need in order to be successful in school and in life. Being successful embraces having the literacy, numeracy, cultural and life skills that form the basis of good citizenship and enable people to participate positively in society.

It is essential for Pacific children and people to be literate. However, it is critical that they first become literate in their own language before acquiring literacy in a global language such as English or French. The linguistic diversity of the Pacific region and the challenges confronting countries of greater linguistic and cultural diversity in making choices of models of bi-lingualism, bi-literacy and, in some cases, multi-lingualism and multi-literacy are manifold. For example, there are more than 65 languages in Solomon Islands, more than one hundred in Vanuatu,

1. The members of the group who contributed to the ideas in this chapter include Kasa Kilion, Tonga; Pearl Dageago, Nauru; Maria Fonmanu, Fiji, and Upokoina Herrmann, Cook Islands.
and more than eight hundred in Papua New Guinea. In other regions of the
Pacific the diversity is not quite as great; Polynesian countries are monolingual
with some dialects and in Micronesia there are fewer languages.

With the accent on globalisation and the technological age, Pacific countries must
consider multi-lingualism and multi-literacies. In addition, people with special
needs must be considered; access to language and literacy(ies) for people who
are deaf and mute means competency in sign language. For children in remote
islands of the Pacific it means equity of access and opportunity. A quick scan
of the region reflects many models of language immersion, ranging from total
immersion to two-way immersion, and including an increasing commitment to
people who are disadvantaged in one way or another. The success stories of these
models vary from country to country.

Low (see Chapter 1) refers to literacies in ‘new times’. Similarly, Luke (2005) in
reconceptualising pedagogy, learning and teacher education, refers to ‘new times’.
The term, teachers for ‘all times’ features in this paper. In both instances the
reference to new times is about being literate in the technological age and the new
knowledge economy. The term teachers for ‘all times’ is inclusive of teachers for
‘new times’. Within Pacific realities, it is imperative that Pacific visions for education
are not dictated or driven by the high-tech economy of the global world. Teachers
for ‘all times’ are teachers who are historically, linguistically and culturally grounded
and articulate in terms of time, place and people, as well as attuned to the linguistic
and cultural contexts of the global world. Within the context of the Pacific, this
term means teachers who are equally sensitive to the local and global configurations
of a people in time and place. Too often, Pacific people’s perception of education,
language and literacy is of catching up with the west or with modernisation and
technology, rather than beginning with the core realities of Pacific communities.
Teachers for ‘all times’ should be able to teach and facilitate learning for all times,
places and settings of yesterday, today and tomorrow.

The vision

The vision is to provide all children with the opportunity to be literate in their
own language, English and/or other languages. In other words, for all children
to be competent and function effectively as bilingual and biliterate, (and in some cases multilingual and multi-literate), citizens of their own country.

This vision statement acknowledges the linguistic and cultural diversity of the Pacific region and advocates that the decision for language and literacy paradigms will be determined by each country within their own cultural, social, economic and political contexts and realities, and within their capacity to think critically and strategically.

The importance of the vernacular as the medium of instruction cannot be emphasised enough, and it is well supported by research findings that indicate children require at least 12 years to learn their first language, which takes them up to Class 6 and 7 (Taufe‘ulgaki, 2004).

**The metaphor**

The canoe is an apt metaphor for Pacific peoples’ education. The canoe in motion signifies a journey of lifelong learning created and recreated by the navigators themselves. It is symbolic of Pacific indigeneity in an ocean of island nations and globalisation, and it embodies Pacific worldviews, epistemologies, philosophies, languages, cultures and connectedness with nature: the sea, the land, and the cosmos. More importantly, this canoe has endured, and will continue to endure waves of globalisation as manifested in colonisation, Christianisation, modernisation, and the technological onslaught.

The journey is one of revitalising and reaffirming, of redefining and reconstructing Pacific identities and pride as a people firmly anchored in Pacific uniqueness and riding the waves of modernisation, or globalisation at its own pace. The resilience and tenacity of the canoe in this sea of change is in its construction (indigeneity) and reconstruction (fusion of indigeneity and globalisation).

**Challenges and the next steps**

The key challenges identified are typical of all countries of the Pacific with recognisable contextual variance and realities, namely languages (national
policy, language policy and practice), teacher education, community education, curriculum, resources, isolation and access, the lack of willpower and the myths and misconceptions about languages.

Recent impetus in education reforms throughout the region reflect the determination of Pacific educators to recreate and reconstruct Pacific models of education that are unique; models of education that are firmly rooted in Pacific languages and cultures, yet equally responsive to global languages and cultures. Education reform initiatives are well articulated by Pacific scholars, educators and researchers, such as Thaman, Taufe‘ulungaki, Puamau, Fua, Sanga and others. Centre stage, as evidenced in the recent PRIDE Project and other Institute of Education (University of the South Pacific) initiatives, is a push for Pacific people to re-think, reconstruct and recreate destinations for Pacific people. Teasdale, Tokai and Puamau (2004) noted profound shifts in perspectives on education: the shift in power from teacher to learner, the shift from acquisition of knowledge to learning how to learn, and the shift from education as preparation for the world of work to education as a holistic process of lifelong learning.

**Language policy and practice**

A major stumbling block to achieving access to language and subsequently to literacy, firstly in the vernacular and secondly in the global language, is the disparity between policies and practice both in formal and non-formal settings. In Nauru, for example, the vernacular does not feature in the education of children; English is the language of instruction at school. In the Cook Islands, the vernacular was only recently declared (July 2003) an official language; previously English was the official language. One does not need to dig too deeply to realise the status of the vernacular, and the resultant mindsets entrenched in the mentality of the people of Nauru and the Cook Islands. The formation of a language policy is a new phenomenon in Fiji. In contrast, the Tongan vernacular is the national language, spoken by almost the entire population of Tonga. It is also the medium of instruction for all or part of primary education, and is taught as a subject, not only at primary, but also at secondary level. English is the other official language. General trends in national policy, language policy and language practice in the Pacific region are well documented by Taufe‘ulungaki (2004).
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The disparity in national policy, language policy and language practice is compounded by a string of fundamental and interrelated factors. At the regional level, the ongoing discourse amongst Pacific educators and researchers is challenging countries to re-think and re-conceptualise education for the people of the Pacific. After more than three decades of self-determination and formal schooling, why is it that a high proportion of Pacific children and people have remained illiterate and are struggling to ride the waves of globalisation with a strong sense of purpose, confidence and success?

At the regional and national levels, education policy and the language debate must cease to be mere rhetoric. It should also be noted that most, if not all, national and education policies are written in English. Governments of the region must re-think their country’s vision for education, commit to the course, and lead by example if the populations of Pacific countries are to be literate and successful across local and global boundaries. All government ministries, the private sector, communities, individually and collectively, must engage in the promotion of literacy, firstly, in the vernacular and then the global language(s). A case in point is Samoa, where the government is fully committed to its language initiatives. Tonga is another example, where the vernacular is the primary language. In PNG, the government took a brave stance and advocated the use of the vernacular as the medium of instruction for the first six years of basic education, and community support is behind this drive.

Teacher education

At the school level, teachers’ implementation of the language policy is far from consistent. Many teachers are still opting to teach in English rather than the vernacular, code-switching is prevalent and teachers are still entrenched in a colonial mindset and are increasingly cultivating a dependency mentality.

The question of teacher quality for ‘all times’, incorporating the local, global and high-technology, is a force to be recognised. In re-thinking teacher education in the Pacific, teacher educators must redefine paradigms of learning and teaching within Pacific contexts. At the same time they must also take cognisance of global languages and cultures in order to reconstruct a ‘Pacific child’ who is uniquely Pacific, but able to transcend local and global settings with competence and
optimism. Teachers for ‘all times’ are highly effective because they are highly
motivated, inspirational, reflective and critical thinkers. They are linguistically
and culturally competent, literate (bi-literate/tri-literate/multi-literate), interactive,
decisive, flexible and committed to the reconstruction of this ‘Pacific child’ within
the contexts of the Pacific Ocean and beyond. Teachers for ‘all times’ will ensure
that policy is transformed into action and access, so success for all students is
assured. The greatest challenge is the cultivation of teachers for ‘all times’. In
speaking of bilingual teachers, Troike and Saville-Troike maintain that the training
of all bilingual teachers will require training in four key skills in both languages:
language proficiency, linguistic knowledge, cultural knowledge and pedagogical
competencies (cited in Taufe’ulungaki, 2004: 20). The key to this challenge lies
with each individual country in the reconstruction of training models that resonate
with both the local and global environments.

Research

As a region, the Pacific can reconstruct models of teacher education programmes,
pedagogy and other forms of capacity-building to suit both the local and the
global community. Associated with this reconstruction is the need for Pacific
research by Pacific people, because the reconstruction of the Pacific child and
teachers for ‘all times’ can only be closer to being ‘right’ if it is firmly grounded
in Pacific research.

To this end, teacher-training programmes should have research as a compulsory
component. The recent establishment in 2003 of the Pacific Education and
Research Foundation is confirmation of the conviction of Pacific leaders in
education and research to grow and nurture the seeds of research that have already
begun. The University of the South Pacific (USP), in association with other
regional institutions, should take the lead in reconstructing research frameworks
to inform Pacific research. The initiatives in Tonga and the Cook Islands are two
recent examples.

The Tonga research initiative’s key focus is on emerging themes and methodologies
from education research in Tonga (Maka, Fua & Pene, 2006) and it involves
critical discourse of education in Tonga by Tongan educators. The findings of
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the research provide invaluable insight into the reality of Tongan classrooms and the recommendations presented will contribute to better education for Tongan children. In the Cook Islands, on the other hand, The Values Evaluation Study (Fua, 2005) identified three key findings: limited support for Maori Studies impacts on literacy in both Maori and English, curriculum continues to be academically inclined, and student motivation is low.

Community

The community in its totality has untapped potential. Generations of people, those who have come before and those who will come after, are potential custodians, creators, motivators and innovators of the use of local languages and cultures, and their wisdom will inform the journey into the future. The community is the canoe that we speak of, unified in its mission of a journey towards various destinations of its own creation. To capitalise on this untapped potential, the community must be an interactive participant and an integral part of the process of education and the thrust towards literate communities. Initiatives in various countries of the Pacific are indicative of the power of communities as effective agents of education reform.

Those countries yet to establish national language commissions must look to Samoa, Tonga and other countries for guidance, inspiration and motivation. National language commissions will ensure that the language grows and that standardisation and codification match the inevitable turbulence of the waves of change. It is critically important that indigenous languages and cultures are valued and celebrated by the community if we are to achieve levels of literacy(ies) for our children and for the country as a whole. This will require constant dialogue and reconstruction of ideas, relationships and models that are deemed workable for each country. Targeted community and education programmes of a reciprocal nature can be delivered from different perspectives, and workable options must be explored. These may consist of community-driven, or school/community-driven initiatives. In this way, the ‘hand, head, heart and soul’ of the canoe and, hence, of the people are strengthened and the synchronising of the best of local and global is assured.
Isolation

The smallness, isolation, remoteness and fragmentation of the countries of the Pacific have often been regarded as a major disadvantage. However, if the people of the Pacific are to reconsider seriously the ‘hand, head, heart and soul’ of the canoe, they would come to realise that within this so called geographical dilemma lies the potential to succeed. The languages and cultures are untouched, rich, vibrant and alive. Reconstructing models of literacy and indigenous knowledges and wisdom within this environment is ideal. Thaman (1995) describes concepts of ako (teaching and learning), ilo (knowledge and understanding) and poto (having a good mind or intelligence). These strongholds of languages and cultures can be transformed into centres of excellence in languages and cultures. Such centres will facilitate programmes that are of Pacific epistemologies, pedagogy and processes, indigenous learning styles, languages and cultures. With this newfound confidence, Pacific people will be energised and the canoe will be alight with fire and pride as it traverses the waves of globalisation. Idealistic, perhaps, but most certainly possible and durable.

Curriculum

The challenge in the area of curriculum is rooted in the previous discussion. To this day, the curriculum in most, if not all, Pacific Island countries continues to be examination-driven, over-crowded, foreign in content, pedagogy, language and culture, and continues to fail the majority of Pacific children. Muralidhar’s (2006) analogy of curricula as ‘overstuffed and undernourished’ illustrates the problems associated with current curricula: learning of answers more than exploration of questions; memory at the expense of critical thought; recitation over debate; reading and copying rather than doing; competition over cooperation; and covering the curricula at the expense of understanding them. Furthermore, Muralidhar’s analogy forces the issue of the reconstruction of curricula that are meaningful and nourished in Pacific languages and cultures. If literacy(ies) is to benefit the people of the Pacific, then literacy in the vernacular is imperative.

Education reforms in curriculum development and implementation around the region are reassessing the very principles acclaimed to emulate quality education.
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These are the principles of access, equity, relevance, efficiency and partnerships. The re-thinking and re-conceptualising initiatives are urging Pacific people to re-affirm and re-discover their indigeneity, their languages and their cultures through the reconstruction of curriculum content and pedagogy, a curriculum that is culturally inclusive of local languages and cultures, and at the same time critical and analytical of what is in store in the global world. One suggestion is to begin at the core of the community and grow outwards, establishing, for example, centres of excellence. That is, redefine the local, reconstruct curricula that are grounded in indigenous values, languages and cultures and then merge in the global. For this process to succeed, each country needs to muster that critical mass of thinkers, educators and practitioners to work alongside the custodians of indigenous languages and cultures.

Parallel to curricula is the challenge of resources, both physical and human. The challenge of human resources has already been mentioned in this paper. Given the linguistic and cultural diversity of the Pacific region, the challenge of producing quality resources, in all forms—print, oral, audio, film—is enormous. Pacific people and their communities are core for indigenous resources. The technology of the global world can be the tool to reconstruct the array of resources to enhance literacy(ies). Schools and communities need to work together to produce the resources.

Myths and misconceptions

The most challenging of all is the deep-seated mindset—the myths and misconceptions—of Pacific people at various levels of society: people in leadership roles, planners, managers, practitioners and people in the community. One misconception is the notion that the language the child brings to school is inferior and deficient and therefore detrimental to their success at school. This must be refuted. Another commonly held notion is that early exposure to English results in academic success, that is, greater exposure equals greater competence and consequently economic and social prosperity. Research has disputed these notions and advocates that the best medium, psychologically, sociologically and educationally for teaching a child, particularly in the early years, is the child’s vernacular language.
The urgency to shift the mindset of Pacific people is reiterated emphatically by Emmit, Pollock and Kommesaroff (2003:14). For too long, Pacific people have existed merely as passive vessels, accepting realities constructed by other people, and in the process have lost not only themselves, but also the very essence, the heart and soul, of their indigeneity and that of future Pacific generations:

As human beings our shared vocation is to become active individual subjects engaged on an equal basis with others in the process of creating (or renaming) the world. We should create history and culture rather than exist as passive objects accepting reality and the world ready made by other people. By creating history and culture we create our own beings in the process. This is the great challenge for literacy education. (Emmit et al. 2003:14).

In a similar vein, and with specific reference to the Tongan context, Manu’atu (2000: 238) emphasised that Pacific people:

[c]annot just be the subjects in the contexts in which they live; rather, they must critically and actively pursue the relationships in these contexts in order to produce and experience malie and mafana.

These shifts in thinking require the ‘conscientising’ process that Freire (1970) speaks of. The Freires of the Pacific are people like Thaman, Taufe‘ulungaki, Puamau and Muralidhar. The conscientising process has begun, but Pacific countries need to generate or cultivate a critical mass of visionary leaders, educators, scholars and researchers to transform Pacific people and take them to the forefront of Pacific consciousness, that reconstruction of the Pacific child. Pacific people must reclaim their ‘ancestral cloaks’ with all the values, knowledge systems and beliefs, and reconstruct their place with confidence, competence and mana (pride and honour) in the local and the global setting. The canoe is that cloak, the Pacific Ocean of islands is that place, and the merging of ‘oceans’ is that point of fusion and testing the resilience and tenacity of Pacific people.
Conclusion

Pacific people must reconstruct their routes and navigate their canoes towards destinies of their own creation. The ‘wave’ of literacy is urging Pacific people to look into their ‘hands, heads, hearts and souls’, their ‘ocean of islands’ to begin the reconstruction process. It is time to recognise the challenges that are confronting Pacific people and the impact of global forces. Pacific people must step outside the system, outside colonial dependency and recreate a future that will take them to the great depths and widths of the Pacific Ocean and beyond. Only when this happens can Pacific people say that our children and people have equal access to literacy(ies).

Delors’ (1996) four pillars of learning; learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be, need to be transformed into a Pacific paradigm of education and literacy(ies). Pacific people must believe in their capacity to reconstruct literacy(ies) paradigms for Pacific people. Pacific people must take up the mantle of challenges discussed in this paper and set alight the canoes with optimism for this generation and for future generations—Pacific people have to do it themselves; no one else will or can.

References


The title of this chapter, and therefore the content, is open to many different definitions or interpretations. For example, how does one define quality, who decides what quality is in any given situation and, just as importantly, how does one judge whether ‘quality’ learning has been achieved, or is being delivered? Some education authorities consider that a high pass rate in yearly examinations is an indication of quality education, whereas others have benchmarks at clearly defined points throughout the education cycle. Should quality of learning be judged by its constituent parts—the quality of the teaching based on the qualifications of the teachers, the standard of classroom resources, the school facilities, the number of students who pass examinations—or the sum of the parts? One year of teacher training may be an acceptable standard in one country, but another country may require two or three years of training. Parents in rural areas may have different expectations from those in urban areas. The definition of ‘quality’ is very subjective and often governed by prevailing circumstances.
Much has been written elsewhere in this book about the imposition of foreign curricula, values and systems of learning in Pacific Island countries (PICs) and the perceived poor quality of learning being, in part, caused by this. However, it could be argued that the poor quality of learning is due to education authorities allowing curricula and teaching practices to stagnate.

Traditionally, learning in PICs took place in the community in which a child lived. With the advent of colonisation both what was learned and where that learning took place changed dramatically—a purpose-built structure to be attended daily with learning divided up into subject areas wrapped in neat parcels of time. There is now an almost universal acceptance that this is the most efficacious type of formal learning and children are subjected to it the world over, although that is not to say other types of learning do not take place in a child’s home environment.

Having established that for children, at least in the primary years, the accepted mode of learning is to attend school, surely it behoves those responsible that the quality of teaching and learning be relevant to the learners and of such a standard that allows the learners to fulfil their potential. Similarly, since the children are to be confined to a school environment, is it not important that the physical environment be to a certain standard? This chapter discusses how to create the most effective conditions to achieve quality of learning, particularly in languages and literacies, in Pacific Island schools.

**Factors affecting the quality of learning (in) languages and literacies**

The framework reproduced in Figure 1 on the next page broadens the opening remarks of this chapter and reflects enabling inputs which are internationally recognised as contributing to any discussion of quality of education.

Due to space constraints, this chapter can provide only a limited discussion on teaching and learning, curriculum materials, physical infrastructure, and human resources with the adherent challenges prevailing in PICs.
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Figure 1 A framework for understanding education quality

Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2005:26
Physical infrastructure and facilities

Many primary schools in PICs reportedly have overcrowded classrooms, limited toilet facilities, often no electricity or running water, no quiet reading corners, no library and broken or insufficient desks and chairs. Certainly very few have computers or adequate science equipment.

The economic status of the state contributes to, or detracts from, effective conditions for learning. In most western countries the state pays for the provision and upkeep of public schools, as well as teachers’ salaries and curriculum resources. These are financed through taxation, so parents are in a position to demand at least an adequate learning environment for their children. This is not the case in many PICs, where only a small percentage of the costs emanate from government through the ministry of education. Schools must meet the costs of physical structures and maintenance, as well as, in many cases, a percentage of teachers’ salaries. In other words, parents must subsidise the costs.

The formal employment sector is limited in the Pacific, so governments are not in a position to collect enough taxes to pay for all costs associated with the education system, as well as provide for other essential services, such as a health system. What are the choices then? Tolerate run-down buildings and inadequate classroom space, or impose a capital fee which increases the financial burden on parents to the extent they withdraw their children from school, as has happened in many less developed countries around the world? Neither is acceptable. However, without a massive injection of capital, either from government or aid agencies, the physical condition of many Pacific Island schools is likely to remain unchanged for some time. Nevertheless, one should aspire to providing the best physical environment possible for learning, even if it is not the highest priority, particularly where financial resources are limited.

Curriculum resources

In recent years the notion of literacy has changed ‘from viewing literacy as a simple process of acquiring basic cognitive skills, to using these skills in ways that contribute to socio-economic development, to developing the capacity for social
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awareness and critical reflection as a basis for personal and social change’ (UNESCO, 2005: 147). Not only has the notion of literacy changed but it has also broadened to encompass other forms of literacy: information literacy, mathematical literacy, visual literacy and scientific literacy to name but a few.

Historically, language and literacy in PICs was an oral process, indigenous languages were not translated into written symbols until the advent of the missionaries in the 19th century, and even today some are still only represented orally. This, depending on ones’ point of view, could be an advantage and open up possibilities for learning (in) languages and literacies, without being confined to the written word.

The curriculum resources for teaching literacy can be a financial burden on the government, schools and parents, but could schools (teachers) utilise the resources surrounding them more effectively? During my own teacher training in the UK a recurring theme was ‘providing a rich literacy environment’. But what did that mean in terms of curriculum resources? Glossy posters on the wall depicting parts of speech, a selection of poetry, bookshelves crammed full of children’s classics including fairy tales, Enid Blyton, the Brontes, Shakespeare and more recently a selection of Harry Potter books and Tales from Other Countries? Yes, it did, but it also meant so much more; it meant children’s writing—essays, acrostic poems, haiku, crossword puzzles, interviews with public figures, illustrated stories, recipes for favourite meals, instruction booklets, newspaper stories, cartoons, holiday journals and that was only in the language corner!

In PICs there are opportunities to exploit the rich oral traditions and enhance learning (in) languages and literacies. One of the four pillars of learning, as defined by UNESCO, is ‘Learning to be: the right to self-definition and self-identification—The right of indigenous peoples to their own interpretation of their history as well as the right to learn in their own languages’ (UIE, 1997a cited in UNESCO, 2005: 141).

Story-telling is an art form, which nowadays, at least in western countries, is often relegated to bedtime reading from storybooks. In the Pacific, there are many village elders and other members of the community who could be a
valuable resource for schools; they have ‘real’ stories and experiences to tell which could contribute to the quality of children’s learning, particularly in their own languages.

One very successful example of using community members is a history class in a British school in Bucharest, Romania. One unit of the history curriculum is *What it was like for children in World War II*. This might seem a rather dull and boring subject for a class of seven-year-olds, but the teacher brought it alive by the resources she used and the follow-up activities. Like the definition of ‘quality’, accounts of historical events are very subjective; they depend on who you are, what you witnessed or experienced and, in the case of World War II, which country you lived in at that time.

The teacher in question found two people, an English lady in her seventies who had lived in an English city during World War II and a Romanian lady of Russian descent in her eighties who had spent the war years in a rural area of Romania. The language used was English because children of 14 nationalities made up the class. The stories the two women told the children were original, fascinating, rich in language that the children, including the native English speakers, had not heard before. The children could ask questions for clarification of language and meaning, which one cannot do with a textbook. They learned about the similarities and differences of growing up in two different countries during wartime, the rural and urban settings, the food and nutritional values, the clothes, transport and social values of the time. In the following weeks the children worked in groups. They designed bomb shelters, planned nutritional menus from limited food resources and a small budget, wrote songs and poetry, performed short plays to entertain others during 'bomb raids', and a host of other activities. Indeed a rich language and learning experience, which encompassed many forms of literacy.

The point here is that curriculum resources need not necessarily mean commercially produced resources or textbooks provided by the school system; they are anything that can be used to enhance and enrich the learning environment. Producing and utilising existing resources is only limited by the teacher’s and, to a certain extent, the children’s imagination and abilities.
Human resources

The single biggest resource of any education system are the people who work within it, and as much as eighty per cent of financial resources available in a fiscal year may be spent on recurrent expenditure, i.e. salaries. There is significant input from administrators, principals, school boards, inspectors and those in curriculum development units in any education system. However, as teachers constitute the bulk of human resources in any education system, as well as being the single biggest influence on learners, well-trained, knowledgeable teachers are arguably the most important investment made in education (UNESCO, 2004). Therefore, as with any investment, a good return is expected: quality of teaching and learning.

Teachers and teacher training

Research suggests that teachers are victims of their own learning, that is, they teach how they were taught. Research also suggests that attitudes and ‘teaching practices are informed by ideas and beliefs that teachers begin to develop long before embracing teaching as a career and that traditional teacher preparation does not successfully challenge these beliefs’ (UNESCO, 2004:153). If this is true, and there would appear to be little evidence to the contrary, then it is no wonder that education systems in PICs appear to have stagnated. This, then, becomes a circular process, as teachers are trained in an institutional setting by trainers who are possibly also victims of their own teacher training, ideas, beliefs and experiences.

Even where new methodologies and concepts are taught in a teacher training institution, the reality of the classroom situation may not be conducive to practising these approaches. For example, where the curriculum is still exam-driven and the only accountability of the quality of teaching and learning is by exam results, teaching tends to focus on drilling students to pass the exams rather than on learner-centred activities which enhance teaching or learning. Teachers should be trusted to assess learning through continuous assessment where both teachers and learners benefit from the experience. Additionally, newly-qualified teachers may be unwilling to challenge the status quo; if the existing teaching body is resistant to ‘new’ methodologies and ideas it could prove very difficult, but not impossible,
to introduce changes. Another barrier to change is the fact that the content of many curricula in PICs is very prescribed and overburdened, leaving little room for flexibility in teaching and learning at school level.

People in general can be resistant to change, and this can be particularly true of teachers unless they can see the value of that change. Any strategies or innovations, if they are to be effective, must be part of school policy. All teachers must be aware of, and comfortable with, the common themes and practices that are developed, and this requires effective leadership (Wragg, 1997). Is it enough to pass on new policy directives to schools and expect teachers to implement them without the accompanying new knowledge or resources? A good teacher’s manual with sample lesson plans might go some way to mitigating the situation, but teachers also need interactive learner-centred opportunities to enhance their skills, which means targeted in-service training.

Providing ongoing professional development and quality training opportunities for teachers, both pre-service and in-service, can help teachers change but, all too often, professional development is equated with promotion. Why promote a good teacher out of the classroom? Is there a system in place to give more responsibility to teachers with better skills and knowledge, perhaps in the role of a language or literacy coordinator at school or district level?

Much in-service training is in the form of short workshops without children, those at the very heart of any education system. What is the likelihood of new strategies or innovations being utilised when teachers return to an under-resourced, overcrowded classroom, in a remote, rural (or urban), run-down school? Do the trainers have recent experience in a classroom setting with the inherent problems teachers face on a daily basis? Could the teacher trainers walk into any classroom and practise what they preach effectively?

Pacific Island nations could look to other developing countries for solutions. For example, in remote areas of Vietnam ‘master’ schools have been set up and much of the in-service training, particularly for multi-grade teaching, is conducted in these schools (see Aikman & Pridmore, 2001). The learners (teachers) observe
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classes of children being taught by the teacher trainers after they have had exposure to the theory based training. They then have an opportunity to plan and teach classes themselves. Yes, these schools are better resourced than most, but the advantage is that teachers have the opportunity to discuss how the methodology could work in their own classrooms. Moreover, the teacher trainers visit the schools and work with the teachers in their own classroom settings and are thus able to suggest solutions or strategies to implement the new knowledge/skills. Similarly, inspectors are also practising teachers who are able to offer guidance and mentoring where it is needed.

Any attempt at decentralising training from the main teacher training institutions requires close collaboration within and between schools, and between schools and teacher training institutions. However, providing in-service training for clusters of schools can be a cost-effective method of updating teaching skills and knowledge. Alternatively, there is nothing to stop schools organising themselves into clusters to share best practice and resources, although this does require a certain flexibility in timetabling and good organisation, as well as political will by the school management.

Parents and community

Support from parents and the community is crucial if quality of learning (in) language and literacies is to be achieved. Change—and it is apparent that this is required in order to achieve quality in the existing system, whether at school, district level, or nationally—requires at least an understanding of, if not wholehearted endorsement, by all stakeholders, including the parents and community. The existing ‘chalk and talk’, teacher-centred, exam-driven system of many Pacific Island schools has produced the current parent body, which may make the task of winning support harder. However, if parents, like teachers, are involved and informed about the value of initiatives which will raise the quality of their children’s learning, particularly as under the existing structure much of the financial burden for schools rests with parents and the community, most parents will welcome such initiatives.

One way of involving the community is to make use of some members as a school resource. Parents and other community members, particularly the elderly who still
retain memories of culture and traditions which may be disappearing faster than they can be recorded for posterity, are a valuable resource. Oral traditions, where stories, histories, culture and indigenous knowledge are passed down from one generation to next, have slowly been eroded in an age where the written word is given priority. Harnessing that knowledge and passing it on to Pacific children could enhance the delivery and quality of learning (in) languages and literacies.

The role of the Fiji Ministry of Education

A brief scan of the Fiji Ministry of Education Strategic Plan 2003-2005 (GoF, 2003:1) conjures up images of an institution committed to providing a high quality of learning. The rhetoric includes phrases like ‘supporting equal access to education’, ‘address inequalities in the distribution of resources’ and ‘all students must have equal opportunity to achieve their personal best’—but does the rhetoric meet the reality?

Do all students have equal opportunity to achieve their personal best? If a child’s learning style does not lend itself to the chalk and talk methodology, and where there is an exam-driven curriculum and students are judged only by examination results, it is unlikely. Are inequalities addressed in the distribution of resources? The appalling physical condition of many schools, as well as the lack of curriculum resources, suggests otherwise. What exactly does ‘supporting equal access to education’ mean? Does it mean that there are the same opportunities for quality of learning on small islands or in poor rural communities as there are in urban or peri-urban areas? No, it does not. This is evidenced by the number of children who, even at primary level, have to attend boarding school due to limited access. It is also evidenced by the lack of facilities in poor rural areas and often the lack of experienced teachers. Anecdotal evidence suggests that it is often the less experienced teachers who are assigned to the island and rural schools and, due to their lack of experience, they are less likely to be able to cope in such schools.

Whilst appreciating that small populations, scattered over a large geographical area, suffer from problems of accessibility and communication, and a lack of financial and human resources—constraints not experienced by larger populations—the South Pacific is not unique in that respect (Baldacchino & Farrugia, 2002). The
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Caribbean is similar in nature with its small populations on relatively remote islands, as is Scotland where 40% of all schools are multi-grade. Many other countries have accessibility and communication issues, such as the mountain and desert regions of Pakistan and India. A host of other countries such as Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia, China and the Philippines have small populations scattered over extremely remote areas. Perhaps it is time to look at how these countries deal with the constraints rather than merely castigate, or criticise the ‘adopted western’ concepts which have supposedly contributed to the demise of standards of learning in Pacific Island countries.

The learners

Learners are at the heart of any education system, yet there has been little or no mention in this chapter of the part they play in the framework for understanding education quality. Children have variously been described as ‘empty vessels’ waiting to be filled with knowledge, or ‘clean slates’ on which learning can be written. I prefer the analogy that they are like ‘sponges’, that is, they will soak up knowledge and learning, and indeed they do, mainly with enthusiasm. And, like using the water in the sponge, they must learn to use what they have learned judicially. However, the quality of the learning and the conditions under which that learning takes place is the responsibility of the system, and all those who have a role or responsibility for and within that system.

Conclusion

Financial constraints could be mitigated to some extent by greater flexibility at school and district level. Forming clusters of schools and sharing available resources, expertise and best practice reduces the burden on individual schools. Schools should not be ‘empty vessels’ waiting to be filled by policy directives or resources from the centre; proactive, forward looking schools are effective schools. One advantage of a small population is having a more accurate knowledge of the demographics which should enable more accurate planning for both human and physical resources at school, district and national level.
Lockheed and Levin (1993: 4) suggest that individual inputs such as curriculum resources, or in-service training as discussed above, are rather ‘piecemeal’ and that ‘leaving intact the infrastructure of institutions that are failing to serve the needs of their students’ is the real issue. The rigid, centralised, hierarchal system of education still in existence in Pacific Island countries has allowed, and contributed to, stagnation of education with the resultant effect of poor quality of learning (in) language and literacies. However, until such times as the infrastructure is dealt with comprehensively, ‘piecemeal’ strategies may be the only viable alternative.

There is no quick fix or easy route to ensuring quality of learning (in) language and literacies. As discussed above, there are many constraints incipient in the education systems of PICs but, if constraints cannot be removed, they must be overcome.

References


5

Boundary crossing: a question of contextualised management systems in literacy(ies) and language

Lucy Nakin

This chapter considers whether incorporating aspects of traditional management systems for learning has relevance in today’s world and, if so, could this facilitate crossing the boundary between the worlds of global and local learning. This chapter also seeks to reconceptualise the way current management systems could fuse the local and global literacies in supporting children’s learning (in) literacy(ies) and languages.

Historically, learning in Pacific Island communities was based purely on informal systems. These incorporated observation, imitation, listening, story-telling, participation, and hands-on practice. Children were engaged in purposeful activities within the cultural calendars in their unique environments. Peers, siblings, extended families and elders played the role of mentor and coach whilst

1. The members of the group that contributed ideas to this chapter include Lucy Nakin (Papua New Guinea), Elizabeth Kapi (Cook Islands) and Kanchi Hosia (Marshall Islands).
a particular life skill was being learnt. This network of human relationships, mutuality and cooperation created a supportive and conducive environment for learning the literacy of life skills as well maintaining the social order.

Supporting a child’s learning was a shared or communal responsibility between the home and the wider community, depending on the hierarchical structure of the society. The relevant and purposeful activities helped children to be inquisitive, innovative and creative in unique ways. A high standard of learning was achieved, partly because of the effectiveness of the mentors who played an integral part in modeling life skills through coaching and collective problem-solving around specific practice. The learning was embedded in the real work of the community and had contextual relevance. This increased the level of achievement incrementally and in line with the natural growth of children. There was a mutual understanding of the cultural and practical significance of the learning between children, who were engaged in the process, and the more knowledgeable and experienced coaches or mentors.

This management system for learning worked well and included memory skills, technical skills, carving, fishing, agriculture, weaving, and hunting. Print or autonomous literacy was limited to other traditional activities such as designs, tattoos, and other art forms. Local cultural management systems supported the building of cognitive abilities utilising memories through oratory application in practice.

**What are contextualised management systems?**

Contextualised management systems are, by definition, systems that support children’s learning (in) literacy(ies) and language in a given situation. An example is the assessment system used in schools. Children engaged in multi-literacy events create the context for teachers to utilise an array of assessment and reporting strategies to collect a portfolio of information related to each child’s learning. The assessment informs the teacher, parents, ministries and other key stakeholders of the performance of each child in relation to school based learning. The accrued information is used to improve student learning and classroom practice.
Ministries of education use assessment as one mechanism for monitoring the quality of education, as well as for planning and budgetary purposes. Other support systems include policy directives and frameworks, resources for teachers, curriculum developers, and literacy coaches and mentors. Parental involvement in literacy learning experiences, both in and out of school, is a further example of a management system which can be a contributory factor in supporting the literacy teacher.

Good leadership at school level helps extend the learning network to local communities. This can effectively integrate the local cultural system of mentoring and monitoring learning with the global (western) and local (traditional) methodologies that support learning (in) multi-literacy(ies) and language.

The role of institutions of higher learning in teacher education, in supporting quality teacher training, is an integral part of a holistic approach of managing a system that supports learning (in) multi-literacy(ies) and language.

**The current situation in the Pacific region**

Schools, through directives from ministries of education implement a global, or western management system incorporating practices that are not inclusive. These policies and practices do not embrace important learning support systems rooted in cultural practices that shaped and managed learning for generations. The indigenous mathematical and language and literacy learning ideas and processes are ignored by teachers, curriculum developers and teacher education providers. Previously, children were nurtured into learning a way of life through the process of socialisation, which included oral transmission of traditions, beliefs, values and customs passed down by elders from generation to generation.

The policy directive to use the vernacular as a medium of instruction is aimed at supporting and upholding our indigenous identity. Nevertheless, some parents still prefer English as a medium of instruction and this may either support or hinder the maintenance of the learning (in) multi-literacies and languages.
Currently there is a shift towards a socio-cultural or an ideological perspective where literacy is located within the cultural boundaries. In theory, teachers create appropriate conditions for learning relevant literacies that will equip the learner with life skills, integrating the school curriculum through the use of the vernacular and English. However, sometimes there is a mismatch between statements in policy documents and actual practice, as well as inconsistency and a lack of awareness.

Assessment is an ongoing and integral part of the teaching and learning process that informs stakeholders on how well students learn and teachers teach. Assessment is crucial in developing strategies in quality educational programmes and the quality of education as a whole. There is a need for education policy-makers and planners to accommodate the new shifts in assessment, evaluation and reporting. The reflective teacher is critical in providing relevant multi-literacy opportunities, including appropriate assessment and reporting of oral capabilities.

The current examination-driven school system defeats the purpose of education and assessment for learning life skills. The heavy emphasis on examinations encourages rote learning of examinable areas at the expense of other curriculum areas. Further, the current school and home management systems seem to devalue important cultural knowledge and practices which are not included in the school assessment system.

**Ideal**

For learning to be a shared responsibility, it is necessary to bridge the gap between home and school by bringing the child’s world into the classroom. Using traditional stories and activities, the teacher and children could explore literacy and language through theme-based or project-based activities. Integrating all subjects of the curriculum and life skills, rather than just individual learning activities, would incorporate the mutual and communal network of human relationships in support of a child’s learning that was historically an integral part of traditional Pacific societies.

With the current shift of thinking in education circles in the Pacific to redefining literacy as a social practice, the definition of illiteracy is brought into question. It
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is no longer sufficient to use the term ‘illiterate’ based on autonomous literacy. Literacy is contextual, individuals may well be multi-literate in different contexts. Recognising this is particularly significant for people of the Pacific who have a strong tradition in oral literacy. Print or autonomous literacy is new and different; it is not based on local language and cultural learning systems.

This calls for Pacific learning styles, acknowledging and including the languages of the Pacific in schools and the identification and inclusion of Pacific knowledge and ways of knowing into formal education systems. The shift from an autonomous to an ideological perspective and the new multi-literacies recognise Pacific epistemologies, knowledge and cultural practices. The differences between the Pacific child’s culture and language and a those of non-Pacific child must not only be accommodated in the Pacific curriculum, but actively encouraged in order to foster and maintain further growth in multi-literacy development.

Language and culture are integral support systems for learning (in) literacies and language, as language reflects cultural identity, where a child learns the language(s) spoken in that cultural context through the process of socialisation. The child learns to be literate holistically and not in fragmented ways. The formal school system should incorporate education that is based and oriented towards the knowledge systems that children, teachers and communities live in.

A significant shift to handing back some aspects of education to the people would strengthen and link traditional knowledge systems, skills, values, knowledge transmission–acquisition processes, assessment and monitoring systems between home and school. In this context then, English and the vernacular should be equally promoted in school to fuse both worlds. If local languages die, local culture and multi-literacies die, leaving no footprint. English, an imposed and dominant language, will not suffer the same fate as it is a global language.

**Crossing the boundaries – which management systems for the future?**

The current shift in thinking of how literacy, both English and the vernacular, is viewed and practised in the Pacific region has implications in several key areas.
Considerable development in the provision of training for curriculum developers, policy-makers, teachers and teacher education providers needs to be undertaken in order to facilitate a move towards fusing the global and the local. Viewing literacy as a social practice and moving from an autonomous to an ideological perspective where learning (in) literacies is interwoven into the cultural practices will require major changes in current policy and practice.

Teachers are the key to the implementation of changes and shifts in curriculum, teaching and learning, assessment and evaluation. However, the shift in teaching and learning multi-literacies will require continuous monitoring, mentoring, and coaching, if school-based initiatives or inclusive curricula are to be effective.

Research has demonstrated that coaching is a complex and important undertaking, but one that has the potential to improve teacher and student learning. It requires observation of student and teacher behaviours as well as the ability to analyse and critique those behaviours. Key players during school-based coaching discuss and talk over problems and successes in cooperative partnership. It is within this context that they develop mutual respect for each other’s views and, through this process, extend and elaborate their thinking and practice.

Aligning with the current developments and re-thinking on literacy practices in Pacific countries, teachers can identify and integrate Pacific cultural values, beliefs, traditions, songs, myths, dances, and ceremonies into the formal literacy and language learning at schools. Language (inclusive of mathematics and arts) is value-laden and therefore cannot be taught divorced from context. The new shift in new forms of emerging literacies will shape practice in time and space. It is crucial for the new literacy teacher’s practice to fit local needs and circumstances because universal ‘truth’ in literacy and numeracy is being questioned as the paradigm shift is now towards valuing the local. The cultural difference enriches teaching and learning, accommodating the multiplicity and hybridity of literacies that exist in specific contexts.
Curriculum

Ethno-mathematics is one area that should be promoted during teacher training, both pre- and in-service. The shift in thinking places new values on indigenous mathematics, language and literacy learning, and it is important that these current initiatives are fashioned in such a way as to enable fusion of the global and the local through relevant multi-literacy(ies). Teachers continually observe the changing literacy needs and can plan to improve student learning by developing vernacular materials, including dictionaries for mathematics. The shift also calls for further research or impact studies in teaching and learning indigenous mathematics, language and literacy.

Parents and community

There is a significant call for more parent and community involvement in supporting and strengthening the literacy development of children through active participation in literacy activities. This involvement can help bridge the home/school divide as a mechanism to support and strengthen learning, monitoring and assessing the literacy learning of a child. Parents and children can read books together, retell stories and get involved in other literacy events promoting the use of vernacular and English. Schools should develop programmes to help parents to observe, record and collect evidence of actual child performance in early literacy. Parents’ literacy practice related to child support should be integrated into the school assessment policies and practices.

Assessment

Teachers reflect on and implement traditional forms of oral assessment and reporting through observation, mentoring, coaching, hands-on experience, conferencing and demonstration in the classroom. Story telling and oral traditions play a significant role in Pacific societies. Pacific children tend not to read vernacular and English texts for pleasure and relaxation but rely on oral or visual communication. Oral forms of communication strategies should be incorporated into school assessment systems. Assessment data are blended with global methods for recording and reporting purposes. Which
oral assessment and reporting strategies should be integrated into the formal system rests with the teacher as an expert in local and global literacies.

Leadership

Good leadership is important at all levels of governance, particularly at the school level in order to effectively implement the changes in the re-thinking of literacy. The vision: empowered, proactive leaders are the key players to support and strengthen a more successful implementation of management systems for multi-literacy development in the Pacific island countries will transform the current system. An ideal leader can be described as one who is proactive, shows initiative, facilitates and is a visionary. S/he should be equipped with in-depth knowledge and understanding of global and local literacies, as well as shifts in the current trends in literacy teaching and learning. A good leader empowers and delegates and plans for sustainability, is professional, listens to concerns and is open-minded and diplomatic. Without good leadership, the new thinking in literacy teaching and practice will not be implemented.

Integration

A more consultative approach needs to be adopted between practitioners, community members, students, curriculum developers, teacher education providers and policy-makers when developing policies. This will prevent any mismatch between policy and practice. The management systems involving all education stakeholders in curriculum and policy development may need to be reviewed to ensure there is clear demarcation between their roles and responsibilities. However, paramount is an overarching policy that will govern learning and development in multi-literacy and languages, balancing the use of both English and the vernacular. It should also ensure quality assurance in developing and delivering bridging programmes, fusing the two worlds of global and local.

Making multi-literacy(ies) accessible for all is one of the initiatives by UNESCO and Pacific countries. Currently, there is still a preference for formal education as there is a perception that it is more prestigious. A stigma exists with flexible open distant education, private training providers or private schools. In the new shift, relevant literacy accommodates people from all walks of life, as citizens have the
right to literacy, whether formal or informal systems of education provide the service. In the light of integral human development, an inclusive curriculum, including information literacy (school libraries) and access to literacy, must be in place. The schools or training providers must develop a programme that caters for school-based literacies and life skills for school leavers. In developing relevant literacy(ies) for the various levels and sectors of society, the issue of access is accommodated, as literacy is the core of education for all. Despite numerous obstacles hindering the realisation of a successful multi-literacy programme, an ideal leader with linkages to other educational partners can implement the new shift in the teaching and learning of literacy.

Crucial decisions and actions are needed to achieve the new shifts in fusing global and local literacy(ies), making it everyone’s business. Ownership of the task will come about only if all stakeholders have been mentored and coached through professional development programmes monitored through coordinated training. Good leadership programmes must be strengthened to address the shift in literacy practices. Policies and curricula must be reviewed, articulating various information management systems, policy documents integrating local oral assessments and reporting strategies embracing practice in both worlds. It takes a successful leader to recognise teachers’ potential to fuse the best of both worlds in the teaching and learning of literacy as a social practice. Successful leaders create a successful learning environment.

Conclusion

Practitioners in Pacific schools realise the need to recognise existing values and build on oral traditions, yet blend them with modern and cultural ways of communication. Consideration given to the use of local forms of oral communication involve coaching and mentoring processes in the school assessment and reporting system, thereby fusing local and global multi-literacy(ies) practices, at least on one level.
Information literacy involves teaching and learning about the whole range of information sources and formats. To be information literate you need to know why, when, and how to use all of these tools and think critically about the information. (UNESCO IFAP, 2006: 12)

Information literacy is:

- the ability to locate, evaluate, and apply information to daily life
- the ability to access, evaluate, organize, manipulate, and present information (including electronic information)
- the skill necessary to locate, access, and use information in today’s society.

(Definitions obtained via Google search: define: information literacy)

Information literacy is required in all student learning to improve a student’s ability to know when there is a need for information, and to identify, locate, evaluate and effectively use the information to address an issue or problem. An information
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literate person is an asset in the workplace, community and school. Informed decision-making and knowledge creation is a fundamental building block for lifelong learning.

**Incorporating information literacy into the curricula – why?**

The Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of basic Education (PRIDE) Project seeks to enhance student learning in fifteen Pacific countries by strengthening the capacity of each Ministry of Education to plan and deliver basic education of good quality. The project will result in strategic plans for education in all of the fifteen participating countries. The PRIDE team developed benchmarks derived from the Forum Basic Education Action Plan and the PRIDE Financing Agreement. These benchmarks are to be used in the constructive and collaborative review of each country’s strategic plans and in the development of new strategic plans in the participating countries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benchmark 2</th>
<th>Indicator: Clear statement of promotion of information literacy to ensure access to and use of quality information.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skills for life and work locally, regionally, and globally</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The PRIDE Project Benchmarks, PRIDE, 2006

The inclusion of information literacy (IL) within the benchmarks recognises that it forms the basis of lifelong learning. Evaluation and monitoring of the success of the indicators should see greater emphasis on the ability to use information and knowledge in tandem with increased access to information and information communication technology (ICT).

The Delors Report, *Learning: the treasure within* (1996:22), reaffirms the importance of information, and access to it:

> A learning society founded on the acquisition, renewal and use of knowledge. These are three aspects that ought to be emphasized in the educational process. As the development of the ‘information society’ is increasing the
opportunities for access to data and facts, education should enable everyone to gather information and to select, arrange, manage and use it. While education should, therefore, constantly adapt to changes in society, it must not fail to pass on the attainments, foundations and benefits of human experience.

Information literacy is important to the success of many regional and global initiatives including Education for All (EFA), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005-2014 as well as the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat Basic Education Action Plan. In the context of globalisation, new technologies and social issues in the Pacific, information literacy is core.

Through UNESCO’s Information for All Programme (IFAP), governments of the world have pledged to harness the new opportunities of the information age to create equitable societies through better access to information.

Information literacy enables people to interpret and make informed judgments as users of information sources, as well as to become producers of information in their own right. Information literate people are able to access information about their health, their environment, their education and work, empowering them to make critical decisions about their lives, e.g. in taking more responsibility for their own health and education. In a digital world, information literacy requires users to have the skills to use information and communication technologies and their applications to access and create information (IFLA, 2006, section 201).

More emphasis must be placed on ensuring equitable access to information across the Pacific region. All levels of education need to ensure information literacy is included in policy, planning and development initiatives. Recent developments in teacher training and changes to assessment systems have placed a greater emphasis on information and the means to access it. For example, in Fiji the new school assessment system has an increased focus on student-centred learning. However, students need greater access to information and the skill to effectively use it in order to benefit. Many libraries are not properly resourced and students
are unable to do the work required. The Fiji Library Association has reported on the negative impact of this initiative (FLA, 2006).

**Incorporating information literacy into the curricula – how?**

For information literacy to be effectively implemented across the curriculum several important conditions are required: a philosophical framework for the Pacific; how information literacy relates to Pacific students and learning; a context (curriculum) in which the information literacy standards can be applied; and guidelines relating specific skills to IL standards. The physical resources required for implementation would include libraries and ICT (Jones, 2006).

Education initiatives implemented by the University of the South Pacific (USP), including the PRIDE Project, the Re-thinking Pacific Education Initiatives for and by Pacific Peoples (RPEIPP) and the new Pacific Education Research Foundation (PERF), are creating new opportunities for the integration of Pacific values and beliefs into teaching and learning. An outcome of a regional colloquium on re-thinking Pacific education held in 2001 was agreement on the ‘tree of opportunity’ metaphor which:

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

This realignment of the local with the global creates opportunities to showcase indigenous knowledge and literacies. A good example of the integration of multiple literacies and the convergence of the local and global is *The Canoe is the People* (UNESCO, 2005a). This multimedia CD-ROM captures Pacific navigators sharing their traditional knowledge and skills. It documents the rich history of Pacific sailing and navigation while using new technology to communicate the seascape, sound and skills. It includes video interviews with master navigators and uses animations
to demonstrate complex navigational concepts. The CD-ROM primarily serves as an educational tool, illustrating the vitality of indigenous knowledge, know-how and identity in meaningful ways for Pacific communities. UNESCO is currently developing a learning resource pack, which will include teacher manuals and student workbooks to accompany the use of the CD-ROM in Pacific classrooms.

A very popular and well known information literacy model, The Big6™ developed by Michael Eisenberg and Bob Berkowitz, can be used whenever students are in a situation, academic or personal, which requires information to solve a problem or complete a task.

The Big6™

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Definition</th>
<th>Define the task (the information problem).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information Seeking Strategies</td>
<td>Brainstorm all possible sources and select the best source.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location and Access</td>
<td>Locate sources. Find the needed information within the source.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Information</td>
<td>Engage in the source (read, hear, view, touch). Extract relevant information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>Organize information from multiple sources. Present the information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Judge the process (efficiency). Judge the product (effectiveness).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The development of Pacific standards would be a useful tool to develop and integrate information literacy into the curriculum. Perhaps, using The Big6™, a Pacific information literacy standard could be developed which would assist in ensuring that indigenous wisdom and knowledge are included in teaching and learning.
Incorporating IL skills into the current curricula: what else is needed?

In recent years, classrooms have changed from teacher-centred to learner-focused environments. Information literacy must be developed in conjunction with research activities integrated into the curricula and engagement in resource-based learning. Teachers need to be empowered to apply IL in their classrooms and teaching. In the changing school environment, increased collaboration between administrators, teachers and libraries is a prerequisite for success. There is also a need for teachers and library staff to receive training in how to apply information literacy standards, skills and resources to support information literacy, both in the classroom and library.

One of the teacher education courses at the USP, *ED217 Literacy Processes*, includes a unit being developed by Paula Jones, lecturer in Library and Information Studies. It is entitled *The school library and information literacy*. This new unit means that for the first time teachers will be taught information literacy and basic school library skills and knowledge by a specialist. Lautoka Teachers’ College (LTC) has also developed a ‘library enrichment’ programme, whereby the library provides an information literacy programme for staff and students. The LTC library itself was enriched through an upgrade project when a custom-built library and resource centre was opened in 2006. With new technology, new staff and assistance from professional school librarians from the Western Australian Department of Education, LTC students and staff have improved access to information and increased information literacy.

Other initiatives throughout the region include the Pacific Library Training Institute (PLTI) run by the Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL) in Hawai‘i. Through annual training for staff working in libraries in the (northern) Pacific, PREL seeks to improve library services across the region. In 2005 the USP Library, with the support of the IFLA, held a workshop for school librarians around the Pacific. This regional workshop was opened by the then USP Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Dr Esther Williams (former USP Librarian). She highlighted the fact that many governments in the Pacific do not give much thought to the importance of good libraries in schools. There is a lack of recognition in practice by regional governments in terms of providing appropriate funding to better resource and equip school libraries (Pa-C-fika, 2006 :1).
IL and the role of libraries

The school library provides information and ideas that are fundamental to functioning successfully in today’s information and knowledge-based society.

The school library equips students with life-long learning skills and develops the imagination, enabling them to live as responsible citizens (IFLA, 2006).

Studies carried out in 1991 and 1999 of primary and secondary school libraries in Fiji showed that the libraries were sadly lacking in almost all areas: facilities, basic equipment, staff, budgets and collection development (Rainey, 1991, 1996). In 2000 the Fiji Library Association submission to the Fiji Education Commission reported that little had changed.

FLA contends that education programmes in Fiji schools are currently under-resourced and understaffed. The poor quality of library facilities is partly because staff have little or no knowledge of how to organise and make accessible library information, teach information skills and promote library services (Jones, Waibuca & Vakasisikakala, 2000: 2).

For information literacy to be successful, improvement in libraries is crucial. The *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2006: Literacy for Life*, highlights the role of libraries in literacies:

> It is very clear that the EFA goals can be met only through the development of literate societies, in which all literate individuals have the means and the opportunity to benefit from rich and dynamic literate environments. Policies to develop rich literate environments—alongside schooling and programmes that ensure that youth and adults become literate—are thus important. Such policies can include support for libraries, local-language newspapers, book publishing, access of adults to school libraries and radio listening groups... Literate environments should enable the free exchange of information and provide an array of opportunities for lifelong learning (UNESCO, 2005b:249).
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In this context, Pacific school libraries need proactive, qualified and trained library/information staff; good, relevant collections; and appropriately designed and equipped libraries/learning centres. Current education opportunities like the USP Certificate and Diploma courses in Library/Information studies should be promoted by educators as they focus on how library services are organised and delivered. Like classrooms, school libraries need qualified people, and consideration should be given to ensuring that school libraries in the Pacific have qualified people working in them.

Through access to scholarships, professional teacher librarians (with degrees in library/information and teaching) and professional librarians (with degrees in library/information) can be trained within the Pacific. Workshops and training in information by IFLA, PREL and FLA can promote information literacy and develop effective advocates for libraries.

School libraries and their importance should be articulated in national education strategic plans, and appropriate funding should be allocated for their development. School libraries and their staff need support from education ministries, teachers and school management. Pacific countries that have school library services, such as Library Services of Fiji, should formulate policies and define goals, priorities and services in relation to equipping students with information literacy skills.

Additionally, there needs to be increased opportunities to take part in capacity building education initiatives in the region. The outcomes of the inaugural meeting of the IFAP Pacific Regional Committee, held on 2 May 2006 in Wellington, New Zealand should create new opportunities for collaborative efforts between libraries, associations and governments to build the library profession and libraries in the Pacific.

Collections to support information literacy are essential. Through the support of education ministries and with community assistance, Pacific school libraries are provided with books and training, but much more could be done with increased funding and qualified staff. Support is also available in resources like Guidelines for School Libraries in the Pacific (Jones 2006) and Subject index and Dewey guide for small
school libraries in the Pacific (Jones 2005). In 2005 the FLA published and distributed the FLA Standards for Libraries in Fiji. Often these organisations face resource constraints. However, their work provides examples of literate environments and spaces in the curriculum.

**Examples of information literacy across the curriculum**

*Cultural Mathematics Syllabus – Elementary* (Papua New Guinea, Department of Education, 2003) explains the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that students should achieve. The learning outcomes and indicators provide examples of IL. The outcomes are student-centred and can be demonstrated, assessed or measured. Each learning outcome has an indicator: examples of the kinds of things students should be able to do, know and understand if they are achieving the outcome. The extract on the next page shows the integration of information literacy into the classroom and demonstrates the need for information resources in the classroom and outside.

Another example of information literacy across the curriculum is PREL’s 2004 *Pacific voices: integrating multimedia, technology and culture into education / a curriculum resource*. This is a cooperative effort among educators in American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM: Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Yap), Guam, Hawai‘i, the Republic of Palau, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI). The network includes teachers, administrators, librarians, curriculum specialists, college instructors and parents.

*Pacific Voices* has identified technology integration projects, provided training and support, and documented projects. In their project implementation, *Pacific Voices* works towards achieving a number of literacy, cultural and educational technology goals. Each participating team received a *Pacific Voices* technology kit, which included a DV iMac computer, a Sony digital video camera with tripod and microphone, a printer and scanner, art supplies, and multimedia and educational software. The manual and examples of implementation can be found online at http://www.prtec.hawaii.edu/4_CURRICULUM/inde.html.
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#### Cultural Mathematics Syllabus – Elementary

(Papua New Guinea, Department of Education, 2003)
Conclusion

Evidence exists that there is an emerging integration of information literacy into Pacific classrooms and reveals the need for information resources in the classroom and outside. However, much more needs to be done. Across the Pacific it can be said that school libraries are generally not adequate for the information needs of pupils or teachers and that Pacific library and information systems are underdeveloped. There is also a lack of information specialists and librarians and little awareness or promotion of information literacy policies and programmes.

Pupils (and teachers) are not educated about the nature of information, nor about ways to access and effectively use information to promote lifelong learning. As a result, pupils are not leaving school ‘information literate’. This must be addressed, given that information literacy is gaining recognition as a critical factor in achieving the higher-level goals of Education for All.
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The challenge for the Pacific is to ensure that, at the national level and within the context of national education strategic plans and curriculum frameworks, information literacy and school libraries are put on the agenda. Information literacy and the improvement of school libraries must be fast-tracked if the Pacific is to realise the potential of knowledge-based societies, informed decision-making and information for all.

References


