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The dilemmas and realities of curriculum development: Writing a social studies curriculum for the Republic of Nauru

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The University of Auckland

Abstract

This article discusses the difficulties of developing and implementing a national social studies curriculum in the Republic of Nauru during a time of political change and social expansion. The nature and purpose of education in a Pacific island nation are examined. The explanation of the process of curriculum development that follows is informed by a knowledge-based approach. This is in contrast to the cultural relevance and economic imperative explanations that inform the social studies curriculum itself. The article also documents the journey taken from the writer's perspective as an 'outsider' and reflects on the expectations and realities of a 21st century education for the teachers and children of Nauru.

Introduction

The difficulties associated with curriculum development, implementation, and change are well documented (Apple, 1993; Rogan & Grayson, 2003; Slattery, 2012). Curriculum developers must acknowledge the tensions that often exist between international imperatives, national interests, and the professional needs of teachers as they design an academic plan for teaching and learning. Balancing these different, and sometimes conflicting, needs makes curriculum development and implementation challenging. It is even more challenging in developing nations where infrastructure is still developing, where there has been no official national curriculum, and where teacher experience is limited. This article describes the development and implementation of a social studies curriculum in such a context. It argues for the centrality of conceptual knowledge in a space that is driven by economic imperatives and cultural relevance rather than by a knowledge focus. Furthermore, it recognises the difficulties that occur when there is a mismatch between curriculum goals and classroom realities.

The article has three parts. First, it begins by describing the context in which this curriculum development and implementation occurred. The history of Nauru and its current circumstances is not just a backdrop to the curriculum change under discussion, but influenced the nature and provision of the work. The second section outlines the issues curriculum writers identified when writing a national social studies curriculum in this context. It presents the theoretical framework which is used to explain a knowledge-based approach to curriculum. Finally, I return to the context to describe the realities of aligning a theoretically informed, written curriculum with teachers' needs for a more functional document that could guide their practice.

The Context

Nauru is a small island nation in the Central Pacific with a population of around 10,000 people and a landmass of 21 square kilometres. The island has a narrow coastal rim where most of the population resides and a raised interior plateau. Once described as being one of the world's richest nations, Nauru is now one of the poorest and receives the majority of its revenue from international aid. It is probably most well known for its rich phosphate deposits found in the interior plateau and mined since 1906. For Nauru, the 20th century is a story of prosperity and poverty, hope and despair, success and crisis. During the prosperous years, Nauru grew rich from the sale of phosphate, which was essential in the making of fertiliser upon which nations such as New Zealand and Australia were dependent for the development of their agricultural industries. From the sale of this resource, Nauru invested in a global finance portfolio that was the envy of most Pacific Island nations. It included hotel developments in Samoa and the Marshall Islands, property in central Melbourne, and shopping centres in the United States. It could boast its own airline, the biggest hotel in the South Pacific and could invest in ventures such as a West End theatre production, all of which were well beyond the reach of its island neighbours. During this period, Nauruans used their wealth to buy everything that was needed to support the nation, from expatriate labour and services to food and drinking water. Consequently, when the economy collapsed in 1995 due to failing finances, out of control debt, and the closure of the Bank of Nauru, Nauru was not only economically destitute, but depleted of the skills and many services required to sustain its national infrastructure.

Nauru has a history, however, of clawing its way back from crisis. During World War II, it was occupied by Japanese forces which had a profound effect on the society, psychology, and geography of the island. The telling of this history is not for this article, but it is important to note that events such as: the deportation of 1200 of the island's residents to Truk in 1943 (some two-thirds of the entire population); the massacre of the leper colony; the harsh forced labour and near starvation for both the remaining population and those on Truk; and the near-total destruction and decimation of the island due to repeated bombing left Nauruans traumatised and distrustful of anyone who is not Nauruan. Pollock (1991) explains: "The Americans had bombed them, the Australians had apparently abandoned them, and the Japanese had beaten and starved them, so who could they trust but their fellow Nauruans" (p. 104). It is not surprising, then, that Nauru was determined to become independent in the years to follow, in spite of its struggle to survive as a viable nation. Prior to independence in 1968, Australia offered to move the entire population to a fertile island off the coast of Queensland, since Nauru was becoming increasingly uninhabitable due to phosphate mining. This offer was, understandably, refused and the very difficult road to independence was seen as the only option. Twenty-first century Nauru continues to adjust to the reality of its economic situation after many years of prosperity. The recent siting of the Australian Overseas Processing Centre for asylum seekers has brought people, resources, and jobs to the island, however, the country is looking to education to provide a way forward for the young to have a viable future in Nauru.

The education system in Nauru has its own set of historical problems related to

staffing, resourcing, and school stability. Schools all but closed in the period of economic decline from 2000–2005. During these years teachers were unpaid, which led to the departure of the most skilled teachers and all expatriate teachers. Resources were unaffordable and even the most basic of services were suspended. The effects of this crisis were far reaching. While in the last few years teacher numbers have grown, there is still a severe shortage of qualified Nauruan teachers. The 2008 “Education and Training Strategic Plan” (Department of Education and Training [DET], 2008) showed that, of the 140 teachers employed in infant, primary, and secondary schools, only four teachers at the secondary school held a degree qualification. Only 6.4% of teachers held a diploma, 50% held a certificate, and 34.4% held no qualification. In 2014, while working with teachers in primary schools, I observed the return of expatriate teachers to supplement local staff numbers. This led to the situation where the majority of teachers were expatriate, mainly Fijian. For example, all the Year 5 teachers on the island were Fijian teachers, most employed on two-year contracts. These teachers are qualified, experienced, and enthusiastic about contributing to teaching and learning in Nauru. However, they have little knowledge of the Nauru curriculum and its content. This knowledge can be quickly acquired, but is just as quickly lost when expatriate teachers depart after two years.

The “Education For All” (EFA) report, written primarily by Nauru Education Department officials following a series of reviews held by public forum, provides a unique insight into the condition of the national education system as it moves towards the nation’s goals for education in the 21st century “to prepare its citizens to cope with the changing economic and social conditions of the country” (UNESCO, 1999). The report describes education as failing to produce Nauruans competent to deal with this vision of the future. It regarded the curriculum as culturally inappropriate and claimed that “a lack of continuity [and] relevance” contributed to the academic failure and a loss of identity for Nauruan students. Significant numbers of Nauruans were reported to be illiterate in English and also to have a poor command of Nauruan. Furthermore, the report declared, “Nauru does not have a learning culture. This way of life has not yet been developed in the society.” Given these conditions, the EFA acknowledged the need for education to preserve Nauruan culture, language, tradition, and identity. It was in this context that I became involved in Nauru’s educational goals as one of two international consultants contracted from New Zealand to write a social studies curriculum and to build teacher capacity so that they could implement this curriculum.

A Social Studies Curriculum for Nauru

The establishment of an education system and the provision of a national curriculum is outlined in the Nauru–Australian Partnership for development, which was formalised in 2009. One of the stated objectives in the partnership is to “develop, establish and maintain an education system that provides full enrolment in and completion of basic education” (Nauru–Australia Partnership for Development, 2009, p. 2). Achieving universal education, providing qualified teachers and an education of high quality are identified in Nauru’s strategic plan for education as is the acknowledgement that “teachers [need to] have the skills to implement a relevant curriculum” (DET, 2008, p. 2).

Given the context, the goal outlined above raised two related questions that required serious contemplation for us as the curriculum writers. First, there was the issue of the knowledge and skills that the teachers needed in order to implement the curriculum that we were to write. Second, what would a relevant curriculum for Nauru include and what should it discard? For us, these questions required a concept of knowledge; specifically what knowledge should be made explicit in a social studies curriculum? The DET stated their desire for a curriculum that:

will prepare our students to be able to meet the challenges of a global community, be active and informed citizens who contribute in a positive manner to their community and the region. This curriculum will be of a standard comparable to Australia, whilst at the same time promoting a sense of national identity. (DET, 2008, p. 2)

The DET strategy tasked us with the inclusion of relevant content and “explicit details on what students need to learn” (p. 4). The DET also acknowledged the problem for educators: “With the explosion in the volume of knowledge, the problem for educators is to select what is important knowledge” (p. 24).

Even before we started writing, we were concerned about the nature of our task. We were required to balance the goals expressed in Nauru’s strategic plan for education of affirming relevant, local knowledge and experiences related to cultural and national identity on the one hand, while providing an education that would allow students to “leav[e] school as confident citizens able to live in, and contribute to, both Nauruan society and a complex, global, networked society” on the other (DET, 2008, p. 8). If a curriculum is, as Young (2010) claims, “knowledge that a country agrees is important for all students to have access to” (p. 23), then the social studies curriculum that we were tasked with writing might require a stronger emphasis on localised knowledge that was ‘relevant’ to Nauruan students and explicit in the first part of the goal above. We feared that such a curriculum would not give students access to the epistemic knowledge that was not identified, but necessary if students were to meet the second part of the goal. Rata (2012) explains the consequences of an emphasis on local relevant experience over epistemic knowledge:

The ability of a nation’s children to think outside their experience using higher order thinking depends upon the choice of knowledge in the curriculum. With knowledge limited to their experience, young people will be unable to contribute to the ideals of a progressive future, one characterised by innovative technology informed by the political, moral and aesthetic ideas found in the arts, humanities, social sciences and sciences. (p. 137)

We were not the first to ask these kinds of questions about the knowledge that should be included in a curriculum for a developing nation that is concerned with both local and international imperatives. Muller and Subotzky (2001) noted,

Identifying what kind of knowledge is appropriate for the citizen of the new millennium is of special concern in developing countries.

They face two simultaneous challenges: carving out niche areas of innovation within the competitive global arena while meeting the basic development needs of the majority of their increasingly marginalized and impoverished populations. (p. 163)

While Muller and Subotzky were writing about the South African experience, the expectation that education would meet these two challenges is evident in the Nauru strategic plan for education. Our choice to use a knowledge-based approach was informed by a social realist perspective which prioritises “the centrality of concepts and content knowledge in the curriculum” (Rata & Barrett, 2014, p. 1) as the means to achieve the educational goals and described by the DET above. The role of schools in developing students’ conceptual resources is confirmed by Rata (2012) when she addressed the question also raised by the DET and of interest to us as curriculum writers: What should be taught at school? She argues for a curriculum made up of subjects derived from the disciplines rather than learning that is based on students’ social and cultural interests, for, to do so, leaves the curriculum empty of conceptual resources. She explains that schools should focus on:

the best knowledge available in a subject, ‘best’ because it expresses the subject’s generative concepts and principles, serves a wider socio-political role in maintaining democracy. Providing a common curriculum to all children contributes to integrating the nation by creating a shared symbolic understanding of the world. (p. 132)

Rata (2012) also warns against what could be described as the tyranny of relevance and ‘authenticity’. The emphasis in many curricula of Pacific Island nations (see for example, The Cook Islands Curriculum Framework, 2002; The National Curriculum Policy Framework for Tokelau, 2006) on the local is an attempt to maintain a cultural and national identity as well as an attempt to make learning relevant. While this emphasis can be explained as a move away from colonialism and towards independence and self-determination, it has the effect of tying learners to their local experiences in favour of opening them to “the powerful knowledge needed to develop conceptual thought” (Rata, 2012, p. 133). If we, as writers, were to write a curriculum that would help students meet the challenges of living in a globalised world, we could not exclude that powerful knowledge nor could we ignore the conceptual resources students would require to make sense of the world.

The work of Young and Muller (2010) provided a theoretical framework for explaining our development of a conceptually rich, knowledge-based social studies curriculum. They outline three models of curriculum that identify assumptions about curriculum content and discuss the possible implications of each model for the future. In the first, Future 1, the acquisition of knowledge is treated as the core purpose of a highly prescribed curriculum. This model draws on a liberal approach to education where children are provided with the opportunity to access and engage with disciplinary knowledge which has its own intrinsic value. Young (2011), however, also describes the Future 1 model as a curriculum for compliance that encourages memorisation and

rote learning. The lack of flexibility in this model makes any changes and additions of new subjects difficult. This model was most commonly used prior to World War II and can be described as a traditional model of schooling.

In contrast, the Future 2 model (Young & Muller, 2010) is a response to the limitations of a traditional model of schooling and an acknowledgement of a reconceptualised vision of education that will meet the demands of a knowledge economy. This vision of education includes the generation of new knowledge, cooperative learning processes, and using problem-solving approaches in relevant, authentic contexts (Gilbert, 2007). Emphasis is shifted from ‘what to know’ to ‘how to find out’, what Yates and Young (2008) describe as “the ability ‘to do’ rather than ‘to know’” (p. 6). This reconceptualisation was most clearly manifest in the OECD’s Definition and Selection of Key Competencies (OECD, 2005) report, which argued for learners to be adaptive, innovative, creative, self-directed and self-motivated in order to meet the demands of living in the 21st century.

While providing a viable alternative to traditional education, Young and Muller (2010) criticise what they describe as the Future 2 model of curriculum for being driven by economic imperatives. In this idealised model, the purpose of schooling is instrumental and knowledge is treated as an expression of power. Young (2010) uses the term ‘knowledge of the powerful’ to describe the attention given to the question of whose knowledge is included with less interest being paid to what the knowledge is. Because the knowledge that is included in curriculum is seen as a representation of *who* is included, curriculum content is used as a way to be inclusive and culturally responsive to diverse communities. As such, the learners’ experiences and interests — social knowledge — is given priority over disciplinary knowledge. Teachers take on the role of facilitators of learning as opposed to providing students with access to specialist knowledge identified as a feature in the Future 1 model. Such an approach is attractive to educators who are concerned with addressing the inequalities of education for disenfranchised groups who are disproportionately disadvantaged by a Future 1 model of curriculum.

Futures 1 and 2 (Young & Muller, 2010) can be seen as polarised views of educational curriculum: Future 1 focussing on fixed objective disciplinary knowledge and Future 2 open to subjective social knowledge which draws on students’ experiences. The Future 3 model (Young & Muller, 2010) both draws on and rejects aspects of these models. First, it rejects the assumptions both models make about knowledge and argues for knowledge that is both social and objective. In this way, students can be exposed to knowledge beyond their experiences and are not locked in the “present and particular” (Bailey, 1984) of cultural relevance or their social knowledge. Young (2011) summarises the Future 3 model as “[balancing] the stability of concepts (expressed in subjects), and changes in content (under-emphasised in Future 1) and skills (over-emphasised in Future 2)” (p. 270).

These differentiated models of curriculum (Muller & Young, 2010) provided a way of explaining the tensions experienced by the Nauruan curriculum writers (of whom I was one) in developing the social studies curriculum. The next section examines the process of writing and implementing what was subsequently titled the ‘Nauru Social Sciences Syllabus’ and discusses how these tensions were addressed.

The Dilemma of Reality

As curriculum writers, our task was two-fold: first, to design a 21st century curriculum of a standard comparable with Australia, and second, to design a curriculum that promoted a sense of national identity. We were to look outward to the world while also looking inwards to the local. Furthermore, an analysis of the Education Strategic Plan 2008–2013 revealed the goal that the curriculum should provide explicit details for teachers on what students need to learn. This requirement posed a problem for us. A curriculum that focused on this level of detail would have a very short shelf life. It would not allow for the flexibility required to change or include current topics that could provide the best content to develop conceptual knowledge. Also, we were concerned that such an approach did not align with our understanding of the nature and purpose of curriculum and would not allow teachers to exercise professional judgment. It would instead relegate them to the role of followers rather than leaders of curriculum.

Our solution was to take a two-leveled approach to developing the social studies curriculum. The first stage involved the designing of a curriculum that was influenced by our reading of the knowledge-based approach suggested in the Future 3 model developed by Young and Muller (2010). Second, we developed a “Teachers’ Guide” that would support teachers in their implementation of the curriculum at their current level of capability. The formal curriculum that we developed emphasised conceptual knowledge, with concepts rather than specific content, detailed. For example, Year 5 students in the study of “Time, Continuity, and Change” would develop conceptual understanding of relationships between people and events through time. The learning outcome identifies conceptual knowledge “of the causes and effects of events that have shaped the lives of a group of people” (Department of Education, 2013, p. 25). The concepts of past, present, future, cause and effect, change, conflict, and challenge are stipulated. The aim was that “students will understand the relationship between the past and future consequences of a series of events for a group of people” (Department of Education, 2013, p. 25).

The provision of these guidelines within the curriculum met our intention that the curriculum would focus on the development of conceptual understanding. It also provided opportunities for students to use their “social objectivity as a tool for treating the world as an object – and so enabling students to gain access to understanding the world that takes them beyond their experience” (Young, 2011, p. 269). However, like recent Australian and New Zealand curricula, the Nauru curriculum we developed does not link the concepts to content. The absence of content can be understood in two ways. First, it is an indication of our attempt, as writers, to balance the stability of concepts, required in a Future 3 curriculum, and the possible changes in content, not possible in a traditional or Future 1 curriculum. Second, the absence of content was our recognition of our ‘outsider’ status. If the curriculum was to meet the goals expected of education, then it would need to be accepted and owned by Nauruan teachers rather than imposed upon them. An aspect of the contract for writing the curriculum was also the capacity building of teachers who would implement that curriculum. In this way, we hoped that we could work with Nauruan educators to collaboratively choose the best content for teaching the concepts set down in the curriculum. As writers, we were wary of putting content into the curriculum because we feared conceptual knowledge would be overlooked in favour of the itemistic teaching of content.

Nevertheless, we recognise that it is necessary to link content to the concepts. Without content the concepts were empty; content provided the raw material from which to develop strong conceptual knowledge (Rata, 2012). It was in order to address the dilemma that we developed the Teachers' Guide with suggested content and units of work to support the development of conceptual knowledge. The Year 5 students who were to develop conceptual knowledge about "the causes and effects of events that have shaped the lives of a group of people" (Department of Education, 2013, p. 25) mentioned above would do so in the context of World War II in the Pacific. Set out in the Guide are examples of how students can come to develop conceptual understanding of cause and effect, change, and conflict as they learn about how life changed in Nauru and the Pacific Islands during World War II, the effect of Japan entering the war in the Pacific, and the causes and effects of the bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima. While these examples are suggestions to teachers of what we considered the best content for developing conceptual understanding as well as the strategies and ideas that would make this knowledge accessible and engaging for students, we were acutely aware that the teachers for whom we were writing were also learners. We acknowledged that the majority of Nauruan teachers did not have access to the knowledge and experience to construct the conceptual and symbolic knowledge and meaning that would allow them to achieve the entirety of Nauru's educational aspirations.

We were, at first, reluctant to write a Teachers' Guide. In our view, it would become the default curriculum, one that was more aligned with a Future 1 model. Furthermore, it could reduce teachers to mere dispatchers of curriculum, if the space for developing the kind of pedagogy described by Alexander (2008) is understood as:

the observable act of teaching together with its attendant discourse of educational theories, values, evidence, and justifications. It is what one needs to know, and the skills one needs to command, in order to make and justify the many different kinds of decisions of which teaching is constituted. (p. 29)

The Teachers' Guide then, needed to be specific enough to provide the best content to support the concept-rich understandings stipulated in the curriculum. It also needed to be general enough to allow and encourage teachers to select, interpret, refine, and rework material for their classroom context rather than rigidly follow a set of steps for implementation. In this way, the Teachers' Guide could provide the guidance necessary as well as act as a builder of capacity and capability. We hope that the Teachers' Guide will become obsolete over time, as Nauruan teachers gain the experience, knowledge, and confidence necessary for them to become creators rather than followers of curriculum.

Conclusion

This paper has raised questions about the realities and dilemmas of writing a curriculum as an 'outsider' in a developing, small island nation. It demonstrates how the consideration of both the global and the local, the universal and the specific can be realised in a knowledge-based curriculum. Learners from small developing nations,

like Nauru, do not have to be tied to the local but should be given access to the powerful knowledge identified by Young and Muller (2010, 2013). This does not preclude the affirmation of their national identity. These thoughts and experiences are shared in the hope that learners in developing nations — whether they be teachers or students — are exposed to the kind of learning that releases them from their dependency on others and equips them with the powerful knowledge that provides the intellectual autonomy to participate in and beyond their world.

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Renewal in Samoa: Insights from life skills training

David Cooke and T. Pascal Brown

Abstract

Faced with certain pressing social problems in rural Samoa, a local NGO, Matuaileoo Environment Trust Inc (METI) is mounting programmes in life skills training (LST). An evaluation of several recent courses suggests an overall positive response to the training, mixed with some indifference, negatives and backsliding. Analysis of the participants' responses reveals a series of inter-related discourses: distress; problem-solving; renewal; awareness of others in society; and the efficacy or need for the LST. Overall, the evaluation suggests some movement towards regeneration, with increased awareness of social issues and willingness to address them. The analysis is a contribution to addressing sensitive social matters in the South Pacific in need of continuing inquiry.

Keywords: life skills; rural Samoa; fa'asamoa; discourses of social issues

Introduction

Samoa has a high rural population and a high number of youth leaving school with no qualifications (sometimes called "premature school leavers"). In 2010, of a total population of 183,081 there were 140,240 living in rural villages, which equates to 74% of the population (Rural Poverty Portal, 2014). A UNICEF report on the state of youth in the Pacific (Curtain & Vakaoti, 2011) asserts:

. . . young men not-in-education or work may be contributing little to their community. The issue is particularly serious in Kiribati, Marshall Islands and Samoa, where around half or more of young men aged 20–24 years are not engaged in productive activity (58 per cent of males 20–24 years in Kiribati, 44 per cent in Marshall Islands and 46 per cent in Samoa). (p. 14)

The report continues:

Getting an up-to-date and comprehensive picture of education completion rates is difficult because many PICTs (Pacific Island countries and territories) do not collect or make public data on their school drop-out rates and, for those which do, the data are usually out-of-date. . . . In Samoa in 2009, the gross secondary enrolment rate shows that one in four young people did not go to secondary school. . . . The absence of 'second-chance' opportunities for school drop-outs makes it extremely hard for young people with little or no education to escape a cycle of poverty caused by having limited options to earn a livelihood. (p. 17)

The Government of Samoa has identified the unqualified leavers as a considerable group of society who have been “un-reached” (Education for All, 2007). Boys especially are “at risk” in Samoa, as identified in research into underachievement of males in education in Commonwealth countries (Jha & Kelleher, 2006). School leavers who lack formal education may often have an insufficient knowledge base to become confident participants in the social, cultural and democratic processes of the country, with potentially troubling consequences for society. Often these school leavers also have low self-esteem, lack problem-solving skills and have short attention spans – “soft skills” (Urciuoli 2008, p. 212) that can be addressed in life skills training.

A significant feature of Samoan life (Lilomaiava-Doktor, 2004) is the extended family within a village setting. “The *aiga* or extended family forms the basis of the framework called *fa’asamoa* or the ‘Samoa way’,” says Va’ai (2011, p. 22). She elaborates that *fa’asamoa* is “the basis of the social and organisational systems governing family and village behaviour and the source of individual and group identity” (p. 30). But there can be strains and constraints within such a structure, recognised in the 1980s in the work of Bradd Shore. “Far from a carefree existence geared only to the requirements of the moment,” says Shore (1982), “a well-run village defines for its residents an intricate system of long-term social and economic obligations, strictly enforced by the chiefs and their power to levy fines for noncompliance” (p. 98). Hardship and change currently put pressure on family and village life, as a recent report by World Vision NZ testifies: “There are few economic opportunities in rural communities and as a consequence there has been an increase in migration to urban areas, negatively affecting agricultural production and intensifying social problems” (2013, p. 16).

Further, Tuafuti (2010) reports a “culture of silence” in Samoa, by which many people neither ask questions nor speak up about inequalities, but acquiesce to authority figures. One danger of such culture is that it can enable numerous inequities to take place without check. It is claimed that Samoa has a relatively high level of violence and domestic abuse in families, which is often not acknowledged. Schwalger (2003), for instance, writes, “Violence against women cuts across all racial, social, cultural, economic, political and religious boundaries. It is endemic [in Samoa]” (p. 39). She therefore calls for a range of actions to confront the issue: “Addressing domestic violence involves individual assistance, attitudinal change, education and legal and institutional change” (2003, p. 40).

Faced with such issues, the Matuaileoo Environment Trust Inc (METI), an NGO in Samoa, has been offering a programme in life-skills training (LST) to improve the wellness of individuals, families and villages in rural Samoa. The following discussion analyses and interprets information from the evaluation of several recent life-skills courses in the villages focusing on findings that offer insights into social issues and renewal. It includes responses to the outcomes of the course; commentaries of participants and their family members; results of the evaluation; and interpretation of social challenges. It argues that an outcome of the courses is some serious attention to addressing social problems, even amidst the faltering and lapses of certain participants, along with some prospect of promoting social justice in the community.

The reflections are based around interviews, first with the course participants

after their training, and second, with two of their family members. Findings from the interviews underlying these reflections could be relevant to subsequent planning, course design, curriculum design, materials development, assessments and evaluations of such adult second-chance education courses. It is hoped that the discussion contributes to the addressing of social distress issues and a culture of violence in a rural Pacific Island nation.

The Concept of Life Skills Training

Over ten years of its operation in Samoa, METI observed the above pattern of young people leaving school with very low, or no, formal qualifications, thereby creating imbalances and limiting potential in society. In response, having already introduced training in permaculture, they added LST courses which they believed could also help to reverse social problems like increases in family violence and poverty. They recognised that there was a context of societal changes, such as increasing costs for electricity, transport and food; tensions in secondary and tertiary education; and ongoing pressures to maintain the traditional gifting system at cultural events such as weddings, funerals and title bestowals. METI hope to enable young people to help their families socio-economically and become role models for change. METI invoke Wilber (1996) as a foundation for LST programmes in Samoa:

We cannot build tomorrow on the bruises of yesterday.... This means a new form of society will have to evolve that integrates consciousness, culture and nature, and thus finds room for arts, morals and science – for personal values, the collective wisdom, and for technical know-how. (p. 336)

Adult LST is recognised as a way of providing progressive informal education for unemployed youth and village people (Allen et al., 1995; Botvin & Griffin, 2004; Forneris et al., 2007). LST for adults comes under the umbrella of second-chance adult education. The training addresses social, cultural, language, business and entrepreneurial skills that will help people live more happily in their families and contribute more to the economics of the family unit (Wilber, 2000). “Life skills” have been defined as “problem-solving behaviours appropriately and responsibly used in the management of personal affairs [and applying to] self, family, leisure, community, and job” (Curtiss & Warren, 1994, p. 21).

Several main themes characterise literature on LST for adults. First, descriptions of the teaching of LST courses and the direction they take, e.g., through sports (Danish & Nellen, 1997; Gould & Carson, 2008). Second, there is a focus on neglected areas of learning in formal education systems such as learning to be, and learning to live with others (Wilber, 2000). One element of life skills is sustainable development, which Meadows, Randers, and Meadows (2004) point out can succeed only in a peaceful environment.

Third, there is evaluation of how useful or how effective LST is for different groups of adults, particularly disadvantaged groups such as alcoholics and long-term unemployed youth. Indeed LST is recognised as a way of providing progressive

informal education for various groups. The courses cater to unemployed youth (Allen et al., 1995; Botvin & Griffin, 2004; Forneris et al., 2007); alcoholics treatment and prevention programs (e.g., Botvin & Kantor, 2000; Van Hasselt, Hersen, & Milliones, 1978); smoking prevention among Hispanic youth (Botvin et al., 1989); and substance abuse (Gorman, Conde, & Huber, 2007) among American Indian and Alaska Native youth (Hawkins, Cummins, & Marlatt, 2004). Four researchers in Jordan evaluated how soft skills (LST) training compared with a wage subsidy to employers in helping young female youth to find employment (Groh, Krishnan, McKenzie, & Vishwanath, 2012). These two treatments resulted in equivalent positive outcomes.

In passing, it might be noted that the term, *life skills* can be appropriated in misleading or reductionist ways. The world-wide OECD study, Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALL), for instance, is routinely presented as life skills, when the actual focus of the study is *literacy* (see, for instance Lawes, 2009; OECD, 2005). The implication from the survey results is that ALL is more encompassing than it actually is.

The current discussion, fitting into evaluation, the third main theme above, focuses on interpreting an evaluation of LST in the context of identifiable social tension in a Pacific Island nation.

The Training in Samoa

LST courses are delivered by a range of providers in Pacific Island countries, such as schools, polytechnics, churches or community training providers. In Samoa, METI has been working since 2001 in the area of non-formal, rural agricultural education. In 2006, it moved into semi-formal, second-chance education.

In 2006, consultant academics from George Brown College, Toronto, Canada, advised METI on LST. After the period of six weeks training and consulting, METI staff became “Life Skills Coaches” to mentor adult learners in life skills and set up farming co-operatives. As a prerequisite to becoming fully fledged trainers, the coaches had to complete the elementary LST course themselves, then the Certificate in Adult Teaching (CAT) from the National University of Samoa, over their first six to twelve months of employment. Once working at METI, the coaches were given the Samoan name *taiala* which translates as “path breakers” or “front-line education and sustainable development workers.”

The LST course delivered in Samoa employs a participatory training methodology. The course has ten units, delivered either as a one-week intensive or a four-week part-time course. Units cover such items as self-disclosure; thinking and feeling; choices and consequences; vertical and lateral thinking; trust; creativity; consensus; working cooperatively; and notably, forgiveness. Participants also reflect on pressing social problems (like climate change, the culture of silence in a society), events or experiences (e.g., tsunamis, family violence, cultural events) and technical agricultural issues (like adopting permaculture principles and practices). Groups of between 12 and 30 villagers meet for periods of 2–4 hours at a time. The ultimate outcome is for participants to develop independent, flexible thinking and “balanced and self-directed behaviour” (Nelson, Low, & Hammett, 2012, p. 243).

To introduce the LST to a village, METI makes a formal presentation to the *pulenu'u*

(village mayor) and other village leaders about the purpose and objectives of the *taiala* programme, after which the Village Council decides whether to accept the programme. If accepted, the *pulenu'u* goes around the village to inform the people, advising amongst other items, that entry is free and open to anyone aged over 18 years.

To date, the LST course has been delivered in 30 rural villages in Samoa with the goals of trying to break the “culture of silence,” to lead to more of a “culture of peace” in villages and society at large and to counter the country’s emerging social problems. METI finds support for its approach in a finding by Smith (2000):

*Problem solving, critique and praxis are crucial for empowerment.
In these can lie the seeds of impetus to empowerment, through the
awakening of dissatisfaction with the status quo. (p. 151)*

The discussion below reports on an evaluation of the LST of 2009 and 2010.

Study Design

The main aim of the evaluation was to assess the efficacy of METI’s LST in Samoa by studying the effects of the training on the graduates’ behaviour, for them as individuals, and for their families, six to twelve months after the course was completed.

To prepare for the evaluation, on a field trip to Samoa in 2010, one of the authors (Brown) gathered basic information about the LST and METI staff’s perceptions of its benefits. There followed a literature review of relevant research, and ethics approval for the evaluation from a large polytechnic in Auckland, New Zealand. Then on a subsequent field trip in 2011, 22 Life Skills Coaches (who had delivered the LST), were trained in data-gathering and interviewing. Over three days in an open house (*fale*), the training on how to conduct evaluations covered topics such as ethics, objectivity, types of questions, asking questions, listening to responses non-judgmentally, note-taking and politeness strategies in evaluation procedures. Brown presented main principles of evaluation in English, then moved to Samoan to explain the information.

Of the 22 *taiala* conducting interviews, 20 were female; ages ranged from 28–55. Women were more available for the work because men were usually working elsewhere, either in town or on family plantations. Part of the interview training was to role-play an interview in the village in groups of three. To prepare coaches to work in pairs in the village interviews, two people took the part of interviewers and one played the interviewee. One person in the pair asked the questions (always in the local Samoan language) and the other person wrote down the answers, which, in the subsequent evaluation proper, appear as quotes in this paper.

Interviews were conducted in Samoan, in ten villages (a total of 182 participants) completing the METI LST course between 2009 and 2010. Held in local village houses, interviews focused on participants’ responses to the LST and possible changes in behaviour and outlook. Separately, interviews also took place with two family members of each course participant (e.g., a brother, a sister, a father, a mother, an auntie), in total, 360 family members. These encounters asked family members for their perceptions of participants’ responses and change. Given some cultural sensitivity to intervention, one of the interviewers took notes of the conversation rather than recording the discussion.

To conduct the interviews, the evaluators went back to their own villages where they were well known and had strong relationships with the participants they had taught in the elementary LST course.

Of the 182 course participants, 25% were males and 75% were women. The 3:1 ratio in favour of females was consistent with the pattern among *taiala* and for the same reasons. The average age of the men was 45 years and of the women 48 years. They had on average of 2–6 children, 60% were married, 20% divorced or separated and 20% single. In education, 60% had up to standard 4 at primary school, 30% had completed fifth form (equivalent Year 11 secondary school in New Zealand and Australia), 10% had completed sixth form (equivalent Year 12 secondary school in New Zealand and Australia), and none had a tertiary qualification. Results were then analysed for trends, drawing on grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The focus in the analysis of the evaluation data is on the trainees, in order to explore the way these participants addressed the dynamics of the social context they were a part of. The interviewees and staff of METI use English a second language, which accounts for certain variations in the form of their statements.

Results

In between the LST and the evaluation, anecdotal reports suggested that some participants were showing a new drive in life and village activities, with notably less verbal and physical aggression. In nine of the ten villages, the participants of the Life Skills course banded together to set up a Farmers and Producers Cooperative. These indications coincide with responses from the interviews. A majority (80%) of the interviewees, both participants and family members, had positive responses about the LST, saying that the course participants' behaviour had, in fact, changed for the better as a result of the course. One further sign of engagement is that 90% of the graduated trainees took up the offer of further training by METI, in this case, in Permaculture. The discussion below extracts themes from the findings, which shed more light on the usefulness of such a second-chance education course for adults.

Discourses of the Evaluation

Examining the language of the evaluations reveals a number of related discourses running through the comments of the participants. A key commentary is a *discourse of distress*, revealing disagreement, argument and violence. A related discourse is of *problem-solving*, usually claiming a willingness to resolve identified issues. Consistent with such an outlook is a discourse of *renewal* or *regeneration* in the face of personal or social distress, addressing changes to behaviour and reversing previous trends. A societal discourse shows an *awareness of others in society*, either acknowledging a need for positive action, or complaining at a lack of action. A final discourse comments on the *efficacy or need for the LST*. In describing extracts from the data, we bear in mind that the comments are part of a retrospective account of the training, and that some are the co-interviewers' accounts of the participants' responses, rather than first-person quotes from the participants.

Some key terms, *aggression*, *disagreement*, *dislike* and *violence* characterise the

discourse of distress. Referring to members of a certain village, for instance, a participant claims, “they always hit their kids and use bad language when they hate their kids,” and another, in almost identical terms, says, “they always swear most of the time, they also hit their kids when they were angry.” Another highlights the context of disagreement: “they didn’t know how to make their family member calm down when having a family *misa* (argument).” Likewise, one participant identifies conditions that contribute to disagreement: “Some of them are very happy [following the LST] because the family member are very selfish before. . .” Similarly, another calls for the LST “[so] that there won’t be able to have too much *fa’avelave* [Samoan for issue, problems, lack of calm] in the village.” Others explicitly recognise violence in the society: “they don’t want any violence also.” Some see the LST as an antidote to perceived problems in society: “This training [LST] helps the members of the family to change their behaviour and helped to protect them from violence.”

Closely related is the discourse of problem-solving: “This training helped them to know how to solve different problems in their families,” says one report. “They can stand on their own to solve their own problems,” says another. A third talks of “preparing a way to communicate with other members of our family for problem solving.” Several of these comments point to ways of creating a more harmonious future: “They learned new ideas from the training to solve their family and individual problems.”

These two themes of social unrest seem to prompt a counter-discourse of renewal or regeneration, often expressed in terms of peace, with positive outcomes for family and other sectors: “We want to have a culture of peace.” “We can develop the family by delivering peace.” “It will also bring peace in our village and especially our family.” In some cases, the participants explicitly identify areas of progress, with echoes of the earlier discourse of distress: “There’s a big change in the family, they love each other and support each other. They never use strong language or swear words any more.” Some comments invoke “virtue,” a major aspect of the LST: “most of them changed a lot in their family and they apply some virtues in their lives.” There is an element of hopeful expectation in some of the claims: “Most of them changed their lives or renewed their lives and try to solve their own problem.” “[T]hey want to encourage the youth of their village to have more knowledge to live with a happy life like the other[s] ha[ve].”

Certain comments reveal a concern for wider elements of society, as summed up in the following brief statement: “We want to have a Life Skills Training in our village again.” The village is consistently present in commentaries: “Life Skills Training is very important in rural areas, so we want all our family members to attend this training so that we will stand together to solve different problems in our village.” Some comments claim sharing or extending skills to others and consequently an ability to act as agents: “They shared the life skills learning to other family members, their friends and other members of the village. They can stand on their own to solve their own problems.” “They also said that they have some new ideas to help them to solve their own problems.” In contrast, one points to a failure to follow through: “But there are two members from Village D that have not been changed, they always hit their kids and use bad language when they hate their kids.”

As suggested above, participants engaged in critiquing the LST course and its effects. One such is almost a back-handed compliment: “Not enough time, because we only have two lessons within a month, but we really want to have the training twice a week.” Some are more forthright: “Saw some big changes and they know that this training helped them to know how to solve different problems in their families.” “Big changes in their lives. They are so happy and love to have that training again.”

In contrast, some are equally categorical about lack of progress: “People don’t understand what we are trying to share about the problem solving with Life Skills lessons. They think we’re not good enough to maintain the programme that we had have [sic].” Certain comments suggest a mixed picture, at times noting little or no change as a result of the LST:

He didn’t share any ideas with his family, He is a smart person but he doesn’t want to expand it, he wasted his time by doing unimportant things and he always go out with his friends.

He didn’t change a lot in our family. He doesn’t want to help others in the family.

Some family agree that their relatives/parents are using life skills in their families but some don’t [their] old behaviour and old attitudes are still [the] same.

Some Life skills people are now changed and some need to have the training again or repeat the course because they’re not using the skill and forget what the life skills training is.

Discussion

Some of the participants’ comments are first-person quotations and others are third-person records by the interviewing team. There is therefore the possibility that the evaluation team constructed the commentaries according to their own interpretation of either the interviews or of the LST itself. So some of the comments cited may reflect the kinds of concerns that characterised the tutoring side of the course rather than the true voice of the participants. While we should therefore read the comments cautiously, two factors suggest a certain veracity to the data. One is that the kinds of discourse analysed above are consistent across the data, including the direct quotations and the reported (third-person) remarks. The other is that there are some sharply differing opinions offered, which does not tend to imply an overall script or an imposed frame.

Taken together, the discourses identified above suggest an awareness of inter-related social issues and an apparent openness to confront them. The pivotal discourse is arguably problem-solving, which both acknowledges that there are areas that need attention and at the same time suggests an orientation to attend to them. Whether or not participants are actually expressing intention to deal with issues, their remarks lay the groundwork for focusing attention on perceived problems around them. As such, they recall Va’ai’s (2011) discussion of the complex, paradoxical concept of *fa’asamoa*.

Fa'asamoa is a framework of perceptions and action because it encompasses the whole social system. It is regarded at various times as a philosophy, a burden, a problem, a buffer; an excuse, a cause, a saving grace. Different contexts determine how it is perceived, and more importantly, it continues to change with time. (p. 32)

In this connection, the discourse oriented to others in society suggests an acknowledgment of community that goes beyond the individual. Throughout the data, there is constant reference to the family as a central entity, and to the village, an important interactive context for families, and a significant element in the concept of *fa'asamoa* described above. In short, various comments hint tangentially at the prospect of promoting socially just relationships, to the extent that those remarks confront issues of anger, harsh language, violence and beating. Families and communities that can address and limit such negativities presumably thereby allow for the productive development of both individuals and groups. “We want to have a culture of peace,” says the participant quoted above, moving into the discourse of renewal. “There’s a big change in our family nowadays.” Another participant sums up these crucial elements: “We really want this training to be held again in our village, because it helps a lot in our families, our village and also the new generation of our village in the future. It will also bring peace in our village and especially our family.”

Coupled with the discourse of renewal, there is then the prospect of building social justice, which by one definition, consists of “equal chance to acquire equal capabilities” as Merkel (2009, p. 45) puts it, quoting Dahrendorf’s reference to “a just distribution of life chances.” In the scope of the current study in Samoa, one could argue that the social distress identified would restrict life chances, whereas constructing more positive life-styles should create potential for acquiring equal capabilities. Put simply, if participants reduce or eliminate violence in the home, there is the chance for all parties, partners, spouses and children, to develop their own potential. Such benefits could then presumably advantage larger entities like the village.

In the light of this relatively optimistic perspective, it is not surprising that a majority of the participants welcome the LST: the training offers hope in the midst of a certain social distress. What to make, then, of those who are unconvinced or negative? Here several related factors may play a part, ranging across psychological, social and educational spheres. It is understandable that some participants would not respond very positively. It is a big call for a short course of the above kind to counter patterns of behaviour that are presumably well-entrenched. Perhaps addressing such a background, one participant suggests, as noted above, “we really want to have the training twice a week.” The orientation of the LST would likely challenge the previous lifestyle of numerous participants, including those with a strongly male-control outlook. And, if indeed the analyses of violence and aggression are correct, we would do well to remember the pervasive effects of dominant social norms, reinforcing previous behaviour and reluctance to change. Meanwhile, it may be that some participants were pressured by family members into joining the course, but without strong commitment. On the other hand a substantial number of the participants voluntarily repeated the

course which implies that they wanted to deepen their understanding of the issues raised in the LST.

Because of the often negative comments from the participants about violence, unseemly behaviour and a lack of peace in villages of the particular LST course evaluated, there is a danger of distorting the picture of wider Samoan society. The concept of *fa'asamoa* suggests strong and enduring positive aspects of society, amongst contradictory social cross-currents, as would well apply in other nations. Hence, to the extent that disturbing social issues are real and unsettling, Samoans could readily point to dimensions of culture that would address identified problems.

The outcomes and findings of the evaluation may have useful implications for other such courses in the LST (e.g., intermediate life skills training where topics such as emotional control and stress reduction are taught) and possibly for other forms of second-chance education. If, for instance, the above kinds of discourse are valid descriptors of the participants' interests and outlooks, they might well be drawn on for course content, following, for example, a cycle of distress → awareness of others → problem-solving → renewal. Each area of discourse could prompt questions for relevant inquiries during a course:

Distress: What causes distress? What are the contexts in which this occurs? What is the nature of the distress?

Awareness of others: In what ways do problematic social issues impact on others? Who is involved? Who is/are otherwise ignored, sidelined or dismissed?

Problem-solving: How to address identified problems? Who can be involved? What support is available?

Renewal: What kind of “imagined community” could emerge? What sound models already exist? What existing institutions might be involved?

Conceivably, processes of this kind might also inform other forms of adult education.

Limitations

Certain limitations should be noted about this evaluation study. First, after only three days' training, the coaches were taking up the role of official interviewer for the first time. Hence they were novice interviewers, which means there may have been lapses in their note-taking and/or in their judgment of the relative importance of information.

Second, this is a small exploratory study and the note-taking took place without the advantage of voice-recording. Third, both course participants and the family members interviewed may represent an engaged cross-section of Samoan villagers. Course participants joining voluntarily might have been highly motivated and their family members might have been just as keen for the training to succeed.

Fourth, interviewees may have wanted to please the interviewers and therefore give answers that the interviewers wanted to hear. Finally, while the interviews were carried out six to twelve months after the LST, it would be an advantage to conduct follow-up studies after 18 months and even two years, to see if behavioural change had held up.

Conclusions and Implications

Participants' comments indicate that the LST has been effective in enhancing and enlightening a key segment of Samoan life. Many of the responses show that individuals are more tolerant of each other and have the capacity to reflect more before responding to life's challenges. If this is true, then social cohesiveness and a "climate of peace" in their homes and villages will have been advanced. A sign of collective cooperation is that graduated trainees also rallied the support of sufficient farmers to set up a Farmers and Producers Cooperative in nine of the 12 villages. The incentive for METI to prepare an LST programme was an expressed concern at social issues. The catalyst for the reasonably positive outcomes was the LST courses that were delivered.

The data from the evaluation suggest a certain momentum among the participants and families, deriving from a number of inter-related responses converging on some significant social issues. Throughout, there is acknowledgment that there are matters of social distress to address. This recognition in itself is an indication of signs of awareness of unsettling situations and a need to act not only in personal, individual terms, but within families and wider social structures in the villages. These developments prompt moves for renewal, displaying signs of dynamism rather than say, resignation or apathy. There is then some pro-active engagement involving goodwill, when there might otherwise have been withdrawal or denial. One distinguishing feature of the METI intervention is that it is home-grown, offering a made-in-Samoa integrity, even though drawing to some extent on invited overseas advice, a very normal aspect of a globalising world. The net effect is a form of conscientisation and/or consciousness-raising, in this case with attention to social forces, though implicitly bearing upon the political dimension of power relations. These moves are possible because of glimpses of attaining an alternative, imagined community, centred around peace.

There is a need in Samoa to further investigate these graduated trainees and their positive, mixed and "no change" responses. Such study could involve deeper interviewing, extended follow-up studies, with a comprehensive research design. Further inquiry of this kind may unlock other doors through providing training for rural residents who are committed to improving their lives.

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Māori language as a subject for instruction in secondary schools 1909–2014

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Abstract

This paper provides an account of the inclusion and development of Māori language as a subject for instruction in New Zealand secondary schools. It begins in 1909, when the language was first offered as a subject for instruction for boys in the denominational Māori boarding schools and ends in 2014. In New Zealand's more recent history, significant changes in the education system have resulted in the establishment of Māori-medium education settings, and this has tended to overshadow a longer history of as-a-subject Māori language taught in schools. Māori language has been offered as a subject for instruction in secondary schools for over a century now, and engaging with this history provides insights into a range of attitudes and beliefs held over time about the rightful place of Māori language both in schools and in New Zealand society.

Māori language as a subject for instruction in secondary schools 1909 – 2014

Māori language as a subject for instruction, rather than a means by which instruction could be facilitated, began very early in New Zealand's educational history. In New Zealand's more recent history, significant changes in the education system have resulted in the establishment of Māori-medium education settings, and this has tended to overshadow a longer history of as-a-subject Māori language taught in schools. Engaging with this longer history helps to challenge a commonly held perception that, in the past, all Māori students were forbidden to speak Māori in school and were punished for doing so. There are some excellent accounts which tell a more accurate and balanced version of this 'common knowledge' history (Barrington, 2008; Simon, Smith, & Cram, 2001). This paper aims to add to the body of literature showing that decisions about the rightful place of Māori language in school were not made easily or without contestation. Consequently Māori language has held a place in secondary education for a substantial part of New Zealand's educational history, albeit for a small number of students for much of that time. The paper traces the introduction of Māori language as a school subject from its beginning in 1909 until the present day against a backdrop of changing attitudes and perceptions held by communities and officials over time.

The 1909 revision of the *Regulations Relating to Native Schools* included for the first time, the study of Māori language as an optional subject for boys in the denominational boarding schools (Barrington & Beaglehole, 1974, p. 181). This small event in history could easily be mistaken as unremarkable, especially because the number of students

involved was very small. In 1910 there were 381 pupils attending the Māori boarding schools, including those in the primary departments (Barrington & Beaglehole, 1974, p. 178). However, when considered against the background of attitudes towards the Māori language and the educational policy of the time, it can be seen in fact, as quite remarkable. At this time in New Zealand's history, most students' education concluded at the end of primary school, so an understanding of the provision of primary education and the limited opportunity for post-primary education for Māori students is necessary to understand why the inclusion of Māori language in the denominational secondary schools is worthy of some attention.

During this period education policy was shaped by an overarching goal of assimilation, as declared in the preamble to the *Native Trust Ordinance* of 1844:

And whereas great disasters have fallen upon uncivilised nations on being brought into contact with colonists from the nations of Europe, and in undertaking the colonisation of New Zealand Her Majesty's Government has recognised the duty of endeavouring by all practical means to avert the like disasters from the native people of these islands, which object may best be attained by assimilating as speedily as possible the habits and usages of the native to those of the European population. (National Library of New Zealand, 2014)

Assimilation was seen, not only as an appropriate policy to pursue at this time, but in fact, one that must be beneficial to the natives as a means of avoiding the 'great disasters' of earlier colonisation experiences, and education was viewed as a key means by which this goal could be achieved.

Provision for the education of Māori had been made very early on through the mission schools, the first of which opened in 1816. However, instruction in these schools took place in Māori, and by the late 1860s a belief had emerged among government officials that missionary schooling was proving ineffective in achieving the goals of assimilation (Stephenson, 2008). In 1867 the Native Schools Act was passed establishing state control of Māori education. Secular village day schools were created which were to be controlled and administered by the Department of Native Affairs. These were primary schools and were chiefly for Māori, although non-Māori could also attend if they chose and attendance was voluntary. The language of instruction was to be English as far as practicable, but Native teachers could be employed to teach in Native Schools in remote districts if it proved impossible to employ an English speaking teacher. The whole system was considered to be transitory; as soon as the children in the district had learnt enough English, the school could become an ordinary district school (Barrington & Beaglehole, 1974).

The parliamentary debates that took place when the 1867 Native Schools Bill was read indicate a unanimous agreement that English must be taught in these schools. Some members expressed strong opinions about the inferiority of the Māori language, and the need to provide education in the English language in order to achieve the civilisation and assimilation of the Māori people. For example, Hugh Carleton, Member for the Bay of Islands and a former Inspector of Native Schools, stated that Māori could never

be civilised through the medium of their own language because it was “imperfect as a medium of thought”, and that “civilisation could only be carried out by means of a perfect language” (NZPD, 1867, p. 863). Interestingly, while there is unanimous agreement that the English language must be taught in schools, others saw the benefit of including Māori language in the curriculum. One member, Mr Graham, considered Māori language to be a fit medium for reading and writing, albeit as a precursor to learning English. He argued that “the Bill did not go far enough, as they should first teach the Natives to read and write in their own language” (NZPD, 1867, p. 866).

The provision of secondary education for Māori students

The 1877 Education Act, which established free, compulsory and secular schooling for all children between the ages of 7 and 13, made only token provision for the establishment of state secondary schools. Apart from some district high schools where a secondary department was attached to a rural primary school, and ‘industrial’ schools for adolescent lawbreakers, secondary schools remained voluntary and fee-paying until 1944 (Grant, 2003). A review of education carried out in 1880 by Inspector of Māori schools James Pope, and the Inspector-General of Schools, W. Habens, included consideration of the question of further education. It was agreed that the most able Māori pupils who had passed through the primary schools should be provided with some opportunity for continuing their studies and a scholarship scheme was developed which would entitle ‘clever’ Māori children to two years of study at a denominational boarding school. At the completion of the two years it was intended that students should return to their home communities. The purpose of this policy was explained by Pope:

At the end of such a period they would be educated Māoris, able and probably willing to do much good among their own people to whom they should always return. If an attempt is made to Europeanize them thoroughly, and to separate them from their relatives, the result will probably be that they will eventually become either strong reactionaries or a sort of Pakeha-Maori (AJHR, 1881, p. 11).

Pope, like many of his contemporaries, believed Māori people should be Europeanised, but he also believed that changes to Māori society needed to be gradual and made without giving up what was good and desirable in their own culture (Barrington, 2008).

In 1903 the Secondary Schools Act established two years of free secondary education for all students with a Proficiency Certificate. The Proficiency examination was a departmentally sanctioned, school-leaving qualification which signalled that its holder had achieved a high level of primary education. While Māori students who held Proficiency Certificates were entitled to these two years of free secondary education, the government high schools were usually long distances from the centres of Māori population, so few Māori families were able to make use of this education opportunity (Openshaw, Lee, & Lee, 1993). Hence, secondary education for Māori students at this time was provided largely by the denominational high schools, and in contrast to what was occurring in primary schools, Māori language came into existence as a subject of

instruction in these schools.

An explanation for this exception to the education policy of the time regarding the place of the Māori language in schools was offered by Education Department officials. They perceived value in the employment of young Māori in minor civil service positions. Recognising that such careers would require these men to communicate with Māori-speaking communities, it was deemed useful for educated Māoris to study their own language. “Because it is desirable to foster the study of their own language by educated Māoris, the Māori language and literature are included in the syllabus of the Native secondary schools” (AJHR, 1909, p. 9).

It is worth noting some other important milestones in the introduction of Māori as-a-subject that suggest it gained a reasonable degree of recognition as an option both at secondary and university levels. It was introduced as a subject for Matriculation in 1918 and University Entrance in 1929 which were examinations students sat in their third or fourth year of high school. It was first introduced as a BA subject in 1929 (Openshaw et al., 1993). Over this period it appears that Māori language was viewed as a suitable subject for a small number of Māori students who were likely to take up leadership roles.

1930s: A decade of changing attitudes

The appointment of Douglas Ball in 1928 as Inspector of Native Schools resulted in modification of what had been uncompromisingly assimilationist education policies at the official level. Post-primary education was still not widespread, so changing attitudes towards the Māori language are evidenced in comments and policy change that was happening in the Native Schools in the primary sector. These changes were to prove significant enough that, nearly twenty years later, not long after secondary education became more widely available, the Māori language would become a School Certificate Examination subject, and hence a subject for instruction in state secondary schools.

In 1930 the Department of Education surveyed 1,000 students in Standard 4, Form I and Form II in 92 Native Schools and, based on the results, estimated that Māori was the only language used in 99.6% of Māori homes (Barrington & Beaglehole, 1974, p. 159). The survey concluded that the assimilationist doctrine of early native schooling was now outdated and inappropriate. Ball responded to the survey by identifying a need to restore to the Māori his pride of race, initiative and confidence, and issued guidelines to Native School teachers which formed the core of Māori education policy in the 1930s and early 1940s. Māori arts and crafts were included in the curriculum but there was still no officially sanctioned place for the systematic teaching through, or of, the Māori language at the primary level (Openshaw et al., 1993). However, despite its continued exclusion from primary schools in the 1930s there was significantly increased interest and comment about the place of Māori language in the education of Māori children, and the origins of a notion that the Māori language might be tied up with the identity of all New Zealanders.

In his later work on the Native Schools, John Barrington (2008) identifies significant influences on the changing attitudes towards the place of Māori language and culture in education policy at this time. The first came from the discipline of anthropology. Some

anthropologists took up the idea of cultural relativism, or the idea that different human cultures are equally valid when judged according to their own terms of reference, and this idea became fashionable (Barrington, 2008). The Progressive Education movement, led by John Dewey, which emphasised learning by doing, and the dissolving of barriers between school and community was very influential in New Zealand education (Couch, 2012; Mutch, 2013). Douglas Ball was, in his own words, “prepared to apply the philosophy in Native schools” (cited in Barrington, 2008, p. 176). This was to result in the introduction of Māori arts and crafts into the Native School programmes, and a beginning was made to engage with what Ball described as the “emotional life of the Māori” (cited in Barrington, 2008, p. 176).

The place of Māori language in education continued to be debated during this period. The Native School inspectors and some Māori themselves continued to express the view that the introduction of Māori language instruction would impede, rather than facilitate, the effective teaching of English. In 1930, influential Māori leader Apirana Ngata expressed the view that the primary purpose of the Native Schools was to teach English. “Māori parents do not like their children being taught in Māori even in the Māori schools, as they argue that the children are sent there to learn English and the ways of the English” (cited in Barrington & Beaglehole, 1974, p. 206). However, his expectation was that children would be bilingual. Māori language would be the language of the home, but English would be the language of the school. By the late 1930s Ngata had become so aware of the possibility of language loss that he began to argue forcefully for Māori pupils to learn both English and Māori stating his belief that “nothing was worse than for one to be with Māori features but without his own language” (cited in Barrington & Beaglehole, 1974, p. 207).

Ngata’s later concerns relating to the Māori language had been conveyed much earlier by other educationalists at the 1930 New Zealand Teachers’ Summer School. The theme for the 1930 Summer School was “Education and the Māori Race” (Jackson, 1931, p. xii) and the proceedings were published as a book the following year. Mere Hall, the Principal of Hukarere School in Napier spoke of her concern for Māori students unable to speak their own language: “The tendency today is to ape the Pakeha and be ashamed of being Māori. The result is not satisfactory. They are neither good Māoris nor good Pakehas, even in the matter of language the average Māori boy and girl can speak neither correct Māori nor correct English” (Hall, 1931, p. 278). She concluded that the study of their own language should hold an important place in the school curriculum.

Another Summer School contributor, psychologist Dr I.L.G. Sutherland, asked people to understand the very great psychological difficulties the Māori had to cope with. He considered the use of English only in the Native Schools and Māori at home and elsewhere had resulted in many Māori “divided and confused as to whether to try to be a European or to try and be a ‘good’ Māori” (Sutherland, 1931, p. 86). While he agreed that there was a need to teach the English language to Māori children, he expressed concerns for Māori children caught up in this confusion because of his belief in a peculiarly close relationship between language and mental development. He later developed this idea further explaining that “some Māori children acquire their own

language very imperfectly; some do not acquire their own language at all; some acquire English thoroughly and some do not get a real grip on either language. Schooling Māori children in English often results in their alternating between the languages or even blending them in ways which make clear and sustained thinking practically impossible” (Sutherland, 1935, p. 113). Sutherland concluded that the teaching of Māori language was a psychological necessity.

It is interesting too, to note the suggestion of one contributor, Patrick Smyth from St Stephen’s College, that not only was the Māori language of vital importance to Māori people but something all New Zealanders could potentially share: “Māori has a right to his language, and we have no right to take it from him; ...the Māori language should be known in its purity, and should be encouraged as a national bond” (Smyth, 1931, p. 240). However, alternative views were also expressed. T.B Strong, the Director of Education, could see no reason for the Māori retaining the use of his/her own language, expressing a belief that “a knowledge of the Māori language is unnecessary to natives who know only English. The Māori language has no literature and consequently in this direction, too, the natural abandonment of the native tongue inflicts no loss on the Māori” (Strong, 1931, p. 193).

Against a background of changes in policy and attitudes in the primary sector, Māori became a compulsory subject for both boy and girl government scholars in the denominational boarding schools in 1931. At this time there seemed to be a focus on developing leadership amongst a small group of Māori students. In his annual report on the Native Schools, W. Bird refers to funding and scholarships that enable “the best pupils to continue their studies in the direction of enabling them to be leaders amongst Māoris” (AJHR, 1931, p. 2) and, later in the same report, states that “the provision of a definite academic course for about 10 per cent of the pupils is necessary” (p. 4). It seems from these comments that there was perceived value in encouraging effective leadership among Māori, perhaps in the likeness of current leaders like Ngata and Pomare, and an implicit understanding held that to be effective leaders of their own people, educated Māori would continue to need to be proficient in the language that was still being spoken by a large majority of their own people.

In 1937 the new Labour Government abolished the primary school Proficiency Certificate so that all children could have access to secondary schooling without having to pass an examination. This led to hugely increased numbers of primary students entering secondary school, from 58% in 1935 to 92% in 1949 and close to 100% in 1955 (Grant, 2003, p. 15). In 1941, the first Native District High Schools were opened as the Government recognised the need for additional secondary facilities for Māori pupils who at this time continued to live in rural areas. The high schools were intended to bring education into the closest touch with the realities of Māori life (Barrington & Beaglehole, 1974). In accordance with this aim Māori language was included as a subject for instruction.

School Certificate and the expansion of Māori language as a subject in schools

The *Education (Post-Primary) Regulations* were published in 1945 giving effect to the recommendations of the Thomas Report, including the introduction of School

Certificate (Openshaw, 1995). The Thomas Report recommended a core curriculum based on the idea of providing a generous and well balanced education for post-primary students with a wide range of abilities and interests, and led to the common core curriculum being established for all secondary schools. It also recommended that, in as many schools as possible, the study of Māori should be fostered, and “if it is taught full advantage should be taken of the opportunities that here exist to reveal it as the ‘living language of a living people’ and to use it as a vehicle for the understanding of the culture it expresses” (Department of Education, 1944, p. 70). When the School Certificate Examination was introduced in 1946 Māori language was included as an examinable subject and thus became a subject for instruction in mainstream state secondary schools.

The 1950s saw a growth in concern for the education of Māori youth, partly stimulated by the comparatively low numbers of Māori students staying at school past Form IV, and by the increasing number of Māori students in city schools due to rural–urban migration. In response, the Government established the National Committee on Māori Education in 1955. There was strong Māori representation on this committee, and its establishment gave Māori a direct voice on issues relating to the education of their children (Ronald, 1972). The Committee voiced its support for the teaching of the Māori language and recommended that that everything possible be done to implement it. The Committee proceeded to set up a further body in 1958, the Māori Language Advisory Committee, which was to advise on standards and forms of Māori language and to oversee the production of text material for the teaching of Māori in secondary schools.

In 1960, the Report of the Department of Māori Affairs (or Hunn Report) was released (Hunn, 1960). After surveying the fields of education, employment, crime, health, housing and welfare, Hunn concluded that Māori were a depressed ethnic minority. Hunn argued that education had a major part to play in the economic and social advancement of the Māori, but that at the time of the report they were underachieving compared to Pākehā. Perhaps more significantly, the Hunn Report rejected the policy of assimilation which had shaped New Zealand’s education policy since 1844 and offered an alternative of ‘integration’, an equal partnership which would “combine (not fuse) the Māori and Pakeha elements to form one nation wherein Māori culture remains distinct”(Hunn, 1960, p. 15).

The Hunn Report was followed in 1962 by the Report of the Commission on Education in New Zealand, known as the Currie Report which collected evidence from a wide variety of educational organisations in order to take stock of the educational situation. This resulted in the emergence of disquieting data of an educational gap between Māori and non-Māori students. Without explaining its perceived value, the Currie Commission recommended “that the Māori language continue as an optional subject in secondary schools but begin with other languages at the form 1 level, and that efforts be made to foster its teaching in schools that have many Māori pupils” (1962, p. 436). Implicit in this recommendation seems to be the understanding that learning Māori language may be of benefit to the educational achievement of Māori students.

Increased awareness of the educational underachievement of Māori students during

the 1960s seems to have been paralleled by an expansion of the teaching of Māori as a second language (Benton, 1981; Grant, 2003). Benton claims that this was made possible in no small way by the work of John Waititi who produced the set of *Te Rangatahi* text books, published between 1962 and 1964, and by Mrs Beth Ranapia who, until her death in 1974, planned and edited most of the Department of Education's Māori language publications for use in secondary schools. At this time Māori language teaching was book-based and the syllabus centred on preparing for School Certificate and University Entrance Examinations (Grant, 2003).

Attitudes towards the Māori culture and language continued to shift. Reflecting on her career, Myrtle Simpson (1968), previously a school inspector, noted that the rejection of all things Māori in the Native School curriculum, coupled with the emphasis on English, had resulted in the forced separation of Native Schools from Māori ways of life and traditions. However, in later years she believed there was a change and that elements of traditional Māori culture had come to be regarded as valuable in themselves.

These shifting attitudes extended to include attitudes towards the Māori language and the extent to which it was being taught in schools. What starts to emerge during this period of time is much greater discussion of a concept that was later to become known as biculturalism and the role of the Māori language in developing and contributing to the unique cultural background of New Zealanders. In a letter to the editor published in the *Journal of the Polynesian Society* in 1965, a writer expressed the belief that too much emphasis was being placed on making a Māori a European and that New Zealand's cultural background must contain both *Māoritanga* and *pākehātanga*. The letter concludes that "it is time that sincere efforts were made by the Education authorities to provide a foundation of teachers to make possible the eventual teaching of the Māori language in all secondary schools" (Masters, 1965, p. 12).

By 1966 there were 1886 Māori secondary school pupils learning Māori as a school subject and over the next five years the number grew steadily until, by 1971, this number had risen to 3048 (Ronald, 1972, p. 25). Shifting attitudes and perhaps increased resourcing appeared to be having an effect on what was taking place in the schools themselves.

The 1970s: Growing awareness of Māori language issues

The 1970s marked a significant shift in attitudes towards the Māori language. At this time Māori groups had begun to raise the political profile of issues related to unresolved Treaty of Waitangi grievances and while the issues were largely land related, this period of 'renaissance' (Walker, 1990) resulted in the general public becoming much more aware of Māori issues. At the same time, the decline in the use of the Māori language became increasingly apparent and greater attention began to be directed at its survival (Benton, 1977, 1979). Educational policy reflected this shift and began to move away from previous principles of assimilation and adaptation and towards biculturalism.

Awareness of Māori language issues was significantly increased when the first major survey to look at the state of Māori language commenced in 1973 by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER). The findings of this research showed an alarming decline in the number of fluent speakers, and that, outside the institution of

the marae, Māori people tended to speak English. The survey raised serious questions as to whether the Māori language would survive beyond the generation of that time (Benton, 1977, 1979). By the end of the 1970s, concerns for the future of the Māori language which had been expressed since the beginning of the urban migration became more insistent, and Māori became increasingly active in responding to the precarious state of the Māori language.

In addition to concerns about the state of the Māori language, figures released in 1970 revealed a worsening situation in relation to Māori educational achievement. In 1969, only 15.9% of Māori students passed School Certificate in three or more subjects (Grant, 2003). While not reflected in educational policy at this time, there is evidence to suggest that discussions in the education community were taking place about possible links between the greater inclusion of Māori language in the curriculum and the educational achievement of Māori children. Lester Ronald, for example, found that Māori language teachers and school principals in Auckland at this time considered that Māori language study would help Māori children to achieve better at school and enhance their self-worth because of the common bond that would be created through the entry of Pākehā children into the Māori domain (Ronald, 1972).

Benton (1981) argues the effects on Māori pupils of the inclusion of Māori language in the curriculum varied greatly from one school to another. As an example he describes how, in one school, Māori language was regarded as a second-rate subject when it was introduced in 1972. However, five years later, all Māori pupils were studying Māori and according to teachers in the school, success in Māori had overlapped to their other subjects. Later on in the decade, in an attempt to provide evidence of this link, Peter Ranby (1979), in an extensive survey of North Island secondary school children, found that the presence or absence of Māori language courses in the curriculum at the time (1973–1974) had no measurable effect on the self-concept of Māori children. However, he did note that the absence of a demonstrable relationship does not prove that a relationship does not exist, or that psychological well-being or behaviour remain unaffected, because of a number of school and pupil-related variables (Ranby, 1979).

In discussions relating to changes in educational policy, the discourse seemed largely to be informed by the notion of improved social relations between Māori and Pākehā. This is apparent in the 1970 Report of the National Committee on Māori Education which outlined two key things that Māori wanted from the education system: the first was that cultural differences needed to be understood and respected by all students and teachers and the second was that a place must be found in the curriculum for the understanding of Māoritanga, including the Māori language.

A similar idea is conveyed in a petition circulated by Mrs H.M. Jackson, a member of Nga Tamatoa¹ Council regarding the greater availability of the Māori language in the early 1970s. The English part of the petition reads:

To the Honourable Speaker and the Members of the House of Representatives of New Zealand in Parliament assembled. We the undersigned, do humbly pray that courses in Māori language and aspects of Māori culture be offered in ALL those schools with large

1 Nga Tamatoa was a Māori activist group who were originally formed at the University of Auckland (King, 2003)

Māori rolls and that these same courses be offered, as a gift to the Pakeha from the Māori in ALL other New Zealand schools as a positive effort to promote a more meaningful concept of integration. (Ronald, 1972, p. 22)

There were many resulting expressions of personal opinion that appeared in the press as a consequence of this petition (Ronald, 1972), but again, it is interesting to note the expression of an idea that the Māori language has the potential to improve social relations by assisting with meaningful integration.

The Government of the time indicated that the time was right for a decisive policy statement on the teaching of Māori in schools. In a speech at the meeting of the National Advisory Committee on Māori Education on the 21 August 1974, the Hon Phillip Amos offered his thoughts about the place of Māori language in schools. Like Jackson, he saw its potential to improve race relations claiming, “greater acceptance of Māori language will improve understanding by schools and parents and assist better race relations” (Amos, 1974, p. 4). Amos was also aware of the relative isolation of the Māori language in secondary school, noting that, while there was an expansion of the teaching of Māori language, students were learning Māori as a second language and that there was “some danger of it being treated as an academic exercise, another subject for School Certificate” (Amos, 1974, p. 5). Amos suggested that Māori language programmes needed rethinking so that they worked cumulatively from early classes towards the more advanced study available at secondary schools. However, when they emerged, the policy guidelines were conservative. The Minister simply called for a planned sequential syllabus incorporating elements of Māori language, defined as “pronunciation of Māori; common words and phrases, simple oral conversation” as part of the primary school Māori studies course, and for “the teaching of Māori as a genuine option in secondary schools for those who wish to take it” (Amos, 1974, p. 5).

The notion of biculturalism was growing in popularity in the 1970s. By the late 1970s an idea was emerging that both the Māori language and the Māori culture were important to the cultural identity of all New Zealanders. Director of Māori and Pacific Island Education, A.F. Smith, argued that the Māori language had come to be seen as an essential ingredient in New Zealand education, and with other aspects of Māori culture, a source of sustenance for the growth of a New Zealand identity (Benton, 1981).

At this time changes were occurring in secondary schools. The number of students learning Māori language increased during the 1970s as did the number of students presenting themselves as candidates for the School Certificate Examination. In contrast to the previous decade when, between 1962 and 1972, there was no real increase in the popularity of Māori as an examination subject, there was a dramatic change as the number of students presenting themselves for the School Certificate Examination increased from 331 students in 1970, to 2089 in 1979 (Benton, 1981). The number of Māori students learning Māori language in secondary schools had increased from 2,249 in 1969 to 6,850 in 1973 and by the end of the decade the number was around 15,000 (Benton, 1981). Similarly, while just 52 secondary schools taught Māori in 1971 the number continued to increase; by 1990 there were 222 secondary schools teaching Māori (Grant, 2003).

As early as 1940, concern had been expressed that high school curricula continued to be dictated by the requirements of national examinations. In 1972 the Department of Education was forced to concede that the School Certificate Examination had become the fifth form teaching syllabus (Lee & Lee, 1992) and likewise it is probable that a similar sentiment existed amongst teaching professionals regarding the influence of the University Entrance Examination on the seventh form teaching syllabus. In the absence of a national syllabus, the examination requirements certainly appear to have provided the general shape of Māori language courses taught at the time, as well as being heavily influenced by the available text of the time, John Waititi's *Te Rangatahi* series. Timoti Karetu also contributed to the resources available to secondary teachers at this time with his book, *Te Reo Rangatira, a course in Māori for sixth and seventh forms*, published in 1974.

Benton (1981) notes the effect of the twin ideas of 'second language teaching' and 'less able students' continued to leave their mark on the development of Māori language courses in New Zealand schools at this time, partly because of the ambiguity in the ministerial statements and a lack of adequate guidance and resource materials. It was often not considered a genuine subject option and Benton refers to schools in which it was offered only to students in non-examination classes or to students in non-academic courses. Other schools refused to offer the subject despite parental demand and the availability of the Correspondence School courses.

The 1970s also saw the emergence of support for bilingual education, influenced by the work of Richard Benton. Benton argued that, for Māori-speaking children, some form of bilingual schooling was a right, and asked whether it should be the right of all New Zealanders (Benton, 1973). In his well-known book, *The Flight of the Amokura*, published in 1981, he argued that by the 1970s it had become apparent that teaching the Māori language as a subject was not an effective way of creating bilingual individuals, and that the way forward was the development of bilingual schools. Subsequently, the Department of Education agreed to the establishment of a bilingual programme at Ruatoki School in the Bay of Plenty in 1976, a decision which was to foreshadow the huge changes that were to occur in Māori education in the 1980s.

As-a-subject Māori language education and Māori-medium education

The 1980s was a period during which some Māori, disenchanted with the state school system, embarked on their own programme of educational reform, resulting in a separate Māori education system known as Kura Kaupapa Māori. This was also the period of a clear separation between as-a-subject Māori language education and the establishment of Māori-medium education, that is, instruction in the medium of Māori language.

Despite the huge changes that were occurring in Māori education elsewhere, as-a-subject Māori language education continued largely unchanged in mainstream secondary schools, although there was heightened interest and focus on Māori language education evident in the 1984 Review of the Core Curriculum for Schools (Department of Education, 1984). This review was an examination of the structure and balance of the compulsory core curriculum in both primary and secondary education, which had not been modified since the recommendations of the Thomas Report (1944) took effect.

The Review made a number of significant comments relating to the place of the

Māori language within schools. While it did not recommend that it should be part of the compulsory core curriculum, it made strong suggestions that its development within schools should be fostered as far as possible. The Review noted that, while there was still no syllabus for Māori language, both a primary and secondary syllabus were being prepared. While *Tihē Mauri Ora* (Ministry of Education, 1990), a syllabus for primary school, was eventually developed the only available national ‘syllabus’ for Māori language in secondary schools continued to be the examination prescriptions for the School Certificate and University Entrance examinations until the *Te Reo Māori i roto i te Marautanga o Aotearoa* (Ministry of Education, 1996) curriculum statement was written. This curriculum statement was published in 1996 as part of the project that saw curriculum statements published for the seven learning areas mandated in schools in the 1990s. What was interesting about this curriculum statement was that it was primarily created for Māori immersion classes:

kua tuhia te tauākī marautanga nei hei tautoko i ngā mahi o ngā whakaakoranga rumaki ki te reo. Heoi anō rā, kei konei anō ngā painga mō ngā ākonga katoa e ako ana i te reo Māori [this curriculum statement has been written to support Māori immersion classes. However, it will also provide benefits for all students learning te reo Māori, author’s translation]. (p. 11)

When a new national qualification system called the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) was established in 2001, two significant decisions were made in relation to the assessment of Māori language. The first was that *Te Reo Māori i roto i te Marautanga o Aotearoa* would be the curriculum statement that all achievement standards were created against, which in effect signalled that this curriculum statement was to be shared by English-medium and Māori-medium schools. The second decision was to create two different sets of achievement standards: *te reo Māori* standards which were written for students learning Māori as a second language for three or four hours a week in mainstream secondary schools and which loosely corresponded with levels 1, 2 and 3 of the curriculum statement, and *te reo Rangatira* standards which were written corresponding with levels 6, 7 and 8 of the curriculum statement for students involved in immersion or bilingual education. This was the first recognition of the existence of two distinct groups of Māori language learners seeking qualifications at secondary schools.

Renewed interest in as-a-subject Māori language programmes?

The curriculum statement *Te aho arataki marau mo te ako i te reo Māori/Curriculum guidelines for teaching and learning te reo Māori in English-medium schools* (Ministry of Education, 2009b) specifically created for as-a-subject Māori language programmes in English-medium setting was finally published in 2009. However, there has been much interest in the recent years in supporting the growth of high quality kaupapa Māori education (Ministry of Education, 2009a). This current decade has seen the Government continue to publish documents announcing its continued interest and support of Māori-medium education despite the fact that the majority of Māori learners are in English-

medium settings. *Tau Mai te Reo*, the most recent Māori language strategy document, provides a rationale for this continued emphasis: “While most Māori learners are within English medium education settings, Māori medium education increases the ability of the education system to deliver for and with Māori learners, their families, whānau and iwi” (Ministry of Education, 2013b, p. 9).

Statistics certainly do indicate that a large majority of students learning as-a-subject Māori are doing so in English-medium settings. In 2013 there were 141,054 students learning Māori language this way, in contrast to the 17,343 students who are in Māori-medium school settings (Ministry of Education, 2013a). Despite the emphasis on Māori-medium education, *Tau Mai te Reo* has the broad goal of improving the provision of quality Māori language education in both Māori and English-medium settings, and explicitly contains the goal of providing support for Māori language education in the English-medium sector. This suggests that there is some acknowledgement of the need to not overlook this kind of Māori language education.

Concluding comments

This paper has provided an account of the inclusion and development of Māori language as a subject for instruction in New Zealand secondary schools from 1909 until the present day. It has demonstrated that, over time, the place of the Māori language as a subject for instruction in secondary schools has been debated and challenged. A reoccurring theme emerges in the account relating to the question of purpose. What is the purpose of as-a-subject Māori language education? In 1909 it was viewed as a subject suitable for a minority of Māori students who were likely to take up leadership positions among their own people, while in more recent decades it has expanded to include any New Zealand student interested in learning the language as a secondary school subject. As-a-subject Māori language education has been somewhat overshadowed by Māori-medium education since its establishment but statistics indicate that the majority of students learning Māori language in secondary schools are doing so in mainstream English-medium settings. As this paper has shown, as attitudes and beliefs about the role of Māori language in education have changed, so too, has the intended purpose of its inclusion as a subject. Given the background of ongoing concern about the progress of Māori language revitalisation and the number of students learning Māori this way at present, it may well be that the purpose of as-a-subject Māori language education will change again in the not-too-distant future.

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A five-pointed star: Enhancing explorations into English teaching in the Mekong

Lesley Harbon, Tinh Quoc Lap and Kevin Laws

Teachers and teacher educators in four Southeast Asian countries and Australia have been exploring teacher professional learning in a project that builds upon existing continuing teacher education in each country. The five points of the star in our paper title represent the image used especially by our Laos colleagues to conceptualise integrated strategies for working with teacher professional learning. Two of the four Southeast Asian teams have conducted teacher professional learning programs by exploring English language teacher development. This paper: (i) outlines teacher development in the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam; (ii) describes the project model which has enabled our research to be undertaken; (iii) examines the group network of the larger Southeast Asian group of colleagues and its potential to impact on teacher development in the Mekong; and (iv) outlines the outcomes of the project to date, commenting on possible applications to other similar contexts.

Keywords: teacher professional learning; English teaching; Mekong; Southeast Asia

Introduction

In 2000 UNICEF and the World Education Forum stated that, in order to keep children in school and ensure meaningful learning outcomes, efforts to expand school enrolment rates must be accompanied by initiatives to improve the quality of education, in particular, through continuing professional development programs for teachers (UNICEF, 2000).

Student learning is strongly influenced by what and how teachers teach. Teaching young people is a complex activity which is influenced by teachers' knowledge and beliefs, the subjects they teach and, given the constraints of the curriculum, about what they think is important to teach the students in their classes about that subject. Teaching is also influenced by the ways in which teachers think how their students learn and how effectively they manage the classroom and the learning activities they design for their students (Timperley, 2008). Building the individual and collective capacity of teachers is critical in increasing the capacity of educational organisations in order to promote student learning. As Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, and Thomas (2006, p. 221) state:

Capacity is a complex blend of motivation, skill, positive learning, organisational conditions and culture, and infrastructure of support ... it provides the power to get involved in and sustain learning over time. Developing professional learning communities (PLCs) appears to hold considerable promise for capacity building for sustainable improvement.

Continuing teacher professional development is a complex and problematic area. Ingvarson (1998) distinguishes between the traditional system of professional development (often identified as in-service training) and the standards-based system of professional development. In the traditional system it was common for employers to stipulate policy on professional learning (as an example, see New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 2004) and for governments to establish the purposes and goals of the focus of teacher continuing professional development. In the latter “standards-based system” professional teacher associations have greater input into deciding goals and implementing the professional development models. In the former system labelled by Ingvarson as “traditional”, the models used have most often been short-term courses and workshops which are not necessarily related to practical issues of classroom teaching. Under the latter system there are more opportunities to meet the real needs of teachers in practical ways. Though neither system will ever be considered perfect or attending to all teachers’ and school contexts’ needs, they both remain important because both models will offer variety, and variety is likely to meet a wider number of teachers’ needs.

The governments of many Southeast Asian countries have made considerable progress in increasing school enrolment rates since 2000, and they recognise the need to improve the quality of education. However, there have been very few efforts to enhance the skills and knowledge of practising teachers. A study in Vietnam found that 76% of upper secondary school teachers required retraining both in terms of their subject and/or pedagogical knowledge and skills (Pham, 2004). In many countries, teaching means transmitting knowledge to students. Teachers are not considered as partners in the construction of knowledge with students (Le, 2013). Learning has been understood as consuming knowledge without questioning how pre-packaged knowledge is meaningful to learners’ lives. Such teaching and learning practices ignore social skills as such as critical thinking, creativity, communication and collaboration (Trilling & Fadel, 2012) that learners of the 21st century need to be equipped with. The strategic plan for development of education in Vietnam from 2011 to 2020 indicated that teachers in schools lack pedagogical knowledge and skills to help students develop such desirable competencies. Regarding research capacity, especially in doing action research, the strategic plan also revealed that in-service teachers’ research skills are too far from satisfactory, due to their shortage of problem-identifying skills, observation skills and knowledge of research methodology (Ministry of Education and Training, Vietnam, 2013). This issue is common in other Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia, Laos and Thailand. According to the World Bank, irrelevant curriculum and under-qualified teachers in these countries have resulted in low internal efficiency within schools leading to high student repetition and dropout rates (Heyneman, 2003).

English language education is a high priority in many countries in the Southeast Asian region. English language education is seen as an important guarantee of an individual’s internationalized education. English language education is flourishing in the region. Both English teacher initial education for beginning teachers, and English language teacher professional development for teachers’ ongoing education throughout their careers, are essential for these countries.

The image of the “five pointed star” was introduced to the project participants by Laos colleagues and it seems particularly apt, because it not only represents the five universities involved, but also captures the integrative essence of activity-based learning, the benefits of group learning, the development and use of context-appropriate learning and teaching technologies and resources, the importance of questioning both in the classroom and on the professional development journey, and the necessity to focus professional development on elements that matter in the classroom.

This paper outlines the key issues for English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching and English teacher development in the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam through one case in one university. The paper describes our project model which has enabled our research in this part of the region to be undertaken. The paper examines how a five-country collaboration between colleagues involved in teacher education in Indonesia, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam and Australia has impacted on the work of the group members and, in particular, those involved in ELT in the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam. The paper also outlines the outcomes of the project to date.

Background context

The story of our project began with a group of educators from teacher education institutions in Australia, Indonesia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam who planned and implemented a series of teacher professional development projects aimed at changing teacher practice and impacting positively on student learning outcomes in school classrooms.

In 2009 two teacher educators from a university in Sydney contacted colleagues in teacher education faculties in teacher preparation institutions in Indonesia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam, to assess their interest in being a part of a cross-national group which would focus on issues in continuing teacher professional development in the following year.

The group received Australian Government funding from the Australian Leadership Award Fellowship (ALAF) scheme, and 16 educators – two teacher educators and two classroom teachers from each of the four Southeast Asian countries – travelled to Sydney in November 2010 to participate in workshops on developing models of in-service teacher education suitable for each of the four contexts. The first two phases of the project have operated with the title, “Re-forming Teacher Professional Development Programs in Southeast Asia”.

In November 2010, the first meeting of the group of 18 comprised a two-week intensive capacity-building program at the university in Sydney for senior academics and leading school teachers from universities and schools in Indonesia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam. The program’s goal was to improve the quality of school education and student learning in Southeast Asia through the development of sustainable and region-specific models of continuing teacher professional development.

While at the university in Sydney in November 2010, the whole team met and discussed education practitioners’ current practices, issues, needs and best-practice professional development programs for teachers which could be applicable to local contexts. While in Sydney the group of 18 made observations of practice and developed

action plans and follow-up activities.

Project participants met at the university in Vietnam in June 2011 to review progress and plan future steps in the project. At that meeting it was decided that the group would meet again at the partner university in Thailand in December 2011. At that time a monograph recording the project's development and successes was to be launched. It was also decided that in 2012 further project meetings would be held in Vientiane (Laos), and Jakarta (Indonesia).

During the November 2010 workshops, it became clear that although the group of universities were aligned under the notion of "Southeast Asia", the needs of the four contexts were very different. Continuing teacher professional development was crucial in each country, yet with different government and policy priorities, continuing teacher development would need to be focused on different themes, and also be implemented through different models. The model in Vietnam was built around the concept of coaching to improve the quality of teacher questions in the EFL classroom. In Indonesia the emphasis was on classroom action research. In Thailand a variety of strategies, including teacher action research and blogging, were implemented. The situation in Laos was such that there was a general need to focus on teaching and learning strategies in order to upgrade teacher classroom skills.

The project's goals confirm the teams' commitment to contributing to economic growth and rural development, and particularly to an internationalized education through English language education, by enhancing the scope and quality of professional development programs for teachers. The dual purpose of the program in both the short and long term has been to build capacity within key education institutions – universities and schools – to develop, deliver and implement effective professional development programs for primary and secondary school teachers in the region while also providing direct professional development opportunities for teachers and university education practitioners. In essence, the focus for two of the countries (Indonesia and Vietnam) has been English language teacher professional development. For the other two countries (Laos and Thailand), English language teachers have been a part of the project.

The program has equipped leading education practitioners and senior teachers from four Southeast Asian countries with the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to introduce, develop and maintain professional development programs for classroom teachers in their home institutions and communities and to develop sustainable models of continuing professional development in line with country priorities and requirements which are applicable to the local context. The program directly supports AusAID Education strategies for Laos, Indonesia and Vietnam, while directly contributing to regional cooperation in Southeast Asia and highlighting a productive role that Australia can play in this process.

During the November 2010 workshop in Sydney, teams developed a three-month plan of action to start promoting and implementing professional development programs for teachers in their home institutions and other organisations, and to identify medium term (1–2 year) goals. This ensured that all team members had the opportunity to use the knowledge and skills gained after returning to their home countries and that all activity outcomes were sustained in the short and medium term. The team members

further developed their leadership skills by taking on responsibility, ownership and leading roles in design and implementation of professional development programs for teachers in their regions.

All teacher educators selected for the proposed program were already acknowledged as leaders in their professions and communities. The process of selection was driven by the counterpart organisations. First, the university in Sydney provisionally invited leading academics and in-service teacher training professionals of education faculties in the universities in Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam and Laos to be involved in the program. Secondly, those teacher educators identified the staff in their faculties with established track records in development and delivery of continuing teacher professional development and extensive links with the local schools. Thirdly, the university teacher educators in each country identified leading local school teachers who had demonstrated a deep understanding of teachers' professional development needs, especially those with experience, expertise, leadership and management skills to contribute to development and dissemination of sustainable professional development programs in their regions and communities. In addition to professional achievements, those finally chosen had demonstrated the ability to successfully manage change, and promote gender and ethnic equality in their practices.

The November 2010 program was designed so that the first week focused on topics of schooling, teacher education, and continuing professional development in the Southeast Asia and Australia to identify gaps, issues and barriers in order to plan models that would be implemented in the participating countries in the months after the program. The second week was designed to provide input and plan activities and resources that could be used to address the issues and to complete the development of a range of appropriate models of continuing professional development in the countries involved.

This paper reports on the genesis and progress of an international collaboration between teacher educators, and therefore does not report a statement of ethics, as it is not reporting on research involving human participants.

The “Re-forming Teacher Professional Development” project was conceptualised on the basis of the types of reforms achieved in this project. The world is becoming more complex and changes are taking place with greater rapidity. It is no longer appropriate to consider capacity building in a linear manner, as is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Capacity Building (linear fashion)



Important questions arise such as: Who determined that needs existed? Were these needs a high priority for those who were perceived as having those needs? Why was a certain type of training considered an appropriate method of providing solutions?

Pearson (2011, p. 15) argues that “learning is not something external actors can do for, or to, individuals, organisations or systems: ultimately the outsider’s role can only be to support the emergence of learning”. Given the complex nature of many of the projects which aim to increase the capacity development of organisations and individuals who work within them, it can be said that training, in itself, is not the only way in which learning can be supported.

Continuing teacher professional development is particularly important in rural areas where learning outcomes and overall development are at lower levels than urban areas. In its current document, “The Education Development Strategy of Vietnam for 2011-2020”, the Ministry of Education and Training, Vietnam (2012) identified low-quality teaching as a weakness to be addressed in its education system through the re-training of teachers. Similarly, the Thai government listed professional development for teachers as priority in its education reforms. Indonesian and Laotian governments have recently embarked on large-scale education system reforms with an emphasis on quality of teaching in schools and universities.

All governments in the selected countries have identified the crucial leadership role that local universities can play in addressing the teaching quality issues in schools, and the importance of linking higher education institutions and school – even integrating their activities. Professional development programs for teachers are especially pertinent given that most governments in Southeast Asia are currently reforming their education systems by mainstreaming student-focused teaching and learning, which has been proven to produce more effective learning outcomes. In order to achieve this mainstreaming, there is a crucial need to update the skills and knowledge of classroom teachers.

EFL and English teacher development in the Mekong region of Vietnam

Background to EFL in Vietnam

The political and economic framework of Vietnam has determined the choice of a foreign language in general, and English in particular, to be taught in the country. From 111 BC to 938 AD, the country was a Chinese colony; as a result, classical Chinese was used as the official language in administration, education, philosophy, and literature composition. Vietnam gained national independence in 938; however, Vietnamese monarchies still used classical Chinese as the official language. The French attacked Vietnam in 1858 and the country was a French colony from 1858 to 1954. During this century of French colonization, the Confucianism-based education system was converted to a French-oriented one, paving the way for the adoption of French as a language of instruction in many Vietnamese schools. In 1954, when Vietnam gained complete independence from France it still suffered from the separation of its North and South. From 1954 until the political changes in Eastern Europe in 1990, the principal foreign language for international communication for North Vietnam was Russian.

In the south of the country, the American-supported government pursued a different education policy: both French and English were taught in schools in urban areas (Le, 2011). With the conclusion of the war in April 1975, the country was reunited. Since 1975, two big shifts in foreign language instruction have been observed: first, the shift to Russian (1975–1986) and then to English language (1986–present).

After the reunification of Vietnam in 1975, most of Vietnam’s international ties were with the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries; therefore, Russian remained as the first foreign language in secondary schools and at tertiary level. Russian majors always outnumbered the combined enrolments in other foreign languages (English, French, and Chinese) (Do, 2000).

Vietnam experienced an economic decline from 1975 to 1985. In 1986, the Vietnamese government decided to introduce an open-door policy to promote the economic development. This new economic policy expressed the government’s determination to participate in the global economy (Le, 2014). The open-door policy attracted English-speaking foreigners to Vietnam. The lifting of the US trade embargo on Vietnam and the influx of foreign investors from Asian countries, Australia and the European Union, strongly supported the use of English within these foreign companies in the beginning of the 1990s. Within the context of international business development, the importance of English language use increased. Its status and role were officially acknowledged and programs were initiated to promote English language learning in the national education system. The country faced a big challenge in preparing quality English teachers to serve the mushrooming demands of learning English. Many English teacher education programs were of poor quality for preparing teachers of English since many teacher educators themselves were not qualified in terms of their language proficiency or teaching methods. In serving the urgent need for teachers to teach English in schools, universities produced many teachers of English who were not well qualified to teach (Le, 2006); this is the main reason for the unsatisfactory quality of English learning and teaching in Vietnam.

In addition to the inadequate preparation of English teachers, cultural characteristics of the country and testing and assessment methods played a role in realizing the English learning outcomes of students. The major philosophical tradition that has influenced the culture of teaching in Vietnam is Confucianism. The basic Confucian teachings provided a model for social relations (Ellis, 1994) shaping a culture of collectivism and high power distance, which have shaped typical Vietnamese students’ attitudes to knowledge and authority and their beliefs about teaching and learning styles (To, 2000). The position of the teacher is highly respected, both inside and outside the school. At school, students are supposed to learn how to behave first and then learn the subject. It is considered very rude to misbehave to a teacher either verbally or non-verbally. The English learning environment in Vietnamese classrooms could be described as a “cultural island” (Le, 2000) in which the teacher is supposed to be the *provider* of knowledge of the target language. The focus of instruction is on the language structure more than on its use. This means that a comprehensive mastery of grammatical structures of the English language is an expected pre-requisite for teachers in teaching their students.

In Vietnam, learning is strongly examination-focused. Examinations in English are constructed to test the students' knowledge of grammatical structures and vocabulary. The final score during a semester in lower or upper secondary level is generally the combination of the scores of one oral test, two 15-minute, in-class written tests, one 1-hour, in-class written test and one 2-hour, in-class final semester written examination. In the oral test, the teacher normally asks students the meanings of words or comprehension questions after having read a text. Sometimes in oral tests, students are expected to build sentences using given cued words they construct on the basis of their knowledge of grammar. The paper tests or examinations are largely grammar-based. The grammar section is most often tested through the use of multiple choice questions. Reading a text and answering the questions, or giving the synonyms or antonyms of the words and writing (sentence building) are the most common formats used in testing and examinations.

Students' learning outcomes are evaluated within a product-oriented framework, so teachers assume another role, that of an evaluator who grades students' performance on tests and exams and makes the final decisions on a student's grade, which, in turn, is an indicator of success or failure in learning.

As mentioned earlier, English teaching and learning is examination-driven and this links to another role of the teacher – the high-pass-rate guarantor. As is to be expected, what and how the teacher teaches is dictated by the requirements of the examination and is not linked to the learning needs of individual students. Overall, English in general education in Vietnam demonstrates the teacher-centred approach to teaching. Here, the teacher, constrained by the curriculum (in this case, the textbook), decides the learning purposes and learning paths and evaluates the learning outcomes of transmitted knowledge via norm-referenced examinations.

Such an education approach has resulted in unsatisfactory learning outcomes. Empirical results from a questionnaire survey conducted in a high-quality urban secondary school by Nguyen (2004) showed that grammar and vocabulary are what these students learn most often in their English lessons, listening and speaking were least learned, while writing (i.e., combining sentences, using grammatical rules) and reading come somewhere between the two. The survey results also revealed that 57.4% of students do not agree that they can use English for communication. Four reasons given for their communicative incompetence are: (1) shyness; (2) shortage of vocabulary; (3) a lack of opportunity to practice listening and speaking skills; and (4) the absence of an English-speaking environment. During the years of learning English at secondary schools, students experience listening and speaking least often. Though grammar and vocabulary are taught more often than language skills, students neither have the opportunity to communicate in English for genuine purposes nor use their vocabulary in real communication which could explain the lack of competence in using English to communicate (Nguyen, 2004).

A study conducted by Phan (2000) showed that most graduates from ELT programs lacked confidence in their professional skills and their great need was to be trained not only in teaching skills but also in language skills. The results of this study are identical to Nguyen's (2011) findings in evaluating the quality of teachers of English in the country.

To improve the quality of foreign language education, the Vietnamese government approved a national project on foreign language improvement in 2008. Before the implementation of this project in 2010, opportunities for continuing teacher professional development were rare. Continuing professional development for teachers of English was conducted only when there was a change of the textbook series used nationwide in the education system; the training was usually for one week in which some teachers who were considered to be a “task force” were introduced the purposes of the textbook, the content and the associated teaching methods to implement the textbooks. In some cases, trained teachers had the opportunity to watch a video recording a “model lesson” taught by a well-recognized teacher and to use this model in their teaching. Teachers in the task force then returned to their schools and used their training to re-train their colleagues. These professional development activities were usually one-offs (Villegas-Reimers, 2003).

From 2010 until now, opportunities for English teachers’ professional development are more numerous. Many teacher educators and school teachers from the Mekong Delta participated in English language improvement courses and some attended courses on effective EFL teaching methods, doing action research in English classes, using ICT in English teaching, and so on. No impact evaluation of these professional development courses has been conducted until now.

Leading into this collaborative project: Developments in the Mekong Delta Region

In 2010, responding to the demand to improve the quality of English language education, the Ministry of Education and Training in Vietnam embarked on an innovation in English teaching and learning via the national project on improving foreign language education. The project aimed to improve the quality of foreign language teachers in general education, specifically English language teachers, via professional development activities. These are to be conducted by English teacher education program providers throughout the country. The project highlighted the role of English teacher education providers in offering professional development courses for in-service English teachers in primary and secondary education. However, according to a national report released by the Deputy-Prime Minister of Education and Training, after two years of implementation only around 10% of English teachers in general education met the job requirements (Nguyen, 2011). Learning English is still considered to be a school subject rather than a means of communication.

Located in the south of the country, the Mekong Delta of Vietnam is characterised as one of the two regions in the country which is least financially well-off and in which the labour force has the lowest level of education. Many schools in rural areas in the Mekong Delta lack teachers of English and the command of English of people in the region is relatively low. Only in cities or larger towns do individuals have access to cable television where they can benefit from English language programs. Teachers of English need professional development courses both in language skills and professional expertise.

A 2009 study conducted by faculty in a school of education at a Vietnamese partner university (Nguyen & Trinh, 2009) showed that opportunities for professional

development for school teachers needed to be created and indicated that the linkage between teacher education universities or faculties should be stronger. The study indicated that teacher education providers should partner with schools in school teachers' professional development activities.

Participating in the project on teacher professional development with the university in Sydney and other Southeast Asian universities, our Vietnamese team, which includes teacher educators and school teachers of English, attended workshops, discussions and site visits in Sydney and an international conference on teacher educators and teachers professional development in Thailand. These input sessions, exposure and feedback from our Australian and Southeast Asian colleagues have contributed to the success of our team project entitled, "Coaching as a tool to professional development for teachers of English in making and using evaluative questions" (see Laws, Harbon, & Fielding, 2011).

In this project, we developed a professional development model of coaching which aimed to support school teachers of English through the development of their knowledge and skills in making and using "how" and "why" questions in their lessons. These higher-order evaluative questions are the most challenging questions for Vietnamese learners of English. We realized that we in Vietnam, similar to Laos, were "under the 5 pointed star" – that is, planning and implementing integrated strategies for working with teacher professional learning. The 5-country project provided us with a further opportunity to affect English teaching and learning in the Mekong region of Vietnam.

A similar project was conducted in primary school classrooms (see Laws et al., 2011) with coaching as the medium used for continuing teacher professional development. Through the use of coaching, benefits were seen for the coaches, those who were coached, and a growth in the enthusiasm for learning and learning outcomes of students.

The idea of using action research in English lessons as a tool for professional development from the Indonesian project participants triggered the Vietnamese team to conduct a study on enhancing Vietnamese EFL learners' ability in writing English argumentative essays. The Vietnamese team indentified the challenge that Vietnamese EFL learners experience when they write argumentative essays in English; and the way in which the culture of "respectfulness for others" hinders Vietnamese EFL learners in establishing their viewpoints and selecting proper arguments to support their stance (Trinh & Nguyen, 2014). This cultural characteristic of Vietnamese learners is somewhat similar to that which Thai project participants mentioned as a challenge for their teachers in developing their students' critical thinking skills since Thai people are strongly influenced by Buddhism and being critical means being aggressive, which is against their religious practice.

The image of the five-point star in our project inspired the Vietnamese participants to think of different strategies to achieve the aim of teachers' professional development: activity-based learning, group learning, the development and use of context-appropriate teaching and learning technologies and resources, the importance of questioning both in the classroom and on the professional development journey, and the necessity to focus professional development on elements that matter in the classroom. We collaborated with English teacher educators in the Mekong Delta and school teachers in undertaking

action research and we also trained some school teachers as “change agents” and these teachers functioned as trainers in their own school. A good example of this is the result of our strategy on using lesson study, a Japanese model of professional development, in supporting English teachers in a school in the Mekong Delta to develop their professionalism. The results of our lesson study strategy in professional development indicated that teachers had learned how to collaborate with colleagues, how to be better observers of their lessons and how to provide better feedback to colleagues, and most importantly, a learning community was built.

Using the framework by Guskey (2000) in evaluating professional development, the Vietnamese team observed initial encouraging results. Firstly, those who participated in the project positively reacted to activities in this project by making the project sustainable up to date. Secondly, the knowledge and skills they learned from the project were helpful to their teaching context. Thirdly, participants received full support from their schools in implementing new initiatives. Fourth, and finally, opportunities for participants’ professional development had strong impacts on students’ learning which was reflected in the results of action research participants conducted. What has been achieved so far showed that the Vietnamese team adapted new theories of workplace learning or a community practice as a new idea for teacher development (Le & Nguyen, 2012).

Summary of outcomes of the project in Vietnam’s Mekong region to date

The project has been a success with important outcomes and lessons learned. Via our project we have built a learning community. In this learning community, members learn and share their understanding and knowledge with each other based on mutual understanding, respect and inter-dependence. We have developed a working model of coaching for teacher professional development. The model includes planning, coaching, classroom observation and reflection. Participating teachers became confident about developing and using evaluative questions; and students’ learning outcomes in relation to their responses to evaluative questions are better.

The role of the School of Education as a teacher education provider in community service and in this case, supporting school teacher professional development is highlighted. In other words, the linkage between the university and schools is strengthened. Inter-personal relationships and mutual understandings between teacher educators and teachers have been developed which forms a base for further collaboration in professional development activities.

One further important outcome of the project is that it contributes to the well-being of people in the region since the level of English language proficiency is positively correlated with good job opportunities and better living. Trinh and Nguyen (2012) found that the project was “tailor made” and thus suited the context. The researchers found that input activities were diverse and effective, thus answering current needs. Group cohesiveness and commitment were developed and there was a development and growth of interpersonal relationships, mutual respect and trust between participants.

Conclusion and further research ideas

This paper has outlined a project in Vietnam's Mekong region focused on English language teacher professional development. The project has had, as its aim, the improvement of opportunities for student English language learning via a focus on language teacher professional development. To date, the project is considered to have been a success, measured by initial data analysis as outlined above.

The project has inbuilt sustainability aspects: the strength of the design of the program and its components; the development of the professional development models to be used in the counterpart institutions after completion of the program; continuing collaboration, communication and exchange between the participants' organisations in the four Southeast Asian countries and leaders at the university in Sydney as a part of long-term cooperative agreements; and a range of follow-up activities.

The team members from each country have had the opportunity to gain knowledge of current international best-practice in professional development for teachers while being able to make an assessment of the applicability of these practices in local contexts and the modifications required to implement international best-practices in the context of Laos, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam. For the teaching of English in the Mekong region of Vietnam, this is a tangible benefit.

The team members have proved they can promote and implement effective professional development programs in their home institutions and pass on knowledge to their colleagues. Further, the program has positioned team members as agents of change with improved leadership and management capacity in their home institutions.

The team members in the Vietnam project have learned new skills for using student-centred teaching and learning both in teacher professional development programs and in school classrooms. For all participants in all the countries, a related outcome has been that partner countries have been able to contribute to mainstream student-centred pedagogies in local schools, thereby improving the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning outcomes. The team members have deepened their understanding of, and developed strategies for, managing specific education issues in the Southeast Asian context, including rural underdevelopment, teaching ethnic minorities and gender inequality. The team members who are teaching staff from primary and secondary schools have the opportunity to improve the quality of their teaching through the direct professional development activities and site visits. All project participants have been able to make positive contributions to the capabilities of their colleagues who have joined them in various professional development activities.

One further key positive outcome of the project has been that linkages have been strengthened between key higher education institutions and schools in different countries in Southeast Asia and Australia. The launch of the first monograph in December 2011 (Laws, Harbon, & Wescombe, 2011) at a major international conference on teacher professional development held on the campus of the partner university in Thailand, was a substantial achievement. Articles were produced by participants from all countries celebrating their achievements and outlining the models of teacher professional development implemented and evaluated during the previous months. At the meeting it was decided by all participants that the project should continue with a focus on

involving teachers in action research into their practice and this theme formed the focus of activities during 2012 and 2013, leading to the second monograph (Laws et al., 2013).

English language teaching in the Mekong region of Vietnam will continue to improve with the efforts and energies of their dedicated team, who in turn receive the same kinds of motivation from the other teams in the project. Such a model fashioned according to the “five points of the star” representing the integrated strategies for working with teacher professional learning could easily be adapted and adopted by other contexts wishing to make a difference to educational outcomes.

After 2015, Vietnam will be conducting a comprehensive reform in her national education system, focusing on developing 21st century competencies for learners. Teacher educators and school teachers throughout the country are in need of continuing professional development in helping learners develop desirable competencies for living and working in a globalized world. It would be worthwhile conducting research on how the use of integrated strategies represented in the five-point star affected teachers’ professional development in empowering them to help their learners develop as 21st century world citizens.

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Book Review

Maton, K. (2013). *Knowledge and knowers: Towards a realist sociology of education.* London & New York: Routledge

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Graham McPhail

In her chapter, “Bernstein and empirical research”, Sally Power (2010) utilises Dowling’s (1999) categories of disciples, vulgarisers, exploiters, and heretics to qualitatively differentiate approaches to the use of Basil Bernstein’s work:

Vulgarisers reproduce but with only a weak (or superficial) grasp of his work. Disciples also reproduce, but they have a strong and deep grasp of his work. By contrast, heretics also have a strong grasp of his work, but use it to produce, rather than reproduce, new conceptual structures. Exploiters produce new conceptual structures, but with only a weak grasp of his work. (p. 241)

In *Knowledge and Knowers* there is a rich and deep engagement with Bernstein’s ideas as well as significant developments so, in Dowling’s terms, Karl Maton acts as both disciple and heretic. Maton acknowledges that his work extends and integrates concepts from established approaches. He utilises Bourdieu’s concept of *field* for example but identifies its limits: “field theory is an unfinished conceptual revolution: the framework does not reveal the organizing principles of practices, dispositions and fields” (2013a p. 20). The core of the theoretical work, its central foundation, is developed from Bernstein’s theories of codes and knowledge forms (Bernstein, 2000) which “provide templates for enabling analytic power in substantive research” (Maton, 2013a, p. 20). Maton’s development is rich, layered, and highly imaginative and, while somewhat overwhelming at times, as we move through an array of gazes, lenses, waves, altitudes, latitudes, clusters, constellations, and cosmologies, the book certainly establishes the credentials of some of the key concepts of Maton’s legitimation code theory (LCT) and the important research it has generated.

Maton sets the context for a social realist theoretical position in the opening chapter where he outlines the “blind-spot” and paradox within the sociology of education in relation to knowledge and educational research; “Knowledge is described as a defining

feature of modern societies, but what that knowledge is, its forms and effects, are not part of the analysis” (Maton, 2013a, p. 2). Constructivism in particular, Maton argues, has helped establish a generic view of learning focused on the intrinsic characteristics of the learner; mental processes, states of consciousness, and cultural identities. This is part of what Maton terms the *subjectivist doxa* prevalent in the field of educational research where knowledge is reduced to knowing and expressions of power. Maton’s work on the other hand, and in alignment with other recent publications espousing realist theories of knowledge (see for example Young, 2013, Moore, 2013, and Rata, 2012), reemphasises the object of learning – knowledge itself – focusing on its inherent structures and characteristics of legitimation within fields of production and recontextualisation, and the effects of these dimensions of knowledge on teaching and learning. As Maton suggests, “how the forms taken by educational knowledge may enable or constrain cumulative teaching and learning remains relatively under-researched” (Maton, 2013b, p. 9). Maton’s book *Knowledge and Knowers*, makes a major contribution to rectifying this blind-spot. The book introduces the conceptual framework of LCT that Maton claims “enables knowledge practices to be seen, their organizing principles to be conceptualized, and their effects to be explored” (2013a p. 3). The book also acts as a compendium for the impressive proliferation of empirical work that this approach (LCT) has inspired in a relatively short space of time.

The chapters chart the development of the theory, each chapter introducing new concepts illustrated through key studies which focus on varied “problems” within social science from varied disciplinary areas such as cultural studies, secondary-school music, and English. In this way the theoretical concepts are nicely exemplified and elaborated through empirical examples, reinforcing Maton’s assertion that there is a continual interrelationship between developing theory and empirical data: “data speak back to the theory, demanding clarifications, refinements and new developments” (2013a, p. 15). The central theme of cumulative knowledge building is exemplified in the structure of the book itself as the conceptual framework unfolds. The book then realises one of Maton’s aims to move the “polemical and inventive” (p. 9) concerns of much social realist literature towards providing a means for the analysis of knowledge, its organizing principles, properties, and effects.

Maton makes it clear that “LCT is a practical theory rather than a paradigm, a conceptual toolkit and analytical methodology rather than an ‘-ism’, and sociological rather than philosophical” (2013a, p. 15). The book focusses on two of five dimensions that make up LCT theory in its current form: Specialization and Semantics. The other dimensions – Autonomy, Density, and Temporality – remain less developed. Each dimension explores “different organizing principles of practices” (2013a, p. 19) and comprises a set of concepts. The studies focussed on Specialization provide extremely useful concepts for making visible aspects of the processes through which knowledge is legitimised in various fields: specialization codes, the epistemic–pedagogic device, knowledge–knower structures, and gazes and insights. This work in particular extends Bernstein’s theory of knowledge structures to include the practices of actors in various processes of legitimation. The dimension of Semantics also includes extremely useful concepts such as semantic gravity, semantic density, and condensation.

Specialization is elaborated most clearly through chapters focussed on tertiary-level cultural studies and secondary-school music. The concept of legitimation identifies four codes through which knowledge becomes specialised and legitimated: knowledge, knower, elite, and relativist. These codes act in various combinations with resulting varied strengths of classification and framing. Secondary-school music's problem of uptake in the UK is therefore revealed as a problem of combined codes in its legitimation. The analysis suggests that music exhibits an elite code, one requiring both specialised knowledge and specialised knower dispositions. This provides some insight into the structuring of knowledge within that subject and why students may be reluctant to choose music for senior study in secondary school.

Semantics is explored through studies of secondary-school English and the application of the concepts of semantic gravity and semantic density. Maton talks of strengthening and weakening semantic gravity as we move from abstract or generalised ideas and to concrete cases/examples. He suggests that insightful responses move in semantic waves – weakening and strengthening the semantic gravity from the abstract (*weaker* semantic gravity) to the particular (*stronger* semantic gravity) and back again. Student exemplars from an Australian secondary-school English assessment are utilised to illustrate the concepts and to make visible just what it is that differentiates student responses that we recognise as high-achieving. The studies show how planned curricula aimed at building cumulative knowledge do not necessarily succeed due to a blind-spot; the significance of knowledge–knower structures within the learning process:

one feature constraining cumulative learning may be a mismatch between the cultivated gaze that the students are expected to demonstrate ... and the lack of cultivation offered. The minimal guidance and limited models offered ... meant that students not already capable of recognizing and realizing the requisite gaze ... were disadvantaged. For such students, assessment largely measured pre-existing dispositions. Ironically, far from being authentic learning or representing a journey, these forms of pedagogy offered students limited opportunities for learning and left many where they began. (2013a, p. 122)

The implications for pedagogy in this chapter (chapter six) are amongst the most compelling in the book.

LCT contains significant developments emerging from the work of two of the world's most important sociologists – Bourdieu and Bernstein. As Maton suggests, LCT is a sociology of possibility and this elaboration of a rich, densely layered, conceptual “toolkit” for considering education problems is very welcome. Maton suggests “little can be said of ‘knowledge societies’ and ‘the information age’ until more is known about forms of knowledge or information and the processes of their creation, reproduction, transformation and change” (2013a, p. 216). Research that explores the organizing principles of different forms of knowledge is motivated by a social justice agenda. Social inclusion and achievement for all learners can be enhanced as our knowledge about knowledge and knowledge building is enhanced. This book certainly helps us move towards realising this aim.

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For article: Baumgart, N., Halse, C. (1999). Approaches to learning across cultures: the role of assessment. *Assessment in Education* 6(3), 321-337.

For chapters: Long, M.H. (1996). The role of the linguistic environment in second languages acquisition. In W.C. Ritchie & T. L. Bhatia (Eds.), *Handbook of second language acquisition* (pp. 413-468). San Diego: Academic Press.

Tables must be typed on separate pages and not included as part of the text. The approximate location of tables should be indicated in the text.

Figures should be submitted on separate pages, in finished form, correctly labelled and their approximate location in the text clearly indicated.

In addition to consulting the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th ed.) authors should note the following **conventions** must be used in preparing a manuscript for submission:

- Either British English or American English spelling should be used consistently throughout the
- text.
- Footnotes should not be used. Endnotes should be kept to a minimum.
- All pages should be numbered consecutively.
- Do not use more than three heading levels.
- Do not use double spaces after full stops at the end of sentences.
- Do not use full stops in abbreviations: USA not U.S.A.
- When referring to the title of an organization by its initials, first spell out the title in full followed by the abbreviation in parentheses, e.g. Curriculum Development Council (CDC). Thereafter refer to it as CDC.

Refereeing of articles takes approximately three months although this may vary according to the availability and commitments of referees.

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