

The rise of basic education: A local issue or a construct of the global agenda?

A review of education priorities of key donors in the Pacific region

Hilary C. Tolley
University of Auckland
tolley@ihug.co.nz

With ‘basic education’ now firmly a part of the current development discourse, this paper discusses how a selection of donors in Pacific education relate to this notion in terms of shifts in their development policy, their financial commitment and their underlying political agenda. With Levesque’s (2001) notion of “perception gaps” in mind, discussion about the direction in which these priorities, objectives and obligations are pushing education development are considered and attention is drawn to the need for a loud local voice with increasing donor convergence.

[Key words: basic education, Pacific region, development, NZAID]

INTRODUCTION

This paper explores global development trends in relation to the rise of education as a development tool in the fight against poverty and how donors in the Pacific are currently translating these trends. In understanding some of the underlying desires, objectives and obligations of the donors, and by drawing attention to where current policy shifts might lead in the future, it hopes to promote greater awareness within the Pacific that increasing donor convergence comes with a need for a louder local voice.

GLOBAL TRENDS

The rise of education as a development issue is well documented in the literature. From its scant international support following the end of World War II, to being dominated, especially since the late 1980s, by the discourse of structural adjustment policies (SAPs) and ‘human capital development’. Amid a plethora of international conferences¹, the early 1990s became a watershed and saw a series of shifts in perceptions over the definition of development. These shifts, which included profound changes in understanding of the relationship between education and development and around the relationship between aid and development, resulted in a general “education for development” regime (Coxon and Tolley, 2003). It was recognised that if aid was to result in development, certain preconditions² were needed. This realisation led to both a flood and a convergence of donor objectives. By the mid-to-late ’90s, a distinct shift towards poverty-

¹ For example, 1992 Conference on the Environment, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; 1993 WCHR, Vienna, Italy; 1994 Cairo Conference on Populations and Development, Egypt; 1995 WSSD, Copenhagen, Denmark; 1995, Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China; 1996, Education Forum Meeting, Accra, Ghana; 1996 DAC Shaping the 21st Century, Paris; 1999 Introduction of IMF/WB PRSP; 2000 WEF, Dakar, Senegal; 2000 Millennium Summit & Millennium Declaration, New York

² Institutional strengthening, capacity building, good governance, strengthening democracy and civil society, human resource development (HRD), local ownership, gender equality, and sustainability

focused strategies had become evident with education central to this new ‘pro-poor’ approach. Although the consensus that poverty reduction and education were critical in achieving this new global development agenda, critics argued that the approach might be more one of stabilising the political, economic and social conditions of poor populations rather than any benevolent change of heart (Ilon, 1996) — or, “adjustment with a human face” (Cornia *et al.*, 1987, cited in Robertson, Novelli, Dale, Tikly *et al.*, 2007 p.55).

In education, clear shifts in financial and technical assistance towards support of basic education as a universal human right and an international concern, became evident (Buchert, 1995). The concept of Education for All (EFA) and subsequent development of, and international participation in, the EFA Targets and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) raised the notion that greater support for ‘basic education’ was needed. It also reduced the ideological differences between the major groups of multilateral and bilateral agencies to the point where they came closer together (Robertson, Novelli, Dale, Tikly *et al.*, 2007). Education, in particular the universal right to primary education and the provision of publicly funded basic education, emerged as one of the key pillars of the global development model, uncontested by all factions — perhaps because it satisfies those consumed with a focus on equity and human rights as well as those who view development more as a conceptualisation of productivity (Mundy, 2006).

By the close of the century, education had not only become thoroughly embedded in the anti-poverty development approach, it had also helped to create unprecedented interest among international donors in mechanisms to harmonise their initiatives around a common framework of priorities and targets. Among the mechanisms responsible for embedding the new global development policy agenda have been the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs)³, which lie at the heart of World Bank/IMF anti-poverty initiatives, and the Sector-Wide Approach (SWAp)⁴ generally supported by the EU, DfID, New Zealand, ADB, and increasingly, Australia. Within both frameworks, selective measures can be targeted at specific countries and populations to help the poor adjust to a changing international economic order (Robertson, Novelli, Dale, Tikly *et al.*, 2007). Through extensive country assessments, governments develop ‘credible’ education strategies detailing priorities and subsequently develop an appropriate action plan. Donors and recipients then decide together how best to allocate the available funding and resources according to the plan. Many see SWAps as a precursor rather than an alternative to PRSPs and in some ‘post-SWAp’ countries, similarly conceived direct budgetary support is being developed. As Mundy (2006) suggests, experimentation with pooled funding or direct budgetary support and recurrent funding support suggest that universal basic education is steadily being recognised by rich countries as a global public good in need of collective rather than unilateral action (p.38).

³ The PRSP initiative requires recipient governments to develop a national development plan focusing on growth and poverty reduction, formally integrating social policy with plans for macro-economic stability, liberalisation and debt repayments within a medium-term expenditure framework (MTEF) (Mundy 2006). Using participatory methodology a PRSP requires governments to fully identify the incidence and causes of poverty and develop a national program of targeting expenditure on measures to reduce it. Ideally this approach should encourage national ‘ownership’ of development planning and accountability; critics argue that this approach can lead to forced consensus — or no consensus — to adopt contextually inappropriate initiatives which favour stability and liberalisation over social development. It is also argued, however, that the PRSP process has had the specific effect of bringing about much tighter integration of educational development planning into development expenditure planning, often favouring the reallocation of resources towards primary or basic education (Mundy 2006).

⁴ The central aim of a SWAp is to create a single repository (a ‘pool’ or ‘basket’) into which donors place funds in support of a particular national policy program. The local stakeholders are responsible for using the funds in previously identified priority areas within the sector strategy, and for monitoring predetermined outcomes. Audits monitoring and evaluation are centrally managed and one set of common reports can then be issued to all stakeholders (King and McGrath, 2002; Ward, 2002).

The events of September 11 2001 radically altered the geo-political and geo-strategic activities of the dominant Western powers and from the point of view of development aid, three main issues have emerged (Robertson, Novelli, Dale, Tikly *et al.*, 2007). The first relates to the definition of what constitutes official development assistance (ODA). Recently, and for the first time, the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC), which controls and regulates the definition, has allowed the aid budget to include certain military and security funding. Secondly, some nations — most notably the United States — have increased concern for the need to be identified contributing in the humanitarian and development field. This individualism, as noted in the high profile Millennium Challenge Account, which bypasses other multilateral organisations performing similar activities, endangers other nations' willingness to pool funds in multilateral institutions or funding mechanisms (*ibid.*). Thirdly, there has been a variety of responses to the threat of terrorism and conflict influenced by different underlying understandings of the causes of conflict and insecurity and thus in determining appropriate interventions, whether it be winning hearts and minds, a structural inequality approach or applying sanctions on rogue states or players (*ibid.*).

PACIFIC TRENDS

Education developments among donors in the Pacific have reflected international trends. During the decolonising era of the 1960s and '70s development and educational aid programs were primarily directed towards localisation and the promotion of self-reliance (Baba, 1987; Coxon and Baba, 2003). The educational approach applied to both decolonising administrations and newly independent states was two-fold: to assist in the provision of qualified indigenous personnel to staff public service, and facilitate the development of a workforce with the 'modern' skills and attitudes deemed necessary for economic development. Based on the continuation of the formal western model, central to both was the need for more senior secondary and vocational schooling and the development of tertiary education. To assist the 11 countries formerly under their administration, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand were instrumental in establishing the University of the South Pacific (USP) in 1968 (Coxon 2003).

Localisation remained the major thrust in education development for the Pacific Islands region throughout the 1980s (the lower levels of education at national level, and higher education at regional level). Into the 1990s education development in the Pacific came under increased scrutiny from the international funding institutions (IFIs) and the findings and recommendations of the education sector studies undertaken in the island states strongly reflected the 'global blueprint'. As a result, the aid programs of Australia and New Zealand underwent significant shifts in policy and procedures, many of which affected their bilateral relationships with the Pacific states. Australia's policies, in particular, shifted from explicitly providing maximum benefits to Pacific peoples and supporting self-reliance, to emphasising the need for Australian aid to work for Australian economic interests. Thus, Australian support for the regional higher education institutions shifted towards the export of Australian educational services through tightened contracting conditions stipulating the use of Australian education institutions to deliver aid expertise and provide places for overseas scholarship students (Baba, 1987, 1989). Together these recommendations ensured a very high level of 'boomerang aid' in which a large proportion of the Australian aid dollar remained in the Australian economy (Coxon and Tolley, 2003). In 1997, the Simons Review⁵ led to significant changes in the priorities and administration of

⁵ In May 1997 the Report of the Committee to Review Australia's Overseas Aid Program was submitted to the Minister for Foreign Affairs by the Chairman of the Committee, Mr. Paul Simons. The report, entitled *One Clear*

AusAID from which emerged a central and strong anti-poverty focus centred on five priority areas: education, health, governance, rural development and infrastructure.

Similarly, early New Zealand Overseas Development Assistance (NZODA) strategies more directly pursued export markets, and encouraged Pacific Island governments to emulate New Zealand by deregulating their economies (Coxon and Baba, 2003). New Zealand also established an educational services export industry and aid, trade and foreign policy became inextricably linked — clearly demonstrated by the move of the aid program into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Coxon 1996). In accordance with the global emphasis on targeting and monitoring aid in the interests of accountability, efficiency and cost effectiveness, NZODA's education policy paper (MFAT, 1993) recommended that greater emphasis be placed on management and capacity building in education policy and planning; the identification of HRD needs; the development of information systems to monitor and evaluate expenditure on education and training according to HRD needs; and to increased education investment by the private sector. There was little focus on quality — that is, the processes and structures of learning were downplayed in favour of education as a delivery system (Coxon and Tolley, 2003).

Australian Aid: into the 21st Century

Despite Australia's shift in focus towards poverty alleviation, the overriding objective of Australia's aid program remains "to advance Australia's national interest by assisting developing countries to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development" (AusAID, 1997). In the latest White Paper, *Australian Aid: Promoting Growth and Stability*, which governs policy until 2019, the central mission statement is only slightly reworded, and now reads: "To assist developing countries to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development, in line with Australia's national interest" (AusAID, 2006). To achieve sustainable economic growth as the solution to poverty, strong emphasis is placed on ensuring "secure and stable environments; improving governance and the investment climate, including property rights; opening up to trade; and [participation of the poor] through health, education and market access" (Downer, 2005).

Since 2001, and the rise of the post 9/11 security-centred development agenda, Australia's aid policy has become increasingly interventionist in its quest for "... functioning and effective states" ... [and] promoting regional stability ..." (AusAID, 2006, p.34) as shown by a recent rapid rise in funding for governance projects (including law and justice programs). In the period between 1999 and 2005 AusAID's governance spending has increased from 15 to 36 per cent while education and infrastructure funding dropped from 18 to 14 per cent and from 15 to 7 per cent, respectively (O'Connor *et al.*, 2006). Although there has been a drop in official 'tied' aid, the shift from conditional assistance to a combination of military intervention, law and order securitisation and good governance signals an important new phase — security and governance are now closely linked (law and justice take 47% of the governance budget) and often involve the deployment of staff and resources from Australian government departments such as Treasury, Finance, Customs, Defence and the Federal Police (O'Connor *et al.*, 2006). While Australian aid might have been seen previously as a conduit for social and economic intervention, critics argue that it has increasingly become a means of direct political interference; a process with the potential to widen the gulf between donor interests and recipient needs. One example of this can be seen in Australia's controversial view that land registry is critical to economic growth in Solomon Islands (*ibid.*).

Objective: Poverty Reduction Through Sustainable Development, was the most comprehensive examination of the program since the Jackson Report of 1984 and made a total of 79 recommendations.

Australia's support for the Millennium Development Goals makes only a rhetorical appearance in government policy, although some support for them can be read implicitly in the sections on social investment and support for water and environmental programs. However, they play little part in planning, measuring or reporting on how Australia's support is contributing to sustainable poverty reduction in the region.

In terms of educational support in recent years, Australia's focus on basic education resulted in 31 per cent of the education budget being tagged for this area in 2002/3 with the main focus in the region being on education sector programs, training, institutional strengthening, in addition to its scholarships scheme. However, the 2006 White paper declares a "significant scaling up of Australia's investment in the creation of functioning and inclusive national education systems" that could amount to tripling their support by 2010 (AusAID, 2006, p.53). In line with the Paris Declaration (OECD, 2005)⁶, there is evidence of an increased willingness on the part of Australia to support regional multi-donor sector programs, contribute combined budget support, and a general movement away from stand-alone projects, as witnessed in AusAID providing assistance to Government of PNG to develop a sector-wide approach (SWAp) in the health sector in association with the EU, World Bank and ADB.

Although there had been an earlier general decrease in the Australian Development Scholarship program in favour of funding 'basic education' (Tolley, 2003), a major new Australian Scholarship scheme (A\$1.4b over five years) is to be introduced, aimed at doubling the number of Australian education awards in the Asia Pacific region to 19,000 (AusAID, 2006). This program is expected to include a new type of scholarship, Australian Leadership Awards, which, similar to the Colombo Plan of old, will assist future leaders in partner countries to develop and maintain links with Australia, as well as support for the establishment of a new Asia Pacific Technical College⁷.

Contemporary New Zealand Aid

A significant change occurred in New Zealand's approach to ODA in July 2002 with the announcement of the establishment of New Zealand Aid and International Development (NZAID), a semi-autonomous division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade with a single clear mission: to alleviate poverty. Up to this point New Zealand's aid agenda had become inextricably linked with trade and foreign policy and had no specific education policy document with an explicit development focus. Support had been significantly tertiary-biased, offered largely in the form of overseas scholarships. In 2000 just 1.7 per cent of the aid budget was spent on areas of 'basic education' (despite 40% being allocated to education), and mainly concentrated on technical assistance in areas of teacher training, educational assessment and support for curriculum development, materials production, and in-service teacher development. The establishment of NZAID therefore provided an important opportunity to re-examine many of the country's fundamental approaches to aid and development.

In line with global development trends, NZAID's 2002 policy statement reflected the agency's new long-term commitment to the alleviation of poverty and the associated roles of achieving the MDGs and EFA goals across the Pacific region. As such, basic education became a prominent

⁶ The Paris Declaration, committed to by over 100 countries, aims to continue to increase efforts in harmonisation, alignment and managing aid with a set of monitorable actions and indicators (OECD 2005)

⁷ The college is expected to focus initially on occupations in the automotive, electrical, health and community services, manufacturing, hospitality and tourism, and construction fields (AusAID 2006)

focus in NZAID's 2003 Education Policy. Aid delivery systems also came under scrutiny in the development of the policy (NZAID, 2002a, 2002b) with a Sector-Wide Approach being clearly favoured in the document: "There will be increasing emphasis on support that is focussed on process and outcomes, and moves partner countries and donors towards sector-wide approaches to cohesive education development" (NZAID, 2003b, para 43). Since 2004, these shifts have become evident through New Zealand's contribution to the *Pacific Regional Initiative for the Delivery of basic Education* (PRIDE) project; its spearheading of the Solomon Islands *Education Sector Investment Reform Project* (ESIRP); its assistance (US\$3.8m grant) in the implementation of the *Tonga Education Support Project* (TESP), a supplement to the concessionary loan (US\$1m) provided by the World Bank; and its involvement in the *Post Conflict Emergency Rehabilitation Project* (PCERP), jointly funded by ADB, AusAID, and NZAID. The DAC review in 2005 noted the country's commitment to improving the focus of its assistance through "bigger, fewer, deeper and longer engagements with bilateral and multilateral partners" (DAC 2005, cited in *Reality of Aid*, 2006, p.313).

NZAID is keen to encourage donor harmonisation and has built up strong relationships with AusAID and the EU, in particular. These collaborations exist predominantly in areas of program administration; cooperation at policy, program and sector level planning; and coordinated representation in high-level meetings. In addition, collaboration in funding and management of Pacific Regional Organisations is an area of interest and engagement among these agencies. For example, New Zealand has recently entered into a tripartite funding arrangement with Australia and the University of the South Pacific (USP), as well as with the EU, through USP, on the PRIDE project. In the Cook Islands and Niue, AusAID's funding for development is channelled through and managed by NZAID and in Tuvalu, AusAID and NZAID operate from a single office, which facilitates stronger links between the donor programs and cuts overheads. There is also a joint NZAID/AusAID education program underway in Kiribati utilising a sector-wide approach for the co-funding of basic education in the country. Support is provided through government systems under the Kiribati National Development strategy with opportunities for other donors to contribute to the assistance program.

New Zealand has a distinct humanitarian flavour to its aid policy in the Pacific and, unlike Australia, has not countenanced a strong emphasis on security and terrorism, although it acknowledges the vulnerability of some nations being perceived as potential weak security links. Instead, it places importance on assisting countries to develop a culture of respecting human rights and recognises the importance of preventing conflict by addressing the root causes — addressing human rights and gender issues, tackling poverty as a cause of conflict, developing local capacities for conflict resolution, supporting process of disarmament and assisting governments and communities with post-conflict reconstruction (*Reality of Aid*, 2006).

The European Union and Pacific Island Forum

The European Union is the largest regional donor in the Pacific and an important influence on educational development in the region. The Pacific Islands Forum, comprising 16 independent and self-governing states in the Pacific⁸, is the conduit for €29m, the European Commission's European Development Fund allocation to the Pacific under the 9th EDF (2002–2007).

In 2002 a new framework of objectives and priorities was launched which included new measures for education and training. Three key priorities for EC support were identified: basic education,

⁸ The 16 members of the PIFS comprise Australia and New Zealand and 14 ACP countries: Cook Islands, FSM, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, PNG, RMI, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

primary education and teacher training; work-related training; and higher education, especially at regional level. Under the Cotonou Agreement, African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries are obliged to produce Country Support Strategies which reflect the EU development approach and the country's analysis of how to achieve it, in a similar manner to the PRSPs (Hilditch, 2002). The main objective of the 9th EDF was to eradicate poverty in the region by 2020 and regional leaders highlighted human resource development (HRD) and regional economic development as two focal areas for funding (Government of Fiji, 2001; Tavola, 2001). In 2001, €8m was assigned to support the HRD component and has been used to co-fund the Pacific Regional Initiative for the Delivery of basic Education (PRIDE) with NZAID.

At the initial Pacific Forum Education Ministers Meeting (PFEdMM) in 2001, it was agreed that a basic education plan be drawn up based on the EFA/MDG goals and in line with the aforementioned EC strategy, as the basis for a new regional education program. The *Forum Basic Education Action Plan* (FBEAP) was subsequently produced (PIFS, 2001). This formed the basis for the development of the regional PRIDE initiative, which focuses on the development of coherent national education policies in all Pacific States. At the second PFEdMM in 2002, NZAID spearheaded suggestions that the region move away from an individual project approach and adopt a Sector-Wide Approach (SWAp) as the mechanism for educational support and donor collaboration. This mechanism has been supported, most notably in the education and health sectors, in the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Kiribati and Samoa, and is in contrast to the limited interest within the Pacific Forum nations in adopting a PRSP approach, although certain countries are known to be working in this direction.

Fast Track Initiative and Education for All (FTI–EFA)

There is a further major, internationally driven, planning exercise influencing the education sector in the Pacific that emanates from UNESCO's mandate for monitoring progress and overall coordination of the EFA goals. Although UNESCO's initial direct action involved assisting in the production of EFA country assessments and the development of subsequent plans of action, the raised profile of education through the EFA goals and MDGs has attracted support of several new players to the field of educational aid. Most notable is the unprecedented role that international non-government organisation (INGO) coalitions have taken on — that of leaders, advocates, EFA policy activists, and monitors of global EFA goals (Mundy, 2006). By 2000, most of the Pacific nations had carried out national EFA assessments, which formed the basis for the FBEAP in 2001. In 2002 the EFA Fast Track Initiative (FTI) was spearheaded by the World Bank with the aim of increasing the number of countries on-track towards achieving the MDG of universal primary education by 2015 (World Bank, 2004).

Although purportedly a “global partnership between donors and developing countries ... which includes all major donors for education” (World Bank, 2005, p.1), funding for the FTI–EFA did not reach the anticipated levels and the initiative was reconceptualised as a facility that gives recognition to ‘sound’ country plans. Such plans must include a primary education component and sector financing consistent with the FTI Indicative Framework (20% of budget and 50% of that on primary education) (World Bank, 2004); have access to predictable aid; and be able to manage large programs of sector-wide funding from multiple sources (Mundy, 2006). To access the support, low-income countries must have a PRSP or equivalent transitional strategy, which includes a credible education plan. This link to the PRSP has made FTI–EFA vulnerable to the same kind of criticisms; for example, issues of local preference, the speed of implementing policy changes, and limiting national policy to MDG goals (for more extensive discussion see Robertson, Novelli, Dale, Tikley *et al.*, 2007: pp.93–97).

In 2006 a proposal was made by the World Bank to Ministers at the PFEdMM for the introduction of the FTI–EFA initiative in the Pacific (PIFS, 2006). It was proposed that the PRIDE Project be the vehicle to facilitate the participation of Pacific Island countries in the Fast Track Initiative. However, in its submission, the Bank stressed that it would not be financing PRIDE, but instead would add value to PRIDE’s activities through its technical assistance in strategic and financial planning, and monitoring and evaluation. Thus, rather than duplicate current initiatives in the region, it would enhance them (ibid). Ministers endorsed the World Bank’s proposals to carry out an exploratory investigation in this regard (PIFS, 2006).

To conclude this section of the paper, it is acknowledged that the agencies discussed above are by no means the only actors in the education aid forum in the Pacific. They are, however, probably the most influential in the region at this time. Other players include the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Japan’s bilateral aid agency, JICA. The ADB currently has few educational loans in the region (apart from one in Samoa) although it does provide some grant funding. In general, JICA tends to bypass government channels and funds schools directly, largely on a self-help basis and often in infrastructural assistance, although this approach is showing signs of change (Tolley, 2003).

DISCUSSION

The analysis of the priorities and activities of key education donors in the Pacific indicates that most educational aid is provided through bilateral rather than multilateral channels and in the form of grants rather than loans⁹. Since 2000, there has been clear convergence among donors both in their objectives and delivery models. They have generally conformed to the widely legitimised international consensus that supporting the delivery of basic and universal primary education (UPE) is a ‘pro-poor’ global good, more worthy of unified support than the elitist top-heavy support for higher education of earlier eras. Also, in sharp contrast to previous approaches, there are palpable indications that donors are now prepared to assume some of the longer-term recurrent costs in education, as evidenced by their support for channeling funds through sectoral budgetary support mechanisms such as the Solomon Islands Education SWAp. However, it remains unclear how much and for how long such support will be forthcoming and there is limited, if any, evidence that these methods are, or will, substantially reduce issues of poverty in the Pacific. As Mundy (2006) points out, education is the key sector in which donors tend to experiment with historically novel efforts at donor coordination and resource pooling; a fact that is rarely realised (p.36).

It is clear that the main donors are increasingly choosing to focus their involvement on the negotiation of sector policies and strategies, rather than channelling their development assistance at more grassroots support (as Japan’s bilateral approach tends to be). These new mechanisms for aid delivery are aimed at eliminating poverty by changing the way recipient governments govern (Levesque, 2001), rhetorically known as the ‘good governance agenda’. Through this approach, donors can influence the way resources are allocated rather than relying on invoking more direct popular support. Basic education and UPE are now clearly embedded in this agenda. It is a core feature of ‘good global development’ and embraces all development camps: human rights, community participation, economic growth, human capital, and productive investment. Such dedication to the global goals and global good is also politically useful — not only does it crucially indicate to donor-country electorates their government’s humanitarian dedication to

⁹ It is acknowledged that the ADB is providing educational loans to Samoa.

reducing global poverty, it also serves to increase the agency's accountability both at home, and internationally.

Compliance to attesting attainment of the global education goals across the region is forefront in the majority of donors' policies and one might be forgiven for assuming that this is the overriding education 'problem' faced by all Pacific Island countries. This is not the case. In countries such as Fiji and Samoa it is felt that many of the statutory goals have already been achieved and an over-concentration on the MDG/EFA goals risks narrowing nations' educational scope and undermining other activities of the State in areas such as training and technological development. As one senior government official explained¹⁰, some countries are committed to their own education targets and have little enthusiasm for the global goals. Instead, the government pays lip-service to them, purely to 'stay in the game' and remain in the donor agencies' favour, while at the same time resenting the energy and resources that have had to be expended in continuing the façade. This is particularly the case in nations with small populations and very limited staff resources.

With self-interest an acknowledged priority of some donors (e.g. AusAID) it is not surprising that recipients in the Pacific have found it difficult to reconcile self-interest and 'humanitarian', morally motivated aid¹¹, although AusAID would assert that moral and self-interested objectives can be compatible in a donor-recipient relationship. From Levesque's (2001) work in Pakistan it is clear that when donor self-interest is perceived by recipient to be the principal motivation, it tends to produce a negative climate, characterised by resistance to donor priorities, resentment at any form of external interference in local affairs and cynicism among government officials. In terms of the Pacific, some regard the high levels of aid currently being delivered by Australia to the Melanesian islands group (the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea) more a result of Australia's preoccupation with regional security than for genuine humanitarian reasons and reducing poverty (Brewer, 2002). However, although this preoccupation has resulted in increased military and security measures, it also appears that AusAID has interpreted the relationship between security and poverty more broadly than the idea that poverty may act as a catalyst to security, and makes attempt to address the relationship between terrorism and social exclusion, marginalisation and inequality (Robertson, Novelli, Dale, Tikley *et al.*, 2007). Moreover, the crucial role of education in this area must not be overlooked, especially in areas of promoting positive social integration, citizenship and human rights; assessing the effects of conflict on education and providing avenues of return to education for those affected; access to adult education; and reducing educational inequalities.

Within the Pacific the following assumptions are gaining momentum: donor activity is more effective when (1) it is coordinated and harmonised to reduce unproductive transaction and reporting costs, and is achieving greater integration of funding agency and government effort; (2) it is aimed at putting more control and leadership into the hands of recipient governments and is more in-line with their 'credible' strategic plans; and (3) when it is strengthening government management systems (Ward, 2003). However, for such approaches to become 'country-driven', donors need to be mindful of the level of capacity building that will be required for effective

¹⁰ Personal communication at the 2003 Pacific Regional Education Conference: Rethinking Educational Aid, Nadi, Fiji, October 20-22

¹¹ This attitude was noticeable towards AusAID, and to a lesser extent towards NZAID, in the early stages of the 2003 Pacific Regional Educational Conference (PREC) in Fiji. Strong disapproval of and disillusionment with the involvement of highly paid, contextually insensitive, expatriate consultants has been highlighted by Nabobo (2000) who made strong calls for more locally driven self-development; sentiments that were clearly reiterated at the latest Conference (Sanga, 2003)

planning, prioritising and implementing programs. In some Pacific countries there is clearly an institutional need for external technical assistance, training and support¹² to produce a national education strategy. However, this is not universal across the region; Samoa, for example, already has adequate and functional plans in place. Thus, the donors, especially through mechanisms such as the PRIDE project, must be wary of over-steering the process and imposing external criteria on internal processes while ignoring the local context. As Levesque (2001) points out, ignorance of local conditions and insufficient regard or use of local expertise can result in the detrimental development of so-called 'perception gaps'.

SWAps are seen as precursors to macro budget support mechanisms through which donors are suspected of becoming increasingly involved in the internal functioning of the State in a manner that could be construed as 'neo-colonialism' (Baba, 1999)¹³. SWAps and the introduction of the FTI-EFA initiative, in association with PRIDE with its mandate to prepare "credible" strategic plans (NZAID, 2003), could be seen as the beginning of Pacific PRSPs. From the literature, it is becoming clear that the panacea of the international donor community is for *every* aid-receiving country to develop a PRSP as a precondition for further lending and grant assistance (Ward, 2003). The PRSP, anticipated to be a reflection of individuality and national ownership, is however, also expected to conform to the methodology laid out in the thousand-page instruction booklet produced by the World Bank, and is based on the assumption that political change is a prerequisite for the elimination of poverty (Levesque, 2001). However, the continued use of conditionality and incentives may reduce the worth of such good intentions, especially when applied with the expressed intention of achieving one aim over another. Although no PRSP has yet been produced within the Pacific, countries should be vigilant of the experience of others who have already been through the process. They should also be aware of the concerns raised over the appropriateness of such an approach for small island states, together with the controversy that surrounds the actual levels of civil society participation and government involvement in their production and the model of development being encouraged. As Levesque (2001, pp.346–7) states, "There is limited evidence that politically prioritised development aid influences recipient government policy and significantly reduces poverty ... the assumed 'trickle down development effect' where 'better government' leads to more equitable resource allocation for the poor and improved social sector delivery has yet to be demonstrated [in Pakistan]".

The title of this paper asks whether developing countries are losing sight of their local desires and obligations under international pressures to conform to a standardised global model. The message it hopes to portray is that with an awareness of where perception gaps might occur — for example, in the use of benevolent rhetorical language to hide political intent, the mismatch between local conditions and aspirations and global aims, and the real level of external involvement the new financial models demand — Pacific countries, in particular, can manoeuvre a strong and effective pathway through the current development maze with a loud and informed local voice.

¹² A lack of capacity in these areas was recognised by the ESIRP Mid Term Review Panel in the Solomon Islands

¹³ For comment on the numerous conditions attached to the ADB public sector reform loan to Samoa, see Tolley (2003).

REFERENCES

- AusAID. (1997). *Better Aid for a Better Future: Seventh Annual Report to Parliament on Australia's Development Cooperation Program and the Government's Response to the Committee of Review of Australia's Overseas Aid Program*. Canberra: Government of Australia.
- AusAID. (2006). *Australian Aid: Promoting Growth and Stability. A White Paper on the Australian Government's Overseas Aid Program*. Canberra: Government of Australia, AusAID.
- Baba, T. (1987). Academic Buccaneering Australian Style: The role of Australian Academics in the South Seas. *Directions*, 9(1), 3–11.
- Baba, T. (1989). *The Business of Australian Aid: Education, Training and Development. The Majories Smart Memorial Lecture*. Melbourne: University of Melbourne.
- Baba, T. (1999). Teacher education and Globalisation: Challenges for Teacher Education in the Pacific during the New Millennium. *Directions*, 21(1).
- Brewer, N. (2002). The “silent P” in the Asia–Pacific. May 2002. Retrieved 1 November, 2003, from <http://www.westpapua.net/news/02/05/270502-silentp.htm>
- Buchert, L. (1995). *Recent Trends in education aid: towards a classification of policies*. Paris: UNESCO/International Institute of Education Planning (IIEP).
- Coxon, E. (1996). *The Politics of 'Modernisation' in Western Samoan Education*. University of Auckland, New Zealand.
- Coxon, E. (2003). Education Policy-Making At the Intersection. In E. Coxon & A. Taufe'ulungaki (Eds.), *Global/Local Intersections: Researching the delivery of aid to Pacific Education* (pp.67–85). Auckland: RUPE, University of Auckland, New Zealand.
- Coxon, E., & Baba, T. (2003). Introduction: Global Blueprints and Local Complexities. In E. Coxon & A. Taufe'ulungaki (Eds.), *Global/Local Intersections. Researching the delivery of aid to Pacific Education*. Auckland: University of Auckland, New Zealand.
- Coxon, E., & Tolley, H. (2003). *Aid to Pacific Education: An Overview. Background paper prepared for Paper presented at the The Regional Conference on Rethinking Educational Aid in the Pacific, Nadi, Fiji*.
- Downer, A. (2005). Ministerial Statement to Parliament on Australia's Aid Program. Speech by the Minister for Foreign Affairs The Hon Alexander Downer MP delivered to Parliament on 10 March 2005. *Overseas Aid* Retrieved 23 October, 2007, from http://www.ausaid.gov.au/media/release.cfm?BC=Speech&ID=4181_6837_1755_8392_9413
- Government of Fiji. (2001). European Union Aid for Pacific States. Retrieved 12 August, 2003, from http://www.fiji.gov.fj/press/2001_07/2001_12-03.shtml
- Hilditch, L. (2002). Cotonou Agreement: trail-blazing or treading a well-worn path? In J. Randel, T. German & D. Ewing (Eds.), *The Reality of Aid 2002* (pp.131–134). Manila: IBON Books.
- Ilon, L. (1996). The Changing Role of the World Bank: education policy as global warfare. *Policy and Politics*, 24(4), pp.413–424.
- King, K., & McGrath, S. (2002). *Globalisation, Enterprise and Knowledge. Education, Training and Development in Africa*. Oxford: Symposium Books.

- Levesque, D. (2001). *Whose money, Whose education system? Improving aid effectiveness by examining paradigm, policy and implementation perception gaps in Pakistan's, donor funded, primary education development programme 1991–2000*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Reading, Reading.
- MFAT. (1993). *NZODA Policy on Education and Training*. Wellington: Government of New Zealand.
- Mundy, K. E. (2006). Education for All and the New Development Compact. *Review of Education*, 52, 23–48.
- Nabobo, U. (2000). Teacher Education in an Aid Project: The Case of the Fiji–Australian Teacher Education Project (FATEP). *Directions*, 22(1), 97–115.
- NZAID. (2002a). *Achievement of EFA in the Pacific. Pacific Priorities: Donor Roles and Activity. Discussion Paper*. Suva, Fiji: Forum Education Ministers Meeting.
- NZAID. (2002b). *Options for Structuring External Financing of Education for Effectiveness of Education Development and Delivery in Pacific Countries. NZAID Discussion Paper*. Suva: Forum Education Ministers Meeting.
- NZAID. (2003). *Education Policy Statement: Draft October 2003. Achieving Education For All: The New Zealand Agency for International Development's Education Policy*. Wellington: NZAID.
- O'Connor, T., Chan, S., & Goodman, J. (2006). Australian Aid: Promoting Insecurity? In *The Reality of Aid*. <http://www.realityofaid.org>
- OECD. (2005). The Paris Declaration. Retrieved 23 August, 2007, from http://www.oecd.org/document/18/0,2340,en_2649_3236398_35401554_1_1_1_1,00.html
- PIFS. (2001). *Pacific Islands Forum Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP) – 2001*. Auckland: Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.
- PIFS. (2006). *Forum Basic Education Action Plan – 2006 Review*. Nadi, Fiji: Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. Forum Education Ministers Meeting.
- Reality of Aid. (2006). *Reality of Aid Reports*.
- Robertson, S., Novelli, M., Dale, R., Tikly, L., Dachi, H., & Alphonse, N. (2007). *Globalisation, Education and Development: Ideas, Actors and Dynamics* (Vol. 68). Bristol: DFID Publications.
- Sanga, K. (2003). Keynote lecture. In P. R. E. Conference (Ed.). Nadi: Personal notes.
- Tavola, H. (2001). The Role of the Forum Secretariat in Education. *Directions*, 23(2), 14–19.
- Tolley, H. (2003). *Basic Education: Globalising the Local?*, University of Auckland, New Zealand
- Ward, M. (2002). *External Financing of Education: Uganda Case Study*. Wellington: NZAID.
- Ward, M. (2003, 20–22 October). *Bilateral Aid to Education in the Pacific: A Review of Aid Delivery Mechanisms*. Paper presented at the Pacific Regional Education Conference on Rethinking Educational Aid, Nadi, Fiji.
- World Bank. (2004). *Education for All–Fast Track Initiative. Accelerating progress towards quality universal primary education. Framework*. Washington: The World Bank.

World Bank. (2005). *Education for All—Fast Track Initiative. Fact Sheet: About Aid Effectiveness*. Retrieved 2007, June 2, from http://www.worldbank.org/education/efaiti/documents/factsheet_harmonization.pdf