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International Policy Convergence in Higher Education: An Analysis from the Periphery

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Introduction

In response to international developments in educational policy discussions, higher education institutions and governments on the periphery are changing the way that they articulate policy. Although local institutions and governments may appear to have autonomy in educational policy formulation and practice, international trends have had a wide-ranging impact on peripheral systems of education. This chapter analyses the convergence of educational policy across international borders (Ball 1998) by examining the 'new managerialism' in higher education in Fiji, looking in detail at how international trends in educational policy are being adopted at the national level in Fiji and how they are being played out in the local, peripheral setting of a Fiji teacher education institution.

The international context of education has changed significantly over the last decade, and in today's more globalized world it is no longer possible to ignore the effects of global macro socio-economic changes on both national and local education systems. The influence of these changes on national education systems is widely acknowledged with, for example, an increase in privatization and market driven reforms (Dale 1997, Elliot 1999, Smyth, Dow, Hattam, Reid & Shacklock 2000, Whitty 1997, Woods & Jeffrey 1996). Furthermore, according to Ball (1998: 122), concepts such as the 'learning society', the 'knowledge-based economy' and the 'new managerialism' are policy 'condensates' which "serve and symbolise the increasing colonization of education policy by economic policy imperatives".

Emerging as part of the trend brought about by economic globalization is the focus on the internationalization of higher education. The internationalization of higher education might be understood as a response of higher education to globalization. More specifically, it could be seen as "a systematic, sustained effort by

P. Ninnes and M. Hellstén (eds.), Internationalizing Higher Education, 199-214.

government to make higher education institutions more responsive to the challenges of globalisation of the economy and society" (Elliot 1999: 32).

The internationalization of higher education in this sense is examined here in relation to secondary teacher education policy and practice in Fiji, a country that has one national institutional provider of secondary teachers, namely, the Fiji College of Advanced Education (FCAE). The Ministry of Finance in Fiji has required that all Ministries produce new policy documents including Mission Statements and Strategic Plans along the lines of the new managerialist style. Thus the Fiji Ministry of Education (MoE) has recently developed three new policy documents: *Education Fiji 2020*; The *Strategic Plan 2000 – 2002*; and the *2001 Corporate Plan*. These policy documents are used to plan and monitor educational processes at all levels of the education system, including higher education. As a consequence, and as I discuss in this chapter, the FCAE has now developed its own Mission Statement and Strategic Plan complete with performance indicators.

There is a clear appropriation of economic discourses in the new FCAE documents. Defining education in terms of economics "means that economic interests dominate content and process in education, and that in turn requires that what counts as knowledge is redefined, for practitioners as well as pupils" (Ozga 2000: 56). This knowledge and reality are largely defined in a meaning-deficient new managerial style, and this should be a crucial matter for debate (Loughlin 2002).

Of added interest, however, is how these new, globally recognizable policies are implemented by the FCAE, and this chapter reports on some research findings based on a study of teacher education in Fiji (Tuinamuana 2002). I argue that although the new global educational discourses might have the potential to contribute to the construction of a new reality of education in Fiji, the way in which the new managerialist policy is perceived and acted upon by the players on the ground adds complexity to the situation.

The New Managerialism

The new managerialism is a form of management that emphasizes efficiency and effectiveness using techniques and values appropriated from the business sector. Ball (1998: 123) suggests that in practice, there is an "insertion of the theories and techniques of business management and the 'cult of excellence' into public sector institutions".

There is very little doubt that the new managerialism has become a part of the way in which education is conceptualized within institutions and at local, national and global policy levels. Loughlin (2002) discusses some of the new language associated with the quality reforms introduced in the United Kingdom. He very aptly entitles his article with the words: "Assurance, effectiveness, ownership, empowerment, autonomy, dynamic, learning curves, a continuum of quality-awareness, self-actualisation

and enhancement … whatever that means". Loughlin (2002: 20) is critical of the culture of "perpetual linguistic innovation" evident within contemporary management practice suggesting that, first, this new terminology is inadequately explained by its promoters, except in superficial and circular ways, and second, that the purpose of the new jargon is really to deliver support for existing government policies.

Moreover, the new managerialism is seen as a way to devolve responsibility (that is, power), at a very superficial level, to practitioners. Thus, in this situation practitioners might attain a sense of empowerment, whereas in reality control and power remain at centralized locations. Hartley (1997: 48) outlines the UK experience with the new managerialism:

> How can the costs of the welfare state be pruned so that both professionals and clients lend their approval to the cuts? The preferred solution is to assign control of strategy to government, but to devolve to institutions and to individuals the control over tactics which will implement that strategy. Funding now follows performance, as a reward; hitherto funding preceded performance as an investment.

In this sense, within the new managerialism, there is now a new form of employee involvement. Ball (1998: 123) calls this the cultivation of "corporate culture" a development that is "deeply paradoxical. On the one hand . . . managerial responsebilities are delegated and initiative and problem solving are highly valued. On the other hand, new forms of surveillance and self-monitoring are put in place, for example, appraisal systems, target setting, and output comparisons."

Thus the new managerialism, replete with its own jargon, seems to be functioning in support of neo-liberal global economic agendas in its appropriation of the technicist language typically used in the business sector. That Fiji is not exempt from these international trends is evident in the directions that she is now taking in matters to do with educational policy both at a general level and more specifically in terms of teacher education. The next section illustrates this point further.

The New Managerialism in Fiji

Fiji is currently going through an unprecedented phase of educational policy document production, with the new-style policy documents now gaining a unique currency of authority and prestige. This phase commenced at the beginning of 1999, when the MoE developed a strategic plan to "provide greater focus and direction on educational planning in government" (Kotobalavu 2000: i). This plan was called the *Education Fiji 2020 Strategic Plan*, and was developed during the reign of the newly elected Labour/Peoples' Coalition Party Government. It was later supplemented by the

Strategic Plan 2000 – 2002, and the *2001 Corporate Plan: Putting the 'Strategic Plan 2000 – 2002' into Action.*

It might be asked from what impetus did these documents suddenly appear? It is evident that the preparation of the new set of planning documents was initiated by the economic requirements set up within the Fiji Ministry of Finance. In a section on "Internal Outputs" the 2001 MoE Corporate Plan lists as the number 1 output, "Prepare Corporate Plan". The quality of this Plan is to be assessed in terms of how far it complies with the "requirements of (the) Public Service Act and (the) Finance Management Act" (Fiji Ministry of Education 2001: 37). There are thus very clear links between the new policy documents and the macroeconomic policies that successive governments in Fiji have been pursuing since the onslaught of neo-liberal ideals (Prasad 1998). Fiji is not exempt from the influence of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank directives, and is now integrated with the global structural adjustment policies that are encouraged by these institutions and their subsidiaries. Commentators have suggested that the Bank has "abandoned its role as a development bank to become a policy-making institution that intervenes in the internal affairs of countries" (Ugarteche 1997: 201).

The current economic emphasis on the principles of neo-liberalism affects education in 'developing' countries in a number of significant ways. The most visible influence has been one of intervention in the supply of teaching personnel, transferral of curricula from the centre to the periphery, sharing of examinations and the growth in the number of external consultancies carried out. However, the underlying influence can be better articulated in terms of the role of education in being a tool for integration of Fiji as a 'junior' player into the wider regional and global economy.

It is significant, therefore, that the push for policy formulation seems to be coming from outside the education sector. This of course is not a phenomenon restricted to Fiji's situation. Furthermore, there is some feeling in the education sector that the MoE might not have acted on its own accord in following the new managerial trend if there had not been an impetus from the Finance Ministry for development of the new plans. A senior academic member of staff working at the management level at the FCAE commented on these developments, tying them in with the reforms that Fiji is currently undergoing:

> It's all tied up with these public sector reforms that we are inheriting, or borrowing from Australia. And it's all tied up with Performance Management Systems where you have to have a Vision, a Mission, you have to have a Strategic Plan, and your Annual Plans and all that. If it weren't for that I don't think that the ministry would ever dream that that's the way they'd like to go. That's a very recent thing and only because they've been forced to be able to think ahead. Otherwise they're very reactive and never proactive (Interview with Lecturer A, 2000).

The next section analyses this new managerial-style policy development.

Education Fiji 2020

This document is the first in the series of 'new style' policies, and the language employed within the text of the policy tends toward the new managerialist style as discussed above:

> *Education Fiji 2020* denotes the beginning of an increased focus on planning at all levels of education, providing a framework for strategic and management planning which will ensure that the efforts of all partners in education are integrated for the benefit of our students, the community and the nation … This analysis identified a number of changes and challenges which were the starting point for developing the objectives and planned outcomes for education to the year 2020. The outcomes describe the desired features of education by the year 2020 and give us reference points from which we can measure our success (Fiji Ministry of Education 1999: 2).

Almost at the outset, *Education Fiji 2020* uses the language typical of the discourse of the new managerialism. There are strong tendencies towards a behaviouristic perspective, with an uncritical emphasis on outcomes and measurement. After an introduction to the tradition of education in Fiji and an examination of changes and challenges, the *2020* document goes on to discuss 10 objectives for planning in education to the year 2020. Each of these objectives is followed by a set of "desired outcomes", which are to act as sources of measurement of achievement of these objectives. Both the objectives and the outcomes are replete with the exhortation to develop quality and excellence. Objective 6 is, "To establish standards, monitor, account for and seek continuous improvement in the performance of our learners, our staff and our education system" (Ministry of Education 1999:11). The document buttresses this economic terminology with appeals to the participatory nature of education with objective 10, which states, "To increase educational participation at all levels, encouraging a learning culture with community recognition of the importance and value of education and training throughout life" (Ministry of Education 1999:11). These two objectives taken together aptly illustrate Hartley's point about the two sets of vocabulary evident in the new managerialism:

> Before us, therefore, is the discourse of the new managerialism. It comprises two sets of vocabulary, the one replete with the industrial metaphors of the rationally structured machine, the other suffused with the appeals to empowerment and ownership. The former is the discourse for strategy; the latter for tactics. Somehow, we, the professionals … are meant to mix these two contradictory vocabularies in our minds, as if they are of a piece, devoid of

> contradiction, logically coherent. In our attempt to bring their contradictory logics together, we are left with confusion and not a little cynicism. It just does not feel right. And it does not feel empowering (Hartley 1997: 48).

Strategic Plan 2000 – 2002

The *Strategic Plan* provides detailed strategies for the achievement of the objectives outlined in *Education Fiji 2020*. As with the latter document, The *Strategic Plan* continues with the use of the new managerialist discourse. There is an emphasis on outcomes and performance indicators, and the associated discourses of measurement and accountability. The idea that educational outcomes can and should be predicted and then measured seems to be the logical and sensible thing to do. However, the adoption of the rhetoric of outcomes and performance is, again, indicative of the move toward viewing education in entrepreneurial terms, supporting a broader thesis about the economizing of education that is now a significant part of international developments in higher education. Furthermore, as with the *Education Fiji 2020* document, there are appeals to "empowerment", "partnership" and "ownership" of education processes (Fiji Ministry of Education 2000: 7-9). These more humanistic concerns are placed alongside the economic rhetoric that is implicit as a techno-rational discourse of control from the central policy-making body; or as Hartley puts it, there is a contradiction between the central controlling discourse of strategy as is evident in the metaphors of industry, and the discourse of tactics that promotes a façade of policy ownership by the practitioner (Hartley 1997: 48). As will be evident from the response of teacher educators in Fiji to the new policy, the rhetoric of empowerment and ownership does not devolve into local cultures of practice in Fijian teacher education.

2001 Corporate Plan

The managerialist language continues in the *2001 Corporate Plan,* the third major policy document produced by the Fiji MoE in line with the requirements of the Fiji Finance Management Act.

> The Ministry of Education is declaring 2001 as the Year of Breakthrough … We have analysed our inputs, outputs and desired outcomes for the Year 2000 and have mapped out in this Plan a more decisive and focused pathway for education in Fiji in 2001. Our primary focus is to realise set accountabilities and targets in partnership with our stakeholders (Fiji Ministry of Education 2001:1).

The focus in this particular document is on the ministry outputs for 2001. In its review of the 2000 outputs there are 11 pages of a tabulated assessment of delivery of outputs, with a separate column for "If Not, Why?" cases. There is a strong tendency towards a ticking off of achievements with the inclusion of a separate entry each for bureaucratic

items such as: "Payment of salary", "Payment of accounts", "Payment of government grants", and "Issue of revenue and trust fund receipts".

Although these are extreme examples of the more bureaucratic aspects of the outputs, what is of interest here is that they are tabulated alongside more professional issues such as: "Provision of teaching services", "Provision of pre-service teaching services", "Strengthening of Fijian education", "Conduct research when necessary on above issues and use finding as basis of advice". The juxtaposition of two very diverse sets of outputs in this contrived manner is, again, reflective of an underlying techno-rational ideology.

The New Managerialism in Teacher Education

The FCAE has recently developed a Mission Statement and a Strategic Plan. The directive for this initiative came from the MoE via the Ministry of Finance. As with the MoE *2020* document, the FCAE planning documents are assessed in terms of how satisfactorily they comply with the Fiji Finance Management Act (Government of Fiji 1999).

In essence, the new FCAE planning documents do not differ from the three new Fiji MoE documents described above. For example, the FCAE Strategic Plan is structured according to the very same objectives contained in the *Education Fiji 2020* policy document. It outlines strategies and performance indicators that will be used to achieve and assess the defined objectives. There is an emphasis on excellence and quality. In addition, the economic terminology is, as for *Education Fiji 2020*, buttressed by an appeal to the participatory nature of education in several of its objectives and strategies.

The development of the three new policy documents *Education Fiji 2020*, *Strategic Plan 2000-2002*, and the *2001 Corporate Plan*, along with the new FCAE planning documents, is an important moment for Fiji. Their production is indicative of a strong centralized attempt to take a more proactive stance on matters to do with education. However, as has been suggested above there are a number of matters of concern that need to be noted. First, the fact that the directives for this policy development emerge from the finance sector should not be seen as an unimportant issue. The dictates of the financial sector through a wider economic rationalist culture of cost cutting, downgrading, objective measurement, and monitoring and accountability should be noted for its effects on educational and other social institutions in the country. Second, there is a need to separate the professional matters from the more mundane bureaucratic matters in a consideration of what are called outputs. Education is primarily a human endeavour and designing policy for its own sake considerably denies this factor. Third, it is clear that the language of the new managerialism has emerged in the new policy documents, and there are indications that much of this language is imported from the economic sector. Again, a view of education as an

overtly technicist endeavour induces a tendency towards a meaninglessness and a decontextualization of policy matters.

This flurry of paperwork in planning the education system is, of course, not happening in a vacuum. A planning document is only as good as the community that it was written for, and therefore we must ask the question: what do teacher educators make of this new-style managerialist documentation?

Practitioner Responses to the New Policy: Who Owns Teacher Education?

Data collected by Tuinamuana (2002) as part of a larger research study point to a contradiction between the set of new official policy discourses and that of context-bound discourses. Context-bound here refers to discourses articulated by those directly involved with teacher education on the ground. In effect, teacher educators generally did not feel that they owned teacher education, a situation that further confirms the workings of a technocratic ideology at work. This issue can be illustrated with the analogy of car factory workers who work on one isolated part of the product and receives little intrinsic personal satisfaction from their labour. Similarly, if the ownership of teacher education practice becomes externalized and alienated from personal experience then there is a sense of disengagement from practice. Practice becomes routinized and takes on a hue of artificiality and automaticity.

The data shows that there is very little fit between the official policy discourse and the response from those more directly involved with teacher education. As might be expected in a system where the perception is that, over the years, very little has changed in the education system, there is also a significant degree of scepticism about what the officially sanctioned policy is able to achieve at the level of implementation. Further, there was a general lack of awareness of what the policy is, and sometimes there was almost apathy about what it might mean for future changes and developments. The dominance of a discourse of educational practice that has become routinized over the years suggests that that this lack of interest in larger issues might be part of the process of alienation that separates educational practice from any meaningful and dynamic contextualization.

In trying to effect educational change through new policy formation, the mistake is often made of not including those on the 'shop floor' in decision-making. Fullan (1991: 38) suggests that the implementation of educational change involves "change in practice". However, the data suggests that the changes that the new policy directions are designed to effect would actually make very few inroads into educational practice. The bureaucratic inertia and personal apathy that seems to dominate local culture/s of educational practice make significant contributions to widening this space between policy and implementation. This inertia and apathy is, of course, not presented to lay blame at any personal level. Rather, the objective is to draw attention to this situation as it exists in a wider context of a dominant techno-rational culture of

teacher education. An articulation of this point, conversely, also assists in clarifying the possibilities that lie in a teacher education policy and practice that works, not in the form of alienation, but as a form of educational change (Fullan 1991).

Below, I discuss in some detail the responses of teacher education personnel to the issue of policy. These responses illustrate the sense of disengagement from policy issues that was evident in local cultures of teacher education practice. Despite the rhetoric of decentralization and local empowerment that imbues neo-liberal approaches to governance (McGinn 1997), the picture that emerged from interviews with teacher education staff suggested that national policy development at the governmental level was something that 'they' did. Very few staff members were aware of the existence of the new MoE policy documents. Where there was awareness, there seemed to be some consensus in the perception that the MoE tended to focus on issues of numbers rather than quality of teachers.

At the senior administrative level, the principal of the FCAE suggested that, in his opinion, the FCAE was happy to work within the MoE requirements. This is not surprising since the FCAE is a government institution and is funded and run by the central management at the MoE headquarters. In response to the question "Is teacher education policy formalised in any way here [at FCAE]?", the principal observed:

> For the college how it all started here, the policy for teacher education institutions are formulated by the ministry. They initiate policy, of course, through the influence of the government of the day …. So in terms of policy guidelines we are going along with the major policies set by the MoE. We do not deviate but we want to make sure in what way we can help the MoE achieve the major goals and the vision of the MoE. So we have a vision statement, we have strategies, and because of that without these plans how can we justify what we are doing? Because in there we have different programmes there we are following so we can justify for budget allocation.

However, in interviews with FCAE lecturing staff, the question of policy initiated some interesting discussion. The following extract is typical (K is the researcher, C1 is the respondent):

K As far as you are aware, what are the written policy documents that guide teacher training in Fiji?

C1 I've seen only education ones. I haven't seen any teacher training policies.

K The College has a vision statement? How widely was it discussed here at FCAE?

C1 It wasn't really discussed it came from the top [i.e. from the MoE] to the administrators here and then it was brought up at the staff meeting, and it was decided that this was going to be our mission statement.

K How is it brought down to the school [ie. Faculty] level?
C1 When you have meetings with the schools, reviewing of courses and all that, the mission and the statement is there. And you check what you have been practising to see whether it is in line with the statement.
K Is it a useful thing to have?
C1 I suppose it's good to have a mission statement in that you have a goal, but the only time I even know that they ever talk about it was for the Performance Management System.
K What are some of the factors that restrict the potential for change?
C1 We don't have good governance. We have never had a good minister. We have ministers who talk about goals and visions. The government of the day has to mean it and be serious about improving education. Just paying lip service to it doesn't work.

In light of the data collected from the FCAE, a comment from the MoE seemed necessary. When interviewing a senior manager at the MoE, I asked the question, "How does the MoE direct, if it does direct, the work of the FCAE?" The response was:

> Well [the MoE and FCAE] have a board on which we are represented. And [the MoE and FCAE] also have an examination board on which the senior staff sits as well …. Also we dictate in terms of the budget, we dictate in terms of the course to be run … dependent on the needs. For some years we have had enough language teachers for example, so we changed the enrolment to lessen the numbers in the area and move to technical vocation, if we found that there were more vacancies in that area then we will increase the number.

This comment is quite telling especially in the light of other comments made by teacher education staff on the preponderance of issues of quantity over those of quality. Furthermore, the MoE, in its managerial role with the FCAE, seems to focus on a technical role. My interview with the senior management at the MoE continues thus (K is the researcher, M1 is the respondent):

M1 So in a sense because [the FCAE is] a government institution there is some direction, or control from the ministry and the way it goes. It appoints the staff, it determines the budget, the capital programmes, by capital I mean building of new facilities, and other assistance that comes with it.
K And how do you get feedback from them to you?
M1 Um ...
K In terms of the things that they … what *they* want?

M1 Like in the government system we have an annual budgeting system. So the principal and the staff if they want to put forward certain projects what they want, their needs, they have to put in their annual requests.

K What about at the level of the professional needs of teachers, or curriculum discussions. Is there a section in the ministry that deals directly with FCAE or are they sort of autonomous?

M1 They are autonomous in that, but they may consult with the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) officers, they deal more with the professional side of things.

However, my own discussions with both FCAE staff and CDU staff suggested that contact between them was minimal. This was partly due to both groups of staff being overworked, and also to the fact that there were very few workable structures set up for more liaising between the FCAE and the CDU.

The following interview response creates a direct link between teacher education policy and the lack of interaction between the CDU and the FCAE (where C3 is the FCAE respondent):

K Are you aware of any formal secondary teacher education policy for Fiji? Have you ever seen anything on paper?

C3 No. With CDU, by right, there should have been a lot of interaction with us [on this matter]. But it seems that they are in a world of their own, But only when we need help, then we go out [to them]. But with them they really wouldn't seek our help. They are probably more concerned with teachers in the field, rather than teachers who are coming to the field. They are forever going out on school visits. They don't realise that if they come here [FCAE] they will make more impact.

The above discussion indicates that there is a significant degree of scepticism about the policy relationship between central policy defining bodies, and those that participate at the level of implementation. The new policy documentation produced by the MoE through its *Education 2020* policy has permeated into the FCAE via their own policy documents, as discussed by the Principal of the college. The lecturing staff themselves differ in their level of awareness, with some maintaining what might be considered to be a healthy scepticism. However, the existence of an overt apathy about the meaning of policy for teacher education in Fiji is significant. Although the following response was not typical of FCAE lecturers' comments on policy related issues, it still represents a considerable segment of opinion in the college:

K Are you aware of any formal secondary teacher education policy?

C4 No ... I am quite ignorant

K Do you think there might be one?

C4 There should be.
K What kinds of things do you think this policy should emphasize?
C4 I think the hours of teaching should be looked at. Some schools have one-hour periods, some have 40 minutes. Because one hour … imagine for students' level of concentration. So such things should be standardised from the ministry.
K Did you have a chance to look at the Fiji Education Review Report?
C4 I wasn't interested.
K Is there a reason for your not being interested?
C4 I have so many things to do, like me studying, and my family, and I am running all new courses this year. I just didn't have the time to do it.
K What about from what you've read in the papers? What did you think about the way that the review was carried out?
C4 I think reports like this, there's a big hue and cry, a lot of money is put in, it's made and it's shelved, then nothing happens.

The following extract provides a further example of the lack of interest in matters pertaining to policy:

K Do you have an opinion on the Fiji Education Review commission?
C5 Actually I haven't gone through the review. So I won't be able to comment.
K Did your school make a contribution to the submission from here?
C5 Yes, um ... Actually I'm not aware of what contributions were made. I'm not really aware of that. It happened beginning of last year, and was mostly compiled by our head of school [faculty head].

It is debatable whether the lack of interest in wider matters impacting on teacher education is due to a lack of time, or whether it is indicative that educators just become accustomed to matters such as a lack of policy ownership as they progress in their careers. That there is a lack of sense of ownership in the policy process is, however, very evident, and it is clear that there is a developing sense of apathy in the way that policy issues are being addressed. This might be due to the centralized nature of policy making in Fiji. The development of the new planning documents does not seem to have altered the situation for the better.

The above discussion has shown the scepticism with which teacher educators view the top-down approach to policy making, whether it is at the governmental level or the institutional level. There was also concern shown that the implementers of the policy did not have more of a voice in the policy making process. For example, a teacher educator sitting on the Education Forum (a forum set up by the MoE to discuss new initiatives in education that would then be presented to the cabinet for

ratification) was less than flattering about its role. The interviewee makes specific comments about the top-down nature of proceedings of the Education Forum:

> This body [the education forum] is only a rubber stamp at the moment…. Because at the moment whether you agree or disagree to what is being proposed you just go there. In other words it is just a rubber stamp. But the proposal, where did this proposal come from? We're not part of the initial process, where these needs come from.

The understandings expressed in the interview with this Education Forum member are supported by data from interviews with other teacher educators. The following interview extract, focussing on the policy making process, provides an example of this (where K is the researcher and L1 is the lecturer):

K What kinds of considerations do they take into account when they make policy? Perhaps think of something that you were involved in?

L1 Some policies came from the Education Forum members although that body is just a showpiece for the ministry people ... I personally feel that every thing comes from the Permanent Secretary (of Education), they decide on something and then they do it.

K Who influences the Permanent Secretary now?

L1 Actually, he should be influenced by the people but at the moment, uh honestly, it is more political decisions, it is the political masters who call the tune. The other people who call the tune is the employers.

K What do you think about that?

L1 It's good and bad. Because they provide employment so we must train them to fit there. The bad thing is that they are money-makers, and they are going into one direction and therefore we are not able to prepare the human resource.

Thus there are strong implications here that the role of the Fiji Education Forum in formulating policy needs to be re-assessed. If there continues to be a limited sense of dialogue between policy makers and practitioners then, as discussed earlier, the gap between official policy discourses and context-bound discourses will widen further.

The role of the Education Forum was also critiqued in the report of the Fiji Education Review Commission 2000:

> The Forum is required to meet three times a year but in reality it does not meet this requirement. It is an advisory body, and has no powers as such. Its role is to advise the Minister on organisation and policy matters, and any matter raised by the Permanent Secretary. Ideally, the Education Forum should fulfil the role of a

> 'Think Tank'. It appears, however, that it has become a forum for stakeholders to express grievances and the MoE to defend itself (Tavola 2000: 31).

As the discussion with the Education Forum member (cited above) progressed to the specific issue of teacher education, s/he talked more directly about the FCAE. When questioned about the role of policy in teacher education, the interviewee makes specific comments about the FCAE:

> Yes but those people [FCAE] are the implementers, they don't really know how come they're doing what they're doing, 'why am I doing what I'm doing? Where does this originate from? Whose idea was this, where did the process start?'

This is a strong indication of the urgent need for more participation at the level of policy development. However, although this is a worthy call there is some doubt that, within current organizational structures of teacher education in Fiji, policy formulation can work in any other way.

In concluding this section on the issue of ownership of teacher education in Fiji, it would seem that, in spite of there being immense amounts of documentation generated by the development of new policy, there is very little meaningful or willing engagement concerning how this new policy might be usefully applied to Fiji's education system. Rather, the policy seems to just 'sit there', on display as it were, and the main function that it has served to date has been to do with planning for future teacher requirements, and for bureaucratic functions of resource allocation. These functions are of course very important, but it is clear that further steps have not been taken to ensure a closer link between official policies and context-bound settings.

Conclusion

The teacher education policy-practice context in Fiji is shaped by a complex interplay of local and external factors, and can be described as currently being in a state of unprecedented flux. Policy is being disseminated and discussed in new ways, and the indication is that much of this is in the form of the new managerialism that is part of the techno-rational discourse associated with economic globalization. Certainly there is scope for further research into how policy plays out in particular contexts of implementation. This chapter has drawn out some of the contextual factors that are important to an enhanced understanding of these new policy developments, and for any educational reform to be successful, a socio-economic and historical assessment should be made of the major issues. Otherwise, the impact of the new policy will inevitably be reduced.

It might be argued that the techno-rational approach to education in Fiji is not new; in fact it developed as part of the history of the introduction of colonialist education (Whitehead 1981). However, it could also be argued that the intensity and pervasiveness of neo-liberal, managerialist approaches to educational policies are unprecedented in Fiji. Furthermore, if the new policy proceeds to underpin the introduction of educational reforms into Fiji, the particular problems surrounding education in Fiji, such as the lack of ownership of reform on the part of practitioners, will become masked by policy innovations.

It is clear that there is a strong and urgent need for a well-articulated philosophical and theoretical direction for teacher education. As I have shown in this chapter, higher education in Fiji is becoming internationalized in the sense that there is a rise to prominence of international administrative and policy approaches derived from managerialist discourses associated with globalization. If educators are to avoid the negative consequences of these approaches, including alienation and the marginalization of educational concerns, then educationists must be allowed to take a stronger proactive professional role. As Ilon (2000: 281) suggests:

> If we are unwilling or unable to rapidly adapt to the dynamics of a knowledge-based economy, we may forgo our chance to become proactive agents of change. Fields far less capable of developing our diverse and contextually driven productive capacities may well influence the design of education. The possibility for a radically improved future will be diminished.

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