

Chapter 9

Critical Reflection and the Question of Epistemology: Is Fiji “On the Ball”?



Eta Varani-Norton

Abstract The change from knowledge transmission of the Industrial Age to knowledge building of the twenty-first century clearly demarcates two different paradigms and the need to heed their implications. This transformation means that the educational system has to change from simply teaching or transmitting knowledge to a mode of creating and building knowledge. Learners have to be innovative in order to create new knowledge. Quality teaching and learning provide the roadmap to achieving this change. A crucial component of the needed transformation in teacher training is critical reflection. This chapter is based on a piece of small-scale qualitative research conducted on a class of 23 students studying a *Curriculum Development* course at a university in Fiji, with reflection exercises as an assessment component. The findings are discussed together with the results of previous studies conducted in Fiji and its region to gauge the quality of students’ reflections. These studies claim that to teach critical reflection will be a challenge in classrooms because of our strong cultural and colonial influences. I argue that Fiji’s colonial history and the traditional socialisation of the *iTaukei*, a name referred to indigenous Fijians, are strong factors in today’s classroom culture and are partly an impediment to our engagement with the twenty-first-century paradigm shift. In this respect, Fiji’s educational problem is comparable to other developing countries. The chapter discusses the history of Fiji’s educational system and its link to the British educational system before defining “reflection” and its role in quality teaching and learning. The research on reflection as a form of assessment will then be examined. In conclusion, the chapter proposes reflection as an exercise and as part of quality assessment be taught to equip students for the purposes of knowledge creation.

Keywords Fiji · *iTaukei* · Critical reflection · Rote learning · Classroom culture

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J. Dorovolomo and G. I. Lingam (eds.), *Leadership, Community Partnerships and Schools in the Pacific Islands*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-6483-3_9

Introduction

Since the introduction of literacy and numeracy by the Christian missionaries in the mid to late 1800s, and colonial government education policies in the second decade of the twentieth century, the surge in school enrolments has encouraged the government to focus on the quantitative expansion of formal education, at the expense of improving its quality. The Fiji colonial government, aside from its focus to increase the number of educational facilities, was also concerned to make education accessible to all and to close the disparity between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians.

The colonial government did not take over the governing of Fiji's education until 1916, with an ad hoc approach to funding, teacher provision and infrastructure. In the 1920s, the tripartite system was introduced, which, although racially based, was an attempt to formulate and implement policies with consistency. Between 1940 and 1960, there was an expansion and gradual standardisation of secondary education. By 1979, there was an increasing demand for external examination qualification based on a narrow examination-oriented curriculum (Tavola 1991). In describing his village school, Nagonenicolo District School in Waimaro in 1929, the anthropologist Ravuvu observed that the introduction of Western education, come new values, was also the "*beginning of a new kind of dependence in relation to the socialisation of children*" (1988, p. 37).

By contrast, Tavola (1991) stated that the purpose of education for the Indo-Fijians was to achieve an English literacy that would open doors to white-collar jobs. Indigenous Fijians generally viewed schooling mainly as a new way of gaining respect (Ravuvu 1988). Colonial schooling inculcated "... new values and aspirations in which the acquisition of introduced knowledge and skills and of things European was considered prestigious and a mark of 'progress'" (Ravuvu 1988, p. 34).

While the Indo-Fijians were sure of what they wanted, the rank and file Indigenous Fijians were not explicit in their desire for a Western type of education and were more inclined to leave schooling for the sons of their chiefs. But both communities have long-valued European ideals very highly. Now the purpose of going to school is for both to get a Western type of education for a white-collar job (Tavola 1991, 2000; Ravuvu 1988; Hoar 2004). For *iTaukei* as for Indians, there is now a desire to adopt European ideals and be successful in modern life. Yet, this popular aspiration has had little influence in transforming the culture of the classroom (Coxon 2000; Tavola 1991).

Classroom Culture

An improved classroom culture is often associated with democratic values, the necessary nexus required for quality improvement in curriculum. Yet curriculum changes in the 1980s did not improve the quality of teaching and learning in Fiji (Tavola 1991). The new curriculum required a child-centred approach to encourage teachers

to come away from factual memorisation and recall, and to focus on an all-round development, upholding the child's dignity and ensuring that his or her creative potential is nurtured. The attempted reform failed because teachers lacked confidence and felt threatened by this new approach (Tavola 1991). They remained more comfortable with the established teacher-centred approach. The change also meant that teachers would have to put more emphasis on rote learning to prepare children for examinations. Despite the progressive aspect of the new curriculum, some of the old shortcomings remained.

Fiji's only female Education Minister to date, Taufa Vakatale, commented on the flaws of Fiji's education system that measures students' success only by their performance in examinations (Singh 1992). This has encouraged student learning by rote, cramming texts and coming out of the system not as fully developed independent young adults. With excessive emphasis on examinations there is inflexibility both in learning by the students and in teaching by the teachers. Whatever students are taught is narrow and fragmented, and they learn only what is covered in the curriculum. Teachers are unable to digress to subjects that have more relevance to students' lives, such as values, literature, drama and culture, when opportunities arise. Their objective is simply to cover the syllabus to prepare students for examinations.

The Fijian aspirations to be successful in Western education and the call to incorporate cultural values in the curriculum can create frictions that may be vexing, particularly for those who are more inclined to value Western education over tradition (Thaman 1993; Varani-Norton 2016). Moreover, the current push by the present government to embed universal values and global sentiments in our curriculum further compound the problem. The process of contextualising the school curriculum by adapting traditional or Western concepts or of creating new knowledge to improve learning and facilitate better understanding is not an easy one. The additional requirement to embed universal values makes the task ever more complex. These different forces can compete with one other and achieving these objectives may require a concerted effort from all stakeholders, including teacher educators, in-service and pre-service teachers in collaboration to achieve the best outcome.

The process of adopting and adapting Western knowledge and global values tends to clash with Fiji's hierarchical, paternalistic and authoritarian cultures, particularly the *iTaukei* culture. But the latter is a social reality that must be considered and problematised if knowledge adaptation and creation are to be achieved. A useful strategy to scrutinise, assess and filter this process is to critically reflect on the different factors and their influence, so that learners may arrive at what they perceive as the best outcome for the school, community and society.

Rote Learning and Schools of the Industrial Age

The emphasis on rote learning is not just a traditional pedagogy of *iTaukei* oral communication to teach through practice and imitation. It was reinforced by the British educational system of the industrial schools, imported by the missionaries.

Modern schooling and the professional training of teachers were the products of the rise of mass systems of education in many Western countries as a result of industrialisation and urbanisation (Simon 1983). By the twentieth century, however, there was a view worldwide that the industrial school “one-size-fits-all” model was failing to meet the needs of most students (Murphy 2016). The evolution of the world economy also meant that schooling was failing the Fijian society since the much-needed skill sets were not adequately provided.

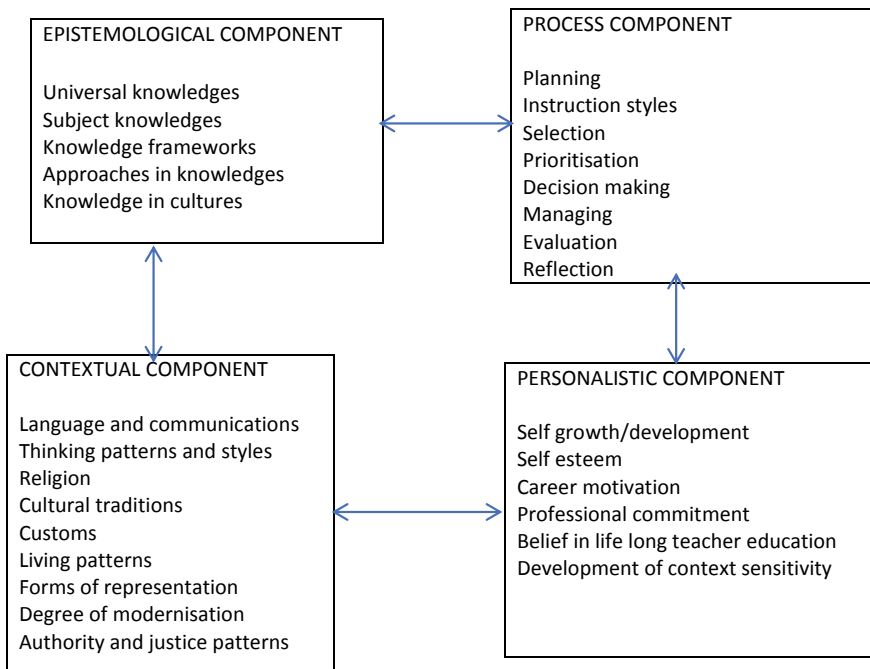
In Fiji, the rapid evolution from an isolated group of islands with rural subsistence to a more diversified and market-based cash economy, meant new knowledge and skills were required. The change also brought the need for social and political transformations. Today, with advanced technology that is rapidly changing many traditions into a global culture, this transition has radically changed the vision of the role of schooling (Kliebard 1995; World Bank 1995; Bacchus 2000). In concluding his report on education in Fiji, Bacchus (2000) asserted that the system will require strategies to enhance qualitative improvements in the nation’s human resources. There must be a movement away from the examination-oriented curriculum into a more rounded approach in terms of epistemology and pedagogy. As Bacchus (2000) argues, teachers should not only view teaching as a technical task to ensure students pass their examinations, but also as their moral and social responsibility to prepare students not only to earn a living but also to make a contribution to enhance the quality of life in their families, their communities and the country as a whole.

Paradoxically, Fiji’s current education system has a two-pronged effect: the Westernised examination-oriented curriculum leaves gaps in knowledge and skills amongst school leavers, and there is still a strong overlap with traditional socialisation that is authoritarian, hierarchical and paternalistic. While this twin effect persists in Fiji, the global pressure to make changes to accommodate twenty-first-century expectations is urgent. The push to change from knowledge transmission to knowledge creation is unavoidable. The change will furthermore involve the fundamental process of communication, cognition, memory and identity construction (Tuomi and Miller 2011). Learners learn to collaborate as they work together. Such exchange will involve learning each other’s cultural knowledge and world views that will influence their understanding of each other, and this will provide the foundation for social life and knowledge creation. With modern technology in classrooms and the instantaneous accessibility of information on the World Wide Web, the community of learners becomes widened, their horizons broadened, and so their identity also has the potential to change. Basically, this means that in this complex environment of change, caution must be taken regarding the need for contextual realities to remain at the forefront of decision-making (Coxon 2000). Contextual realities differ from culture to culture, which has to be taken into consideration in creating or adapting new knowledge. Coxon (ibid) warned of a contextual reality that will clash with the much-needed change: that the authoritarian approach in Fiji to teaching and learning is an obstruction to building students’ independent capacity for knowledge creation.

The role of critical reflection in this much-needed transition is to carefully examine the content of the curriculum, much of which is Western-oriented, and to determine how, in incorporating universal liberal values and cultural beliefs and attitudes, meld

to shape the content. This process requires close scrutiny, questioning, critiquing and filtering for a workable outcome. The process is likely to conflict with traditional *iTaukei* attitudes, and so may require tact to avoid what Tomlinson (2006, p.501) describes as “perils toward of taking a critical reflexive stance tradition”. Tomlinson asserts that Nayacakalou’s changes to the Native Land Trust Board, in the context of the *iTaukei* anxiety about rapid social change, were interpreted by indigenous Fijians as weakening the *iTaukei* society which resulted in a backlash and an assertion of “traditional Fijian rights”. The dilemma for the teacher in this regard is to be mindful about cultural sensitivities while helping students keep an open mind about change.

Thomas’s (1997) model for bridging old and new values for a culturally appropriate pedagogy emphasised four major components in the creation of knowledge: epistemology, process, context and personal:



A pedagogical component model (Thomas 1997, p. 17)

These components must be appraised in any attempt to make learning relevant to teachers and students. Thomas stresses that the components are strongly influenced by politics, economy, society, profession, research and culture. As a prerequisite to producing a culturally appropriate educational outcome, he argued that these factors must be assessed from the perspective of students’ cultures. Claiming that this model will help bridge old and new values, he highlighted various strategies that can help achieve a melding. Reflection, as one of the strategies, will be addressed below. Another component in Thomas’s model, “the personal”, involves

self-reflection which is an inward approach and requires self-examination. Critical reflection, therefore, is not only outwardly but also inwardly oriented. Learners reflect cognitively on the knowledge content (on what is being studied) but also about why they think the way they think (metacognitive). In Brookfield's words, self-reflection involves, "challenging unquestioned assumptions, looking sceptically at givens we have lived by, and trying to shake off habitual ideas and behaviours so that we can try out alternatives" (1987, pp. 231–232).

Self-reflection should be viewed as an exercise that involves personal attributes such as attitudes, disposition, habits of mind and character traits (Auli et al. 2015). The process of examining old and new values for a culturally appropriate pedagogy may still be swayed by dominant values that will most likely influence learners' needs and desires and their learning of new ideas in the classroom (Kanu 2005).

Critical Reflections and Alternative Knowledge

Constructivism is a philosophy which argues that people actively construct knowledge by reflecting on their experience of the world they live in. In this process, they construct their own meanings or understandings. Legitimising their own knowledge, according to Akena (2012, p. 600), is "closely related to context, class affiliation, and the social identity of the [knowledge] producers". Thus, European colonisers who produced Western knowledge as legitimate, strongly influenced by ethnocentrism, imposed their knowledge and world view on their host society which gave them power and control to delegitimise alternatives such as indigenous knowledge. Akena (2012) maintains that the motive of knowledge producers is to legitimise, validate and impose such knowledge in the society in which they live. The subjugated alternatives, such as the existing indigenous knowledge, are often articulated as savage, superstitious and primitive. More likely than not, according to Breidlid (2013), the truth claims of objectivity and universality of Western knowledge are seldom interrogated by the recipient society. He acknowledges that modern science and technology are indispensable as essential aspects of modern contemporary societies. However, he stresses the importance of questioning the sweeping claims of Western knowledge superiority and emphasises the need to put its self-proclaimed superior position in perspective.

Auli et al. (2015) broadly define reflective thought as the process of looking back on assumptions and beliefs, while simultaneously, looking forward to the implications or consequences of the assumption or belief on the "action". They position this as an exercise in sustaining multiple elements and emotions in teaching. According to this approach, being reflective means, "expanding rather than narrowing the psychic, social and cultural fields of analysis" (Auli et al. 2015, p. 516). Mezirow similarly advocates that those engaged in such critical reflections must critique "the presupposition on which our beliefs have been built" (Mezirow, 1998, p. 1).

The chapter's discussion is based on Hatton and Smith's (1995) definition of critical reflection as a process that takes account of wider historic, cultural and political

values or beliefs in framing and reframing practical problems to which solutions are being sought. Such critical reflection is an exercise that examines multiple elements and emotions and their impact on pedagogy while considering how best to understand, and perhaps change, the teaching practice. It also considers the different factors which influence the culture of the classroom.

Why is reflection important in the knowledge creation process? All learning is based on experienced reflection. We reflect in order to achieve a specific outcome or purpose or to deal with complex issues. We reflect on something about which we already have some prior knowledge which is *often* a “process of re-organising knowledge and emotional orientations in order to achieve further insights” (Moon 2004, p. 82). However, incorporating reflection into teacher education in order to produce a reflective teacher, especially in non-Western cultures, is problematic, not just in its definitions but also in the process involved. Quite often, educational reforms and new ideas fail because the contextual factors were not taken into consideration when making the change (O’Donoghue 1994; Crossley 1983; Tabulawa 1997; 1998; 2009; Phan et al. 2010). Moreover, the different contexts and knowledge may also create gaps and conflicts. Kanu (2005) believes that contradictions and gaps that result from culture clashes create opportunities for critical reflection on culture and knowledge in postcolonial periods of transition. She further asserts that what is important in this exercise is to abandon the “... hegemonizing forms of knowledge that are rooted in Eurocentrism, in favour of dialogue with knowledges and identities which have been submerged or marginalised in the global power/knowledge relations” (Kanu, 2005, p. 512).

Background and Context of the Study

The present study was conducted in 2010 at a university in Fiji with a group of 23 students who studied a *Curriculum Development and Practice* unit. Sixteen of the 23 students in the study were in-service teachers, 90% with teaching experience between 2 and 10 years. As part of the unit, it was mandatory for the students to keep a journal and write a weekly reflection on their classroom practices. They could reflect on a particular “learning experience” during one day, or on the whole week’s classroom experience, depending on whether the “meaning” of the experience has changed them in some way. Because this Bachelor of Education program and the unit were new, I began with the assumption that reflection in the teaching profession was unknown. However, this was corrected by the in-service students, many of whom assumed that their journal reflections would be based on the reflections they did during their pre-service training which was associated mainly with their teaching practice. They were not familiar with curriculum content reflections which involved “thinking outside the box”, and this may have confused them. The objective of the journal writing was to gauge their level of reflection and metacognition. The result was expected to be a guide for revising reflective exercises in future units. There was no limit on word length for the written reflections, and it was hoped that the content would be sufficiently detailed to impress the assessor on the depth of reflection.

Method

Hatton and Smith (1995) outlined four strategies to obtain data on reflections: a written report; self-evaluations; a 7-min videotape of teaching; and a students' interview (in pairs), with the researcher using structured questions about the participants' evaluations. This study adopted the first strategy, a weekly written report, because this method had provided most evidence of reflections in the Hatton and Smith study. As part of the unit, students were given a marking rubric to help improve their reflections, guided by my comments. Journals were collected on the third and seventh week to monitor their reflections. My comments were included to point out areas that needed improvement.

Samples of reflective exercises (Moon 2004) and readings for students' guidance were discussed during the first two weeks of lectures and tutorials. Levels of reflective thinking were assessed using a framework that identified four types of writing: descriptive writing; descriptive reflection; dialogic reflection; and critical reflection (Hatton and Smith 1995). The criteria of marking the journal writing corresponded with the framework.

The first type, "descriptive writing" only reports an event. In the "descriptive reflection", there is an attempt to suggest reasons why such an event has occurred based on the student's personal judgement. "Dialogic reflection" is a form of discourse with one's self, an exploration on possible reasons (Hatton and Smith 1995). This involves the writer asking questions, using conversational language in trying to understand the problem at hand. Finally, "critical reflection" takes into account the historical, social, political contexts and reasons influencing the student's report.

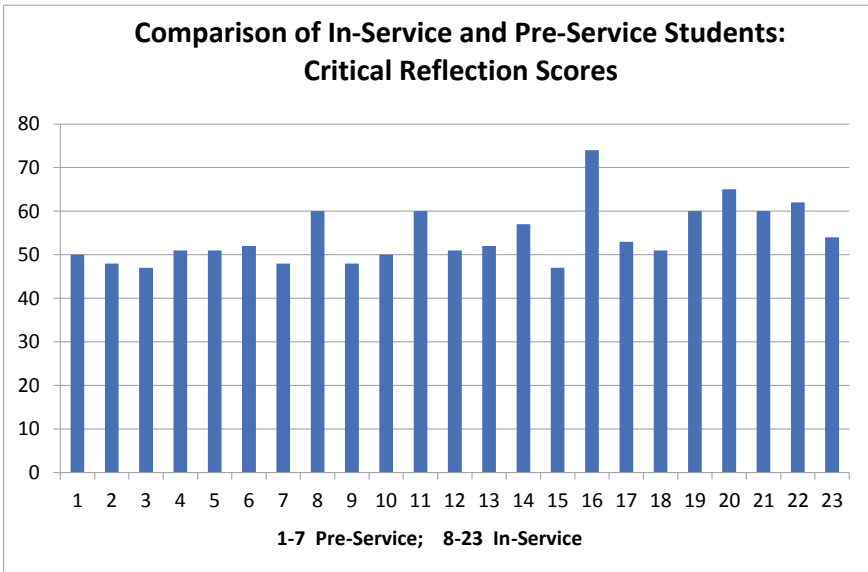
In week three, journals were read and comments were provided to help improve students' reflections because almost all had been at the descriptive level. There were more discussions during tutorials and lectures after the journals were returned. Journals were collected again in week seven to gauge the students' progress. The majority were still mainly descriptive in their writing. This prompted me to extract a paragraph from a student's journal and to present it to the group encouraging them to consider what questions the writer could have asked about the experience. They were challenged to question the political, social, and cultural aspects of the issue. Writing style was discussed together with other skills in critical reflection. At the end of the trimester, the journals were collected and graded.

Results

Of the 23 students who submitted their journals, 15 (65%) remained at "descriptive writing" level, 30% at "descriptive reflection" and 5% at "dialogic reflection". In total, 95% were therefore still at the superficial level. All seven pre-service students were borderline in their reflective skills, being mainly at the "descriptive writing"

level. Meanwhile, of the 16 in-service students, 94% were at the superficial level of reflective writing. 50% of the in-service teachers had made a slight improvement but were still largely at the level of descriptive reflection.

Dialogic reflection involves distancing oneself from the event, mulling over it, asking questions and exploring reasons. The language writing at this level is dialogic as a genre of reflective writing, which is unproblematic as long as it involves valid reflections (Hatton and Smith 1995).



An excerpt from a student’s journal on his dialogic self-conversation illustrates his level of reflection:

Do stakeholders really care about whether teachers are active thinkers or not? Do they really know what it means to say that iron sharpens iron? Do teachers know that they need to continually grow? I do not understand exactly how I am going to change some of the things that I do, but I can be sure that I may have to ‘fine-tune’ my philosophies and help my students rework theirs! (Indigenous Fijian, male).

This student recognises that much of what is around him is outside his control and he is still unsure on the approach required to make the necessary changes. He has become aware of factors outside his jurisdiction that are affecting his classroom performance, but his probing lacks critical depth. His focus on his teaching practice has not yet changed, although he acknowledges the need to change. What is lacking is an attempt to spell out his philosophy and why it needs changing. How will he achieve that in the classroom? On the basis of their own study, Hatton and Smith conclude that descriptive writing, “... is more easily mastered and utilised than either the exploratory ‘dialogic’ or demanding ‘critical’ forms, both of which require knowledge and experiential bases that take some time to develop” (Hatton and Smith 1995 p. 46).

The two most common types of reflection amongst the students in the present study were descriptive writing and descriptive reflection.

Besides the result discussed above, there are four other problems that Hatton and Smith (1995) outlined in their research that may have relevance to the present study. First is the novelty of reflection being associated with teaching and the likelihood of students viewing it as useless and irrelevant compared to the importance they assign to skills and content of teaching. This may also link to students' static concept of teaching and their resistance to making any change. Second is students' lack of time to think through their experience and develop a certain level of metacognitive skill to enable them to reflect. With Fiji Ministry of Education's national approach to implement changes at the school level, in-service teachers were inundated with demands. They were left with little time for preparation let alone for studies. It was no surprise that some weekly journals were not completed. Equally important is the additional problem of the absence of a knowledge base to help students understand concepts of reflection and apply them. The third problem is the feeling of vulnerability students may feel from exposing their perceptions and beliefs, and their weaknesses, that they may have uncovered during reflection. The fourth problem concerns the component parts, its structure and the ideology of the whole teacher education program which should incorporate reflection. A critical reflective approach should employ an ideology that is different from the traditional practices which have failed to illuminate the problematic nature of schooling.

Discussion

Findings of the present study showed little improvement in students' reflections over the course of the study despite the readings provided and discussions and activities during tutorials, and two interventions (at weeks 3 and 7). Huy's (2007) study at the University of the South Pacific on causal and mediating relations on reflective thinking, (amongst other things), arrived at three important findings: 1. the culture of silence and its potential influence on student's reflections; 2. an ignorance of reflective thinking practice; and 3. the absence of theoretical and practical discourse to help develop reflective thinking skills in learning.

These findings and those of my own study are consistent with studies or experiences in other developing countries in respect to problems in making reforms. For example, Tabulawa's 1998 study in Botswana found that teachers' classroom practices were influenced by their assumptions about the nature of knowledge, their view of students, and the goal of education and schooling. The classroom practice was teacher-centred and examination-oriented and emphasised mass teaching with little student interaction. Tabulawa posits that teachers' views of students reflected the Tswana culture that is rigidly authoritarian and paternalistic, encouraging a dependent mode of thinking (1998; see also Fuller and Synder on Botswana, 1991). He further argues that the classroom practice was heavily influenced, as in Fiji, by the

bureaucratic-authoritarian educational model of Britain, imported by the missionaries long ago (1997). Tabulawa later proposed (2009) that a critical role for teachers should be reflecting on their own teaching to problematise the taken-for-granted aspects of their work.

In South Africa, Harley et al. (2000) claimed that any change in the education system can be rejected by teachers due to their personal values and indifference to the cultures of others. Kanu's (1996) study found a strong similarity in Sierra Leone, and Pakistan whose people were socialised into the culture of their colonial masters and critical thinking was discouraged. In a rural school in India, Sriprakash (2010) studied the difficulty of making changes in an authoritarian system. In his study of developing reflective teachers as a major ingredient of a quality approach in Papua New Guinea, O'Donoghue (1994) found that lecturers' perceptions of students, their teacher-centred approach and the authoritarian culture of the society inhibited any change that could develop pre-service students into reflective teachers. To "transplant" educational knowledge, O'Donoghue (ibid) asserted that social realities must be taken into consideration in reforming programs or an education system.

Kanu (1996 p. 178) argues for a re-socialisation approach to education where students are "encouraged to carefully and critically examine the 'facts' and values they encounter and their taken-for-granted ways of looking at the world". For a programme of re-socialising in-service teachers in Pakistan, Kanu stresses three principles. These principles put teacher education at the centre of re-socialising teachers and students, who are both products of the country's socialisation process. The first principle involves teachers recognising the deficiency of the traditional system that sometimes conflicts with modern expectations, and the need to cultivate habits of social criticism, independent and critical thinking and questioning of realities. The second principle is for teachers to reappraise the outcome of the new learning and ensure that such knowledge is understood and interpreted into the wider social, political and economic spectrum. Third is for teachers to understand the psychology of the people, the ideologies they internalise that embed certain values, actions and traditions that have become second nature, to the point that they are not questioned. The key to this third principle is to come away from expository methods of teaching to engage in modes of questioning, probing and critiquing. Implicit in these principles is the use of critical reflection to guide teachers to "become reflective, critical inquirers who, through modelling, will eventually pass on the habits of critical inquiry to their students" (Kanu 1996, p. 178–79).

Within the Pacific context more specifically, Gegeo's (2001) response to Subramani's "The Oceanic Imaginary" articulates the need for Pacific Islanders to decolonise pedagogies because we are often caught in the "self-fulfilling prophecy" that outsiders have about Islanders as incapable of thinking critically and deeply about issues and have little to contribute based on their own cultural knowledge. Like Subramani, Gegeo agreed on the need to come away from visions projected by Anglo-Europeans but rather to work and adapt existing epistemologies, or to construct new ones. Both authors agreed on the importance of respecting cultural and gender diversity and creating labels that unite people. Importantly, as the present study

emphasises, close attention should focus on changing the educational system, especially teachers, who often resist change. Alcorn (2010) came up with six forms and stages of knowledge development in action research and reflections. She discusses the implementation of forms and stages in knowledge creation as participants of the School of Education, Solomon Islands College of Higher Education, worked collaboratively with participants from the University of Waikato, New Zealand. She found that knowledge generation occurred at all stages because the end product is contextualised, adapted or integrated.

The difficulty of participants in this study to engage in deep reflection, whether in the classroom or beyond, is an experience widely shared by cultures that are authoritarian, teacher-centred and examination-oriented. Fiji is a good example of this situation. There is an urgent need to incorporate critical, independent thinking and a self-critical stance in teacher training to help them become effective role models for their students.

Conclusion

The introduction of literacy and numeracy to Fiji by the missionaries in the mid-1800s ensured the grafting of the indigenous socialisation into the new British educational system. The graft was steeped in traditionalism, paternalism, authoritarianism and hierarchy. The grafting was very lop-sided as Western values were promoted as superior and were readily adopted by the local population at the expense of incorporating local knowledge as part of the curriculum. Indigenous knowledge, cultural values and practices were subjugated as irrelevant superstition. As a consequence, the development of education from colonial days to date has had a two-pronged effect: an examination-oriented curriculum that centres simply on knowledge transmission and rote learning, and a socialisation process that is authoritarian, paternalistic and hierarchical, the antithesis of the more democratic classroom culture that is essential for education in the twenty-first-century educational transformation. The re-socialisation of teachers is crucial for developing a culture of creativity and innovation, essential to learning for the twenty-first century. Especially crucial in the professional training of teachers today is the incorporation of critical reflection. Critical reflection helps teachers understand the construction of their pedagogical knowledge, its meanings and the contexts of its construction. Analysing the various forces that impinge on pedagogy is a prerequisite to either embed, adapt or create new knowledge. The process may involve knowledge (re)construction or adaptation, personal and professional growth and commitment. To make reflective teachers creators of new knowledge and practice and to ensure that these skills are passed down to their students, a course on critical reflection is now essential as part of teacher training. This study reinforces findings from other Third World countries that highlight the difficulty of teaching critical thinking in an authoritarian, teacher-centred and examination-oriented education culture. The findings in this study necessitate incorporating critical reflection as a crucial aspect of teacher training.

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