

*Education Provision in the Third World: the actors,  
and the lessons of a study in Fiji*

by

Sarah St. Clair Skett

A thesis submitted to the Department of Geography  
in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Queen's University  
Kingston, Ontario, Canada  
September, 2007

Copyright © Sarah St. Clair Skett, 2007

# Abstract

Education decentralization is sweeping through many third world countries. The geographic disparities of access to education are crippling many regions and communities. Within Fiji a Community Based Approach to education is further exacerbating geographic disparities. This practice places the responsibility of education on individual communities, many of which are unable to construct and maintain schools. However, since the late 1980s, numerous players such as the World Bank, UNESCO, as well as other donor agencies and countries have been crucial in developing education strategies for the Fijian education system. The motives behind these strategies need to be critiqued. Do they benefit Fijians, and their education needs? Since the end of seventy years of British colonial rule, Fiji has witnessed many transitions, including four coup d'états over the last two decades which have stifled social, political and economic development. To overcome this historical and current political unrest, many Fijians have pursued white-collar jobs. Within my research, I discuss how a philanthropist in the Yasawa Islands is trying to help the surrounding communities pursue the elusive white-collar job, although it remains to be seen if this is practical to their needs and realities.

# Acknowledgements

There are no words for the support that my family has given me, not just with my Masters Degree, but throughout all of my adventures. Mum, you instilled in me the desire to travel, the dream to explore the world and to learn what is out there. Without that none of this would have come to fruition. Dad, your unwavering encouragement and critical feedback throughout this process has been invaluable. You have taught me to enjoy the academic side of life, as well as the social. Dee, you are my best friend in the whole wide world, thank you for all the ways you spoil me. It is your courage and independence that allowed me to believe that I can do anything I want. Frank, I will always remember the guys at Atlantic telling me how you were telling them about my research and how proud you were, it truly warmed my heart. Dakota, I often think of you when I'm doing my research and I hope that one day you too will have the same opportunities that I have had. Our phone conversations, although you will never remember them, were the most welcome relief in the middle of a long day staring at my computer.

Then there is my other family. Juan, I love that you get excited for me, I love that you get excited about everything, your love of life is inspiring. You have taught me to appreciate the value of true friendship. Sheldon, you are still my role model, meeting you led me to grad school. I love that you are so relaxed and just go with life, all the while carving your own path. Anonh, thank you for always bringing me back to reality, always teasing me and reminding me who I really am; thank you for your friendship.

And the two people that made this thesis a reality, one was the reason I came to Queen's, the other took me to Fiji. Barry, had I known you were a Leaf's fan it may have dissuaded my decision, but I was willing to overlook it because what I have learnt from

you has been invaluable. You are an inspiring teacher and I promise to always ask “so what”? I would like to especially thank you and Dona for going out of your way to make me feel so welcome. Wayne, I cannot thank you enough for taking a chance on a stranger and offering me the opportunity of a lifetime, there are no words for my gratitude.

Finally, I would ask anyone who reads this to remember how many million of children around world are not in school – and ask why.

# Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
List of Tables and Illustrations.....	vii
Acronyms.....	viii
Chapter 1 – Introduction .....	1
Fiji: the empirical setting .....	6
Universal Secondary Education.....	9
The Regional Context .....	10
The Research Context .....	12
Thesis Outline .....	12
Chapter 2 – The Historical Evolution of Fijian Schooling .....	14
The Fijian Education System – Missionaries and Colonists .....	14
Secondary Education .....	22
Post-Independence Education in Fiji .....	24
Chapter 3 – Post Independence; <i>The Actors in Fiji’s educational system: the players both external and internal – and their motives behind the curriculum</i> .....	31
Education and Development: The World Bank and UNESCO .....	31
Education Decentralization and Privatization .....	41
Curriculum – the elusive White-Collar job .....	46
The Internal (and External) Players: Fiji’s Education System and the White-Collar job .....	52
Fiji Today: Coups, Beaches, and the City .....	52
Current Players and Strategies .....	55
The Community Based Approach to the elusive white-collar job .....	59
Chapter 4 – Realities and Resorts; <i>A window into Fiji’s current education puzzle and the pursuit of the elusive white-collar job</i> .....	62
Nacula Island and its communities .....	64
The Evanson Learning Center and Turtle Island Resort .....	69
The Student Perspective – “I would like to have a white-collar job” .....	75
The Headmaster and his difficult task ahead .....	80
The Curriculum .....	86

Chapter 5 – Outcomes and Conclusion; *The realities of the white-collar job in Fiji* .....89

- The realities of the Community Based Approach .....89
- The elusive ‘white-collar’ job vs. the Village & its enduring traditions .....91
- Conclusion .....98

Bibliography .....102

Appendix 1 .....110

## List of Tables and Illustrations

Map 1.1 <u>Map of Fiji</u> .....	10
Map 1.2 <u>Yasawa Island Chain, Fiji</u> .....	12
Table 3.1 <u>Decentralization Formats</u> .....	41
Picture 4.1 <u>Evanson Learning Center, Turtle Island, Fiji</u> .....	71

## Acronyms

<b>ADB</b>	Asia Development Bank
<b>AusAID</b>	Australian Government's overseas aid program
<b>CBA</b>	Community Based Approach
<b>CSPU</b>	Country Strategy and Program Update
<b>ELC</b>	Evanson Learning Center
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FJ\$</b>	Fiji Dollars
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>IBRD</b>	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>ITT</b>	Information Technology Training
<b>KVHS</b>	Kai Viti High School
<b>MDG</b>	Millennium Development Goals
<b>MoE</b>	Ministry of Education
<b>PIC</b>	Pacific Island Countries
<b>PIN</b>	Pacific Island Nations
<b>SIA</b>	Social Impact Assessment
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Program
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
<b>UPE</b>	Universal Primary Education
<b>USE</b>	Universal Secondary Education
<b>USP</b>	University of the South Pacific
<b>WB</b>	World Bank

*In Fiji, education may be compulsory but not free. Ask any parent. Each one will have a story to tell of how much free education is costing their families...In fact we have been paying for our own so-called free education system for years now. We have repeatedly heard people in power referring to education as free (Pacific Islands Report, 2007)*

## **Chapter 1 - Introduction**

The notion of education decentralization is a phenomenon recently sweeping many Third World countries. Such decentralization involves the passing of responsibility of education from the national level to the regional and community levels. The process primarily involves economic concerns, but it also reflects curriculum decisions and human resource issues. This leads to inevitable regional disparities worthy of further investigation to determine the way in which it shapes the geography of a region and its country.

This momentum is propelled by both the discourse and funding of the World Bank and is heavily endorsed by global organizations such as the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Neoliberal strategies put forward by the World Bank have saturated countless education systems in to treating education like a business and allowing market forces to dominate policies (Craig & Porter, 2006; Hill, 2003; Patrinos, 1999; Samoff, 2003).

Fiji is but one of several countries undergoing such decentralization. Their education system operates under what is locally described as the *Community Based Approach*, and although it is never referred to as being decentralized, it incorporates many of the same processes and encounters the same challenges within their education system's structure. In particular the Community Based Approach requires private funds

from the community for the construction and maintenance of schools – which in reality demonstrates that the Fijian education system operates under the most extreme form of decentralization – privatization. As well, the responsibility of education to be placed on the community, to be implemented from the regional level, mimics decentralization strategies from numerous developing countries. Fiji provides an empirical ‘window’ enabling us to understand this process and its outcomes.

This thesis will seek to answer the following questions: What outcome is the Community Based Approach to education in Fiji having on its population? Are the rural disparities being further exacerbated by this approach; while at the same time further propelling the decentralization of education in Fiji? Is an education that aspires for the elusive white-collar job practical for Fiji and its people and is the Community Based Approach allowing Fiji to succeed with USE? Is the Fijian education system a good model for other countries?

Education and Geography are inextricably linked. For example, Gould indicates that the education system is a geographical phenomenon: “It creates patterns of space, and is affected by processes that operate over space” (1993, 68). There are numerous possibilities for the patterns that are created, as well as the reasons which underlie them. Gould argues that geographers tend to examine these spatial systems from a national scale:

They seek to answer the question: why are the distributions of schools and pupils structured the way they are? These distributions are described in spatial terms, whether regional or rural-urban, and resulting from a range of processes affecting the distribution of demand for schools and school places, and from those factors affecting the supply of teachers and the other inputs in the system. The education system is the resultant of the wide range of processes that operate in the national space to allocate resources or to generate demand differently (1993, 72).

Arnove explains the continued interest in education from the national perspective:

More recently, the belief that there is causal relationship between the “excellence” of a school system, as measured by national standardized examinations, and the economic success of a country in global competition has revived the interest in the relationship between education systems and national productivity. Finally, the end of the Cold War, the break up of the former Soviet Union with the emergence of newly independent republics, often microstates, and the outbreak of ethnic conflict in various regions of the world has, once again, led to renewed interest in the relationship of education to political stability and development (2003, 4).

Samoff acknowledges that there is little attention focused on the links between large-scale agendas at the national level, and the small scale decisions and activities of education decision makers and educators (2003, 75). It is the processes that are occurring at the national level that are leading to education decentralization. It is often difficult for developing countries to finance education in more remote regions, even though they may seemingly formulate uniform policies such as Universal Primary Education; they may not have the financial means to supply the schools and the teachers to outlying regions.

Geography plays a pivotal role in the determinants of an education system. The resulting aerial disparities that occur within education provision support the argument for decentralization (Bray, 1996).

Educating all children presents a significant challenge due to the large number of children who live in remote, rural areas of developing countries. High rates of poverty in rural areas limit educational opportunities because of demands for children’s labor, low levels of parental education and lack of access to good quality schooling. Based on household surveys in 80 developing countries, 30 per cent of rural children of primary school age do not attend school, compared to 18 per cent in urban areas. And because rural areas have larger populations of children, they account for 82 percent of children who are not in school in developing countries (United Nations, The Millennium Development Goals Report 2006, 9).

The difficulty in ensuring that all regions have equal access to education provides support for the idea of delegating responsibilities to more local authorities (i.e.

decentralization). Since the physical geography of a country cannot be altered, education systems must therefore be adapted.

The very geographical character of Fiji makes its regional disparities even more predominant, being an island nation consisting of approximately 330 islands, only a third of which are inhabited. Its aerial extent is 1.3 million square kilometers of the South Pacific Ocean, although only 18,333 square kilometers of that is actual land area. (Fiji Government, Fiji Today 2005/2006, 1). Even within those islands, much of the topography is mountainous and volcanic; therefore the terrain is very difficult to traverse and there are few, if any, access roads or transportation systems in place. The two main islands of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu, make up close to three-quarters of the population. There still remains, however, a sizable portion of the population living in the more remote communities, and in particular in very difficultly accessed areas. Voigt-Graf explains the detrimental outcomes of the regional disparities in Fiji:

Inequality of access to education has negative implications over and above it running counter to the aim of providing equal educational opportunities to every citizen. It perpetuates inequality of income by region. In addition, intelligent children missing out on educational opportunities because of their place of residence may have some serious and long-term implications for regional productivity and development [Jones, 2000]. The situation also generates more migrants among students in search of better educational opportunities (2003, 171).

Another issue that enters into the discussion with education decentralization is the curriculum being put forward. Although there is a country-wide curriculum put in place by the Fijian Ministry of Education (MoE), that curriculum may not adequately support the development and growth of the country, and of its people. And the question then comes in to play: if education implementation is delegated down to the regional levels, then should curriculum not also be decided at the regional levels? Is it already being altered at the regional level, and if so, what impact is that having? This is where the

'geography' of education may begin to be seen. The disparities will begin to differentiate levels of educational attainment/achievement; this will impact the geography of populations.

Education curricula are another area of discussion for geographers, as is the spatial transfer of education (Waters, 2006). Gould implies that in many developing countries there may be cultural barriers to education that occur in more remote regions. Parents may be opposed to their students attending modern schools. There is also the concern within these remote regions that children are needed as labor to support and sustain the family; for this reason governments are apprehensive to impose mandatory attendance, or pursue further educational needs. For these reasons inequalities in enrolment are the norm in developing countries (Gould, 1993, 73). Much research in Fiji has indeed revealed these barriers<sup>1</sup>.

There is often a tendency to alter curriculum to fit the needs of these rural communities, focusing on agriculture and more domesticated subjects, and in the case of Fiji there is also the influence from the growing tourism industry on the curriculum.

Further to the regional disparities that are created, there is also the overall systematic underdevelopment that is taking place with many education curricula. This shapes the landscape of a country even more. The western ideologies of many, if not most, education curricula may not be conducive to a country's overall well-being.

A fundamental controversy in development studies is whether and to what extent Third World Countries are developing or being underdeveloped. Are they 'developing' – becoming richer, more productive and more self-sufficient, with less poverty and unemployment, and more opportunities for individual and community improvement, and a rising quality of life? Or are they being actively

---

<sup>1</sup> Brison, 2003; Bullivant, 1983; Hassall, 2005; Hoar, 2004; Kedrayate, 2001; Lynch & Szoreny, 2005; Prosser, 2006; Sofer, 1993; Tavola, 1993; Williams, 2000 and White, 2001.

‘underdeveloped’ as a result of their participation in a world system dominated by Western capitalism through which there is unequal exchange of goods and services to the benefit of richer countries and into which the artifacts of capitalism and colonialism, including schools and structures and values creating the demand for formal education, have been introduced and which help them to sustain that unequal relationship? (Gould, 1993, 3).

Indeed, throughout this thesis the tension between universal education as a public good and the difficulties encountered with local and national curricula recur. The literature will address the debates on national vs. regional curricula and the overshadowing universal education blueprint that pervades. This tension is occurring in numerous developing countries but may easily be seen with the case study of Fiji, particularly in the Yasawa Islands. The question remains: what is the best curriculum for the country of Fiji and for its people? What do they need for their best development<sup>2</sup> strategies to be successful? Is an education that aspires for the elusive white-collar job practical for Fiji and its people?

### **Fiji: the empirical setting**

Fiji is a country striving to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

As recently remarked:

PICs [Pacific Island Countries] provide a diverse picture with respect to their capabilities in achieving the MDGs. In the short term the resource poor Polynesian countries have greater potential to achieve the MDGs. This is because they have the physical and social infrastructure to do so. Fiji is also well placed in this regard (Vijay Naidu, Presentation, 2002).

---

<sup>2</sup> Development is used in the sense of their own evolution as a strong, united nation. It is implied in betterment in an economic context, but also in a social and political one. For example, in December 2006 Fiji experienced their 4th coup since 1987. There is a need for long-term development, growth and stability for the people of Fiji, just as there is a need for more schools, better communication, and improved income.

Such MDGs are viewed as a set of goals intended to relieve Third World countries of the worst indices of poverty and underdevelopment<sup>3</sup>, but most important to the present analysis is that educational improvement is included among them as goal 2 - Achieve Universal Primary Education. This MDG goal is intended to ensure that all children, everywhere, will have the opportunity to complete a full course of primary education. Naidoo could be challenged with his belief that Fiji is 'well placed' in achieving the MDGs. The geography of Fiji greatly limits numerous inhabitants from receiving the social services and basic human needs which fall under the MDGs. It must be remembered that the MDGs strive for *universal* goals – therefore everyone must have access.

Education is seen universally as both basic human right and a necessity of basic human development. Lewis contends that it is agreed that primary education is the best possible weapon to defeat poverty, ensure better health and nutrition, and to increase opportunity and economic growth, both for individuals and nations. "From UNESCO to UNICEF to the World Bank, it is agreed that universal primary education is the ultimate vector of human progress" (2005, 75). Education is argued as the most successful and pertinent tool in development strategies.

Education is development. It creates choices and opportunities for people, reduces the twin burdens of poverty and diseases, and gives a stronger voice in society. For nations it creates a dynamic workforce and well-informed citizens to be able to compete and cooperate globally – opening doors to economic and social prosperity (The World Bank Group, 2007).

---

<sup>3</sup> The Millennium Development Goals were established by the United Nations in 2000, anticipating their successful completion by 2015. These goals focus at achieving basic needs and reducing poverty in an economic context. These basic needs that they strive for are to eradicate extreme poverty; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and empower women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; and develop a global partnership for development. (<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/index.html#>).

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Fijian Government acknowledge that one in four Fijians are living below the poverty line, and economically struggling (Fiji Government, Fiji Today 2005/2006, 52). These high levels of poverty in Fiji correlate to the high rates of attrition and withdrawal from school (Naidu, 2002).

The high rate of poverty in Fiji is also a grave concern with the Community Based Approach to education in which it is the responsibility of the community to construct the school and the other infrastructure. The Fijian Ministry of Education (MoE) then supplies the teachers and pays their salaries; as well, they allot a small stipend to each school, and they also determine the curriculum. For poverty stricken communities which are predominately rural areas, it is difficult to even provide the necessary means:

Providing for an education for their children is just one of many competing demands on a family. For indigenous Fijians, traditional obligations and donations to churches often take priority over contributions to schools. There is a knowledge and information gap between Fijians and non-Fijians, and between urban Fijians and rural Fijians (Williams, 2000, 183).

The Fijian Government deems it the responsibility of the parents to ensure that their children receive an education, as long as the school is within walking distance<sup>4</sup>. It is easy to see how the Fijian Government has alleviated themselves of the burden of ensuring all Fijians receive an education; indeed, further regional disparities are created through these strategies.

By placing the responsibility of education primarily on the community and the parents, the state alleviates itself of the burden. However, the state continues to play a substantial, dominant role. What must also be further examined is what are the influences

---

<sup>4</sup> As stipulated under the Compulsory Education Regulations of the Fijian Ministry of Education, it is the duty of the parent(s) or guardian(s) of every child to ensure that every child of the school age receives suitable or relevant education. There are however, a few exceptions, one being if there is no school that is within walking distance. (UNESCO, 2000, Part 2, 7). This scenario falls true for Nacula Island and other island communities in the Yasawa's.

on the state, with regards to education, and how are these being propagated at the local level?

Are there other motives behind this support? The World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) continue to support this education structure, why? Is this community based approach creating a decentralization of the education system in Fiji? Is the Fijian education system a good model for other developing countries, could it be used in other communities around the world?<sup>5</sup>

## **Universal Secondary Education**

What now needs further evaluation is secondary education in Fiji, which faces many of the same challenges as primary education, only to a much greater extent.

Universal Secondary Education (USE) is nowhere near being realized in Fiji, nor in many other developing countries. It is, however, an impending issue globally. Once Universal Primary Education is realized the focus will then shift to secondary education. Fiji being seen as an excellent model for education will make it a superb reference, depending on their success. For this reason it is again important to use Fiji as a ‘window’ in order to understand the implementation of secondary education. We ask: ‘Is the Community Based Approach allowing Fiji to succeed with USE’?

The Fiji Ministry of Education is making increasing efforts to invest in secondary education. However, of the FJ\$260.4 million put in to education in 2005, only FJ\$10 million was allocated to Tuition Fee Assistance for secondary Forms one through six. (Fiji Government, Fiji Today 2005/2006, 59). This 3.8% is a very small allotment,

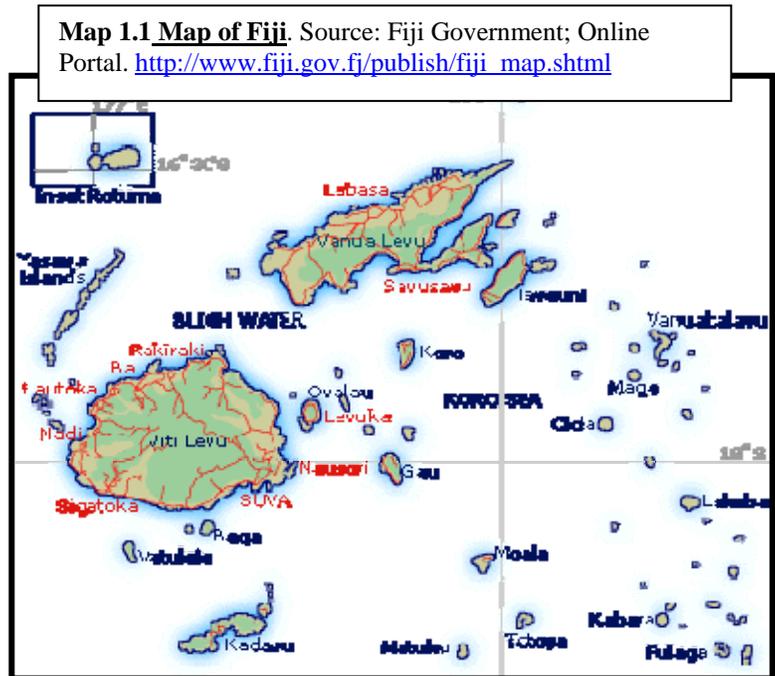
---

<sup>5</sup> UNESCO has praised Fiji’s community approach to education.

particularly since it means there are still fees involved. With Fiji as a potential model for other countries it is crucial to evaluate the current situation, as well as to understand the issues and concerns surrounding it.

## The Regional Context

The research will focus on the Yasawa Islands, an area where secondary education has only recently become available in the region<sup>6</sup>. As of 2004 there were 714 Primary Schools and 160 Secondary Schools in Fiji (Education Statistics, Fiji Islands



Bureau of Statistics, Accessed: September 9, 2007). There are at present only three schools in the Yasawa Island region: Yaqeta School which has 102 students (none of which are boarders); Vuaki Primary School which has 121 students (45 of which are weekly boarders); and Ratu Meli Primary School which has 181 students (110 of which are boarders).

In the Yasawa Islands secondary education is difficult for numerous reasons. There are only two secondary schools in the entire region, one which is supported by the MoE (Yaqeta School) and another, the Evanson Learning Center (ELC), which is owned

---

<sup>6</sup> I was hired to conduct a Social Impact Assessment (SIA) in the Yasawa Islands, and during that time became aware of the educational disparities in the region and decided to pursue this research. There was no conflict between the SIA and my research since they were conducted through two separate groups which had no affiliation (other than both owning resorts in the region).

and operated by the owner of Turtle Island Resort, where the school is located. Many students from the region attend secondary school on the mainland.

As well the issue of school fees is a concern for the government operated school, as are the secondary costs for students to attend school outside of their own communities. The primary concern with ELC is that the curriculum has been determined by one man, Richard Evanson. The curriculum differs from the MoE outlined curriculum in that it incorporates hands-on learning for students on the resort, which can mean that other subjects may assume reduced importance. This concern was seen with ELC's first graduating class last year, only having three students pass the government issued exams. Here, the question of relevancy and quality of education came into discussion of the ELC. As well, the school does not offer form seven, a requirement for any student wishing to continue on with tertiary studies. Are schools like ELC offering increased opportunities or simply just training new tourism workers? With Fiji's economy growing we inquire what sort of education should they be focusing upon?

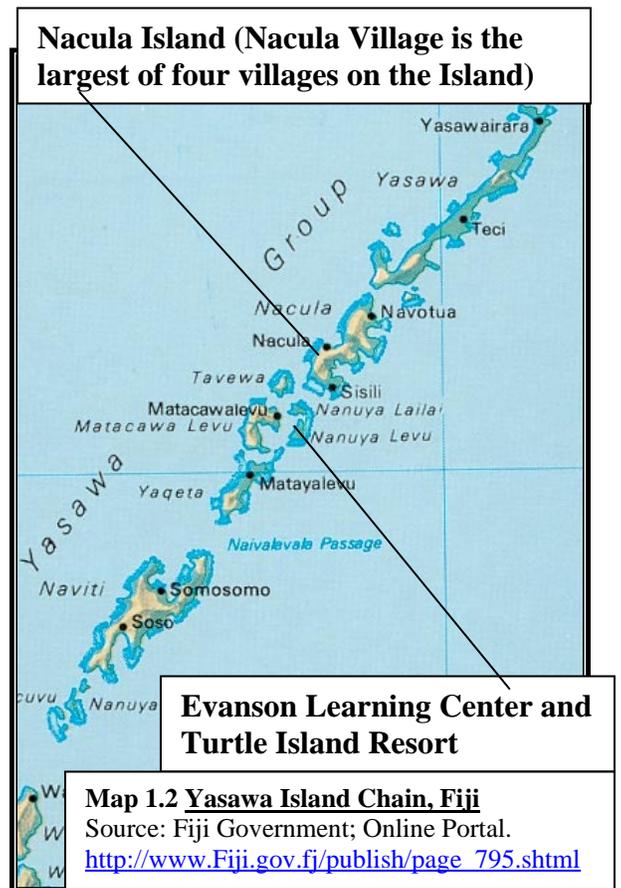
The other question of concern asks whether this is what the students want; does this education and training meet, not only their needs, but provide them with the tools necessary to pursue their goals? With schools like ELC is it further easing the burden of the State to be responsible for education? Is this strategy further propelling the decentralization of education in Fiji?

## The Research Context

Within the Yasawa Islands the field research was conducted at the Evanson Learning Center (ELC) which is located on the island of Nanuya Levu. The majority of the students come from Nacula Island, one of the largest islands in the chain.

The thesis will investigate the numerous challenges and obstacles facing this community. The education system may be praised, however, if there is not equal access and opportunity across the country then the discrepancies will need to be addressed. It is

in fact these discrepancies that are allowing the decentralization of education to occur in Fiji.



## Thesis Outline

In order to consider the above issues, the thesis is structured in the following manner: the proceeding chapter, the *Historical Evolution of Fijian Schooling* will examine the factors and influences which have determined the current state of the Fijian education system. Arnove explains the imperative need for this knowledge.

“[Education systems] reflect their societies – their many tensions and contradictions. Perhaps more can be learned from their lessons of failure – what not to do – that from stories of success...If understanding is to be advanced in what works and what does not work in a country, then such study must be guided by

knowledge of that country, by familiarity with its history and unique abilities, as well as by recognition of what it shares in common with other societies” (2003, 7).

There will also be an evaluation of the education system in Fiji, not only at the current time, but historically. There is a need to determine the influences of the Fijian Education system and curriculum, again both present and historically. Is the education geared towards tourism development as opposed to country, community, or personal development? Is there a systematic under-development occurring in Fiji within the current education curriculum and community based approach?

Chapter three, *Post Independence; The Actors in Fiji’s educational system: the players both external and internal – and their motives behind the curriculum*, will discuss the current issues facing education in developing countries, the discourse of education decentralization and the current state of the Fijian education system.

This will be followed by the *Realities and Resorts; A window into Fiji’s current education puzzle and the pursuit of the elusive white-collar job*. This will debate the issues and realities encountered during the field work in the Yasawa Islands. This will include interviews with the owner of the Evanson Learning Center, the headmaster and the teachers; surveys were conducted with all of the students as well. There will also be a discussion of the communities in which this school operates and their realities.

The final chapter, *Outcomes and Conclusions; The realities of the white-collar job in Fiji*, will determine whether the Community Based Approach is a viable model for other regions. The research will also seek to determine whether the curriculum of the Evanson Learning Center is indeed a realistic one for, not only the surrounding communities, but in the pursuit of the elusive white-collar job.

## Chapter 2 - The Historical Evolution of Fijian Schooling

*“I cannot disassociate myself from my past and ignore the important values and norms that have shaped my life. I am what I am today because of my past. And yet, at times in my modern mind I am in a dilemma as to which part of my education has changed me the most. Is it my community education or the Western education? On the one hand, I want to say that the past is no longer relevant to the modern world of science and technology. But then, on reflection, no matter how much the modern world has to offer, I find myself escaping to my community quite often to recapitulate the positive teachings and values I have lost through modern education.”*

*Akanisi Kedrayate<sup>7</sup>*

### The Fijian Education System – Missionaries and Colonialists

Fijian society is rooted in the notion of community, but at the same time it is also very hierarchal. Tavola, an eminent educationalist on Fiji, exemplifies: “Fijian society is based on firmly integrated clan relationships with strong group solidarity, emphasized by kinship relations” (1991, 6) but that “The High Chief is to be obeyed and respected above all else” (Fairley, Presentation, 2005).

Such roles are established by the paternal line and the clans are referred to as Matagalīs. These cultural practices are the premise upon which the education system, past and present, has been organized. Fijian education is founded on the Community Based Approach, an approach for which it continues to be praised<sup>8</sup>. Education access and completion is decided upon by the chiefs, and historically it is the chiefly members of the Matagalīs who have first access to education, a trend that persists to the present.

---

<sup>7</sup> Head of the Department of Education and Psychology, School of Humanities, University of the South Pacific, 2004 (Kedrayate, Editorial, 2004, 61).

<sup>8</sup> “This has been acknowledged worldwide as a strength of the education system in Fiji... A strength of this system of school ownership has been, and will continue to be the capacity for schools to be responsive to local community and environment. It also engenders parental commitment and partnership in education at all levels and demonstrates to young people the exceptional value which is placed upon teaching and learning in the levels of all our citizens. This has been a major driving force in our high participation rates in the system, particularly in the basic years of schooling” (UNESCO, 2000, Part 1, 1).

This community orientation continues to play a role in the implementation of education. The community has always been involved in the execution of education, yesterday and today. Centuries ago this began in the structure of non-formal education, a tradition which is declining in importance, but is not completely obsolete. The above quoted Akanisi Kedrayate is the head of the Department of Education and Psychology, School of Humanities, University of the South Pacific and she has written extensively on the non-formal/informal education of Fiji. Such a community based approach to education was previously achieved through observation, imitation, and on-the-job experience. For example, Kedrayate contends that such informal education was a necessity in ensuring the continuity and sustainability of life; this was achieved through the teaching of local cultural values and norms, as well as in aiding the transition to adulthood:

Some highly organized learning, with special instructions given by elders, was provided for the young as well as for adults. Special buildings were also put up where teaching was given. In traditional communities in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and other Pacific countries, the initiation rites for young people when they reached puberty was organized [sic] formally. During this period the male youths were placed in a special building away from the village with knowledgeable and experienced elders. They were given instructions and training, and circumcised as a preparation for adulthood. The initiates went through certain ordeals to test their courage and adulthood (Kedrayate, 2004, Editorial, issue 61).

Prior to European contact, Fiji was not a literate society. Rather, “Oral histories and geneologies were passed down in the form of chants, songs, and dances, or in myths, legends, and story-telling” (Tavola, 1991, 7). In 1835 the first European education was introduced by mission societies in formal church organizations. With the Methodist Missionaries came the introduction to formal education; their intentions were to teach the

Fijians the Bible<sup>9</sup>, agriculture, and basic hygiene practices. Fijians initially went to learn to read and write, but had little interest in Christianity. Unfortunately they were only offered four years of schooling, so their final level of literacy was poor. The eventual acceptance of Christianity began to cause a shift in Fijian society. Previously, accounts had Fiji as a violent society with cannibalism, infanticide, widow strangulation, and slavery. With the acceptance of Christianity by the British-appointed King in 1854 the rest of the country began to accept and believe in Christianity, and thus tribal warfare came to an end (White, 2003).

In 1874 Fiji became a British colony, by this time much of the population had been converted to Christianity, the Fijian language was written (in the Bauan dialect) and most of the adult population was moderately literate. The British imposed Indirect Rule which applied to education as well<sup>10</sup>. They did provide education for the children of the colonists, and a select few children of the chiefs were able to attend these schools<sup>11</sup>. Elsewhere and throughout Fiji, it was the efforts of the missions that led to the dissemination of primary education. By 1900, school attendance had become an integral part of the Fijian culture, although such educational training lasted only four years.

In 1916 an official Education Department was created which imposed mandatory registration of all schools and teachers. The Education Ordinance also introduced a Grant-in-aid scheme which provided government financial support to schools that met the prescribed standards of the colonial rulers; such a practice was common for British

---

<sup>9</sup> Fijians interest in history through story telling drew them to the Bible when offered by the missionaries (Paumau, 2001, 111).

<sup>10</sup> Indirect rule was the imposition of British rule over the entire 'colony', with chiefs being retained as the local implementers. In this sense it conserved regional cultural transitions and can be contrasted to French Direct Rule elsewhere which altered local society toward peasant forms in the home country.

<sup>11</sup> The purpose of this was to educate an elite Fijian population who would work for the colony (White, 2001, 311), and to represent their interests. These Chiefs did not, however, push the government to provide education for the common people (Tavola, 1991, 21).

colonies, which allowed missionary educational expansion with minimal supervision and expense (Paumau, 2001, 111). However, the colonial approach to non-European education in Fiji continued to focus on agriculture and manual work.

There were two factors greater than the Bible that changed Fijian society dramatically through their education strategies: the introduction of western education and the segregation of Indigenous from Indian Fijians. Both would have lasting consequences that continue to plague the country. The segregation, of both education and business, between Indigenous Fijians and Indian Fijians, is said to be the main contributors to the *coups d'états* which occurred in Fiji in 1987 and 2000 (Prosser, 2006, 228).

A detrimental outcome of such separation was this segregation between Indigenous Fijians and Indian Fijians. White explains the damaging practices imposed:

Protectionist policies were buttressed by rationalizing discursive practices that defined Fijians as a primitive people who would be deleteriously impacted by rapid exposure to civilization. Colonial discourse also configured Fijians as a communalistic people, incompetent in managing their own affairs, and with customs and collective character predilections that rendered them ill suited for plantation labor. The themes of colonial discourse were particularly salient in providing a rationale for two major colonial policies that would ultimately impinge on contemporary forms of differential educational attainment: the importation of indentured labor from India and restrictions on Fijian spatial mobility (White, 2001, 308).

Indentured laborers were brought into Fiji from India from 1879 to 1916 in order to work on sugar plantations (slavery had been outlawed by the British in 1833). During this time little education was made available to Indian Fijians and at the time Indigenous Fijians possessed a higher level of literacy, thanks to the many missionary schools in the rural areas (Tavola, 1991, 11). When indentured labor was finally abolished in 1920, many Indians remained in Fiji and most moved into urban areas.

At present 43.6% of the Fijian population is of Indian descent (Fiji Government, Fiji Today 2005-06, 1). In these urban places Indian Fijians opened commercial businesses, since very few, if any, either owned or had access to land. This was due to the practices put in place by the Native Land Trust Board (NLTB)<sup>12</sup>, established in 1940: “The primary role of the Board is to administer native land for the benefit of the indigenous land owners” (Fiji Government Online Portal, Fiji Today 2005-06, 3). Indigenous Fijians maintain 83% of the land rights in Fiji<sup>13</sup> (Prosser, 2006, 233). Thus, ethnic tension in Fiji remains high and is indexed by the four political coups that have occurred in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

While this Indian Fijian migration to urban centers was occurring, at the same time a restriction was being placed on such movement by Indigenous Fijians, the majority of whom resided in rural areas. Colonial policies emphasized agricultural practices for these rural Fijians, with a particular focus on cash-cropping, and under this pretense the government would only supplement schools which were utilizing a curriculum which favored these activities (White, 2001, 310). Indeed, any further attempts or demands for educational reform were discouraged<sup>14</sup>.

The domination of land ownership further propelled the segregation of Fijian and Indian Fijian students throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. With no access to land Indian Fijians focused their attention on education in order to advance economically, as well as socially; they no longer wanted their education to focus upon

---

<sup>12</sup> The Native Land Trust Board is the only institution of its kind in the world, and is seen as one of the most important and influential institutions in Fiji (Fiji Government Online Portal, Fiji Today 2005-06).

<sup>13</sup> This is another highly contentious and explosive issue in Fiji; it was a factor in the 1987 and 2000 *coups d'états*, as well in the most recent one that took place in January 2007.

<sup>14</sup> “Official policy was to discourage Fijians from leaving their villages, and education beyond the very elementary level was deemed unnecessary for those whose destiny was subsistence agriculture” (Tavola, 1991, 19).

agriculture (Tavola, 1991; White, 2001). Once Indian Fijians established themselves in the urban areas they began to insist on improved education for their children, in terms both of access and quality:

Indian mission leaders inspired the pursuit of political rights, economic opportunities, and formal education as a vehicle of upward mobility and to restore *izzat*, or honor, and thus erase the humiliation of indenture in the colony. Fiji Indians actively lobbied for qualified teachers and an academic curriculum, while the government emphasized a vocational curriculum for both Fijian and Fiji Indian schools. By the 1940s, Fiji Indian rural primary schools were described as providing formal education of a higher standard than that of Fijian primary schools and offering, on average, 2 more years of schooling (White, 2001, 11).

Another major alteration that later occurred to Fiji's education system was the change of many primary schools in the early 1930s from the control of missionaries to local committees. This allowed massive changes in the curriculum to occur. The mission schools had always emphasized the teaching of basic arithmetic, practical farming, craft work, and scriptures; the general aim was to consolidate local church membership and reinforce rural agricultural life (Ravuvu, 1988, 68). The government of the day was more focused on modernizing and integrating the western monetary economy.

As a result, over 600 schools, the majority of which were in the rural areas, were now being run by a barely literate population with little to no experience with formal education implementation. Tavola argues that difficulties of staffing, equipment, and management were compounded with the complete lack of support from the central department of education; all this led to a hiatus of the Fijian education system (1991, 16). This, however, provides the premise of current Fijian education implementation: the Community Based Approach<sup>15</sup>.

---

<sup>15</sup> Therefore, the Fijian education system remains in such a hiatus. Although there may be awareness to these concerns, it remains to be seen if they are being adequately addressed.

As well as this urban bias in schooling, the second imposition by colonial rule that has had a detrimental outcome for Fiji is the education curriculum. This occurred with the change to formal (away from missionary control) education, which was imposed by the colonial powers and welcomed by all Fijians: “Formal education was valued more and seen as prestigious as it paved the way to ‘white collar jobs’ mainly in the modern sectors of society” (Kedrayate, 2002, 1).

This western, formal education proved to be very difficult for Fijians, particularly rural Fijians. “On entering the school they stand as individuals, study as individuals and are graded as individuals, according to the Western education paradigm” (Prosser, 2006, 232). Initially the curriculum instilled by European settlers focused on agriculture, particularly in the more remote regions. However, the focus on agriculture shifted: “Perceptions of education were inextricably linked with white-collar occupations in the modern sector of the economy and social demand throughout the colonial period was for a western-type literary education” (Tavola, 1991, 15). What this meant was a complete shift in the education system, a phenomenon not exclusive to Fiji. With the growth of the modern state the imposition of a national culture became a major concern of many colonial states. This, however, proved to be very problematic for smaller scale, more traditional cultures (W. T. S. Gould, 1993, 67). The ideas of white-collar jobs were very foreign to them (most rural Fijians); rather, it was a more common pursuit for the Indian Fijian population. Nonetheless, today these white-collar jobs are pursued by most Fijians.

White argues that the institution of education, as imposed by Christian missionaries from Britain, Australia, and New Zealand has been shrouded in the western educational discourse with its concepts and evaluations (2001, 306). Indeed, Prosser acknowledges these difficulties that continue to persist: “The school curriculum places

students under intense pressure, due to its focus on individual achievement, its use of western models of education, and by providing lessons in English, their second language [Fiji Ministry of Education, 2000]. Cultural confusion and anxiety can result as students try to blend two world views into their lives [Fiji Ministry of Education, 2000; Johnson, 1996]” (2006, 230). The trend was more apparent with rural and indigenous Fijians who had grown up in villages and only knew the accompanying culture. Ravuvu condemns the education system for being remote from local reality (1988, 67). The village life not only dictates their tradition and culture, it shapes their identities. It prioritizes mutual respect and preserves tradition, rather than stressing financial economies (Prosser, 2006).

This was true of the past and the legacy continues to the present although not reduced in practice. Rural Fijians continue to battle between this demand to be autonomous and to remain part of their natal communities (Brison, 2003). Lynch and Szorenyi encountered such concerns in their research on information technology education in Fiji. Their interview with a local teacher provides an insight: “Because it is a communal society if they do well they have to learn to become a little more individualistic and it is a problem in Fiji. It is one of the reasons the Fijian students are not doing as well as the Indian students” (Lynch & Szorenyi, 2005, 8). The Fijian education system continues to face these challenges and endorsing the community based approach and the pursuit of western education. There continues to be uneven development in Fiji.

## SECONDARY EDUCATION

In the mid-1940s secondary education was not common in Fijian society; less than one percent of total school enrollment was in secondary education at that time (Tavola, 1991, 22). No secondary schools were located outside of the urban centers. What this implies for the Fijian education system is the existence of an urban-rural discord, in regard to secondary education.

Both Indigenous Fijians and Indian Fijians were keen to pursue secondary education in the 1930s. However, Tavola explains that they followed different avenues to achieve their needs; Indigenous Fijians wished to continue with their current curriculum focused on agriculture, but to have secondary education available to a select few overseas<sup>16</sup>; Indian Fijians insisted on freely available secondary education which extends to pre-university<sup>17</sup> (1991, 19). It was for this reason that secondary education was dominant in the urban areas.

By the 1950s these urban and racial biases were becoming much more apparent. This was not only occurring with secondary education, but also, at the tertiary and professional training levels.

By the 1950s the economies of the region were boosted by increased subsidization from the metropole. In Fiji, this allowed for the expansion of industry. Growing numbers of Fiji Indians availed themselves of opportunities to pursue professional training in such fields as medicine and law. Throughout the 1950s the Fiji Indian middle class expanded at a time when the most strident restrictions on Fijian spatial mobility into urban areas remained in place (White, 2001, 311).

---

<sup>16</sup> This is a trend that continues today in Fiji; those of the Chiefly Matagalis are often given the opportunity for education abroad. Tavola contends that the lack of pressure from Fijians for their education (for the common people) has allowed for complete government neglect (1991, 21).

<sup>17</sup> At the time there were only secondary schools available to Europeans. However, by the end of the 1930s Indian Fijians secured their first secondary school which was the Natuba School which was a government run school (Tavola, 1991, 19).

Ordinances were put in place by the Council of Chiefs (which was established by British Colonial rulers) which restricted the migration and spatial mobility of Indigenous Fijians. The justification of the ordinances was to preserve rural village life and to minimize social disruption. One such example was an ordinance that declared it unlawful for Fijians to leave their village, without permission of the Chief, for more than sixty days (White, 2003, 350). There were also ordinances that restricted the employment of Fijians.

The 1960s began to see the migration of rural Indigenous Fijians to the urban centers in search of better education opportunities, as well as employment. There continue, unfortunately, to be difficulties with these Indigenous Fijian students in terms of their academic achievement. This trend first began with rural parents sending their children to the urban centers<sup>18</sup> to stay with their extended family while they pursued secondary education (White, 2001, 312). Others, that did not have extended family, but did have the means, remained in the boarding facilities available at some of the secondary schools. This caused high stress levels for the students, who were not able to cope with the separation from their families and their communities. This separation anxiety is often attributed to high rates of attrition for many rural Fijians (Prosser, 2006).

White argues that by 1960 it may have indeed been too late for rural Fijians; not only were there nearly twice as many Indian Fijians enrolled in secondary education, but the level of success in academic achievement of these country people was poor (2001, 312). This was a concern for a country that was preparing for independence and such disquiet was escalating due to the small number of educated and professional Indigenous Fijians. This is a trend that has persisted for many decades and continues to plague the country. Indeed, Indigenous Fijians do not have the same completion rates as many

---

<sup>18</sup> For many this means all the way to the mainland, in which both travel and costs, are great.

Indian Fijians; for example, between 1989 and 1997 the pass rate of Indigenous Fijians was 39% while for Indian Fijians it was 59% (Lynch & Szorenyi, 2005, 6). This demonstrates not only the difference in educational achievement – but it is also indicative of the overall low quality of the education with pass rates below 60%. This indicates that problems, greater than racial or geographical, persist with the education curriculum and the system as a whole.

## **Post-Independence Education in Fiji**

Post-Independence in Fiji was a time of great hope for both Indigenous and Indian Fijians, for not only their education, but for their futures. Indeed, Fijians filled most of the key positions in the country. Poverty was minimal; the World Bank classed Fiji as a middle-income country (Tavola, 1991, 39). Today, however, Fiji has been relegated to a lower middle income country<sup>19</sup> (World Bank, 2007a).

Two years prior to independence, in 1968, there were two events which transformed the Fijian education system. The first was the opening of the University of the South Pacific, in the capital Suva; the second was the formulation of a Royal Commission to address the increasing demand being placed on the Department of Education.

The racial disparities were immediately evident within the University of the South Pacific (USP); few Indigenous Fijians were, in fact, qualified to attend. This was one of many issues that the Royal Commission (composed of four Britons, one Australian and

---

<sup>19</sup> Countries are classified by the World Bank according to their 2005 GNI per Capita. A lower middle income country has a GNI per capita of US\$876-\$US3,465.

one Malaysian) addressed<sup>20</sup>. The commission put forward 81 recommendations which focused on three core issues: the quality of education being offered, as well as the lack of teachers; the rural and racial biases occurring; and the nature of the curriculum. In response, Fiji's intention was to establish junior-secondary schools in the rural areas, to make the curriculum more localized and, to not only increase the number of teachers, but improve their training. One of the most controversial strategies put forward was the one which reserved fifty per cent of all university scholarships for Indigenous Fijians. "The "50/50 policy"<sup>21</sup> as it came to be known, was a visible and politically appealing solution to closing "the education gap" between Fijians and other races, it was immediately adopted" (Tavola, 1991, 32). This 50/50 policy allowed more Fijian students to attend USP; it did not, however, address the larger issues of academic achievement at the primary and secondary level, nor did it speak to motivation issues. Most initiatives were, unfortunately, short lived and few ever came to fruition, with the exception of the 50/50 policy, which remains in place today.

The difficulty in achieving the recommendations of the Royal Commission was that the newly established, independent Fijian government had to deal with the education explosion that was occurring across the country. Every community wanted not only primary schools, but secondary schools as well; this led to a great many of privately owned schools opening throughout the country. These schools were owned and operated through religious based organizations. By the end of the 1980s nearly 97% of schools in Fiji were owned and operated by non-government bodies (Tavola, 1991, 35). What this

---

<sup>20</sup> Not one Fijian was included in the process.

<sup>21</sup> Indigenous Fijians were admitted to USP with a passing mark of 216 on New Zealand University Entrance Exam and non-Fijians were required to have a passing mark of 261 on the same exam (Bullivant, 1983, 242).

implied in terms of outcomes for the quality and curriculum was a detriment to the educational system. There were not enough teachers throughout the islands available and the curriculum, although outlined by the Department of Education, varied dramatically in its implementation. Tavola attributes many of the anomalies in the Fijian education system to these issues as well as to the imbalance created by the Grant-in-Aid system. She wrote: “The grant-in-aid system is seen as the root cause of the government’s inability to control the education system effectively today and as the cause of major inequalities in the quality and provision of education throughout Fiji” (1991, 2). The Grant-in-Aid system favored schools, and regions, in which English was taught by all teachers (which greatly disadvantaged rural, indigenous Fijian schools); as well, it supported building grants on a pound-for-pound basis which favored the construction of new schools in areas which already had available means.

The remainder of the 1970s saw immense political unrest; racial disparities continued to plague the education system, but of greater concern was the lack of employment opportunities for all Fijians. The 1977 General election brought education to the forefront of political debate. The issue of different entry marks for Indigenous Fijian students over those of Indian Fijian students to USP created massive unrest. Indian Fijians undoubtedly saw the inequality gap widening again, with an unfair advantage being allocated to Indigenous Fijians. This in turn, was exacerbated by the lack of jobs for graduates – the ‘school leaver’ crisis which haunts most of the third world.

Another key issue that occurred shortly after this was the oil crisis of 1979, which had devastating consequences for all of Fiji due to massive price increases<sup>22</sup>. This pushed Fiji's economy further into crisis. Tavola explains the situation:

The early 1980s were a turning point economically, with increased vulnerability especially in the main export commodity, sugar. The country could have, at this point, opted for a no-growth oriented economy, which would have maintained a stable balance of payments but may have reduced employment opportunities in the country, or chosen a growth oriented path. It was a political decision; obviously, a growth oriented economy had more appeal, especially at a time of increasing employment (1991, 39).

The pressure to pursue a growth oriented economy was one that was transpiring across the globe. Neo-liberal strategies were being imposed, by multilateral and bilateral aid agencies, with their lending policies. Neo-liberal strategies emanated from the belief that open, competitive, and unregulated markets – free from State interference – allow for optimal economic development; this also meant the privatization of all social services such as education. “By the mid-1980s, in the wake of this dramatic U-turn of policy agendas throughout the world, neoliberalism had become the dominant political and ideological form of capitalist globalization” (Brenner & Theodore, 2002, 350).

The Development Plan VIII, of 1981-1985, focused on quality concerns and left the impression that all quantitative issues had been resolved. The focus was put upon the issue of the educated unemployed. Fiji was producing more graduates than the economy could absorb. A shift in curriculum began to take a greater emphasis placed on vocational training, in particular, agro-technical courses. The Fiji economy was not suited to western, or colonial, education. Upon independence Fiji's economy was predominately focused, and dependant on, the sugar industry; tourism and manufacturing were

---

<sup>22</sup> The fiscal crisis produced by the two oil shocks of the 1970s was crippling for countless developing countries and in particular for their education systems (Farrell, 2003, 149).

secondary economic sectors. In the immediate post-independence Fiji experienced an annual growth rate of 5.8% from 1971-75; however, it declined to 2.9% from 1976-80 (Gounder, 1999, 4). The Fijian government had to address this and believed that focusing on a workforce skilled in agriculture and manufacturing would allow them to revive their stagnant, declining, economy.

This was followed by the Development Plan IX, from 1986-1990, which again attempted to reduce the academic bias of education. The problem with these strategies was that they were composed and put forward by an assembly that was lacking the education or knowledge they were attempting to instill. To further stifle the development of the Fijian education system the coups in 1987<sup>23</sup> shelved any and all educational reforms that had been put in to place. There was a massive outflow of private and foreign investment, of skilled labor (the majority of which were Indian Fijians), a damaging impact on trade and a 35% devaluation of the domestic currency; overall leading to a decline of 6.4% of the economic growth rate (Gounder, 1999, 4).

The major concern for the education system that ensued from the coups was the loss of teachers; many of these were Indian Fijians who joined the mass emigration with other Indian Fijians wishing to escape the turmoil. By September 1987, Fiji had lost 150 primary and 70 secondary school teachers (Tavola, 1991, 51). The other outcome of the

---

<sup>23</sup> Two coups occurred in Fiji in 1987. The first on May 14<sup>th</sup> was a result of the Parliamentary elections the previous month which saw the replacement of the Indigenous-led government by a multi-ethnic coalition which was predominately Indian Fijian. Lieutenant Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka, then third in command of the Royal Military Forces, claimed racial discrimination as his excuse for seizing power. The second coup on September 25<sup>th</sup> was again led by Rabuka. When Fiji's head of State, the Queen of Fiji, Elizabeth II (Fiji was still under the realm of the Commonwealth) and the Supreme Court ruled the first coup unconstitutional, the Queen appointed Governor-General Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau who initiated the Debua talks which were supported by most indigenous Fijians. They drafted the Debua Accord on September 23<sup>rd</sup> which provided for a government of national unity. Rabuka, however, feared the efforts of the first coup would be lost. The new regime declared Fiji a republic on October 7<sup>th</sup> which led to the expulsion from the Commonwealth. Ewins offers an extensive review of the literature of the coups and offers four explanations for the causes underlying them: racial, class, customs, and specific interests (1998).

coups was that many children were withdrawn from the educational system because parents could no longer afford the fees; this was particularly true for secondary students with their exam fees. As well, the coups meant excessive job loss throughout Fiji with the decline in tourism, but also many unskilled and casual workers lost their incomes with the overall collapse of the economy. Tavola argues although the drop in teachers and students was damaging that what was of more crucial significance was that the “loss of morale and heightened inter-racial tension were increasingly damaging to the educational process” (1991, 52).

One change to the curriculum in the immediate post-coups period was the inclusion of military cadet training; essentially it was an attempt for Indigenous Fijians to demonstrate their willingness to fight for their land against the Indian Fijians. This could also be seen as a continuous reminder of the potential for further coups. Today, Indigenous Fijians dominate both the police force and the military (Hassall, 2005, 4). It was also an attack against western education, which many Indigenous Fijians came to believe, was the root of their demise. In 1987 the Fijian Prime Minister explained his position to Queen Elizabeth II:

All the highlights of the western democratic values – freedom of speech, religion etc, exacerbate the inferior position of the Fijian people in their own country. The western media ridicules, belittles, vilifies, insults and does violence to Fijian customs and traditions. Customary and traditional freedoms have clearly defined boundaries. Western freedom knows no boundaries (quoted in Tavola, 1991, 53).

This was also occurring when the modernization theory was being heavily discredited and many developing countries began emphasizing the importance of the continuation of rural tradition. Indeed, the Fijian Ministry of Education was encouraging rural schools to reintegrate subsistence practices, as well as teaching respect for tradition, “since their chances of having higher education and paid employment were slim” (Brison,

2003, 339). This is a struggle that continues today, for not only Fiji, but for all developing countries.

The government could not decipher, and continues to struggle with, whether to focus on a more traditional curriculum, maintaining Fijian traditions and values, or implement a more western curriculum, in search of the elusive white-collar economy. Bullivant reveals the quandary posed by the situation: “Fiji is now at the point where it cannot survive or develop further without being heavily dependant of the Western economic framework. The education system reflects this; much of the curriculum is still dominated by Western philosophies and values, despite the attempts to implement a multicultural ideology” (1988, 245). The problem was, and still remains, that the Fijian government has to address not only the concerns of their peoples, but the concerns of outside players. The following section will discuss the various shifts that occurred as a result of external influences, and continue today, in the country’s education system and also in other third world Countries. The discussion will then return to Fiji and its current education system.

## **Chapter 3 - Post Independence;** ***The Actors in Fiji's educational system: the players both external and internal – and their motives behind the curriculum***

*“Understanding international influences in education requires critical attention to the faith and enthusiasm of the evangelists of global goals and standards, to the roles of foreign aid and empirical research, and to the ways in which strategies intended to promote empowerment can become vehicles for undermining education reform and entrenching poverty”* (Samoff, 2003, 52).

### **Education and Development: the World Bank and UNESCO**

Education is seen as not only the tool for development, but the key to such betterment. The impacts of education on developing countries are plentiful. Stretching from the mythical increase in national<sup>24</sup> economic output to the westernized perception of increased social well-being of entire populations; education is deemed the strongest driving force of development<sup>25</sup>:

In the struggle against poverty, education appears as one of the key mechanisms for facilitating the social insertion and employment of excluded communities, providing them with the abilities they require to be individually independent. Given the importance of education as a tool for the training of human capital and potential social mobility, prioritizing educational investment to overcome poverty is a legitimate and necessary goal. What is less clear, however, is how to determine the best strategies, the best means of achieving this (Bonal, 2004, 650).

Gould, however, warned of the conundrum that education presents in such developing countries:

Education seemed to be a key, perhaps even the master key, to the Pandora's Box of development. However, once the box had been opened the contents that were found

---

<sup>24</sup> This national benefit is another source of contention with development theorists (Case, 2006; Lewis, 2005; W.T.S. Gould, 1993) who argue that all development initiatives put forward are for the benefit of the Nation, which in turn largely benefits the wealthy and the urban. This is of growing concern, since it is the poor and rural populations who have the most to gain from this proposed development.

<sup>25</sup> It is crucial to note, however, that the notion of development is highly contested and habitually refers to western, neo-liberal, materialistic-consuming notions of development. Samoff insists that the late twentieth-century developmentalism is reflective of “the resuscitation of modernization theory, which insists now, as it did a half century ago, that the causes of the third world's problems are to be found within the third world: its people, resources, capital, skills, psychological orientation, child-rearing practices, and more” (2003, 58).

in it were not sufficient to go round. Cynically it might be argued that education has held out to eager populations an unrealizably optimistic prospect of social and economic progress. This is a prospect that people continue to seek even where the conditions suggest falling opportunities for the educated to achieve the promised and much sought-after benefits. Education has perhaps become a drug or placebo that the mass of the people needs to believe in order to provide itself with the possibility of escaping from the burden of poverty. Without it, all is lost, but with it only some can benefit (1993, 203).

Unfortunately, the reality remains that every healthy, independent, and economically surviving country today has an educated population. Education allows individuals to develop within their community and country, and allows nations to compete and survive in the global economy<sup>26</sup>. These are indeed essential ideas for Fiji and its education system; in particular by creating employment for excluded communities.

The focus on education in developing countries only began to take shape in the last two decades, and the focus on higher education only this millennium<sup>27</sup>. This is largely attributed to the biggest actor in education in developing countries: the World Bank (WB). Even though the WB may only contribute a small percentage of the education budget of various countries, its policies (and their impacts) dominate that country's education structure and practices (Bonal, 2006, 650). Even with the share on a per country basis being minimal in some cases, the WB accounted for more than 25% of all bilateral and multilateral assistance to education in the 1990s (Welch, 2000, 13). Money provided by the WB was, and remains, laden with conditions. In particular, the 1980s and early 1990s saw a strong drive towards Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) which heavily endorsed the privatization of social services, free-market policies, and state

---

<sup>26</sup> Education is heralded to reduce population growth, reduce maternal mortality, increase agricultural productivity and lead to democratization (Case, 2006; McGrath, 1999).

<sup>27</sup> The literature addressing education and development often tends to focus primarily on basic/primary education; however, much of that literature overlaps in its concepts, strategies, implementation, and problems. For this reason no distinction will be made from various literatures.

deregulation. As a result, education became a business rather than an instrument for development; a trend which persists today.

Bonal contends that the WB, followed by the IMF (International Monetary Fund), were placed at the forefront of the neo-liberal paradigm for development, in both its output and maintenance, throughout the 1980s and 1990s (2004, 650). Through their initiatives the privatization of social services was imposed in many developing countries. This was subsumed under the human capital theory<sup>28</sup> which allowed the WB to apply its banking approach to human development under this notion (Bonal, 2004, 653; Welch, 2000). This also meant that the education system, at the international level, shifted from a welfare good to one of competition. The justification for education regulation or intervention was for the sole purpose of economic growth and competitiveness, at both the national and international levels (Welch, 2000, 21). Unfortunately this neo-liberal orthodoxy, so heavily imposed by the WB, meant no real redistribution of wealth, nor did it have any success in the struggle against poverty (Bonal, 2004, 651; Farrell, 2003, 148; Samoff, 2003).

Although the WB and the IMF remain the principle investors<sup>29</sup> in education, it is UNESCO which is the ‘technical assistance agency’ of educational strategies. *Education for All* (EFA) is their mandate to provide quality basic education for which they coordinate all international efforts. “A global objective that must be accomplished locally”

---

<sup>28</sup> Human Capital Theory was theorized by Arthur Cecil Pigou and was first applied to neo-classical economics in 1958 by Jacob Mincer (1958). The theory viewed humans through their physical means of production, therefore increased investment yields increased output; investment in human capital is achieved through such areas as education and health care. Ferrell contends that the human capital theory placed education at the center of the optimistic vision [of development] in the late 1950s and early 1960s; education was seen as an investment opportunity. “Public expenditures on increasing the availability of education would produce net social benefits, increasing the total amount of wealth in a society and improving its distribution” (2003, 147).

<sup>29</sup> Throughout WB and IMF literature they refer to their efforts as *investments* which are indicative that they expect a return on their investment. They are lenders not donors.

(Samoff, 2003, 52). UNESCO partners with governments, development agencies, civil society, non-governmental organizations, and the media. Samoff further argues that UNESCO has been “eclipsed” by funding organizations, predominately the WB, by characterizing themselves as a development advisory service (2003, 60). This may also be a reflection in the different approaches that each organization takes towards education reform. Naidoo contends that UNESCO emphasizes a more democratic approach, focusing on community involvement, whereas the WB emphasizes decentralization from the perspective of financing and administration (2003, 3). Therefore the “eclipse” is inevitable when education is perceived and understood from an economic standpoint, and particularly when results are expected. It is much more difficult to show the returns on issues such as governance as compared to enrollment rates and teacher/student ratios. It can be argued, however, that UNESCO still maintains a strong presence even if only to maintain public awareness.

The EFA campaign was launched in 1990 at the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand. The human capital theory was the focus at this conference. The central concern was the idea of basic education for the creation of human capital, indispensable to productive social development and economic growth (Lynch, 1997, 6). Ten years later, when the conference reconvened in Dakar, Senegal there was a realization that many countries were far from achieving these goals and it put forth six key education goals<sup>30</sup> which are intended to help countries succeed in reaching the MDGs by 2015. The same disparities persisted with these goals; however, they maintain basic

---

<sup>30</sup> The six goals include: Expand early childhood care and education; Provide free and compulsory primary education for all; Promote learning and life skills for young people and adults; Increase adult literacy by 50 per cent; Achieve gender parity by 2005, gender equality by 2015; and Improve the quality of education (UNESCO, 2007, About Education for All, accessed April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2007).

education as the goal which will only further the education gap between the North and the South.

EFA is endorsed from a humanistic approach, with a premise of education as a basic human right; its implementation, however, is not. EFA pursues education from a neo-liberal foundation, which is further reflected, and stressed by the WB and IMF. Tamatea argues that this blue print<sup>31</sup> for the ‘development’ of education by 2015 creates a Matrix-like effect<sup>32</sup> which precludes other ways of thinking about and practicing education; as well, the contradiction between the human rights centered discourse and the neo-liberal discourse are more than simply an exercise in lies, deception, and rhetoric. “Rather, the Matrix-like effect of the framework lies, but because it doubly exploits the very same ambivalence in liberal-humanism that facilitated the European control of ‘Others’ in an earlier era of globalization” (2005, 311).

The disadvantageous neo-liberal roots in education strategies resound with countless others and are chronic throughout the literature. Hill asserts repeatedly that education is not a commodity which can be bought and sold. “One can buy *the means* to an education, but not the hard graft of autonomous learning itself” (2003, 10). The problem is that none of the literature offers ways in which to challenge or overcome the overbearing presence of neo-liberalism education strategies. The literature seeks to find solutions within the third world context and rarely questions the forces which continue to drive their underdevelopment. What needs to be considered is the reality in which these education systems exist. It is not just that education occurs under a neo-liberal system.

---

<sup>31</sup> Tamatea refers to The Dakar framework for action – Education for All: Meeting our collective commitments composed in 2000 (2005).

<sup>32</sup> Tamatea makes reference to the movie ‘The Matrix’ released in 2004 in which the central character realizes that realities and truths are generated by a neural-interactive computer system known as the Matrix, which all humans are joined with to further benefit the system. He argues the Matrix as “an analogy for the globalizing neo-liberal capitalist corporate machine” (2005, 312).

Tamatea is correct in his condemnation of the Dakar Framework for Action in that it precludes other ways of thinking and practicing education but perhaps that is because there is an acknowledgement of the inescapable neo-liberal realities for which global graduates must face.

Lockheed & Cueto<sup>33</sup>, along with Bourne<sup>34</sup>, claim there is a deficiency in the literature pertaining to education and development, as well as lack of researchers (2006; 2003). The reality of this is, in fact, the opposite. There is an abundance of literature on the subject<sup>35</sup>; it is more so the case that it overlaps. The other difficulty is that no two countries, or even regions within a country, are the same or face the same challenges (Farrell, 2003; Glewwe, 2002).

A further concern to this is that many of those concerned are unaware of their own underlying values and presumptions which “silently but powerfully guide their judgments and decisions about education in developing countries” (Lynch, 1997, 3). Indeed, the concern of all research conducted in developing countries is not only the origin of the researcher and who they are working on behalf of, but the predetermined expectations and outcomes that they have for their research (Ansell, 2001; Gold, 2002; Sidaway, 1992). Much of the literature on education and development is not only funded by the World Bank and UNESCO, but researched and written by their staff which reflects a neo-liberal, western approach to education. Samoff also blames scholars (being one himself) who shift the focus of their research in order to better fit the desired outcomes from investors and are unaware they are doing so (2003, 84). Therefore, investors will continue to

---

<sup>33</sup> They argue that the lack of how to improve schools is of particular concern. This is vague in what exactly it is in reference to.

<sup>34</sup> Bourne contends that what is lacking is a solid educational theoretical framework (2003).

<sup>35</sup> Bonal (2004); Huckle (2004); King & Buchert (1999); McGrath (1999); and Welch (2000).

control the research and the outcomes; how then will the real local needs be realized and addressed?

There is an abundance of research about the plague of teacher shortages in countless developing countries, but what is lacking is research which speaks with and to those teachers which are there. There are even fewer attempts by researchers to discuss the issues with students – in order to determine their immediate needs. Also, there is a prevailing assumption by the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and Governments alike that strategies need to be devised at the universal level; yet it is assumed that they will slot in with local contexts.

Much of the literature offers insights into the various strategies in place and their problems. In particular they decipher problems occurring at the national level, but always in an economic context. What is lacking from the body of literature are solutions which pertain directly to each specific country or region. Strategies need to steer away from the universalistic “one size fits all” approach that is assumed with education (Farrell, 2003, 151).

There is also the issue of time. Researchers, policy makers, and civil society all seek not only fast answers to their questions, but even more difficult, immediate results. The pressure of achieving the MDGs, as well as countless other development strategies, insist that they be achieved through the neo-liberal conditions which provide the detrimental conditions under which these problems were conceived.

The final piece which is missing in the literature, to be addressed is the focus and importance of secondary education. This is missing not only in the literature, but is also absent from education investment and implementation. DFID (Department for International Development of the United Kingdom) allocates roughly 80% of their

education aid to basic and primary education; and USAID (United States Agency for International Development) allocated 72.2% of total education funding to basic education in 2002 (quoted in Palmer, 2006, 4). This focus has recently made headlines because of the imperative need to focus on *higher education*; this however, refers to tertiary education and vocational training. James Wolfensohn, the President of the World Bank, conceded in his March 2003 address on *Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril and Promise* that the bank had drastically miscalculated the social rate of return to higher education and there were valid reasons for “adequately” funding this level of education (Arnove, 2003, 5). This, unfortunately, was in direct reference to tertiary education. Secondary is indeed the missing piece of the puzzle for the literature of education and development. There needs to be a more profound condemnation of education strategies that focus on simply achieving basic/primary education, which in Fiji further propels the knowledge gap occurring between the North and South. This knowledge gap is essential for industrialized countries to maintain their control over developing countries. Lynch explains the paradigm:

The [the ‘North’] generate the academic concepts which homogenize, routinize and steer the educational process, and they receive in return a hallowed and favoured position in the selection and allocation of both life chances and qualities, the moral high ground of argumentation and a high price for the export of their knowledge ‘wares’. They thus play a major role in the legitimation of inequality, while appearing to seek to attenuate it. Their declared values are interactive, egalitarian and concerned with social welfare, their operative values are purposive-rational, exploitive and economic (1997, 2).

Although Lynch acknowledged these issues a decade ago they endure today.

There continues to be a systematic underdevelopment occurring with a focus on basic/primary education. This is easily seen within the MDGs and in the goal of achieving UPE by 2015. The issue that begs to be explored is the benefit that would ensue if

secondary education was deemed the minimum level of education achievement for all.

What economic and social benefits could then occur?

The World Bank (WB) has slowly and grudgingly begun to acknowledge the value of secondary education; recently it released *Expanding Opportunities and Building Competencies for Young People: A New Agenda for Secondary Education* (2005). The entire body of research and strategies, as well as proposed outcomes, are from an economic, neo-liberal standpoint. The benefits are the same as those offered for primary education. There is also a constant comparison to the development of secondary education in the United States at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; unfortunately the comparisons between history and underdevelopment are completely incompatible. That is not to discredit entirely the research offered; however, there remains a level of systematic underdevelopment within the continued focus on lower secondary education. There is also a warning of the possible negative effects of secondary education, an idea which would not be favourably viewed were it in the context of a developed country. The WB warns: “In developing countries, despite all the efforts in recent decades, secondary education often acts as a bottleneck within the overall education system, inhibiting participation rates. The bottleneck is mostly manifested in the form of too few lower secondary education places, or too rigid tracking at the secondary education level, or both” (2005b, 26). Since the WB presents itself as the leader in development one would assume they would have a way to overcome this rather than allow it to defeat them, unless they have an ulterior motive.

It was not until the late 1990s that the WB began to recognize the need to assess and implement education from a regional context rather than from a national one, although all the while imposing its policies and practices from the national level. This

was mainly because the SAPs put in place by the WB had failed miserably, more often than not leaving their recipient countries further in debt with social services crippled than when they began the programs (Lewis, 2005). Poverty, both national and individual, was further exacerbated by already crumbling and dilapidated economies (Welch, 2000, 12). Civil society, Third World governments, and numerous NGOs cried out for the termination of SAPs and for the complete elimination of debts owing by developing countries.

These SAPs remained, however, under the new title of the Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) Initiatives. These initiatives are now targeting the enhancement of social services more so than the market-driven enterprises. The major focus being education, followed closely by health care and poverty alleviation; these strategies all strive for the same end result: national economic development. This time in the HIPC Initiatives, however, it is expected that this key will also unlock the door to social development.

This has triggered the decentralization and the privatization of education in numerous developing countries. This decentralization and privatization of education has triggered the interest and pursuant discourse about curriculum content; and the concern for the quality of education more than quantity of education (Lockheed & Cueto, 2006, 100). Welch argues that “[t]his methodology, which seeks to estimate the benefits of education in terms of a complex mathematical calculus, usually takes little or no account of noneconomic factors and does not allow for regional or cultural differences and diversity” (2000, 17). Both of these shifts in the WB’s focus will be discussed in the following sections.

## Education Decentralization and Privatization

The premise of education decentralization<sup>36</sup> is complex in its explanation and even more so in its outcomes. Essentially it is the fiscal mitigation of education from the national level down to the regional and community levels. It is however, geography that justifies it; more remote regions are often overlooked or forgotten when education is implemented at the national level – often favoring urban centers. The argument suggests that with education strategies being determined and managed at the local level the needs of such communities will be better met; there will be increased transparency and more efficient allocation of resources (Bray, 1996; Chapman et al., 2002; Cuellar-Marchelli, 2003; de Guzman, 2007; Osei, 2007; Therkildsen, 2000; Tracy, 1997). All of these have the long term promise of increasing education quality and access<sup>37</sup>. The reality is that neither of these ever came to fruition, nor do the promised gains of additional democratic rights occur (Welch, 2000, 16).

<sup>36</sup> The various degrees of decentralization, and their terminologies, offer a glimpse in to the vast differences which are occurring; but also later reflect many of the same challenges. The three central, and recurring, forms of decentralization in the literature are *Deconcentration*, *Delegation*, and *Devolution*:

<b><u>Decentralization Formats</u></b>	<b><u>Strategies and Implementation</u></b>
<i>Deconcentration</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Responsibility transferred to lower levels within the central government</li> <li>▪ Shifting workloads from central offices to regional ones</li> </ul>
<i>Delegation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Decision-making (management) is delegated to other government units, although they may not act independently</li> <li>▪ Ultimate responsibility remains with the sovereign authority</li> </ul>
<i>Devolution</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The transfer of authority to a public unit, or community, that can act independently</li> <li>▪ Sub-national units are created and recognized, the activities of which are outside the direct control of the central government</li> <li>▪ National authorities exercise indirect or supervisory control</li> </ul>

(Table 3.1 **Decentralization Formats**. Sources: Cuellar-Marchelli, 2003; de Guzman, 2007; Naidoo, 2003).

<sup>37</sup> Access refers to the urban-rural disparities that exist in many developing countries. It is argued that it is governments that compound the discrepancies; therefore education decentralization alleviates this problem (Bray, 1996). Access also refers to financial access in certain circumstances.

The reality of education decentralization is that it is simply the state failing, or cowering, in its responsibility to its citizens by placing the onus of education on them. De Grauwe et al. challenge this position:

[d]ecentralization does not imply abandonment by the State, but rather a change in the role of the State. Where its supervision and support is weak and where its absence is not counterbalanced by strong local accountability, the inefficiency and mismanagement which characterized centralized central management might be repeated, if not multiplied, at lower levels. Decentralization is therefore neither a panacea nor a shortcut (2005, 14).

The reality is that decentralization places the implementation and management of education on a population who themselves lack the knowledge of how to go forth with this task, and many even lack the basic education for which they are responsible for their children and community. As with the risks of education researchers and investors at the international level having ulterior motives and predetermined notions, so too might those at the local level. Furthermore, the communities/regions the most in need of improvements to their education are the ones with the fewest resources - meaning they are unable to finance many of the requirements placed on them (Welch, 2000, 15). Following De Grauwe et al.'s argument the long term consequences of education decentralization are increased inequality between regions, as well as grave discrepancies in curriculum quality. This thus creates an overall uneven development within nations often at the excuse of geography.

There are numerous deviations in decentralization implementation and no two countries have the same strategies or policies. This can vary in terms of which aspects of the education are relegated to the various levels and how much power, finance, and access they are actually granted. There is also a vast difference in the reasons behind the decision to decentralize education systems (although geography is always a factor).

There is, however, the same underlying reality about decentralization: it is heavily endorsed and imposed by the World Bank (Belfield & Levin, 2002, 23; Osei, 2007, 151; Tracy, 1997, 159). It is, in essence, a blanket policy that is appended with their loans. The basis for their unyielding dominance of educational decentralization is that it intends to achieve improvement in efficiency and quality in education. It also allows the WB to continue to impose education from an economic, neo-liberal, standpoint.

Of increasing concern, and surprise, is that NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) and CSOs (Civil Society Organizations) are playing an increasing role in education decentralization. Their role being to organize training programs under the premise of empowering local stakeholders (Naidoo, 2003, 3). The problem here lies in the reality that many NGOs and CSOs operate through community initiatives with little to no resources, again creating uneven development. Bonal (2004) confirms that the promise of increased equality, with regards to decentralization, is an ambivalent one (662); regardless of who is initiating and implementing it. Indeed this is the case for numerous countries<sup>38</sup>, under which education decentralization is the policy of the day, and the promised results have yet to be seen.

The newest, and most extreme, form of education decentralization is the School-Based Management (SBM) approach which is occurring in Columbia, Uganda, South Africa, and Senegal (Naidoo, 2003). The SBM approach offers an improved quality of teaching since it is the teachers, along with other members of the community, who design the education programs with the goal of meeting local needs. Naidoo heeds a warning

---

<sup>38</sup> Benin, Senegal, Mali, and Guinea (De Grauwe et al., 2005).

with this approach<sup>39</sup>: that in order for the success of this strategy governments must ensure that in all schools “the basic conditions for effective learning can be met and that community efforts add to, rather than substitute for what has been provided through public funds” (2003, 11). This would undoubtedly ease the problems of regional disparities and the widening knowledge gap.

A further form, or outcome, of decentralization that is occurring, due to the fiscal constraints of many states and also the increasing dominance of market economies (Cuellar-Marchelli, 2003), is education privatization. This is the ultimate instance of education becoming a business. This is when the state begins to include the private sector in the education system, in both its delivery and/or financing.

Privatization has recently taken place in many South American and African countries. Indeed, this privatization of education has become globally the most prominent *scheme* in expanding access, improving quality, and enhancing proficiency - in particular in El Salvador (Cuellar-Marchelli, 2003, 146), Chili, Columbia, Indonesia, and the Czech Republic (Belfield & Levin, 2002).

In much of the literature this private sector is somewhat unclear; it assumes three distinct forms: private business enterprises, community ownership, or individual ownership; this privatization is of particular interest for the later discussion about education in Fiji. Cuellar-Marchelli makes the distinction: “In its pure form, both public and private schools are owned, managed and financed by only one entity; either the state, if a school is public, or a parents’ association, business, non-profit organization or a religious institution, if the school is private” (2003, 147). Belfield & Levin expand further

---

<sup>39</sup> This will later enter the discussion in chapter 4 with the Evanson Learning Center; although the Fijian education system does not operate under the SBM strategy there are many similarities, therefore many of the same concerns.

on the notion of privatization thought of as liberalization or marketization where these new markets are created as alternatives to state allocation systems or government services (2002, 19). Undoubtedly this is the 'ideal' for bilateral and unilateral organizations; it is unlikely this is the overall goal of locals within a community.

As previously stated though, there are many degrees to education decentralization, and therefore to privatization; it may be occurring at different levels and for different aspects of education implementation. There are also different motives which affect such decisions. Belfield and Levin argue there are three motives for education privatization. The first are the *Demand-side pressures* (2002, 29); which occur through parental demand. Parents view education as a means through which to achieve social and economic advancement. The underlying assumption is that education is the key for economic development and is one which has been engrained from western/global powers. The second motives are *Supply-side pressures* (2002, 31) in which the decline of not only public sector funding, but educational quality, have fallen so much that governments are left with little other choice. This often occurs when enrollment rates increase, often as an off-shoot of increased primary education. The third motive, better referred to as the dominant influence, are what they refer to as *General pressures* (2002, 32). They partially link this to the pressures of globalization, but ultimately it is the "encouragement" of the world agencies, particularly the World Bank.

It is essential to realize that it is the WB that is the driving force behind the *supply-side* and *demand-side pressures*. It is they who continue to enforce the economic approach to education, achieving economic development through western education. It is also they who are behind the decline in the public sector funding due to their loans with conditions attached. They dictate the manner in which these loans are allocated and most

often services such as education are scaled back. It is the World Bank which is indeed deciding and implementing education strategies on a global scale. What remains to be seen is the impact it is having at the local scale, and in particular on Fiji.

De Grauwe et al. cite the major concerns with decentralization/privatization are that governments which seek advice/instruction do not take into account the context specific needs of their country. Secondly, several countries adopt the policies without sufficient attention being paid to the strategies required for successful implementation. Thirdly, little is known about the impacts of decentralization/privatization, particularly in developing countries (2005, 2). The problem is the comparison being made for education implementation strategies between developed and developing countries; they operate under completely different economic, political, and social conditions. This is also the case for comparisons between developing countries.

The biggest concern with education decentralization/privatization, aside from the increasing disparities in access, is that of the declining quality of the curriculum being offered further creating disparities. Of greatest concern is that there is no extant literature of any success stories of education decentralization and/or privatization in developing countries<sup>40</sup>; nor is there any literature by the WB on changing its current approach.

## **Curriculum – The elusive White-Collar Job**

Not only is there an issue of access, but also there is a concern with the nature of the education those students receive once they arrive at school. This is an even greater debate than that of quantity, most often discussed as an issue of quality, particularly for

---

<sup>40</sup> The WB offers success stories from Australia, Denmark, New Zealand, Scotland, Sweden, and the United States, but from no Third World Country (Patrinou, 1999).

developing countries. Welch heavily criticizes the World Bank's *Priorities and Strategies* for completely overlooking the issue of education quality, referring to the strategies only with regard to the efficiency with which funds are expended in education "rather than with the quality of pedagogical relationship, or the quality of knowledge gained in schools" (2000, 18). Lynch argues that the preoccupation with the quantity of education, in particular Universal Primary Education (UPE) enrolment rates, has obscured the need to focus on qualitative concerns (1997, 13). Education successes are always expressed in terms of attendance rates and exam pass rates, neither of which is indicative of an education which is relevant to the recipient or the overall success rates of that education system. By presenting increased attendance rates, particularly for countries striving to achieve UPE, they often do not account for increases in population, so although attendance may have increased the actual percentage of children in school may have declined<sup>41</sup>. Further, often attendance rates are inflated by repetition, or repeating.

The use of exam pass rates often compares different social groups, schools, and nations; referred to as the "league table" approach which also assumes that these various groups all have access to the same occupational categories and salary levels (Farrell, 2003, 154). It is becoming increasingly obvious that different individuals and groups indeed need and want to learn curriculum which is relevant to their needs and their surrounding environment (be it social, economic, or political). The balancing act involved with education decentralization/privatization and relevant curriculum is the most challenging of all.

Western education curriculum lingers in post-colonial societies, and this is further emphasized with the neo-liberal approach to education. The World Bank is the major

---

<sup>41</sup> Often termed 'Demographic Investment'.

nemesis of education in this scenario. The advice of the WB, in fact their overbearing imposition of western education models, is uncritically adopted by developing countries. “In education it has implied an assumption, fully borne out in the operation of multilateral and bilateral aid agencies, of Third World countries being positively affected in their development by the operations of the development/education relationship that seemed to apply in Europe, North America and Japan (W.T.S. Gould, 1993, 207). The stress upon western education is not applicable to many, if any, developing countries today. The reality is that these countries, although perhaps not completely industrialized themselves, are now expected to survive and compete in a very different global economy than that which existed more than a century ago. Today the global powers are already determined and their agencies (the IMF, WB, and WTO) assist. The question remains though, who decides on this local curriculum and what are their motives?

The issue at hand is the relevance of that education to the receiving population. How is this curriculum benefiting them, and is it of relevance to the realities of their futures? When we talk of curriculum we must also take the real-world context (local, regional, national, and global) into consideration. Globalization is rapidly changing every economy in the world. That said, however, is it fair to offer an agricultural curriculum simply because it is the most prevalent source of income in the region, meaning no further, or other, opportunities for the population?

Farrell offers a “model” of education inequality based on the assumption that education operates as a social screening mechanism. He then determines how they are screened in or kept out:

1. *Equality of access* – the probabilities of children from different social groupings getting in to the school system, or some particular level or portion of it

2. *Equality of survival* – the probabilities of children from various social groupings staying in the school system to some defined level, usually the end of a complete cycle (primary, secondary, higher)
3. *Equality of output* – the probabilities that children from various social groupings will learn the same things to the same levels at a defined point in the schooling system
4. *Equality of outcome* – the probabilities that children from various social groupings will live relatively similar lives subsequent to and as a result of schooling (have equal incomes, have jobs of roughly the same status, have equal access to sites of political power, etc) (2003, 155)

All four of these components are of concern with regard to education

decentralization/privatization, and can indeed be further exacerbated by this process. Of the greatest significance is the fourth, *equality of outcome* - how will the education best suit the economy and environment upon which graduates enter? Geography is fundamental to this discourse; how is the curriculum changing the landscape? How is the landscape determining curriculum? Globalization is changing not only the world economy but has an impact in the most remote, rural regions. By focusing on something such as Information Technology Training (ITT), the newest initiative of the World Bank (therefore of most third world governments), for a predominately rural population, what outcome will this have? In five years will there be a population of trained ITT professionals, with no jobs because the infrastructure has yet to be developed or has been overdeveloped in other countries, and hungry because they do not know how to cultivate their lands to feed their families, nor can they afford to purchase food (because they are unemployed).

The problem with a curriculum that focuses on western education and globally competitive training is that it allows the 'Brain Drain' to be further promoted, crippling the development of predominately rural and poverty-stricken regions throughout developing countries; furthermore, it leaves them with few other skills to sustain

themselves. With increased education and skills the individual is seen as part of the international labour market (W.T.S. Gould, 1993, 192). Thus, at the local level of education we ask: What is the best curriculum, who decides that, and is it logical to pursue the elusive white-collar job?

As W.T.S. Gould indicates in order for more development to occur more formal education is required (1993). Indeed, the social development that is accrued from increased education is well documented<sup>42</sup>, although, the economic benefits have yet to be seen in many countries. Therefore, at the national level, the imperative discussion relates to the curriculum offered with that increased education.

With education decentralization in developing countries, a decentralization of the curriculum has occurred. Some governments have deemed that curriculum requirements must have a more regional approach in order to better meet the needs of communities, and argue that this will improve the overall national development of their countries; this is best achieved with said region or community determining and implementing that curriculum.

For example, this was one of the strategies attempted in Ghana with education decentralization. It implemented the local content curriculum (LCC); launched in 1987, where all secondary schools were required to allocate 20% of all instruction to locally designed subject matter (Osei, 2007, 153). The Ghana Ministry of Education encouraged local schools to decipher this aspect of the curriculum that would help students understand their local culture and also develop skills that would be beneficial to their

---

<sup>42</sup> In particular the benefit of increased education to women has led to a reduction in maternal mortality rates, early marriage rates, HIV/AIDS infection rates, and improved overall health to women. As well, it is believed this generation of educated women will lead to an even healthier and productive generation of women (Case, 2006; Save the Children, 2005).

communities. They also believed it would encourage students to remain in school longer (Osei, 2007, 156). The greatest difficulty they encountered was the lack of teachers' interest in the design and implementation of this revised curriculum. Also, uneven regional disparities in the curriculum developed.

Whether curriculum is state or regionally designed and implemented remains overshadowed by the greater concern of the relativity/benefit of that curriculum to the individuals. The question of the influences of education, the decentralization/privatization of education and the curriculum are all pertinent discussions as we return the focus to Fiji. Indeed, all foreign aid policies (i.e. the external players) are laden with self-serving motives. The two biggest contributors of foreign aid in Fiji are the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Australian Government's Overseas Aid (AusAID), both of whom acknowledge their motives behind their support<sup>43</sup>. AusAID's motives for foreign aid to the Pacific is to improve their own regional security: "by helping to build stronger communities and more stable governments we improve our own economic and security interests" (AusAID, 2007, homepage). This is not an isolated attempt by a country to secure their own region by assuring their neighbors are stable and economically viable. Many Australians also have millions of dollars invested in the tourism industry in Fiji.

We inquire: what strategies are in place, under what pretence are they implemented, and how realistic is the education to the benefit of the individual and for all of Fiji?

---

<sup>43</sup> In 2007-2008 AusAID will provide AUD\$2,731.6 million to foreign aid with the Pacific Rim being the biggest recipient (AusAID, 2007, Homepage).

## **The Internal (and External) Players: Fiji's Education System and the White-Collar Job**

### **Fiji today: Coups, Beaches, and the City**

The population of Fiji is 918,675 (CIA Factbook 2007); last recorded in 2005 there were 54% Indigenous Fijians, 38% Indian Fijians and 7.5% were denoted as others<sup>44</sup> (Fiji Government 2005-06). What was once almost a 50/50 split between Indigenous and Indian Fijians has shifted with Indian Fijians fleeing during post-coups periods. Indeed, by 2022, if current emigration trends persist, Indian Fijians may only comprise 20% of the population (Robertson, 2006). The 'others' is indicative of a growing number of foreigners moving to Fiji, the majority of whom are affiliated with the tourism industry, be they hotel/resort owners or operators of other tourist businesses.

There is an even greater transformation of the population. For the first time in Fiji's history the country has a majority urban population, with an increase from 33% to over 50% living in urban places since the 1987 coups and the collapse of regional development programs (Robertson, 2005). The SAPs put in place by the World Bank and adopted by the interim government, from 1987-1992, focused on manufacturing and increased industrialization. Fiji was encouraged to become an exporting country by reducing their post-colonial development strategy of securing full employment through the country's natural resources. A major problem with this strategy was the competition with garment industries in Asia, where workers were in abundance, labour costs were

---

<sup>44</sup> It is interesting to note these stats are provided on the official government website and actually list the stats as Fijians, Indians and Others respectively. For a country which claims to be so desperately seeking social cohesion and an end to racial segregation and tension it is striking that they make the distinction on the first page of the document, but more so that they do not consider Indians as Fijians even though they may potentially be 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> generation Fijians.

much lower, and external investments were much higher. The end result of the SAPs adopted by the interim government was the deterioration in income distribution and a decline in investment in Fiji; it altered Fiji's position in the world economy, making it less globally competitive (Akram-Lodhi, 1996, 285).

Fiji is in a period of transition; there have been two coups in recent years, one in May 2000<sup>45</sup> and the most recent in December 2006<sup>46</sup>; both have had crippling consequences for the economy. The racial tensions that were the driving force behind both these coups have yet to subside or be adequately addressed; therefore there remains constant instability. The most recent coup in 2006 has led to travel warnings issued on Fiji by numerous countries, including all of their major tourist source countries<sup>47</sup>. Many countries have also rescinded their foreign aid and the Council of the Commonwealth has

---

<sup>45</sup> The Coup on May 19<sup>th</sup> 2000 was the most violent and drawn out of all four coups in the last two decades. George Speight, an Indigenous Fijian businessman led an armed faction (not associated with the military) which held members of parliament and the Prime Minister, Mahendra Chaudry (an Indian Fijian), hostage for 56 days. Speight claimed to be acting in the name of Indigenous Fijians against a government dominated by Indian Fijian politicians. During the coup businesses in Suva shut their doors due to looting, and schools were closed. Commodore Josaia Vorege Bainimarama declared martial law and ended the crisis through forceful intervention. An interim government was led by Laisinia Qarase who was later democratically elected in 2001 and again in 2006.

<sup>46</sup> With Laisinia Qarase's second election into parliament in 2006 he put forward three bills that Commander Bainimarama publicly criticized to be corrupt and leading to Fiji's doom. The first was the Reconciliation Tolerance & Unity Bill which questioned the illegality of the 2000 coup and offered pardons to those involved (including current members of parliament). The second was the Qoliqoli bill which would return control of lagoon, beach, and reef access to Indigenous Fijians, were this bill passed it would greatly affect resort owners and place great strains on tourism. The third was the Land Tribunal Bill which faded in to the background compared to the other two bills. Bainamarama handed down nine commands pertaining to the bills, giving Qarase the ultimatum to concede to the demands or step down by December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2006. On that day the military set up road blocks in Suva and seized weapons from opposing factions. On December 5<sup>th</sup> select government members were placed under house arrest and President Ratu Josifa Lloilo allegedly signed an order to dissolve parliament (which he later denied). It is of particular interest that Richard Evanson (owner of Turtle Island Resort and the Evanson Learning Center) financed some of Qarase's campaign after the 2000 coup admitted that he felt cheated by Qarase's push for the Qoliqoli bill (Callinan, 2006). So it was no surprise that Evanson then donated to Ratu Epeli Ganilau (Bainimarama is his successor and associate), who ran against Qarase in the 2006 election. It is also a great coincidence that in September 2005 Bainimarama was seated on a plane next to Andrew Fairley (then director of Turtle Island Resort) where he was first informed about the Qoliqoli bill. Bainimarama had further opportunity to discuss this bill, along with many other things, when he and his family were invited to Turtle Island in December 2005; U.S. Senator John McCain and his family were coincidentally also invited guests during that same week (Callinan, 2006). Bainamarama has since been sworn-in as the interim Prime Minister.

<sup>47</sup> Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain, Canada, and the United States.

suspended Fiji's membership. There has also been a great political strain with both Australia and New Zealand, the two key investing countries in Fiji<sup>48</sup>.

Robbie Robertson (2006), Professor and Director of Development Studies at USP, warns of the volatility of the Fijian economy with particular reference to the coups. The 2000 coup had a detrimental effect on education in Fiji, with out-migration of over 3,800 professionals, representing half of Fiji's stock of middle to high level workers, teachers being the most predominant group of professional workers lost (Mohanty, 2005, 5).

Tourism remains the "star" performer of the economy, which brings in more than FJ\$700 million (Robertson, 2006) and despite the coups is still the country's largest source of investment and foreign exchange. That said, however, tourist visitors fell from 576,000 in 2005 to 545,000 in 2006, a direct outcome of the coup and the period of uncertainty that preceded it (World Bank, 2007b).

The majority of Fiji's tourism, however, occurs outside of Suva along the coastlines and predominately in the surrounding islands. This is an important consideration with the increased 'urbanization' that is occurring, how realistic is it?

There has been a shift in Fiji's economy from a primarily resource based sector (including agriculture, forestry, fishing, and mining dropping from 25% to 18% of GDP from 1987 to 2005) to a wholesale and retail trade (encompassing retail, restaurants, and hotel) now accounting for 19% of GDP (Fiji Government 2005-06). That is not to downplay the vital role of the rest of the economy; in particular the sugar industry has been the principal export of Fiji for the last century and remains a dominant force in the economy, employing 40,000 people which, with families included, accounts for nearly one quarter of Fiji's population (Robertson, 2006).

---

<sup>48</sup> Who have also imposed a ban on interim government officials from entering their countries.

Indeed, Fiji is in a time of transition and continued turmoil. The question that persists is whether the Fijian education system is providing the right structure and curriculum to meet the needs of the current and future population?

## **Current Players and Strategies**

Today the biggest investors in the Fijian education system are the World Bank (WB), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the European Union (EU), Australia, Japan, and New Zealand<sup>49</sup>.

The **World Bank** has had fourteen projects to date in Fiji, since it became a member in 1971, primarily in the infrastructure, telecommunications, and electric power sectors. Since the late 1990s the WB's involvement in Fiji has been limited due to the country's classification which precludes it from being an eligible IBRD borrower (i.e. the World Bank's window to poor countries, providing lower interest rates). The WB is currently attempting to strengthen its engagement with Fiji with a program that would respond to fiscal pressures and identify opportunities to remove impediments to private sector development, commonly known as privatization (World Bank, 2005a, 37).

The WB has also begun to focus on the issue of job opportunities in the Pacific region; the greatest concern is the increasing population, thanks to improved health care, and the challenge of the lack of employment opportunities to support them. The WB is advocating an increased migration within and out of the region. This is to be a facilitated through an increased focus on secondary education, contending it would help with the 'up-skilling' of migrants (World Bank, 2006). This argument contends that there will be a

---

<sup>49</sup> There are also over a dozen United Nations agencies with activities in Fiji (World Bank, 2005a).

larger pool of young people from which industrialized countries will be able to draw. One should easily be able to see that this strategy will drain skilled labor from Fiji for the benefit of industrialized nations at a great cost to Fiji. This strategy could potentially work if Fiji was not currently ranked as a middle to low income country. The ADB assessed 'hardship' in Fiji in 2002 and discovered that 40% of the population lived below the poverty line, up from 25% in 1990/91 (ADB, 2007). Indeed, this is no time for Fiji to be training an emigrating labor pool. The argument of remittances is offered by the WB; however, this labor pool is vital for future development. In fact, Fiji lost more capital resources through the outflow of human capital than received through remittances; it is estimated that FJ\$45 million annually is lost, both directly and indirectly, through human capital loss (quoted in Mohanty, 2005, 6). Mohanty observes that the mass exodus of skilled migration has led to the country's drop on the UNDP Human Development Index rank from 66 in 2000 to 92 in 2005 (2005, 9). Voigt-Graf argues that with secondary schools in remote Fijian communities, particularly the outer islands, migration is inevitable:

While lack of resources and of skilled workers constitutes obstacles to improving educational standards in remote regions, consideration needs to be given to the fact that remote regions provide limited employment prospects for students successfully completing secondary school. Indeed, in small Fijian Islands such as in Lau or Lomaiviti, many school leavers are not satisfied with non-wage rural employment (Nair, 1980) and are therefore likely to join the outflow of skilled workers from the area. In this sense, the very existence of secondary schools in remote regions is likely to produce future migration, especially of young and educated people, leading to a further depletion of the regions' human resources (2003, 171).

The problem remains: with the migration out of the island regions, development is crippled. Fiji is an island nation with over 300 islands; so how does the MoE provide education for these remote regions in order to provide them with the means for not only their own development, but also for that of their community?

The **Asian Development Bank** (ADB) has loaned Fiji a total of US\$249.9 million since joining in 1970 (ADB, 2006). Currently the ADB is implementing a Country Strategy and Program Update (CSPU) which is a results-based framework which aspires to boost private sector-led growth through macroeconomic policies, infrastructure, and alternative livelihoods; as well to establish development institutions (ADB, 2006). The only current education strategy in place by ADB is the Technical Assistance for the Pacific Developing Member Countries' Leadership Enhancement and Advancement Program. This program is targeted at tertiary education focusing on sustainable economic growth, inclusive social development, governance, private sector development, and regional cooperation (ADB 2004).

**UNESCO's** EFA strategies in Fiji have three goals: the improvement of education facilities and resources in rural areas, increasing school participation rates and reducing dropout in basic education, and to improve the quality and relevance of education to all. One of the underlying goals is to increase community expectations of education which will provide a means of social and economic advancement and this will be achieved through a relevant curriculum which is responsive to these needs (UNESCO, 2000, Analytical Section, 9). This returns the responsibility to the Fijian Government and the Ministry of Education.

The **Fiji Government** faces numerous challenges with education:

Fijian under-achievement in all aspects of education, high dropout rates at various stages of schooling and the plight of rural Fijian schools have remained vexing problems for successive governments. If not addressed, these can continue to result in a greater exclusion, especially of rural Fijians, from access to quality education and also to the new technological and information revolution, thus further widening the educational gap between them and other groups in society (quoted in Lynch & Szorenyi, 2005, 4).

There have been numerous strategies geared towards addressing the issues of racial segregation, geographical disparities, and curriculum content. Brison contends that government has, in fact, been doing everything in their capacity to minimize the success of rural (Indigenous) Fijians. “Rural Fijians, however, had also been exposed to waves of government policy molded by an opposite philosophy stressing the importance of preserving Fijian communal tradition in order to prevent deracinated people from flooding urban areas that offered employment only to a few” (Brison, 2003, 338).

The rural disparities are the most difficult hurdle for the Ministry of Education (MoE) to overcome. Many remote areas do not have enough potential students to necessitate a school being provided in their region. As well, in 2000, 155 secondary school teachers left the profession, citing frustration with the system and low pay (Voigt-Graf, 2003, 167). This is particularly true for teachers posted in rural schools where more is expected of them, including community participation, repairing equipment, and supervising boarders. This is further increased with the poor state of resources in rural schools. They are also concerned with poor educational opportunities for their own children. This is added to the flight of Indian-Fijian teachers who leave for security reasons in post-coups. The government has offered incentive increments for ‘remote living’ teachers of F\$300 or F\$400 per annum; however, this has not been enough to maintain them. Nor were there enough of the volunteer Peace Corp teachers to fulfill the needs of the most remote communities (Voigt-Graf, 2003, 172). The shortage of teachers continues to plague the government today.

The MoE’s newest strategic plan, 2006-2008: *Educating the Child Holistically for a Peaceful and Prosperous Fiji* attempts to tackle some of these concerns. The 2006 budget allocated F\$301 million to education, 75% of which is allocated to salaries and

wages for teachers (Fiji Ministry of Education, 2006, 9). The plan acknowledges that 30% of all secondary schools, and 63% of primary schools, are located in remote regions, most of which suffer from low enrollment rates (14% for secondary schools) and provide a significant challenge for the MoE (Fiji Ministry of Education, 2006, 9). They are attempting to address this through Distance Education Centers and incentives for rural teachers; the document makes no mention of retaining skilled labor in remote areas. Nor are there any concrete strategies for addressing racial disparities or tension, other than in the title of the plan. There is no mention of curriculum strategies in order to meet the needs being emphasized by UNESCO.

### **The Community Based Approach to the elusive white-collar job**

The Fijian education system operates through a Community Based Approach (CBA) in an attempt to include all Fijians in the schooling process and ensure that traditions are maintained and encouraged. Essentially, CBA requires communities to construct the schools with their necessary facilities, and the State provides teachers who implement the State-wide determined curriculum. The community is further responsible for the ongoing maintenance and upkeep of the school. The majority of funds are raised by the communities through bazaars, levies, and sporting events. The CBA is heralded by UNESCO as one of the most successful education operations:

[o]ne of the most important aspects of education not centralized<sup>50</sup> was the ownership of schools, which was left with the communities and other controlling authorities. This has been acknowledged worldwide as a strength of the education system in Fiji. Often in the face of economic hardships and adversities,

---

<sup>50</sup> It is interesting that the education system is referred to as *not centralized* as opposed to *decentralized*.

communities devote significant human and physical resources to raise funds in the name of educating the young people of the nation (2000, 2).

The Pacific Island Report (2007) contends that with the CBA there are numerous challenges that face parents and also many hidden costs which burden Fijian families. But of even greater concern is that “while parents carry a large section of the burden of keeping the education system going, they appear to have little say in shaping education in Fiji” (Fiji Times Online). The reality is indeed that it is the Fijian government that determines curriculum and establishes all testing parameters, undoubtedly influenced by outside investors and with national (and international) goals at heart.

The other problem with the community based approach is that it leads to great regional disparities, in particular for Indigenous Fijians who are the predominately rural sector of the population. Bray warns that if such disparities become excessive it may potentially threaten broader national security. There are also concerns with the community financing of education:

In other contexts, self-help activities raise problems not because they are too vigorous but because they are too weak. The questions facing governments in such circumstances concerns the amount of help that should be given to communities that do not help themselves. If governments do not aid such communities, regional imbalances are likely to grow; but if governments provide too much assistance the aid may undermine self-help because the communities see the resources are forthcoming despite the communities’ inertia (Bray, 1999, 194).

With the case study to follow of the Evanson Learning Center, and the need for a secondary school in the Yasawa Islands, it will become apparent that indeed community financing is not a viable solution for education implementation.

The 2006-2008 Strategic Plan emphasizes the continued role of the community; a strategy that will offer little potential for success. Indeed, between the strategies and

detrimental outcomes it could be seen that the Community Based Approach to education in Fiji is, in fact, a form of education decentralization.

What is needed now is a window in to the education system in Fiji. With the literature discussed it is pertinent to now see the real influences and their impacts in Fiji - and for it's students and their communities. The following chapter will discuss the fieldwork conducted in the Yasawa Islands, all voices must be heard: students, teachers, parents, and the investors of their education – all of whom are members of the Yasawa Island communities.

## **Chapter 4 – Realities and Resorts;** *A window into Fiji's current education puzzle and the pursuit of the elusive white-collar job*

A case study was conducted at the Evanson Learning Center (ELC) on Turtle Island and in Nacula Village on Nacula Island, both located in the Yasawa Islands, Fiji. I was hired by Pearl Hotel Ltd. to conduct a social impact assessment in the region for an eco-resort they are currently constructing on Yaromo Island which is 1km off the south-west coast of Nacula Island. I chose ELC as my case study upon learning that, not only was it only one of two secondary schools in the Yasawa Islands, but it was privately owned and operated by Richard Evanson, the owner of Turtle Island Resort where the school is located.

The goal of the case study was to determine what impact the secondary school was having in the region; I wanted to know what difference it was having on not just the communities, but also upon individuals. In order to achieve a balanced qualitative outcome of the research it was imperative to acknowledge all stakeholders involved. Therefore it was necessary to conduct research at the school, with both staff and students, and within their communities.

The research and SIA were confirmed prior to my arrival by Ratu Anthony Christian Dovi Tavutavuvanua, a business partner of Pearl Hotel Ltd., he insisted the social impact assessment be conducted as part of the signing of the land lease for Yaromo Island, for which his Matagali owns the rights. He welcomed my research and offered to ensure the work could be carried out, as well to arrange for accommodation in the village (as opposed to a resort). Unfortunately he passed away the month before the research was

to be conducted. His older brother, Ratu Epeli, is the Tui Drola (High Chief) and was not as welcoming to the research, or to the social impact assessment. At the present time he is protesting the signing of the lease for Yaromo Island and it is currently under review by the Native Land Trust Board. This made research in the village extremely difficult. Two visits took place, although under the pretense of a “village visit” organized by the resort. Interviews conducted with people from Nacula Village were carried out at the Oarsman’s Bay Lodge where all of them were staff. One casual interview was conducted with the Tui Drola’s younger brother, Jopsapeki Ramagimagi, which took place in Nadi, on the mainland.

Throughout the research period field observations were taken. All of those involved were aware of the research and knew it both as part of my social impact assessment for Pearl Hotel Ltd. as well as that of a student researcher from Queen’s University<sup>51</sup>. It was imperative to ensure not to conduct covert research which would be unethical and go against the ethos of openness for evaluation (Hall & Hall, 2004, 107).

Interviews with the owner, the headmaster, and the teachers were conducted at the school during two visits in August 2006. The interviews were conducted one-on-one at the school in a private office, and were based upon semi-structured questions (see below, pages 75-85). This allowed for both openness and flexibility. This, combined with field observations, allowed me the opportunity to conduct analysis and interviewing concurrently which Hall & Hall argue is vital in order to provide the opportunity to introduce emergent topics throughout the interview when needed - referred to as progressive focusing of phenomenological research (2004, 118).

---

<sup>51</sup> Most were much more interested in my school work, since it was not the first social impact assessment conducted in the village.

Structured surveys were administered to all the students during the first visit to the school and all were anonymous. This was the most crucial aspect of the research in that it allowed me to better understand the perceptions and goals of the students – the future generation of the region. Children are increasingly becoming recognized as social actors (Creswell, 2007; Hall & Hall, 2004).

During the research period for the month of August 2006 I stayed at the Oarsman's Bay Lodge on Nacula Island which is owned and operated by the chiefly clan of Nacula Village. This provided an ethnographic study of the employees and a glimpse of the tourist industry from both the employee and tourist perspectives. Two visits to Nacula Village were also carried out where field observations were made. At the same time casual discussions with local villagers took place.

Based on Creswell's definition of the case study, my research could be seen as critical ethnography since "this approach is in response to current society, in which systems of power, prestige, privilege, and authority serve to marginalize individuals who are from different classes, races, and genders" (2007, 70). The potential students of the Yasawa Islands have indeed been marginalized, in part by their geographical remoteness, but also by the community based approach to education being pursued by the Fijian government.

### **Nacula Island and its communities**

The community, in which the majority of my empirical investigation took place, was Nacula Village, the largest of four villages on Nacula Island. Nacula Village provides

an empirical window for other communities in the Yasawa's, but also for many communities in remote regions throughout Fiji.

The opening of the Yasawa Islands to tourism in 1987 has had massive impacts, not only on land use but also upon local communities and their cultures<sup>52</sup>. This is the case not only since it is the chiefly Matagalas<sup>53</sup> that have the right to all the beaches, they are the ones which have profited the greatest from the increase in tourism.

Nacula Village has not been shielded from the tourism boom; they opened their own backpackers resort in September 2002. The resort is located on Nalova Bay, approximately 1km south of Nacula Village. This community has undergone massive changes since Oarsman's Bay Lodge opened. The resort now employs 44 employees, nearly all of whom are from Nacula Village with a few coming from the surrounding villages, all of whom have experienced an increase in their income six or seven fold<sup>54</sup>.

There have been many outcomes to this change in their community. The first benefit has been increased income; these funds have allowed many to improve their living conditions, and also they have enabled many to send their children to secondary school on the mainland. However, there have been several culturally destructive outcomes of, not only the increased income to the community, but the increased interaction and influence

---

<sup>52</sup> There was some tourism prior to this with the Turtle Island Resort and the Blue Lagoon Cruises, although neither of these ever meant the direct impact of tourists in Nacula Village, or any other villages in the surrounding islands.

<sup>53</sup> Matagalas are the various clans in each village. Chiefs, known as Ratus, are the eldest male from the chiefly Matagali.

<sup>54</sup> Most employees earn between FJ\$5,000 – FJ\$6,000 annually (Fairley, Presentation, Monash University, 2005). The exchange rate for the Fijian dollar was FJ\$1 = 0.6637Can\$ (as of August 8, 2007) (Fiji Currency Online, 2007).

of tourists<sup>55</sup>. Ratu Anthony Christian Dovi Tavutavuvanua, a younger brother of the Tui Drola, explains how his village and their entire community have changed:

*There were strong social bonds within our community, with a great strength of respect and morality underpinning relationships...I would like to see the introduction of programs which will help the transition of my community and my Village to the inevitability of tourism, and to maximize the positives for them...On balance, we have seen many positives from tourism, and there are few who would want to go back to what we were doing. Our challenge is to rein in the excess that tourism has facilitated, and to grow with tourism at our own pace, putting in place back stops to prevent the disadvantages from overwhelming the benefits...I don't want our future generations to point the finger at us, believing us to have been negligent and being "asleep during our watch", in areas of environmental responsibility, social development and cultural development and retention<sup>56</sup>(2005).*

Discussions with others from the village also expressed such concerns<sup>57</sup>. While staying at the Oarsman's Bay Lodge the staff consumed Kava<sup>58</sup> every night, into the early hours of the morning; they did not view this as a problem. Many also expressed interest for there to be a grocery store located in the village, indicating they were not fearful about the increased consumption of processed food; in fact, they welcomed it. One member of the village believed that their village was behind, compared to westerners; the reason for this was the time it has taken (and will continue to take) to inform the Chief and educate him about the changes, and to await his decisions on these matters. Everyone spoken to expressed the same underlying message: all decisions had to be made through the chief,

---

<sup>55</sup> The majority of Fiji tourists come from New Zealand and Australia primarily; this is followed by Americans and British ([http://www.spc.int/prism/country/fj/stats/Tourism/Visitor\\_Arrivals-resid.htm](http://www.spc.int/prism/country/fj/stats/Tourism/Visitor_Arrivals-resid.htm)).

<sup>56</sup> For the full story of his village see Appendix 1.

<sup>57</sup> Although the Tui Drola did not welcome the research the people of the village were more than eager to speak about their needs and those of their community. This was indicative of a desperately desired change within these communities, they respected their roles and that of the Chief (to an extent) but it was apparent that they realized the only way to bring about change was to have their voices heard, even if it meant going against the Chief.

<sup>58</sup> Kava (Yaqona) is used throughout the Pacific Island Nations for religious, medicinal, political, cultural, and social purposes, known to increase amiability and relaxation. Sun dried Kava root is pounded and mixed with cold water, commonly described as looking and tasting like dirty water by non-Fijians.

he must be informed, and if not he becomes suspicious and will not allow the changes. Indeed, Fijian Chiefs hold greater social authority than elected leaders. Hassal argues that Fijian Chiefs, more than 40% of whom reside in their rural villages, “control messages in and out of that social world” (2005, 8).

It was repeatedly emphasized by all members of the village that the Chief views education as the highest of importance for his people. This notion was repeated by a sibling of the Chief, and the idea of using tourism money to make this a reality was stressed. However, they did not believe that this education should be for the sole purpose of training new tourism workers; in fact, they considered that the opposite should be occurring, the education should offer this and coming generations for careers other than those within the tourism industry. The difficulty with this path is that the option is not always present. For example, one member of the Matagali whose child had completed university and upon graduation was ordered by the Chief to return to Nacula Island to work at Oarsman’s Bay Lodge. In Fijian culture the Tui Drola has the final word and this can not be questioned, even by another member of the Chiefly Matagali.

This was indeed a trend at Oarsman’s Bay Lodge, many of the staff had completed university or trade school; yet they were ordered to return to Nacula Island to work at Oarsman’s Bay Lodge, inevitably for jobs that fell far below their qualifications and training. There were even some employees, whose families originated from Nacula Village, yet they themselves had never lived there, and upon completion of secondary school, University, or trade school, they were ordered to work at Oarsman’s Bay Lodge<sup>59</sup>.

---

<sup>59</sup> All those who are ordered back to work at Oarsman’s Bay Lodge are all part of the chiefly Matagali, which also leads to tension in the village since it is those of the chiefly Matagali who are earning the incomes and creating income (and therefore social) disparities within the village. This tension is further

Many of the staff expressed their interest to return/emigrate to the mainland, they believe the hours of work would be far fewer<sup>60</sup> and they could live a more modern lifestyle, as well having the increased freedom of living away from the Chief and the obligations to the Matagali and their community. Indeed, the changing perspectives of many rural Fijians is to relocate from the villages to urban centers in the hopes of evading their kinship obligations with their new found incomes; as well their individualistic mindset is infiltrating their traditional, communal values (Brison, 2003).

There is one primary school on Nacula Island, located in Nacula Village, which children from all four villages attend<sup>61</sup>. The Ratu Meli Primary School offers primary grades one through six. The school is heavily subsidized by Oarsman's Bay Lodge, but also through donations from such organizations as the Rotary Clubs of Australia and New Zealand. One member of the community explained that prior to Oarsman's Bay Lodge the primary school was falling apart. Now, with the help of tourist donations (as well as the aforementioned sources of funding) they have repaired the dormitories, there is a library and there is sports equipment. A boat was also donated by the Rotary Club for the use of the school<sup>62</sup>. There is, however, no secondary school on Nacula Island, or on any of the surrounding islands. This means that parents must send their students to the mainland where their children will either reside with extended family or in the school boarding facilities. This has caused much grief for the community because the costs are very high

---

exacerbated by the fact that the introduction of urban dwellers into the rural village is often very difficult for all people involved (Brison, 2003).

<sup>60</sup> Employees of the Oarsman's Bay Lodge work seven days a week, often more than twelve hours a day. They work seven weeks on, one week off. This was the same for workers from the neighboring resorts.

<sup>61</sup> Those from other villages remain in the dormitories since the walk would be too far on a daily basis. They return home during school holidays.

<sup>62</sup> This boat was never seen during the three weeks the research was conducted.

to parents<sup>63</sup>. But of greater concern are the participation rates, which are as low as 20% (Ratu Tavutavuvanua, 2005). In fact, there are fewer rural children attending secondary school than those in the urban area; 2% of the rural children did not attend at all<sup>64</sup> [Fiji Ministry of Education, 2000] (Prosser, 2006, 230). The parents explained that both the distance and separation are very difficult for children. It is also argued that the transition from rural to urban can be very overwhelming for many Fijians. This was the case for students in Kadavu, Fiji; they experienced disorientation, grief, anxiety, and often alienation (Prosser, 2006, 232). It is clear that Nacula Village, along with the rest of Fiji, is in a period of great transition.

### **The Evanson Learning Center and Turtle Island Resort**

Richard Evanson is the owner of Nanuya Levu Island in the Yasawa Island chain. The island houses the Turtle Island Resort, the Evanson Learning Center, and Turtle Airways; it is also well known as the setting for both of the 'Blue Lagoon' movies. The American Philanthropist purchased the island in 1972, returning it to its natural state<sup>65</sup>, and opening the resort in 1980; he has remained there ever since.

The Turtle Island Resort is one of the most exclusive, luxurious resorts in the world. At any one time the maximum guest count is fourteen; there are, however, over 100 staff on the island. One of the first resorts of its kind in the Yasawa Islands it is now internationally recognized not only for its luxury but for its environmental practices and social commitment to the surrounding communities. Turtle Island Resort offers an annual

---

<sup>63</sup> One parent explained it cost him FJ\$120 per semester to send his daughter to school on the mainland.

<sup>64</sup> This 2% refers to children who never once attended secondary school, many children in rural areas of Fiji would periodically attend secondary school depending on funds available by the family; however, attendance and completion rates remain exceptionally low.

<sup>65</sup> When he purchased the island it was completely barren and had been desecrated by goats.

eye clinic to the surrounding 3500 residents, which has performed over 1000 eye cataract operations at no cost. Richard Evanson has also provided several low/no interest loans to surrounding communities to open their own resorts<sup>66</sup>, and provides assistance with the management and operations<sup>67</sup>. He also constructed the Evanson Learning Center in 2002, on his island, a secondary school for the surrounding communities.

Richard recognized that the future enlightened leadership of our community in the globalised world in which we live requires greater educational opportunity and achievement. There was a need to establish our own Secondary School, but the challenge was to do it sustainably. This involved a very significant commitment from Turtle Island. We wanted to run the School on the basis of no fees for children, and no costs for the books. The only charge that the parents were required to meet was uniforms (Fairley, Presentation, New Zealand, 2004).

Clearly Richard Evanson, having lived in the region for 35 years, sees himself as a member of the community. Not only has he contributed to the surrounding communities, but he too has received something in return and has felt the need to better his community. So when the Fijian Ministry of Education promotes the Community Based Approach to education is this what they intended? Is this proper that this one man, who is not Fijian, nor was he raised in Fiji, mandates the nature of education for a community that has few other options? Is this a practice worthy of encouragement?

The school began as one open classroom in the back of a warehouse with seven students. By 2003 a second warehouse was converted to the main school, twenty students were enrolled for forms three and four, and there were two teachers employed.

---

<sup>66</sup> This includes the Oarsmans's Bay Lodge which opened in 2001 with a loan of over FJ\$700,000 which was paid off in September 2006.

<sup>67</sup> Many discussions with community members and staff at several resorts alluded to the fact that Richard Evanson is indeed profiting off these loans and controls most decisions of these resorts.



**Picture 4.1 Evanson Learning Center, Turtle Island, Fiji. August 2006. (Source: Skett, 2006)**

All construction costs were covered, as well as were the annual costs of boarding for an average of sixty students. The average annual cost of operating a secondary school in Fiji is F\$70,000 (Prosser, 2006, 231). Compared to the annual operation costs of ELC which are FJ\$250,000<sup>68</sup>; FJ\$70,000 is donated by Geelong Grammar School (Australia) and approximately FJ\$90,000 is contributed by guests of the resort. The Evanson Learning Center also relies on tourist donations to cover the operating costs of the school, including the boarding facilities for the students. Tourist donations are one aspect of sustainability for the Evanson Learning Center, but it is the long-term sustainability that is of greater importance, as noted, “our educational program is to try and maximize the number of young people that pass through our school, who then go on to university or some higher education, and then come back to take a role within one of the villages within our community, and give back the benefit of the education that we have provided to them” (Fairley, Presentation, New Zealand, 2004).

---

<sup>68</sup> It is probable that the increased use of computers and newer science equipment accounts for some of this cost. As well, the Evanson Learning Center supplies all scholastic material (which other secondary schools do not) and the costs for vocational training as well.

Indeed, this notion of educated students returning to the community is of greatest concern, and ties directly in to the education curriculum/type of education and training they receive. It also leads to the question of job opportunities for graduates in the region. This is of particular concern in reference to the white-collar education and the Information Technology training (ITT) that is being so heavily pursued, by not only the Fijian Government, but by the Evanson Learning Center.

Repeatedly, it was stressed how fortunate the students were to have access to so many computers, more so than other schools on the mainland. The greater problem with this, as with the elusive white-collar job, is that it draws students further away from their villages and into urban centers, predominately Suva. Lynch & Szorenyi maintain that ITT in Fiji must also include the teaching of the technology itself so that the skills may remain in the community, and to find ways to not only retain the trained individuals but for their new skills to further the development of their communities. “Becoming an IT professional, or being computer literate, should not be a pathway out of ones community, but should include more involvement in that community and should assist that community to assess and access new technologies” (2005, 2).

Of greatest concern is that educated Fijians are emigrating at rapid rates; indeed since 2000, the outflow rate totaled nearly 20,000 skilled workers (Lynch & Szorenyi, 2005, 4). The fact that 90% of these skilled workers emigrating are Indian Fijians<sup>69</sup> means that there is a massive opportunity for educated Indigenous Fijians to fill these positions, nearly all of which are in the urban centers (Lynch & Szorenyi, 2005, 4; Narayan & Smyth, 2005, 247). So although there are increasing employment

---

<sup>69</sup> Since Fiji's Independence in 1970 there are estimates that up to 150,000 Fijians have emigrated. Between 1978 and 1986, 84% were Indian Fijians; this figure increased to 89% between 1987 and 1996 (Narayan & Smyth, 2005, 247).

opportunities for graduates of ELC, it is not likely they will remain in the Yasawa Islands, based on both availability and expressed desires previously discussed.

Richard Evanson<sup>70</sup> is the *Gatekeeper* to the case study in this situation<sup>71</sup>. The students and staff may fear reprisal from Richard Evanson for their involvement with my research: “The (reasonable) cynicism of ordinary people in impoverished areas towards those claiming to help them can be reflected in barriers thrown up by their leaders. This can entirely block a piece of research if they are unsympathetic to it” (Laws, Harper and Marcus, 2003, 162). The barriers of access were overcome through common/mutual partnerships<sup>72</sup>, this created an opportunity for access to be allowed and through these connections the intentions of the research were made known and the barriers were lowered.

The physical issue of access also became a concern, transportation to Nanuya Levu proved to be challenging. Although the islands are not far apart, approximately 15kms, it is difficult to secure a boat. The small motor boats in the area are all owned and operated by one of the local chiefs, Jopsapeki Ramagimagi, and are used by the

---

<sup>70</sup> A casual interview was also conducted with Richard Evanson; he was welcoming to the research, but unable to sit down for a formal interview. The research was initially approved by the then Director of Turtle Island, Andrew Fairley, who had not relayed the research or visit to Richard Evanson. This initially proved to be a challenge when it was realized that the two were not in communication, and it was rumored that Andrew Fairley would no longer be working for Turtle Island. I became aware of the “falling out” once I arrived at the Oarsman’s Bay Lodge on Nacula Island and the staff and other locals alluded to the rumours. However, through my communication with Andrew Fairley he never gave me reason to suspect there was a problem between the two and in fact attempted to put me in contact with Richard Evanson via email (which was unsuccessful). Fortunately, the staff at the Oarsman’s Bay Lodge was keen for the research to continue and made the necessary arrangements with Richard Evanson to pursue the research. Through the radio they were able to inform Richard Evanson of the research and arrange a time to visit. Upon my second visit to ELC it was confirmed that Andrew Fairley had resigned from his position as the Director of Turtle Island Resort.

<sup>71</sup> A term used in third world development research in which they represent those who may create ‘barriers’ to conducting your research (Creswell, 2007; Laws, Harper and Marcus, 2003).

<sup>72</sup> My initial research being approved by Andrew Fairley was secured through Wayne Jenvey, who is Dean Swaagman’s business partner, and has worked with Andrew Fairley in Australia for several years. Approval by Richard Evanson was achieved through Dean Swaagman, the business partner of Wayne Jenvey who has been the manager of both Oarsman’s Bay Lodge and Turtle Island Resort, and remains in close contact with all involved.

surrounding resorts to transport guests for day trips, as well as to and from the Yasawa Flyer<sup>73</sup>. Securing a private boat to transport an individual from one island to another is difficult and costly (up to FJ\$50) and is never guaranteed<sup>74</sup>.

While taking me to the school Richard Evanson spoke with me about his reasons for opening the school and explained that he had realized several years ago that no secondary school was accessible for the surrounding communities<sup>75</sup>. I suspect he was also concerned for many of the children of his staff. Based on the curriculum I also suspect he was interested in training a new staff.

One of the first things that he emphasized was that all classes were taught in English, he felt this was one of the most important learning components for students. The second was the use of the bible and the importance of religion. He also emphasized the need for the curriculum to include hands-on training. This meant that the students were learning new skills on the resort. I was curious about this when he had first shown me the mechanics and woodworking sheds and many of the people working there looked very young. As it happens they were indeed students. When asked why the Evanson Learning Center did not offer form seven he replied, “*Why? Do you think it should?*” A response I was not expecting. I reminded him that form seven is a requirement for a secondary

---

<sup>73</sup> This luxury, 267 passenger, Catamaran transports tourists and locals from the mainland, Viti Levu, throughout the Yasawa Islands. The trip from the mainland, departing from Denarau, travels to Nanuya Lailai<sup>73</sup> as its furthest point, every day of the year. This trip costs FJ\$100 each direction and takes up to four hours from Denarau to Nanuya Lailai.

<sup>74</sup> The staff of Oarsman’s Bay Lodge and Turtle Island Resort arranged transportation. The journey involved some deception. Since the Yasawa Flyer was not an option for return back to the Oarsman’s Bay Lodge the staff at the Turtle Island Resort, as per Richard Evanson’s instructions, provided a ride back on one of their boats. This difficulty for transportation would also be true for all students, and their parents, of ELC.

<sup>75</sup> Once at the Turtle Island Resort Richard Evanson and his staff were very welcoming to me and my research. Mr. Evanson drove me to the school in his golf cart during which he showed me around the island; it is easy to see all the hard work he has put in to it. All fruit and vegetables are grown on the island, organically; there is also livestock on the island. There were several large work sheds where he explained one was for wood working, another for mechanics, as well as several others.

student to enter university. His response was that he did not feel it necessary at the present time, but that perhaps they would offer that at a later date.

### **The Student Perspective – “*I would like to have a White Collar job*”**

It was imperative to the research that the students have their voices heard. They are the generation for which the research concerns itself. Laws, Harper and Marcus explain the vital role of children in the research process:

Rejecting traditional approaches to children which essentially see them as defective adults, the new philosophy suggests that research should see children as ‘social actors’ in themselves. We should be interested in children’s points of view for their own sake, not just to measure them against adults’ perceptions. Children are placed at the center of the process of investigation, and research should seek to take a lead from the children’s own agenda (2003, 251).

Surveys were conducted with the students of the Evanson Learning Center. The goal of the survey was simply to determine how the children felt about their education and what their future goals were. Hall & Hall assert that it is essential for surveys to cover both processes and outcomes of social programs; as well, it is important to determine how people have changed as a result of their involvement with the program and how it works - but even more so to determine how they feel about it (2003, 112). This was indeed the goal of the survey; to not only determine the impact of ELC for them, their family, and their community – but to determine if it was meeting their needs and aspirations.

Although there were 56 students enrolled at the time, only forty were on site that day to answer the survey<sup>76</sup>. The surveys were intended to be very simple and remained

---

<sup>76</sup> Surveys were the most logical research method since the students were too busy to sit for interviews, as well as the research did not allow the time to individually interview 50+ students. There is also the concern that interviews with children can seem like a test in their minds. Laws, Harper and Marcus argue that a self-completion questionnaire is an excellent research method for children who are reasonably comfortable with

anonymous. The students were asked six questions, four of which had multiple choice options (the fourth option being to answer in their own words). The other two were open-ended questions.

Almost all of the students answered that they plan to attend university/college upon their completion of form six. Although previously stated that form seven is required for University entrance, the University of the South Pacific (USP) does offer an option for a Preliminary Level (Form Six) as well as a Foundation Level (Form Seven). However, where students would find the funds to attend USP is unknown. Even if students were able to secure the funding to complete the foundation level and continue on to their tertiary studies there is an even greater challenge they will face. Prosser talks of the challenges that rural Fijian students encounter when they go to the urban centers for further education:

For those who attend a tertiary institution the attrition rate is high, predominately due to culture shock, that is, leaving a traditional rural environment and going to a westernized urban environment. Currently only 25 percent successfully complete their studies due to these stressors. Additionally, many students do not complete their tertiary studies as they are seen as taking too long, and many do not want to be away from their families (2006, 232).

To the second question of what they thought they would be doing if they were not attending ELC, again, nearly all students said they would be attending school on the mainland. The question of who would pay for this again comes into issue. Parents on Nacula Island who are currently sending their children to secondary school on the mainland are paying up to FJ\$120 per semester, per child. This includes the transportation

---

reading and writing, it grants them confidentiality (2003, 254). Since the students of the Evanson Learning Center read and write in English it was the most appropriate research method. Many students were elsewhere on the island participating in the hands-on training. This would include the garden, mechanics, and woodworking sheds.

to and from the mainland, the school fees<sup>77</sup>, uniforms, examination fees; and on top of this the boarding fees or remittances to the families who house their children throughout the semester<sup>78</sup>.

When asked what sort of job the students would like to have the majority listed professional or ‘white-collar’ jobs. Many listed jobs in the medical profession such as doctor, dentist, and nurse. Pilot was a common answer, as were teacher and mechanic. One student simply answered “*I would like to have a White Collar job*” (ELC Student, 2006). More specifically one answered Health Inspector and another Environmentalist. These last two, as with Mechanic, may be a reflection of the on-site training that they have received on the resort.

The careers that these students desire are, in fact, the ones which are fleeing the country. Of the average 571 highly skilled workers to emigrate from Fiji annually 29% are teachers, 20% are comprised of architects, engineers, and related technicians; 16% are accountants; and another 13% are doctors and medical professionals<sup>79</sup> (Narayan & Smyth, 2005, 248). Indeed, this outflow of educated and trained Fijians led to the Fijian workforce, of around 120,000, to be seriously deficient of educators, health care professionals, builders, engineers, and ITT professionals (Lynch & Szorenyi, 2005, 4). Since the majority of emigration is Indian Fijian it stands to reason that the opportunity for Indigenous Fijians is indeed increasing rapidly. This, however, leads to a further

---

<sup>77</sup> School fees are levied based on the school’s direct costs and determined by those running the daily operations of the school (Prosser, 2006, 231).

<sup>78</sup> Many families in Nacula Village/Island have extended families that live in the town of Lautoka so many children remain with them and attend secondary school there.

<sup>79</sup> Up until the coups in 1987 over two thirds of Fijian emigrants went to North America (in the 1970s 50% went to Canada). Since the coups the flow of Fijian emigration has shifted to Australasia, mainly due to geographical proximity, perceived employment opportunities, family migration, and chain migration. In 1997, one third of Fijian emigration was to North America (10% to Canada), and more than 50% to Australia and New Zealand (Narayan & Smyth, 2005, 248).

deficiency in the rural areas and will have crippling long-term repercussions. Beyond the alarming concerns this poses for their immediate communities, it also means a loss of FJ\$44.5 million annually due to expenditure on education and training of emigrants (Narayan & Smyth, 2005, 248).

The fourth question of how attending school has affected their family varied in answers, although only between two of the four potential answers. Twenty five students out of forty believed that their days were longer, their responsibilities had doubled now that they were attending ELC. Eleven of the students believed that their attendance at ELC meant more work for their parents. This would likely be indicative of children who come from families who do not come from a chiefly Matagali and their parents were likely laborers and did not generate income through the immediate or secondary tourism economy.

The fifth question asked how their attendance at the Evanson Learning Center has changed their village. This question was of particular interest since it looked at the greater question of how the increased access to secondary education was impacting their communities. The students differed the most with their answers to this question. Seven students believed that it has led to more traditional practices. However, it is important to acknowledge that it was never stated what was meant by traditional practices. The fact that sixteen of the students, making a majority with this answer, found that there were fewer traditional practices. This suggests that the students did have an understanding of the ideas behind traditional practices. Fifteen of the students, making it exceptionally close to the majority, judged that everyone talks less. This is obvious in that the students are far away from their villages and their families. This option was presented because in

Hoar's research, conducted in 2000, in a rural Fijian community many respondents believed this to be one of the most detrimental outcomes of education<sup>80</sup> (2004).

Two students did offer some comments to this question. "*It help[s] to encourage people in my village that education is the first priority*" (ELC Student, 2006). Another one noted "*Share my experiences in high school with the primary school students who want to come here*" (ELC Student, 2006). I would have been curious to know if the student would have supported their interest or deterred it.

The sixth question offered the most interesting insight; however, less than ten of the students opted to answer it. The question simply asked if there was anything else the students wanted to mention (which had not been asked) about their school, family, or village. All of those that did not offer a comment did answer the question with a simple no. Many of the answers addressed the notion of helping their families and their villages; in particular their obligations to them. "*I attended school so that I can have a good job in the future and help my family*" (ELC Student, 2006). Others expressed an obligation to the village, "*I have to work hard, because in future I have managed to look after my family and especially the problems that my village may face*" (ELC Student, 2006). Again, I would have liked to discuss with the student what problems they felt their village may encounter. "*I have to work hard, and help my parents for their support and also to help my village for the developing*" (ELC Student, 2006). One student responded to the question with another excellent one, "*When you have a job, e.g. teacher, HOW can you develop your village?*" (ELC Student, 2006). This question is one that I would have loved

---

<sup>80</sup> Her research looked at the relationship between the school (primary) and its community in Totoka Island, Fiji. Her study focused on (1) the factors that inhibit or motivate a community to support the local school, (2) how various interests of parents, educators, community members and international agencies are communicated and negotiated.

to discuss with the students; it is likely that they are taught that the education they are receiving is to benefit them and their community, “*School is the most important thing in life you must go through. In order to become successful in life*” (ELC Student, 2006). Perhaps they are not being shown how to use their newly acquired tool, to see the larger picture and the potential and the powers they possess. This is another example of the systematic underdevelopment that is occurring with their education. However, it is also indicative that these students wish to return, and remain, in their communities once they have completed their training and tertiary education or perhaps it reflects the obligation and pressure they feel to their families and their villages, as seen with the staff from Oarsman’s Bay Lodge.

The greater concern with this is that employees of Oarsman’s Bay Lodge, which is indicative of the current employment opportunities in the region, all wish to return to the mainland and escape the village life, and all the commitments and sacrifices that come with it. This will undoubtedly be the students of ELC in the next five to ten years. The question remains: how do they retain the skilled population in order for their community to prosper? Is ELC able to retain their graduates? Why is the responsibility solely on them?

### **The Headmaster and his difficult tasks ahead**

Alfereti Nasokia became the headmaster of the Evanson Learning Center at the beginning of the 2006 school year. The previous headmaster, as well as all the teachers (except one), were let go at the end of the previous school year. This is likely due to the dismal passing rates of that year; only three students completed the form six exams. I was

not able to follow this up with Richard Evanson; however, Alfereti Nasokia offered the following:

*Well, we had one good pass and she's in form seven in Lautoka. But ah, it was not really a satisfactory result. But I cannot comment on that because I was not here last year. Our main goal is to improve last year's performance (2006).*

It is unclear whether the lack of passing rates was solely to blame on the teachers or if there were other factors involved; unfortunately no one was willing to comment any further on this matter. Alfereti Nasokia did explain this to be the reason they did not offer form seven, lack of qualifying students. Lynch & Szorenyi argue that the current education system in Fiji is setting Indigenous Fijians up for failure, in particular with their success for entering and completing tertiary education, citing the dominance of English in the curriculum which is particularly challenging for them when exposure outside the classroom can be very variable (2005, 6).

What needs to be understood is how this education is impacting the students, are they benefiting? Even without the successful passing rates of last year Alfereti Nasokia explains the change in his student's attitudes. He believes that by attending the Evanson Learning Center they are developing a work ethic, one which is not overtly present in the Indigenous Fijian culture.

*We sort of change their mindset, so that they view work as something beneficial to them....They learn to like working, working hard. That is something that is very prevalent in the village communities. The Fijian way of life is very easy going, whatever can be done today, can always be left till tomorrow (Nasokia, 2006).*

One teacher explains that she is trying to teach the girls to cease their gossiping, a common village practice. She believes by instilling this with the girls at the school this can be transferred when they go back to visit their villages. *"In the village the girls may*

*be used to sitting in groups together, but what I'm trying too teach them here is not to gossip but if you see it with your own eyes then yes, you can say it really happened... When they go [in to their communities] I always encourage them to act like they're educated, so I have not been with them when they are in their village, so I'm not really sure" (Vucago, 2006).*

What this does not address is how this is going to benefit the students. Admittedly, the social lessons they are learning may indeed help to strengthen village communities, to create a cohesion which may have long-term benefits of retaining graduate students. Brison argues, however, that the racial segregation over the last century in Fiji has "led to identities based on a romanticized version of Fijian tradition centered around 'loving each other', ties to land and chiefly hierarchy" (2003, 346). Indeed, the Fijian village is changing dramatically with increased globalization and, in the Yasawa Islands especially, tourism. Fijians are at a cross-roads of retaining their village culture and becoming global citizens. They are educated in western curricula and encouraged to believe the white-collar job is the key to their community's success, all the while retaining their cultural traditions and remaining in the village.

When asked how the community perceived the Evanson Learning Center and the impact it is having on their community Alfereti Nasokia relayed their strong distrust, of not only the Evanson Learning Center, but also for Richard Evanson:

*[t]hey view the ELC with suspicion....The owner is trying to win them over for his own benefit or something like that. We try and increase our community outreach program to explain to them that the school has nothing to do with the resort. It is purely out of his own good heart to try to help the people. He has nothing to gain from this, he wants the people to benefit from the development that this education is having on the Yasawas (2006).*

This was also the impression that came across with casual discussions with the people of Nacula Village. They did not express a direct distrust of Richard Evanson but they did express a strong distrust of the intentions of the Evanson Learning Center. They felt that students were simply being exploited for free labor on the resort. This, however, is not an uncommon practice for secondary schools in Fiji, particularly in more remote regions. Prosser's research, conducted at the Kai Viti High School (KVHS), on the island of Kadavu, revealed similar practices:

The school has an agricultural farm one hour's walk up a hill from the compound. All students work on the farm Wednesday afternoons and Saturday mornings. This schedule changes at planting and harvesting time when more labor is needed....Monday to Saturday students are up at 4:45am, completing duties such as cutting grass, food preparation, weeding and cleaning. Classes begin at 7am and finish at 3pm. Between 3-6pm, students wash their clothes, help prepare meals and study. Dinner is at 6pm and students are then required back in the classrooms at 7:30pm where they continue to study until 9pm (2006, 231).

Andrew Fairley spoke about this suspicion at a presentation:

This type of commitment to community development is not something that has thus far been wide spread in Fiji. Accordingly, when confronted with being provided with something that appears to be for no cost, there have been a number of motives attributed to us that have not been generous. To their great credit, many of those who initially had those concerns have now identified the fact that strong community is as important to us, in the operation of our Resort, as it is to the communities themselves – there is clearly a commonality of interest in us having a strong and healthy community (Presentation, New Zealand, 2004).

This, again, returns to the question of whether Richard Evanson is seen as a member of the community. If he is not, then how is ELC reflective of the success of the Community Based Approach to education in Fiji? The MoE may recognize the school, but if the community does not, is it still a success?

Many of them also expressed concern that students became ill while attending ELC. At the time of my visit three students from Nacula Village had returned home from

ELC due to illness, two girls and one boy. It had not yet been determined if and when the girls would return to ELC, the boy, however, had no intention of returning and his father was in support of this decision<sup>81</sup>. At the time of my research the boy was pointed out; he was doing manual labor at the Oarsman's Bay Lodge. There is no success story here. This disregard for the child's education is again reflective of the perceived Fijian attitude towards education. Brison encountered this attitude with her own research on the modernity of rural Fiji. While interviewing headmasters of secondary schools this perception of indigenous/rural indifference was prominent. Many attributed the lack of motivation to the fact that Indigenous Fijians could always fall back on living off the land (2003, 338). Although this is in reference to the land for the purpose of agriculture (be it for subsistence or to rent to Indian Fijians) it holds true in the present day as well for any child of a chiefly Matagali in Fiji. In the Yasawa Islands the chiefly Matagalas own the beaches, which in turn means they own the resorts. There will always be a job made available for them and they will always have a share of the profits. Although it was reiterated repeatedly that the Chief, along with the villagers, believed education to be the top priority, this is not reflective in their practices.

White encountered the same attitudes while conducting research in Fiji; however, it was the teachers that believed that parents lack of commitment to education was the impediment to Fijian academic achievement. White further acknowledges the western bias that is allowing the blame to persist: "That Fijians parents are not knowledgeable about the appropriate role they should play in their children's education is a point

---

<sup>81</sup> When asked what sort of illness the children were suffering from it was simply referred to as 'tummy problems'. It should also be noted that during my research many residents of Nacula Village had 'tummy problems' on occasion which may be attributed to water sources and not exclusive to ELC, but occurring throughout the region. This was also a common occurrence at KVHS due to a polluted water supply system (Prosser, 2006, 231).

reiterated by Fijian and non-Fijian educators, government administrators, and other society leaders. The parameters of parental involvement and measures employed to determine relative degrees of value that parents place on education are narrowly drawn and based on criteria associated with Western, particularly U.S., modes of assessment” (2001, 319).

Although the boy not returning to ELC is an isolated incident (that I was made aware of) the greater evidence is the number of over-qualified workers being forced to return, or emigrate, to Nacula Village to work at Oarsman’s Bay Lodge. Indeed, if education was of value their skills would be used to benefit the community, not to merely profit the Chiefly Matagali through working at the Oarsman’s Bay Lodge.

Many people from Nacula Island simply felt that the students were not being permitted a sufficient amount of time to work on their homework, spending too much time working in and around the resort, and therefore neglecting their studies with their success rates plummeting. The issue of the distance from their families was also brought up by several people, explaining that the students did not have their parents to help them with their homework in the evening. This, however, does not seem that different from several other situations for secondary students in Fiji, many of who remain in boarding facilities while attending school. The only exception, in the case of students from Nacula Village/Island, is that if they were to attend secondary school on the mainland many would remain with family in Lautoka.

## The Curriculum

What needs to be evaluated is the curriculum that is being offered at the Evanson Learning Center, is it meeting the needs of the students and the greater community?

Lynch & Szorenyi argue that the secondary curriculum in Fiji is outdated and that at the tertiary level it is much more geared to meet the needs of western students and does not account for Fijians background experience and knowledge (2005, 14).

They do offer the Ministry of Education's required curriculum; however, they also offer direct training for future employment (Nasokia, 2006). This includes accounting, economics, and vocational training. Students spend three hours on Saturdays and three hours on Sundays working at the Turtle Island Resort. From their first year at ELC they begin this training and by then end of form six they will have had experience in every department. This includes the kitchen, the bar, house cleaning, the garden, etc. This is clearly the work that many of the parents expressed concern and outrage towards.

However, the Headmaster explains the need to incorporate tourism training at the school.

*“So one of the things we are concentrating on is the aspects of tourism and a very rural community. This used to be a very rural community ten years ago, suddenly there's a flood of tourism”* (Nasokia, 2006). This influx of tourists in the region comes from the Fijian government closing the Yasawa Islands to land based tourism until 1987. Up until that point there was boat-based tourism permitted, denying tourists permission to step foot on land<sup>82</sup>. The exceptions to this were Nanuya Levu (Turtle Island, because it was privately owned), Tavewa Island (free-hold), and three further resorts were constructed.

---

<sup>82</sup> This was dominated by Blue Lagoon Cruises.

The number of resorts that have opened in the Yasawa Islands has expanded dramatically, with almost twenty five opening in the last ten years.

When asked if they felt that their students were interested in pursuing tourism jobs one teacher explained he did not believe his students were interested in pursuing that avenue, unless there was an incentive. *“Currently I think they would not, but upon motivation, especially the geography students, they could be interested in a job in tourism. Surely if they had a scholarship to study tourism at USP they would be motivated”* (Prakash, 2006). This again leads to the numerous concerns for return rates of graduates. At present, nearly all jobs in the Yasawa Islands are in the tourism sector. The truth is that there are not many other jobs in the region that are not directly related to tourism, a fact that is not going to change. The second concern is that many development strategies in place for Fiji at the national level focus on tourism development for the capital, Suva (Robertson, 2006). This means further emigration from the Yasawa Islands, not increased retention rates.

However, it is clear that there are many areas of tourism that are being offered at ELC, the vocational training in particular is preparing students for work in the tourism industry. Alfereti Nasokia would like for this training to be recognized so that when students complete form six they would already possess the certificate necessary to work all over Fiji, not just in their own community (Nasokia, 2006). This also demonstrates that the Headmaster wishes his students to go on to pursue work outside of the region, a contradiction to Richard Evanson’s vision for his school and its students. Is this tourism focused curriculum the only true reality for retaining students in the region? For those students who dream of the white-collar job how realistic is it? There are white-collar jobs for students on the mainland, but will all the barriers they face such as difficulty

transitioning to the urban areas and their ties to the village that draw them back, keep them from securing their dream job?

During the discussion with the Headmaster about the increase in tourists to the community he explained that the Evanson Learning Center is also making efforts to help students adapt to the changes that are taking place in their communities, and also to prepare for the changes in demands on them. These classes are held every Thursday, “*We discuss the culture of the Fijians and the effects of modernization on their culture. And also on the other side, we teach them to accept change, culture is bound to change, it cannot be constant all the time*” (Nasokia, 2006).

Is this change for the best and will the students of ELC be able to adapt to these changes? Will these changes keep them in the Yasawa Islands?

The Evanson Learning Center is offering an unprecedented opportunity for education in the Yasawa Islands, with the hope of sustaining and developing further growth in the region – whether or not it is for the benefit of the communities or that of the resorts remains to be seen. The concluding chapter will answer the questions put forward throughout this thesis; with a review of the literature as well as the realities of the region, and those of Fiji.

## **Chapter 5 – Outcomes and Conclusion; *The realities of the white-collar job in Fiji***

*“Trained and thoughtful professionals who still belong to their communities are essential. But this capacity building in developing countries is far from straightforward and the role of the intellectually trained in communities which are hierarchically organized along traditional cultural lines is still being contested and worked out”* (Lynch & Szorenyi, 2005, 2).

### **The Realities of the Community Based Approach**

The Evanson Learning Center (ELC) has offered a window in to Fiji’s Community Based Approach to education. It was constructed by a community member<sup>83</sup> with community funds<sup>84</sup>. It offers the Government approved curriculum, with some modifications. The one difference is that the school is very isolated and removed from any community, other than resort guests and employees. Unfortunately, there are still disparities with access to this school; only taking 15 new students each year, from three select elementary schools, greatly limits participation rates forcing many parents to send their children to secondary school on the mainland – if this is financially feasible. There is also the risk that with the continuing political instability in Fiji the tourism industry could be greatly crippled, which could potentially have detrimental outcomes for the funding of ELC. In one way, ELC is an anomaly not being repeated by any other philanthropists, unless other resort owners begin to recognize the need for increased participation in the communities where they operate; or the Fijian Government imposes it upon them – as part of the Community Based Approach.

---

<sup>83</sup> This is assuming Richard Evanson can be seen as a member of the community, I believe this to be a realistic assumption despite some of the perceptions of the people of Nacula Village.

<sup>84</sup> Community Funds in this context would be tourism income generated by the Turtle Island Resort, as well as tourist donations. Tourists are temporary members of the community but contribute none the less.

Because the global reality assumes a neo-liberal approach it is unlikely that changes will occur. But, with increased community ownership of tourist resorts and ventures there is potential for further community financing of schools. In order for increased Fijian ownership of tourist resorts, however, increased education placements are essential for this to occur.

The Community Based Approach is, in reality, education decentralization and even education privatization. Cuellar-Marchelli (2003) argued that rarely does privatization occur prior to decentralization; however, ELC is clearly an example of education privatization. In reality, Fijian education has been privatized since the missionaries first entered the country more than a century ago. With less than 3% of schools being owned by the government today it is impossible to deny that privatization is occurring. This has led to an inevitable uneven regional and racial development in Fiji.

The Evanson Learning Center offers a limited opening for the development of the Yasawa Islands, an opportunity for a peripheral and ignored population. The secondary education being made available is providing its students unprecedented opportunities at both the regional and national level. Again, this is only a small window and there remains numerous excluded communities throughout Fiji who do not have a wealthy philanthropist to build them a school. Why should one region prosper because it has better beaches and massive external investment in tourism? Indeed, in order to achieve equal access and opportunity in Fiji it is imperative for the Fijian Government to become more involved in the education system in Fiji. Welch explains the realities:

Certainly, a path which follows the dictates of neoliberal economics, with its ideology of reduced state activity, more individual contributions to education, and increased deregulation and privatization of the economy, will only exacerbate the existing chasms between rich and poor, both within and between nations and

regions of the world. Equally certainly, the private sector cannot be relied upon to attain equity and democracy in society (2000, 23).

It is pointless to provide strategies and curricula for students who have no school to attend. This also requires addressing the greater issues: the *External Players* who influence education structures and curricula. It would be naïve to think that any education system can escape the shadow of the World Bank and the greater global, neo-liberal economy in which it exists. There is no way of escaping Tamatea's Matrix-like effect of neo-liberal approaches to education and the humanistic approach. Stephen Lewis, for all his condemnation of the WB and the UN [and all its sub-groups], legitimates both organizations throughout his final chapter of solutions in his award winning book 'Race against Time' (2005). Clearly he sees no relevance to solutions that do not accept them as a constant and permanent fixture. In Fiji, graduates inevitably enter in to the reality of a neo-liberal, global economy.

### **The Elusive 'White-Collar' Job vs. the Village & its enduring traditions**

The World Bank has acknowledged that secondary education must be more realistic in terms of the needs of the young people today. Fiji's educational system is influenced by constant changes in technology and lifestyle, as well as the "presence of a strong world-wide adolescent subculture resulting from the global influence of communications, information technology and multimedia" (World Bank, 2005b, 30). Secondary schools must indeed provide a relevant curriculum that offers 'youngsters' an opportunity to develop their competencies. Samoff argues that international funding

agencies are incapable of paying attention to the critical orientation among learners; nor are they able to foster a strong sense of individual or collective competence, self-reliance, or self-governance (2003, 71).

The Evanson Learning Center is attempting to provide this for its students. Through increased access to computers and hands-on training in the resort the students are indeed receiving a much more practical and relevant education for the opportunities and realities that await them upon graduation. They are also strengthening social ties amongst the students and with the greater community. Alfereti Nasokia explained this was being achieved through their culturing sessions, the ideas being passed on to the students has the underlying goal of helping them develop and realize their powers (2006).

The reality of Fiji's economy is that tourism is the dominant industry; therefore, it is only logical and realistic for ELC to offer relevant and hands-on tourism training. There are, however, very serious and real concerns with education focusing predominately on tourism. The first is that less than 40% of tourism's income remains in Fiji (Robertson, 2006). It is therefore imperative that Fiji begins to diversify in ways that can generate greater linkages with the tourism industry and also retain more income internally. Robertson suggests that Fiji begin to cater to the 'well-heeled' who rent houses and apartments in foreign countries to escape their cold winter conditions in their home countries (2006, 6). With this increased permanent residency, predominately in the rural areas, it will increase the demand for other services such as medical and retail needs; therein is the path to the elusive white-collar job.

The greater concern of relying on the tourism industry is that it is fragile at the present time. The most recent coup in December 2006 saw travel warnings imposed by several countries, a loss of foreign investment and aid, and a decline in tourists to visit in

the months leading up to, and following, the coup. The sources of tension surrounding all four coups remain constant in Fiji. Not only will this hurt tourist visits and investment in the short term, but unless the underlying issues of land ownership and racial segregation are adequately addressed there will continue to be turmoil. This is not isolated to the tourism industry; the coups have had detrimental effects on the education system and the greater economy. The loss of skilled labor, including teachers, has created job openings in the short-term which is beneficial to recent graduates, but in the long-term there will be repercussions of these events. The loss of teachers is pulling more teachers to the urban areas, where demand is greatest (this also applies to other skilled labor) and the rural areas further suffer from the shortages.

It is important to acknowledge that there are only so many jobs available, even in a booming tourism industry. AusAID (the Australian Government's overseas aid program) has put forth the *Pacific 2020* project which supports broad-based economic growth in the Pacific Island Nations (PINs) in order to reduce poverty and to achieve sustainable development in the region. This project has acknowledged the grave concern over the large populations of youths under the age of 14 in the region – 31% in Fiji - and the challenge this is creating for all the national economies<sup>85</sup> (AusAID, 2006, 27). The report acknowledges that Fiji will need to have an annual growth rate of 1.75% [approximately] in non-agricultural employment between 2004 and 2020 to prevent joblessness from worsening and sounds this warning : “prospects are even worse if educated youth are interested only in paid employment” (2006, 28). This may indeed be the reason that secondary education is not a priority; it does not present a potential for

---

<sup>85</sup> AusAID also warns of that this ‘youth bulge’ has been associated with the increased likelihood of civil conflict [Urdal, 2004] (2006, 27).

further growth – it presents a threat of further unrest. Kedrayate has acknowledged the difficulties that Fijian graduates face:

We have to acknowledge that formal education has contributed and will continue to play an important role in the preparation of literate and educated human resources for the modern economy. However, we also have to accept the reality that there is a mismatch between the output of the formal education system, the aspirations of school leavers and paid employment opportunities... [a]n estimated 14,000 young people enter the labour market every year, but only about 8,000 of them find jobs or further training. Many young people both in the urban and rural areas need openings to develop skills to enable them to earn a living” (2001, 2).

The final reality of the white-collar job is that it contradicts the traditional, communal lifestyle that is propagated by the government and practiced/enforced, predominately in the rural areas, by older generations. Fiji is unquestionably in a time of transition, particularly this is so in villages in rural and more remote regions. This was seen with the research conducted in Nacula Village and through discussions with employees of the Oarsman’s Bay Lodge. It was clear that many, both from the village and those who grew up on the mainland, wished for their communities to ‘modernize’<sup>86</sup>. It is important to note, however, that very few expressed an interest in the greater development of Fiji as a nation; their concerns were predominately focused on their village and the surrounding villages in the Yasawa Islands. This is indicative that they wish to remain in the rural areas by bringing the modern amenities to the village. Interestingly, employees of Oarsman’s Bay Lodge expressed interest to work in the urban centers; however, students of ELC expressed interest to remain in, or return to, their communities once they had completed their education. This may be a reflection of, not only their culturing lessons, but the overall attitudes being passed on at ELC by the

---

<sup>86</sup> I use the term ‘modernize’ in reference to having more amenities available in the village, this covers everything from 24 hour electricity to a grocery store in the village. It also refers to their hopes of employment, they all wanted jobs that were the 9-5 jobs in the Suva, if not for them then for their children.

headmaster, the teachers, and Richard Evanson. They are attempting to retain an educated population in the community.

Hoar<sup>87</sup> also observed the loss of tradition in Totoka Village, Fiji, during her research spanning over a year (2004). Again, it was the village elders that observed the changes in the community and amongst the younger generations, the majority of which viewed the changes as negative. Many of the changes in Fijian villages have stemmed from the introduction of a monetary economy. This has led to an increase in material consumption. But of greater concern, it has led to a loss of communal practices; people are much more individualistic. Hoar revealed that many village elders in Totoka saw education as the reason for the changes. One elder explains:

Education changes village life. But, one boy goes to learn and doesn't want to teach others, but keeps it for himself. Tries to trick us with new ideas. They get a good job. When they come back, they do some things not good for the village; help only themselves" (Hoar, 2004, 3).

A young man from the village, attending school on the mainland, acknowledged the concerns, but also the realities:

Education can really devastate our culture, to think negatively. They [village elders] pointed at me and said 'you go to school and forget your culture'. One part is true. One part is not true. We live in a modern world, it is changing a lot...A person should know how to live in his culture. Education is the main reason we can go out in the world. The best way is to learn lots about our culture, knowing our culture, how we live in a modern society (Hoar, 2004, 3).

Were it not for education these communities would become increasingly dependant on outside aid and would have no opportunity to pursue the white-collar job. The balance between tradition and modern is indeed a challenge that all rural Fijians, young and old, are facing. There needs to be a distinction between the changes that

---

<sup>87</sup> Hoar's research in Totoka Island has many similarities to the research conducted in Nacula Island. Both are small island communities with three villages on the island and a community-owned backpackers resort.

education has brought and the changes that tourism and globalization have triggered. Education has allowed health to improve in the region and also increased opportunities for migration across and out of Fiji. Tourism is seen to have brought income but also many negative 'western' cultural changes.

A social impact assessment was conducted in Nacula Village in 2005<sup>88</sup> by the Charles Sturt University; Institute for Land Water and Society. Their interviews with members of Nacula Village explained the positive perceptions of the impacts of education:

Also related to education was the perception, expressed by several participants, that hosting tourists in the village, at the school and at the resorts gave the children opportunities to practice and improve their English and to experience and learn from other cultures...B also expressed a belief that improved education would provide a positive impact in that it would enable residents to be able to potentially secure positions within the government, where decisions that affect the community are made. B saw residents' traditional lack of education as a barrier to this previously (Thwaites, 2006, 8).

Alfereti Nasokia acknowledges that students initially are not keen to participate in their education when they first arrive, they do not want to work hard and tend to follow the Fijian mentality of 'whatever can be done today can always be left till tomorrow'; a prevalent attitude among Fijians he argues (2006). Overcoming this attitude is the major contribution to the communities since it changes their mindset to view work as something beneficial to them.

The negative outcomes of tourism are often lumped with the effects of globalization. The majority of the concerns lie with the western culture. The loss of traditional clothing - undoubtedly for a white-collar shirt - has upset many village elders;

---

<sup>88</sup> This was part of a larger social impact assessment for the Yasawa Islands; the research was carried out by students.

this also includes when tourists<sup>89</sup> visit the village and are dressed too provocatively by Fijian standards. Also, the change in diet from locally grown and caught food to processed and packaged food has led to numerous health concerns (Tavutavuvanua, 2005). There was the further concern that many of the traditional skills had been lost, particularly with regard to fishing and farming practices. This correlated with the increase in consumption of processed and packaged foods. The greatest loss to ‘western’ culture is the loss of reciprocity (Hoar, 2004; Tavutavuvanua, 2005; Thwaites, 2006). The loss of communal practices, triggered predominately by monetary income, has created much tension and discord between villagers. The research in Nacula Village revealed that this was the belief of village elders - few (if any) of the younger villagers or employees of Oarsman’s Bay Lodge indicated this to be a problem. Thwaites research offered an insight by a local who saw education as the solution to the ‘western’ woes:

G believes that a lack of education is a key factor that has influenced the move toward more Western values and is keen to address this. He was concerned that local people were adopting Western ways of life without realizing the negative impacts of these ways of life. He hoped to help them make an informed decision (2006, 11).

Modernization and change are inevitable in the traditional Fijian village, be it through education, tourism, or globalisation. It is argued by Brison that Fijian traditions are not fading, that in reality, they were a romanticized notion perpetuated by the government and outside forces. Furthermore, these notions of tradition are better understood at the individual level, she explains:

It is important to look at the local pressure that shape people’s sense of self and their imagination of modernity to realize that these local pressures act very differently on individuals. Looking at individual strategies reveals a more fluid and hybrid sense of Fijian identity than is apparent at the national level. People in Fiji

---

<sup>89</sup> Thwaites offers tourists as the only source of ‘media’ in many Fijian villages since many do not have televisions or even radios (2006, 11).

and elsewhere are caught in a web of contradictory global ideologies advocating modernity, romanticizing premodern tradition, and so on (Brison, 2003, 347).

However, it would be fair to say that modernization has seen a loss of traditions/practices throughout many Fijian communities; this, however, is true of countless communities around the world. Change is inevitable. With the whole World 'modernizing' it would be unfair and unrealistic to think Fiji exempt from this reality. It is imperative that Fiji have the same opportunities as any other country with regards to education and development. Modernizing Fijian villages is the only way to retain their communities, and as more educated Fijians remain in their remote villages and communities, so too will increase the opportunity for development and the white-collar jobs.

## **Conclusion**

With the introduction of European education in 1835, by missionaries, Fiji began to change. First, was the introduction of the bible and Christianity, followed by the introduction of the English language. The largest, and arguably most impacting change, was the introduction of indentured labour from India. The resulting racial turmoil, founded on land rights, political power, and most importantly educational achievement, is an issue that remains to be addressed. The geography of Fiji makes these issues particularly difficult to overcome. The remoteness of numerous communities has allowed uneven distribution of resources – particularly education – which has perpetuated uneven development across the island nation.

With the dawn of post-Independence, and the lifting of ordinances which restricted Indigenous Fijians to their rural villages, allowed increased access to education on the mainland in the urban centers. There remained, however, uneven access to education for many Indigenous Fijians. The *Community Based Approach* was seen as a way for more remote communities to have the opportunity for an education – this has not however, proven to be successful. Throughout this thesis it has been acknowledged that the disparities in education access and achievement continue today. Many communities do not even have secondary schools – parents, with little education and income themselves, must find the resources to send their children to the mainland for their educational needs. For this reason alone Fiji is not a good example of Universal Secondary Education. The Community Based Approach is indeed allowing further rural disparities to occur. It is undeniable that education decentralization – if not outright privatization – is occurring in Fiji.

What is the best curriculum for Fiji and its people? It is clear that outside players, in particular the World Bank, are pushing for an educated resource pool for the ‘west’. Other external players, such as the Asian Development Bank and AusAID, wish to retain an educated resource pool in their birth countries. And one person in particular, Richard Evanson, is attempting to provide a curriculum that will allow an educated resource pool to remain in the community of origin.

The Pacific 2020 Project is attempting to put forward the most plausible development strategy for the Pacific Island nations – it is realistic in acknowledging the hurdles that first must be overcome. They realize that they are dealing with a ‘bulging’ youth population in an economy plagued by stagnant growth and social turmoil – further complicated by an educated population. The concern is that nowhere in the proposal put

forward by the project does it include local communities or educators. The literature offered in this thesis stressed the fact that educators and communities must be included in decisions – although the burden cannot be solely placed upon them (be it in the implementation, financial or otherwise).

It is clear that the Community Based Approach is not allowing equal access to education and therefore is not a good model for other countries. The findings from this research demonstrate what has already been stated in the literature: communities cannot be solely responsible for their education. What may be transferred from this research are the role of private investors in education, as well as the criteria of including a community and its students to determine their needs and realities. It can also be argued that even though ELC is increasing educational opportunities in the Yasawa Islands – it is not a good (or realistic) model for other countries – it is creating regional disparities and uneven development. Also, there is a concern with increased philanthropy<sup>90</sup> in developing communities, and countries; it reduces the responsibilities of governments.

That said, however, ELC provides an opportunity for the Yasawa Islands and continues to grow within its community. November 2006 saw another graduating class, with much greater success than the previous year. Nine students sat the form six Fiji School Leaving Certificate Examination, eight of which passed; six of those students are now in form seven. Even more encouraging is that those six students are attending form

---

<sup>90</sup> Oprah Winfrey recently opened the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls in South Africa; at a cost of US\$40 million. The South African government had planned to build the school with her but were forced to withdraw, criticizing that the academy was too elitist and lavish for a country as poor as South Africa. Many have voiced their objections to the school and Ms Winfrey's response is simple (and arrogant): "I understand that many in the school system and out feel that I'm going overboard, and that's fine. This is what I want to do"... "I'd like to think I have as much good sense as I have money, so that's a lot of good sense" (quoted in Samuels, 2007, Newsweek). There are undoubtedly self-fulfilling motivations with philanthropy that overshadow the needs and realities of developing communities – and further regional disparities are created.

seven at ELC. The school was able to offer form seven, beginning February 2007, with another eight students from outside of ELC joining the class.

Chapter 1 asked whether an education that aspires for the elusive white-collar job was practical for Fiji and its people; the answer is yes. No country has ever suffered from increased education – and that is indeed what the white-collar job requires. Whether or not graduates will find their white-collar job is the premise of another thesis. Of interest, as a follow-up to this thesis, would be in observing the first graduates of ELC in the following years – to learn where they end up upon the completion of their education; do they return to the Yasawa Islands or are they lost to the mainland? Or even more troublesome, are they lost somewhere else in the world? And when we find them, have they found their elusive white-collar job?

## Bibliography

- ADB Asian Development Bank, 2006. A Fact Sheet: Fiji Islands and the ADB. URL: [http://www.adb.org/Documents/Fact\\_Sheets/FIJ.asp?p=ctryfij](http://www.adb.org/Documents/Fact_Sheets/FIJ.asp?p=ctryfij). Accessed: February 7, 2007.
- ADB Asian Development Bank, 2007. Country Information; Fiji Islands. URL: <http://www.adb.org/FijiIslands/country-info.asp>. Accessed: February 7, 2007.
- Akram-Lodhi, A.H., 1996. Structural Adjustment in Fiji under the Interim Government, 1987-1992. *The Contemporary Pacific*, 8 (2), 259-290.
- Ansell, N., 2001. Producing Knowledge about 'Third World Women': the Politics of Fieldwork in a Zimbabwean Secondary School. *Ethics, Place and Environment*, 4(2), 101-116.
- Arnove, R. F., 2003. Introduction: Reframing Comparative Education; The Dialectic of the Global and the Local. *Comparative Education; The Dialectic of the Global and the Local*, Editors: Arnove, R. F., Torres, C. A., Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., United Kingdom, 1-23.
- AusAID, 2007. The Australian Government's Overseas Aid Program Homepage. URL: <http://www.ausaid.gov.au/makediff/whatis.cfm>. Accessed: August 1, 2007.
- Belfield, C.R., Levin, H.M., 2002. Education Privatization: causes, consequences and planning implications. UNESCO: International Institute for Educational Planning, Paris.
- Bonal, X., 2004. Is the World Bank education policy adequate for fighting poverty? Some evidence from Latin America. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 24, 649-666.
- Bourne, D., 2003. Towards a theory of development education. *The Development Education Journal*, 10(1), 3-6.
- Bray, M., 1999. Community Financing of Education. *Education, Cultures, and Economics: dilemmas for development*, eds. Leach, F.E., Little, A.W., Falmer Press, New York, 183-202.
- Bray, M., 2003. Community Initiatives in Education: goals, dimensions and linkages with governments. *Compare*, 33 (1), 31-45.
- Bray, M., 1996. Decentralization of education: Community financing. *The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank*, Washington, D. C.

- Brenner, N., Theodore, N., 2002. Cities and the Geographies of “Actually Existing Neoliberalism”. *Antipode*, 34 (3), 349-379.
- Brison, K. J., 2003. Imagining Modernity in Rural Fiji. *Ethnology*, 42 (4), 335-348.
- Bullivant, B. M., 1983. Cultural Reproduction in Fiji: Who controls knowledge/power? *Comparative Education Review*, 27 (2), 227-245.
- Callinan, R., 2006. Fueling Fiji’s Coup. *Time Magazine*, Wednesday December 20, 2006. URL: <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1571756,00.html>. Accessed: January 28, 2007.
- Case, A., 2006. The Primacy of Education. *Understanding Poverty*, Editors: Banerjee, A., Benabou, R., Mookherjee, D., Oxford University Press, Inc., Oxford, 269-284.
- Chapman, D., Barcikowski, E., Sowah, M., Gyamera, E., Woode, G., 2002. Do Communities know best? Testing a premise of educational decentralization: Community members’ perceptions of their local schools in Ghana. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 22, 181-189.
- CIA Factbook: Fiji. 2007. URL: <https://www.cia.factbook.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/fj.html>. Accessed: August 3, 2007.
- Craig, D. & Porter, D., 2006. *Development Beyond Neoliberalism? Governance, Poverty Reduction and Political Economy*. Routledge, New York.
- Creswell, J.W., 2007. *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design; Choosing among five approaches*. Second Edition. Sage Publications, Inc., California.
- Cuellar-Marchelli, H., 2003. Decentralization and privatization in El Salvador: Assessing the experience. *International Journal of Development*, 23, 145-166.
- De Grauwe, A., Lugaz, C., Balde, C., Diakhate, C., Dougnon, D, Moustapha, M., & Odushina, D., 2005. Does decentralization lead to school improvement? Findings and lessons from research in West-Africa. *Journal of Education for International Development* 1 (1), 1-15.
- de Guzman, A. B., 2007. Chronicling decentralization initiatives in the Philippine basic education sector. *International Journal of Educational Development*, available online March 6, 2007.
- Ewins, R., 1998. *Colour, Class and Custom: The Literature of the 1987 Fiji Coup*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. URL: [http://speedynail.com/pacific/fiji\\_coup/](http://speedynail.com/pacific/fiji_coup/). Accessed: January 20, 2007.
- Fairley, A., 2004. Capacity Building in the Nacula Tikina – Yasawas, Fiji; How Turtle Island ensures sustainability in its social equity programs. Paper presented to

Green Globe 21 Sustainable Tourism Conference, Kiakoura, New Zealand, March 5, 2004.

Farrell, J. P., 2003. Equality of Education; A Half-Century of Comparative Evidence Seen from a New Millennium. Comparative Education; The Dialectic of the Global and the Local, Editors: Arnove, R. F., Torres, C. A., Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., United Kingdom.

Fiji Currency. URL: <http://www.greenwichmeantime.com/time-zone/pacific/fiji/currency.htm>. Accessed: August 8, 2007.

Fiji Government Online Portal. Fiji Today 2005/2006. URL: <http://fiji.gov.fj/uploads/FijiToday2005-06.pdf>. Accessed: January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2005.

Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics, Education Statistics, 2007. URL: <http://www.spc.int/prism/country/fj/stats/Social/education.htm>. Accessed: September 9, 2007.

Fiji Times Online, 2007. Pacific Islands Report: Editorial. Pacific Islands Development Program/East-West Center. URL: <http://pidp.eastwestcenter.org/pireport/2007/January/01-11-ed1.htm>. Accessed: February 27, 2007.

Glewwe, P., 2002. Schools and Skills in Developing Countries: Education Policies and Socioeconomic Outcomes. Journal of Economic Literature, XL (June 2002), 436-482.

Gold, L., 2002. Positionality, Worldview and Geographical Research: a Personal Account of a Research Journey. Ethics, Place and Environment, 5(3), 223-237.

Gould, W.T.S., 1993. People and Education in the Third World. Longman Group, United Kingdom.

Gounder, R., 1999. The role of development assistance and economic growth: Empirical results for Fiji. Discussion Paper No. 99, Massey University, Palmerston North.

Hall, I., Hall, D., 2004. Evaluation and Social Research: introducing small-scale practice. Palgrave MacMillan, New York.

Hassall, G., 2005. Using multi-stakeholder dialogue as a social transformation tool – the case of Fiji. Expert Group Meeting on “Dialogue in the Social Integration Process: Building peaceful social relations – by, for and with people”, United Nations, New York, 21-23 November 2005. URL: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/egm/paper/Graham%20Hassall.pdf>. Accessed: April 3, 2007.

- Hill, D., 2003. Global Neo-Liberalism, the Deformation of Education and Resistance. *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies*, 1(1). URL: <http://www.jceps.com/?pageID=article&articleID=7>. Accessed April 19, 2007.
- Hoar, M.L., 2004. Relationships, Status, and Traditions: School and Community in a Fijian Village. Thesis Submission, Faculty of Graduate Studies, Department of Educational Studies, University of British Columbia.
- Huckle, J., 2004. Further towards a theory of development education. *The Development Education Journal*, 11(1), 29-30.
- Kedrayate, A., 2001. Education for Nation Building: The Contribution of Non-Formal Education in Fiji. *Adult Education and Development*, 58. URL: [http://www.iiz-dvv.de/englisch/publikationen/Ewb\\_ausgaben/58\\_2002/eng\\_kendrayate.htm](http://www.iiz-dvv.de/englisch/publikationen/Ewb_ausgaben/58_2002/eng_kendrayate.htm). Accessed: May 15, 2007.
- Kedrayate, A., 2004. Learning in Traditional Societies in the South Pacific: A Personal Reflection; Editorial. *Adult Education and Development*, 61. URL: [http://www.iizdvv.de/englisch/Publikationen/Ewb\\_ausgaben/61\\_2004/eng\\_kedrayate.htm](http://www.iizdvv.de/englisch/Publikationen/Ewb_ausgaben/61_2004/eng_kedrayate.htm). Accessed: May 15, 2007.
- Laws, S., Harper, C. & Marcus, R., 2003. *Research for Development*. Sage Publications, India.
- Lewis, S., 2005. *Race against Time*. House of Anansi Press, Toronto.
- Lockheed, M., Cueto, S., 2006. Research on education equity and quality in developing and transition countries. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 45, 97-101.
- Lynch, J., 1997. *Education and Development: A Human Rights Analysis*. James Lynch, British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data, London.
- Lynch, T., Szorenyi, N., 2005. Dilemmas Surrounding Information Technology Education in Developing Countries: A Study in Fiji. *The Electronic Journal on Information Systems in Developing Countries*, 21 (4), 1-16.
- McGrath, S., 1999. Education, development and assistance: the challenge of the new millennium. *Changing international aid to education; Global patterns and national contexts*, Eds. King, K., Buchert, L., UNESCO, Paris, 68-90.
- Mincer, J., 1958. Investment in Human Capital and Personal Income Distribution. *The Journal of Political Economy*, LXVI (4), 281-302.

- Mohanty, M., 2005. Globalisation, New Labour Migration and Development in Fiji Islands. Paper presented at State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project Conference, Australia National University, Canberra, October 25-27, 2005.
- Naidoo, J., 2003. Implementing Education Decentralization; Policy and Strategy Paper: Second Draft. UNESCO. URL: [http://portal.unesco.org/education/fr/file\\_download.php/dd77e5c010ac755890a30bb8cbc3e313Policy+paper+draft.pdf](http://portal.unesco.org/education/fr/file_download.php/dd77e5c010ac755890a30bb8cbc3e313Policy+paper+draft.pdf). Accessed: November 5, 2006.
- Naidu, V., 2002. The Millennium Goals and the South Pacific. Paper presented 3<sup>rd</sup> Biennial Conference of the International Development Studies Network of Aotearoa, New Zealand, Massey University, Palmerston North. URL: <http://devnet.massey.ac.nz/papers/Naidu,%20Vijay.pdf>. Accessed: January 5, 2007.
- Narayan, P. K., Smyth, R., 2005. Temporal Causality and the Dynamics of Democracy, Emigration and Real Income in Fiji. *International Review of Applied Economics*, 19 (2), 245-263.
- Osei, G. M., 2007. Decentralisation and the exploration of the impact of local content curriculum reforms in Ghana. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 27, 151-165.
- Palmer, R., 2006. Beyond the basics: Balancing education and training systems in developing countries. *International Journal for International Development*, 2 (1), 1-21.
- Patrinos, H.A., 1999. Market Forces in Education. World Bank, Washington DC 20433. Paper Presented in Donostia-San Sebastian, Spain, July 22-24, 1999.
- Paumau, P. Q., 2001. A Post-colonial Reading of Affirmative Action in Education in Fiji. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 4 (2), 109-123.
- Prosser, J., 2006. Seeking the Good Life in Fiji: Managing Educational Transitions. *Journal of Human Ecology*, 19 (3), 227-234.
- Ravuvu, A.D., 1988. Development or Dependence; The Pattern of Change in a Fijian Village. Institute of Pacific Studies and Fiji Extension Center, University of the South Pacific, Suva.
- Robertson, R., 2005. From Multiculturalism to Transculturalism; moving beyond Post-Colonialism in Fiji. Paper delivered to the PIAS-DG, University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2005.
- Robertson, R., 2006. Fiji Futuring. Paper for the Asia-Pacific Development Conference Review Conference: Fiji Forward 2000, 15-16 June 2006.

- Robinson, Sir Ken, 2006. Do schools today kill creativity? Presented February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2006, TED Talks, Monterey, California. URL: <http://youtube.com/watch?v=iG9CE55wbtY>. Accessed: February 15, 2007.
- Samoff, J., 2003. Institutionalizing International Influence. *Comparative Education; The Dialectic of the Global and the Local*, Editors: Arnove, R. F., Torres, C. A., Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., United Kingdom, 52-91.
- Samuels, A., 2007. Oprah Goes to School. *Newsweek*, January 8, 2007. URL: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/1639634/site/newsweek/page/0/>. Accessed: June 25, 2007.
- Save the Children, 2005. *The Power and Promise of Girls' Education*. State of the World's Mothers 2005, Save the Children.
- Sidaway, J. D., 1992. In other worlds: on the politics of research by 'First World' geographers in the 'Third World'. *Area*, 24(4), 403-408.
- Sofer, M. 1993. Uneven regional development and internal labor migration in Fiji. *World Development*, 21 (2), 301-310.
- Tamatea, L., 2005. *The Dakar framework: constructing and deconstructing the global neo-liberal matrix*. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 3(3), 311-334.
- Tavola, H., 1991. *Secondary Education in Fiji; A Key to the Future*. The Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, Suva.
- Tavutavuvanua, Ratu, A.C.D., 2005. *Social Challenges of Tourism for Indigenous Fijians*. Paper presented to Ecotourism Australia Conference in Hobart, December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2005.
- Therkildsen, O., 2000. Contextual issues in decentralization of primary education in Tanzania. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 20, 407-421.
- Thwaites, R., 2006. Report on Research undertaken during a visit to Yasawa Islands, Fiji, September 2005. Charles Sturt University, Institute for Land Water and Society, Report No. 15.
- Tooley, J., Dixon, P., Olaniyan, O., 2005. Private and public schooling in low-income areas of Lagos State, Nigeria: A census and comparative survey. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 43, 125-146.
- Tracy, M., 1997. To transfer power or to transfer responsibility: Educational decentralization in Venezuela. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 17, 145-162.

- UNESCO, 2007. About Education for All. URL: [http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.phpURL\\_ID=47044&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TO PIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.phpURL_ID=47044&URL_DO=DO_TO PIC&URL_SECTION=201.html). Accessed: April 22, 2007.
- UNESCO, 2000. The EFA 2000 Assessment; Country Reports: Fiji. <http://www2.unesco.org/wef/countryreports/fiji/contents.html>. Accessed: February 13, 2006.
- United Nations, 2007. The Millennium Development Report. URL: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/mdg2007.pdf>. Accessed: February 2, 2007.
- Voigt-Graf, C., 2003. Fijian teachers on the move: Causes, implications and policies. *Asian Pacific Viewpoint*, 44 (2), 163-175.
- Waters, J. L., 2006. Emergent Geographies of International Education and Social Exclusion. *Antipode*, 38 (5), 1046-1068.
- Welch, A. R., 2000. Quality and Equality in Third World Education. *Third World Education; Quality and Equality*. Ed. Welch, A. R., Garland Publishing, New York, 3-28.
- White, C., 2001. Between Academic Theory and Folk Wisdom: Local Discourse on Differential Educational Attainment in Fiji. *Comparative Education Review*, 45 (3), 303-333.
- White, C., 2003. Historicizing educational disparities: colonial policy and Fijian educational attainment. *History of Education*, 32 (4), 345-365.
- Williams, E.B., 2000. Facing the Challenges of Fijian Education: Planning for the Future, Learning Together: Directions for Education in the Fiji Islands. Fiji Islands Education Commission/Panel, Government of Fiji (Ministry of Education), Suva, 179-225.
- Wils, A., Hartwell, A., Zhao, Y., 2006. Reaching Out-of-School Children: Sub-Regional Disparities. *Journal of Education for International Development*, 2 (2), 1-23.
- World Bank, 2006. At Home & Away; Expanding Job Opportunities for Pacific Islanders through Mobility. URL: <http://go.worldbank.org/FU6EIDBG30>. Accessed: May 14, 2007.
- World Bank, 2005a. Regional Engagement Framework FY 2006-2009 for Pacific Islands. Report No: 32261-EAP. URL: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPACIFICISLANDS/Resources/PI-Strategy-05.pdf>. Accessed: May 4, 2007.

World Bank, 2007a. Data & Statistics. URL:  
<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DATASTATISTICS/Resources/CLASS.XLS>.  
Accessed: May 4, 2007.

World Bank, 2007b. East Asia Update: Fiji. URL:  
<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTEAPHALFYEARLYUPDATE/Resources/550192-1175629375615/Fiji-EAP-Update-April2007.pdf>. Accessed: May 11, 2007.

World Bank, 2005b. Expanding Opportunities and Building Competencies: A New Agenda for Secondary Education. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank, Washington DC.

World Bank Group, 2007. Millennium Development Goals. URL:  
<http://www.moe.gov.pk/MDGs/Millennium%20Development%20Goals%20Education.htm>. Accessed: January 5, 2007.

## Appendix 1

*Kava [a celebratory drink derived from taro root] was always a central part of any celebration, but was specifically used for that. There was little kava indulgence outside those celebrations. A kilo of Kava would last for days.*

*There were strong social bonds within our community, with a great strength of respect and morality underpinning relationships. There was infinite respect for the Chief and the Elders, and intermarriage between islands was common, outside our immediate family groups.*

*I notice now that the Village eats much more processed food. We are not as dependant on root crops we grow ourselves nor the fish that we catch. Our people eat noodles, tinned fish, corned beef. This is a significant shift in our natural diet, and I am clearly concerned about the impact that might have on the already high level of diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease in our community.*

*Probably one of the most challenging social changes is the amount of Kava that is now being drunk around the village. Every night, there will be bowls of Kava with men sitting around them drinking – in fact sometimes it commences in the afternoons. A kilo of Kava that used to last day's now lasts an hour.*

*When Kava drinking goes on until 2 or 3am in the morning, people's effectiveness the next day is limited. They sleep when otherwise they would have been tending their vegetables, looking after their gardens or fishing. I now see bread fruit rotting on our trees rather than being picked up seasonally, and used as part of our staple diet, as our people's taste buds are attuned slowly to processed food.*

*An inevitability of receiving wages is that everything in the village now has monetary value. I have a sense that we are losing that commitment to community, whereby we undertake work and are involved in activities for the benefit of our brothers and sisters. Private enterprise has created private needs which are replacing a commitment to community.*

*I would like to see more of the money that we collectively earn put aside for housing, supplies and education. Perhaps we will get to this once our Community Hall has been built. I have a sense that we as a community judge ourselves as a success by the size of our buildings and our community halls and churches, rather than our educational levels, our principles and our humanity.*

*I would like to see the introduction of programs which will help the transition of my community and my Village to the inevitability of tourism, and to maximize the positives for them.*

*Tourism has been around in Fiji since the 1940's. Until the 1990's, with the exception of the Blue Lagoon and Turtle Island, the Yasawas were largely*

*untouched by tourism directly. We lived our uncomplicated Village life, and were modestly happy. We were certainly rich in our families and our culture and heritage.*

*Globalisation discovers even the remotest pockets of the world. The Yasawa's can't escape radio, television and the impact of tourism in town, when we go there to trade our goods. Tourism inexorably was going to change our lives.*

*On balance, we have seen many positives from tourism, and there are few who would want to go back to what we were doing. Our challenge is to rein in the excess that tourism has facilitated, and to grow with tourism at our own pace, putting in place back stops to prevent the disadvantages from overwhelming the benefits.*

*I don't want our future generations to point the finger at us, believing us to have been negligent and being "asleep during our watch", in areas of environmental responsibility, social development and cultural development and retention.*

*Tourism is very very good for us. It revives culture and ancient arts and gives us economic independence, but there should be a balance and we must know where to draw the line.*

- Ratu Tavutavuvanua, Presentation in Hobart, Australia, 2005