Serving the
Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu
Towards peace and sustainable development through teacher education: some examples from Oceania

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Main topics

• Introduction: ESD & other ideas
• Agenda of schooling
• Context: Oceania in the 21st century.
• Neglect of teachers
• UNESCO Chair activities
• Some Challenges
• Some Achievements
• Conclusion
Introduction

- Numerous UN instruments
- Education for peace & sustainable dev. must be lifelong and holistic in its conceptualization & spread (cannot just focus on what happens in schools)
- In Oceania, sustainable dev. is about cultural survival & continuity based on continuous nurturing/strengthening of interpersonal & inter-group relationships (vaa)- foundation of peace & identities
- Cultural survival and continuity was/is the main purpose of indigenous education (learning outside of schools); the content of such education is derived from ‘life’ and assessment of such learning is through people’s behavior and performance, in different contexts
- Culture matters in, and is central to, educating for peace and sustainable development in Oceania
- Cultural perceptions of peace & sustainable development important for teacher education in Oceania
Schooling agenda

• To bring about economic growth
• To transmit culture
• To assist in children’s moral and intellectual growth
• In Oceania, schools have failed most learners
• In Oceania, schooling is based on ‘universal’ values/knowledge etc; it devalues/de-emphasizes learners’ cultures;
• School education is generally seen as an instrument of conflicts and unsustainable development in Oceania
Oceania in the 21st century

• Cultural diversity (hundreds of usually small culturally distinct groups)
• Long cultural histories (thousands of years old)
• Fragmented and geographically isolated islands
• Vulnerable physical environments
• Colonization & globalization resulting in social, economic and political transformations (compromised cultures)
• Dual systems including in education: school and non-school
• Schools continue to be culturally undemocratic learning environments
• Moral and epistemological dilemmas for majority of teachers and teacher educators
Neglect of teachers in educational reforms in Oceania

• Teachers’ beliefs and values are important in teaching/learning process
• Global/regional/national educational reforms traditionally neglect teachers
• Teachers’ continue to be invisible in educational planning & reforms (largely as a result of dependence on foreign consultants)
• Yet teachers ARE expected to ‘implement’ new curricula and act as cultural mediators/bridges for majority of learners
• Cultural democracy in school is dependent on teachers who can contextualize predominantly foreign curriculum content and processes (including foreign medium of instruction & content)
• Educating for peace & sustainable development is about strengthening teachers’ and teacher educators’ capacity to contextualize their work by raising their awareness of (Pacific) cultural values & knowledge systems
• The above is a major focus of the work of the UNESCO Chair in partnership with Pacific regional teachers’ colleges, organizations, and networks (e.g. COPE, PATE, RPEIPPP)
Foci of UNESCO Chair activities

- Promoting culturally inclusive curriculum development through teaching, consultancies and regional training activities (e.g. Chair was co-convener of recent RPEIPP/USP regional workshop, Fiji, April 2006)
- Promoting culturally inclusive teacher education (on-going undergraduate & post-graduate teaching; research & publications; advocacy & community work).
- Encouraging development of curricula for (multi)cultural literacy through consultancies and advocacy (e.g. Tonga & Samoa)
- Encouraging learning from indigenous education (in partnership with RPEIPP & COPE (2006))
- Capacity building of indigenous scholars and researchers through development & use of Pacific frameworks for teaching & research, and facilitating action research activities involving Pacific island researchers (launching of Ta Kupesi, research from Tonga, April 2006)
Some challenges

- Continuing cultural blindness among consultants in the areas of educational reforms in curriculum and teacher development
- Lack of overt institutional support for study of Pacific knowledge systems and processes, part of the colonial legacy of indifference towards indigenous cultures and knowledge systems
- Globalization of individualism and systematized selfishness (especially through mass media)
- Lack of critical analyses by Pacific people, of many recently championed/ introduced ideas and values, due to nature & processes of (aid) donor requirements
Some achievements

• Teaching (multi-modal, undergraduate and postgraduate courses), involving about 400/students from at least 10 PICs a year.
• Research & publications of teacher ed. Materials (e.g. 2000, Teacher Education Modules Series – 6 so far; 2003 ‘Educational Ideas from Oceania’
• Regional collaboration & advocacy. E.g. Co-founder of ‘Re-thinking Pacific Education Initiative’ (2001) – sponsor of many national and regional activities in the areas of re-thinking research, leadership and educational aid;
• Partnership with UNESCO Office for Pacific States in ESD & other activities, such as Council of Pacific Education conference, August 2006, in Fiji
• On-going Networking (e.g. NOPE, launched Mar.2006)
Conclusion

PEACE POEM

today we come together
to read and sing of peace
lay aside our differences
rise and greet the breeze

there’s no need to explain
Define or defend our theme
Question our ancestors
About their silent dreams
No need to blame the rain or pain
For crying on the phone
No need to ask how far the tide
Will come and meet our bones
when all is said and done
You’ll have to give up soon
The things that make you what you are
The things you think you own
A spouse a house
A child a friend
The land your customs
Even the pain

For when you’re left with nothing
Only wings to lift you up
You’ll see how fast your soul is trembling
Freedom’s trapped in a cup
Seize it now hold it tight
Have no fear you’re there
Let me whisper no I’ll shout
Peace is in the air
THE END