

**THE PRIDE PROJECT:**  
**ASSESSING THE REGIONAL APPROACH TO BASIC**  
**EDUCATION DELIVERY**

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## ABSTRACT

The PRIDE Project was conceived as a way to bolster the awareness, coordination and delivery of basic education in the Pacific region. The project's mandate was to enhance the capacity of Pacific education agencies to effectively plan and deliver quality basic education through formal and non-formal means. The project focused on the provision of technical assistance as well as support and advice to build national capacities through three key areas. First, the development of effective and realistic education strategic plans, secondly the implementation of plans (through sub-project activities) and thirdly sharing best practice through online networks, a resource centre and regional and sub- regional workshops. In total the project received €8 million from the European Union Development Fund and NZD\$5 million from NZAID.<sup>1 2</sup>

The project's concept was developed by Pacific Ministers of Education who believed many past educational aid initiatives had not delivered successful, relevant or sustainable results. PRIDE was therefore established as a project that would be housed and operated from within the Pacific region. Being based out of the University of the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji, the project wanted to utilise and foster Pacific capacity, knowledge and ownership as much as possible.

This thesis will explore The PRIDE Project's activities within the region. Discussion will focus on why the mandate of sector planning was chosen, and how it has many similarities to sector wide approaches. Investigation into PRIDE within the Solomon Islands will demonstrate that the project had an overoptimistic mandate which struggled to make any considerable achievements in the everyday delivery of basic education. The regional dynamics of this project will be analysed against local priorities and agendas, ultimately showing that they can sit uncomfortably next to each other. Discussion will highlight how ideas of complete Pacific ownership will continue to be a challenge for the region as capacity and infrastructure is limited. In addition, development projects need to move beyond top level sector planning to

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<sup>1</sup> Barbara Hau'ofa and Priscilla Puamau, *Best Practise in Pacific Education: Learning with PRIDE* (The PRIDE Project Pacific Education Series No. 9, Institute of Education, University of the South Pacific, 2010), p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> This thesis will use the term NZAID for New Zealand's International Aid Programme, as this was the operational name during which The PRIDE Project was most active.

implementation and delivery if any significant changes to education provision are to be made.

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Having travelled to Suva and Honiara for this research, I saw firsthand the incredibly hard work that goes on every day to bolster education provision in the region. I hope that one day every child within the Pacific has the opportunity to attend school and receive a quality education so they can thrive.

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## ACRONYMS

AID	Assistance for International Development
AUSAID	Australian Agency for International Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EFA	Education for All
EU	European Union
FBEAP	Forum Basic Education Action Plan
GRA	Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army
ICT	Information & Communications Technology
IFM	Isatabu Freedom Movement
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MEHRD	Ministry of Education & Human Resources
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NOPE	Network of Pacific Educators
NPC	National Project Coordinator
NZAID	New Zealand Agency for International Development
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
PADDLE	Pacific Archive of Digital Data for Learning and Education
PIF	Pacific Island Forum
PRIDE	Pacific Regional Initiative for the Delivery of Basic Education
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands

SAP	Structural Adjustment Programmes
SICHE	Solomon Island College of Higher Education
SWAP	Sector Wide Approaches
TA	Technical Assistance
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training \
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Science & Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USP	University of the South Pacific



## INTRODUCTION

Much that is wrong with foreign aid is caused not by incompetence but by the complex machinery which has been developed to enable aid to be transmitted from donor to recipient. This machinery that has been designed and constructed mainly by the donors, with the stated intention of making the aid process more efficient, causes or exacerbates many of the very problems that aid is meant to alleviate.<sup>3</sup>

This thesis will assess a regional education initiative ‘The Pacific Regional Initiative for the Delivery of basic Education Project’ (PRIDE). PRIDE attempted to create a truly unique and innovative project that would encourage Pacific people to own and deliver their own priorities for education. After years of turbulent relationships between donors and recipients, PRIDE sought to overcome cycles of dependency and redefine how educational aid was delivered. Allowing Pacific people to be in the driving seat of this project, it was hoped to build local capacity and achieve more sustainable results. The project was operational in 15 countries across the region and lasted over six years. This thesis offers a rare insight into this project which has thus far received little research and analysis. Discussion will focus on how PRIDE’s regional approach improved on previous donor efforts of creating local ownership and fostering Pacific relevant basic education.

At the 1999 annual Pacific Island Forum (PIF) Heads of Government meeting, delegates voiced concerns about the growing educational needs of their countries. Discussion was based on the recognition that some countries were really struggling with providing education for their young citizens. The Forum decided that they would convene another meeting of Pacific Education Ministers to discuss and come up with action plans and potential solutions for these concerns. In 2001, the Ministers met in Auckland, New Zealand. By this time, basic education rhetoric contained in the Education For All (EFA) and the new Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), had filtered down into the Pacific and countries were aware of the targets they had to meet. The goals are about creating essential structural changes

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<sup>3</sup> Desmond McNeill, *The Contradictions of Foreign Aid* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), p. 9.

around the world to help more children get access to schooling and an education.<sup>4</sup> The Pacific Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP) was developed to fulfil these goals as some countries in the Pacific were not achieving the levels of education provision. FBEAP made recommendations and collaborated strategies on how to achieve basic education levels. Subsequently a team was tasked with the role of creating a regional project that could implement all of the ideas laid out in the FBEAP. After considerable consultation and negotiations PRIDE was created.

PRIDE's mandate was to enhance the capacity of Pacific education agencies to effectively plan and deliver quality basic education through formal and non-formal means, by improving the coordination of donor inputs and assisting countries to implement their plans. Fifteen countries signed up to participate and PRIDE was considered unique as it was conceived, housed and managed all within the Pacific. The project was based on the notion that participating countries could collaborate and support each other with their educational developments. At the heart of PRIDE is the principle of syncretising the best of local with the best of regional and global practices.

External assistance from foreign donors in the forms of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) and loans have driven a large number of significant reforms and educational developments in the Pacific. However, the educational aid environment from which PRIDE was established was problematic in several ways. There is concern that countries within the Pacific are facing a growing dependency on foreign assistance, with aid now contributing to a substantial part of national government budgets. While this money is being channelled into funding key public sectors such as education, the acceptance of ODA can potentially open up governments to foreign input and control. Donors are able to set agendas and often are able dictate what they are willing to support or not. As Pacific government budgets are limited, they are left in the unfortunate position of having to accept the 'double edged sword' of aid.<sup>5</sup> Pacific educators believe that external influence has resulted in schooling systems

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<sup>4</sup> United Nations, 'United Nations Millennium Development Goals', <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/> (accessed 31 March 2011)

<sup>5</sup> Priscilla Puamau, 'Rethinking Education in the Pacific', (Keynote address presented at Australia New Zealand Comparative International Education Society Annual Conference, Canberra, 30 November – 3 December 2006), p. 4.

that are not always relevant to everyday Pacific life, and are more related to donors' own country systems.

The uncoordinated way in which development projects have unfolded in the region have exacerbated dependency issues. Educational aid is now described as 'big business' with multiple donors and actors undertaking a wide variety of projects everyday throughout the region.<sup>6</sup> Donors bring with them different ways of working, external resources, their own personnel, and often operate according to their own agendas and timeframes. The limited coordination between agencies creates a chaotic picture and places a considerable onus on government departments and stakeholders to manage donors. The Ministry of Education can at any one time be working on multiple externally funded initiatives as well as their own everyday workloads. This puts pressure on capacity and can take personnel away from areas where they are most needed. This does little to foster knowledge generation, build capacity and use local resources, all of which contribute to economic growth. Therefore the issue of aid is often not the dollar value but rather what is being financed.

While much has been achieved through ODA flows, significant gaps in the provision of education also exist. Countries within Melanesia have the lowest Human Development Index (HDI) ratings,<sup>7</sup> adult literacy rates, and combined gross enrolment rates for the region. Limited economic growth, geographical isolation and capacity constraints have created wider societal problems for many countries. While the average Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita improved from \$1,484 in 1990 to \$3,251 in 2000, an estimated 17 percent of the Pacific population lives on less than \$1 per day.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, Pacific Island Countries have made only moderate progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

As global understandings of development and policy change, so do donors priorities and implementation of educational projects within the Pacific. The recent EFA

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<sup>6</sup> Kabini Sanga, 'The nature and impact of educational aid in Pacific countries', in Kabini Sanga, *International Aid Impacts on Pacific Education* (Wellington: He Parekerekere, Institute for Research and Development in Maori and Pacific Education, Victoria University, 2005), p. 17.

<sup>7</sup> The Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite statistic used to rank countries by level of 'human development'.

<sup>8</sup> UNICEF, 'Pacific Island Countries: Children's issues', <http://www.unicef.org/pacificislands/overview.html> (accessed 17 February 2011).

initiative and the MDGs have very much prioritised basic education delivery. The goals are about creating essential structural changes around the world to help more children get access to schooling and an education.<sup>9</sup> As some countries in the Pacific are not achieving the levels of education provision to fulfil these EFA and MDG goals, the spotlight has been thrust onto helping these struggling countries.

There is a considerable gap in the literature and limited critical analysis about PRIDE. Apart from project reviews and publications, little has been written about PRIDE and therefore this thesis is well timed to analyse it. This research will examine PRIDE at three levels. The implementation of PRIDE at the national (local) level will be explored using a case study of the Solomon Islands. It will assess the extent to which PRIDE has been able to deal with problems of ownership and donor coordination. At a regional level, investigation will look at how the PIF became involved and how the University of the South Pacific managed the project from a regional 'hub' in Suva, Fiji. Analysis will centre on how a regional mandate can work in different country contexts. At the global level, the thesis will explore how the project mandate is influenced from wider global policy trends of the basic education and Sector Wide Approach (SWAP) agendas. By examining these three levels, this research aims to explore the relationship between local, regional, and global agendas in the implementation of the PRIDE project.

While there were some positive outcomes, a number of key challenges plagued PRIDE's success. This project was established in the context of a bigger chaotic picture. Tensions of ownership versus local capacity and planning versus actual delivery, perpetuate daily in the region. Whilst PRIDE had great intentions, wider issues that PRIDE could not tackle and solve alone, limited the success of the project. Specifically within the Solomon Islands, the project was badly timed and replicated bigger and more successful projects already taking place. Ultimately the project set out to achieve something extraordinary with a limited amount of funding and capacity, and therefore was destined to struggle. While it is essential that local capacity is cherished and used, relying solely on local knowledge and personnel is highly problematic and may not achieve the most successful results.

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<sup>9</sup> United Nations, 'United Nations Millennium Development Goals', <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/> (accessed 31 March 2011)

### Methodology

The intention for this research was to find a recent educational aid initiative within the Pacific that was working with countries to improve basic education levels. As PRIDE was the largest regional education initiative at its inception and had activities in over 15 Pacific countries, the project was chosen as an ideal case study.

A combination of primary and secondary literature, official policy documents and a small number of semi structured interviews in Suva, Honiara and Wellington formed the basis of this research. It must be noted that only a limited amount of peer reviewed academic resources were available on the area of Pacific educational aid. In addition, PRIDE, in comparison to other funded projects in the Pacific, is very small in size, funding and allocated resources. This meant not a large amount of research had been done on it. Overall, the author has endeavoured to utilise the limited amount of secondary literature available to complete this research.

Secondary literature was used to form the context and historical overview of educational aid. To gain an understanding of SWAPS, wider secondary literature from non-Pacific countries were consulted. Semi-structured interviews were used to learn more about the PRIDE's dynamics and activities. Finally during an interview with Priscilla Puamau, the Director of PRIDE in Suva, Fiji, official 'End of Project Completion Reports' were obtained. Permission was granted to use these reports, despite them not being publicly available.

Interviews were conducted with a total of seventeen subjects. Four interviews took place in Wellington, one in Auckland, seven in Fiji and five in the Solomon Islands. Fiji was chosen because of the location of PRIDE headquarters, University of the South Pacific main campus, NZAID regional hub and Pacific Island Forum. Honiara was chosen as the Solomon Island Ministry of Education headquarters and PRIDE national country project coordinator were located there. The subjects were either involved with educational aid and development within the Pacific, or directly involved with PRIDE and its project activities. Several interviewees were not directly quoted as they asked to remain anonymous. Due to the limited amount of literature available, information gathered from the interviews were used as background information.

Although some questions were asked of all the participants and the topics were the similar, each interview took its own course. All interviews attempted to covered three main areas; firstly the history of aid and educational aid giving within the Pacific (this included questions on donor behaviour), secondly the dynamics and activities of PRIDE and thirdly how PRIDE succeeded/failed with these activities. Some of the topics were further discussed through email correspondence.

The Solomon Islands was chosen as it is symbolic of where PRIDE was needed most. Second to Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands experiences the lowest adult literacy rates and lowest combined gross enrolment rates within the Pacific. Counteracting these figures, it receives the second largest ODA flows within the Pacific and houses a considerable number of development partners. Since the 1999 ethnic tension and the 2002 ceasefire, the country has been thrust into the worlds focus. With the introduction of the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI), New Zealand, Australia and other Pacific partners now have vested interest in getting the country back on track. This means that a significant number of donors are present and a significant number of development activities are undertaken each year and therefore the Solomon Islands would be an excellent case study. Specific interest was focused on how countries with so many development partners and limited capacity (human and infrastructural) can truly 'own' and manage development projects. Whilst ownership and utilising local capacity are essential pillars for PRIDE, this thesis will explore the possibilities of these elements actually evolving within the Solomon Islands. In addition, investigation will focus on how regional projects can exist between countries that are so vastly different (regional versus local).

There are weaknesses in using just one country case study, however due to size and time constraints analysing more than one country would have been difficult. The Solomon Islands proved to be a very interesting case study and provided wider discussion on development challenges, including donor agendas, aid saturation and limited in-country capacity. Discussion on SWAPs later in this thesis shows that the Solomon Islands already had an education sector wide approach underway. The author felt that this was not problematic as a number of countries in the Pacific during PRIDE's duration were establishing SWAPs (including Samoa, Cook Islands, Vanuatu and Tonga). Key donors in the region, including NZAID and Australian

Agency for International Development (AUSAID) now promote this type of bilateral sector engagement as priorities.

### Chapter Overview

This thesis is broken into five chapters. The first chapter provides an historical overview of educational aid giving within the Pacific. Donor giving trends per decade will be identified. While low achievement rates in some Pacific countries have not gathered too much attention, the advent of the global EFA and MDG goals more recently have forced donors to re-evaluate their mandates and methods of giving. The focus on basic education and lifting enrolment, achievement and access rates is now a priority. Overall the chapter will explain how donors have historically controlled educational aid, timeframes and budgets. This raises concern that what children are learning in the Pacific does not take into account local history, Pacific culture and epistemologies, and is more in favour of donors own agendas. The chapter will provide the context from which PRIDE was established.

The second chapter will discuss the beginnings of PRIDE and how the Ministers of Education conceived the project design. Exploration into the project's three key result areas will also be outlined. The chapter will propose four criteria from which the project's success can be measured against, and will be analysed later in chapter four and five.

Chapter three will examine how PRIDE's mandate is influenced by sector wide approaches (SWAPs). A comparison between the two initiatives will help to determine whether PRIDE incorporates some elements. By outlining the critiques of SWAPs we can identify key challenges and critiques of PRIDE. Overall discussion will focus on how PRIDE has used SWAPs notions of sector strategising and planning to create pathways for Pacific Ministries of Education to work off. The concern is that despite now having some strategies in place, there is limited capacity to actually implement what is proposed. Whilst it is laudable that the first step has been taken, committing resources, personnel and money is now a priority. PRIDE unfortunately was not able to commit these resources and in some cases the project had to compete with other development activities. Overall PRIDE's ambition of being the biggest education initiative in the region did not happen.

Chapter four will analyse PRIDE activities within the country context of the Solomon Islands. Discussion will focus on how this regional project played out within a local country setting. An overview of educational aid, education delivery and the ethnic tensions will form the context that PRIDE was established against. It will outline extensively every PRIDE activity the country participated in. As PRIDE was operational during the same time the country was implementing an education SWAP, analysis will look at how the two initiatives worked together. Using the four criteria for success, conclusions will draw out that the project sat uncomfortably against other development projects going on. PRIDE came at a difficult time and the capacity of staff to properly undertake the project could not happen. PRIDE suffered from not being considered a priority and held little recognition outside of top Ministry of Education staff. Overall within the Solomon Islands unless a project has considerable money and resources, government officials simply do not have the time or capacity to dedicate their time to it. This has created a cycle of the biggest, not the best, projects being prioritised.

Chapter five will examine the successes and shortfalls of PRIDE as a regional project. Analysis will draw together previous arguments of how the project replicated elements of the SWAP model and encouraged Pacific governments to put together strategic pathways. Discussion will focus on how the project's mandate was overly optimistic and its lacked pre - country assessments meaning it did not find a particular niche or opportunity to flourish in many participating countries. Countries in the region are operating at vastly different levels and a 'one size fits all' mandate was not suitable. PRIDE has demonstrated that real tensions exist in the region about local Pacific ownership versus capacity on the ground. The picture is not black and white and requires a more flexible approach, incorporating a mix of foreign nationals as well as Pacific expertise. Secondly, there seems to be an obsession with creating plans, frameworks and strategies, with less focus on actually delivering and implementing what is proposed. Planning is certainly a component on the educational aid 'process', however more focus and attention needs to be on implementing plans and getting results at a classroom level. Ultimately the thesis will conclude that the legacy of PRIDE will be mixed, as it really failed to deliver the impossible task it set out to achieve.



## **CHAPTER ONE- HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL AID IN THE PACIFIC REGION**

PRIDE was established out of dissatisfaction with the historical provision of educational aid in the Pacific. Overtime donors have typically set the agendas of educational aid, frequently shifting their priorities and implementation methods. This has not always produced the most relevant or suitable education initiatives. PRIDE aimed to allow recipients greater control over their aid so that they could effectively plan and deliver their own basic education priorities.

This chapter will provide the context from which PRIDE was established. Discussion will give an historical overview of the provision of educational aid within the Pacific and explore the contested relationships that have flourished between donors and recipients. Decade trends of Pacific educational aid will highlight fundamental issues of ownership, relevancy and donor control, all of which PRIDE has attempted to fix. In addition, discussion will show how the new focus for educational aid in the Pacific is centred on ‘basic education’ delivery, which is also fundamental to PRIDE’s mandate.

From its small early beginnings, educational aid to the Pacific is now described as ‘big business’. According to a 2004 OECD report aid to the Pacific Islands from all donors during the 2002 totalled US\$656 million.<sup>10</sup> Aid to fund education is delivered through bilateral, multilateral and regional programmes, using various approaches. This money is given by multiple stakeholders, with Australia being the largest donor of educational aid in the Pacific.<sup>11</sup> Educational aid is historical, it came with colonisation and then self-government, today it accompanies newer forms of strategic and constitutional associations.<sup>12</sup> The distribution of this aid mirrors the needs of each country. Generally countries within Melanesia are classified as having ‘serious needs’ compared to their Polynesian and Micronesian neighbours. Therefore

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<sup>10</sup> Sanga, Op. Cit. (2005). p. 17.

<sup>11</sup> Kabini Sanga, ‘A context sensitive approach to educational aid’, *Journal of Educational Studies*, 25/1&2 (2003), p. 29.

<sup>12</sup> Sanga, Op. Cit. (2005). p. 17.

Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, all of which are located in Melanesia, receive more than 50 percent of the total aid to the region.<sup>13</sup>

Foreign donors have driven many educational reforms and developments in the Pacific region. Many of these reforms have focused on curriculum development, assessment, teacher education, and resource development to support curriculum change from colonial times. While many argue that donor countries benefit too much from aid relationships there have been significant benefits for recipient Pacific countries as well.<sup>14</sup> Since the 1960s Pacific countries have seen infrastructure such as classrooms, libraries and toilet blocks being built. In addition, local citizens have been employed to both manage and facilitate the education sector and many students have travelled internationally to obtain secondary and tertiary education on scholarship schemes.<sup>15</sup> Without educational aid much of this would not have been possible.

However, research is showing that quality education is not being achieved and the same issues have continued to plague educators for the last four decades. Issues of quality, access, equity, relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and student achievement continue to trouble many Pacific nations. Despite Pacific governments and many donor agencies investing heavily into the education sector, learning outcomes are decreasing and students continue to fail or drop out of school at alarming rates. This chapter will explore the way in which foreign aid and involvement has become intrinsically linked with education development and what has resulted.

#### Aid to education - the beginnings

The giving of aid to fund education systems in the Pacific is not a new phenomenon. External influence and involvement in education systems has been present since the beginning of schooling in the region. Schools were set up and run by missionaries who came to the Islands and were seen as a medium through which Pacific communities could be assimilated with colonial beliefs, systems and practices, and a way to produce 'tractable populations'. Colonisers felt obligation to provide education systems. However, the 'imported' systems through which they provided

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Puamau, Op. Cit. p. 5.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

education were often felt to be contradictory with traditional Pacific cultures.<sup>16</sup> Formal education was limited and the curriculum at the time was described as inappropriate and irrelevant to Pacific life. There was an emphasis placed on individualism, written expression and English language learning, which failed to take into account Pacific traditions of oral story telling, culture and native Pacific languages.<sup>17</sup> Ironically these debates around the relevance and appropriateness of education systems in the Pacific continue today.

The end of World War Two triggered significant political, economic and social changes for the Pacific Islands resulting in many countries becoming independent. After independence the governments of these new Pacific states began to re-establish their relationships with their former 'colonial masters'. An important and integral component of these new relationships was the provision of aid to encourage 'economic development'. Donors believed education was a precondition for wider development and modernisation, and therefore prioritised funding this sector. Ever since, the sector has seen a large amount of aid being channelled through it. As a result Pacific governments have allowed external assistance, such as loans and aid, to significantly fund and shape educational developments in their countries.

Educational aid discourse during the 1950s and 1960s was dominated on a global scale by the notion that education resulted in modernisation for a country. When populations of developing countries were 'educated' they would in turn acquire the right set of skills to help their countries become more technologically, socially and economically 'advanced'. If countries were not able to provide education for their citizens then it was perceived that development could not occur.<sup>18</sup> Education was seen as the central mechanism for the production of a skilled labour force which in turn would increase gross national product levels. This influenced policy to favour the expansion of funding to formal education, in particular funding to higher and secondary education sectors. Investing in education was seen as necessary for economic growth and linked to ideas of human capital theory, which is based on the premise that 'investments' can be made in humans to enhance their economic

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<sup>16</sup> James Boutillier, 'Educational Dilemmas in the Pacific Islands', *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 23/1 (1992), p. 79.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>18</sup> Eve Coxon and Hillary Tolley, 'Aid to Pacific Education: An overview', in Kabini Sanga (ed.), *Rethinking aid relationships in Pacific education* (Wellington: He Parekerekere, Institute for Research and Development in Maori and Pacific Education, Victoria University, 2005), p. 35.

productivity.<sup>19</sup> The provision of formal education is seen as a productive investment in human capital, and is viewed as equally or more worthwhile than that of physical capital investments.<sup>20</sup>

Therefore more aid around the world was directed toward building up the infrastructure that enabled education to occur, including funding for schools and Ministries of Education. Emphasis was placed on teacher training and producing the necessary manpower in order to deliver education. There was a promotion by donors of particular knowledge and skills that they deemed necessary for modernisation, for example English language learning.<sup>21</sup> Aid for educational development grew quickly and by 1960 it accounted for almost 10 percent of global aid flows.<sup>22</sup> As governments and international organisations began to involve themselves in education for development a loose international regime for educational development emerged. This regime had no formal systems of governance or coordination in place, it simply operated under the notion that more education equalled more development for a developing country.<sup>23</sup> Mundy argues that educational development in developing countries was seen as a job that national governments needed to implement, which was to be supported and funded by expertise and resources from donors and international organisations.<sup>24</sup>

Modernisation theory profoundly influenced educational aid to the Pacific for many years. On a Pacific level, education was perceived by donors as a necessity for enabling each country to ‘catch up’ with more developed countries. It was seen as something countries needed to build on for ‘self reliance’. Two key outcomes of education were sought; the first was the immediate requirement of qualified indigenous staff to man the public service and take over government roles from colonial expats. The second, and longer term emphasis, was on the provision of a workforce with the appropriate skills, knowledge and attitudes deemed necessary for economic development. Central to both of these foci was the need for greater senior

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<sup>19</sup> Olaniyan. Okemakinde, ‘Human Capital Theory: Implications for Educational Development’, *European Journal of Scientific Research*, 24/2 (2008), p. 158.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Coxon and Tolley, Op. Cit. p. 35.

<sup>22</sup> Karen Mundy, ‘Education for All- Paradoxes and Prospects of a global promise’, in David Baker and Alexander Wiseman, *Education for All: Global Promises, National Challenges* (Oxford: Elsevier, 2007), p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

secondary schooling and tertiary education facilities. Funding from donors began to pour into these areas. Both of these new focus areas had an emphasis placed on vocational learning.<sup>25</sup> Both Island governments and aid donors increasingly viewed education provision from an economic perspective. Island governments began to accept the orthodox human capital view that education was an 'investment' for a country. Citizens would be imparted with useful skills and knowledge that in turn would increase their productivity as workers, and as a consequence would produce greater economic growth for their country.<sup>26</sup> These understandings were fed into national development plans and informed education policies throughout the emerging Pacific states.

Access problems began to emerge in the sector during the 1970s. During the post war years there was rapid population growth across the Islands, mainly due to improved access and availability of health services. Once these children reached school age it meant there were increased demands placed on education systems to provide schooling for them. What resulted were disjointed systems that could not keep up with the demand, leaving many young children excluded. As the world experienced a financial downturn, overall aid flows to the Pacific decreased.<sup>27</sup> It was during this time that the sector needed the money the most, however with poor economic growth Pacific governments found themselves financially constrained. Poor achievements in economic growth by the newly established governments restricted expenditure, which meant everyday government spending on infrastructure and services was limited. As a result, aid going into the Pacific by the 1970s began to directly fund government expenditure, such as education systems.<sup>28</sup> This has continued until today, for example, Rodney Cole notes in his 1993 article on economic development in the South Pacific that over \$350 million Australian dollars per annum was used to directly fund government expenditure programmes in Papua New Guinea.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Coxon and Tolley, Op. Cit. p. 38.

<sup>26</sup> Leo Maglen, 'The impact of bilateral aid on educational development: The Case of Australia and the South Pacific', *Comparative Education*, 26/1 (1990), p. 84.

<sup>27</sup> Coxon and Tolley, Op. Cit. p. 38.

<sup>28</sup> P. Collier and D. Dollar, 'Development effectiveness: What have we learnt?', *The Economic Journal*, 114 (1993), p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> Rodney Cole, 'Economic development in the South Pacific promoting the private sector', *World Development*, 21 (1993), p. 5.

Tension began to mount as the sector had been put on a pedestal, and was believed to be a central medium through which economic development could occur. Despite Pacific governments attempting to allocate substantial percentages to fund education in their national budgets, the amounts translated into small pools of money. Often allocations were barely able to cover recurrent expenses. For example, the Samoan Government in the 1970s allocated 21-25 percent of their total government budgets to education. However, this was not enough to cover the 43 percent of the population in school at the time.<sup>30</sup> Across the region, economic growth that was promised from education was not occurring. In addition, many Pacific educators questioned the appropriateness of what was being offered, particularly whether the education systems were only addressing the needs of pockets of society.<sup>31</sup> For the select few who were able to complete both primary and secondary school, jobs in the government sector were not guaranteed and were becoming limited as a result of structural adjustment.

By placing an emphasis on funding secondary and tertiary education with the hope of producing a skilled workforce, many younger students were not able to access education. This meant that they could not proceed onto higher levels of education and in many cases seek employment. Local politicians and bureaucrats became concerned with the growing number of rural dwellers moving to urban areas in search of educational and employment opportunities. These uneducated and often unemployed youth began to become a real problem for Island countries.<sup>32</sup> Lack of opportunities and employment led to increasing civil unrest, crime and violence. Without education these students had little chance at gaining employment, yet the education systems were often irrelevant and could not provide a space for them.

By the 1980s it was clear that the Pacific region was becoming increasingly dependent on foreign aid and development flows. In addition, the Islands' limited resource base, isolation from world markets, geographical dispersion over vast expanses of ocean, and limited export commodities ensured that, while these nations were small in size, their problems were becoming significant. The end of colonial

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<sup>30</sup> Tilianamua Afamasga and Epenesa Esera, 'Educational Aid in Samoa', in Kabini Sanga (ed.), *Re-thinking aid relationships in Pacific education* (Wellington: He Parekereke, Institute for Research and Development in Maori and Pacific Education, Victoria University, 2005), p. 293.

<sup>31</sup> Coxon and Tolley, *Op. Cit.* p. 39.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

rule brought forward a number of political and economic problems for newly established governments.<sup>33</sup> Escalating problems of poverty, corruption, crime and secessionist violence were rearing their heads. Economic growth and diversification had been limited for Pacific Islands since decolonisation, especially when compared to a number of other developing Island economies of the same size in the Caribbean and Indian Ocean.<sup>34</sup> As a result, the 1980s became a very turbulent time for educational aid in the Pacific.

As with other developing countries around the world, the recommended answer for economic development being practised and preached by the World Bank and other International Financial Institutions was structural adjustment. However the structural adjustment programmes aimed at deregulating economies to become internationally competitive and better integrated into the global economy had devastating effects in the Pacific Islands.<sup>35</sup> Pacific Island economies are small with limited private sectors and relatively large public and informal sectors. They are removed from global markets and reliant on imports for many basic commodities. Their export base is very limited.<sup>36</sup> When structural adjustment went ahead, state assets were privatised and essential services such as health and education were reduced. The economic policies implemented under structural adjustment have had a lasting effect, and in the view of many Pacific commentators, have posed and will continue to pose “a serious threat to the fragile, semi-subsistence Pacific economies.”<sup>37</sup> Weaknesses in macroeconomic policies have limited future economic growth. A 2002 study of six Island countries showed that only three countries, Fiji, Samoa and Vanuatu, averaged growth rates better than 2 percent per annum.<sup>38</sup> The remaining countries recorded annual growth between 1.2 and 1.8 percent. These outcomes are significantly inferior

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<sup>33</sup> Stephen Hoadley, *Pacific island security management by New Zealand & Australia: towards a new paradigm* (Wellington: Centre for Strategic Studies, Victoria University, 2005), p. 5.

<sup>34</sup> Azmat Gani, ‘Pacific Island Countries High Per Capita Foreign Aid Requirement’, *Journal for International Development*, 18/285-292 (2006), p. 2.

<sup>35</sup> Coxon and Tolley, Op. Cit. p. 42.

<sup>36</sup> Eve Coxon and Karen Munce, ‘The global education agenda and the delivery of aid to education’, *Comparative Education*, 44/2 (2008), p. 150.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 148.

<sup>38</sup> Countries in the study include Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Study information from Te’o I. J. Fairbairn, ‘Pacific Island Economies: Performance, Growth, Prospects and the Impact of the Asian Economic Crisis’, *Asian-Pacific Economic Literature*, 13/2 (2002), p. 47

to those achieved by island countries in the Caribbean, Africa and Indian Ocean which average between 3.5 and 4.0 percent per annum over the same time period.<sup>39</sup>

The education sectors in the Pacific were not sheltered from the global education blueprints being recommended by the World Bank at the time. Between the mid-1980s and 1990s a large number of externally initiated education sector reviews were carried out and implemented in developing countries. The standard World Bank model was based around sharply curtailing the government involvement in educational provision. This was part of wider policies encouraging decentralisation of public and governmental services. These policies reflected neoliberal thinking which saw a move away from state led centralised planning models that had dominated development thinking since the 1960s.<sup>40</sup> It was argued that decentralisation of the education sector would give power back to parents and the communities. Relocating decision making to local levels would make education systems more responsive and adaptable to local circumstances. Central to the rationale for decentralisation was the belief that an introduction of ‘market like’ mechanisms would improve efficiency, and that the market rather than the state could deliver education. Under ‘Rates of Return’ policies, education was examined as an economic phenomenon which could achieve public and private gains.<sup>41</sup> Controversially there were growing calls for ‘user charges’ in education provision, particularly in higher and secondary education. The global blueprints began to refocus the previous recommendations of secondary education more toward prioritising basic and vocational education.

Evaluation of structural adjustment in the early 1990s highlighted fundamental flaws with the World Bank’s policies. Overall funding to education decreased dramatically around the world and many families were unable to afford the new costs associated with education provision. Cost recovery or cost reduction programmes practised by governments acted as a deterrent for poorer people gaining access to quality public services, such as education. The introduction of school fees meant that school drop out rates increased and in many countries this disproportionately affected girls. As with many countries around the world, these policies in the Pacific failed to take into

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<sup>39</sup> Te’o I. J. Fairbairn, Op. Cit. p. 47.

<sup>40</sup> Susan Robertson et al, ‘Globalisation, Education and Development-Ideas, Actors and Dynamics’, *Researching the Issues*, 68 (2007), p. 42.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.



account local socio-cultural factors which once again opened Pacific education systems to a large amount of external policy prescriptions that were not relevant in a Pacific context.<sup>42</sup>

At this time the two largest bilateral donors funding education in the Pacific were Australia and New Zealand. Both of these countries experienced significant changes in the policies and procedures underpinning their aid programmes, which directly affected their educational aid. Up until the 1980s, Australia's aid policy had had a clear mandate of 'providing the maximum benefits to Pacific peoples and supporting self-reliance'. Within this mandate Australia included strong financial support for enhancing the capabilities and capacities of national and regional educational institutions to deliver their own education and training. However, when the Jackson Report was published in 1984 it emphasised the need for Australian aid to work more in favour of Australia's economic interests.<sup>43</sup> That Report viewed education as an 'export industry', encouraging more Pacific students to attend Australian tertiary institutions and Australian contractors to deliver aid. These recommendations and subsequent policy changes ensured that a very high proportion of Australian aid dollars remained within the Australian economy.

In New Zealand, after a major internal restructuring of the public sector, there was a refocus of aid funded development policies, including Pacific educational aid. All education development assistance services moved from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. New Zealand's aid, trade and foreign policy became inextricably linked and all relationships with the Pacific were encouraged to bring a more contemporary focus with an injection of realism.<sup>44</sup> Both New Zealand and Australia began funding scholarships for Pacific students to come and study within their own countries. New Zealand began to manage the majority of its educational projects instead of having local people involved. Government officials appeared to draw heavily on global education blueprints of accountability, efficiency and cost effectiveness, recommending that management and capacity building policy and planning were funded with its aid money. New Zealand recommended to Pacific Ministries of Education to increase private sector

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<sup>42</sup> Coxon and Tolley, *Op. Cit.* p. 42.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

involvement in education, ignoring processes and structures of teaching and learning in favour of an 'input/output' assessment.<sup>45</sup> The changes implemented by both countries during the 1980s showed a move away from funding education for self reliance towards self interested economism.<sup>46</sup>

It was during the 1990s that big changes began to happen around the world for educational aid which saw the most significant policy changes for educational aid in the Pacific Islands. New donors became concerned with funding education and new global education targets saw greater international coordination and cooperation occur. The 1990 Education for All Conference held in Jomtien, Thailand launched a new global commitment to provide quality basic education for all children, youth and adults.<sup>47</sup> Under the leadership of UNESCO and four other UN agencies (the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the World Bank), 155 country representatives and 150 governmental and non governmental organisations came together to adopt a new vision for education around the world.<sup>48</sup> There was agreement that countries and organisations needed to work together to make primary education accessible to all children and efforts needed to be increased to reduce illiteracy rates before the end of the decade. The quest to achieve Education for All (EFA) by 2000 was later extended to 2015, as many countries were far off reaching these goals.<sup>49</sup> The delegates of the conference adopted a '*World Declaration on Education for All*', which reaffirmed the notion that education is a fundamental human right, as outlined in the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights. It urged countries to intensify their efforts to increase and address the basic learning needs of all citizens. The Declaration was grounded within the '*Framework for Action to Meet the Basic Learning Needs*' which comprised of six goals.<sup>50</sup> These included;

Goal One: Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>47</sup> UNESCO, 'World Conference on EFA, Jomtien, 1990', <http://www.unesco.org/en/efa/the-efa-movement/jomtien-1990/> (accessed 20 July 2010).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Coxon and Tolley, Op. Cit. p. 50.

<sup>50</sup> UNESCO, Op. Cit.

Goal Two: Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances, and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to, and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

Goal Three: Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes.

Goal Four: Achieving a 50 percent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.

Goal Five: Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.

Goal Six: Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.<sup>51</sup>

The conference prioritised basic education through global mobilization around time-bound targets.<sup>52</sup> Although the term ‘basic education’ was not new, it very much became the new focus within development and education circles. Basic education was intended to meet basic learning needs, which is a foundation from which subsequent learning can be achieved. It is based on the premise that equipping young people with the necessary literacy and numeracy skills will enable them to build sustenance from their environment, to participate effectively in society, to meet challenges, to create new solutions, and to transform the world in a positive way.”<sup>53</sup> Overall learning, schooling and an education were seen as a catalyst for development. The challenge was now set for countries to find a feasible way to meet the basic learning needs of all of their populations. To achieve the goals many countries needed additional resources, structures and financial systems. To realistically achieve EFA in developing countries there needed to be strong leadership within individual countries as well as support from donors, organisations

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Katarina Tomasevski, *Education Denied* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 2003), p. 93.

<sup>53</sup> UNESCO, ‘Meeting Basic Learning Needs: A Vision for the 1990s, Background Document World Conference on Education for All’, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0009/000975/097552e.pdf> (accessed 10 July 2010), p. 7.

and governments.<sup>54</sup> In response to this, overall collaboration and coordination among donors concerned with education has visibly increased. It has created debate, discussion and focus and increased multilateral interest in the education sector. The conference has also seen a dramatic swing and focus now on funding primary and basic education levels around the world.

The EFA Jomtien Conference and the subsequent international goals have had a profound and lasting impact on educational aid to the Pacific region. The goals opened a forum for debate and examination of how education systems were performing and what shortfalls needed addressing in the region. Meeting the EFA goals and more recently the Millennium Development Goals have become a strong focus for donor agencies and governments of the Pacific. To be able to achieve the international targets, emphasis shifted from the previous 30 years of funding secondary and tertiary education toward funding basic education at a primary level. Education for All had strong links with ‘poverty alleviation’ agendas being put into new aid delivery mechanisms and practices in the region, as well as around the world. Donors and governments recognised education’s intrinsic links to poverty reduction and reaffirmed the World Bank’s notion that a failure to provide basic education seriously compromises a country’s efforts to reduce poverty.”<sup>55</sup>

Since the 1990 EFA Jomtien Conference there has been widespread disputes over the exact meaning of ‘basic education’. The disputes arise as to whether basic education solely means providing primary school education, or primary and secondary school as well as non-formal and adult education. As the Education for All mandate fails to specifically define what it entails, it has left the concept open to large amount of interpretation. During the 1990 and 1996 Education for All conferences there were large recorded struggles over the definition and concept of ‘basic education’. Brock-Utne believes that the struggles appeared “crudely, to be between the World Bank along with UNICEF on the one side and African states along with UNESCO on the other.”<sup>56</sup> While the World Bank and UNICEF believed basic education entailed primary schooling/education, African Ministers of Education, along with other African delegates and UNESCO, refused this assumption and insisted that the

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>55</sup> Coxon and Tolley, Op. Cit. p. 40.

<sup>56</sup> Birgit Brock-Utne, ‘Who has the power to define basic education’, *Noraag News*, 19 (1997), p. 24.

mandate must include non-formal and adult education.<sup>57</sup> This ‘loose’ definition has enabled governments and donors to define basic education based on their own priorities and what they deem achievable. Ultimately this can be considered a failure of EFA as it has caused considerable confusion and uncertainty.

The loose definition of what basic education entails on a global scale also caused uncertainty in the Islands. Across the region there were varying views as to the exact meaning of basic education. In most cases basic education was seen as primary education, whilst in others it included junior secondary. There also appeared to be no mention or indicators of basic education in terms of outcomes, skills and values being taught, with the majority of focus on the ability of students to pass tests and examinations.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless Island governments and donors shared the common objective of achieving the provision of universal primary education and meeting the EFA and later MDG goals.

Even groups that had previously not been involved in education planning began to take more notice of education's role for the region. For example, the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat convened meetings amongst Pacific Ministers of Education. For the first time ever Education Ministers met in May of 2001 to share ideas, key learning and strategies to help each country achieve EFA. Out of the first conference the Forum Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP) was put together.<sup>59</sup> The FBEAP identified the need for “basic education to be founded on distinct Pacific values, morals, social, political, economic and cultural heritages, and to reflect the Pacific’s unique geographical context while taking account of the global context.”<sup>60</sup> There was recognition that more collaborative partnerships and coordination was needed amongst donors, as well as between donors and local stakeholders. Knowledge and information needed to be shared between countries and greater participation from non-governmental partners such as NGOs was essential. The strategy was officially endorsed by the 32<sup>nd</sup> Pacific Islands Forum in 2001.<sup>61</sup> The PRIDE Project was conceived as a project that could help implement FBEAP and help countries achieve basic education. The project’s overall mandate was to enhance the capacity of

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<sup>57</sup> Robertson et al, Op. Cit. p. 63.

<sup>58</sup> Coxon and Munce, Op. Cit. p. 151.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. p. 154.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> NZAID, ‘Achieving Education for All- Policy Document’, 2004, <http://www.nzaid.govt.nz/library/docs/nzaid-education-policy.pdf> (accessed 21 July 2010), p. 15.

Pacific education agencies to effectively plan and deliver quality basic education through formal and non-formal means. PRIDE will be analysed later in this thesis.

### Aid to Education Today

The EFA global agendas have successfully brought new donors into funding education in the region. Educational aid in the Pacific now has multiple stakeholders. In the Pacific region the main bilateral donors include Australia, the United States, Japan, New Zealand and European Union. The main multilateral groups are UNESCO, UNFPA and UNDP. At the project level there are various universities, companies, NGOs and professional groups that participate on a daily basis delivering education.<sup>62</sup> While all of the five main bilateral donors have different perspectives on what educational aid is meant for they all share a belief in the provision of basic education.

While all of these donors uphold the notion that basic education has a strong place in development, the projects that they support follow different mandates, visions and rationales. This results in a variety of projects being funded and a large amount of projects actually taking place on the ground. Despite this support and positive rhetoric toward achieving basic education learning achievement levels remain low by international standards and persistent inequalities are hindering progress towards the EFA goals. The range of adult literacy rates (15 and over) varies within the region with lows of 57 percent in PNG to 99 percent in Samoa and Tonga.<sup>63</sup>

*Educational statistics of selected to Pacific Countries (%) UNDP 2009<sup>64</sup>*

	<b>Human Development Index Ranking in relation to 180 other countries<sup>65</sup></b>	<b>National average adult literacy</b>	<b>Combined Gross Enrolment Ratio</b>
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<sup>62</sup> Sanga, Op. Cit. (2005), p. 20.

<sup>63</sup> Australian Agency for International Development, 'Aid Activities: Pacific Education', <http://www.aisaid.gov.au/country/pacific/education.cfm> (accessed 20 July 2010).

<sup>64</sup> United Nations Development Programme, Country Profiles and International Human Development Indicators', <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data/profiles/> (accessed 20 July 2010).

<sup>65</sup> 182 countries are rated against each other to compare and contrast their human development. The HDI provides a composite measure of three dimensions of human development: living a long and healthy life (measured by life expectancy), being educated (measured by adult literacy and gross enrolment in education) and having a decent standard of living (measured by purchasing power parity, PPP, income).

		(ages 15 and above) <sup>66</sup>	
Fiji	108/180 (0.741)	Not Available	71.5%
Papua New Guinea	148/180 (0.541)	57.8%	40.7%
Samoa	94/180 (0.771)	98.7 %	74.1%
Solomon Islands	135/180 (0.610)	76.6%	49.7%
Tonga	99/180 (0.768)	99.2%	78%
Vanuatu	126/180 (0.693)	78.1%	62.3%

As the table outlines, countries within Melanesia<sup>67</sup> have the lowest Human Development Index ratings, adult literacy rates, and combined gross enrolment rates. Despite decades of educational aid there continue to be very low achievement rates for countries within Melanesia. Discussion below will focus on what key challenges are potentially holding back achievement levels and the role that aid has played in this picture.

### Ownership of Education

Analyses of the impacts of educational aid to and in Pacific communities are symbolic of larger debates of the impacts of foreign aid to the region. One of the major concerns is the dependency that Pacific countries now have on foreign aid and external 'expertise'. Two big questions remain, first, whether there can be 'Pacific ownership' with such large amounts of foreign expertise, resources and financial backing flowing into the region. Secondly, whether countries should even expect to own and manage their aid programmes, or whether donors should be able to dictate the agenda.

A 2010 OECD 'Oceania Development aid at a glance - statistics by region Report' highlights that, per capita, Oceania is the highest net overseas development aid

<sup>66</sup> This indicator is measured by the proportion of the adult population aged 15 years and older which is literate, expressed as a percentage of the corresponding population (total or for a given sex) in a given country, territory, or geographic area, at a specific point in time, usually mid-year. For statistical purposes, a person is literate who can, with understanding, both read and write a short simple statement on their everyday life.

<sup>67</sup> Melanesian countries include Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu.

(ODA) recipient in the world.<sup>68</sup> On average Oceania received US \$177 per capita in aid flows in 2008, compare to Africa receiving US \$45 per capita and Asia US \$12 per capita.<sup>69</sup> Papua New Guinea followed by the Solomon Islands receives over 35 percent of this aid.<sup>70</sup> While this aid has been used for many beneficial projects, some scholars believe that, on the whole, it has failed to improve living standards and in some cases has descended the region into ‘chaos’.<sup>71</sup>

There are now multiple players involved in the ‘development business’, including new partners such as the European Union, China and Taiwan. This interest and involvement can be viewed as both a challenge and an asset for the region.<sup>72</sup> Many of these donors bring external expertise and ultimately influence with them. For many donors, money is not spent solely in the Pacific but on employing their own national consultants and ‘experts’ to come into the Pacific to ‘advise and consult’. A case study undertaken of New Zealand educational aid money found that from every \$100 promised to the region only \$3 is actually spent in the Pacific. Between 82-85 percent of educational aid does not actually leave New Zealand as it is spent on national consultants, scholarships and New Zealand sourced resources.<sup>73</sup> In addition, at any one time in the region there can be up to 300 foreign consultants present, each with their own agendas and projects.<sup>74</sup> An example of this happening was during the 1999 year the Department of Education in Samoa implemented 34 new education projects. The majority of these projects (eleven in total) were in the primary school sector closely followed by eight in the secondary schools sector. All of the 34 projects were externally funded by either bilateral activities/donors (New Zealand, Australia, Japan and more), administered through the University of the South Pacific or agencies of the United Nations (including UNESCO and UNICEF).<sup>75</sup> The example of foreign donors in Samoa is systematic of what is happening in many

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<sup>68</sup> Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, ‘Development Aid at a Glance 2010: Statistics by Region’, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/43/29/42139429.pdf>, (accessed 8 August 2010).

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Helen Hughes, ‘Trade or aid? Which benefits developing countries the most’, *Economic Papers*, 22/3, p. 15.

<sup>72</sup> Coxon and Munce, Op. Cit. p. 150.

<sup>73</sup> Kabini Sanga, (Pacific educational aid researcher), interview by author, Wellington, 19 May, 2010.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Tilianamua Afamasga and Epenesa Esera, ‘Educational Aid in Samoa’, in Kabini Sanga & ‘Ana Taufe’ulungaki (ed.), *‘International Aid Impacts on Pacific Education’*, (Wellington: He Parekereke, Institute for Research and Development in Maori and Pacific Education, Victoria University, 2005) p. 296.



countries throughout the Pacific. Countries are managing multiple projects funded by multiple donors. Overall, the potential and threatening impact of this is the focus and attention now paid to donor projects. Juggling donor interests and priorities can take up a large amount of Ministries of Education time and resources. In some cases Ministries of Education are criticised for acting more like ‘development partners’ than national providers of education.<sup>76</sup> Carrying out one’s work load to the best of their ability may already be constrained by a lack of resources and infrastructure. This, coupled with donor demands, reporting expectations and additional workloads, is an incredible challenge.

Kabini Sanga and Trisha Nally believe another major challenge for education in the Pacific region, “is the widespread sense of despair and dependency that has permeated some aspects of education in the Pacific over the past 40-50 years and contributed to directions for education being set, intentionally or otherwise by external agents.”<sup>77</sup> While donors continue to fund projects they are able to set agendas and dictate what they are willing to support or not. As Pacific Government budgets are limited, they are left in the unfortunate position of having to accept the ‘double edged sword’ of aid.<sup>78</sup> Pacific educators believe that external influence has resulted in schooling systems that are not relevant to everyday Pacific life, but more to donors’ own country systems. There is a strong sense that Pacific peoples need to have greater ownership over their education. For most Pacific countries, curriculum content is perceived to be removed from ‘real life’. Practical cultural knowledge and skills have been excluded over time in favour of preparation for exams, often set by foreign qualification authorities.<sup>79</sup> Examining more practical and cultural knowledge and skills, which are highly important to life in Pacific communities, is hard to do and often gets overlooked.<sup>80</sup>

### Access to Education

Despite high proportions of national budgets being invested into basic education and considerable donor assistance, resources for education are reportedly becoming scarcer as expectations around educational provision expand. This is particularly true

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<sup>76</sup> Sanga, interview.

<sup>77</sup> Sanga, Op. Cit. (2003), p.1

<sup>78</sup> Priscilla Puamau, Op. Cit. p. 4.

<sup>79</sup> Coxon and Munce, Op. Cit. p. 152.

<sup>80</sup> Puamau, Op. Cit. p. 9.

as countries are now expected to achieve the goals laid out under the EFA framework by 2015. There are indications that basic education delivery costs are increasing due to factors relating to population growth, the expansion of compulsory education years and the task of now including rural populations in education provision. For some countries in the Pacific providing education for their remote communities will be an enormous challenge. The Pacific region is a unique geographical area of the world as it covers vast expanses of ocean and is made up of densely forested Islands such as Papua New Guinea down to tiny, sparsely populated atolls scattered across the ocean. Many Pacific countries have dispersed populations across many tiny isolated islands. Population estimates in 2008 put the combined total population at 8.7 million people. The countries exhibit large diversity of cultures and thousands of languages. While some countries are well on track to achieving universal primary education, such as Tonga, Samoa and the Cook Islands, the enrolment rates for the larger Melanesia countries, such as Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, are not. This is of great concern as the Melanesian countries contain about 80 percent of the total population of the region.<sup>81</sup> Equalising access to education not only in Melanesia but across the Pacific will be a challenge. Scattered isolated islands, mountainous terrain and remote villages are incredibly expensive to service and maintain. In addition recruiting and retaining trained school teachers is difficult. The remoteness means that teachers salaries are often delayed or ‘lost’ along the way. Ministries of Education may not have the capacity to carry out field visits and communication from central Ministries with schools may not happen. For some countries access issues are based around school populations being sparsely located across remote or isolated areas. For other countries access may be more related to the effects of rapid urbanisation which places schools in a difficult position to provide spaces for all young people.<sup>82</sup>

### Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the trends for educational aid giving from the 1950s until today. Overtime educational aid has seen many successes - schools have been built, literacy rates have increased and curriculum developed. However it has opened the education sectors to a large amount of external influence and foreign models.

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<sup>81</sup> Coxon and Munce, Op. Cit. p. 153.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

Overtime these models have permeated the education systems which are now very dependent on foreign ties to exist. Despite for over forty years of receiving donor money and expertise to fund educational developments, enrolment and literacy rates remain low for countries in the Pacific, particularly Melanesia. Compounding these issues the region is plagued with economic, social and political issues which overtime have hindered economic growth. This has made government expenditure in some countries incredibly limited, resulting in aid flows propping up government budgets. There is a strong belief that these low achievement rates are the result of the way in which donor/recipient relations have evolved. From the early beginnings educational aid has very much been based on donor priorities and foci. As donors' perceptions about the delivery and mechanisms for aid have changed, so has the way in which aid has been delivered. The changing foci, as well as the amount of foreign involvement, has resulted in many foreign education models being implemented. These models often fail to incorporate Pacific values systems and beliefs, which are fundamental to Pacific culture. What children are learning and the skills that they are leaving school with are often not relevant to modern day life in the region. In addition, there are multiple stakeholders involved in the educational aid 'business', each funding and managing multiple projects. Overall Pacific educators remain overwhelmed, discouraged and in many cases angry at how educational aid is delivered.

With the new focus now on increasing basic education levels in order to fulfil the EFA and MDG agendas, new projects have been created to help achieve this. The PRIDE Project is such an example. The following chapters will provide an overview of PRIDE and show how it is working to bolster basic education levels across the region. PRIDE's activities within the Solomon Islands will be case studied to show how it played out within a specific country setting.

## CHAPTER TWO : OVERVIEW OF THE PRIDE PROJECT

In response to the issues of donor control, lack of ownership and relevance identified in the previous chapter, The PRIDE Project was seen as an initiative that could help build more collaborative, open and transparent ways of delivering educational aid in the Pacific. PRIDE was an attempt by Pacific Education Ministers to create a truly Pacific driven and owned aid project. The project's overall mandate was to enhance the capacity of Pacific education agencies to effectively plan and deliver quality basic education through formal and non-formal means. It would also work to improve the coordination of donor inputs to assist countries to implement their strategic plans. Overall the project had three key areas; strategic planning, sub-project activities and capacity building.

This chapter will discuss how the project came about, the project's mandate and what its three key areas of work were. It will conclude by posing four indicators that measure the project's ultimate success. Overall this chapter will provide an overview of the project for further analysis in chapters three and four.

### The PRIDE Project Mandate

PRIDE was something that grew out of the Pacific Island Forum (PIF) and gathered funding from the EU and NZAID. The Pacific Island Forum represents the Heads of Government of all the independent and self-governing Pacific countries, as well as New Zealand and Australia. Through the help of PIF since 1971 these countries have met regularly (and more recently annually) to express and discuss their joint political views and how to cooperate on political and economic matters. The administrative arm of the Forum, the Secretariat, is based in Suva, Fiji.<sup>83</sup>

At the 1999 Palau meeting of Heads of Government organised by PIF, there was considerable debate about the "human resource needs and the failure of most education systems to satisfy them, thereby perpetuating the regions dependence of highly paid employees from rim countries."<sup>84</sup> Discussion moved to critiquing the way in which the schooling systems in their countries were being run. The leaders

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<sup>83</sup> Pacific Islands Forum, 'About Us', Pacific Islands Forum, <http://www.forumsec.org/pages.cfm/about-us/> (accessed October 15 2010).

<sup>84</sup> University of South Pacific, 'The PRIDE Project, <http://www.usp.ac.fj/index.php?id=publications0>, (accessed October 15 2010).

believed that schools were not providing the relevant life and working skills that young people needed to contribute, not only to their communities and countries but also, to wider global markets. In response to this heated discussion the Forum decided that Ministers of Education needed to come together to address these concerns. Two years later the PIF brought Forum Education Ministers together in May 2001 in Auckland, New Zealand.

By this time wider global focus on basic education and achieving Education for All were considered priorities for the region. With the support of the Pacific UNESCO regional office nearly all Pacific countries have committed to the EFA initiative as well as the MDGs. As expectations of educational provision expanded with these commitments, resources for providing education were reportedly becoming scarcer.<sup>85</sup> In addition, there was no universally agreed upon criteria or definition of ‘basic education’ in the Pacific so governments struggled to determine what they were working to achieve. Therefore the key focus of the Palau meeting became how the region would define and deliver ‘basic education’.<sup>86</sup> After discussion the Ministers decided that basic education would be defined as “all educational provisions for children and youth, both formal and non-formal, except for higher education.”<sup>87</sup> The definition stated:

Basic education is the fundamental building block for society. If this foundation is weak, then livelihoods are more difficult to pursue or students struggle in the higher reaches of education. Furthermore, through the teaching of health, culture, governance and other subjects basic education can engender the broader life skills that lead to social cohesion and which, when combined with an enhancing of employment opportunities, creates a higher level of personal and societal security.<sup>88</sup>

Forum members recognised that basic education would only take place within the context of commitments from both Island governments and the ‘world community’. There was acknowledgement that all plans put forward around the delivery of basic

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<sup>85</sup> Coxon and Munce, *Op. Cit.* p. 152.

<sup>86</sup> See chapter two for discussion on basic education’s problematic ‘open’ definition.

<sup>87</sup> Pacific Islands Forum, ‘Forum Basic Education Action Plan’, 2001, [http://www.usp.ac.fj/fileadmin/files/Institutes/pride/FBEAP\\_complete.pdf](http://www.usp.ac.fj/fileadmin/files/Institutes/pride/FBEAP_complete.pdf) (accessed October 15 2010), p. 2.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*

education must include, “Pacific values, morals, social, political, economic and cultural heritages, and reflect the Pacific’s unique geographical context.”<sup>89</sup> The Ministers agreed in order for each country in the Pacific to improve educational outcomes there needed to be better educational planning in place, with clear frameworks and action plans. The Forum commissioned a working group to put together an overarching education planning document that countries could use and adapt to their local setting. The Forum Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP) was created and sets out the visions, goals and strategies for future education provision in the region. The document proposed the development and strengthening of collaborative partnerships, coordination, knowledge and information sharing and enhanced participation of non-government partners. In reality the document was more of a declaration of agreed sentiments than an action plan per se. The Ministers meeting requested that the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat (PIFS) be mandated to facilitate the implementation of the FBEAP through an additional pilot project or programme.<sup>90</sup>

At the same time the European Union in 2001 decided that funding to its African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of countries would focus on regional initiatives with human resource development (HRD) and regional economic integration components. In the Pacific the PIF held the role of ‘Regional Authorising Officer’, which in turn gave it the mandate to scope a suitable HRD project for €8 million.<sup>91</sup> It was eventually decided that this funding stream would be used to implement the FBEAP and a working group was established in late 2001 to discuss and steer the initiative. A project team was put together who undertook extensive consultation around the Pacific with key education stakeholders. A project design was constructed from this consultation and the proposed outlines went to the Forum Education Ministers meeting in Suva in 2002. The proposed focus had been on providing both formal and non-formal education opportunities to Pacific youth to acquire the knowledge and skills to participate “in the social, spiritual, economic and cultural development of their communities as individuals, community members and citizens.”<sup>92</sup> The title for the project was decided on as PRIDE which was an acronym

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Coxon and Munce, Op. Cit. p. 154.

<sup>91</sup> Hau’ofa and Puamau, Op. Cit. p. 18.

<sup>92</sup> Coxon and Munce, Op. Cit. p. 157.

for *Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of (Basic) Education*.<sup>93</sup> The acronym was seen as encapsulating both the overall objective and feel of the project which was to develop in Pacific youth, through the provision of quality basic education and a sense of pride not only in themselves, but in their language, culture, communities and heritage. Unfortunately the design was famously thrown out by the Ministers, who sighted the concept as too vague and holding limited benefit for countries in the project.

The project design went back to the drawing board and significant modifications were made. The PRIDE design presented to the Education Ministers in 2002 was significantly different to the design the team had developed through extensive consultation. The new focus was to be on achieving basic education through the development of Education Strategic Plans, despite the fact that many countries already had education sector plans under construction or already in place (discussion will focus on this later). All project activities (strategic plans, sub-projects activities and capacity building) were now tailored to the higher purpose of achieving basic education outcomes. The new proposal was accepted and the original name of PRIDE was kept. Funding from the EU was topped up by funding from NZAID which agreed to kick start the project and co-fund it NZD \$5 million for five years. These funds enabled the process of recruiting staff to begin.

After some discussion it was decided that PRIDE would be housed at the University of the South Pacific. At this time the PIF Secretariat did not have the capacity or manpower to take ownership so when the Chancellor of the University signalled his interest it was quickly agreed upon. The project moved into the Institute of Education as the Laucala Campus in Suva in March 2004. Three positions were advertised including a director and administrators. In hindsight Kabini Sanga believes that the positions were cast “too highly” and “not in context” failing to attract real interest. Eventually the job descriptions were altered and “outsiders” including an Australian were hired for the roles by August 2004.<sup>94</sup> As the PRIDE staff were new to the area of Pacific education they did not have the pre-existing contacts so had to begin establishing new relationships with key stakeholders.

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid. p. 156.

<sup>94</sup> Sanga, interview.

The project was officially launched in May 2004 by the Samoan Minister of Education in conjunction with the first meeting of the Project Steering Committee.<sup>95</sup> The project's three key elements; creating strategic plans and benchmarks for Pacific countries, the second establishing a funding stream for sub-projects and thirdly capacity building activities through the creation of a resource centre, online networks and regional/sub-regional workshops. The overall emphasis of the project was to encourage local people to decide on their own local contexts. Therefore when resource people or consultants were required (that the local Ministry of Education could not full) then local consultants would be recruited for the job. If this did not work then the Pacific region consultants would be asked. Only when the previous options had been tried and failed were international consultants asked to become involved. The project was strongly trying to re-examine the way in which foreign expertise was utilised, encouraging more local ownership and decision making to happen within country contexts. Finally the overall spirit and principle of the project would be grounded on the idea of 'flexibility', allowing countries to determine their own needs and priorities. PRIDE was to be implemented through two phases; phase one (the operational implementation) and phase two (closure phase) will end on December 31, 2010.<sup>96</sup> At the time of inception it was the largest regional education project happening within the Pacific.

Key Result Area One: Comprehensive strategic plans covering formal and non-formal education

Supporting education strategic planning across the Pacific was to be PRIDE's core function. The creation of these plans would be made through extensive consultation with teachers, parents, pupils, community groups and private sector representatives within each participating country. The plans would cover both formal and non-formal education. The plans were meant to act as a framework for governments to base their national education systems off.

PRIDE was able to draw on its own core staff to provide technical assistance (TA) to countries to assist with the development of these education plans. This assistance was complemented by a group of regional technical assistants whom held extensive backgrounds in educational planning in the Pacific. PRIDE became heavily involved

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<sup>95</sup> University of South Pacific [web page], Op. Cit.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid



with supporting the northern Pacific with all of the states of FSM and Palau having their educational plans developed with PRIDE's assistance and funding.<sup>97</sup> All plans were approved by the Project Steering Committee (PSC), which comprised of education specialists from all fifteen countries, representatives of the University of the South Pacific, donor organisations, Pacific Island Forum and NGO's.<sup>98</sup> Through working together it was hoped that regional capacity would be built and better educational outcomes would flourish.

As a way to monitor and evaluate how each strategic plan was developing, the PRIDE team established benchmarks, principles and criteria to apply to national strategic education sector plans. These benchmarks were meant to be used as a way of providing constructive and collaborative reviews and feedback. The first set of benchmarks were drafted by the PRIDE team and agreed upon by participating countries.

The eleven benchmarks became:

1. Pride in cultural and national identity;
2. Skills for life and work locally, regionally and globally;
3. Alignment with National Development Plan and Regional and International Conventions;
4. Access and equity for students with special needs;
5. Partnerships with communities and stakeholders;
6. A holistic approach to basic education;
7. Realistic financial costing;
8. Use of data and research information in educational planning;
9. Effective capacity building for all educational personnel;
10. Framework for monitoring and evaluation; and

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<sup>97</sup> University of South Pacific, *PRIDE: End of Completion Report, Part One, Summary Report* (October 2010), p. 17.

<sup>98</sup> University of South Pacific [web page], Op. Cit.

### 11. Integration of Health and Physical Education in the curriculum and school activities<sup>99</sup>

In the spirit of PRIDE the benchmarks were set up as a working document, with regular and open opportunities for review and revision.

#### Key Result Area Two: Implementation of strategic plans

An integral component of the PRIDE project was the funding of in-country sub-projects. Over half the total allocated funds given from the EU and New Zealand were available for this purpose, at the time this amounted to FJ\$12 million. The overall aim of the sub-projects was to assist countries to implement key priorities and areas from their strategic plans. This was identified as “areas where significant reforms were taking place.”<sup>100</sup> The sub-projects quickly became popular and were used as a way to fund and test new ideas and innovations. Piloting projects was strongly encouraged, for example, on PRIDE’s website it states, “If a country wants to develop a more community based approach to the early primary curriculum, it may wish to test these ideas and approaches in just two or three settings.”<sup>101</sup> It was hoped that sub-projects would become examples of best practice, from which staff and other education officials could learn from. Through the funding available many felt that there were now opportunities to develop new curricula, teaching resources and new approaches to staff professional development.

The process for applying for sub-projects was simplified when the PRIDE team developed five model sub-project proposals for countries to base their applications off. The templates were based around the areas of; Vernacular Literacy, Early Childhood Education, Special Needs, ICT and TVET (technical, vocational education and training). Once projects had been approved they were implemented and coordinated through each country’s own Ministry of Education. Every participating country had an assigned PRIDE National Project Coordinator (NPC) which could be liaised and consulted with for information about the overall project as well as the sub-project funding.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Puamau, Op. Cit. p. 9.

<sup>100</sup> University of South Pacific, [web page], Op. Cit.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

Key Result Area Three: Strengthened regional capacity to assist Pacific countries to support strategic planning and implementation of basic education

PRIDE initiated a range of strategies and measures to strengthen regional capacity to assist Pacific countries with planning and implementation of basic education. The key mechanisms were the planned strengthening of USP's Institute of Education, the establishment of a PRIDE resource centre, regional knowledge generation and sharing through workshops on key strategic issues and themes within FBEAP and finally study tours and attachments to regional institutions.<sup>103</sup>

From 2004 to 2009 the PRIDE Resource Centre was a key activity for the project. It was hoped the centre would help build regional capacity and provide access to “a unique collection of education policy, planning and development materials from and relevant to the 15 Pacific countries of the Project.”<sup>104</sup> The Resource Centre was to be housed at the University of the South Pacific Library in Suva, Fiji. In addition to the traditional library resources an online Pacific Archive of Digital Data for Learning and Education (PADDLE) was launched. This was an online hub of resources that could be accessed anytime from around the region. Not only does PADDLE have Pacific contextual resources but also material from international and regional organisations including UNESCO, the Asian Development Bank, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth of Learning, Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL), and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.<sup>105</sup> By making these resources available the Centres' primary objective was to encourage the sharing of best practice and experiences with education practitioners across the region. In addition, the Network of Pacific Educators (NOPE) was established for educators to share their experiences. The Network started with approximately 35 people, this however grew quickly to approximately 700 subscribers.<sup>106</sup>

To maintain direction and build capacity of education personnel ten regional workshops on key priority themes within the FBEAP were organised, and annual workshops were held for the NPCs of each participating country. The workshops were held throughout the region and some were co-sponsored by other agencies and

<sup>103</sup> University of South Pacific, *PRIDE: End of Completion Report*, Op. Cit. p. 17.

<sup>104</sup> University of South Pacific, [web page], Op. Cit.

<sup>105</sup> Pacific Archive of Digital Data for Learning and Education (PADDLE) <http://www.paddle.usp.ac.fj/> (accessed 15 October 2010).

<sup>106</sup> University of South Pacific, *PRIDE: End of Completion Report*, Op. Cit. p. 19.

donors including UNICEF and AUSAID. PRIDE facilitated expertise from around the world as well as local personnel to be present at each workshop.

### Measurements of success?

It is difficult to measure the success of a regional project like this as some countries will naturally do better than others and success can be measured on a number of variables. This thesis will argue that the success of the project can be measured against four objectives.<sup>107</sup> These objectives embody the main aspects of PRIDE's project mandate, which include; being distinctive from past educational aid projects, being the regions leading educational aid initiative and fostering significant capacity building activities. The objectives are;

1. Development of strategic planning documents to deliver basic education using PRIDE resources and funding, whilst building the capacity of educators so they could feel confident to enact and deliver these strategic plans;
2. Using Pacific expertise and personnel to keep knowledge generation and employment within the Pacific region;
3. Facilitate a range of successful sub-projects across the Pacific that would involve extensive education stakeholders (from civil society to Ministries of Education); and
4. Be widely recognised as the leading regional education initiative by a range of stakeholders and education specialists.

This thesis will use these four categories to examine PRIDE within the context of the Solomon Islands. By doing this we may be able to identify wider trends of how PRIDE evolved and ultimately played out within other countries. These criteria will be analysed further in chapter four.

### Conclusion

It seems the name of the project – PRIDE – has deep significance for many people that were involved. A strong sense of pride has resonated amongst many participants and key stakeholders. The project marks a number of 'firsts' for the region. It was the first regional education initiative of its kind to be designed by Education

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<sup>107</sup> These objectives are written by the author of this thesis. They embody all the characteristics of what PRIDE was hoping to achieve.

Ministers themselves. It received the largest amount of funding for a regional project. It was the first time that the Forum had been involved in education and because of this project the Forum now employs staff to oversee an education portfolio. The project design has attempted to be a project that is housed in the Pacific region, involving as many Pacific people as possible. A focus on using local expertise over foreign expertise has really been encouraged. There is a strong emphasis on mutual collaboration and support, with countries supporting each other with expertise, knowledge sharing and resources.<sup>108</sup> For years Pacific educators had been calling for more involvement and input from parents, teachers, students, NGOs and civil society in educational aid planning and delivery and PRIDE strongly encouraged this practise. The project was set up to encourage participating countries to be in the 'steering wheel' and access the project when they wanted to. Countries that utilised the project right from the beginning were able to reap the most benefits. Overall policy makers have placed considerable value in the support provided by PRIDE in the area of educational planning. PRIDE has attempted to bring to the planning process a clear valuing of Pacific cultures and languages with the full participation of community stakeholders.<sup>109</sup> The project is heralded for incorporating elements of wider development priorities including sector wide approaches and follows the Paris Declaration principles.

This chapter has discussed the overall mandate of The PRIDE Project. The following sections of the thesis will analyse why the project focused on strategic planning and what parallels can be drawn between sector wide approaches. There will also be discussion on how PRIDE was implemented within the Solomon Islands.

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<sup>108</sup> Puamau, Op. Cit. p. 10.

<sup>109</sup> University of South Pacific, *PRIDE: End of Completion Report*, Op. Cit. p. 3.

## **CHAPTER THREE- THE INFLUENCE OF THE GLOBAL SWAP MODEL ON THE PRIDE PROJECT**

This chapter will explore how The PRIDE Project can be closely tied with Sector Wide Approaches (SWAPs) ideals. SWAPs are increasingly being promoted as ‘a good way to do business’ and a positive force for development practices.<sup>110</sup> SWAPS are based fundamentally on ideas of country ownership, sector strategizing, coherence and achieving results through greater dialogue. This new approach to aid delivery is attempting to change the dynamics of donor and recipient relationships that have previously been highly criticised. Although not directly intentional, PRIDE is also reminiscent of sector strategising. Donors were quick to fund this project as it encompassed holistic sector planning, was promoted as a concept designed and ‘owned’ by Pacific peoples and had a long term strategic focus.

This chapter will analyse what SWAPs are meant to look like from a World Bank perspective. This will be followed by discussion on the critiques of the SWAP approach. Looking at the problems identified with the SWAP approach we may be able to draw some parallels to PRIDE and see where any shortfalls in the project design are. Through comparing and contrasting PRIDE with SWAPs we can learn how PRIDE is positioning itself within wider development frameworks and how the project is working to address issues involved with relationship management, ownership and sector planning that have historically plagued educational aid delivery in the Pacific region. Conclusions will discuss how the SWAP model is idealised and how PRIDE has borrowed its practical and achievable elements of sector planning. By having a strong strategy and framework to use, Pacific governments will have, in theory, a pathway to help them establish systems to achieve basic education levels. In reality, despite the strategies and frameworks, some Pacific education sectors remain behind and unable to deliver quality basic education to their citizens.

### Origin of SWAPs

The concept of Sector Wide Approaches evolved during the latter part of the 1990s. They can be seen as a reactionary force that came about after the harsh neoliberal Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) of the 1980s and early 1990s.

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<sup>110</sup> Paul Garner, Sector Wide Approaches in Developing Countries: The aid given must make the most impact’, *BMJ*, 321, (2000), p. 129.

Development policy during the 1990s was dominated by a focus on returning ownership and greater control to the private sector. Neo-liberalism and SAPs encouraged a reduced public sector role in areas such as education and health in favour of privatisation. Policy prescriptions given by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) saw the introduction of ‘user pays’ systems in countries which meant that many people missed out on basic services as they could not afford the new fees and charges. The introduction of school fees meant many families could no longer afford to send their children to schools. By the latter 1990s, The World Bank and many of its supporters were forced to retract and admit that “many of the strategies to spur economic growth had made the rich richer, harmed the poor and vastly increased inequality.”<sup>111</sup> A fundamental ideological shift occurred during the 1990s which now saw a revised focus on returning ‘ownership’ to local recipient governments, and away from the private sector. The notions of ‘partnership’ and ‘cooperation’ were seen as alternative methods of engagement to their problematic structural adjustment predecessors.

Mike Foster from the Overseas Development Institute believes there was recognition that previous conditionalities placed by donors on aid had not produced supportive policy environments to achieve sustainable results.<sup>112</sup> Conditions that were closely associated with structural adjustment had in fact created a poor track record in working with governments to reform their policies and procedures. A greater understanding that donors themselves could be detrimental to development outcomes began to be discussed and analysed. In the past many development initiatives were funded as self-contained projects according to their own mandates/priorities. This could mean that within an education sector multiple donors could have been implementing multiple projects with little to no cross over or communication between them.<sup>113</sup> Serious questioning occurred about whether individual project assistance could really enhance the holistic education sector development. A World Bank Education Sector Strategy report in 1999 devotes a whole chapter to the idea

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<sup>111</sup> Steven Klees, ‘World Bank Development Policy: A SAP in SWAPs clothing’, *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, 3/2, (2001), p. 114.

<sup>112</sup> Mick Foster, ‘New Approaches to Development Co-operation: What can we learn from experience with implementing Sector Wide Approaches’, *Working Paper 140: Overseas Development Institute* (2000), p. 7.

<sup>113</sup> As was the case in Samoa in 2009 when 34 externally funded projects were being implemented by a variety of bilateral, multilateral and NGO groups. Information taken from Sanga, *Op. Cit.* (2005), p. 297.

that parties needed to come together as “strengthening education is too big for any single institution” was recognised.<sup>114</sup>

A World Bank Report in 1998 titled ‘Assessing Aid: What Works, What Doesn’t and Why’, concluded that;

If donor projects are not set within a coherent plan and budget, the result can add up to a development effort which is expensive to manage, and in which there is wasteful duplication, uneven coverage, inconsistent approaches, and poor sustainability of projects once donors withdraw. Perhaps most serious of all, donor projects have tended to be set up outside core government systems, often employing their own staff. They have drained capacity from government when they should have been building it.<sup>115</sup>

The report outlined debates that were systematic of the time. Big questions were being asked and solutions were sought about ways in which donors as well as recipient governments could find more equitable and sustainable methods of working together. Rhetoric from the World Bank during this time switched from conditionality to partnership and there was now increased emphasis on direct budget support, building up accountability of domestic institutions and good governance.<sup>116</sup> Comprehensive Development Frameworks and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers were constructed through participatory processes in which countries mapped out their paths and strategies for economic development and poverty reduction.<sup>117</sup> Within this new policy environment where coordination, harmonisation and participation were seen as priorities the concept of Sector Wide Approaches (SWAPs) began to flourish. SWAPs were introduced as a way to increase local capacity, management and sustainability of aid projects. Supporting a single sector policy and expenditure programme, under local government leadership would ensure

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<sup>114</sup> Klees, Op. Cit. p. 111.

<sup>115</sup> Analysis of ‘World Bank 1998 Assessing Aid: What Works, What Doesn’t and Why’ discussed in: Foster, Op. Cit. p. 7.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid

<sup>117</sup> The Comprehensive Development Frameworks (CDF) are a World Bank tool through which countries can manage knowledge and resources to design and implement effective strategies for economic development and poverty reduction. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) is based on CDF principles integrating poverty reducing policies into a coherent, growth oriented macroeconomic framework.



considerable behavioural change from donors, funding agencies and recipient countries.

### What is a Sector Wide Approach?

SWAPs are a new way of donors or lenders consolidating their financial and resource support for a partner country's own policies, strategies and systems. Money given by donors and lenders is directed into a funding pool which is then used to establish and grow national sectors. Often, sector policy and planning is established through extensive consultation and collaboration between donors and recipient country governments. Aid is provided in a context which adheres to a pre-arranged sectoral plan and is managed using the partner country's own existing systems and procedures. This approach was established not only to encourage greater leadership by government personnel in sectoral policy and planning, but to channel aid money where it is most needed and to avoid duplication where possible. This will ultimately increase efficiency and in turn hopefully produce better results.

Although there are several definitions of SWAPs the most commonly accepted definition comprises of elements where;

- All significant public funding for the sector supports a single sector policy and expenditure programme
- Under the control and leadership of local country Government
- With common approaches adopted across the sector by all funding parties
- A progression towards relying on Government procedures to disburse and account for all public expenditure however funded.<sup>118</sup>

SWAPs marry two inter-linked concepts. They are first '*sector wide*', which means that planning and activities are focused at the sector level. The boundaries of a sector can be difficult to define with no 'universal' definition agreed upon. NZAID defines a sector as "encompassing a wide range of thematically linked activities, involving government, non-government and private participation."<sup>119</sup> The education sector for example can extend from early childhood education, through to secondary and

<sup>118</sup> Adrienne Brown et al., 'The Status of Sector Wide Approaches', *Working Paper 142: Overseas Development Institute* (January 2001), p. 7.

<sup>119</sup> NZAID, 'NZAID Sector Wide Approaches (SWAs) Guideline Report', 2006, <http://nzaidtools.nzaid.govt.nz/sector-wide-approaches-swaps> (accessed 5 December 2010), p. 5.

tertiary education, as well as technical, vocational and adult education. The ‘sector’ may also include formal and non-formal. Importantly the scope of any sector is broader than just a single Ministry. It involves multiple actors, institutions, organisations and Ministries. Often with education provision, areas may be coordinated by other Ministries, with specific activities run by private sector stakeholders, church groups and/or community groups.<sup>120</sup>

The context of a SWAP may also differ according to the needs of individual countries. For example in some countries a SWAP may focus on the whole education system, whereas in other situations it may be narrower focusing on just the primary education sub-sector. In addition, some SWAPs may focus in on just a particular area, region or province of a country. Due to the small size of governments in the Pacific region a SWAP may involve multiple Ministries. Ultimately how a sector is defined and any subsequent SWAP that is created is grounded within the context of a country’s local needs, priorities and resources, as well as donors inputs.

The second important concept is the ‘*approach*’ which is taken. SWAPs are not an aid delivery instrument or modality, they are a method through which donors and recipients agree to interact. This approach emphasises partner country ownership and leadership, using domestic systems, expertise and processes and the harmonisation of donors to work together in supporting short-medium and long-term goals. In a sense, SWAPs constitute a new and ‘reformed’ way that donors and recipients cooperate. As opposed to situations where donors set up outside of core government systems, employ expatriate staff and set strict conditions on timeframes, budgets and implementation.<sup>121</sup> The ‘one plan’ sector approach is intended to provide greater overall coherence that is lacking when multiple projects by multiple donors are occurring in one sector at a time.<sup>122</sup>

### Education and SWAPs

Within the development community the education sector has emerged as one of the two key sectors where SWAPs are considered most suitable (the other sector is Health). Both sectors are run primarily by the government who set overall strategic

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p.6.

<sup>121</sup> Foster, Op. Cit. p. 7.

<sup>122</sup> Abby Riddell, *Education Sector-Wide Approaches (SWAPs): Background, Guide and Lessons* (Paris, Division of Education Strategies and Field Support Report, UNESCO, 2007), p. 5.

direction and deliver essential services. Education sectors within developing countries can receive considerable aid flows and donor input. Educational aid, like other sector support, is more likely to be effective when a strong policy and macro-economic environment exist.<sup>123</sup> SWAPs are therefore seen as a medium through which donors and governments priorities, funding and activities can be aligned. SWAPs facilitate all parties working together in support of a pre-agreed and wholly acceptable sector plan.<sup>124</sup> Economically effective spending necessitates real commitment to reform and demonstrates a willingness to make difficult decisions around vested interests and capacity.<sup>125</sup>

Education sector support provided within the context of a SWAP usually consists of the following areas;

1. It is based on a clear sector strategy and policy;
2. Local stakeholders are in charge;
3. All main funding agencies are participating in the funding arrangement and contributing only to areas identified as priorities within the sector plan/framework;
4. There is one system of implementation for the sector and all stakeholders share one set of common institutional and management arrangements; and
5. There is a reliance on local capacity, building on capacity at all levels of the sector. There is technical assistance provided from external sources.

#### PRIDE, Pacific and SWAPS

Aid flows into the Pacific region have not been sheltered from the global debates on the implementation and effectiveness of aid. While internationally donors focus on making aid more efficient, these debates are resounding on a local scale in the Pacific region. The move to sector budget support and sector wide approaches has filtered down to the region, and PRIDE has been heralded as sharing many commonalities with a SWAP approach. As SWAPs feature heavily as a positive force for development approaches let us explore what commonalities PRIDE's

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<sup>123</sup> Murray Macrae and Mike Ratcliffe, 'Sector Wide Approaches to Education- A strategic analysis', *Education Research Paper: Department for International Development*, 32 (1999), p. 3.

<sup>124</sup> Eve Coxon and Eric Pedersen, *Review of the Solomon Island Education Sector Wide Approach Agreement*, (Pederson Pierce Ltd, 2009), p. 7.

<sup>125</sup> Macrae and Ratcliffe, Op. Cit. p. 3.

mandate shares. Using the five education sector criteria (as discussed above) this chapter will explore how PRIDE does or doesn't fit into a SWAP model.

### 1. It is based on a clear sector strategy and policy

The fundamental idea behind PRIDE was to develop and strengthen the capacity of each national Ministry of Education (or equivalent) to plan and deliver quality basic education.<sup>126</sup> This would be achieved through the creation of comprehensive strategic national education plans which would cover both formal and non-formal education delivery. This is perhaps the strongest link that SWAPs and PRIDE share. By building and supporting an education sector strategy at the 'top' it was hoped strong policy and educational delivery programmes would 'trickle down' to schools and classrooms in each country. Each sector plan outlined how the government and other stakeholders would work together to achieve collective results. Each national education strategic plan was put together by an in-country team and was led by National Project Coordinator. Emphasis was placed on making plans context specific to each country by incorporating local culture, languages and epistemologies.<sup>127</sup> Technical assistance was available for any country that needed help with developing their plans.

Once the strategic plans had been agreed and established, participating countries sought funding from PRIDE to implement certain aspects of their strategic plans (this was the sub-project component of PRIDE). The aim of the sub-projects was to assist countries in implementing key priority areas of their strategic plans. Ideally these were areas where significant reforms were taking place.<sup>128</sup> Countries chose which projects they wanted to put forward for funding and throughout the process they were in charge of implementing, monitoring and evaluating each sub-project. Over 132 sub-projects were implemented at the country level across the region. PRIDE allowed many countries to step up and take a greater role in 'owning' the process of setting education agendas and priorities.

### 2. Local stakeholders are in charge

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<sup>126</sup> University of South Pacific, [web page], Op. Cit

<sup>127</sup> Puamau, Op. Cit. p. 10.

<sup>128</sup> University of South Pacific, *PRIDE: End of Completion Report*, Op. Cit. p. 5.

Incorporating ideas of ‘Pacific ownership’ features heavily in The PRIDE Project’s mandate. The project was established as part of the implementation strategy of FBEAP to achieve universal educational participation and achievement. After three or more decades of educational aid, sustainable and quality education had not yet been achieved and significant gaps in education provision remained in some countries. Instead donors and other external players had continued to define these goals and parameters.<sup>129</sup> Sanga believes a significant failure of past educational aid is that “Pacific Islanders did not own the process, educational visions and goals of education.”<sup>130</sup> Going into the project these challenges had been identified and a considerable effort was made to build the project around a ‘Pacific vision’ that would be ‘owned’ by Pacific people.

When The PRIDE Project was launched it was touted as a model that was ‘owned by the Pacific people for Pacific people by Pacific people’. It was designed and approved by Pacific Ministers for Education. The project was unique as it started with the Ministers coming together, not donors, to make a project. The project wanted Pacific Ministries of Education to decide their own priorities and plans. When Pacific Ministers of Education met at their inaugural meeting in 1999 many expressed concerns for a lack of overall strategic focus for education delivery in the region. Some countries were far from achieving basic education levels and there was a sense that what children were learning in schools was not equipping them with the necessary skills to contribute to international labour markets. Many countries did not have national education strategic plans in place and it was felt without these grounding documents that education delivery lacked focus and direction. After this gap was identified supporting education strategic planning across the Pacific became PRIDE’s core function. Drawing on technical assistance and funding, countries were assisted by PRIDE’s consultants, in putting together robust national education plans through the project. These plans would ultimately guide each participating country’s education sector and key stakeholders to implement their national education programmes.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Sanga, Op. Cit. (2003), p. 1.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> University of South Pacific, *PRIDE: End of Completion Report*, Op. Cit. p.17.

The Project worked off annual work plans which were developed by the PRIDE team and approved by a Project Steering Committee. A considerable effort was made to include this wide range of stakeholders in the process. This Committee comprised education stakeholders from each of the 15 participating countries, including representatives from the University of the South Pacific (from multiple campuses), NGOs and Pacific Island Forum Secretariat. Additionally other donors and multilateral organisations with staff members in Suva were entitled to a ‘observer status’.

3. There is a reliance on local capacity, as well as building on capacity at all levels of the sector. There is little technical assistance provided from external sources.

PRIDE placed a strong emphasis on mutual collaboration, partnerships and support between countries in order to build regional capacity. The key mechanisms were the strengthening of USP’s Institute of Education, the establishment of a Resource Centre, regional knowledge generation, information sharing through workshops, and study tours.<sup>132</sup>

Another aim of the project was to ‘help countries help each other’. Informal partnerships were created with the establishment of the PRIDE Resource Centre from 2004-2009. This centre hoped to foster regional capacity building, informal partnerships, and dialogue between education stakeholders across the region. In this Resource Centre, a physical library was established in 2004 at Fiji’s University of the South Pacific campus.<sup>133</sup> The Centre provided over 700 hard copy publications which covered education policy, planning and development material from the fifteen participating Pacific countries. In addition an online resource centre, the Pacific Archive of Digital Data for Learning and Education (PADDLE) and an online Network of Pacific Education specialists (NOPE) was created to facilitate greater information sharing and conversations between key stakeholders. PADDLE helped share best practice experiences and examples amongst the fifteen Pacific countries of the Project. It also included material from international and regional organisations including UNESCO, the Asian Development Bank, the Commonwealth Secretariat,

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid

<sup>133</sup> University of South Pacific, [web page], Op. Cit

the Commonwealth of Learning, Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL), and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.<sup>134</sup> National, regional and sub-regional workshops throughout the Pacific brought key education stakeholders and partners together to discuss dialogue and direction over twenty times between 2004 and 2010.<sup>135</sup> Each workshop utilised both national and regional educationalists to explore new ideas and devise culturally relevant solutions together through dialogue, discussion and debate.

4. All main funding agencies are participating in the funding arrangement and contributing only to areas identified as priorities within the sector plan/framework

Both PRIDE and SWAPs take a holistic view of planning and recognise that many different stakeholders and parties ultimately are needed to implement and deliver good quality education in developing countries. In theory, the sector plan which PRIDE helped facilitate in some Pacific countries enables governments and stakeholders to contextualise their work and work off a ‘blueprint’ in areas where there is the greatest need. PRIDE’s mandate specifies that the project will ‘improve the coordination of donor inputs through the development of national education plans’.<sup>136</sup> However, creating and then actually implementing a plan are very different, as will be detailed below.

5. There is one system of implementation for the sector and all stakeholders share one set of common institutional and management arrangements.

In a limited number of cases the Project was able to be proactive in donor harmonisation activities. In Tuvalu, for example, the PRIDE team collaborated with donors in roundtable consultation meetings on issues relating to funding and participation. PRIDE’s overall mandate has attempted to get countries to create strategic plans which may ultimately be used like a SWAP for countries and donors to use as a blueprint to collaborate together. Through regional workshops and networks PRIDE has also attempted to facilitate greater dialogue and interaction between countries to work in partnership with each other.

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<sup>134</sup> Pacific Archive of Digital Data for Learning and Education (PADDLE) [web page], Op. Cit.

<sup>135</sup> University of South Pacific, *PRIDE: End of Completion Report*, Op. Cit. p. 20.

<sup>136</sup> University of South Pacific, [web page], Op. Cit

### Critiques and differences of SWAPs and PRIDE

As SWAPs and PRIDE share many commonalities through looking at the problems identified with the SWAP approach we may be able to draw out some critiques of PRIDE. These will help us show what PRIDE is doing well and what areas it is not achieving in.

### Challenges of capacity and capability

While there are many positive elements to SWAPS, how they actually evolve on the ground can be vastly different. A key critique of government ownership is that some countries may simply not have the capacity (both human and physical) to implement, manage or 'own' whole projects. SWAPs present a challenging situation, as success is premised on ministries/sectors now being capable of handling high levels of planning, prioritising, donor management and performance monitoring.<sup>137</sup> As Harvey Smith states, "there is no point in saying that a government should be in the driving seat if it does not know how to drive."<sup>138</sup> There appears to be a tension between ownership and capacity, and in many cases an assumption is made that taking responsibility for one's own development will automatically strengthen national capacities.<sup>139</sup> It seems in many cases that countries are calling for greater ownership however capacity must be present to work with. If capacity is limited additional capacity building activities will require funding, resources and time from donors. If donors perceive capacity building as too difficult they may simply take over the direction and implementation of activities. With this context in mind it is understandable that the previous 'quick fix solution' of inserting international consultants into the situation to advise and implement projects is often seen as preferable.<sup>140</sup>

In PRIDE's case the success of a regional project like this very much depends on the capacity and capabilities of participating countries. Whilst the mandate at the top can be well-organised and well-structured there needs to be the capacity and

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<sup>137</sup> Harvey Smith, 'Ownership and capacity: Do current donor approaches help or hinder the achievement of international and national targets for education', *International Journal of Educational Development*, 25/4, (2005), p. 450.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., p. 453.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., p. 447.

<sup>140</sup> Mick Foster from the Overseas Development Institute discusses how traditionally donor projects have tended to be set up outside of core Government systems and employ their own staff. This has drained capacity from recipient Governments instead of building and fostering it.



commitment at the country level to lead the project forward and implement strategies. Capacity can include both physical infrastructures within countries as well as human capacity. PRIDE has acknowledged that for some countries a considerable amount of technical assistance was needed to put together their strategic plans. Establishing together the national education plan is just the first step in the process of education delivery. Whilst having a strategic direction and focus is beneficial, it is just the beginning part of actually achieving quality education. Small disbursements of funding were available to implement key areas of each country's strategic plan, however what will happen to areas that are not considered a 'priority' or areas that did not receive funding through the sub-project disbursements? PRIDE's review found that many countries spent a considerable amount of time putting together their strategic plans which left little time to utilise funding from the sub-projects. Whilst some countries are in the fortunate position of being able to seek funding from other sources/donors, there is the potential that some plans will lose momentum. Whilst "plans are there to stay" the enthusiasm and deemed 'priorities' may falter overtime with new staff, governments and donor agendas.<sup>141</sup>

Another systematic problem of the Pacific is the saturation of donors and aid flows that are present. PRIDE experienced this first hand as many countries simply did not have the human capacity within the Ministries of Education to undertake the project as key personnel were working on other donor funded projects. PRIDE staff in Suva acknowledged that "some countries had little time for the project" and it provided just a "small drop in the ocean" compared to what other donors were offering.<sup>142</sup> This meant that PRIDE significantly underspent in the area of sub-projects.<sup>143</sup> There are two possible reasons for this occurrence. First, countries that were already stretched in capacity were simply looking to donors/projects where they could get the most resources, both financially and physical. The idea that donors must make their assistance attractive to recipients is a new phenomenon, and particularly prevalent in the Pacific.<sup>144</sup> An example that was offered was Fiji which had recently been working on two large projects; a €56 million European Union infrastructure development project and an AUSAID AUD\$23 million programmatic and

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<sup>141</sup> Filipe Jitoko (Pacific Island Forum Secretariat), interview by author, Suva, Fiji, 21 October 2010.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Puamau, Op. Cit. p. 8.

<sup>144</sup> Dr Dona Ruru (Pacific education aid researcher), interview by author, Nadi, Fiji, 22 October, 2010.

curriculum building project which had dedicated their best staff to work on these activities. The total funds combined from these projects made up almost one third of Fiji's entire national education budget. This meant there were few people physically available to work on PRIDE.<sup>145</sup>

The second is that PRIDE often relied on a National Project Coordinator (NPC) to oversee and manage PRIDE's activities in each country. These people, who were mainly senior staff members in the Ministry of Education, already held a busy portfolio. When additional pressures of being an NPC were added to their workloads, NPC's were not able to access or utilise PRIDE to its full potential.<sup>146</sup> PRIDE in its *End of Completion Report* noted that capacity building activities needed to extend beyond just the NPC. In PRIDE's project design the NPC was supposed to be senior enough within the Ministry to be able to set and offer direction. In reality these people had so many responsibilities they were a liability for the in-country progress of the project.<sup>147</sup> Ultimately this example shows that you cannot simply throw money at countries to help with educational delivery. There are a lot of other players involved in this area which take up valuable human capacity and resources. Ironically a true SWAP in each country would be able to harmonise and align every donors efforts. It is clear that educational aid has to be very strategic to be utilised and sustained.

### Donor Power Struggles

Sector Wide Approaches are essentially a World Bank approach to development. Previous World Bank approaches have been criticised for their implementation methods particularly for encouraging highly "homogenised and Western recipes of development".<sup>148</sup> There is increasing concern that SWAPs are just another way for the World Bank to push their neo-liberal economic policies which have had devastating effects for some developing countries.<sup>149</sup> As Steven Klees states, "the

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<sup>145</sup> Jitoko, interview.

<sup>146</sup> Puamau, Op. Cit. p. 8.

<sup>147</sup> University of South Pacific, *PRIDE: End of Completion Report*, Op. Cit. p. 49.

<sup>148</sup> Catherine Caufield, *Masters of Illusion: The World Bank and the Poverty of Nations*, (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1997), p. 24.

<sup>149</sup> Steven Klees discusses how the strategies under SAP's to spur economic growth vastly increased inequality within developing countries and marginalised the poor even further. Information taken from Klees, Op. Cit. p.114.

result so far has been a SAP in SWAPs clothing.”<sup>150</sup> He also believes that SWAPs enable donors to become stronger and monolithic. Aid recipients are less able to find space to follow their own agendas and SWAPs further fuel the unequal power balance of the donor community because donors ultimately set the direction of the sectoral plan which dictates how a country’s education system will evolve.<sup>151</sup>

Ironically, global debates of donors pushing and following their own agendas resonated strongly within PRIDE. During the initial planning stages of the project it was agreed that a small team, made up of nationals from Fiji, Samoa, New Zealand, Australia and the UK would be appointed to develop a single regional basic education project that would identify basic education problems, review relevant documentation, consider related activities of other donors, assess the feasibility of involving a range of regional stakeholders, and consider how the project implementation mechanisms would work.<sup>152</sup> The team travelled to fourteen different countries for consultations with government, non-government actors, and education stakeholders to research what education issues were apparent within their local contexts. These meetings enabled the team to “ascertain local perspectives on various basic education and aid delivery issues, including ongoing programmes and possibilities for the project.”<sup>153</sup>

Utilising feedback received it was decided that the project needed to focus on Pacific youth. Education provision at the time did not provide;

A significant number of Pacific youth with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that enables them to participate in the social, spiritual, economic and cultural development of their communities as individuals, community members and citizens. More specifically, there are a significant number of Pacific youth within and outside the formal school system who have not achieved basic education outcomes.<sup>154</sup>

Therefore in the project proposal document put forward to donors (the EU and NZAID) it stated the focus of PRIDE should be;

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<sup>150</sup> Klees, Op. Cit. p. 114.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>152</sup> Coxon and Munce, Op. Cit. p.154.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., p. 156.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

To enhance the capacity of Pacific education agencies to effectively plan and deliver quality basic education, through formal or non-formal means, so that defined basic education outcomes are achieved by Pacific [emphasis added] youth, providing a foundation for further education, training, personal development and/or employment activities in the formal or in-formal sectors<sup>155</sup>

Unfortunately this proposed focus was not supported by the two aforementioned donors. Both parties highlighted their concerns and ultimately wanted changes to be made. Whilst the team expressed their disappointment at the ‘heavy handedness’ of donors overriding Pacific stakeholders and disregarding the spirit of ‘participation, consultation and transparency’ that had characterised the project to date, changes to the project design were ultimately made. The overarching objective contained a critical difference from the original proposal.

In the final design document the focus became;

To enhance the capacity of pacific education agencies to effectively plan and deliver quality basic education through formal and non-formal means and to improve the coordination of donor inputs to assist countries implement their plans.<sup>156</sup>

The entire emphasis during the design process had originally been on Pacific youth, however, in the final version there was no such mention or focus. In addition, there was now a focus on the development of Education Strategic Plans. As the donors are ultimately providing money and resources they can have the final say on how and where such inputs are used.

#### Ownership in a regional model

The notion of ownership within a regional model is problematic. PRIDE acknowledged that opportunities may have been missed as the design and inception of this regional project needed to take into better account country specific situation analyses. The project’s mandate does not completely recognise major variations in

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid., p. 159.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

the stages of development in different education systems across the region.<sup>157</sup> As little analysis had been undertaken on this during the initial design stages the support mechanisms were not always applicable or appropriate for every country. In addition the project's mandate of strategic planning was not needed for every single country. Had such situation analyses been undertaken in the design stages it is likely that a different set of project implementation arrangements would have been rolled out for a number of countries.<sup>158</sup> There is certainly a tension with any regional model and how it deals with differing abilities of countries within its area.

While the project is proudly 'Pacific-centric' it highlights the difference between 'Pacific ownership' and 'country ownership'. Once PRIDE commenced some critics of PRIDE believed that the projects mandate imposed a regional 'one size fits all' agenda, and did not take into account the vast differences in education quality, delivery, and capacity across the region. Although PRIDE encouraged country ownership in many aspects, it was ultimately a regional project whose mandate was decided by a task group in Suva, Fiji. For some countries the project's mandate of strategic planning was not a necessity as these processes had already begun. The only countries to really utilise PRIDE's help in having their education plans developed were Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands and Palau. Whilst Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Samoa, Tokelau and Tuvalu had some assisted help at national level and Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands at provincial level with education planning. The Cook Islands, Vanuatu, Tonga, and Niue were being supported already by bilateral or multilateral donors with this activity (as were PNG and Solomon Islands at a national level).<sup>159</sup> While PRIDE helped solidify some countries plans, for others the project became just another individual project-based assignment, which is exactly what SWAPs and sector planning were attempting to avoid.

#### Development and its changing environment

Over the last decade the development and aid environment has undergone some serious transformations. The Paris Declaration and Accra conventions on aid effectiveness represent a very different way of thinking about aid design and

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<sup>157</sup> This includes capacity, achievement levels and support systems

<sup>158</sup> University of South Pacific, *PRIDE: End of Completion Report*, Op. Cit. p. 50.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

implementation. New approaches and modalities have emerged which have transferred from global models/ideas down into development work within the Pacific. While PRIDE was being implemented, many countries, including PNG, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Samoa, the Cook Islands and Vanuatu formally entered into a SWAP as *the* key strategy for education sector development. While PRIDE and SWAPs share many commonalities PRIDE is not an actual SWAP model. As it stands PRIDE ran in parallel to the SWAPs. For countries that had not implemented a formal SWAP, PRIDE held potential to be utilised and facilitate those countries into creating their own SWAP. Designs of future regional projects must therefore take into account this new environment for development assistance, particularly if SWAPs are becoming the ‘way to do business’ in the Islands. This recognition will reduce transaction costs and simplify monitoring and evaluation reporting requirements.

### Conclusion

The secondary literature tells us that SWAPs have the potential to revolutionise development practices. They are based on notions of coordination, participation and ownership within countries. They are characterised by a certain set of operating principles rather than a concrete set of activities or actions. Through creating an overarching vision and plan for sectors, donors and stakeholders can work together in an efficient and cohesive way. There is less likelihood of duplication and development projects will be based on wider sector priorities, not just donor priorities. It is not surprising, therefore, that PRIDE attempted to incorporate ideals of top-level sector planning into its project mandate. The project’s vision of creating strategic plans for education systems throughout the region aligns perfectly with wider global development agendas. In theory, having a strong pathway for governments and stakeholders to utilise, would help facilitate better management, infrastructure and educational delivery which in turn would help achieve basic education and global EFA goals.

The fundamental tensions of SWAPs and PRIDE is that having a strong sector plan does not necessarily guarantee it will be committed to or used appropriately. Certain preconditions in the macroeconomic, policy and institutional environment are necessary. In addition, pre-existing capacity and infrastructure must be present in

order to facilitate this lengthy process. Alignment to the sector strategy from all stakeholders involved and a commitment to working off the strategy must guide all actions forward. This can be difficult as donors can work to their own priorities, are often dictated by their taxpayers' perceptions, politics and leadership within their countries. In many situations certain elements of the SWAP may be created, for example a sector strategy/plan, however not all donors or stakeholders involved in the sector will use it. Some donors are not able to commit themselves to the sectoral plan so will continue to provide individual funded projects. What the SWAP can do is allow sectors to think more strategically and reorganise themselves to be more effective.

PRIDE is not specifically a SWAP as it has more flexibility in its approach. The project was not just guided by a set of operating principles, but provided funding for direct implementation of activities through its sub-projects. It also had many capacity building activities to help build up capabilities for personnel involved in the education sectors. A key force holding back the success of SWAPs and sector plans is the limited human capacity. PRIDE demonstrated foresight by incorporating capacity building into its mandate. By filtering money through several different key areas and allowing countries to put forward their own priorities and applications for funding (for the sub-projects) there was less likelihood of complete donor ownership and control. An authentic SWAP only provides funding and resources to reorganise top levels of a sector. PRIDE allowed access to funding for sub-project activities to a wide range of education stakeholders including NGOs and civil society groups. It also consulted with and included personnel in its capacity building activities from not just within the ministries of Education but teachers, community leaders, NGOs and other key stakeholders. PRIDE's scope and outreach was therefore broader than a SWAP. Ultimately it seems that PRIDE took the most popular and promising components of SWAPs and attempted to incorporate a local Pacific 'spin'. As the project was not guided by the World Bank, the founder of the SWAP model, it was able to do this.

The following chapter will explore how PRIDE evolved within the Solomon Islands. The Solomon Islands is an interesting country to analyse as a national education SWAP was beginning just as PRIDE was commencing. In addition, the country was coming out of civil war which threw the education sector into disarray for a number

of years. The chapter will therefore analyse how the two initiatives fitted together, what overlap occurred, tensions between the commonalities and what results were able to be achieved. Field research as well as secondary literature will help draw conclusions on the above areas.



## CHAPTER FOUR – THE PRIDE PROJECT WITHIN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

Whilst the Solomon Islands is small in size, it has faced large economic, social and political problems since colonisation which have plagued its development. The Solomon Islands is a developing country located within Melanesia, in the southwest Pacific Ocean. It comprises over 1000 Islands scattered across 1400 kilometres of sea.<sup>160</sup> Overtime, the Solomon Islands has become the second largest recipient of ODA flows into the Pacific region. This brings with it a multitude of development practitioners, organisations and has really created a development ‘industry’. An overall dependency mentality pervades a large number of government departments, including the Ministry of Education. Educational aid has achieved a large amount. However, this has brought a large number of external actors and consultants into the picture. Issues of access, participation and quality in education were prevalent and ultimately were compounded when civil war broke out in the Solomon Islands in 1999. After years of underlying tensions, a civil war erupted between the Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army and Malaitan settlers. During the four year conflict, a large number of people were killed, wounded and displaced. Government departments closed down or ran at minimal capacity and a general state of chaos ruled. As the conflict receded donors were quick to encourage the development of an education sector wide approach (SWAP) to help the Government and Ministry of Education put in place better planning and strategic frameworks as well as coordinating donors to work together better. This new approach after the conflict was hoped to bring a fresh start and inject new modalities towards helping achieve basic education levels.

As the new SWAP was establishing, the PRIDE Project was beginning to be implemented in 14 Pacific countries. This chapter will explore how the Solomon Islands participated in PRIDE’s three key areas as set out in the previous chapter- strategic planning, implementation of strategic plans through sub-project activities and strengthening of regional capacity. Discussion on PRIDE’s successes and challenges will be looked at through the lens of four areas; capacity, ownership,

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<sup>160</sup> Sinclair Dinnen, ‘Winners and Losers: Politics and Disorder in the Solomon Islands 2000-2002’, *The Journal of Pacific History*, 37/ 3 (2002), p. 285.

donor power struggles and the changing donor environment. Discussion will also focus on how PRIDE sits in relation to the education SWAP. Overall discussion will conclude that PRIDE's activities within the Solomon Islands were largely disappointing and due to timing, capacity and resource issues, failed to achieve a lasting legacy for the project.

### The conflict

With a population of just over half a million people, the bulk of Solomon Islanders live across six main Islands: Guadalcanal, Malaita, Choiseul, Santa Isabel, Makira and New Georgia. Only 16 percent of the population is urbanised, whilst a staggering 84 percent of people remain in several thousand villages. Tribes and kinship hold the majority of land under customary arrangements. There are around 80 different languages spoken and, like their neighbouring countries Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu, primary identities and allegiances remain implanted in local languages.<sup>161</sup> The vast majority of people live in rural villages and subsistence living is predominantly practised. Rural villages share limited participation in the cash economy, only participating in selling fish, plants and garden products at local markets.<sup>162</sup>

With few services available and a limited number of employment opportunities, many Solomon Islanders have driven rapid urbanisation to Guadalcanal, in particular the capital Honiara. The majority of infrastructural investment and development has been focused on the capital which means a number of economic opportunities are also available there. Large numbers of migrants come from the adjoining, densely populated Island of Malaita to seek out employment opportunities. These include on the plantations on the Guadalcanal Plains, in Government Departments/Ministries, businesses and services or since 1997 within 'The Gold Ridge Mine' located to the East of the Capital.<sup>163</sup> Tension began to mount as the Guadalcanal people felt that the new settlers were prospering unfairly at the expense of locals. By the 1990s, many large Malaitan settlements were flourishing on the northern side of

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Bob Pollard, 'Solomon Islands Education and Donor Assistance in the Post Conflict Period' in Kabini Sanga & Ana Taufe'ulungaki (ed.), *'International Aid Impacts on Pacific Education'*, (Wellington: He Parekereke, Institute for Research and Development in Maori and Pacific Education, Victoria University, 2005), p.156.

<sup>163</sup> Dinnen, Op. Cit. p. 285.

Guadalcanal. Although this land had been obtained with permission from landowners, some communities ‘extended beyond the original agreed basis for settlement’ turning the land into squatter communities which had on-going socio-economic effects for surrounding areas.<sup>164</sup> In addition, the Guadalcanal people felt they were not receiving adequate economic benefits from their land as well as missing out on job opportunities, which instead were going to perceived ‘outsiders’. These issues of land tenure, culture and deprivation grew over decades, and coupled with corrupt and incompetent government officials not intervening, grievances came to a violent head in 1999. The conflict in the Solomon Islands was inevitable as a volatile mix of social, political, economic and criminal/corruption issues had been brewing for many years.

After stockpiling home-made and rehabilitated World War Two weapons since the mid-1990s, the Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army (GRA), later renamed the Isatabu Freedom Movement (IFM) embarked on a violent campaign of harassment and intimidation, directed mainly against Malaitan settlers in 1999. Thousands of settlers were chased under gunpoint out from their homes and were forced to seek refuge in Honiara or return to their own Islands. Within a short space of time an open warfare had begun and by June 1999 the Government was forced to declare a state of emergency within Guadalcanal.<sup>165</sup> The Townsville Peace Agreement was signed the following year in October 2000 which was warmly welcomed by locals. Once the initial euphoria of the agreement wore off, there was a realisation that significant challenges still continued to plague the Solomon Islands. Large numbers of weaponry remained in communities, militia involved in the fighting were still ‘at large’ and the already fragile national economy was on the brink of completely collapsing. Continued corruption and disruption to civil institutions led the country to what Bob Pollard describes as “drifting the nation toward anarchy”.<sup>166</sup> An atmosphere of lawlessness, widespread corruption and prevailing bankruptcy continued on until 2003.

Despite continued offers of help from its surrounding neighbours, including New Zealand and Australia, the Solomon Islands only formally requested international

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<sup>164</sup> Pollard, Op. Cit. p. 158.

<sup>165</sup> Dinnen, Op. Cit. p. 287.

<sup>166</sup> Pollard, Op Cit. p. 158.

assistance in April 2003. The Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands, Sir Allan Kemakeza made an urgent request to other countries in the region to help him curb “the many and serious problems facing his troubled nation”.<sup>167</sup> In response to this request, a meeting was quickly convened in Canberra, Australia where the Solomon Island Government representatives, along with Pacific Island Forum representatives met. They agreed on a mandate to address civil unrest and lawlessness, economic decline, corruption and a dramatic drop in service delivery and government administrative standards. Subsequently on July 22, 2003, the Solomon Island National Parliament unanimously passed the ‘Facilitation of International Assistance Act 2003’ which gave authority to foreign countries to participate in RAMSI domestic activities, the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands.<sup>168</sup>

Within two days of this Act being passed, on July 24 2003, soldiers, police and civilians arrived from Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu to participate in RAMSI activities. Eventually there were over two thousand foreign personnel serving in the Islands. The primary objective of RAMSI was to halt the downward economic and political spiral, help restore law and order and help rebuild the country’s weakened economic and governing institutions.<sup>169</sup> The lack of law and order within the police force was identified as a critical failure in the lead up to, and during, the conflict. The police force had been neglected for so many years that it allowed injustices ‘to fester’. The Solomon Island Police force was ill prepared for the conflict and could do little to contain the violence once it had begun. In addition, a lack of national leadership and good governance was seen as a re-occurring theme. Post-independence governments had done little to address the entrenched societal issues that eventually fuelled the conflict, not only at national level, but also at provincial and local levels. Corruption and crime had plagued government structures and nepotism flourished. Ultimately this lack of leadership was seen as an obstacle to peace. Strengthening the police and government leadership were therefore seen as identified as RAMSI’s primary priorities.

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<sup>167</sup> RAMSI, <http://www.ramsi.org/about/history.html>, (accessed 14 December 2010).

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> David Hegarty et al., ‘Rebuilding State and nation in Solomon Islands: Policy options for the Regional Assistance Mission’, *State Society and Governance in Melanesia Discussion Paper: Australian National University*, 2 (2004), p. 1.

### Education in the Solomon Islands

Like many other Pacific countries, education was first introduced to the Solomon Islands through Christian missionaries. Christian missions opened schools in various parts of the Islands during the first half of the 1900's. The curriculum was described as 'education with Christianisation' teaching basic literacy skills alongside Christian beliefs. The church placed importance on education as it was a way to further its work and teachings. The British remained in control of the Solomon Islands until 1976 and full independence was achieved in 1978.<sup>170</sup> The newly formed Solomon Islands Government needed skilled and educated people to administer new positions and provide personnel for the growing public sector. From 1976, the Government took over the responsibility of providing education; schools during this time were effectively transferred from church groups to the Government. Whilst all primary schools were now under the control of the Government, some secondary schools remained within the control of churches. The Government pushed education as a way to get formal employment and for many Solomon Islanders education was seen as 'desirable and a doorway to opportunity'.<sup>171</sup> During the years of independence secondary education was only attended by the elite, whilst primary school was mostly accessible to all (ironically this still remains today).

During the 1980's, a World Bank supported initiative saw an injection of funding and resources to boost the number of provincial secondary schools. Due to access and location issues many of the schools were established as boarding schools so young people could attend from different areas. The curriculum set up in these schools was based more on vocational training. This angered a lot of parents who could not understand why their children were not learning what they perceived as an 'academic education' off the national curriculum. This protest was swiftly met by all provincial schools moving away from vocational education toward adopting a national secondary schools curriculum. Bob Pollard believes this obsession with formal secondary school education was understandable as, up until the early 1990's, all those who were able to finish secondary school were almost guaranteed formal employment.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Bob Pollard, Op. Cit. p.159.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., p. 160.

The mid 1990's saw a new evolution of community schools establishing themselves. These were often attached to primary schools and were predominantly run by communities who recognised that their children may not be able to access schooling beyond primary level. Despite this community level involvement, the Government paid teachers salaries. Like all areas, finding qualified and trained teachers was a challenge and many community schools struggled to find teachers who could teach a wide range of subjects.<sup>173</sup> The conflict between 1999-2003 essentially compounded a number of existing educational issues, particularly with the closing of schools and government departments becoming ineffective and disorganised.

#### Education during the post conflict years

During the four year conflict, underlying issues of access, participation and provision were all compounded. The conflict forced a number of schools in and around the capital to shut and caused a lot of disruption to government departments, including the Ministry of Education and Finance. This meant that few teachers were paid during the conflict and little money was available for additional resources. Whilst some employees "stuck it out" many people left, which sent the whole education system into disarray.<sup>174</sup> Once the tensions calmed the education sector resumed work. However, significant gaps continue to plague the sector due to the four years without proper service.

#### Participation in Education

The demand for education in the Solomon Islands has grown exponentially. The premise that formal academic schooling provides access to formal employment and income has driven this demand. However, much of this growth was unprepared for and unplanned, resulting in a disjointed and often complex system that is poorly administered and managed. Many schools are sparsely resourced and have the bare minimum equipment to operate. It is rare to find schools with libraries and laboratory spaces for sciences and other subjects. The everyday maintenance and running of schools is largely left up to the community to manage. Early childhood education (ECE) has been a late phenomenon and the majority of ECE centres are community

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Maelyn Kuve (Permanent Secretary to the Solomon Islands Ministry of Education and PRIDE Project Officer for the Solomon Islands), interview by author, Honiara, Solomon Islands, 1 November 2010.

run and managed. ECE only received an official curriculum during the early 2000's. Formal schooling begins at age six and, despite the Government's desire for primary school to be compulsory, this is not enforced. Secondary schooling is seven years in total and students must sit exams in Form Three to allow them to move onto Forms Four and Five. Very few students will participate in Form Six and Seven. For those who are not able to continue onwards, there are limited spaces available in vocational training centres. However these centres are limited in number and students leave with no formal or recognised qualification. To be able to enter a tertiary institution, students must have completed the equivalent of five years of secondary education (up to Form Five).<sup>175</sup> In 2003, 42 percent of students ended their education after primary school largely due to limited spaces being available in secondary schools. With an annual growth rate of 2.8 percent, the secondary school population will be approximately 146,000 students by 2015, whilst in 2002 this number was only 87,000. With growth and demand ever increasing, the need for trained teachers and classrooms is overwhelming.<sup>176</sup>

#### Access to Education

The 2004 census found that 72.3 percent of boys and 70.1 percent of girls attended primary school (making a mean of 71.2 percent).<sup>177</sup> Participation rates at all levels of education are amongst the lowest in the Pacific region. Whilst the four year conflict in 1999 had many detrimental effects on education services for the country, access to education has been a recurring problem throughout Solomon Islands history. The physical remoteness of some islands and communities make service delivery, finding qualified teachers and providing infrastructure very difficult. For some isolated communities there is virtually no access to education services meaning that many young children either have to leave home to stay with relatives/friends in a neighbouring district or simply not attend school at all. While education was heralded as the path through which employment could be gained, this view is diminishing. For some parents, sending their children to school (particularly in logistically difficult situations) is seen as futile.<sup>178</sup> The growing disillusionment with

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<sup>175</sup> Pollard, Op Cit. p. 161.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., p. 169.

<sup>177</sup> Solomon Islands National Statistics Office, <http://www.spc.int/prism/country/sb/stats/Social/Education/primnet-enrol.htm>, (accessed 16 December 2010).

<sup>178</sup> Pollard, Op. Cit, p. 162.

schooling is making parents ask the common question, ‘education for what?’, particularly if little to no job opportunities are available.

### Education Curriculum

Over the years curriculum development has been severely neglected. This has meant that some students are leaving primary school unable to read or write. Illiteracy fuels further development challenges for the country. Like many other Pacific countries there is concern about the relevance and appropriateness of what children are learning and how it equips them for ‘Solomon Island life’. Often there is not enough in the Government’s budget to produce curriculum materials to cater for all schools across the country. This means schools in outer and rural areas are less likely to receive teaching resources or curricula support. The provision of a relevant curriculum to such a diverse and rapidly growing population is not being met.<sup>179</sup>

### Teachers

Finding and retaining trained and qualified teachers is another challenge for the Ministry of Education. Ministry of Education records show that the mobility of teachers within the Solomon Islands is incredibly high. Teachers are either moved by the Ministry of Education from one school to another, or do so on the own accord. This creates uncertainty and makes forward planning for schools and their communities difficult. All teachers are paid by the Ministry of Finance and paying some teachers who live on outer islands or within remote areas can be a logistically difficult and costly task. Some teachers have to travel considerable distances to pick up their fortnightly pay check. In addition, approximately 20 percent of all teachers at primary school level and 16 percent at secondary school level are untrained. Whilst there is a tertiary qualification available in teacher training from the Solomon Island College of Higher Education (SICHE), the institution is not able to produce enough teachers to meet the growing demands. The Ministry of Education is candid in admitting that they employ untrained teachers to fill vacancies across the country.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid,



### Educational Aid

The Solomon Islands are the second biggest recipient of foreign aid flows in the Pacific. Second to Papua New Guinea the country receives almost 17 percent of the regions Overseas Development Assistance (ODA).<sup>181</sup> Wider ODA going into the Solomon Islands has very much permeated through the education system which is now heavily dependent on its financial flows. From building and construction, curriculum maintenance, scholarship schemes and training, all are likely to involve some form of foreign assistance. As Pollard believes, a dependence mentality pervades and penetrates the education system and is a self perpetuating cycle. Although aid has brought and achieved many great results, it brings with it certain conditions and objectives which are often donor driven. Even if the intent of aid is optimistic and positive, the fact that it comes from donors may ultimately undermine the whole process and outcome. Educational aid is often seen in the Solomon Islands as inappropriate and out of context to local needs.

The management of aid and the relationships that come with it often create an industry in itself. Aid management has created jobs and offices which sit alongside regular educational institutions. These offices hold a considerable amount of power and can dictate the direction of the education sector. Whilst donors look to the Solomon Islands Government and Ministry of Education for direction, donors still bring certain biases and agendas. Aid programmes have been known to run to the timelines of the donor and because such dependency exists, the education systems are forced to “dance to the same tune.”<sup>182</sup> Cooperation between donors can be difficult as they have different timelines and their own criteria to stick to. Whilst some cooperation between donors is present there is a certain level of competition between them. Ultimately, as previous chapters have highlighted as a similar issue throughout the region, the Ministry of Education was spending a considerable amount of time working to, and for, donors. Individual donor projects were also not always producing relevant and sustainable results creating much frustration.

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<sup>181</sup> OECD, ‘Development at a glance- Statistics by region- Oceania’, 2010, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/43/29/42139429.pdf>, (accessed 10 December 2010), p. 7.

<sup>182</sup> Pollard, Op. Cit. p. 174.

## SWAP

As the conflict was ending in 2003, a Sector Wide Approach (SWAP) was put forward as a mode of aid delivery to address many of the problems the Ministry of Education and Human Resources (MEHRD) were experiencing. The Permanent Secretary of Education, Dr Derek Sikua, was a key architect in the development of the SWAP. He noted that having watched and experienced educational aid projects during the 1980s and 1990s that they often “had parallel structures, constant flows of technical assistants who worked for donors rather than the Solomon Islands’ Ministry, had confined times frames and narrow focuses meaning that too many things were missed out.”<sup>183</sup> Overall the Ministry of Education felt there had to be a better way of operating and working with donors. The Permanent Secretary did research into aid delivery mechanisms in other countries, believing that the SWAP model would offer a fresh perspective. Dr Sikua particularly applauded SWAPs holistic approach, strategic and systemic thinking and felt it could offer “a new positive way forward for the country.”<sup>184</sup> He explains that “now the technical advisors work for us, not the project - they are commissioned by MEHRD and report to MEHRD.”<sup>185</sup> It was also a model being heavily promoted by both NZAID and the EU at the time. While the SWAP was being developed, the EU and NZAID provided temporary recovery measures from 2002-2004 to help the education sector rebuild and become operational again. The immediate need was to address an acute revenue shortage which had drastically fallen with the collapse of government finances during the conflict period.<sup>186</sup>

NZAID and the EU continued their support and formally entered into the SWAP with the Ministry of Education in 2004. Having only two agencies involved in the process was deliberate. Not only was it less logistically difficult but it meant other partners could be directed to other ministries. For example AUSAID was steered toward the Ministry of Health to help with their activities. A National Education Strategic Plan (ESP) was put together which set the direction for education delivery in the Solomon Islands for 2004-2006. The Education Sector Investment and Reform

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<sup>183</sup> Eve Coxon and Eric Pedersen, *Review of the Solomon Island Education Sector Wide Approach Agreement*, (Pederson Pierce Ltd, 2009), p. 8.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> University of South Pacific, *Solomon Islands PRIDE: End of Completion Report, Part One, Summary Report* (October 2010), p. 4.

Programme (ESIRP) was developed as a framework for governance, implementation, monitoring and review of the Strategic Plan. A memorandum of understanding was signed in June 2004 between the Solomon Islands Government, NZAID and EU. Phase Two of the programmes was to be guided by the National Education Strategic Framework 2007-2015 and National Education Action Plan 2007-2009. All three strategic plans and strategies were established with the broader aim of improving access, quality and management of education in the medium and longer term. They also were seen as stepping stones to meet the Millennium Development Goals. All align principles of ownership, alignment and predictability as set out in the Paris Declaration of Aid Effectiveness.<sup>187</sup> Under the agreements the Solomon Islands Government would manage the process and allocate aid and resources from donors to priority areas as outlined in their national education strategies.

### The PRIDE Project

The section below outlines specifically how the Solomon Islands participated in the PRIDE Project's three key areas; strategic planning, sub-projects and capacity building. Information gathered for this section is from PRIDE 'End of Completion' Project Reports as well as interviews carried out in Suva and Honiara.

### Key Area One: Creation of comprehensive strategic plans covering formal and non-formal education

In PRIDE's *End of Completion Report*, the Review team found that PRIDE's assistance in Key Area One was extremely limited within the Solomon Islands. PRIDE's mandate was to help foster and facilitate better educational planning across the region to achieve the goals laid out in the Forum Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP). However, the Solomon Islands was ahead in the region and had already begun the early stages of creating its own SWAP. By the time PRIDE was established, it had developed its own National Education Action Plan for 2004-2006 and was in the process of rolling it out across the country. With on-going assistance being provided from its two key education partners, NZAID and EU, there was little need for further technical assistance being offered by PRIDE. From an interview in Honiara with Maelyn Kuve, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education

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<sup>187</sup> Coxon and Pedersen, Op. Cit. p. 9.

she stated, “we didn’t really need PRIDE initially to help with our sectoral planning, we more just looked at PRIDE as filling any gaps.”<sup>188</sup> This meant that the first key area of PRIDE in the Solomon Islands was not relevant or needed.

#### Key Area Two: Implementation of Strategic Plans

Under Key Area Two, PRIDE participating countries were able to seek funding to implement certain aspects of their strategic plans as sub- projects. The Solomon Islands implemented nine sub- projects in total from 2004-2010. This became the more concrete component of PRIDE and helped fill gaps with the national strategic education plans and SWAP. Below is a short summary report of the sub-project activities taken from the ‘Solomon Islands PRIDE- End of Project Completion Report’ which is supplemented by field research findings.

Table 1: PRIDE Sub -Projects within the Solomon Islands<sup>189</sup>

<b>Sub- Projects Title</b>	<b>Managed by</b>
SOL 001 Implementation of Assessment Resource Tools for Teaching and Learning (ARTTLE)	National Examinations and Standards Unit within the Ministry of Education
SOL 002 Education for Visually Impaired	Ministry of Health
SOL 003 Vernacular Education Pilot Project	Ministry of Education
SOL 004 Completion of Provincial Education Plans	Ministry of Education
SOL 005 Teacher Supply, Demand and Deployment Study	Ministry of Education
SOL 006 Development of Basic Education Policy	Ministry of Education
SOL 007 Early Childhood Education	Ministry of Education

<sup>188</sup> Kuve, Interview.

<sup>189</sup> Table taken from University of South Pacific, *Solomon Islands PRIDE*, Op. Cit. p. 7.

National Curriculum	
SOL 008 Pilot Project for School Based Environmental Education	Ministry of Education
SOL 009 Solomon Islands Language Vernacular Policy	Ministry of Education
<b>TOTAL SPENT</b>  SBD \$2, 799, 569  (USD \$341,830.68)	

Each sub-project was reviewed and evaluated by a team in August 2010. Each sub-project's outcomes were assessed using a four category framework, these included;

- Project **EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS**: The outcomes of the project were more than expected
- Project was **SUCCESSFUL**: The sub-project met all of its objectives
- Project was **PARTLY SUCCESSFUL**: The sub-project met some of its objectives
- Project was **UNSUCCESSFUL**: The intended objectives of the project were not achieved

In addition, each sub-project was assessed on whether it was likely to be sustained beyond PRIDE's completion. Each sub-project was put into six categories, these were;

- Highly likely
- Likely
- Potential to be sustained
- Unlikely

- Highly Unlikely
- No sustainability issue<sup>190</sup>

SOL 001 Implementation of Assessment Resource Tools for Teaching and Learning (ARTTLE)

Success against Objectives: **Partly Successful**

Sustainability: **Likely to be sustained**

This sub-project was created shortly after a national standardised achievement test in 2004 of all Class Four children showed that almost 50 percent of students were not achieving learning outcomes for their age group. ARTTLE was conceived as a remedial strategy to help underachieving students. The specific objectives of the sub-project were to prepare resources and activities that would help teachers identify non-performing students within their classrooms. Unfortunately this sub-project did not proceed as planned and failed to achieve a large amount during the first three years. Finding appropriate and trained staff to create and carry out the intricacies of the project was highlighted as the main reason for this. The person who created the proposal left the National Examinations and Standards Unit (NESU) shortly after the proposal was placed. As there was limited human capacity to take this forward the project was eventually stopped. With the original proposer returned to NESU in early 2010 some progress was eventually made. The Ministry of Education recognises the importance of this project and has included the programme in its 2011 budget estimates (hence why it has been labelled ‘likely to be sustained’).<sup>191</sup>

SOL 002 Education for Visually Impaired

Success against Objectives: **Partly Successful**

Sustainability: **Unlikely to be sustained**

This sub-project was based on a pilot survey carried out in 2004 that highlighted 16 percent of all children with disabilities also had visual impairment issues. The objective of the sub-project was to integrate children with visual impairment issues

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<sup>190</sup> University of South Pacific, *Solomon Islands PRIDE*, Op. Cit. p. 7.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

back into mainstream education through better school support systems and resources. This project also experienced major implementation problems during its preliminary years. Finding the right personnel to oversee the project was highlighted as a major constraint. Ultimately, an AUSAID funded volunteer was engaged as Project Officer and steered the project down a new path. The project was geographically narrowed to just Honiara. Subsequently during 2009, 9953 eye screenings were conducted, large print materials were distributed to schools and an awareness programme for teachers and schools was given out of the project's headquarters.<sup>192</sup>

#### SOL 003 Vernacular Education Pilot Project

Success against Objectives: **Partly Successful**

Sustainability: **Likely to be sustained**

This sub-project was based on raising awareness of using vernacular language in teaching and learning in the Zahana area of Isabel Province. The project aimed to provide vernacular training for teachers, learning materials and assessment tools to test how schools were performing with implementing a vernacular programme. The project was hoped to be a pilot which could help shape a national vernacular policy for the Solomon Islands. Unfortunately the sub-project did not proceed as planned. The sub-project coordinator left the Solomon Islands soon after the project commenced. With the departure of key staff within the implementing agency and a change of staff within the Ministry of Education even deciphering exact project details was incredibly difficult to come by. The only reason why this project is 'likely to be sustained' is that key elements are being assured through sub-project SOL 009.<sup>193</sup>

#### SOL 004 Completion of Provincial Education Action Plans

Success against Objectives: **Successful**

Sustainability: **Likely to be sustained**

This sub-project helped engage a technical assistant to check and edit the data within the National Provincial Education Action Plans. An expert, Mr Uke Kombre, was

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

hired from Papua New Guinea for 42 days to put the documents in a uniform format. Overall, the Ministry of Education greatly benefitted from having the provincial plans aligned to wider national plans. Each province has also benefitted from having their own plans placed within local context specific objectives. The only issues highlighted were that some provinces had not yet implemented the plans created for them.<sup>194</sup>

#### SOL 005 Teacher Supply, Demand and Deployment

Success against Objectives: **Partly Successful**

Sustainability: **Likely to be sustained**

The Ministry of Education felt that a detailed study needed to be undertaken to properly determine whether there were an adequate number of teachers being trained within the SICHE (Solomon Island College of Higher Education) and what strategies needed to be rolled out to deal with supply and demand. The sub-project was meant to take the form of a pilot study that could provide recommendations to the Ministry of Education. While initial delays were caused by the late arrival of funds, a considerable delay occurred when trying to find suitable technical assistants to physically undertake the study. The study's results stirred considerable discussion after it found that there was actually an excess of teachers for both primary and secondary levels. However, almost 50 percent of primary teachers and 45 percent of secondary teachers were uncertified. The study made a number of recommendations that were subsequently adopted and integrated into the Ministry of Education's work.<sup>195</sup>

#### SOL 006 Development of Basic Education Policy

Success against Objectives: **Successful**

Sustainability: **Highly likely to be Sustained**

The objective of this sub-project was to finalise the development of the Solomon Islands Basic Education Policy document through extensive consultation with stakeholders. Policies for both national and provincial levels were established. The

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., p. 17.



sub-project achieved its objectives and a Basic Education Policy document was approved by Cabinet in early 2010. Basic Education subsequently within the Solomon Islands came to be defined as starting at Year One and finishing at Year Nine (nine years of education).<sup>196</sup>

#### SOL 007 Development of Early Childhood Education Curriculum

Success against Objectives: **Partly Successful**

Sustainability: **Likely to be sustained**

The purpose of this sub-project was to write a new Solomon Islands ECE Curriculum. Whilst some developments of the sector had been funded by NZAID during the 1990s, no ECE curriculum existed. Therefore, PRIDE funds were used to write a new ECE curriculum and guidelines, develop curricula frameworks and resources and provide training for teachers. An international technical assistant was engaged from Victoria University in Wellington, New Zealand to oversee and create the necessary resources. Some delays were experienced in the project as the technical assistant had limited availability which affected project outputs. In addition, funding was not enough to cover the proposed plans. Although additional funds were secured from UNICEF, the development of learning materials to accompany the new curriculum did not take place.<sup>197</sup>

#### SOL 008 Pilot Project for School Based Environmental Education

Success against Objectives: **Successful**

Sustainability: **Likely to be Sustained**

This sub-project was carried out in conjunction with the 'Live & Learn' NGO to start a small but practical pilot programme in four schools to raise awareness for environmental education. Each school was provided grants and support to teach children top level environmental and sustainable education as well as carry out practical activities of cleaning up school grounds, funding equipment for clean-up,

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

beautification and waste management. Additionally, a conference was attended by 200 people to learn more about this important, yet often over looked area.<sup>198</sup> .

#### SOL 009 Solomon Islands Vernacular Language Policy

Success against Objectives: **Successful**

Sustainability: **Likely to be Sustained**

The objective of this sub-project was to build on ‘SOL 003 Vernacular Education Pilot Project’ and develop a national policy that ‘encourages and facilitates classroom instruction in local languages in ECE and primary education’. The project was jointly funded by PRIDE and UNICEF. PRIDE funded consultations and workshops, while UNICEF funded the international technical assistant. Three models were developed for piloting and testing. In addition, a draft policy framework is currently being incorporated into the Ministry of Educations SWAP.<sup>199</sup>

#### Key Area Three: Strengthened regional capacity to assist Pacific countries to support strategic planning and implementation in basic education

Another key area of PRIDE was to help build regional capacity of key education specialists through regional workshops. Altogether PRIDE organised ten regional workshops, including two specifically for National Project Coordinators. The Solomon Islands hosted one of these workshops in 2007 which focused on Early Childhood Education. Unfortunately delegates from the Solomon Islands were not able to attend two of the regional workshops which focused on Language Policy and TVET (technical and vocational education and training). Overall delegate feedback from the conferences was that the topics covered were incredibly appropriate and helped align regional agendas and goals (such as the Forum Basic Education Action Plan) with local agendas and goals. In addition, having the space to network and share common learnings and challenges helped build confidence and capabilities within the education sector. A Ministry of Education official noted “we talked about wanting good policy but we just didn’t know how to write or establish them. The

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

workshops really helped us with this area and from them we have developed eight education policies that have been passed and approved by Parliament.”<sup>200</sup>

A small number of Ministry of Education staff also noted that they now subscribe to NOPE (Network of Pacific Educators) and have found this a useful tool for network and information sharing.

### The PRIDE Project Challenges

As outlined above, PRIDE experienced many successes within the Solomon Islands during its seven years of operation. Most notably, PRIDE’s main focus within the Solomon Islands centred on the nine sub-projects that were carried out. While the results and outcomes for these were mixed, they have highlighted and worked with strategic priorities reflected within the National Education Action Plans, such as ECE, vernacular and language teaching and basic education. Despite some of these successes, PRIDE in the Solomon Islands experienced a number of constraints and challenges in implementation. Analysing PRIDE’s challenges and constraints within the Solomon Islands using the four categories that were used in chapter three, will illustrate any similarities and cross over. The four categories include capacity and capability challenges, ownership, donor power struggles and the changing donor and development environment.

### Capacity/Capability Challenges

The success of a regional project like this depends very much on the capacity and capabilities of the country and Ministry of Education within it. The PRIDE Project was initiated in the Solomon Islands after a very turbulent period of unrest. The education system was gradually trying to develop a recovery path from the period of social disruption. Essential services had been stopped for a number of years and most government departments and agencies had run at an absolute minimum. On a wider societal level, peace was being installed by RAMSI personnel and the country was experiencing significant social as well as political changes. Key staff and positions were vacant within the Ministry of Education and the country had limited resources and money at its disposal. Compounding this, under-resourced staff were

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<sup>200</sup> Kuve, interview.

experiencing heavy workloads with the creation of the new SWAP agreement with NZAID and the EU.

The country during the post conflict years saw an influx of foreign aid and development work. ODA flows went from around USD \$60 million between 1990-1999 to USD \$162 million between 2000-2008.<sup>201</sup> New actors and donors became involved and many new projects were formed. The SWAP is a good example of the new post conflict aid and development projects that were being started. For the Ministry of Education the SWAP provided a sizeable amount of money and resources. The funding that the Ministry of Education received from the SWAP agreement was really unlike any other grant it had dealt with before. In comparison, the money PRIDE was offering was not as attractive and was substantively less than the SWAP. Due to this, PRIDE's money and resources were not really seen as 'essential' and therefore not a large amount of human capacity or resources were devoted to it.<sup>202</sup>

Under PRIDE's mandate each country had a National Project Coordinator (NPC) who oversaw activities within each participating country. The NPC within the Solomon Islands was also the Permanent Secretary to the Solomon Islands Ministry of Education, and was playing a key role in the development of the SWAP. This considerably restricted the amount of time she was able to put into PRIDE's implementation and development. Whilst PRIDE was being pushed regionally the timing from an in-country perspective was certainly challenging for the Solomon Island Ministry of Education.<sup>203</sup> The post review of PRIDE and information gathered from interviews undertaken with the NPC in Honiara, found that the level of knowledge and visibility of the project within the Solomon Islands was limited. Top level management within the Ministry of Education were aware of the project, however, other education stakeholders, including middle management and teachers were not as informed of the project's mandate. Even the NPC admitted that she did not produce enough awareness of the project as she was tied up with the SWAP and other donor activities.<sup>204</sup> A regional project like this requires strong leadership within country, and whilst the NPC elected was highly qualified, she did not have the time

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<sup>201</sup> OECD, [web document] Op. Cit.

<sup>202</sup> Kuve, interview.

<sup>203</sup> University of South Pacific, *Solomon Islands PRIDE*, Op. Cit. p. 26.

<sup>204</sup> Kuve, interview.

to devote to maximise this project for her country. In addition, the project was very rigorous with its monitoring and evaluation, having detailed systems and frameworks in place. An NZAID official from Honiara noted in an interview that the level of documentation with the project was very rarely found within the Pacific.<sup>205</sup> While there was an attempt to track money and results, it created considerable paperwork for participating countries. Certainly monitoring and evaluation of projects is an integral component of development. However in this particular case coupled with the timing of the project it became a bit of a burden for the Ministry of Education officials.

As the SWAP developed so did the capacity of the Ministry of Education. There was a gap between the first three sub-projects and the subsequent six sub-projects. Coupled with a number of regional workshops, the latter sub-projects that were implemented achieved considerably better results (four of the six subsequent sub-projects were classified as ‘successful’). Additionally, those projects managed by the Ministry of Education did extensively better. There was disappointment with the first two sub-projects (ARTTLE and Education for the Visually Impaired) as they were implemented outside of the Ministry of Education. Coordination of the projects was noted as particularly challenging and fell outside of the Ministry of Education’s mandate/priorities at the time. The general consensus was that the first three sub-projects were not well managed, operated in a state of confusion and were really just “filled gaps.”<sup>206</sup> A recurring theme that plagued many sub-projects was the lack of human capacity and leadership. Seven out of the nine projects experienced capacity issues. Often sub-projects relied on a key person to lead them and when this person left, the project stalled or in many cases stopped completely. In a number of cases during the early years of the initiative an external (often expatriate) technical assistant was brought in to help bring the project back on track. Clearly there is a perpetuating cycle where capacity is holding back projects so foreign consultants are brought in. Nevertheless, this does little to build the capacity of a country and stop the cycle of foreign dependence from happening again.

Dependency issues are not just limited to the Ministry of Education. Across the whole Solomon Islands Government a real dependence on external assistance occurs,

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<sup>205</sup> NZAID Official (NZAID Regional Office), interview by author, Suva, Fiji, 21 October, 2010.

<sup>206</sup> Kuve, interview.

and is expected to continue into the foreseeable future. ODA continues to increase, For example, between 2006 and 2008 a 50 percent increase in aid flows poured into the Solomon Islands.<sup>207</sup> This amount of donors puts pressure on government officials to manage these relationships and takes time away from their everyday workloads. Managing aid relationships, particularly in a large ministry such as the Ministry of Education is a fine balancing act. Ultimately PRIDE was not prioritised at the time because of a multitude of other activities and therefore was not given the focus it needed to thrive.

### Ownership Challenges

The PRIDE Project within the Solomon Islands took a very top down approach. PRIDE's three pronged mandate (strategic planning, sub- projects and capacity building workshops/activities) was decided at a regional level. It can be argued that PRIDE missed and replicated a number of activities and opportunities within the country. Whilst for some smaller countries the assistance with putting together strong education and strategic plans was extremely beneficial it was not needed within the Solomon Islands. Therefore the design and inception of regional projects must and should include better country specific situation analysis before they commence. While it may be hard to find a project that will cater for all countries, more flexible and project implementation arrangements should be part of a regional project. In addition, making sure timing and logistics are well suited within each country is imperative.

As PRIDE developed within the Solomon Islands there was a struggle and confusion with where the project's responsibility ultimately lay. Two out of the three sub-projects within the first round were managed outside of the Ministry of Education and ultimately were not well regarded. Therefore the Ministry of Education regained control of all sub – project activities and when the second round of projects came about, the Ministry of Education managed them. Four out of the six subsequent projects undertaken in the second round were classified as 'successful' and either 'likely to be sustained' or 'highly likely to be sustained'. In addition, the second round became part of the annual work program and were aligned with the National Education Action Plan (NEAP). By this time, capacity building had occurred

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<sup>207</sup> Coxon and Pedersen, Op. Cit. p. 40.

through the SWAP activities and a strong steering group was formed to lead the project. This brought with it greater sense of ownership and commitment to the project and ultimately achieved better results.<sup>208</sup>

#### Donor power challenges

Ironically, the European Union and NZAID were funders of both the Solomon Islands education SWAP and the PRIDE Project. It can be argued that in the Solomon Islands both projects/initiatives had to compete against each other. As the SWAP was given priority, PRIDE was sidelined until the Ministry of Education was able to implement it. Specific elements of PRIDE were not a priority. As the EU and NZAID were already working within the Solomon Island education system internal dialogue between staff members at each agency may have been able to create a better country assessment. When NZAID staff were interviewed for this research, staff working on the PRIDE Project had little knowledge of the Solomon Islands education SWAP and vice versa. Calls for greater dialogue between development partners will not work if donors are not even able to communicate within and amongst themselves.

Parallel to these concerns looking at wider development partners that were involved with the project, only one NGO took part. The lack of participation may be systematic of wider debates of where NGOs and civil society now sit within the new sector/top level approaches. In interviews and discussions with NGO personnel at Save the Children Solomon Islands, it became clear that there was a sense of unease amongst NGOs and civil society in the country about the role that they now played in development with the introduction of SWAPs. In the Solomon Islands there is now a SWAP in the education and health sectors (two key areas for NGO work). Individual projects that were often carried out by NGOs to 'pick up the slack' are no longer seen as priorities for the big donors in the Solomon Islands, these include AUSAID and EU, and smaller players like NZAID. NGO's such as Save the Children receive significant funding through development agencies like AUSAID and NZAID. Aligning these projects to the national education plans in some cases can take NGOs away from their own mandates and priorities. Moving away from

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<sup>208</sup> University of South Pacific, *Solomon Islands PRIDE*, Op. Cit. p. 26.

supply driven, donor funded projects towards demand driven support to a Ministry of Education can logistically be very difficult.

Finding a way to align and ultimately prove goals align with the new national plans can facilitate groups to work in areas that are not their specialty or expertise. Observations gained from field researching in Honiara, is that the surroundings are logistically difficult to work in. The Ministry of Education is located in a cramped and under resourced building and staff work extremely hard. Getting access to Ministry of Education staff is a challenge and with the sheer number of donor groups present, staff can be elusive and unwilling to make time for donors, particularly if they are seen as not aligning to the sector priorities. Discussion with NGOs and the Ministry staff alluded to frustrations present on both sides. Essentially NGOs are a business and function through the delivery of development programmes. If they are not able to do this or are being restricted from doing this, it puts performance pressure on them. On the other side Ministries must align themselves with the most appropriate groups that will help them deliver their overall sector plans. A definite tension exists and will continue to exist.

The lack of involvement from civil society and NGOs raises questions of how access and participation is evolving in the Solomon Islands to development projects and funding. Are only the top level educated elite within Ministries able to access funding? Are NGOs that are only present in the capital Honiara able to access funding through face to face meetings? Potentially, the NGOs that are able to amount the most pressure for meetings are able to gain funding and 'access' to the bigger strategic plan. Certainly in PRIDE's case, there was recognition that only top level management within the Ministry of Education were aware of PRIDE for at least the first half of the project. As the Summary Report states;

Amongst middle managers and education stakeholders outside of the Ministry of Education, the level of awareness is considerably less and patchy, certainly compared to the major programs being implemented under the SWAP.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> University of South Pacific, *Solomon Islands PRIDE*, Op. Cit. p. 26.



This lack of knowledge about aid programmes is not completely unique to the PRIDE Project. Other development practitioners have complained about the exclusivity of aid and development within the Solomon Islands. Complex paperwork and bureaucracy can really prevent those who need help the most from accessing funding or resources.<sup>210</sup> If literacy levels are low then complex paperwork will definitely deter. On top of this, the Solomon Islands is a particularly challenging environment to work in, limited basic infrastructure such as internet and telecommunications, a slower pace of life and vast geographical distances can make work very difficult. It seems that special attention must be placed on utilising civil society, community groups and NGOs to make sure information filters out into communities beyond the capital, Honiara. Unfortunately, there was little capacity to champion and spread project messages with only one National Project Coordinator and a Ministry of Education in disarray.

#### Changing donor/development environment

The decade through which PRIDE was operational was a time of steep learning for stakeholders in development assistance. The Paris Declaration, Accra Accord and general aid effectiveness agendas reflected new approaches and modalities of aid delivery. SWAPs gained momentum and popularity, and like in the Solomon Islands case, it was heavily pushed by donor agencies. The move to adopting the SWAP within the Solomon Islands was strategic and well-timed. It was established to help revitalise and reorganise the Ministry of Education directly after post conflict years. Whilst initially Ministry of Education officials saw the SWAP as more work, they soon came to realise that it was just a different approach to working, which in the long term would be beneficial. Today, the SWAP has really been integrated into day to day operations and has been applauded by officials as improving the coordination of donors. As Kuve states, “partners now have monthly meetings, they even take turns at coordinating and running the meetings.”<sup>211</sup> The Ministry of Education has even established partnership principles which lay frameworks and boundaries of how they would like donors to work with them. In total seven development partners have signed the Principles.

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<sup>210</sup> Alice Pollard (Aid Practitioner), interview by author, Honiara, Solomon Islands, 2 November, 2010.

<sup>211</sup> Kuve, interview.

As the previous chapter has outlined there are many similarities between the SWAPs mandate and the PRIDE Project's mandate. Both champion the notion of strong sectoral planning through which government and donors can work off, monitor and evaluate together. At the time of PRIDE's inception and phase one (creation of comprehensive strategic plans covering formal and non-formal education) the Solomon Islands was actually ahead of its time.

As Kuve notes;

At the inception of PRIDE we were very busy developing our SWAP. The main reason for PRIDE was to implement FBEAP (Forum Basic Education Action Plan) and to help countries develop their own strategic plans. The Solomon Islands was ahead of this however, we didn't really need PRIDE's help, particularly developing a sectoral plan.<sup>212</sup>

Therefore, PRIDE was initially developed as a parallel project outside of the SWAP. As time passed and the Ministry of Education was in a better place to 'project manage', a lot of the sub-project activities were aligned to either the national education action or strategic plans. The level of sustainability of PRIDE project's within the Solomon Islands is actually significant. Whilst the first group of sub-projects were not well aligned and outside of the control of the Ministry of Education the second phase of sub-projects were mainstreamed into the Ministry work program. This meant they were now aligned to the SWAP and as a result achieved much better results. In total seven of the nine sub-project were classified as 'likely to be sustained'.

### Conclusion

The PRIDE Project was active within the Solomon Islands from 2004 to 2010. The main area of PRIDE engagement was in the nine sub-project activities. While some key achievements were made, there is a sense that PRIDE really could have done a lot more within the Solomon Islands. Overall the project seemed to replicate other bigger education initiatives that sat outside of the Ministry of Education's annual work plans. PRIDE's overlap into the area of strategic planning, coupled with the heavy workloads of the new SWAP, meant it was simply not a priority. Ultimately,

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

the budget allocated through PRIDE was not spent and some unused sub-project funds were returned. Information about the project was not widely dispersed so it held a low profile and a lack of human capacity really held back the project's potential. As time went by and the SWAP work load became more manageable, PRIDE's activities were mainstreamed into the Ministry of Education's annual work programmes under the SWAP. This meant that areas of greater priority were funded and some successful sub-projects were produced.

PRIDE within the Solomon Islands demonstrates that regional projects must include country specific situation analysis to produce the most relevant and appropriate projects for each participating country. In addition, the changing aid and development environment requires some basic rethinking of the role that regional projects play. With the focus on and commitment to SWAPs, PRIDE experienced a bit of an identity crisis of what it was trying to achieve. While PRIDE attempted to incorporate SWAPs thinking of wider strategic planning into its mandate, it was simply not a SWAP. PRIDE was not able to offer the money or resources that donors funding the SWAP were able to give. SWAPs are very technical and resource heavy projects to implement and PRIDE could not compete. The SWAP within the Solomon Islands has been very successful at reorganising the top level of the education sector and the Ministry of Education. It has also begun the processes of getting donors to better coordinate and communicate. By looking at the four criteria set out in chapter two of how PRIDE would measure success, the following observations can be provided as a conclusion to PRIDE's activities within the Solomon Islands.

Measurement One- Development of strategic planning documents to deliver basic education using PRIDE resources and funding whilst building the capacity of educators so they could feel confident to enact and deliver these strategic plans

Conclusion: The Solomon Islands did not utilise PRIDE's strategic planning component at all. While some Solomon Island personnel participated in capacity building activities, this criteria was largely not successful. Through better situational analysis a clearer understanding that the Solomon Islands (along with other Pacific countries) was not in need of this Key Result Area would have been understood. As

PRIDE finishes, significant gaps remain in the provision of basic education in the country. PRIDE will have left a small and innocuous impact on this significant goal.

Measurement Two- Using Pacific expertise and personnel to keep knowledge generation and employment within the Pacific region.

Conclusion: PRIDE within the Solomon Islands undertook many activities that utilised local and Pacific capacity. Ministry of Education staff oversaw the roll out of a number of sub-projects and participated in the online NOPE network and various capacity building activities. However in two sub-projects technical assistants were brought in from New Zealand and Australia to get the projects back on track and finish them (these were SOL 002 Education for Visually Impaired and SOL 007 Development of Early Childhood Education Curriculum). In one sub-project, a Papua New Guinean was brought in to help with the writing and development of the Provincial Action Plans (SOL 004 Completion of Provincial Education Plans). Despite local staff being used almost every sub-project faced capacity issues. In PRIDE's review, there is constant referral to the limited number of personnel present to direct projects as well as the limited scope of knowledge within the country to write policy and enact projects. With such a strong stance against using foreign expertise, this thesis argues that it is at the projects detriment to do so. Sharing knowledge and expertise from countries that have well established systems, procedures and infrastructure could be enormously beneficial for developing countries, particularly those within the Pacific. What is important is the way in which it is done and managed. If consultants were used in a way that facilitated knowledge transfers so local people could take and adapt best practise examples into their own settings, this could be very beneficial. In addition, if outside consultants worked alongside local people this would avoid situations where foreigners come in, facilitate the project, then leave. Having an overall project mandate that is so focused on not encouraging this is problematic. Overall this criteria was successful in utilising local knowledge, however if foreign expertise and knowledge had also been utilised (particularly during the early stages) then a lot more could have been achieved.

Measurement Three: Facilitate a range of successful sub-projects across the Pacific that would involve extensive education stakeholders (from civil society to Ministries of Education)

Conclusion: PRIDE within the Solomon Islands did complete a number of successful sub-projects. Considering the timing of the project (with the ending of civil tensions and the establishment of the SWAP) the project should be commended for even completing nine sub-projects as well as participating in capacity building activities. What the project failed to achieve was extensive stakeholder buy in. Only one sub-project was run by an NGO, the rest were run by the Ministry of Education or other government departments. This lack of participation may also reflect geographical divides. There is concern that many development initiatives fail to extend beyond the capital of Honiara. Certainly in PRIDE's case the majority of activity was based within the Ministry of Education (which is located in Honiara) and the NGO led sub-project was located at four schools in Guadalcanal (the greater Honiara area). While provincial plans and the early childhood curriculum were drawn up for the whole country, they were written from Honiara. Penetrating areas outside of Honiara is challenging as infrastructure and capacity is even further reduced. Participation and access from a wide range of education stakeholders was not achieved and therefore this criteria was not a success within the Solomon Islands.

Measurement Four: Be widely recognised as the leading regional education initiative by a range of stakeholders and education specialists.

Conclusion: PRIDE within the Solomon Islands was not recognised as the leading education initiative. The SWAP agreement (also co-funded by the EU and NZAID) very much took priority for the Ministry of Education. In reality the project held little prominence outside of top and middle managers of the Ministry of Education. It was purposely put aside in favour of bigger priority projects. During the initial stages, PRIDE activities sat outside of the Ministry's work plan and therefore filled gaps. The second round of sub-project activities were more effective and had strong alignment with specific priorities of the National Education Action Plan. Overall it seems that PRIDE did not have the funding or resources to gain the prominence it wanted. In the end funds that were allocated to the Solomon Islands were not used

and a considerable amount was returned to the project. It is disappointing that while significant gaps remain in education provision in the country, PRIDE funds were not able to be spent and used on filling these gaps. However, given capacity challenges it seems that the Ministry of Education acted in their best interest to focus on the biggest and most funded project.

### PRIDE's Legacy within the Solomon Islands

PRIDE's legacy in the Solomon Islands will be mixed. Despite a slow start, PRIDE within the Solomon Islands achieved some positive results. PRIDE was able to produce top level education plans such as the early childhood curriculum and provincial education action plans that were missing from the SWAP. However, the project's mandate to enhance the capacity of Pacific education agencies to effectively plan and deliver quality basic education through formal and non-formal means, and to improve the coordination of donor inputs to assist countries implement their plan was not realised. The project simply did not have enough resources to carry out these tasks. The donor landscape within the Solomon Islands is saturated and projects are prioritised according to the size and money they are able to offer. It seems almost arrogant that one single project with such a limited budget would even hope to deliver these results in one country, let alone fifteen across a wide region. PRIDE was merely a 'drop in the ocean' compared to other development projects that were going on within the Solomon Islands and was destined to struggle. While the limited number of people involved in the project are praising of what they achieved, in reality the dynamics were such that a wide range of stakeholders were not engaged. The reach of the project was limited to just the Honiara area and few educationalists outside of the Ministry of Education were even aware of the project. Overall it feels like a wasted opportunity and despite the initial excitement from the Minister of Education (who was involved in early PRIDE concept and design meetings) the project really failed to ever take off. The delivery and achievement of basic education continues to remain a challenge for the Solomon Islands and PRIDE will have only made a small mark on this enormous task. In order to not erase the small amount that was achieved with PRIDE, the focus must now be on ensuring that the sub-project activities are sustained and that the action and provincial plans that were created are actually implemented.

## **CONCLUSION –ASSESSING PRIDE AS A REGIONAL APPROACH TO BASIC EDUCATION DELIVERY?**

The PRIDE Project's journey began in 2001 when Pacific Island Forum Ministers of Education developed a visionary education blueprint called the Forum Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP) to help achieve greater basic education levels throughout the region. Overtime there has been dissatisfaction by donors and recipients about the delivery of aid and particularly educational aid. There was concern that educational aid had delivered projects and programmes that were not relevant and compatible to 'island life' and were merely borrowed systems from donor countries. A culture of dependency flourished throughout the region, with relationships favouring the donor countries' priorities over Pacific Island countries needs. Currently there are thousands of consultants and aid practitioners that work throughout the region and even more projects and programmes happening. PRIDE was seen as a way for Pacific education agencies to plan and deliver their own education priorities effectively. The approach proposed to be more flexible and open than traditional donor projects, allowing countries to put forward their own projects for funding. Through the development of 'PRIDE Planning Benchmarks', the project was able to offer a 'Pacific epistemology' to the process of education planning and implementation.<sup>213</sup>

The project focused on the provision of technical assistance as well as support and advice to build national capacities in three key areas. First, the development of effective and realistic education strategic plans, secondly the implementation of plans (through sub-project activities), and lastly sharing best practice examples through online networks, a resource centre and regional and sub-regional workshops. In total, the project received €8 million from the European Union Development Fund and NZD \$5 million from NZAID.<sup>214</sup> There are mixed views on how PRIDE developed and what it achieved since it came to an end in 2010. Whilst the project was created with historical hindsight in mind and admirable intentions there seems to be an almost 'black and white' divide between its critics. For some the project was unique, ambitious and indications point out there is much to celebrate.<sup>215</sup> For others

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<sup>213</sup> Hau'ofa and Puamau, Op. Cit. p. 362.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

the brief was too ambitious, the project replicated other initiatives some questioned the true dynamics and success of a regional project.

This chapter will conclude both sides of this argument and highlight key lessons from this research. Discussion will focus on PRIDE as a regional model and demonstrate that lessons can be learnt from this project. It will argue that the project had a mismatched and overoptimistic mandate. The project's size and financial backing was at no time likely to facilitate universal basic education throughout the region. This thesis will conclude by exploring the way forward for educational aid.

### Capacity and Implementation

Two fundamental issues related to educational aid and PRIDE have emerged from this thesis. The first issue is the desire of Pacific people to own and manage their development versus the ability and capacity to undertake this task. The second issue is the notion of planning and strategising against implementation and follow-through. The dynamics of these contradictory issues have been a pervading force throughout PRIDE's duration.

Considerable calls have been made for Pacific people to regain control and have greater ownership of their aid and development. The exact definition of ownership is vast and can be interpreted very differently. It seems that the attention put on Pacific ownership is taking attention away from the pertinent issue that some small Pacific countries simply do not have the capacity to fully own, implement and manage development projects on their own. Donors are accountable to their funders and therefore have to make sure their money is well spent. Limited infrastructure and state capacity within some nations represents a considerable risk should these donors devolve responsibility to the recipient states' governments. Reduced structural infrastructure and wider societal, economic and political issues compound existing capacities. While it is not necessarily in the Pacific's best interest, it is understandable why donors have wanted to remain in control of aid processes. It seems that limited human capacity will continue to plague the Pacific which is now more than ever vulnerable to the 'brain drain' of its brightest people. Future projects must therefore continue to focus on fostering local capacity and reach a balance in using foreign consultants.



Issues of ownership and capacity were demonstrated by PRIDE activities within the Solomon Islands. Ministry of Education staff were pre-occupied with the larger SWAP agreement and few outside of the top levels of the Ministry were even aware of the project. The project did not have wide stakeholder engagement and PRIDE was significantly smaller in comparison to other donor projects underway. A number of sub-projects had to utilise foreign consultants or nationals to help them achieve their objectives. A number of lessons can be learnt from PRIDE within the Solomon Islands. First, what can realistically be achieved through a regional project depends on the capacity and capability of key personnel in a country. If there are not local 'heroes' to take the project forward then the likelihood of success is limited. Timing can also be a key to success as projects must fit alongside other government and donor activities. Through better coordination and communication between donors, duplication and pressure on capacity will be avoided. Secondly, the design of regional projects must include a thorough country specific situation analysis to ascertain and create relevant project activities for the capacity present in the country. It can be argued that PRIDE in the Solomon Islands was not a priority for the country and therefore did not reap many benefits. If the project had been postponed and implemented at a later date there may have been greater participation and results.

The second issue that PRIDE has demonstrated is planning versus implementation. The region seems to have focused heavily on creating plans, frameworks and strategies. Enacting and implementing these plans does not always occur. The first step will naturally include having a plan to work from, however activating the plan is when it becomes challenging. It seems this point is inherently linked back to wider capacity issues. There is definitely the desire and aspiration to achieve EFA and raise education levels, however there may not be the money, infrastructure and key personnel in place for this to happen. Money, time and resources need to continue to be directed toward implementation, which is by far the most crucial part of any development project.

Being influenced by wider development practices and SWAPs, it is understandable why PRIDE chose to focus on sectoral planning. With donors increasingly choosing to deal bilaterally with whole sectors, PRIDE was trying to position itself within these new approaches. Reorganising and making the top levels of a sector more efficient is important if they are to deliver better quality services. However it is still

unclear whether children within classrooms are actually benefitting from these new education sector reforms and the adoption of education SWAPs. How have learning outcomes improved and how many more children are actually attending school? Overall attention from donors as well as Ministries of Education must now be on making sure the sector plans and SWAPs are implemented, otherwise their creation was a waste of time.

### PRIDE's legacy

There are both positive and negative outcomes from PRIDE. There is no doubt that PRIDE has been instrumental in promoting the idea of basic education throughout the Pacific. A large number of activities were carried out and a considerable amount of the budget was spent. Being institutionalised right from the beginning through the Pacific Islands Forum by the Ministers of Education themselves, the project had support from top levels of Ministries of Education. The project got people talking, interacting and thinking about the direction of Pacific education delivery. It also brought Pacific education specialists together and capacity building activities have assisted countries to strengthen their knowledge base in order to implement basic education. For smaller countries, such as Federated States of Micronesia and Palau, the project put together pathways for the future with the development of strategic plans and allowed them to access funding and resources otherwise unattainable. For countries that had strategic plans in place, PRIDE helped reaffirm the need to monitor strategic plans and provided money and resources to implement sub-project activities. The project had strong monitoring, reporting and evaluation mechanisms so a clear and transparent tracking of funding and resources evolved.

Despite these positive elements, the project was perhaps off target in a number of ways. Its overoptimistic mandate, lack of pre-country assessments and overall set up, meant that it began to be seen by recipient countries as just another donor funded project, with no point of difference. When this occurred there was less incentive to participate and overall it did not have the influence, money or resources to compete with other donor projects. Busy workloads and bigger, more pressing donor projects took priority. In addition, its overall objective was trying to achieve something wide-ranging using techniques and strategies that were already being used, and had a track record of not producing results. Being heavily influenced from wider SWAP and

national priority setting agendas, the project's mandate tried to replicate this through its strategic planning components. However, strategic planning had already begun for many countries. A major criticism of PRIDE is that there was little situational analysis' undertaken before the project commenced. With more research-based activities, a focus on each country's needs and gaps could have been identified and the project could have been adapted to suit these needs. When PRIDE commenced some key areas of work were not needed or a duplication of other donor activities occurred. While the flexibility and scope of the project was both a strength and weakness, perhaps focusing the mandate on more specific areas (strategic planning, capacity building or sub-projects) would have produced more concrete results. Instead the project seems to have spread itself too thinly and diluted results. Ultimately a more strategic focus would have yielded more tangible results.

While countries in the Pacific turn to donors for financial assistance and resources they inadvertently open themselves up to donor ownership and control issues. Ultimately these may just be fundamental problems of donor/recipient relations. Despite its best efforts, PRIDE with its small size, resources and manpower was never going to be able to overcome or change this. There is a sense that donors will continue to influence Pacific education priorities, and the top-down, expert-driven processes of gauging priorities will persist. Aid and development in the Pacific is big business with multiple actors and considerable ODA financial flows. Currently donors with the most money seem to draw the most attention, not those projects that are the effective, appropriate or relevant. As demonstrated by PRIDE in the Solomon Islands, the project not only replicated existing projects but sat awkwardly alongside the Ministry of Education. It is therefore vital that if regional projects are to be successful they must have thorough country level assessments, be well-timed, collaborate with existing stakeholders and offer something unique. Regional projects are certainly risky when countries are functioning and achieving different levels of education provision.

#### PRIDE as a regional project

What PRIDE set out to achieve as a regional project was impossible. A regional project of such a small size and large mandate was not well designed. The project was attempting to accomplish something extraordinary, basic education delivery,

without having the capacity and resources to do so. It is not impossible that regional initiatives can help to foster better educational delivery, however PRIDE's overoptimistic objectives were not only mismatched against activities happening within countries, they also failed to take into account what the prior consultation had identified as priorities for the area.<sup>216</sup> In the original project proposal, after extensive consultation, the provision of formal and non-formal education for Pacific youth was meant to encompass the project. Instead, the project took on a considerably broader agenda; the delivery of basic education through strategic planning - which no single project could possibly tackle alone.

A lot can be learnt from PRIDE's regional scope. Utilising resources and collaborating between countries can work in the Pacific. People are willing and able to share their best practise examples and creating a familial 'kinship' environment is possible. The University of the South Pacific and the Pacific Island Forum certainly have a place in future educational aid projects. The Forum has made a commitment to education by appointing a permanent member of staff to oversee this portfolio. However, the extent to which both parties were involved may change in the future. Due to bureaucracy and governance issues throughout PRIDE, the University may not take on such a facilitative role. The Forum may also wish to take more of a back seat role in future educational aid initiatives and act more as a lobby and intermediary agent for countries, particularly as it only has one staff member working on this portfolio. With increasing calls for the establishment of other regional projects in the education and health sectors, the successes and shortfalls of PRIDE's project design can be learnt from. Regionalism can work, however the size and context of the project must be well suited for this to happen.

### Concluding Comments

PRIDE had big expectations laid upon it and for the first regional education initiative of its kind it naturally wanted to be successful. What can be taken from PRIDE is immense. The Pacific region is a challenging area to work in and there are inherent issues that no one project can change, particularly one as small as this. Facilitating ownership will require a fine balance between making sure there is capacity present and not just allowing foreign consultants to dominate. Furthermore building capacity

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<sup>216</sup> Using only one case study is not the right tool for making comments about regionalism in general, further examination/research would be needed to expand on this.

and knowledge generation is vitally important. Delivering quality education will enable the next generation of young people to be confident and skilful in managing the futures of their countries. As every Pacific country now has an education strategic plan in place, through the help of PRIDE, or from other donors, the groundwork has been laid. Making sure education sector plans filter down and actually deliver quality education must now be prioritised. Wider social, political and economic problems will be lessened with populations that are well educated and informed. Unfortunately the ‘chicken and the egg’ argument is apparent as enabling education systems to flourish needs strong leadership, expertise and financial support. Now more than ever donors seem to be equally committed to the provision of quality basic education for all. What is important is that the key lessons from PRIDE as well as other development projects are indeed taken on board to help create future Pacific education initiatives that are truly world class.

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