From the PRIDE Team Leader: A shift in mindsets

In the last issue, I shared my reflections on the impact the PRIDE Project has made in addressing two concerns identified at a Pacific educator leaders’ meeting in 2001 as plaguing education systems in the Pacific region: the lack of ownership and absence of a clear vision for education at national and the regional levels. It is my contention that PRIDE’s work has made a significant impact, through its implementation of the Forum Basic Education Plan, in national vision building through the development of country education strategic plans and a stronger sense of country ownership and control of their education processes and systems.

While the latter is mediated by bilateral or multilateral donor requirements and the demands of the global market economy, countries increasingly are insisting that they are the ones to determine for themselves what their education priorities must be, not the donors or regional development partners. This point came through clearly at the recent FBEAP review meeting with Heads of Education systems from Forum PRIDE countries held in Nadi, Fiji from 17-19 September.

I hinted in the last issue that the priorities reflected in the PRIDE-funded portion of education strategic plan implementation through more than 140 subprojects are indicative of a mindset shift that clearly signals that countries are now thinking and moving outside of the box. I would like to explore this further in this issue.

In their presentation to the Heads of Education systems in September in Nadi, Fiji, the Review Team noted that of the 107 subprojects they had analysed in June this year, the four most common country choices for subprojects were educational planning, ICT, teacher quality and language & culture.

It is the (new) focus on language & culture that I would like to further comment on. The number one benchmark articulated in the PRIDE benchmarks to review education strategic plans (see http://www.usp.ac.fj/pride) is pride in cultural and national identity with the principle articulated as building the plan ‘on a strong foundation of local cultures and languages, thus enabling students to develop a deep pride in their own values, traditions and wisdoms, and a clear sense of their own local cultural identity, as well as their identity as citizens of the nation’.

The PRIDE project complements the work of the Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative (RPEI) implemented from 2001-2006 which has metamorphosed into Rethinking Pacific Education for and by Pacific People (RPEIPP) with funds ending in 2008. Funded by NZAID, this initiative has become a philosophy in countries that have wholeheartedly embraced its ethos and principles. The goal of the RPEI is to promote leadership by Pacific educators for education in Pacific countries. Since 2001, the initiative has been a catalyst for Pacific peoples to re-think education in and for their own communities (see http://www.victoria.ac.nz/education/institutes/hp/hp-rpei.aspx) with a key focus on leadership and research.

PRIDE and RPEIPP share the same philosophy that education should be firmly rooted in the cultures of Pacific societies – process and skills, knowledge, arts and crafts, institutions, languages, values, beliefs, histories and worldviews.

The PRIDE subprojects that encapsulate an emphasis on local language & culture have included:

- Maori resource development (Cook Islands)
- Maori language qualification workshops for secondary school teachers (Cook Is.)
- Culture education curriculum development (Kosrae/FSM)
- Development of Yapanese culture curriculum and supporting resources (Yap/FSM)
- Novice mat weaving (Marshall Islands)
- Nauru language first readers (Nauru)
- Developing vernacular resources (Niue)
- Development of Palauan Studies Textbook for Grade 1 (Palau)
- Vernacular education pilot project (Solomon Islands).

It is evident, through this snapshot of language & culture subprojects that PRIDE is changing educational thinking and practices in the region through countries rethinking and interrogating their practices. There is the growing recognition that Pacific cultures and languages matter, that our local knowledge and values matter, that indigenous skills and processes matter.

Priscilla Puamau, PhD
Project Team Leader
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Pohnpei's Third Regional Sub-Project which will address the area of Inclusive Education. This funding by the PRIDE Project will allow the provision of a Pacific Regional non-award “Certificate of Orientation and Mobility in the Pacific” (O&M), delivered in partnership with the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI) and in collaboration with RIDBC, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and the United Nations Economic & Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP).

Tasi had the honors of handing the cheque over to Setareki Macanawai, President of PDF (pictured) and this was followed by Morning Tea. An article appeared in the Fiji Sun on 23rd August written by Ms Sandra Ah Sam who was also present at the handover with

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### Project Steering Committee Meeting

During the 2007 PSC meeting held in Auckland PSC members requested PRIDE to possibly organize two PSC meetings a year instead of only one. PRIDE was very fortunate therefore to be able to hold its first PSC meeting for 2008 at the Shangri La Resort, Fiji on Saturday 5th July immediately following the big regional Monitoring and Evaluation conference. We thank our Education Partners UNESCO, SPBEA and World Bank for allowing PRIDE to take advantage of this opportunity to incorporate its PSC meeting in the programme. The 2007 Audit Report was discussed and accepted. One member remarked that it was good to see that the Audit Report indicated a consolidation of the financial expenditure for 2007 and congratulated the team. The Project Team Leader presented the Annual Report 2007 and the Progress Report 2008 (Jan-Jun). The members learned that PRIDE now has over 140 in-country subprojects on its register and ratified 61 new subprojects. The 2009 Indicative Work Programme was endorsed and the Project Manager was asked to commence negotiations with the donors to request an extension of the timeline of the PRIDE Project until the end of 2010. This would allow countries that are slow in implementing its subprojects to complete them before PRIDE ends.

**John Stunnenberg**

**Project Manager**

The Review of the Forum Basic Education Action Plan was discussed and Dr. Helen Tavola (PIFS) introduced the Review Team headed by Mr Ian Hind and supported by Ms Elaine Lameta and Dr Hilda Heine who began work in July. She detailed the processes of the review which will culminate in a workshop scheduled for 17th – 19th September to review the key findings and the possibility of a PRIDE II. The final report of the Review will be tabled in FEDMM 2009.

A special thank you goes to the CEO, Samoa Ministry of Education, Mr. Tupae Esera, for efficiently chairing the meeting.

It was wonderful to have the National Secretary for FSM's Department of Education, the Hon Casiano Shommer, and the RMI Minister for Education, Hon. Nidel Lorak present.

**PRIDE's Third Regional Sub-Project**

The PRIDE Team led by Tasi Taukafo'U (Acting Project Manager) & Sereana Tagivakatini (Acting Team Leader) paid a visit to the Pacific Disability Forum Office (PDF) in Desvouex Rd, Suva on the 22nd August, 2008 at morning tea time. They were there to formally hand over a cheque of FJD $50,000, the first instalment of funding for PRIDE's third Regional Sub-Project which will address the area of Inclusive Education.

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**Pohnpei education officials visit Palau**

Seated Front (l-r): Director Emery Wenty, Minister Mario Katosang, Pohnpei State Director of Education Joseph Vilazon. Back (l-r): Reynold Albert, Reynold Mechol, Ted Borja, David Orrukem, Catalino Damarlane, Debbie Tkel-Sbal

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Vilazon, Albert and Damarlan plan upon their return to use what they learnt from the visit to review Pohnpei's high school programs and in the process extend the programs to the elementary level.

Mr Philip N. Haruo.

Palau Horizon

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Palau Horizon
Subproject implementation in RMI

The Project Manager, John Stunnenberg, visited the Marshall Islands from 8-11 July to provide technical assistance in several areas as requested by the Ministry of Education. During this visit he was fortunate to view the implementation of three in-country subprojects. A courtesy visit was made to the Hon. Nidel Lorak, Minister of Education, to brief him on PRIDE, while on the last day the DOE staff organized a surprise afternoon picnic, which was well appreciated.

The PRIDE NPC in RMI, Ms. Brenda Alik Maddison, arranged for an article to be published in the Marshall Islands Journal informing the readers about PRIDE, its donors and the work PRIDE does in RMI. This was a good example of implementing the project’s visibility statement.

The following is a brief recount of the three subprojects:

**The Math Institute**

This subproject had just started with 325 teachers undergoing training by local MoE staff and JICA volunteers. During the three week period in July, Lead trainers engaged the assistance of 12 trainers and 12 supporters to train over 300 teachers in 10 groups of 30 teachers on the math curriculum focusing on the implementation of the math standards and benchmarks.

The Lead trainers are the MOE math curriculum specialists, high school math teachers, JICA Math Volunteer specialist, with support from the elementary school teachers. The participants are teachers from all the public and private schools (76 schools) from K-8th grade. The training content was prepared by the Lead trainers and will be shared with the Trainers/Supporters in a one-week preparation session prior to the Institute. Since this will be the second year of the Math Institute, the Lead trainers will improve the content of the training modules based on evaluations of the first Institutes. The beneficiaries of the project will not only be over 300 school teachers who will gain firsthand knowledge of the math concepts and how to teach to the Math Standards, but also over 9000 students, who newly trained teachers will pass the knowledge and skills on to.

**Early Childhood Parent Education**

This project is implemented by Women United Together in Marshall Islands (WUTMI), an NGO, whose primary goal is to support and strengthen Marshallese women and in doing so, to strengthen Marshallese families. There is no Early Childhood Education service provider in RMI and WUTMI offers the only ECE support that families are receiving to help them prepare their young children for kindergarten and formal education. This project focuses on training parents to be teachers in early childhood education in the rural areas. The Project Manager met with the Executive Board and was briefed on progress of this subproject. He met two recently trained Parent Educators who had just returned from Hawaii after receiving training through PREL and who are now ready to go into the villages and commence their training of parents as teachers.

**The Majuro School Enrichment Programme**

This project started in April this year under supervision of Mr. Rais ‘Aho. It consists of two components, Information Technology and an extracurricular activity programme. The IT component has not started yet, as a computer Lab is still in the process of being established at the Majuro Middle School.

A computer instructor will be hired to teach basic computer and typing skills to both students and teachers. The after-school programme however has been very active and youth are now involved in several sports, e.g. basketball and soccer. During PRIDE’s visit it was RMI’s summer break and we were able to attend a soccer clinic organized for young boys and girls under the guidance of two ex-professional soccer players from Japan. There were about 50 participants who were eager to learn basic soccer skills even when it was raining that afternoon.

The extracurricular activities aim to positively structure the youth’s behavior and encourage creativity, teamwork and constructive learning. Exercise and fresh air will also serve to sharpen students’ minds, thereby improving their performance in school.

Regional Sub-Project

Her counterpart from Legend FM, Ms Paradise Tabulala.

The certificate-level program is designed for educators and community-based rehabilitation (CBR) workers who are providing services directly or indirectly to children with vision impairments in the fifteen Pacific Countries served by PRIDE. The training programme which is aimed to run for 4 weeks will be conducted at Nadave and will also see the participants conducting “in-country” practical assignments and sitting for final examinations before receiving their certificates.

**Math Institute:** a JICA volunteer in action.

Math Institute: a JICA volunteer in action.
Like previous regional workshops this workshop required contributions from the participants; including work done prior, during and post workshop. All participants completed a country survey prior to the workshop. The survey was designed to gather baseline data on Pacific Knowledge Societies indicators and assist countries in their presentations. Country presentations were held on day 2, This was a great opportunity for everyone to learn about other countries in the region in the areas of basic education statistics, information literacy, library, ICT in education and even in answering some "fun" questions which turned out to be very educative and informative, such as the similarities and differences in the Pacific vernacular words for “knowledge”.

On day 2 participants were allocated into groups. Each day the groups were asked to draw out the parallels and differences between the presentations and the Pacific context. They were actively engaged in reflecting on the implications of theories, concepts and ideas provided in the presentations. Working under the guidance of the resource people, the participants also generated new understandings and ideas from examples of best practices and discussed possible practices in creating knowledge societies within schools. In particular groups acknowledged the important role libraries and ICT are said to play in improving access to quality resources and how they support teaching and learning; especially literacy and information literacy. The involvement of the resource people was viewed highly by the participants. Each group presented the product of their group discussion on day 5 PRIIDE will take these outcomes and present them on behalf of the participants and the workshop partners at the Forum Education Ministers meeting, Tonga, March 2009.

What is knowledge?

As part of the country presentations each country was asked to provide in their main vernacular, the word and meaning of knowledge. The following are some examples of what was shared at the workshop:

**Cook Islands**

Knowledge = “Knowing information… “kia ka to rama ei toki tai enua.” “Light your torch and carve a better nation.”

**Samoa**

Knowledge = “Ifoa” to know something.

**Vanuatu**

Knowledge = save (Bislama)

**Nauru**

Knowledge = Enwan

**Kiribati**

Knowledge = Rabakau or wansawa

**Palau**

Knowledge = Klemendege

The workshop was fortunate to have a critical friend present bring a fresh perspective and add value to the discussions, clarify key ideas and issues and ensure that the focus of the workshop was maintained and recast the issues or asking probing questions to enable participants to gain fresh insights. Libby Cass from SPC, explaining the RICS from

The OLPC Oceania project is a project to create educational opportunities for the world’s poorest children by providing each child with a rugged, low cost, low power, connected laptop with content and software designed for collaborative, joyful, self empowered learning.

SPC is coordinating pilots of the OLPC in Niue, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. This initiative, launched at the 2007 Forum Leaders meeting in Tonga, responds to a call by Leaders in the Pacific Plan Digital Strategy to bridge the digital and communication divide between the urban and rural and remote areas in the Pacific.

Participants at the workshop noted that the OLPCs were important and relevant to learning or education and acquiring quality resources for quality education. They also believe that the OLPC can help children to be more literate and transfer a “ripple effect” to the rest of the family and community. OLPC to some participants promises to transform communities and societies.

Most agreed that the OLPC has great potential in improving the delivery of education to remote areas, and that it can encourage distance learning. The OLPC was seen as a mechanism to improve students’ attitudes toward learning. In addition, the OLPC would expand and link teaching and learning in schools to the ‘outside’ and vice-versa.

The OLPC was seen as a way to engage those most marginalised from information literacy opportunities and the many children who are not accessing formal schooling.