Looking through old lenses to understand

the emerging new world order

Implications for education reform in small island states

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There is an increasing pressure on small island states to reconceptualize education policies, education management practices and curriculum to address the emerging issues caused by global economic, social and cultural changes. It has generated increasing demands on limited available resources which is further confounded by the often contradictory yet legitimate advice provided by international and local experts. This paper reflects on the changing expectations to provide a critical analysis of the challenges facing education planners in small developing countries. It challenges them to move beyond the stereotypical ways of thinking about education development while acknowledging the role, played by previous educational development models.

Keywords: curriculum, developing countries, education management, education planners, education policies, small island states, global economy

Introduction

Awareness of the significance of small states continues to grow (Bray and Packer, 1993) particularly at this juncture as we witness an increase in small states caused by the collapse of large federations such as the USSR and Yugoslavia. As a result, we now have new small states such as Armenia, Georgia and Tajikistan and have seen the emergence of Kosovo, Albania and Montenegro. East Timor, having recently secured its independence, is an example of 'a new small island state. This smallness may be defined by variables such as geography; population density- and/or economy. For the purpose of this paper we have focused on small island states which have a small population (less than 2 million) and have limited land areas (often in small lots) and a highly vulnerable economy which is often highly dependent on foreign aid (Bray; 1991; Evans, 1995). This type of small island state may be found in all parts of the world but they are more concentrated in the Caribbean and the South Pacific. Watson (cited in Bray and Packer, 1993) describes 'economics education, politics, sovereignty, national security and vulnerability issues' (p.173) as the characteristics of these small island states. He argues that because of the vulnerability of these states their development needs should be considered differently from development of large states. To apply the same parameters of development to these small island states ignores the fact that small states are not just quantitatively different in their characteristics: they are qualitatively different. For example, their population sizes and geographic spread mean that there are different patterns of interactions among and between the various social strata. Culturally they are vulnerable - particularly because many depend on foreign aid, where conditions may be imposed on trade and financial deals that threaten cultural traditions (Bray and Packer, 1993).

Thus it is not surprising that since the 1980s there has been an awareness of the need to broaden the meaning of development in small states beyond economic and technological concerns. For example, *The World Commission on Environment and Development Report* (Bruntland, 1987) advocated increased international cooperation in a holistic approach to address common concerns. This was particularly relevant to small island states. In the past two decades a significant contribution from national budgets and international aid has been directed to economic and technological infrastructure development (Asian Development Bank, 1999, World

Bank Group, 2003). What we argue in this paper is that while infrastructure development may have been appropriate at that time as many small states gained independence and needed to build basic infrastructure to springboard their economy and social systems including education, there is now a need to invest more in human capital development. A central argument we put is that economic and infrastructure investments alone are not sufficient to sustain development in small states when there is ever increasing dominance of a global economy.

In developed states, economies are becoming virtual, based on knowledge rather than manual skills, and are driven by information explosion and market forces. This has encouraged a significant shift in socioeconomic planning and has forced the recognition of human capital as the key to a country's economic and social growth (see Finger and Schuler, 2003). Human capital development now provides the competitive edge in a global market (Finger and Schuler, 2003; Senge, 1990). Such realization has seen the emergence of concepts such as knowledge capital and knowledge workers (Drucker, 1968). These are all characteristics of what we refer to as a 'new world order' (Pillay and Elliott, 2001): characterised by uncertainty, flexibility and incongruities as well as increased access to information. This contrasts with past ideas of certainty, fixture and information located with 'experts' and institutional structures. These characteristics have encouraged a need for continuous knowledge creation and application of such knowledge in work practices.

This shift to investments in human capital is also true and must be a focus for small island states. Perhaps the case is even more so given the cultural and economic vulnerability of these states. As noted by Pillay (1998) there are many instances in the South Pacific where educational planners, in seeking to establish national identify and pride, invested heavily in vocational training colleges, and many of these are grossly under-utilized today. The reasons for this are complex. For example, there has been an infiltration of new technologies that have made it possible for tertiary institutions from outside the region (Australia and New Zealand) to offer educational programmes in competition with the South Pacific regional institutions. This suggests there is a need to look at educational planning in such states through new lenses, ones that explore ways of living with the ever changing, complex and contradictory situations and values in the global world and the particular characteristics of small states. The old paradigm of building more educational infrastructure and localizing the curriculum may not be sufficient to solve problems such as cultural preservation, illiteracy and the gap between the rich and poor.

Coyne and Bray (1999) also point out that small states have distinctive features (e.g. lack of economy of scale, scarcity of personnel, personalized bureaucracies) that need to be accounted for in design and operation of educational systems. There have been some excellent reviews of development in small states (e.g. Bray, 1991, Bray and Packer, 19930 and the planning for education within them. Bray and Packer (1993) argue that while large countries lack social cohesion, small states are often perceived as manageable and personal but they are also vulnerable, uneconomic and dependent. These studies consider the characteristics of small states and the implications of these for planning and development. For example, Bray and Packer (1993: 3) consider issues such as the dimensions of scale, politics, economies and social structures and seek to 'bring together the many facets of smallness as they affect the development of education' in these societies. Notwithstanding the significance of doing this, there are other issues to consider. For example, to consider development and planning for small states by considering only the aspect of the states themselves runs the risk of ignoring the context in which these states find themselves in the world. Further, we would argue that the technological and ideological revolutions of recent years have meant that it is no longer relevant to consider the e world in terms of individual countries. Fusions of all types have meant that there is a new dynamic at play in the world that may, at one level, shape both large and small states alike.

In this paper we seek to broaden the arguments about development in these small island states to consider them in terms of contemporary world contexts. For this reason we now turn to consider aspects of what we refer to as a 'new world order'.

Understanding the nature of our changing world
The changes in the contemporary world are more than mere physical changes. For example, previously there was an expectation of 'closure' in every educational activity, there was clear demarcation between political ideologies, and there was the luxury of extended debate and trialing before new policies were adopted. The contemporary world is no longer characterized in this way. Consequently, we need to adopt different lenses to see the world and to be part of it. It is not just a question of using new individual lenses but we also need to wear multiple sets of lenses at the same time. We now have to deal with conflicting situations, often where

consideration of opposing ends at the same time is necessary in order to address an issue, although both may have different values attached to them. We need to recognize dilemmas, resolve them to the best of our abilities and live with that resolution until further thought provides other insights. Thus, these dilemmas are not to be solved in a finite sense or in a finite time frame, but lived with in the best possible way. The ability to deal with this fragmented self requires a totally new focus to education systems and education investment for development. We cannot conceive a new education model by looking through old and mono lenses. While this is true of all societies, it is particularly true for small countries such as the island states where resources are scarce.

The changing world and work practices require different types of human attributes, hence there is a need to consider which human capacities are valued by small island states and for what purposes. The objective of education, its processes, and its institutions all need redefining. The literature on productivity suggests a shift from production to service and from producing the same products and services at a cheaper price to more innovative products and services (value adding). This has implications for education, which typically has been driven by proclamations such as 'education for all'. Under such proclamations we have seen a stereotypical education, top-down and highly prescriptive model. If the new focus on education as `service' is adopted there is greater recognition of stakeholders other than the Ministries of Education. Innovations and adding value to education systems cannot be achieved by viewing the problem with traditional lenses. Similarly, in the management area there is a need for more co-dependency between Ministry of Education, schools and communities and an attempt to empower parents and communities to foster creative ways of supporting education reforms. The work of Aga Khan Development Network in Tajikistan (e.g. see http://www.akdn.org/akf/tajikrep_02.pdf and http://www.akdn.org/news/focus_020304.htm) and the Salesian Missions (see http://www.salesianmissions.org/) in East Timor are excellent examples of community-driven educational planning. In both cases the focus has been to mobilize grassroots participation in educational planning rather than waiting for the state to bring about the change. Communities need to be empowered and supported in their initiatives to engage with the development and provision of educational services. Educational management and planning is not about policing people, rather it is about how to encourage stakeholders to become more innovative, productive and reduce mistakes and loss of resources.

Complex changes such as those cited above can only be understood if viewed from new lenses. One such opportunity is provided by a conceptual framework developed by Habermas (1971) for understanding different knowledge types necessary to function effectively in a progressive society. He argues that for a complete and full understanding of human interaction with its environment there are three different, but inter-related, knowledge constructs. These are referred to as technical, sociocultural and emancipatory and each has to be catered for within an education model. Technical knowledge is about scientific rules and procedures, computations, cause and effect type of information and is very much to do with specifics of individual job tasks. Sociocultural knowledge refers to the environment in which an individual lives - it is about people and culture. In a `new world order where global and local, external and internal changes cannot be quarantined' there is a need to understand the dynamics of the interaction between these bipolar continua which are often conflicting yet necessary positions. Emancipatory knowledge is about self development of individuals, becoming confident in one's ability to be critical consumers of information. Capacity to deal with this knowledge type is critical for changes such as decentralization of educational management and the effective use of Educational Management Information Systems (EMIS). Having technical knowledge in EMIS prepares individuals to follow rules, it may not be sufficient for educational planners to make decision about the type of information that needs to be collected, stages at which to gather information or type of analysis to be performed on that data to inform policy development. Previous education models tended to dwell on, mainly, technical knowledge at the expense of sociocultural and emancipatory knowledge. The empowerment of individuals and the ability to navigate through complex and multicultural situations is increasingly becoming central to many of the attributes of model citizens of today. (`Multicultural' is used in a very broad sense to include rural and urban, private and public school cultures, plus others such as ethnic cultures.) Thus, in contrast to the in-depth analyses of planning and development by Bray (1991) and Bray and Packer (1993) we argue that the discourses of educational development in the small island states need to consider more than the appropriate emergent attributes of respective countries. They need to consider educational policies and their implications for a 'new world order' which includes: blurring of boundaries between formal and informal learning and focus of types of knowledge rather than models of

instruction; need for individuals to continually question fundamental beliefs, including epistemological beliefs; need for learning outcomes to address equity in the context of competition; need for individuals to accept best practice, while at the same time, questioning it; and need to recognize the significance of cross-institutional and national networks in continuously supporting learning (Pillay and Elliott, 2001).

Of significance for the contemporary world is the need for a conceptualization of education that pervades all learning contexts – not whether one learning context is more appropriate than another for teaching particular issues. The emerging complexity of our society will not allow us the luxury of adopting one of the given approaches; rather it will be expecting us to function just as effectively in a number of approaches. A multiple approach to understanding education has caused much tension in identifying the most appropriate solutions (e.g. approach to teaching) and this is of relevance in small island countries where often a shortage of resources leads to the seeking of single solutions. It must be realized that this singularly focused approach cannot form the basis for our understanding of something that involves a multitude of variables.

The changing `world order' is fundamentally characterized by uncertainty, flexibility and incongruities and an increased access to information. This contrasts with past ideas of certainty, fixture and information located with certain experts. One recurring issue evidenced in the nature in which the new `world order' is evolving is that there are increasingly contradictory positions that one has to adopt which are perfectly legitimate. This often causes friction with our previous models of understanding the world and its education system. In considering this friction, Delors (1996) identifies several central tensions evidenced in contemporary societies, including:

- the tension between belonging to a global society on the one hand and being a member of a local community on the other;
- the tension between characterizing people as productive components of an economic system on the one hand and being unique individuals on the other;
- the tension between the need to transform the existing environment and the need to preserve the traditions of the past;
- the tension between addressing long-term needs while recognizing the needs of the immediate environment;
- the tension between needing to compete on the world stage and the need to collaborate to encourage strong alliances;
- the tension between the ever expanding knowledge base and the capacity to use this; and
- the tension between spiritual and material development

These tensions are of particular significance for small island countries as some may be welcomed as opportunities for considering alternatives whereas others may present difficulties.

Essentially, these dilemmas imply a move from a single focus of the traditional model of policy development, which relied heavily on the state, to a focus on new multiple pathways policies that place emphasis on the engagement and development of community (including industry) and individual capacities. Traditional models of education development driven by singular, linear and rigid pathways cannot serve the needs of a society that is multidimensional and asynchronous. Long-term policies can no longer assist individuals in a run-away world. The withdrawal of control and regulatory systems associated with increasing importance of economic rationalizing and market forces to monitor quality assumes citizens' capacity to discriminate, evaluate and question assumptions behind rhetoric and promotion. Also, to protect against risk, individuals need to have the capacity to think critically and challenge the status quo to substitute them with better ideas and systems.

In responding to the emerging complexity inherent in the changing world Handy (1995: 17-18) suggested that

> …. acceptance of paradox as a feature of our life is the first step towards living with it and managing it ... we can ... and should reduce the starkness of some of the contradictions, minimise the inconsistencies, understand the puzzles in the paradoxes, but we cannot make them disappear, nor solve them completely, nor escape from them ... Paradoxes are like the weather, something to be lived with, not solved, the worst aspects mitigated, the best enjoyed and used as clues to the way forwards. Paradox has to be accepted, coped with and made sense of, in life, in work, in community and among nations.

Against this backdrop we intend to identify and explore a number of central dilemmas that need to be addressed by small developing countries, and the educational implications of such

dilemmas, which subsequently frame a discourse for policy and strategies. Such an understanding will facilitate effective educational planning to develop individuals as citizens and productive members of society.

Cultural preservation

For each of the above paradoxes, as Handy (1995) noted, there are no absolute solutions and there is no denying their existence. Thaman (2000) in her address to the UNESCO-ACEID conference in 2000 expressed her concern regarding the tension caused in maintaining cultural heritage of small South Pacific nations and at the same time integrating with the global culture. She feared that many South Pacific Island nations would lose their identity, and in some cases, her fear is justified. For instance, the nature of political governance between Cook Islands, Western Samoa and New Zealand allows open mobility between the countries. This has seen strong New Zealand influence on the politics of the other two smaller Pacific Island countries. However, it has strengthened the Polynesian cultures (to which they all belong) because, as a group, they seem to have more chance of surviving culturally. This is no different from the European community grouping together and, in doing so, sacrificing something of their past to gain some new things which they consider valuable in the current context. Retreating to local traditional cultures may not help the smaller countries; can we do justice to the people from small countries by limiting them to only their local and immediate culture? We also know from history that societies evolve and so do their cultures. Therefore, if we were to retreat to traditional cultures and values then how far back should we go? Furthermore, small countries such as Fiji in the South Pacific, Trinidad and Tobago in the West Indies and Mauritius are not monocultural. The question of whether it is appropriate that indigenous culture be imposed on other cultures that came later is one that continues to be addressed in a wide range of fields from arts to sciences. Arguing for privileged cultural recognition in multicultural societies may be contrary to UNESCO's objective of promoting peace, tolerance and equity. Perhaps there is a need to understand issues such as cultural equity from a non neo-colonial perspective, one that considers that characteristics of the new 'world order' and its pervading technologies and ideologies which seem to suggest that global culture cannot be blocked out. Many small island states depend on other developed countries for their television programmes and their economy (directly and indirectly via tourism for example).

   Furthermore, with information technology creating a borderless world, it is impossible to sanction the internet. Therefore, the issue of traditional local and western cultures is not about which culture to adopt. Rather it is about how to provide a balance between the two so that the people from small developing countries still maintain an identity and yet can actively participate in the emerging global cultures. Thaman (2000) seems to imply that the informal and traditional/communal learning inherent in many Pacific Island cultures is perhaps more appropriate than the current western, formal education model which she considers to have failed the South Pacific Island people. There is an assumption in her argument that only traditional local cultures can provide the bet option for small island states. While this may have merit, we believe, for the contemporary world order, it is not a question of one or the other or even which one should become the dominant model and which the secondary. In a post-modern world there will always be situations when the global culture may be more important and at other times the local. Therefore, relegating one to second position only supports the old views of education where a single value position can be held. As we noted earlier it is crucial in the new 'world order' to be able to adopt multiple value positions at the same time. Jones (1995) cautions that Pacific Island States, under the pretence of sovereignty and cultural identity, must not perpetuate the feudal and colonial (in some cases) heritage and continue with the education system of the past while ignoring the huge transformation of the rest of the world in areas such as agriculture, industry, technology, health and knowledge based economies. Such a position may only extend the gap between the two ends in the paradoxes. The issue for the education planner is how to deal with it without sacrificing the local traditional culture and preserving their identity. Traditional schools that were founded to promote local cultures such as the Edhuruge, Makthab and Madhrasa in the Maldives and the village schools in the Pacific Islands have a role to play in educating their citizens but the nature of that role needs to be carefully considered. Informal, community-based education approaches are increasingly becoming a major source of education for many people in the developing world. Solon (1998) points out that the Papua New Guinea education department has already begun retreating to traditional community-based education for elementary and primary education institutions. That government's fiscal policy support for village education and non-formal education centres are exemplary initiatives to foster traditional teaching and ethical and humanities values. UNESCO and

various other international aid agencies have advocated movements towards local school governance and community learning centres for developing countries which encourage greater participation of local stakeholders (Abu-Duhou, 1999; Hakeem, 2002). Perhaps the sociocultural and emancipatory knowledge types identified in Habermas's (1971) framework and aspects of cultural knowledge preservation can be learnt through such informal, community-based models and such initiatives can complement the technical knowledge delivered through formal school systems.

In keeping with the multiple lens metaphor noted earlier in this paper, we would argue that it is not just a question of local governance in the absence of a consideration of more global cultures. There is a need to explore how traditional schools can complement formal approaches because both are relevant to educational planning and development for small island states. Neither can be dismissed as insignificant in the contemporary world and we now turn our attention to such issues.

Blurring of the Boundaries

Formal school systems were conceived as a way to produce large numbers of individuals who were capable of doing a set series of tasks (as in each profession) and have a disposition that supports following the associated rules of the profession. They had a set curriculum and all children learnt the same things within a set time frame, etc. This is quite the opposite today where education is expected to produce individuals who can use their knowledge to work on a number of different tasks and have dispositions that encourage innovativeness, risk taking, etc. Also, we know individuals learn different things at different times and the option of career changes late in life (either by choice or job loss) warrant a focus on continuous and lifelong learning within the education systems. Such concepts challenge the traditional roles and time schedules of formal education systems. Currently, schools provide a model of formal learning, which is perhaps well suited to technical knowledge which is very much directed to jobs and employability As Solon (1998) points out, such models served as a means to train large numbers of public servants to take up emerging jobs in newly independent countries from the developing world. In Papua New Guinea, immediately after independence the formal schools were seen as creating an elitist education targeted at the public servants. There was a lack of policy towards creating a broad-based education emphasizing humanistic, ethical and cultural values to complement the modern economic and political values (Solon 1998). Presumably; Solon is referring to a need to include Habermas's socio-cultural and emancipatory knowledge types which form the foundations for the new emerging attributes of the contemporary workforce.

The sociocultural and emancipatory knowledge types are more complex and require an understanding of the cultural context in which the knowledge is generated and subsequently used. Thus, there is a need to locate learning in the villages and expand the stakeholder involvement in education planning and implementation. In terms of developing policies that ensure such learning experiences are not lost, the 1998 education review in Niue is a classic example of involving the broader community in education planning. In a country with a total population of 2000 it is extremely difficult to identify and recruit people for the review process, which is often in addition to their everyday tasks. The team comprised a housewife, a schoolteacher, a village elder and the director of education, and they came up with a well-balanced and comprehensive report. Instead of looking at the ministry of Education and schools for solutions to promote sociocultural and emancipatory knowledge maybe we need to look at other models, particularly community-based models since small countries have the advantage of having a close relationship between schools and community. It may be worth exploring ways to use informal education networks to complement school management and teaching.

This blurring of boundaries is not only between private and public sectors but also within the public sector. For instance, increasingly classroom teachers initiate curriculum innovations and change, and school inspectors provide support to such innovative teachers in refining their initiatives so they can be shared with other teachers. So the role of teachers and curriculum developers and inspectors all increasingly overlap. At another level this blurring of boundaries can be seen in new ways in which the Ministry of Education is organized. We now see joint ministries such as the Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Education and Social Protection, Ministry of Education and Labour, and Ministry of Education and Rural Development. The recognition that the education ministry has to work in concert with many other sectors also increases the number of stakeholders in education innovations. Areas such as culture and social welfare have significant overlap with education but often budget and accountability processes render the amalgamation problematic.

Another aspect concerning the blurring of the boundaries is the nature of learning experiences from formal and informal site-based education. Vygotsky (1978) and Lave (1991) have argued for the

importance of the cultural context in learning and suggest it should be a central theme in education reform models. Lave's (1991) situated cognition model strongly subscribes to the informal, on-site learning which is considered very suitable for sociocultural and emancipatory knowledge types. These types of new learning paradigms were instrumental in promoting the new workplace-based training and are considered to develop attributes such as innovativeness and cultural sensitivity. The shift in preferred model of education is a source of considerable tension in many countries. In the new models, professional development of teachers is considered best when delivered on-site. This threatens traditional models such as on campus teacher training through formal teachers' colleges. In addressing this tension, perhaps, the role of formal and informal education needs further consideration.

The new situated and distributed learning models have implications for professional development and continuous learning. Site-based models, when well developed, can be very effective in facilitating professional development of teachers while they are still working. This can be particularly attractive to small countries where limited human resources make it difficult to send people away for long periods of training. On-site training models are increasingly being used because, other than providing logistical advantages, they are also considered a better learning experience because they allow teachers to experience all three of Habermas's knowledge types. Many of the new learning theories (Lave, 1988; Pea, 1997; Thayer-Bacon, 2000) argue for a need to integrate more authentic and activity-based learning experiences in order to promote contextual understanding and self-development. Significant conceptual and structural changes will be needed if small island nations wish to experiment with the use of site-based and ongoing professional development. It is within such new perspectives that we may find the answers to the current complex imposed by the new world order. The strong communal bond amongst the small island nations of the South Pacific may provide a basis for more significant communal involvement in redefining their education.

Management practices

Another source of tension for small states seems to stem from global vs local concerns with regard to organizational structures and governance of education in small states. The tension between central office and regional, local or village representatives has always been of concern, especially for the Pacific Island nations, where the two organizational units are spread over vast areas of the Pacific Ocean. The large distances between schools and central office and the lack of effective communication systems often cause new initiatives to fail. In circumstances like these, managing from a central office can be very slow and not sensitive to local needs. It also dis-empowers the local community, which in turn can hinder their engagement in education innovations at a time when we recognize that the role of local stakeholders is increasingly becoming critical in providing a balanced education. Thus, there is a need to review the roles of various organizational units and stakeholders within the education sector in small developing countries.

The decisions on whether to have a decentralized or a centralized system should not be considered in an absolute sense. The answers to problems may be centralized in one case and decentralized in another. There may even be some small states for which a decentralized model is the best option whereas for others a centralized model may be inevitable because of the smallness of the state and limited resources. For instance, in the South Pacific some of the countries are spread so far apart (e.g. Kiribati) that managing from a central office may not be the answer, but at the same time the size of the nation and the resources may be so small that it needs to consolidate its management model rather than decentralize. On the other hand, in Malta, where the islands are not as widely spread and they also have limited resources, a centralized system is able to respond quickly to mobilize local communities for meetings and making decisions (Farrugia, 1991). Abu-Duhou (1999) provides a means to consider a hybrid model for decentralization. She suggests a number of different frameworks, dealing with specific aspects of educational management; curriculum framework, people framework, resources framework and accountability framework. Each of these frameworks can be treated separately and decentralized as necessary. Furthermore, she argues that such a framework is necessary if transparency and monitoring is to be effective.

The conceptual shift in monitoring within management

The traditional use of evaluation and monitoring has been to ensure that a system's performance conforms to the intended plans, more as a control device. Prescriptive rules and timelines were central to such monitoring, with little, if any, room for innovations or trialing new ideas. The monitoring processes were also centrally controlled and often used for promotion or deciding on funding levels.

Often the frequency of such monitoring is very low because of logistical issues, finance and availability of personnel.

However, the current objective of monitoring and evaluation in education is very different because, while you have to ensure that a certain curriculum is taught and certain management requirements are fulfilled, the main objective of monitoring is to act as an ongoing feedback loop within a system for the self-improvement of personnel and the system. Finding faults in the system or the personnel is not viewed as an end in itself, rather as a means to improve the respective component. This requires a new mindset that is very different to that of the traditional school inspectors trained under the colonial models of education. Such models emphasized control, policing and finding weakness rather than recognizing strength and providing support. The new approach will foster the development of sociocultural and emancipatory knowledge types and will support the emerging educational practices.

Management is also being seen as output oriented. New performance based models are used to allow for self-regulation by the employees and also give more opportunity to individuals to be innovative in how they achieve their outcomes. As the boundaries get more and more blurred there is a stronger need to make roles and responsibilities explicit and clear. Individual managers at local and central levels need to be clear about their roles and responsibilities and hence be accountable for performance. The clarity and transparency in performance-based management complements the decentralized management model. The very transparent nature of performance-based management makes it easy to identify the faulty links in communication, actions and outcomes, thereby correcting it quickly.

To support the development of a decentralized and performance-based management system we now have technological tools to assist in collecting and analysing information. These technological systems have made it possible to develop more up to date and efficient monitoring systems. Considering the varying levels of infrastructure in small states it must be noted that there are a multitude of ways in which good Management Information Systems (MIS) can be developed. There are two critical aspects to the effective use of MIS: first, the appropriateness and accuracy of the data we record and, second, how the data are analysed and used for making policy decisions.. it is essential to have well-trained personnel who can identify appropriate input indicators as well as extract relevant information for policy development. Given the higher degree of uncertainty and continuous change, MIS makes it possible to detect problematic issues within education systems at an early stage, thus allowing for appropriate action to be taken quickly. A good MIS, together with well-qualified personnel to use the information and develop policy, can be a very powerful tool to reform education and meet stakeholders needs. The versatility of MIS allows educational planners to deal with the complex and multi dimensional nature of current educational issues. It must he cautioned that a good MIS can be developed without elaborate information communication infrastructures: MIS provides the capacity to collect and analyse useful data and is not about communication technology. The technology only speeds up the storage, transfer and analysis processes.

Immediacy of decision-making
As the number of stakeholders in the provision of education broadens, the traditional, centralized management model may not be able effectively to manage the education system. Problems will increasingly become local and need to be dealt with quickly at the local levels. The luxury of time and prolonged debate may see education initiatives lose their momentum and have little impact. Higginson (1991) notes this problem with regard to the small island states in the South Pacific where it could take as long as two years for an adviser from the central office to visit some of the island schools. With the development of capacity in local/regional level human resources, management models can he reformed. Also, by allowing some of the education decisions to he made locally, stakeholders are encouraged to take more responsibility. Some new pilot initiatives of the World Bank in Central Asia seem to be working well in involving the local community in facilitating the education reform. Abu-Duhou (1999) captures this tension by describing the simultaneous pull from two ends regarding decision-making for improvement of education quality. The educational policymakers contend that one must move away from the downward filtration from the top end, where it is assumed that every school is a replica of the one next door, to a school-based model where every school is unique and has a personality and culture of its own. Such a position supports the earlier statement in this paper that argues for value adding and, in this case, the value is in recognizing the uniqueness of every school's local school personality and culture. This means that while the speed of decision-making may be important, the process and sensitivity of such decisions must come from the end users rather than from central office.

Curriculum innovation

In a global context where uncertainty and tensions have replaced stability and certainty, small developing countries are faced with issues of addressing both local and global issues. There is a temptation to conceive curriculum in absolutist terms to address the issues. However, such a direction is unproductive and counter to the very issues that have to be addressed. Thus the significance of the life of a national curriculum needs to be understood - it has to be an ongoing process, which may present some obstacles for small states with limited resources. The use of the blurring of boundaries mentioned earlier and well-developed MIS attached to curriculum development may provide a solution for ongoing curriculum review with little extra cost.

Curriculum needs to be considered not just in terms of subject requirements but also in terms of generic attributes that have to be developed in each citizen if the society is to survive mounting pressures to deal tensions. For example, our changing world is associated with a new individualism that is linked to global mobility; individual skill development and individual rights. Each of these imperatives implies an attribute associated with individual responsibilities that need to be developed in each individual as they learn new subject matter. This is particularly important as we move towards an information age where market regulates quality. There is an assumption that the education system is developing citizens who are capable of discriminating between advocacy and research-based information.

At the same time, the new changes have given rise to a sophisticated system of welfare to accommodate those who find living with contemporary dilemmas difficult or impossible. While the contemporary world encourages individuals to take responsibility for the consequences of what they do and the lifestyle they pursue, there is always a responsibility for welfare for those unable to accept such responsibility. This implies the need for attributes to be developed that address collective concerns in the community, to promote social values such as tolerance and equity. The need to support each other is even more significant for small states because of the closeness of the society and the limited resources.

Thus, curriculum decision-making is itself a dilemma. For small states to survive, school curriculum needs to address both individual and collective issues and this needs to be taken into account in curriculum design. Thus, decisions about curricula are just not decisions about content - they are about the characteristics of individuals that will enable the states to live in the world as portrayed in this paper.

The influence of information technology is a particular curriculum issue in relation to the need to consider both local and global issues when developing school curriculum and also to balance individual and collective (state) concerns. Information on the internet, symbolic representations on computer games, etc. depict western images and western values. While it is probably impossible to stop technology pervading national and geographic boundaries, it is possible to explore how we can make these new technologies reflect local cultures.

Further, symbolic representations become obsolete very quickly in our rapidly changing world. Hence there is a need to develop curricula that have the capacity to grow and adapt as the environment changes. Curriculum can no longer be developed on the basis of current relevance or on past patterns, it needs to be able to project into the future, of which very little is known. Consequently, there is a need for a pedagogy through which citizens are encouraged to adopt a 'multi-voice' orientation to learning and a curriculum which enables individuals continuously to think about change (Pillay and Elliott, 2001).

Conclusions

As previously noted, there is a particular issue of balancing individual and collective concerns at all levels of education planning. Perhaps the most significant tension can be seen in the inability of the state effectively to legislate on issues such as equity and collaboration. The difficulty in the contemporary global context is that governments are impotent with regard to policies in this matter. With the advent of global communication not only is the local rendered transparent to the outside world, the global is rendered visible to the local. Because of this, many developing countries have faced difficulty in confronting the tensions inherent in issues of equity and social justice. The number of small-scale wars and local skirmishes attest to the fact that not only are tensions being felt but their resolution is not apparent.

These small-scale wars and skirmishes are possibly due to states seeking to address the concerns of citizens through traditional means of policy or force. Such means are rendered

impotent in the face of global societies and merely result in escalation of the issues. Thus, new solutions need to be found based on new premises. The problems facing small island countries may well be attributable to previous world structures or, at least, the disjunction between the old world and the new. The analysis in this paper leads to the conclusion that old mindsets cannot produce solutions to these issues. The seeking of ultimate solutions to problems is now a fruitless exercise. What is required is an educational system that enables citizens to grapple with the tensions of a global world. The provision of infrastructure as a solution to a problem is an outmoded approach. The solutions are to be found in the people and their development and not in infrastructure. In each of these small island states, this requires planning and management models, curriculum and pedagogy that provide people with critical skills, abilities and dispositions to recognize that tensions that characterize their life and the context in which they live are not absolutely resolvable. Instead they must recognize the need to act in ways that are compatible with this realization that issues require ongoing addressing using all forms of knowledge types and a range of education development models.

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