

10 Regional Co-operation

A view from the University of the South Pacific

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In this second overview of regional co-operation in the South Pacific, Prem Udagama offers the perspective of one who has served and the regional university, the University of the South Pacific. He observes that regional co-operation in the South Pacific has been selective and pragmatic, not integrated or ideological. As a political approach aimed at grappling with the problems of the area it has generally been externally imposed. Nevertheless the emerging set of cultural beliefs about a 'Pacific Way' is indigenous and may ultimately prove to be a regionally cohesive force.

He examines, in particular, the role and the potential of the University of the South Pacific and especially its Institute of Education.

Efforts at regional co-operation in the South Pacific

Since the Second World War two hundred or more regional organisations have been formed in the South Pacific. These have nearly all been offshoots of the decolonisation process. The first practical expression of regionalism, apart from the more abstract concept of an all embracing colonial policy, was the formulation of

the South Pacific Commission (SPC) in 1947, just after the end of World War Two. The members of the Commission were the colonial and major regional powers in the South Pacific - the United Kingdom, the United States of America, France, the Netherlands, Australia and New Zealand. The rationale for the creation of this organisation was to reduce the cost to the colonial powers of administering their various territories in the region, share information on policies and practices, and to try to bring about a greater consistency in approach to regional development by the various metropolises, while continuing to 'civilise the natives'.

The role played by Australia and New Zealand in the strengthening of regional co-operation in the South Pacific has become even more significant in recent years. Unlike the other metropolitan powers these two countries are geographically close to the region, and part of its regional base. Further, their relative wealth, their European heritage and more recently, their relationship with their own indigenous populations who have their own cultural links with the rest of the region, have all helped to increase their significance in the South Pacific. They continue to be major aid donors to the region and while their relationship with some of the Pacific territories was originally a colonial one this has changed as many of the states have become politically independent nations.

Regional co-operation continues to be important for the small states of the Pacific as a means of reinforcing regional cohesiveness and solidarity, fostering economic growth, and improving efficiency in the provision and administration of certain services. It is a political as well as an economic necessity, which helps to guarantee continued political sovereignty and integrity. For the islands in the Pacific Ocean regional co-operation helps to act as a buffer against continued economic dependence and exploitation.

But there are problems which adversely affect the strengthening and further development of regional co-operation in the South Pacific. For example, the economically more developed nations tend to deal with individual territories on a bilateral basis rather than in a regional context, with the result that only about two per cent of funds

for development assistance in 1979 were earmarked for regional organisations or initiatives. Another factor which adversely affects the strengthening of regional institutions has been that many projects tend to be contracted out to institutions and individuals in the donor countries rather than being given to the regional institutions which is one way of helping to develop regional expertise, strengthen the infrastructures of regional institutions and develop greater local confidence in the trained personnel available in the region. The regional university - The University of the South Pacific - has protested about these practices but not always with success.

Regional educational activities of the South Pacific Commission

As noted above, the SPC was founded by the colonial powers in 1947. One of its major tasks was the overall social development of the region. The organisation was given responsibility for sixteen programme areas, including education. But this last portfolio was not accorded as high a priority as, for example, agriculture, health and fisheries.

Despite its limited mandate for education the SPC has helped to promote regional discussions on education for nearly four decades. The first conference which it sponsored suggested that English should be made the second or the third language for the peoples of the region. One outcome of this was that while George Pitman and Gloria Tate were working on an English Language Teaching Project in the region they introduced the Tate Oral English syllabus. Readers accompanying the syllabus enjoyed wide popularity throughout the region for many years and it is only recently that their continued usefulness has been challenged. However not all the proposals put forward by the SPC were so successful, in particular, the recommendation to establish a regional education centre, put forward in 1959, failed to gain acceptance.

At the Fifth South Pacific Conference in 1963 it was recommended that if education was to be related effectively to the needs of countries it should be:

- closely integrated with efforts directed at helping to solve problems of local economic and social development
- co-ordinated with plans for social and economic advancement of the region, in order to be mutually supportive of overall development efforts
- learning by doing; the best approach for individuals to discover their capacity for solving life's problems

The range of concerns mentioned in the above recommendations indicate the breadth of the issues which were taken up at these regional conferences.

There were many other experts' seminars, conferences and workshops held in an attempt to forge a regional consensus on education policies and practices for the region. For example, the SPC regional conference in 1978 discussed the theme 'Education for What?' and came out in favour of the development of a more relevant curriculum for the region. In 1978 the South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment was proposed and this has now been established in Suva, Fiji. However, with some islands preferring to have their own examinations, interest in the Board has seemed to wax and wane.

Further, as the result of a deliberate policy in 1973, the SPC began to move away from the area of formal education and concern itself more with non-formal education. Such areas as the education of women and youth, and vocational education have been its main concerns, and this is reflected in community education programmes and home economics. Courses in these areas are conducted in centres located in Suva and in mobile vocational and youth education units. The decline of interest in formal education by the SPC was probably due to the establishment of the University of South Pacific (USP) and in particular its Institute of Education which took over the responsibility for activities such as organising regional seminars.

In summary, although the SPC's agenda on education, as seen from its publications, had low priority, it rendered a useful service in

this area throughout the region, and stimulated discussions on educational matters as an aid to policy making. It provided a stimulant to regional co-operation.

Regional education institutions

The organisation and development of regional tertiary educational institutions to serve the micro- and mini-states has been an important area of co-operation. Some of the institutions developed to service regional needs are described below.

The Fiji School of Medicine

About a century ago, long before regionalism became a goal, the present School of Medicine was founded in Suva with American aid and expertise. It was earlier called the Central Medical School and has undergone many changes in name and support over the years. The school has made an important contribution to the health and well-being of the peoples of the Pacific Islands and served United States, British, Australian and New Zealand colonial territories by training their nurses, health workers, other para-medical staff, and regional medical practitioners. This institution has attempted to combine western medical practice with the cultural beliefs and practices of the region and has done yeoman service in preparing individuals to help meet the health needs of Pacific peoples.

However, because the institution is now administered by the Government of Fiji some critics tend to under-emphasise the regional nature of its work. But whatever the criticisms, nationals from the various South Pacific countries continue to receive training there. Also, from its inception, the school has had dedicated leaders, and many of its alumni have become leaders in their own societies.

The University of the South Pacific (USP)

There could be no better example of regional co-operation in education in the South Pacific than the regional university which serves 11 small island nations with a joint population of 1.5 million.

It is one of the few truly regional universities functioning anywhere in the world.

Established by Royal Charter in 1968, USP was based on a Report by a Higher Education Commission (Morris Report) in 1966 and a subsequent report in 1967 by an academic planner concerned explicitly to implement the recommendations of the earlier report. In its eighteen years of existence, the university has followed assiduously the dictates of its charter, as recorded in various reports by the University Grants Committee, the Vice-Chancellor, and in other documents. As an example, the UGC triennium report (1980-83) states:

The university believes that in many ways it has innovatively responded to challenges inherent in its situation of being a single university attempting not only to meet national needs in development and independence but at the same time being a regional organisation.

In order to serve the needs of the region USP has, according to James Maraj, former Vice-Chancellor, combined the activities of a traditional western type university, a community college, a land grants college, an open university, a development institute, a publication and research organisation and an advisory, consultancy, project formulation and implementation agency. Its geographical presence also indicates its regional character. Two main campuses are located in Suva (Fiji) and Alafua (Western Samoa), and there are now nine centres throughout the region. Some of these serve the entire region such as the Rural Development Centre in Tonga and the Law and Language Centre in Vanuatu.

A regional contribution to education is also made by the Extension Services sector of the university which, with centres in all member countries, has extended university education to each member state. Their importance can be seen in the fact that in 1985 there were 7,370 students enrolled in extension studies as compared with 1,972 on-campus students. In addition to regular certificate, diploma and degree students, there are 3,635 students enrolled in continuing

education courses organised by the centres.

The seven Institutes, in education, natural resources, marine resources, Pacific Studies, social and administrative studies, agriculture and rural development, law and linguistic studies, and the six units are regional extension arms of the university. The Institutes provide in-service training courses, consultancy and advisory functions to the region. In 1985 there were 1,411 participants in short-term training courses from the countries of the region. Furthermore, satellite communication provides a link between the national centres and the two campuses.

The USP is also aware of its wider responsibilities in the larger Pacific basin. Through official institutional and personal contacts, and by student exchange, the USP maintains an open door with other universities and institutions in the Pacific. These include the University of Papua New Guinea, the University of Guam, the United Nations University, the eastern universities of Australia and the universities of New Zealand. It is also likely that students from the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands and Marshall Islands will come to USP in the future.

The contribution of USP to tertiary education and other activities in the region is impressive by any standards despite the fact that it has a history of less than 20 years. Its role in the pre- and in-service education of teachers and the training of administrative and managerial manpower, scientists, scholars and emergent leaders has been appreciated by the governments of the region. USP graduates are held on a par with others trained elsewhere.

From 1978-81 the USP produced 2,140 graduates and 'diplomats' who occupy important positions throughout the region. By 1986 the number would be nearly 4,000. In Niue and Fiji, there is already one graduate or diplomat for every 360 and 374 in the total population respectively. This impressive contribution to tertiary education in the region may create some problems which are related to the limited population size of the various member states. For example, in Fiji there is already some graduate unemployment. 'Size' and 'islandness' also create problems for training the range of

necessary expertise for development in many countries in the region. Engineers, architects, geologists, oceanographers and other experts are required for maintaining the modern public and private sectors, but will have to be trained abroad because the per capita cost of providing such training at USP would be prohibitive.

The USP Institute of Education (IOE)

From its early beginnings in 1976 the Institute of Education has influenced many aspects of education in the countries of the region. A review of the USP Institutes in 1981 referred to IOE as one of the most effective. The IOE has held annual advisory seminars/workshops which have been attended by ministers of education, permanent secretaries and directors of education (or their representatives) from the region. These meetings help formulate the annual plan of activities by the IOE for its constituent member states, and have also provided an excellent opportunity for educational leaders of the region to meet informally and to exchange ideas, news and views.

The IOE like all other Institutes of the USP has many objectives, including the short-term training of personnel, providing consultancy services and advice, formulating and implementing projects and conducting research.

The major priorities which arise from requests made by countries in the region have been in the areas of:

- educational administration
- educational evaluation and assessment
- curriculum development
- teacher education

But other areas have also been included such as primary education, teaching of English, the development and production of reading materials for children (in English and the regional languages). The Institute regularly publishes its journal *Directions*, mostly on educational problems, issues and research in the region. Its staff has also undertaken research funded locally or by foreign institutions and agencies in New Zealand and Australia, as well as the Commonwealth

Secretariat, Unesco and UNDP. The ongoing curriculum project in vocational subjects with UNDP/Unesco/IOE (1984-1987) is an example of this co-operative effort, as was the Commonwealth Secretariat funded, three month regional training course for educational administrators held in 1978.

The Institute aims to be a catalyst in educational change and innovation in the countries of the region. Its short-term training programmes in assessment, curriculum development, administration, primary school teaching, book writing and development for educational officials in the region are well known. Another developmental service is to have regional officials and teachers on attachment for brief periods of study and research at the Institute.

The Institute has, on many occasions, at the request of governments also tried to co-ordinate teacher training programmes. For example, in 1981 a seminar was held for this purpose in Western Samoa. In addition the staff of the Institute act as advisers and consultants on teacher education to many countries of the region. This important regional role often seems to go unrecognised by external governments and aid agencies.

The Institute takes on innovative activities which foster the development of educational systems and institutions in the region. As an example, IOE organised a Diploma Course in Educational Administration in the Solomon Islands in 1982. This programme has continued for four years, with the aim of supporting the ongoing development of managerial skills. Indeed, after the initial effort, USP adopted the programme as an extension course available to all countries within its jurisdiction. A similar development took place with the certificate in pre-school teaching, which is now an extension course, and the training of school librarians and youth leaders.

The educational impact made in the region by IOE during its brief history cannot be assessed with any reliability without research. Nonetheless, one's observation when travelling in the South Pacific does confirm that the Institute plays a significant, constructive and innovative role in education in all participating countries. The Director's report for 1984 enumerates 65 projects for the year, in all

areas of education. From small activities with little finance and much hope, the Institute has maintained a valuable service to the region and has helped to overcome some of the handicaps of size which face most micro- and mini-states.

Other institutions with regional dimensions

The Pacific Theological College (1965) which is open to all major denominations and the Pacific Regional Seminary for Catholics (1972), both located in Suva, have contributed to the training and education of many Christian pastors, priests and theologians to serve the countries of the region. This has, in a sense, brought Christian ecumenism closer in the South Pacific. There is also, however, the need for a 'coconut' theology to emerge in the South Pacific as one theologian remarked at a conference held in London. Perhaps these two colleges may one day develop a theology to suit the cultures of the region.

The Fiji Institute of Technology (FIT), formerly the Derrick Technical Institute and established under colonial rule to serve the then British territories, is the largest technical institute in the region. It is now a national institution of Fiji but continues to train students from the region for craft, technician and sub-professional work in its nine schools, some under scholarships from the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC). Third country scholarships are also awarded to students at FIT by the New Zealand Government, while the smaller technical schools in Kiribati and Solomon Islands train a few students from other countries as seamen and in fisheries.

At the tertiary level some new national institutions have been established in Tonga and Western Samoa. Atenisi University organised by a committed academic, Futa Helu, has begun a degree programme, while in 1983 the government of Western Samoa accepted in principle the idea of establishing a National University and may incorporate a church-organised Iunivesite O Samoa in the near future. Solomon Islands, too, may decide in the future to establish its own university.

In the light of these developments some concern has been expressed over the future of the USP. However, the value of tertiary level education is now being questioned on the basis of its potential rates of return, which inevitably casts doubt on the economic feasibility of the establishment of a university level institution by any one island in the region, except possibly Fiji.

Other regional co-operative activities in education

Teacher education

This is an important area in which there has been much regional co-operation. The governments of the South Pacific gradually took over responsibility for teacher education from the missionaries who initiated much of the early work in this area, such as the Seventh Day Adventists who opened the Fulton College in Fiji in 1941. But before new local institutions were established, two metropolitan countries, Australia and New Zealand, were involved in helping to train both primary and secondary teachers in their institutions. Now almost all except the smallest micro-states of Tuvalu and Tokelau have their own teacher training institutions. But in order to improve the quality of their programmes a regional approach to this activity was attempted by the organisation of regional seminars. In fact, at an early stage the desire was expressed to have a permanent regional organisation. The IOE of USP makes an important contribution in this field especially through its accreditation of certificate and diploma programmes which *inter alia* enable holders of these qualifications to proceed to degree level work at USP or elsewhere.

Pre-school education

While pre-schools are mainly operated by private organisations and individuals in the region - the only exception being Nauru where pre-schools are part of the primary education sector there has been some attempt at regional co-operation to improve education at this level. A South Pacific Pre-School Association was formed several years ago, and the IOE has organised training for pre-school teachers

in association with other organisations in Suva. This has now become a formal certificate programme for pre-school education conducted by the extension services of USP. Many countries other than Fiji and Western Samoa appear to be interested in it. In fact this certificate course might help develop and strengthen the pre-school movement in other countries of the South Pacific.

Primary education

Many micro-states in the South Pacific have now provided universal primary schooling, and those countries that have not yet attained this goal - such as Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands - are well on the way to achieving it within the next decade or so.

With the establishment of the SPC in 1947, efforts began to make qualitative improvements in primary provision. Regional conferences focused on this area. Seminars, workshops and other forms of in-service training for teachers were organised and financed by SPC and metropolitan countries. The meetings organised by the South Pacific Association of Teacher Education were examples of this approach and trend. The Tate Oral English Programme was an outcome of such efforts, and the texts that were produced plus the methods advocated, continue to influence the teaching of English in many island schools.

The USP and its IOE began in 1968 to assist in improving the quality of the primary sector throughout the region. At a special regional seminar in Western Samoa, various aspects of training were discussed and the clearing-house function of the Institute of Education endorsed. As a result, such issues as multiple class teaching, the teaching of English, and the primary school curriculum became areas of study and consultation at the regional level.

Specific research projects were undertaken by the staff of IOE, with the aim of taking improvements further, among which were the 'Book Flood', the Tate English project, bilingualism, assessment, English teaching method, the reading recovery project, the book writing project and local language work. All these efforts were regional in their application, use and adoption and were financed by

a variety of agencies. The attachment of teachers and administrators to the Institute to study any one of these projects was also helped by funding from the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC).

Other efforts to improve primary education in the region have been made with the help of churches, non-government organisations and institutions in New Zealand, Australia, the Commonwealth and United Nations agencies.

One of the realities of the region is that primary schools are not only rural and isolated but also have a limited number of teaching personnel. In Fiji there were 230 primary schools in 1984 with an enrolment of 100 students or less. Such schools tend to be scattered in small island communities and are isolated, generally having the less qualified teachers. However, no regional approach so far has been made to find ways and means to improve the quality of education in these schools. Even regional institutions dare not challenge the elitism which exists in this sector of education.

Secondary education

If primary education was organised for the salvation of souls, secondary education, in colonial countries, was organised for the creation of a reliable governing elite during colonial rule and after independence. This is not only obvious in architectural design and school organisation but also in the curriculum. Most secondary schools prepared students for the Overseas Cambridge School Certificate and other examinations. Later New Zealand and some Australian state examinations were selected. Even before a regional concept was cultivated in the South Pacific, the elitist secondary school (so well known in African and Asian British colonies) served as an unseen web in the regional provision of secondary education.

Secondary school curricula in the South Pacific eventually came under some regional scrutiny. The SPC in the early 1960s was a catalyst in promoting the issue of relevance in the secondary curriculum. Later the UNDP/Unesco/USP Regional Secondary Development Project (1970-75) brought a fresh approach to the

curriculum of junior secondary schools in the region. However this project faced serious problems. A number of its elements were never completed and some countries rejected the materials produced. Nonetheless the project could be deemed successful in that it contributed substantially towards an improved educative process, and in the sense that it offered a more meaningful education than had been the case previously. The project also assisted quite significantly in the identification and training of key people in curriculum development in many subject areas. It gave skills in curriculum development and the confidence essential to many teachers and it sponsored the growth of curriculum development units in several countries. A regional support service was also an outcome, in the form of the establishment of a curriculum development unit at USP.

The ongoing UNDP/Unesco/IOE Curriculum Development Project on Vocational Subjects (1983-87) is a success story of regional co-operation and in-country development of curricula in home economics, commercial studies and industrial arts subjects. The principle objectives of the project are:

- to appoint and train local staff to supervise curriculum production
- to establish curriculum development units, or consolidate existing units and to produce curricula in selected subjects

Except for Fiji all countries of the region have participated in this regional project. Curriculum development units were supplied with necessary equipment, and the IOE is responsible, with Unesco, for its implementation. It is basically an in-country project with a regional approach. Regional content is not mandatory for any country and at its regular meetings, discussions of regional elements of the programme may result in their substitution by local components. The selection of content and the training of teachers in curriculum development are the responsibility of each country and its local curriculum development centre.

The IOE has also been requested to examine the validity of the

tests used in secondary school selection in the Pacific, and the training of teachers in testing and evaluating in the classroom. Many achievement tests, in a variety of subjects, have already been developed for a number of countries. In secondary school management and administration some regional training seminars and workshops have been organised by the IOE supported by the Commonwealth Secretariat, some Australian institutions, the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration, and more recently Unesco. A handbook for headmasters was once planned for the region but has not materialised. The regional Unesco Office in Apia is likely to develop courses/workshops with the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG), USP, Australia and New Zealand in areas such as educational administration and planning. In view of these developments, the regional input, at least in curriculum development and management in secondary education, might well increase in the near future.

Non-formal education

For nearly four decades the SPC has pioneered non-formal education activities in such fields as agriculture, health, nutrition, co-operative enterprises and women's affairs.

The churches too have a long and proven record in this field. They have introduced many innovative activities in education, for the unemployed urban youth, for prisoners in need of rehabilitation and general family education. One sees the commendable efforts of the churches in rural areas when one travels around the region.

USP centres in the region have also organised a multiplicity of non-formal education activities. Indeed, the creation of a new department under the Extension Services sector of USP bears witness to this commitment.

All governments in the region have non-formal education divisions under various ministries, usually agriculture, health, education, labour or women's affairs. Most of this educational work is geared especially to assist with rural development.

International agencies like the ILO, WHO and UNICEF, and some foundations too, are encouraging non-formal education activi-

ties in their respective areas. Some studies in rural development have been undertaken under their auspices.

Attempts have been made, nationally and regionally, to form co-ordinating bodies in the field. In Fiji one such body has been established but many regional attempts have failed. The long distances, isolation, high cost of air travel, vast variety of agencies, the many languages and dialects and the commitment of some agencies continue to present problems to the formation of co-ordinating bodies at national and regional level. Quite recently the three universities, USP, UPNG and Guam met at an all-Pacific Conference to co-ordinate activities in this field. It is too soon to estimate the success of this initiative. The Asia-South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE) is also interested in the formation of a co-ordinating body.

Despite these moves towards an organised system of co-ordination, it is likely that the regional contribution will have to come from a succession of seminars, conferences and workshops. The Commonwealth Youth Education Programme, located at USP, is the consequence of a regional co-ordinating effort, but other areas of focus have yet to produce the necessary thrust in the non-formal field.

The prospects for greater regional co-operation

A cynical observation on the issue of regionalism is that the Pacific Ocean (or at least 29 million square miles of it) provides the only unity in the region. Yet the geography, history and development policies of the islands reveal a discernible commonality in such aspects as their insularity, 'islandness', smallness, and isolation, in addition to the fact that historically these territories were once all colonies of Britain, with one or two exceptions.

These common features have been partly responsible for the similarity of their educational problems. For example, on a rough estimate there is an average of one school to every 600-700 inhabitants in the region. This distribution of course varies from country to country, but it indicates that there are schools in all the inhabited islands which make up these micro-states. Primary schools on the

average tend to be small, especially in the rural areas. Secondary education is mainly urban centred, but where it does exist in the rural areas it tends to be in the form of boarding institutions.

Historically, education was provided by the missions but later, especially after independence, the governments of these territories increasingly assumed control over, and financial responsibility for, their own education services. But partly because of the physical features of these islands the cost of providing education has been high, compared with some other developing countries. Government expenditure in this area varies from 4 per cent to 12 per cent of GNP. This occurs despite the fact that the contributions to education by missions and from private sources are still quite large, both in terms of personnel and finance.

The development expenditure in some countries, like Kiribati and Tuvalu, is financed wholly by foreign agencies, while in Tonga and Samoa the percentage is also very high. This makes it very difficult for these countries to assume any substantial degree of independence and they sometimes continue to be subject to the dictates or wishes of the donor countries in respect of the form of education developed. In addition to these common problems there have also been some common themes in the development policies of the island states including the search for greater economic independence and self-reliance, more equitable distribution of resources, and increased economic growth, which includes increased production and diversification.

In the field of education it has been pointed out by Tupeni Baba, an eminent Pacific educator, that micro-states seem to go through common stages of development and face common issues. Baba has summarised the development process that has taken place in education in the region as:

- the localisation of curricula and examinations
- upgrading the quality of teachers
- providing greater access to basic education, especially at the primary level

- the provision of more appropriate agro-technical education
- development of tertiary education within the South Pacific

An almost inevitable outcome of the need to depend on foreign aid for education is that the region is likely to have great difficulty in adapting existing forms of education to its own needs and problems, if these are seen to be in conflict with the aims, objectives and goals of the donor countries. The effect on the personality development of the peoples of the region is also not to be overlooked. In an absorbingly interesting book, *The Tales of the Tikongs*, by an academic of the region, Epeli Hau'ofa, the following advice is given on obtaining foreign aid:

But you must remember in dealing with foreigners, never appear to be too smart; it's better that you look humble and half-primitive, especially while you are learning the ropes, and try to take off six stones. It's necessary that we're seen to be starved and needy. The reason why Tiko gets very little aid money is that our people are too fat and jolly. I wish the government would wake up and do something about it.

The continued influence of aid on the development of education in the region is seen, for example, in the many expatriates who are working in this field. Their influence on education policy formation and execution is very marked and their expertise usually comes combined in a package of aid to education from donor countries. As regional educators begin to evolve policies and strategies for educational development, which they see as particularly applicable to the area, they are still likely to find the paternalism of the colonial times hindering their ability to proceed with such plans. This is not to deny the need for both expertise and aid to education in the South Pacific. But a greater sensitivity to peoples, their cultures and their aspirations has to be cultivated by experts brought into the region if their work is to be more productive and meet with the hopes and desires of the population of the islands.

The high cost of educational supplies, especially scientific

instruments, is an area of common concern for which a regional solution needs to be found. A proposal a few years ago to establish a regional centre for manufacturing scientific instruments and educational aids has been shelved. There are other perennial problems in educational administration and management; the distribution of textbooks and school supplies, supervision of schools in the more remote islands, the construction of low-cost buildings, the production of readers and textbooks in local languages and in English, all of which can usefully be tackled on a regional basis. But within the present context of the South Pacific islands the question which arises is: can the regional approach in education be further developed to resolve such problems, or would nationalism increasingly get in the way of regional co-operation? And what would be the likely effect on such co-operation if a bilateral approach to aid, rather than a regional one, continues to be pursued by the donor countries? While, as was previously indicated, regionalism has been approached pragmatically in the South Pacific, there has, so far, been no overall proposal for a consistent and common approach to deal with these problems, except in very specific areas of mutual benefit to individual countries.

But with high costs of providing and administering services in the region, the various states are likely to continue depending on foreign aid and try to maximise the possibility of securing bilateral aid, often at the expense of regional co-operation, if these are the conditions under which aid is most likely to be forthcoming. In such a situation it would not be easy to develop a common approach or solutions to regional issues and problems. Even the USP is now being critically assessed by the participating countries, in terms of the benefits each receives from the institution, rather than in respect of the contribution which the university makes to the region as a whole.

However, there are some positive signs that in the future there might be more regional co-operation in the solution of these common educational problems which the islands of the South Pacific face. For example, the interest shown by the Commonwealth Secretariat in the education of small nation states along with the work

of the regional Unesco office in Apia might eventually result in the development of some common policy approaches to the major educational issues which the countries in the region face. The USP also, with its determination to grapple with higher educational problems affecting the region as a whole, would continue to contribute to a solution of these problems, in a typically 'Pacific Way'. Despite these hopes and possibilities, co-operation in education will continue to be a burning question for the small nation states of the South Pacific. Tupeni Baba has surmised that:

The best prospect is the development of interdependence between the islands and the metropolitan powers, but the chance of this working in favour of the islands depends on the ability of the island states to continue their own system of co-operation on economic, political and educational matters.