Volume 24, Issue 1, 2019

Negotiating conflicting discourses of quality teaching in Fiji: Initial teacher education and practicum at the University of the South Pacific

Greg Burnett, Kusum Prakash & Vinata Sharma

Negotiating conflicting discourses of quality teaching in Fiji: Initial teacher education and practicum at the University of the South Pacific

Greg Burnett
Kusum Prakash
Vinata Sharma

University of the South Pacific

Abstract

This article identifies a number of conflicting discourses informing education in Fiji and their impact on Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes and students. The socially constructivist progressivism of the Ministry of Education and the ITE provider is being eroded by a set of socially conservative discourses symptomatic of neoliberal education reforms elsewhere. It is the practicum where the conflict is most acutely evidenced. To highlight the conflict 90 ITE students, as ethnographic fieldworkers, have used an accepted quality teaching checklist to record the teaching they witnessed while on practicum. The resulting misalignments between discourses of quality teaching identified in this article, and highlighted by ITE students, contribute to debates about what constitutes effective teaching in Fiji. The complex set of discourses identified as impacting on initial teacher education and education in Fiji more generally can be utilised by ITE programmes to generate critical reflection among students. One way to do this is to take a learning-centred approach where ITE students are encouraged to make critical choices for teaching based on links between pedagogy, context and consequence.

Keywords

Fiji, practicum, teacher education, social constructivism, behaviourism, learning-centred

Introduction

Initial teacher education (ITE) students at the University of the South Pacific (USP) are positioned at the problematic intersection of a number of competing discourses informing what it means to be a quality teacher in Fijian schools[1]. Discourse is used here in a post-structural sense, in that education positions and regulates teachers, knowledge and pedagogies in particularly narrow ways at the exclusion

---

[1] The focus in this article is on students of Fijian citizenship who dominate USP's ITE enrolment and who will eventually teach in Fijian secondary schools. There are, however, a smaller number of Pacific regional ITE students not included in this article who, upon completion, will return to teach in their home country.

of others. Multiple discourses, therefore, result in conflicting "truths" (Wodak, 2001), in this case about what constitutes quality teaching in Fiji. How then should ITE students and those who teach in USP's ITE programmes respond to these multiple discourses in the way they teach and teach the teachers respectively? It is the discursive tension in the Fijian and wider Pacific context that this article seeks to address.

Research context: The discursive push and pull on ITE students

Due to the unique structure of USP's teacher education degrees, some students will commence practicum with tentative experiences of teaching and learning theory via introductory pedagogies courses in their study programme. Most, however, will enter the first practicum experience equipped only with their personal histories of teaching formed during their own years of primary and secondary schooling. To address this, the initial three-week school placement allows students the opportunity to observe and reflect only on what they see in both classrooms and the wider school. This initial practicum experience marks the beginning of further in-schools experiences and a range of ITE courses designed for further reflection, actual teaching and a widening understanding about what it means to teach effectively. These courses are broadly socially-constructivist or progressive in their orientation. However, the initial three-week experience in schools is set against a backdrop of significant cultural and political change and a range of corresponding influences on what it means to be a teacher in Fijian schools. Inevitably, contradictions emerge over what quality teaching means. This environment is akin to what has been termed elsewhere in initial teacher education as a "policy storm" (Lambert & O'Conner, 2018). Outlined in more detail below, it consists of:

- longstanding conservative social discourses in Fijian society based on gerontocratic and chiefly social structures (White, 2014);

- sometimes troubled multicultural discourses based on decades of i-Taukei and Indian co-existence (Ratuva, 2005);

- anti-colonial discourses of re-indigenising Pacific education (Thaman, 2009a);

- more recently discourses of greater access and equity for learners (Ministry of Education, Heritage and the Arts, 2015c) and

- discourses of increased accountability and performativity on teachers for the academic success of their students (Burchell, 2018).

These all combine to complicate the environment in which ITE in general and practicum, in particular, is carried out in Fiji.

Within such an environment, USP as the ITE provider has little control over what experiences ITE students are exposed to once they leave campus for extended periods of time for each practicum experience. To a certain extent, the ITE teaching team and the Associate Teachers or ATs ITE students are assigned to during practicum, are positioned at the same problematic intersection of discourses. Therefore, a number of questions arise, including:

- what degree can the practicum serve as a model for ITE students in their professionally formative stages?

- are the pedagogies and practices that ATs and placement schools demonstrate valid?

- where do these pedagogies and practices stand in relation to those advocated by the ITE provider?

- how should ITE providers and their students respond in the face of a mismatch during the practicum experience?

- how might the experience of dissonance when it occurs be used productively to add to ITE students' emerging understanding of teaching?

It is the experience of dissonance ITE students face in confronting multiple discourses of quality at the site of the practicum that this article addresses.

The introduction of the Fiji National Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Education, 2007) and its more recent second edition (Ministry of Education, Heritage and the Arts, 2013) signified a very liberal progressivist turn in the way in which Fijian education was envisaged. The change occurred in response to the previous curriculum, considered too teacher-centred and exam-oriented (Ministry of Education, 2007, p.3). Elements of the new framework's core mission and vision statements include the ideals of holism, peace, sustainability, tolerance and harmony among others. These ideals are to be made a reality through a number of key principles of which the first is "social constructivism" (Ministry of Education, Heritage and the Arts, 2013, p.13). Constructivist teaching is explained in some detail over several pages of the framework in the commonly accepted terms used in education systems elsewhere: learner centred-ness; students as active agents in their own learning; learning as social inquiry and the teacher's role as facilitator. Reinforcing this progressivism is the Customer Service Charter 2015-2018 (Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts, 2015c) that emphasises "quality education for change", through "an empowering education system", that is "inclusive ... regardless of learning need", "contextualised" and "student centred in everything" (p.1, emphasis added). More recently this progressivism has been extended to include greater measures of equity and access, for example, in the removal of race-based naming of schools; free school travel; free school stationary and the attempted zoning of schools to limit socio-economic aggregation within particular schools (Burnett & Lingam, 2013).

Contrary to these progressive reforms, however, has been the 2015 re-introduction of standardised national exams and the scrapping of class-based assessment processes (Ministry of Education, Heritage and the Arts, 2015a). This move places students in an age/grade lockstep and ignores the otherwise outcomes-based nature of the curriculum that allows students and their teachers, many of which are ATs to ITE students, to work flexibly within individual zones of proximal development. In addition to this, there have been a number of "performative" (Ball, 2003, p.215) measures imposed upon Fijian teachers affecting the morale of many. These measures include short term teaching contracts based on performance; increased appraisal processes; basic literacy/numeracy testing for teachers and pressure for teachers to increase qualifications for contract renewal. These recent conservative and performative reforms have begun to erode the liberal progressivism described earlier and impact greatly on the teaching work done by the Associate Teachers that ITE students are mentored by. The recently established Fiji Teacher Registration Authority (FTRA) has produced a draft set of teaching competencies to be met by all teachers seeking registration to teach in Fijian schools (Deo, 2018). Significantly these competencies have remained in draft form for several years and serve as further evidence of the tension between the progressivism of curriculum reform in 2007 and beyond, and the recent conservative return to standardised national exams and increased teacher performativity (Ball, 2003).

Pedagogic practices advocated by USP, as the ITE provider, approximate the progressive social constructivist ideals of the Fiji National Curriculum Framework. These are evidenced in ITE programme outcomes emphasising child-centredness, inclusion, professionalism, critical thinking, lifelong learning and research-based pedagogies (School of Education, 2018). They, in turn, inform specific ITE programme professional practice and curriculum course components focusing on teaching and learning theory including the practicum component and the sorts of pedagogies it is hoped ITE students would witness there. Additionally, USP as the ITE provider has also long been a source of advocacy for re-indigenising and re-claiming Pacific education (see graduate attribute – Pacific consciousness). This advocacy is for a set of unique Pacific pedagogies, to contrast what are considered long standing colonial ways of schooling in Fiji and also the wider Pacific region (see Thaman, 2009b, among many others). Similar to many Pacific Island countries, however, the advocacy for re-indigenising Pacific teaching has not had a large impact on the Fiji Ministry of Education policy and how schooling is enacted in Fiji schools. The Fiji Ministry of Education has adopted a rationale for curriculum reform "to be on a par with global standards" (Ministry of Education, Health and Arts, 2015b, p.10) rather than any expressed desire to re-indigenise or re-claim education from a Pacific perspective. Small concessions only to a "Pacific consciousness" can be found, for example, in the two successive regional education frameworks

(see, for example, Pacific culture as a "cross cutting theme" in Forum Ministers, 2009; Forum Ministers, 2018) and minor additions such as the recently formalised Fijian and Hindi language policy and curricula for Fijian schools.

USP, as ITE provider, has been impacted by its own conservative discourses. Recently USP's ITE programmes have been challenged by increasing degrees of accountability evidenced in future development aid funding tied to outcomes (School of Education, 2017), as well as pressure to explicitly demonstrate curriculum alignments between institutional and programme aims; individual course outcomes; teaching and learning and assessment practices. These pressures are linked to heightened levels of accountability from so-called "development partners", competition from other tertiary education providers in Fiji and the related pressure of external accreditation (WASC Senior College and University Commission, 2018) to maintain market edge. USP's ITE teaching team experience performativity pressures similar to Fijian secondary school teachers. These pressures are evidenced in the Quality of Teaching (QOT); Quality of Research (QOR); teaching appraisals; contract renewal processes and so on. Similar to the Fiji MOE's conservative turn in the re-introduction of standardised national exams, the above pressures have led to an element of institutional introspection within USP that contrasts its long history of outward looking advocacy to decolonise and transform Pacific education (see, for example, the Vaka Pasifiki collective (Toumu'a, 2014) and its previous iteration, the Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative (Pene, Taufe'ulungaki & Benson 2002). The actual models of teaching and systems of schooling that ITE students are therefore exposed to, do not always reflect the progressivism, though threatened by conservative discourses, of either the official Ministry of Education policy rhetoric or USP's ITE programmes. This complexity of discourses presents as a challenge in the preparation of teachers in USP's ITE programmes.

Research methodology: ITE student ethnographies

At the beginning of the 2018 school year, 90 ITE students were placed in approximately 50 Fijian secondary schools. These schools were mostly in the urban and peri-urban areas of the capital Suva, extending west to Navua and north to Nausori. Some schools were situated in the western Viti Levu population centres of Nadi through to Ba and some on the second largest island of Vanua Levu. This initial practicum was designed for the purposes of observation and reflection only, and to re-introduce ITE students to school and classroom life. It is important to note that most ITE students have only recently completed their own secondary education. One of the ITE students' tasks involves formally observing five lessons taught by their Associate Teachers - two in each of their teaching majors and one lesson outside of those majors. They used a structured observation schedule based on Subhan & Round's (2015) observational checklist for beginning and pre-service teachers. This checklist incorporates four key elements of effective teaching – lesson structure, classroom management, differentiated activities and assessment and application. Within each element[2] there are a number of prompts to guide students' observations. For example, within effective teaching, prompts include physical layout of learning space; accommodation of student difference and sharing the plan for learning with students. The purpose of the original checklist is "to foster productive and constructive dialogue between mentor teachers and novice/pre-service teachers. It is intended to spark conversations within learning communities" (p.129). The School of Education at USP uses the checklist in the same spirit of furthering conversation and debate concerning what quality teaching means in Fijian secondary schools and how multiple discourses of quality might be addressed by ITE students and their lecturers. The ITE students were encouraged to complete the four part checklist based on what they saw and heard during the five lessons. They noted their observations in the form of short one to three sentence written notes initially resisting any critical comment, which is expected to be added at a later stage. These observations have been collated as an

---

[2] Classroom management includes management strategies; types of reinforcement; lesson transitions; and teacher as facilitator. Differentiated activities includes variation in activities; activities linked to student ability; lesson pace and use of groups/whole class. Assessment and application includes age appropriate activities/resources; technology use; accommodation of learners with specific needs and variety in assessment (Subhan & Round, 2015).

ethnographic record of what occurred in approximately 450 separate lessons taught in Fijian secondary schools at the beginning of the 2018 school year.

ITE student perspectives on their own practicum experiences are reflected in the diversity of discourses outlined above and, in particular, those that inform frontline classroom practices in Fiji secondary schools. ITE student perspectives on their own experiences are not often heard in Fijian education debates. One way of articulating this voice is through their detached observations as ethnographic fieldworkers whilst completing the initial observation and reflection practicum. Singh (2005) in the context of Australia's international tertiary student enrolment, argues for the possibility of international students as "ethnographic field workers" (p.12). Constituting international students in this way opens up a source of new knowledge about Australia's majority tertiary education sector – its domestic students, its pedagogies, its means of administration and its ethos generally. The subject position of "ethnographic field worker" contrasts long running constructions of international students as either deficit, that is, as "sources of revenue" for Australian universities, or as "English language deficient", or as "empty vessels to be filled with Euro-American knowledge" (Singh, 2005, p.10). Quite often these international student discourses are counter to those of the host institution and reverse old identity binaries that Singh (2005) argues are neo-colonial in nature.

USP's ITE students adopt a similar role as they enter schools/classrooms, particularly during their initial practicum experience. These ITE students are traditionally framed as neophytes, as teachers in training, as first years, or as pre-service students: a role heightened by the hierarchical Fijian education sector they enter, for their practicum. ITE students play an important ethnographic role during their practicum placements as they represent the current most significant link between Fiji schools and USP, the ITE provider. They become potential generators of knowledge about teaching and the function and purposes of the wider school system itself. Dominant constructions of quality, teaching and school vision are largely the prerogative of the schools and the Ministry of Education. The perceptions of ITE students are not always considered important but are nevertheless offered here as a source of understanding in what is becoming an increasingly competitive context marked as it is by accountability and high turnover of senior Ministry of Education staff. As mentioned previously, Fijian education has recently come under the influence of neoliberal values of competition evidenced in the re-introduction of standardised national exams (Ministry of Education, Heritage and the Arts, 2015b, p. 48) and the Minister of Education's imperative for all schools to obtain 100% pass rates (Mala, 2017).

Research Findings: What did the ITE students witness?

ITE students' observation checklists were collected and comments examined according to each of the four dimensions of teaching that comprise the checklist. Of interest in this analysis is only the observations made by the students rather than the critical commentary that they were also expected to add later. The analysis also included the silences, that is, the teaching practices that were not observed and recorded that might form a part of a typical social-constructivist approach to teaching. The observations in the form of short one to three handwritten statements were grouped according to loose commonality and how well they did or did not align with a general socially constructivist approach to teaching. The key principles of social constructivism as outlined in the *National Curriculum Frameworks* (Ministry of Education, Heritage and the Arts, 2013) were used to guide this part of the analysis. The sections below use these four dimensions as an organising principle to summarise what ITE students witnessed during their three week school placement. Directly quoted portions of student ethnography from the checklists have been included here to support assertions made concerning the overall approaches to teaching ITE students witnessed. It is important to further emphasise that Associate Teachers are also subject to the same discursive push and pull described above – actors experiencing tensions and challenges within the same policy storm. The practices witnessed by the ITE students, therefore, are also attributable to the changes and tensions within the wider environment in which ATs teach. Individual ITE students have not been differentiated in the selection of observational notes for evidence. As will be shown there is a marked concentration of practices very antithetical to the

principles of social-constructivism contained in both the Ministry of Education curriculum and service statements and ITE provider programme outcomes.

Lesson structure

ITE students observed mostly simple unsophisticated lesson structures regardless of the key teaching/learning area of their AT. Most ATs started their lessons with either disciplinary talk or a recap on the previous lesson, for example, *the teacher just started his class as soon as he comes into the classroom*. Very few started by sharing with the students the direction in which the lesson was to go. Most lessons then proceeded predominantly with teacher talk and with the occasional use of the blackboard or a *chart*. As one ITE student observed, *the teacher does most/all of the talking in the class [and] only one method of teaching is employed whereby the teacher takes the lead role in lecturing and explaining*. Most teachers were observed to be conscious of the time and ensured that what was planned fitted into the allocated teaching period. While most lessons were broken up into explanation followed by a whole class question and answer discussion, there was some variation to this when *students are given time to discuss within the group of two [or more] students*. Very few resources were used beyond the ubiquitous *notes*, blackboards and student exercise books. In some cases, the AT had the *notes* copied in advance such as when the following was observed, *the teacher issues the handout of summarised notes and directs them what to be written during the lesson for half an hour and the other half an hour is taken for discussion*. Alternatively, *everyone did the writing of the notes* often from the blackboard. While there were some ATs who broke up lessons into pre-planned segments, or who grouped students strategically where stronger ones could work with weaker ones, or communicated learning intentions to students and used a variety of resources, most taught using the basic approach outlined above. Overall, this common approach to teaching, which revolves around giving and receiving *the notes*, tends to constitute Fijian learners in passive terms. In contrast, teachers are dominant and learning tends to take place at lower levels of cognitive understanding.

Class management

Most teachers were observed by ITE students to be very negative in terms of their classroom management. A number of very coercive approaches were witnessed such as the following: *those who are disruptive are immediately called out and shamed in front of the class*; as well as *since the students are new to the school they are told that if they keep misbehaving there are many children who wish to attend the school who can easily fill their slot*. Threats of punishment and detention are made sometimes to begin the lesson, for example, *the teacher begins the class by telling students there is no room for people who wish to waste time and anyone who misbehaves will be dealt with accordingly*. ITE students commonly made references to *counselling* as a means of dealing with disruptive behaviour, for example, *if any of the students does [sic] not listen to the teacher then they are taken for counselling*. ITE students did not elaborate on what counselling actually entailed but it is taken to mean a softer approach where the undesirable behaviour is discussed with the student, most often, by senior teachers or Principal. Very little appears to happen in terms of positive reinforcement or prior lesson or classroom planning in order to minimise disruption, although, one student noted an AT *discussing calmly to students about their problems [which] reinforces acceptable behaviour*. Appeals to class and school rules and referrals to the school principal were commonly observed. Common classroom management practices tend to constitute students in similarly passive ways within very asymmetrical teaching and learning relationships. In many classrooms, the teacher is in the more powerful position and students are granted minimal degrees of agency in their own learning.

Differentiated activities

Only a few ITE students observed diverse learning activities or differentiated teaching based on individualised learning needs. For example, one teacher *ensured that the students of different ability*

levels were mixed in each group and also the student is sitting with a person they are comfortable with. However, this was rarely observed. In contrast, as one ITE student put it, *the teacher was mostly as a dictator ... at first the class was interesting but by the end students lost their interest ... a rote teaching method is used – dictation.* The only major common concession to learner difference was the use of question and answer segments in lessons where the different levels of student ability were taken into account. ITE students noted a modification of questions to suit particular ability levels in the class. As mentioned previously copying the *notes* in some form was observed to be a widespread practice as two different students recorded: *the teacher does not give out any activities to the class to be done by them. She just discusses the notes with the students* and *it's just writing of notes on the blackboard. Students read the notes and the teacher briefly explains.* Activities mostly involved listening to explanations and demonstrations with "usually pin drop silence while the teacher is teaching".

Individual differences in terms of learning were not widely planned for. One student recorded that, *The lesson is not structured to cater for the different abilities of the students, they are not accommodated according to differences but as a whole.* The use of digital technology was observed to be minimal. Personal mobile devices[3] in Fijian schools are banned. Tablets and laptops are also expensive for schools with limited budgets or simply not considered important to learning. For example, in terms of the latter, some ITE students arrived at the conclusion from their ATs that *students were not allowed to use any form of technology because it was an English class where students were writing notes* and *we don't use any electronic devices in Hindi class, because only books are being used.* The use of a video clip on a laptop was sometimes observed. However, teachers in curriculum areas that are traditionally resource dependent, for example music, were observed by students to use those resources in their teaching. For example, one student in a music class observed: *all students were able to play instruments in the group and also the students performed in class by singing and playing the instrument at the same time.* Overall, it appears from the ITE student observations that learners are rarely differentiated in terms of ability, despite an otherwise outcomes-based curriculum that encourages differentiated learning. Knowledge is also constituted very much in terms of content rather than processes. The heavy reliance ATs place on *notes* further constitutes both learners, teachers and curriculum in very behaviourist and conservative terms. Teaching in this way aligns with the current age/grade lockstep progression through the secondary years and the heavy reliance on standardised national examinations.

Assessment and application

Student observations of assessment procedures in single lessons were not always possible. However, many ITE students observed teachers making an appeal to the exams and using past papers as both an incentive and basis for lessons with students, even though the practicum period was in the first three weeks of the school year. Students noted that when ATs roved among students while in their groups for discussion and activities there was an opportunity to gauge levels of student learning. *The teacher mostly moves around in the classroom to create a live [sic] class.* Chorus answering of questions by students in discussion parts of lessons were also identified as opportunities for assessment by ATs. ITE students observed the collection of students' workbooks and activity sheets for marking at the end of lessons which presumably opens up the possibility of assessment for learning. However, forms of assessment beyond the workbook, for example, portfolios, self-assessment, peer assessment, work samples etc were not observed.

Discussion and analysis: An ITE provider response

ITE student observations construct actual secondary school teaching in very conservative behaviourist terms. These are not always consistent with the Ministry of Education curriculum rhetoric and USP ITE programme outcomes that emphasise social constructivist and progressivist approaches to teaching. The

---

[3] Ministry of Education policy states that mobile phones can only be brought to school with the Principal's consent (Ministry of Education, Heritage and the Arts, 2016).

observed behaviourist and conservative practices, however, are likely to be consistent with several years of national standardised examinations and other conservative pressures identified earlier that ATs have had to comply with. The practices are also consistent to an extent with culturally informed hierarchic social relations in the wider Fijian community (White, 2014). What benefits, therefore, are to be gained from placing ITE students in such an environment where modelled teaching and other practices of schooling are variable at best and oppositional to some Ministry of Education and most USP perspectives on quality teaching at worst? A long term goal would logically be one to develop closer collaboration between USP as ITE provider and the Fijian school system generally to build a more shared approach to ITE. In the short term, however, a tentative way forward might be to embrace the discursive multiplicity and take a more critically reflective approach where ITE students are encouraged to question the pedagogies they witness. ITE students then make links between certain teaching practices, the context in which they are enacted and their consequences. This questioning of practice must extend to all pedagogies ITE students are exposed to including the social-constructivism of USP's ITE programme itself. This approach finds resonance in comparative education theory and debate where quality teaching is considered highly contingent on cultural, social and economic contexts and in globalising times where there is an increasing mobility of people and ideas. Schweisfurth (2013), among many others, advocates a shift from the social constructivism of learner-centredness to what is termed *learning-centred* pedagogies. The shift is far more than mere semantics. In a *learning-centred* approach the prime focus is on choices for learning itself rather than the learner. A *learning-centred* approach, means that teachers are required to practice higher degrees of professional autonomy and agency (Schweisfurth, 2013). The implications of this for ITE programmes and practicum, in particular, are profound.

Reflection and discussion between the ITE provider, ITE students as well as the practicum school and AT are then based on a principle of: 'If you teach like this then that might happen ... if you teach like that then this might happen ... and finally how then will you teach?'. Rather than narrowly advocating for what Lambert & O'Conner (2018) term elsewhere as reductionist policy narratives, which ITE students need to embrace to become quality teachers, USP's ITE program might more usefully expose ITE students to multiple orientations to teaching and the wider social, cultural and political formations from which they emerge. Making this post-structural concession (Wodak, 2001) to multiple teaching orientations, helps address the complexity of the policy storm that confronts ITE students and providers. USP's ITE program generally, and the practicum experience specifically, then helps ITE students draw conclusions as to the consequences of particular ways of teaching, not only in terms of children's learning outcomes but the way various orientations to teaching constitute Fijian children, social relations and society more generally.

A *learning-centred* approach has emerged out of comparative and international education research and advocacy in response to links theorists have made between neoliberalism and constructivist pedagogies (see, for example, Tabulawa, 2003 and Biraimah, 2008) and its potential to disrupt longstanding adult-child relationships particularly in formerly colonised and developing world settings (see, for example, Carter, 2010 and O'Sullivan, 2004). In Fiji, such an approach with ITE students is an appropriate critical response to the conservative discourses eroding both the Ministry of Education and USP's ITE ideals discussed earlier. A *learning-centred* approach to ITE also furthers the search for a unique set of Pacific pedagogies (see, for example, Thaman, 2009b). A *learning-centred* approach in turn attributes greater degrees of agency and professionalism to ITE students and concedes to the diversity of Pacific contexts with their specific needs that ITE graduates will eventually be employed in. A number of frameworks already exist to facilitate this approach, for example, Jones, (2013) – conservative, liberal, critical, postmodern and Kalantzis & Cope, (2008) – mimesis, synthetic, reflexivity. These frameworks can be used by ITE students to position the pedagogies they witness on practicum and assist them to make critically informed pedagogical decisions for their own teaching.

Conclusion

The University of the South Pacific's ITE students are met with competing discourses of quality teaching once they commence their first in-schools experience as part of their ITE preparation. ITE programme outcomes tend to align with official Ministry of Education frameworks in terms of the broad socially constructive teaching practices both advocate. However, a recent conservative shift toward standardised testing in Fijian secondary schools and top down forms of school leadership that limit Fijian teacher agency in major decisions about policy and practice, tend to confound the progressivism implied in social constructivist discourse. Furthermore, as this article has shown, ITE students appear to meet with a set of very conservative behaviourist teaching practices when they come under the mentee-ship of their assigned Associate Teachers during their initial practicum experiences. ITE students at USP have long been encouraged to reflect critically in so far as the re-indigenisation of Pacific schooling is concerned (see Thaman 2009a & b). However, this critical reflection has not always extended to specific classroom practices and in particular approaches to teaching. The multiple discourses impacting on Fijian secondary schooling, the work done by Associate Teachers and ITE programmes identified by the ITE students in this study, can be generative as they provide useful opportunities for critical reflection on what constitutes quality teaching in Fijian schools. Associate Teacher practices, in particular, perhaps more than in any other ITE context, cannot be taken as a set of roles for ITE students to simply base their own practices on. The practicum experience for ITE students, therefore, serves as an opportunity for ITE students to begin thinking about alignments between their own practice and the contexts in which they will eventually teach and the potential consequences of teaching in particular ways.

References

Ball, S. (2003). The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity, *Journal of Educational Policy, 18*(2), 215-228.

Biraimah, K. (2008). Education for equitable outcomes or educational inequality: A critical analysis of UNESCO's Education for All and the United States' No Child Left Behind programs. In J. Zajda, L. Davies & S. Majhanovich (Eds.), Comparative and Global Pedagogies: Springer.

Burchell, A. (2018). *Presentation to USP School of Education academic staff by Fiji Permanent Secretary for Education*, University of the South Pacific campus, 15th October, Faculty of Arts, Law and Education conference room.

Burnett, G. & Lingam, G.I. (2013). The social construction of urban Fijian childhoods: Literacy teaching, Waka readers and children's lives, *Asia Pacific Education Review, 14*(2), 255-265.

Carter, L. (2010). Neoliberal globalization and learner-centered pedagogies: Posing some different questions, *Canadian Journal of Science, Mathematics and Technology Education, 10*(3), 223-231.

Deo, P. (2018). *Fiji teachers registration authority teacher orientation programme*, Japan-Pacific Lecture Theatre, University of the South Pacific, February.

Forum Ministers. (2009). *Pacific education development framework 2009-2015*.

Forum Ministers. (2018). *Pacific regional education framework* (draft)

Jones, T. (2013). *Understanding education policy: The four education orientations framework,* Dordrecht: Springer.

Kalantzis, M. & Cope, B. (2008). *New learning: Elements of a science of education*, Port Melbourne: Cambridge.

Lambert, K. & O'Conner, J. (2018). Breaking and making curriculum from inside 'policy storms' in an Australian pre-service teacher education course, *The Curriculum Journal, 29*(2), 159-180.

Mala, S. (2017). Head teachers challenged to get 100% pass rate. *Fiji Sun*, April 21st

Ministry of Education. (2007). *The Fiji National Curriculum Framework: Quality education for change, peace and progress*. Government of Fiji.

Ministry of Education, Heritage and the Arts. (2013). *The Fiji National Curriculum Framework: Quality education for change, peace and progress*, 2nd edition. Government of Fiji.

Ministry of Education, Heritage and the Arts, (2015a). *2015-2018 Education sector strategic development plan*, Government of Fiji.

Ministry of Education, Heritage and the Arts, (2015b). *2015 Annual report: Quality education for change, peace and progress*, Government of Fiji.

Ministry of Education, Heritage and the Arts, (2015c). *Customer service charter 2015-2018*, Government of Fiji.

Ministry of Education, Heritage and the Arts, (2016). *Policy on mobile phones in schools*, Retrieved from: http://www.education.gov.fj/images/Policy_on_Mobile_Phones_in_Schools.pdf

O'Sullivan, M. (2004). The reconceptualisation of learner-centred approaches: A Namibian case study, *International Journal of Educational Development, 24*, 585–602.

Pene, F., Taufe'ulungaki, A. & Benson, C. (2002). *Tree of opportunity: Re-thinking Pacific education*. Suva: Institute of Education.

Ratuva, S. (2005). Politics of ethno-national identity in a postcolonial communal democracy: The case of Fiji. In A. Allahar (Ed.), *Ethnicity, class and nationalism: Caribbean and extra-Caribbean dimensions* (pp. 171–198). Lanham: Lexington Books.

School of Education, (2017). *USP: Quality teacher education for the Pacific: Framework for engagement: Serving Pacific education*, 15th November.

School of Education, (2018). *BEd (Primary) Programme outcomes – draft*, University of the South Pacific

Schweisfurth, M. (2013). Learner-centred education in developing country contexts: From solution to problem? *International Journal of Educational Development 31*, 425–432.

Singh, M. (2005). Enabling transnational learning communities: Policies, pedagogies and politics of Educational Power. In P. Ninnes & M. Hellstén (Eds), *Internationalising Higher Education: Critical Explorations of Pedagogy and Policy* (pp.9-36). University of Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre.

Subban, P. K., & Round, P. N. (2015). Differentiated instruction at work. Reinforcing the art of classroom observation through the creation of a checklist for beginning and pre-service teachers. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 40*(5). http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2015v40n5.7

Tabulawa, R. (2003). International aid agencies, Learner-centred pedagogy and political democratisation: A critique, *Comparative Education, 39*(1), 7-26.

Thaman, K. H. (2009a). General perspectives: Culture, teaching and learning in Oceania. In K. H. Thaman (Ed.), *Educational ideas from Oceania: Selected readi*ngs (2nd ed., pp. 1–8). Suva, Fiji: Institute of Education in association with the UNESCO Chair in Teacher Education and Culture, USP.

Thaman, K. (2009b). Towards cultural democracy in teaching and learning with specific references to Pacific Island Nations (PINs). *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning,3*(2).

Toumu'a, R. (2014). *Proceedings of the Vaka Pasifiki Education Conference 2014*. Tonga: Institute of Education, The University of the South Pacific.

WASC Senior College and University Commission, (2018). Statement of Accreditation Status The University of the South Pacific, Retrieved from: https://www.wscuc.org/institutions/university-south-pacific

White, C. (2014). Deficit thinking redux: Cultural deficit discourse and an urban community and school in Fiji, *Social identities, 20*(2-3), 155-170.

Wodak, R. (2001). Critical discourse analysis: Challenges and perspectives. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer, (Eds). *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, (pp.xxi-xliii), London: Sage.