1. THE FORTRESS STATE\textsuperscript{1} AND INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

The basic assumption of this paper is that education on its own cannot solve all societal problems. Multi-dimensional action is needed to maintain peace and stability and to solve conflicts – political action and economic measures are fundamental to dealing with societal diversity. What is being suggested here is not the politicisation of education, but the recognition of the broader political and socially diverse context in which education takes place. This includes issues of equalising resource allocation amongst different groups and between rural and urban schools to bridge the dichotomy between these areas. The same applies to bridging the differential educational provision between the smaller and larger states in the Pacific region. This would materially contribute to education for intercultural and international understanding.

The political context of where and how societal inclusions and exclusions take place is important. Education as a process does not take place in absence of the political system and the decisions taken within it. This has become an all the more critical issue because in the twenty first century many of the gains of the modern state in the nineteenth century are being reversed; the abolition of slavery and serfdom, the establishment of democracies and

\textsuperscript{1} This phrase was used by colleague Dr Robert Cowen during a discussion of this paper, 1st August 2000 (London).
the enfranchisement of people, and the establishment of the laws, rules, regulations and constitutional frameworks which guarantee people's human rights. Increasingly 'fortress states and mentalities' have begun to emerge. How one might ask have these hard won rights and developments been over-ridden by the recent rise of narrow ethnicisms and nationalism? In most parts of the world seemingly normal national political forces have unleashed violence at various levels: neighbourhoods, communities, localities, nations, and regions. The Philippines, Indonesia or Fiji provide recent examples in this region. Civilised and educated politics have turned into Hobbesian jungles. The rise of ethnicised violence in its wake raises a question about why such violence has arisen from within what were considered stable rational, educated and civilised states? Conflict and violence in the past few decades has not been between states, but within nation states. Education systems have a role in inhibiting or exacerbating inter-ethnic conflict within a state. Education for International Understanding (EIU) has to examine issues within as well as between states.

At one level the education systems have failed to develop critical faculties as well as analytical powers which can help to avoid the slide into ethnic strife and chaos. Nations use symbols legitimated by education systems to conserve their invented identities which construct 'us' and 'them', 'belongers' and 'strangers'. When some 'strangers' are poor they become even more estranged because rich 'strangers' can be constructed to be one of 'us' by national authorities. Education systems can play a role in exacerbating or resolving these dilemmas.

Terms like multiculturalism and social diversity are used as descriptive terms in this paper to highlight the aspects of social diversity in politics. If issues of intercultural relations and an equitable intercultural public and social policy are to become a reality, then different groups have to be treated as being central rather than marginal to most Pacific Ocean societies. Part of the problem which needs to be addressed is the institutionalised exclusion and ethnicism within education systems and to strengthen the positive interactive aspects through intercultural education.

The first issue is how to define culturally diverse or multicultural societies. A taxonomic framework of states which includes: religious, social class, nationalities and ethnic groups means that most Pacific Ocean societies have been historically as well as contemporaneously diverse. Hence the states need to develop inclusive policies to ensure that in legal and legislative terms all groups who reside in a polity have citizenship rights. In these terms, constitutions are vested with live principles which can activate a sense of rights and responsibilities in all citizens through its inclusive principles.
It is very important that such constitutional instruments negate what Balibar refers to as "the internal decomposition of the community, created by racism". Development of intercultural measures have to start from negating racism, xenophobia, narrow nationalisms and ethnicisms. Such intercultural learning can only be meaningful if it can help resolve the practice of "exclusionary power and powers of exclusionary institutions". Hence, the task is one of developing a critical interculturalism which is based on sound intellectual foundations and is firmly grounded in the core functioning of institutions. Such a basis for education within a national system is important to the enhancement of EIU.

It is the responsibility of parliamentarians to ensure that constitutional principles are not violated and that policies of intercultural education are seen to be a central concern of the state. They also ought to ensure that policies are turned into effective practice within a society.

1.1 Definitions and Terminology

The notion of analysing multicultural democratic societies also requires a critical academic engagement. At one level, a question can be raised: whether societies have become multicultural or if they have historically been multicultural. Historical facts are subject to distortion whether by dominant nationality, or by racial, linguistic or religious dominance. Teaching history as a 'story' has various pitfalls and one way of ensuring that young people acquire a critical understanding of the past is to educate them to develop skills to interpret, analyse historical evidence, narratives or documents. At this level there is a need for an intervention of historians and social scientists to provide a taxonomy of elements that constitute a multicultural society. If societies are considered to have become multicultural because of the presence of immigrants then parliamentarians and policy-makers confront a totally different set of questions than if societies are seen as historically diverse or multicultural. If social diversity and migration are subjected to historical analysis then immigrants can be seen as merely highlighting what are the underlying and existing features of diversities based on linguistic, religious, territorial and social class bases. Hence, terms like 'ethnic', 'national minorities' or 'ethnic minorities' require further analysis. Who defines these groups? How are these terms used and by whom? How long does an immigrant remain an immigrant and when does he become a citizen? Who are the 'volk' and is it a valid concept in a modern state? Social diversity is complex and its recognition ought not to start and end with immigrant groups and refugees, normally referred to as 'ethnic groups' especially as dominant groups are seldom recognised as having an

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'ethnicity' or ethnic identity. A historical and contemporaneous analytical framework may make it less likely that such issues can be marginalised in a society. A critical perspective may also provide us with a different perspective about societies which may consider themselves monocultural.

In national and regional terms these issues require serious consideration to ensure peace and stability. Marginalisation of these issues in many national and regional contexts has led to conflict, violence and national fragmentation.

The terminological issues also revolve around the Janus headed nature or the nation, which may have 'ethnic' features as well as constructions based on modern constitutions. The latter should ensure equality, liberty and fraternity in legal terms and relate to questions of citizenship. They are also powerful teaching tools to educate young people. Young people need to learn that the nation and a society are complex entities and do not, and are not, subject to singular or simplistic readings. The failure of many schools to do this is a major cause of ethnically based exclusions and violence.

1.2 Public Policies

Exclusions in socially and culturally diverse societies and nations can turn breed mentalities of exclusivity. These have led to ethnic Armageddon in many parts of the world. States, therefore, ought to safeguard citizenship rights of all groups to ensure not only an equitable resolution of conflicts but to establish prophylactic public and social policies which strengthen democratic ideas. Such national policies ought to bridge ethnic, religious, linguistic and racial differences and negate the rise of narrow nationalism and xenophobia. As we move into the millennium civil and political rights need to be validated in all culturally diverse environments to ensure that the civil state is strengthened. In socially diverse Pacific region context increased tensions can lead to 'fortress communities' and fragmentation of communities particularly if impoverished groups are not educated or reskilled for new jobs. This as Castell has written would lead to the "globalization of power flows and the tribalisation of local communities".4

The limited notions of ideas of a capitalist market require further discussion in terms of social democracies to minimise inequalities and the growth of a large underclass in society. The development of intercultural public and social policies ought to ensure that no group loses jobs due to the rapid technological changes in society and the rising levels of de-skilling and unemployment which have accompanied these changes.

It is also important that in representative democracies all groups have a 'voice' because without powerfully secular and inclusive demos the reverting back to narrow

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4 Castell, M (1989), The Informational City, (Oxford: Blackwell's), p350
identities and fragmentation of the polity becomes a real issue. Education systems have so far, not been effective in providing this ‘voice’ to young people and marginalised communities from which they come. It is to be hoped that the new Regional Centre will provide such a focus to develop deeper understandings amongst all the peoples and countries in the region.

1.3 Confederal localisms

The other issue which should be raised is that of belongingness of all groups in a society and the region. This however does present problems because certain dominant nationalities see these societies as ‘theirs’ and as encroached upon by ‘others’ who are aliens and not seen to belong. There are obviously specificities of different localities, communities, families and groups which provide a different colour, texture and hue to different parts of many Pacific region countries. There are also differences of local politics, economics, histories as well as how these intersect and interact with national, regional and global contexts which constitute differences in different areas.

The possibility of interaction and intersection of the histories, the cultures and languages enables the construction of a more realistic understanding of the pasts of Pacific region societies and better inform what may be their present, which may in turn have implications for constructing a less biased and a more meaningful future.

Communities have both features of a universalistic nature as well as particularisms and local differences. Yet non-confederal localisms can become parochial, tyrannical, racist, insular, stagnant and authoritarian. There are thick and textured layers of political, social and economic contexts which intersect with histories, cultures and languages. Pacific region societies therefore provide possibilities and prospects of an infinite nature, and yet, can also be insular, lonely and confining. The confederal nature of societies requires that integrative thinking and structures should link individual groups and localities. The challenge for the political and educational system is to develop a shared and common value system, in which inclusive rights and responsibilities will be developed as an outcome of the work of schools, social and political institutions. Greek notions of ‘paideia’ and German education based on ‘bildung’ merit examination to ensure that future generations have appropriate shared and intercultural values to inhabit the same space.

The challenges which are posed to parliamentarians and policy makers at local, national and Pacific regional levels are of critical importance in addressing these questions, and success in dealing with these would ensure peace, security, stability and citizenship rights of all groups. Such political and policy initiatives need to establish broadly based educational policies, measures, strategies, actions and institutional changes.
1.4 **Functional Apartheid**

Social tensions between different communities can lead to communities living in fear. Only holistic solutions to correct these imbalances and inequalities can change the situation in these disunited communities. In many contexts, social divisions exist not only between the dominant and minority young people but also between interethnic gangs on religious and other grounds which complicate solutions of problems in disadvantaged rural and urban areas. Separate schools on religious or ethnic bases may exacerbate these divisions unless there are strategies to obviate such divisions. Autonomous youth cultures within different sections of majority or dominant communities can also negate the educational and learning experiences within schools.

2. **COMMUNITY AND THE SCHOOL**

Fortress mentalities at community level lead to fortress national communities. In many Asian contexts the school and community links have been undermined much to the detriment of the weak, the marginalised and isolated families, particularly if they or their children are traumatised. Dominant groups in many contexts argue that individual behaviours, and personal values are part of the problem and that severe law and order policies are required to deal with these problems. A more appropriate argument is that many current problems arise from multiple disadvantaged communities and that these need sound social policy initiatives and not only policing. If anything, impoverished communities themselves need protection against crime: communities caught by twin dangers of poverty and violent crime do not make good learners.

Community participation in urban and rural areas is part and parcel of community involvement in schools. Impoverished communities face multi-faceted problems which require a multi-agency approach to deal with their regeneration. Although measures need to be targeted to ensure desired outcomes.

2.1 **The School and its Community**

It therefore follows that there should be a consistency about parental and community involvement across cultural lines which needs to be soundly based within the community. At one level, issues are highlighted by the violence perpetrated by young males in many poor rural and urban areas. But we need to ask, what are the dynamics of girls increasingly participating in gangs and taking part in bullying and violence?
Schools should develop a common strategy to link schools and communities. This is particularly the case because peer group culture based on exclusivity is not healthy. If adolescents are marked off as a separate group the influence of adults on the behaviours of the younger generations is reduced. While this issue raises complex responses in educational terms the importance of the situating of the youth within a community cannot be underestimated. Parents and adults especially need to be educated, if they themselves are in a position to undermine the good intercultural education in schools.

An African expression states “it takes a whole village to educate a child”. Hence, education should not only be considered as a concern of parents and their own children. Parents as such do not own their children although they are obviously responsible for them and their welfare. To educate adults and children in the widest sense is potentially a concern of the whole community. Children also have rights through the UN Convention of Children’s Rights, a fact which acquired a significance during the 50th Anniversary of the United Nations and UNESCO’s “Year of Tolerance”. The way in which adults deny these rights is a complex issue necessitating parent and adult education. In fact, one could argue that the whole village may itself need educating or re-educating.

Adults in poorer areas may themselves not be confident of their own ability to help in their own education and their children’s education. Women and mothers particularly feel isolated and their isolation can be reduced by being involved in learning within the school with other women, especially in patriarchal and rural communities.

2.2 School and Community Partnerships

Partnership with a school requires that communities do not feel alienated from it. For cultural reasons, many adults feel that education is the job of teachers and children. It is seen not to concern them as lay adults. There is the additional issue of cultural differences because adults may not understand the differences between continuing education, informal pre-school and formal education in which schools are engaged. In multilingual communities such links are further exacerbated if languages other than dominant ones are not in common usage.

Professionals, (doctors, lawyers as well as teachers), generally find it difficult to share skills, decision-making or accountability. This position normally detracts from a mutual understanding and a partnership between schools, communities and adults. Given

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1 See Rutter, M D, (1995), *Psychosocial Disorders in Young People*, (John Wiley & Sons)
this complex situation and gap between schools and complex and diverse communities, links may be enhanced by:

- regular and effective communication
- sharing of information
- consultation on curriculum as well as assessment of issues of children and adult education
- ensuring that adults and teachers have similar or shared goals
- visible manifest respect of adults by the school as well as readiness to explain and listen to adults
- approachability and ability to negotiate, as well as sharing responsibility
- while child and adult learners are at the centre general community involvement is important
- equal opportunity policies/intercultural policies should be made clear to all elements of the community.

2.3 Community Involvement and Resistance to Multiculturalism

In multicultural school settings there is a need to avoid the dangers of bullying, particularly since adults themselves may be ‘living in terror’ and unable to be involved in their own education and that of their children. The schools, therefore, need to understand the complexities and the delicacies of the situation to ensure that both the children, adults and isolated members of the community feel safe within the school. This issue yet again highlights the role of school – community links and one which is not restricted to links with parents. The school also needs to deal with exclusionary mechanisms and incidents sensitively, so that no learners are left feeling insecure and vulnerable.

So a ‘collective school ethic’ which includes all the school staff to develop whole school practices is important. If it is a ‘safe school’ with a positive ethos it will spill over into the community. This is a difficult issue because staff are part of a complex institution and such a development may be easier within primary schools and more difficult at secondary school level because they are more difficult to manage. Communication within schools is essential because, for instance, good work in classrooms can be undone by school welfare staff if there is not coordination between two different parts of the school. Adults who remain unconnected to the educational process can also disrupt the positive advantages of education. Given the changing role of families, as well as work patterns, adult and parental involvement in children’s education is important. This might entail parental adult

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7 Learning in Terror (1988), (London: CRE)
education to contribute to their own and the continuing educational process within the community and to ensure learning across age groups.

2.4 Young People and School Culture

As children grow older there is a natural desire to keep their parents away from school, particularly in teenage years as school culture can be different from family culture. Youth and peer group cultures assume a more powerful role whether in social relations or in terms of language use, styles, musical tastes and consumer tastes. The critical role of the media cannot be underestimated in marginalising local and family values. It is therefore important that teachers and children can learn to read media messages (especially visual ones) critically. Rituals of inclusion and exclusion in the playground are part of developing more insular and autonomous peer group cultures. These rituals include ways in which both physical and verbal harassment exacerbate other levels of marginalisation. Children use images, jokes and commonsense prejudices, and exclusions based on these are passed from older to younger children. Is the growth of autonomous young peoples’ cultures partly the result of failure of education to successfully socialise children and resulting in the ‘dumbing down’ of young people? Is this exacerbated by global media?

Teachers and schools therefore face greater problems of dealing with youth who have other pre-occupations, such as consumer goods, games, style, music, sex and perhaps a pressure to become anti-academic. The school exclusions of youth from certain minority or dominant communities because of the greater cultural gap presents major problems for some schools. The tripartite relationship of parents, school and community are important to ensure that disproportionate exclusions rates from certain groups are minimised. Excessive rates of exclusions, particularly from specific groups (in the UK black young males), are an indication of bad relations between schools and disadvantaged groups. Issues of teacher perceptions of behaviours (and bad pupil behaviours and disruption) require institutional policies, because teachers perceptions may not be well informed.

There is an increasing problem in schools of the rise of extreme policies. Rights and responsibilities not only of children but of all citizens require urgent consideration. The rise of extremist right-wing or nationalist politics has raised a reaction in terms of ‘Politics of Recognition’ and of separatist demands by subordinated or marginalised groups. This tends to happen in societies where the dominant groups ignore minorities who then feel that they need to be recognised in their own right. In religious terms the rise of narrow nationalism and fundamentalism and demand for separate schools is an example of this. It is therefore even more imperative at the present time to create spaces for parents and communities to have an actual ‘voice’ in education. This can help in avoiding the polarisation in local
communities where parents and disenfranchised communities feel that reaction and separation are the only solution. The rise of narrow identities and reactions (whether nationalistic, 'ethnic', religious or racial) obviously requires commitment on the part of the education system as a whole. The role of the school in strengthening civil culture, as well as public values, is something that has been weakened and requires strengthening. This is especially the case since there are high levels of unemployment and erosion of social policy provision is leading to higher levels of cynicism amongst ordinary people. The state and its education system cannot afford to marginalise these issues because their cumulative effect erodes safety and stability of the whole polity.

2.5 Community Links, Imagination and Belongingness

Community and school links are particularly important because negative or positive aspects from each domain spill over from one to the other. Violence in the community can affect life in the school. The tension in London Borough of Greenwich schools after the murder on the Thamesmead estate is a case in point.\(^8\) In this instance, different interpretations and stories worked their way from school to community and vice versa. The school gate is therefore not the end of school’s role or policies. Schools can obviously control children’s behaviour through school policy. However, children’s imaginations, both positive and negative, should not be ignored. This is particularly true of ethnicist, racist or nationalistic imaginations. As a negative phenomenon this issue requires action by the media, teachers, youth workers and community. In other words, unless there is an inter-ministerial and multi-agency approach to deal with issues of negative imaginations the behaviours of young people are likely to stay very anti-social.

The confederal nature of urban communities requires integrative thinking and structures which link individual groups and localities.\(^9\) This is probably equally true in rural areas, as rural economic change and social structures and communities are fragmented.

There are obviously specificities of different localities, communities, families and groups which provide a different colour, texture and hue to different parts of many localities. There are also differences of local politics, economies, histories as well as how these interact with national, regional and global contexts which constitute differences in rural and urban areas. Hence, for instance an urban school in one country may have more in common with an urban school in another country than with schools in smaller towns or rural areas in the country in which it is located or from one Pacific region country to another. It is worth

\(^8\) Sagaland, Centre for Multicultural Education (1992), (London)

considering how to develop strategies which incorporate good practices from a school in one local context to another.

2.6 Playground, Games and Styles

Organised games can provide discipline and rules and can help intercultural relations. However, informal interactions in the playgrounds may reinforce racist practices. This is especially the case where play is beyond the influence of stabilising adult cultures. Much of young peoples and peer cultures revolve around oral cultures, music as well as styles.

Clothing and fashion are also complex issues which carry deeper meanings than is ascribed to them. These meanings may have political messages. The role of education in teaching games and sports as a way of ensuring fair play and rules of play is of critical importance. Football and games themselves are used as symbols of war and play has become secondary to nationalistic considerations. The responses of English fans during the European Cup are a case in point. Young peoples violence largely on an ethnicised or nationalistic basis has subverted the positive and intercultural dimensions of games. The role of educators in turning to the rationale for games and sports and to use them for good intercultural relations is extremely important. Schools are obvious sites where the stereotyping of certain groups associated with certain kinds of sports also needs to be dealt with.

2.7 Children and Human Rights

Two general problems frequently arise, one relating to religious schools, another to arguments derived from the claimed demands of political stability and economic development.

Many children still learn in religious schools, while having to live later on as adults in complex, multifaith societies. There is a need for more interfaith contacts between young people. Educational work is often lacking to promote the intercultural values of respect, equality, acceptance and toleration of different groups, based on genuine inter-group and public values.

There are also intercultural issues in the way in which some governments use problems of political stability and economic development to excuse the denial of ‘western-style’ human rights. Educators cannot fudge these questions. There have to be educational strategies which together enhance democratisation, political stability and

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economic development. It is the task of educators to explore how best to enhance universal rights by drawing from different cultural traditions, and demonstrating that universal rights are often locally rooted. Such work must also take account of the rights and needs of the marginalised, oppressed, indigenous and immigrant peoples in most countries. Most international conventions but especially UNESCO, UNICEF and the Human Rights Declarations are relevant.

3. **KNOWLEDGE AND THE CURRICULUM**

The issue of knowledge and curriculum are critical to the way in which the curriculum at the national level can have impact on EIU. Inclusions and exclusions of knowledge have implications for, or peace and stability within, a state or a region. The assumption here is that a ‘centric’ curriculum is inimical to the strengthening of Asian civilizations. It can, in fact, weaken the nation states by privileging dominant discourse, especially since Westernization and Eurocentric knowledge will assume greater levels of ascendency.

3.1 **Problem of Eurocentrism**

Asian education systems confront a double challenge. On the one hand there is the European domination of knowledge and on the other there is the problem of modernisation, development and national integration and a challenge to develop a curriculum relevant to the implementation of these policies\(^{12}\). In terms of Eurocentrism, these hegemonic understandings are informed by the colonialism and imperialism of Europe. As Edward Said writes:

> Without significant exception the universalizing discourses of modern Europe and the United States assume the silence, willing or otherwise, of the non-European world. There is incorporation; there is inclusion; there is direct rule; there is coercion. But there is only infrequently an acknowledgement that the colonized people should be heard from, their ideas known.\(^{13}\)

The interpenetration of cultures and civilizations has universal impact and needs to be analysed at the broadest possible level. This has profound implications for the transfer of knowledge especially since European colonizers ignored or cast aside large portions of

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\(^{13}\) Said, E, (1993), *Culture and Imperialism*, (London: Chatto & Windus)
African and Asian knowledge. Yet, discourses from the colonized peripheries and the subordinated nationalities are still treated as being marginal even in contemporary Asian contexts. Furthermore, dominant nationalities, rather than using national and democratic means to devise a national curriculum, impose very privileged discourses of dominant groups.

Martin Bernal indicated how 18th and 19th century Europeans\textsuperscript{14} developed a historiography which denied the earlier understanding that the Greeks in the Classical and Hellenistic periods had learned as a result of colonization and interaction between Egyptians, Phoenicians and Greeks. Part of the reason for this new historiography has been that with the rise of racist and anti-Semitism in Europe, the European Romantics and racists wanted to distance Greece from the Egyptians and the Phoenicians and construct it as the pure childhood of Europe. It was unacceptable from their perspective that the Europeans would have developed any learning and understanding from the Africans or the Semites.

The notion of a northern European culture separated from the world south of the Mediterranean is largely a mythical construction. The contributions to knowledge in the ancient period from this immediate region include Mesopotamian astronomy, the Egyptian calendar and Greek mathematicians, enriched by the Arabs. As Samir Amin states:

The opposition Greece = the West/Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia = the East is itself a later artificial construct of Eurocentrism. For the boundary in the region separates the backward North African and European West from the advanced East; and the geographic unities constituting Europe, Africa and Asia have no importance on the level of the history of civilization, even if Eurocentrism in its reading of the past is projected onto the past the modern North-South line of demarcation passing through the Mediterranean.\textsuperscript{15}

The debate about how and where ‘civilization’ arose is an interesting one for educationalists and students, but it is only a part of a wider concern with the intellectual straightjacket that Eurocentric and other centric education systems can impose. In this sense, it is always necessary to consider ways in which the curriculum, both formal and informal, can be modified or changed. As long as history is studied from the perspective of one or another narrowly nationalist claim to truth, rather than from one or another paradigm of historiography, education will remain trapped in the tramlines of nationalist tautology. And within this question of communalism, racism, xenophobia and ethnicism will have


propagandistic but not educative value. In the teaching and devising of the curriculum educationalists should therefore consider several alternative definitions of knowledge. These alternative definitions ought to include considerations that are democratic and involve values of social justice and equality in education. This can be done to enhance the quality of education for all and not lower standards as it is normally suggested by elitists.

3.1 Civilizational basis for knowledge

Scholars, including those from Asia, need to develop ideas of non-centric basis of knowledge. This presents curriculum developers with the obvious dilemmas of the rootedness of cultures and civilizations as well as their inter-connectedness. Curriculum developers as well as academics, educators and other policy-makers need to examine these complex notions and to analyse the myths, feelings, understandings and concepts surrounding them in order to develop rational ways of dealing with the resultant dilemmas. Education has normally been seen as a secular or religious phenomenon, but the division and divisiveness caused by this separation has been very damaging. However, if civilizational knowledge can be pooled differently to draw the best from each phase of human history, then a more syncretic understanding from across civilizations and periods of time could inform the educational process differently.

In the first phase between the fifth century BC and seventh century AD, universalist concepts of humanity were established by great religions like Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam and the Confucian and Hellenistic philosophers. However, as Amin states:

The declaration of a universalist vocation did not establish a real unification of humanity. The conditions of tributary society did not permit it, and humanity reformed itself into major tributary areas held together by their own particular universalist religion-philosophy (Christendom, Dar Es Islam, the Hindu world, the Confucian world). It is still the case, however, that tributary revolution, like all the great revolutionary movements in history, projected itself forwards and produced ahead of its time.16

The contribution of Buddhism to encouraging education has made a contribution to intercultural understandings. The contributions and lessons from the Gandharan civilization (1-4 century AD) in Taxila region in north west India, which syncretized the Greco-Indian cultures, provides pointers for resolving some contemporary dilemmas in Asian societies.

Although these earlier movements form an important part of the emergence of universalist norms and values, they also continue to present unresolved dilemmas at a global level. Hans Küng, for one, outlines his major project for encouraging an ethical quest: No survival without a world ethic. No world peace without peace between the religions. No peace between the religions without dialogue between the religions.\textsuperscript{17}

- There can be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions.
- There can be no peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions.
- There can be no dialogue between the religions without research into theological foundations.\textsuperscript{18}

The conclusion of the book is:

Therefore the programme which guides us and which comes together as one may be summed up once again in three basic statements:

- no human life together without a world ethic for the nations;
- no peace among the nations without peace among the religions;
- no peace among the religions without dialogue among the religions.\textsuperscript{19}

The second phase during the modern period likewise has made a contribution universalism is through the philosophy of the Enlightenment. This social vision of society was based on notions of a social construct and the French Revolution sought a nation based not on ideas of blood and ancestors but of free man (sic). The abolition of slavery and ideas of secularism went beyond mere religious toleration. However despite the fact that the nation was not an affirmation of the particular, but of the universal, such universalist objectives have not been achieved. During the American Revolution, in a nation largely based on immigration, the right to be ‘different’ was recognised. Nevertheless, there has been little defence of the right to be ‘similar’ within a constitutional state, especially of the descendants of slaves and indigenous Americans. Hence, inclusive social and political frameworks have not been optimally developed.

Thirdly, the rise of socialism in the 19th century further contributed to notions of radical transformation especially through Soviet Bolshevism. The price paid by socialism in

\textsuperscript{18} ibid, p105
\textsuperscript{19} ibid, p138. See also Huntington, S, (1996), \textit{The Clash of Civilizations Remaking of World Order}, (New York: Simon and Schuster).
respecting difference and not building inclusive rights to be ‘similar’ has been very evident in the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. These states did not develop inclusive citizenships with common and shared values.

Fourthly, the post-colonial states likewise faced great challenges of maintaining unity with divisiveness being foisted upon them by the colonizers. Most of them have tried to maintain national unity despite tendencies towards fragmentation. The Bandung Principles (1955) of non-alignment that avoid polarities need to be re-visited for better interstate relations and for EIU in the region. This independent voice of those who had emerged from colonialism was able to exercise moral influence, especially if they were able to remain democratic. The current processes of democratisation in Indonesia may enable these principles to be reactivated. The Indian state has managed to resolve many ethnic conflicts through accords and negotiated settlements, especially in northeast India, and similar settlements have been successfully concluded in the Philippines. These are important cases of conflict resolution derived in Asia and need to be developed and replicated in other situations of conflict, and form an important part of the work for EIU.

Hopes for genuine underpinning of universal values therefore lie in the collective wisdom of the earlier religious epoch, the Enlightenment philosophy, and their reinterpretation by the socialist movements as well as from progressive elements from amongst the post-colonialist liberation movements. The educational and political challenge for democratic ideas is to hold notions of respecting difference but at the same time ensuring the right to be similar. Such an approach could begin to break the polarisations between particularism and universalism. The establishment of a common set of resemblances amongst citizens of Asian states can largely be accomplished by their education systems.

3.2 Issues at the Regional Level

The dominant-marginal perspective in educational discourses needs to be constantly challenged and often redrawn. The issues being presented here are historically significant and of the greatest importance for the future of education as well as the political and social structures of most nations. It requires a combination of pedagogical patience and persistence. There has to be a constant and fundamental reappraisal of the histories and national identities into which we have all be inducted with such care. The answer does not lie in trying to establish either a liberal or a ‘back-to-basis’ curriculum founded in centric, narrowly nationalist and empire-based intellectual milieu that have done so much to contribute to our present predicament.

An important issue that requires rational consideration is how to engage in processes of national integration, modernization and development which are democratic and inclusive.
At this level the curriculum development issues ought to include relevant considerations of participatory pedagogies.

In many marginalised communities, learning and teaching ought to be seen as flexible processes which involve both younger and older people in life-long learning situations. Such participatory situations would enliven the curriculum, rather than deaden it. Hence, both formal and non-formal learning strategies are needed. Both of them should also have the potential for life-long learning.

For most education systems the challenge is to engage in a wide range establishment of connections with other cultures and civilizations which are part of the fabric of contemporary and substantive realities for young people and the future generations of Asian citizens. However, the regional differences between Northeast Asia (NEA) and Southeast Asia (SEA) are extremely wide. This is partly due to high levels of urbanisation and extensive educational infrastructure in NEA and larger levels of rural and poorer population in SEA.

It is a question of disentangling, decoding and identifying the operation and structures of those discourses that help to sustain the present relations of intellectual power and subordination in our societies. Eurocentrism is of particular significance in relation to knowledge, since it has an implicit theory of world history. It is also a global political project with far reaching universal ramifications. Form this perspective, the so-called western thought and philosophy emerges from Greece and is based on ‘rational principles’ while the ‘Orient’ does not move beyond ‘Metaphysics’.\textsuperscript{20} The curricular question is how the Asian education systems help to liberate universalism from the limits of Eurocentrism? The current habits of thought within some education systems inhibit such a development and this tends to reinforce notions of fortress mentality. This mentality exists not only in Europe but has its equivalents in Sino-centrism and Indo-centrism and these substitutes only continue to perpetuate issues of knowledge exclusion and dominance. Asian centrisms therefore allow Eurocentrism to dominate at the global and universal levels.

Another pronounced problem is the way in which Islam has become constructed as Arabo-centric all over the Asian continent, but the broader Asian context of Islam moored in many parts of the region cannot be ignored. This in its wake has led to violence in some states and replacement of Western corruption with clerical corruption in many faith communities. The role of particularistic curriculum in worsening ethnic tensions and activating siege communal mentalities cannot be under estimated.

To reinstate ‘the voice’ of the disenfranchised would require a great deal of delicacy, diplomacy, persistence and sophistication, particularly if the desired changes are not to be

\textsuperscript{20} Amin, S, \textit{op cit}, p19
relegated to the margins of academic life. Reactive, rhetorical and rebellious responses in curricular terms are not only inadequate but also counter-productive. While action is needed across all Asian societies, those in the poorer parts of SEA have greater levels of difficulties and may require support from international agencies. The more affluent and experienced educational agencies in NEA region can also be helpful and lend support for educational developments in poorer parts of the SEA region.

3.3 Religious Knowledge and Non-Centric Curriculum

Schools and higher education institutions play an important role in the formation of values important for the public domain. In trying to develop the Nehruvian notion of an inclusive university, there is the general issue of the role of religions within the Asian education systems generally. The Chicago Fundamentalist Project coordinated by M Marty and R Appleby has documented the role of religion on a range of issues including education. Discussions have also been undertaken by UNRISD and issues arising from different types of religious (culturalist, syncretist, fundamentalist and community orientated)21 have been analysed. However, the impact of religion on its educational policy implications for education in the region requires a more detailed study to enable development of inclusive educational policies and strategies.

The emergence of the Islamic Umma as well as the Roman Catholic Church at a transnational level present aspects of consensus, domination and dissent. The Hindu cultural chauvinism and the shift towards a purer Buddhist Sangha raise problems for the Indian, Thai and Sri Lankan states. The corruption of the secular apparatus of the state systems in different states (India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Phillippines, Pakistan) presents demands for ‘pure’, ‘just’ and ‘xenophobic’ states in Asia. Christian and Islamic fundamentalism has permeated many African and Asian societies. The current backlash against Christians by Hindu fundamentalists in Gujerat has dangerous consequences for other religious minorities and their institutions including schools. Religions like Christianity and Judaism have a longer presence in India than in many so-called Christian countries and are therefore part and parcel of the Indian society. Yet the impact of new aggressive missionaries of the Christian fundamentalist denominations attempting speedy mass conversions in Asia may also heighten the rise of reactions from religions like Hinduism and Islam.

What is the role of religious educational institutions and curricula in the public domain especially when they demand an uncritical adherence to the texts or about issues of

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religious justice? The issue is raised in acute form by an ex-philosophy lecturer at the International University of Kuala Lumpur. He suggests that the emphasis on rote learning, the reiteration of the revealed truth and message, the curtailment of academic freedom, does not resolve the problems of religion, education and state governance in diverse politics. While the Malaysian critique comes from one scholar, the issue applies to other faiths in other Asian schools and higher education institutions operating in the public domain. The issues are not only of import to critical inquiry and scepticism in education institutions, but they also raise the issue of academic freedom – not a phenomena to be considered peculiar to the Western education system and the university. These issues also have a bearing on inter-group and inter-ethnic relations inside education systems and the wider social fabric of societies.

The increased power of organised religions questions ideas of a non-centric curriculum. In multicultural Asian institutions, how can believers of one faith learn about other faiths, as well as non-believers learning about believers and vice versa? In other words it is a complex Kuhnian understanding of teaching about the faiths and the knowledge derived from them, which is not merely religious instruction. This can provide a way forward, out of the sterile and the formally strictly divided notions of the secular and the religious intellectual (western and Asian discourses). This poses complex issues not just for educational policy, but curricular reform and teacher education. To replace obscurantism with rationality is not a simple or a linear path but rather a more complex strategy and journey. Others like Inayatullah argue for an alternative social science that is not based on nation-states as models of analysis but on new knowledge by “creating layered sovereignty”.

Tagore’s Visva Bharati University near Calcutta where a comprehensive vision of knowledge and understanding continues to exist since its founding in 1921, is perhaps a model worth exploring for the implementation of a non-centric curriculum. Its connections with rural India also has implications for other Asian societies which need to educate local peasantry in rural areas not only in literacy and basic education, but also educating them against bigotry. As Brenda Gourley writes:

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Universities indeed had their conceptual origins in such fabled places as Alexandria with its great library, the Greece of the academy and the lyceum, in the Persia of the Sassanids, and the Gondishapur, in India of Das Guptas and the Nalanda, in the golden ages of Confucian China, in the Muslim worlds of Harun-al-Rashid and the House of Wisdom, in the late medieval Europe of Bologna, and many more.²⁵

The APCEIU has the potential to provide the region with intellectually open agendas that transcend narrow religious, ethnic and nationalistic barriers. Many of them are already institutions that are not bigoted in narrow religious terms or exist in a sea of corrupt materialism but are rich intellectually and spiritually. Such a shift may provide more grounds for integrated knowledge systems in the region. It also bodes well for good inter-group and inter-ethnic relations in most societies in the region.

3.4 Developing an Inclusive Asian Curriculum

Most post-colonial Asian states have not yet developed an optimum understanding of integrating the nation based on an ethos of inclusive national cultures of Asian societies. Many states hark back to anti-colonial, dominant and majoritarian knowledge as legitimization of their polities. Knowledge systems and curricula for both formal and non-formal education therefore are excluding and ignore the complex basis of knowledge and histories of many Asian societies. The recounting of anti-colonial struggles that exclude the contributions of minorities cannot be equated with broadly based and inclusive national struggles.

The need for developing genuinely intercultural and inclusive curricula is urgent because of the development of culturalist developments spearheaded by groups demanding a curriculum of recognition based on ‘politics of recognition’. Marginalised groups, minorities and others who feel excluded by twin processes of national exclusion and economic globalisation raise the stakes of exacerbating inter-group and ethnic conflict in a number of south and southeast Asian countries.

Representation of the national culture based merely on anti-colonial, economic development and class politics is not a sufficient basis to constitute national culture in city-states like Singapore. The superficialities of multiracialism or superficially constructed ‘Asian Values’ are no substitute for a serious consideration of the complex values and histories of its peoples. Arbitrary notions of colonially-derived categories of racial identities is not enough of a basis for developing the curriculum.

In countries like Malaysia and Indonesia the construction of the “overseas Chinese” as ‘othered’ groups, even though they have historically been part of both the Malaysian and Indonesian societies and nations, raises important issues. The role of the Chinese as radical nationalists is ignored by the Bhumiputra Malays, whose aristocracy supported British colonialism. The role of the elite in Indonesia to cast the Chinese as communists has allowed the Chinese to be seen as non-belongers. Curriculum planners have the complex task of deconstructing the notion of ‘the other’ that has been disenfranchised while such groups have contributed extensively to the economic, social and cultural life of both countries. The demonisation of the Chinese in Indonesia and the destabilisation of the regime may yet be subjected a reactive and fundamentalist Islam which is not consistent with diversities within that society. Hence, essentialisation of the Chinese minority can in turn lead to the essentialisation of complex Indonesian identity as being patriarchal and Islamic. Yet, substantively in knowledge terms, the issues of identities, whether those of the ethnic groups or others at local or national levels, are more diverse, layered, textured and complex. They are in other words not essentialist in nature and do not have the inevitability of being ethnic in the modern nation because they may have multiple identities within the imagined nation. In fact, both the cultural communities and the nations may be constructions of imaginations that result from the complex processes of political, economic, social, cultural and historical accidents and processes. The important issue that Asian nations have to address on is how to construct and represent these complex features of societies within the inclusive mainstream curriculum.

An inclusive curriculum by definition has to avoid demonisation of ‘The Other’ whether it is ‘the West’, a caste group, or ‘the Chinese’ and reinstate certain archaic versions of the Islamic, Confucian or Asian particularisms.

This constitutes a major challenge in nation building especially in the post-colonial states of south and southeast Asia. There are complex and different issues pertaining to values like freedom which emanate in this region. In terms of discussions about freedoms, rather than examine these in Orientalist or essentialist modes, is there not value in developing a non-pejorative framework like “Eurasian” which have specificities as well as crosscutting of relationships? On the issue of ethnicity Benedict Anderson states:

The politics of ethnicity have their roots in modern times, not ancient history, and their shape has been largely determined by colonial policy. (It is no accident that uncolonised Siam has the least violently ethnicised politics in the region.)

Their imbrication with class and religion as well as the differences between the 'alien' and the 'indigenous' make for complex curricular implications within the southeast and south Asian education systems.

In Malaysia and in Indonesia the 'alien' Chinese minorities are essential to the political and economic order. In both contexts, however, they face different futures. The demographically larger indigenous groups like Kachins, or Illocanos may have greater potentials for being part of modern bilingual polities and being able to participate in the education systems. The third and much smaller, geographically remote groups are not only more vulnerable to the nation state but also to global exploitation because of mineral and forest resources coveted by the outside.

The irony is that typically they are not ethnic groups; .... Often it means become Christian (in Siam or Indonesia) or Muslim (in Malaysia). Almost always it means the end of the kind of cultural autonomy and self-contained integrity that one enjoyed.

The state cannot ignore complexities presented by these ethnicities and their equitable representation in the educational context that can obviate the pessimistic scenario outlined above by Benedict Anderson.

In Taiwan an important development is the introduction of a democratically derived curriculum and the use of enquiry-based learning. These initiatives take into account the different learning styles of students, an issue that is especially relevant for the children of indigenous minority communities in Taiwan.

In Sri Lanka, the UNICEF founded project on Education for Conflict Resolution (ECR) has developed interactive and hands-on curriculum woven into the regular course of studies. But was it too late? Since 1993 it has been used in primary schools and in a few years will be taught in secondary schools and for teacher training.

The final issue in terms of developing an inclusive curriculum is to disarm history. How will societies like Sri Lanka and Cambodia teach history which is non-

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30 Anderson, B., ibid, p330
triumphalist. The Council of Europe is leading a drive to reform history in the former Soviet Union. The APCEIU could also initiate a similar process in the Asian and Pacific region in devising a history curriculum which is free from ideological and political stereotypes and which lays less stress on military issues.\footnote{The Tbilisi Initiative of the Council of Europe discussed in \textit{The Independent on Sunday}, London, 4 October 1998}