Towards Cultural Democracy in Teaching and Learning With Specific References to Pacific Island Nations (PINs)

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Abstract
This paper argues that the teaching/learning environments of most formal educational institutions in Pacific Islands Nations (PINs) are culturally undemocratic: that is, they do not take into consideration the way most Pacific people think, learn and communicate with one another. This is true not only of the values that underpin the curriculum but also the methods that most teachers use, and the way in which student learning is assessed and evaluated.

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Democracy is a political system in which ordinary citizens exercise control over elites; and such control is legitimate, that is, supported by norms that are accepted by elites and nonelites. In all societies, of course, the making of specific decisions is concentrated in the hands of very few people. Neither the ordinary citizen nor “public opinion” can make policy. In Part II we discussed specifically political qualities and attitudes, their distribution in the five countries, and their interdependence as a democratic syndrome. To separate out political qualities and attitudes from general cultural characteristics is analytically justifiable. Teaching and learning History does include remembering some dates and names but they are only important to get a basic understanding of the time period in which events occurred. There are a few scattered fragments left behind to tell us what happened in the past – an old diary, a torn newspaper, a letter, wrecked buildings, rusting machinery, a few photographs, broken pots, spears, guns or old-fashioned dresses – but students will expect you to know everything about the topic. • Check the daily or weekly Newspapers for references to history (keep a folder of cuttings) • Discuss the list of topics you will be teaching with the class to find out what they know already. • Announce the procedures you want followed in your classroom. Have these procedures typed up The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) is an inter-governmental organization that aims to enhance cooperation between countries and territories of the Pacific Ocean. It was founded in 1971 as the South Pacific Forum (SPF). In 1999, the name was changed; “Pacific Islands Forum” is more inclusive of the Forum’s Oceania-spanning membership of both north and south Pacific island countries, including Australia. It is an observer at the United Nations.