The provision of adequate and appropriate education is a challenge faced by all governments. The particular challenge faced by both government and non-government policymakers in Melanesia is to ensure that, where 'mainstream' education is inappropriate or unavailable, opportunities for self improvement exist alongside the formal education system.

There is a clear need for non-formal education in Pacific island countries but it must be focused in order to satisfy the needs of the people it is intended to target. Here, local success stories highlight the potential benefits of an integrated non-formal education system.

This book examines the need for non-formal education to become an integral part of education planning in Melanesian countries and offers guidelines for decisionmakers.

Rodney Cole initiated the Pacific 2010 Project in 1993 as Director of the Islands/Australia Program at the National Centre for Development Studies.
PACIFIC

2010
Opportunities for non-formal education in Melanesia

Rodney V. Cole
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Key to symbols used in tables
n.a.  not applicable
..  not available
-  zero
.  insignificant
Foreword

The principal objective of the project, *Pacific 2010*, has been to draw to the attention of the leaders of Pacific states a number of issues implicit in the growth of island populations by the year 2010. The initial publication, *Pacific 2010: Challenging the Future*, contained population projections for seven countries including levels of school enrolments and the size of the labour force. Subsequent studies associated with the project dealt with urbanisation, the environment, strategic changes needed in agriculture, health, the position of women in education and a pilot study of the informal economic sector in Vanuatu. The principal focus of *Pacific 2010* has been Melanesia.

*Pacific 2010* has an over-riding concern for the future of the youth of Melanesia, those young people now in school or who will enter the education system in the next few years. These young men and women, as they progress through the various stages of formal education programs, will come to expect (with the encouragement of their parents) that upon the completion of their training there will be available to them some form of gainful employment that reflects the standards they have achieved. On the way through the system some will have dropped or been pushed out but even they will have modest expectations for gaining work for which monetary rewards could be expected. For a majority these expectations seem unlikely to be achievable. On the basis of current levels of labour absorption in the formal sector of island economies and in the absence of new capital investment, so important in the creation of employment opportunities, it seems clear that in the not too distant future a gross over-supply will exist (perhaps already exists in some countries) of persons trained in the formal education system.
In order to consider the implications of this perceived situation the National Centre for Development Studies, with the cooperation of the Government of the Republic of Vanuatu, hosted a workshop in Port Vila in 1995. Participants from Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu represented governments, non-government organisations and research institutions; their fields of special interest covered both formal and non-formal education. The workshop recognised that for the foreseeable future it was unlikely that the formal sector of Melanesian economies would be capable of providing paid employment opportunities for all who sought them; the alternative being a livelihood as a self-employed person or a worker in the semi-subsistence or informal sector. The deliberations of the Port Vila workshop, as refined by a further meeting of workshop participants in Brisbane, are presented in this paper.

Preparation of the paper would not have been possible without the support of the Australian Agency for International Development, both financial and in terms of enthusiasm for the Pacific 2010 project. A particular word of thanks to Father Kevin Barr, MSC, who carried out the unenviable task of trying to determine the scope and extent of non-formal educational activities in the four Melanesian countries.

What might be done to meet the challenge posed by the absence of formal employment opportunities for all who seek them is largely the role of the leaders of today, their fellow citizens within the bureaucracies and private sectors of their countries together with the generous intervention by international agencies and foreign investors. Much has been made in recent times of the 'Pacific Way', a phrase that has tended to become debased in recent years by over-use. None-the-less it is important to remember that even in this day and age there remains a way of doing things in the Pacific that other nations appear to have lost. Within Pacific countries an important cultural feature has always been a collective responsibility for all members of the clan, particularly those less fortunate than others. But now even this inbuilt attitude of caring appears to be under threat as the pressures of western materialism intrude even further into island society. Perhaps some of the
pressures are a consequence of an education system which appears to urge that success and paramountcy bring the greatest rewards and that these rewards are to be found in an economic system that is based on the effort of the individual. This paper canvasses the view that the economic system which has been adopted by the island states, while still perhaps the best now on offer, is currently not, nor likely in the foreseeable future, in a position to deliver those rewards that formal, modern education, seeks to offer. It is therefore counter-productive for governments not to recognise, in a proactive manner, that there are other routes whereby their people might gain the quality of life that they manifestly desire for them. This route is, as this paper represents, by according non-formal education a higher status and recognition in the community.

There is no questioning the role of governments in the provision of basic primary education nor in the provision of quality education at the post-primary level to ensure that the professional and sub-professional needs of both the private and public sectors in the modern economy are adequately met from within the national population. But for those who, for whatever reason, do not enter or choose not to remain in the modern sector there must exist a challenge that is both rewarding and satisfying. This can be met, to a substantial degree, through the development of a more clearly focused system of non-formal education, one which builds on the enthusiasm and dedication that already exists in this field and is designed to cater to the varying needs of a growing cohort of the Melanesian population. Non-formal education should never be regarded as a substitute for or in competition with formal education. It should be seen as taking an all-embracing approach to the needs of all the people of Melanesia both now and into the twenty-first century.

Ila Temu
Director, Islands /Australia Program
National Centre for Development Studies
The people of Melanesia are more fortunate than most; they live in one of the last frontiers of development and are in a position to learn from the mistakes of others. But even they are now under threat from forces both external to and from within their countries. The external forces are mainly concerned to exploit the natural wealth of the islands—activities which can lead to environmental damage. Such damage can be controlled by appropriate policies. The internal threats stem largely from rapid population growth, which could have serious consequences for the next generations.

During the 1980s the population growth rates of the Melanesian states averaged 2.7 per cent, and projections for the future are equally high as a result of declining mortality and continuing high fertility rates (Table 1). Growth over the last 30 years has been lower in Fiji as a result of population outflow after the coups of 1987.

There are many implications for island leaders in the population growth forecasts. The Pacific 2010 project has considered such issues as urbanisation, the development of island agriculture, the environment, health, and the position of women in the education system. Now is the time to consider the manner whereby the livelihoods of the islanders are to be gained in the future. A key determinant will be the nature and quality of the educational systems available to all citizens.
There are many implications for island leaders in the population growth forecasts. The *Pacific 2010* project has considered such issues as urbanisation, the development of island agriculture, the environment, health, and the position of women in the education system. Now is the time to consider the manner whereby the livelihoods of the islanders are to be gained in the future. A key determinant will be the nature and quality of the educational systems available to all citizens.

It is critically important for Melanesian leaders to take heed of the present and future educational needs of their people. Those people who will be looking to gain a livelihood by the year 2010 are now born, and many are already in the education system. Melanesian governments, in recognition of the importance of basic education as fundamental to national progress, have announced policies for upgrading access to primary education for all citizens. The demand for primary school places is expected to double by 2010 in Vanuatu and to almost double in the Solomon Islands (Table 2). The relative increase expected in Papua New Guinea is not nearly so large, but they can be expected to have to find places for over 100,000 children.

After providing for universal primary schooling, governments face the inevitable question, ‘What next?’. Historically, Melanesian governments have set goals for post-primary education in terms of the traditional academic streams or in recent years have sought...
to offer options by way of technical or occupational training. Tertiary education has increasingly been regarded as essential in achieving higher social and economic standards and in order to foster national pride and achievement. Much of the planning in education appears to be based on the assumption that the village or subsistence way of life is no longer appropriate to the communities of Melanesia. That the children of the present and future generations may not be able to find employment for which their government-sponsored training program has trained them appears not to have been seen as an important issue. But indications are that wage employment appropriate to the qualifications offered by post-primary education will not be available to all who seek it. This has not gone unnoticed by Fiji’s Minister of Finance.

While we have had our highest (economic) growth rate for some time [and] while employment has continued to grow, the number of additional paid jobs is minimal, (just over 1,000 from June 1993 to June 1994) compared to the 13,000 or so leaving school each year (The Hon. Bernado Vunibobo, Budget Speech, 11 November 1995:21).

Similar situations exist in the other Melanesian countries.

For Melanesian youth who might reasonably expect to aspire to gainful, paid employment upon completion of post-primary studies, the prospects are grim.
Table 3  Working age population and employment, 1990/91 and 2011 ('000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1990/91</th>
<th></th>
<th>2011e</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working</td>
<td>Economically</td>
<td>Wage</td>
<td>Working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>wage</td>
<td>active</td>
<td>employment</td>
<td>wage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papua New Guinea</td>
<td>1,908</td>
<td>1,305</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>3,065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solomon Islands</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanuatu</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiji</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>638</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Estimate

Note: The definition of 'working age' differs between the four countries as follows; Papua New Guinea, 15–64; Solomon Islands, 14–60, Vanuatu, 15+, Fiji, 15–64.


The difference between persons nominated as 'economically active' and in 'wage employment' represents those engaged in family enterprises or self-employed; a majority would be in the subsistence or semi-subsistence sectors. The forecasts for 'economically active' in 2011 are probably understated. The number likely to be seeking employment can be expected to swell as a consequence of growing education opportunities and a greater proportion of women anxious to enter the workforce. If wage opportunities do not eventuate there will be an equivalent growth in those seeking opportunities for self or family employment.

Even if wage employment grows by 100 per cent in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, and by over 50 per cent in Papua New Guinea, the number of people economically active but not in wage employment will have doubled in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu and increased by 300,000 in Papua New Guinea.

Unfortunately for a large majority of school leavers, this [education policy in the Pacific] has not guaranteed them wage-paid jobs. With slow economic growth in all countries, particularly over the last fifteen years, the number entering the labour market has out-stripped the number of paid jobs available. Even if only 50 per cent of those leaving school actively seek wage employment a very small proportion will
School leavers and paid employment opportunities, 1993

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of school leavers</th>
<th>Number of paid jobs available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fiji</td>
<td>15 000</td>
<td>3 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papua New Guinea</td>
<td>50 000</td>
<td>2 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solomon Islands</td>
<td>10 500</td>
<td>2 000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanuatu</td>
<td>3 500</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This is likely to be a highly inflated figure as the annual average increase in employment from 1983 to 1992 was only 770 jobs.

be successful. The unsuccessful will be mostly those leaving during or at the completion of their primary schooling, although as opportunities for secondary school increase, as demonstrated by Fiji, the education level of the unemployed also increases. Education unfortunately does not produce jobs. To the school leavers in Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands must be added the 20 per cent to 25 per cent who have not received any formal education (Geoff Bamford, ILO consultant).
Unemployment in Papua New Guinea

In July 1993 the two major research organisations in Papua New Guinea, the Institute of National Affairs and the National Research Institute, hosted a seminar on Employment, Agriculture and Industrialisation. A paper by the Director of the Institute of National Affairs, John Millett, addressed the unemployment problem from three aspects: specifying the problem diagnosing the causes, and prescribing the solution. The paper offers an important insight into the particular problems of Papua New Guinea but its assessments are relevant to the other Melanesian states, particularly its assessment of the expanding nature of the unemployment problem.

Based on census data Millett has determined that 'between 1971 and 1980, nine of every net 10 people joining the monetised labour force became self-employed, mainly cash farming. The other became unemployed, there being no net increase in wage employment'. In the period between 1980 and 1990 there were marked changes in this position: 'Of every 10 net additions (to the labour force) 6 went into self-employment, one into wage employment and 3 became unemployed'.

The low level of wage employment stands in stark contrast to the rapid growth in both the unemployed and self-employed categories of the population. Projection of the 1990 data to the year 2000 provides an even more disturbing picture.

Wage employed 286,000—2.1 per cent annual growth from 1990
Unemployed 296,000—8.3 per cent annual growth from 1990
Self-employed 1,041,000—3.4 per cent annual growth from 1990
(Estimates—John Millett, Institute of National Affairs, Papua New Guinea)

Reviewing the issues constraining more rapid growth in both formal and informal sector employment, Millett concludes 'all factor markets exhibit growth-retarding rigidities, in part reflecting the small size and fragmented nature of markets and their early stage of development. But cultural and policy influences play a part'. The analysis provides a valuable background to understanding the challenges faced by both the national and provincial governments of Papua New Guinea but of particular concern in this paper is his view that education is a cause of poor employment growth.
"Misdirected education. Education, which accounts for a high proportion of
government spending, provides more participation in the economy for
citizens displacing expatriates and increases Papua New Guinean incomes
but does not directly generate economic growth. Because education does
not inculcate any sense of vocation in agriculture, where the economic
opportunities are most available, but instead generates non-agricultural
aspirations far ahead of the economy's capacity to fulfil them, part of Papua
New Guinea's export growth may be viewed as being invested in urban
unemployment and its attendant social problems, rather than a permanent
increase in per capita income.'

A number of measures are proposed as a means of reducing unemployment
Insitu. Employment needs to be created at the source of
unemployment, the rural villages, where 85 per cent of the
economically active population lives.

Education. Village employment needs to offer scope for educated
people, as more Grade 10 and Grade 12 school leavers become
unemployed.

While Millett does not make a case for a review of the existing nature of
post-primary education as a means of better fitting the growing numbers of
both self-employed and unemployed persons for the pursuit of a livelihood
in the rural or village environment, his emphasis on agriculture and the rural
sector as an important factor in the solution to growing unemployment does
imply the need for training of an appropriate nature. Such training must be
closely allied to more structured and focused non-formal education.
THE OUTLOOK FOR EMPLOYMENT IN MELANESIA

One of the conditions for growth and therefore employment opportunities is a skilled labour force. Access to labour skills will encourage both foreign and domestic investment which can be the basis for expansion through exports. The existing labour force in Melanesia is low-skilled relative to wage rates, so there has been little or no incentive for foreign investment in the region compared to opportunities in Asia, for example Vietnam or Indonesia. Papua New Guinea has the option to follow the path chosen by Indonesia— to commit large amounts of its oil revenues to improving the education level of its people—but thus far it has not done so. But education alone will not create an environment conducive to investment; there are other factors of equivalent importance to which governments must give their attention to create an attractive environment for saving and investment

- the adoption of stable, sensible macroeconomic policies which promote low inflation and a competitive exchange rate
- fair investment rules for both foreign and domestic investors
- high standards of law and order.

At the time of independence the former colonial powers in Melanesia sought to establish an environment which would encourage investment as a means of reducing their long-term
(mainly financial) obligations to support the new states. Associated with this ambition to increase private sector growth was recognition of the need to create employment opportunities for the rapidly growing number of school leavers. For the most part the economic and education policies put in place by the departing colonists were adopted by the incoming governments. In the field of education the indigenous governments recognised the ambitions of their young people and set out to expand opportunities for secondary and tertiary education in the expectation that jobs would be available at the time they were due to enter the workforce. In the immediate post-independence years there is no doubt that the demand for skilled workers in some fields far outstripped supply as vacancies were created by departing expatriates, new posts were established to serve expanding departments and an upsurge in aid monies helped fuel a growing bureaucracy. But this growth could not be sustained much beyond the first flush of independence. In recent years, despite vigorous efforts to promote the economic performance of the island states, the outcome in terms of growth and employment has been disappointing. Modest levels of growth are associated largely with resource development, and had only a marginal impact on employment.

If population growth and sluggish economic performance continue to confront the Melanesian states, there will also be an increasing gap between formal sector employment levels, and opportunities for those seeking employment. What options are available to avoid declining standards of living and possible political unrest? In the past it has been the safety net of the village, the subsistence sector, which has provided for those unable to obtain either formal or informal employment in the urban centres. Sometimes the option of returning to the village was enforced by economic circumstances, at other times it was voluntary as workers found relief from urban pressures in the traditional lifestyle. Now, however, the subsistence or village sector appears to be under threat, losing appeal as traditional systems of control and management clash with the ambitions of the younger generation. But there are more than social pressures threatening the resilience of traditional Melanesian ways of life. These pressures are largely external and often associated with the exploitation of natural resources owned
on a customary basis. If the subsistence sector is to maintain and enhance the role it traditionally plays in the life of island communities, change—perhaps quite radical change—is needed, both in the perception of the sector and in the manner in which it is treated by the various authorities responsible for the future of these islands.

An essential ingredient in the change process will be the adoption of a new concept of village life, no longer regarding it as a safety net for those people anxious to escape the pressures or disillusionment of urban life or where under-educated or disaffected youth can be sent to keep them 'out of mischief'. The process of change will be concerned with the system of village management and access to land for commercial agriculture as well as subsistence crops. Melanesian communities which, in earlier times, nurtured and supported individuals, have begun to disintegrate under the onslaught of modernisation which has drawn people to urban centres, leaving gaps in traditional structures for resource and community management. Just as towns and cities require effective management if they are to survive, so also must village communities look to appropriate management practices if members are to lead fulfilling lives. The traditional knowledge and skills associated with well-managed village communities are being rapidly lost to modern ideas: for the future the challenge is not only to provide the skills necessary to the individual, but also skills needed to enable village communities to govern themselves as viable units.

Pressures for cash income from natural resource utilisation make it inevitable that the matter of land management and usage becomes a high priority. Here custom and tradition may tend to clash with what could be described as best practices of the modern age: these issues will need to be faced squarely if this basic resource is to play its role in the future wellbeing of these nations. Hardaker and Fleming have observed, 'village-based small holdings are the only viable strategic option for the development of farming systems in Melanesia' (1994:42). While there are those who might debate this conclusion there can be no doubt that village-based agriculture, benefiting from new technologies and farming practices will play a critical role in resolving problems emerging
from the growing gap between those seeking and those able to gain formal employment in these four countries. For this reason alone the issue of land use (not rights of ownership) must be resolved, and soon.
The burgeoning problems of urban unemployment and population congestion must find their ultimate solution in the improvement of the rural environment (Todaro 1986:314).

For Melanesia it seems that the rural economy must look to playing a more vital role in the future, adapting the concept of subsistence so that it can absorb the growing numbers of young people who now face increasing difficulty in securing permanent or even casual employment in the formal sector. To achieve an effective place for the rural sector in the national economies of developing countries, the goals of rural development cannot simply be restricted to agricultural and economic growth. Rather, they must be viewed in terms of balanced economic and social development with emphasis on the equitable distribution, as well as the rapid generation, of the benefits of higher levels of living. Among these broader goals, therefore, are the creation of more productive employment opportunities both on and off the farm; more equitable access to arable land; more equitable distribution of rural income; and finally, a broadened access to both formal [in school] and non-formal [out of school] education, for adults as well as children, of the sort that will have direct relevance to the needs and aspirations of rural dwellers (Todaro 1986:258).

Non-formal education is not new to Melanesia but so far has only received passing recognition by governments whose interest and financial support has focused on more appealing, in political terms,
formal education options with their elaborate curricula, expensive infrastructure and ultimately material gains for those who succeed in reaching the top. But the ladder to the top is long, costly and available only to a very few. For many only a few steps up the education ladder are possible before they are forced to become part of the growing number of push outs or drop outs who are obliged to consider employment options either at the bottom end of the formal sector or within the informal and/or semi-subsistence sectors.

There will always be a need for quality post-primary education but it is now time for the leaders of Melanesia to consider carefully the nature and outcome of policies which eschew the place of non-formal education in the education sector. Both systems, formal and non-formal education, have a place in offering all citizens the opportunity to enjoy fulfilling lives.

A broad indication of the numbers in the formal education system can be seen by reviewing the size of the school age population against those actually enrolled (Table 4).

What is the fate of these young people from Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Fiji who drop out or are pushed-out of the formal education system during or at the conclusion of their primary year or during the course of post-primary studies? Some will go into the family business, others drift to the cities while the vast majority return to or remain in the village or on the family farm. It has become increasingly important that real options are created which offer youth the chance to improve upon their skills and provide for their future welfare.

But it is not only with this large and growing group of young people that non-formal education should be concerned. Non-formal education must become an integral and valued part of the whole social and economic structure of the Melanesian countries.

The need to accord recognition to the role of non-formal education springs, to a large degree, from the fact that training in the formal education system is designed to respond to the requirements of an introduced economic system which takes little account of the indigenous economic system that is evolving dynamically. While
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fiji: 1991</td>
<td>6-11</td>
<td>12-15</td>
<td>16-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School age pop.</td>
<td>114,999</td>
<td>68,370</td>
<td>29,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number enrolled</td>
<td>106,940</td>
<td>54,010</td>
<td>12,280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Out of school</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanuatu: 1989</td>
<td>6-11</td>
<td>12-15</td>
<td>16-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School age pop.</td>
<td>23,990</td>
<td>9,480</td>
<td>11,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number enrolled</td>
<td>18,000</td>
<td>2,600</td>
<td>1,170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Out of school</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papua New Guinea: 1990</td>
<td>6-12</td>
<td>13-16</td>
<td>17-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School age pop.</td>
<td>642,570</td>
<td>341,910</td>
<td>165,730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number enrolled</td>
<td>533,970</td>
<td>126,500</td>
<td>22,370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Out of school</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solomon Islands: 1991</td>
<td>8-13</td>
<td>14-16</td>
<td>17-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School age pop.</td>
<td>55,170</td>
<td>24,320</td>
<td>21,680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number enrolled</td>
<td>49,650</td>
<td>9,730</td>
<td>4,770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Out of school</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The indigenous system remains unrecognised by the formal system and only catered for by the non-formal education system in an uncoordinated way it will never fulfill its proper place in Melanesian societies of the future.
WHAT IS NON-FORMAL EDUCATION?

Non-formal education can be thought of as organised programs of learning which take place outside schools. Often the participants are adults. The programs are usually shorter and more narrowly focused than programs of formal education. Non-formal education can be concerned with occupational skills or with subjects such as literacy or citizenship (Gillis, Perkins, Roemer and Snodgrass 1983:214).

...any organised educational act outside the established formal system whether operating separately or part of a broader program that is intended to serve an identifiable learning clientele and identifiable learning objectives (Coombes and Ahmed 1974:15).

The major components of non-formal education are

- general or basic education—literacy, numeracy, an elementary understanding of science and one’s environment, and so on (ie. what primary and general secondary schools seek to achieve.

- family improvement education—designed primarily to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes useful for improving the quality of family life, on such subjects as health and nutrition, home making and child care, home repairs and improvements and family planning, and so on.
• community improvement education—designed to strengthen local and national institutions and processes through instruction in such matters as national and local government, cooperatives, community projects and the like.

• occupational education—designed to develop particular knowledge and skills associated with various economic activities and useful in making a living (Coombes and Ahmed 1974:214).

In Melanesia, there are presently no clear boundaries between non-formal and formal education. For example, literacy programs and training in awareness can be offered in both formats on an equal basis while vocational or occupational training also has a place in both. In any educational program, formal or non-formal, provision should be made to offer a mix of traditional as well as lifestyle skills in addition to training in earning an income and/or gaining livelihood within the market economy. Non-formal education should be regarded as a catalyst for development and be flexible in addressing the needs and ambitions identified by communities and individuals, and providing a process which supports change both in the individual and within the group.
OBJECTIVES OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN MELANESIA

There are large numbers of young people who can benefit from non-formal education on leaving the formal system. Addressing the workshop on non-formal education, Suliana Siwatibau observed that to equip young people for sustainable life in rural communities will require a re-examination of the kind of non-formal training currently being offered to them and a reassessment of the functions of the rural training institutions that cater for them. Courses need to be designed as part of an integrated training, the basic goal of which is good resource management for sustainable rural living.

In a situation where much of the population is probably not even functionally literate, the non-government organisations, particularly those running rural training centres, will need to become more active centres for community education and development facilitation. It is necessary that their roles be widened to cover training in rural life skills, follow up support for their graduates in the communities, community education and the facilitation of community development (Suliana Siwatibau, Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific).

For urban dwellers different training from that proposed for the rural communities may be appropriate.
Paramount here will be the need to make money, as poor urban dwellers do not usually have access to sufficient land to meet subsistence needs. In addition to gaining trade skills, they will also need to develop skills at marketing their skills in an informal economy as self-employed persons (Suliana Siwatibau, Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific).

A first step in identifying the objectives of non-formal education is to recognise that there are those ‘weak’ states with little power to do a great deal for individual communities because of commitments at the national level and that the people themselves must be empowered to undertake tasks which are in their direct interests. In this way, governments can be assisted in the performance of their wider functions. Non-formal education needs, therefore, to have a strong people orientation. Objectives of non-formal education are

- to heighten the awareness of people in rural areas as to what is happening in their country, a task made difficult by the absence of modern methods of communication, newspapers, television, and to some extent, radio. Theatre and discussion groups led by extension officers of government or non-government organisations would be valuable in broadening horizons and the transfer of knowledge.

- to link both rural and urban communities with their natural resource base, informing them of its worth and the need to protect it for sustainable exploitation will not only ensure a greater regard for the environment but also increased employment opportunities and income prospects.

- a more active and outward-looking rural community. Shortages of government extension workers can be made good by training in the non-formal mode, resulting in higher productivity, incomes and standards of living—all of which can lead to a greater commitment to a rural lifestyle.

- identifying and solving of group problems and issues. Mobilising the people to act in their joint interests will instil a sense of pride and satisfaction in achievement seldom found with national service providers.
Non-formal education in Melanesia should seek to enhance people's knowledge and skills, particularly those which might be involved with the effective use of natural resources, to give them a wider range of opportunities for livelihoods whether in the formal or informal sectors. It should be seen as an education system more clearly identified with the needs of the rural economy, but not to the exclusion of the growing groups of urban dwellers.
In order to exploit effectively the resources which are available to rural communities, non-formal education programs which can offer a quick return on training investment must be designed so as to reflect specific needs and situations. This requirement for care in designing training programs was recognised at the Port Vila workshop.

While we are groping for direction it must be realised that each island nation is unique, with problems particular to itself. There is a diversity in terms of culture, social and political structures and races that is very much part of the Pacific islands. To treat all as a homogeneous group, as outsiders often do, represents a distorted view. This is how we want the situation understood (Apenisa Seduadua, Fiji).

Within the framework for a system of non-formal education encompassing family improvement, community improvement and occupational training (Coombs and Ahmed 1974), the Port Vila workshop enunciated guidelines for particularly Melanesian characteristics to be recognised within training programs. The non-formal education system should be

- outside the formal examinable system and not necessarily attempt to reach nationally recognised standards
- organised, but not hierarchically structured
• flexible in content, duration and location
• people focused, aiming to develop the whole person and incorporating traditional skills and values
• related to all aspects of human development; aiming to improve the quality of life and help those involved to understand and control their own lives, while at the same time providing a basis for livelihood
• available to people of all ages but having a priority for youth
• carried out by a wide range of non-government organisations, government departments, agencies and local communities.

It is important that there should be a place for tradition and custom in the Melanesian model for non-formal education.

The outcome [of ignoring custom and following only the modern education route] is that in the long run we will be educating people who will become foreigners in their own lands. Many of them won’t have had the chance to learn about the use of modern technology because they would have been pushed out before they entered high schools. On the other hand they would have also missed out in learning traditional cultures from their families (George Jonathan, Vanuatu).

The need for canvassing as wide a range of options as possible must also be recognised.

In the attempt to provide a more meaningful human needs program for the country, it is necessary to take a holistic view in finding out what other Pacific countries are and have been doing (Hannington Alatoa, Vanuatu).

Melanesia is part of a global community and influences external to the region must be taken into account in the design of appropriate training programs. If increasing income levels are to be generated it will not be through subsistence farming but through employment generated off-farm, in the rural areas, using ‘modern’ skills and necessitating ‘modern’ education. Research and investment are required to lift productivity in the rural sectors, particularly fishing, agriculture and forestry, where markets exist.
Bala’i Paper Fibre Project, Solomon Islands

Even isolated villages in Solomon Islands require access to money for school fees, imported food stuffs and ever growing demands for traditional social needs. The villages of Bala’i in Western Malaita could have opted to sell their virgin forests as a way of making money with little effort, but recognised that there was an environmental downside to logging. This included destruction of garden land, pollution of rivers and social disintegration.

Seeking an alternative means of raising income, in 1993 the villagers participated in a fibre paper making workshop organised under the New Zealand Aid Program. Initially the workshop stressed mastering the simple but time consuming techniques needed to make quality fibre paper: harvesting leaves with high fibre content, preparing the necessary raw materials from particular hard wood trees, preparing a sizing and/or gluing agent from hibiscus sap, chopping, souping, stirring, drying and handling the product with care and attention.

It became obvious that although fibre paper making involved low level technology it required involvement by the whole village community. Work details, time consuming preparations and the development of new skills, particularly relating to consistency and production, became essential.

Once it had been established that fibre paper making was a real possibility, production settled down as a regular feature of village activity. The paper produced by the villagers of Bala’i has made a strong impression on the artistic community both locally and overseas who have sought this product for charcoal etchings, painted pictures and graphics. The net result is an income in excess of $10,000 per annum.

More important perhaps than the money is the effect on the village community itself: formerly small, unimportant and unknown the village has now grown in stature and developed a real understanding of its own place in the Solomon Islands community. People have learnt new skills, developed a new commitment and understanding of themselves. In two years the group have gone from a simple village community to a working community standing on their own feet and standing tall in the pride of their achievement.
Many individuals and groups feel there is no real alternative to the existing formal system of education. Policy and practice dating back to the beginning of the colonial period and into the present era of independence have stressed the prizes to be won through education—the higher the level of achievement the greater the prize. The entrenched mind-set of parents and their children, teachers and departments of education, governments and their political leaders, as well as many in the development assistance community, is that ‘education is good and more education is better’. No-one would argue with this principle under circumstances where employment opportunities are, or could become, available. But, as has been argued, this is not the case presently nor likely to be the case in the foreseeable future. However, despite the desire to cling to the formal system, non-formal education is gaining recognition within Melanesia.

The traditional education system right across the Pacific is already in great flux. Government education departments without exception realise that no matter how much money, personnel and technology they pour into their systems most peoples’ education opportunities lie outside traditional structures (John Roughan, Adviser to the Solomon Islands Development Trust).
If non-formal education is to play a positive role in the future of Melanesia it must do so on the basis of a partnership between the people, government and non-government organisations.

The people

The formal economic sector and the traditional education system will not, in the foreseeable future, lead to the sort of lifestyle that people aspire to in modern society. The reluctance of parents, and their children, to accept alternatives to the formal education option are understandable. This reluctance persists despite the high costs involved and the knowledge that only a few of those who follow this route will gain the expected rewards; for many there will be the disappointment of becoming a drop-out or push-out, or of failing to gain employment despite achieving qualifications. This is part of the challenge that non-formal education must address if it is to gain acceptance and play a vital role in the development of Melanesia.

Non-formal education must not be seen to be in competition with formal education and should not seek to take on the role of training children in the primary school age group. Although there remains a long way to go before all primary age group children in the region benefit from this level of education—including Papua New Guinea which has recently extended primary training to Year 8—there can be no question that here lies the real priority for government intervention in education. Formal education must always have a critical place in the national agenda, and not only at the primary level. Beyond primary school, however, non-formal education must be capable of offering a flexible range of training programs that reflect the needs and ambitions of distinct groups. There is already considerable diversity in the range and quality of training programs on offer, but what is needed is the introduction of order and formality into what exists. In looking to the target groups, local demand will give clear signals; should the programs be pitched at the whole village to meet a particular need, or is the group most requiring help those young people who have dropped
The Onesua Vocational Centre, Vanuatu

Part of Vanuatu's colonial legacy is an education system which places emphasis on foreign concepts allied with teaching techniques which are costly and fail to provide skills appropriate to the needs of those people outside the formal economic sector. While primary education is almost universal only about 20 per cent of the school age population enter the next level of Junior Secondary Schools. The result is that some 4,000 children are pushed out from the system each year with no hope of further assistance in education from government sources. Lack of skills mean low employment opportunities even within the informal economic sector. Opportunities do exist in the rural environment but access to modern farming techniques is restricted.

Responding to the challenge presented by the children pushed out from the first primary education sector the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu has established three training centres with the following objectives:

- to offer the young people of Vanuatu skills, motivation and self respect that can lead to them becoming productive citizens within their home environment
- encourage the development of leadership skills so that youth might reach their full potential as members of the community
- merge an understanding of tradition and culture with new methods of construction, horticulture, nutrition, sanitation and home economics to improve quality of life
- to encourage citizenship and participation in regional and national development.

The principle centre Onesua, located on Efate island, provides for the training for both young men and women between the age of 17–25 years. Before entry it is essential they should have the support of their parents as well as village leaders and the community generally.

The Girls Centre opened in 1982 and has to date provided training for 218 students in activities designed to assist income generation as well as providing leadership in community education programs directed at women's and youth groups. The Boys Centre opened in 1991 and has provided training for 48 young men in building and furniture making. This involves the construction of cement blocks and tanks, smokeless stoves, toilets and community buildings. Although the number of entrants is low in relation to the emerging needs of the drop-out population in Vanuatu this is an important component of the total effort being provided by non-government organisations. A recent review by an independent consultant commended the work being done at these two centres.
or been pushed out of the formal system? On account of past inequalities in education, women are emerging as a group in need of support as well as those who have never had the opportunity to attend school, such as the elderly. As noted earlier, training programs must not only concern themselves with such topics as literacy, but also training for employment in income-generating activities.

The government

The demands placed upon the governments of the Melanesian states are substantial and costly—many promises for action, usually made in good faith, cannot, for equally good reason, be met. This results in loss of faith in government and often unjustified criticism. The demands placed on governments in the field of education are enormous. In 1993 the contribution to education budgets as a percentage of total government expenditure was Papua New Guinea 15 per cent, Solomon Islands 19 per cent (1991), Vanuatu 25 per cent, and Fiji 18 per cent. To add to this burden by any suggestion that the increasingly important non-formal education system be a charge on governments is unrealistic. Rather, the ‘weak state’ of Melanesian governments vis-à-vis communities should be recognised and current policies which acknowledge that the state can do little in the field of non-formal education should be accepted. This does not mean that governments should then sit back and take a non-interventionist role—to the contrary, they have an important place in the following areas.

- Governments will need to lay down a policy framework within which non-government organisations, presently the major players in the non-formal education field, operate. This includes setting benchmarks against which the performance of the wide range of service providers can be measured. Policy guidelines should state quite clearly just what support non-government organisations can and cannot expect from the administration.
- Coordinating the efforts of non-government organisations to avoid duplication or gaps in the range of services on offer.
• Non-government organisations will, to a large extent, continue to generate their own funding but governments may be called upon to finance some projects, particularly those capable of income generation. Funding would extend to the provision of credit through national instrument- alities such as development banks and commodity marketing boards. The aid community, both bilateral and multilateral, should be encouraged by governments to support recognised non-formal educational activity.

• Governments should facilitate access to national resources such as transport systems, buildings outside official hours of occupation, and trade-testing facilities.

• Research into the prospects of using natural resources to generate incomes and into better farming and other practices will remain an important government activity, as will the provision of extension services or the training of village extension workers to pass on the outcome of research.

• Training of leaders and the transfer of information concerning the meaning and benefits of national policies relating to the development process should be the responsibility of the administration.

• If governments recognise that the rural sector and off-farm employment can play a vital role in the national effort for development, new approaches and policies may be necessary to enhance performance. These would include the avoidance of policies which have a bias towards the promotion of traditional export crops at the expense of new and exotic agricultural and forestry products. Research has already been noted as important in helping develop new markets (for example in Asia), the introduction of techniques to promote production and the control of pests and diseases. Bias in research towards existing crops should be avoided in favour of expanding niche export opportunities. Policies aimed at expanding the use and protection of marine resources and the development of rural enterprises such as ecotourism might be given special attention.

Having established its role in the non-formal education system, the government then needs to consider the important question of
Fiji’s National Youth Scheme

In Fiji some 25 per cent of the population are between 15–24 years. This represents an increase of some 3.4 per cent over the 1986 census figures.

Fiji’s capacity to create paid employment falls well short of the 13,000 school leavers entering the labour market each year. The result has been a policy decision to offer opportunities to youth through a national youth scheme.

This scheme is directed at both the rural and urban sectors. Rural training is focused on the agricultural sector particularly in the creation of an awareness of land as a source of livelihood. This is done by developing vocational skills, discipline, time management and by heightening personal qualities. In addition to agricultural training students are given the opportunity to learn boat building, joinery and mechanical skills involving small engines associated with the rural sector. Urban training is focused on skills which might lead to productive activities such as tailoring (including sewing machine maintenance), driving skills, screen printing, sheet metal working, welding and light engineering.

Since 1993 some 2,600 trainees have passed through the 12 centres located at strategic points within the group.

Typical successes

- Lavenia Mataitonga started a small business enterprise of her own in the field of tailoring.
- Eka Naluva has been involved in community projects, particularly assisting female youths in villages and has now been appointed as youth coordinator in the Ra Provincial Council Office.
- Timoci Tuitoga has started to harvest his two acres of dalo and supplies 12 to 15 gallons of fresh milk each day from his herd of 20 milking cows.
- Nacavanadi Village in the island of Gau is now enjoying the move from pit to flush toilets as a result of a project financed by National Youth Service trainees who sold their agricultural produce and converted the proceeds into community activities.
which ministry or department should exercise the functions of oversight and administration. Because of its multi-faceted nature, this form of training does not sit easily within the management structure of the formal education system and this has been recognised by most Melanesian countries. In the absence of a ‘stand alone’ department, location within a Ministry of Home Affairs or Youth and Employment seems acceptable but a high degree of autonomy is desirable including, in particular, a specific budget line. A peak organisation to facilitate interaction between government, the principal non-government organisations and, of course, ‘the people’ must exist. Such bodies already exist in all four countries: the Fiji Association of Non-formal Education (FANFE), the Solomon Islands Rural Training Council (SIRTC), the Vanuatu Rural Development Training Centres Association (VRDTC) and the National Association of Non Government Organisations (NANGO) in Papua New Guinea. The peak organisation should be in a position to coordinate standards as well as act as a lobby group for government support in appropriate areas of activity.

The aid community

Already an active partner in the community, the breadth of support provided by the aid community has been recognised as has the need for closer coordination of non-government organisation efforts. Some will no doubt have reservations at the suggestion of a greater involvement by governments, even to the fairly modest extent canvassed in this paper. But if the benefits of this form of training are to be maximised, a more positive government position is essential, if only to overcome the situation where,

despite its obvious importance, government support for non-formal education has been mostly sporadic and disorganised since independence. Many non-government organisations have been sponsoring programs to meet their various objectives (Pala Wari, Papua New Guinea).

Once the national structure of non-formal education is in place there will be advantage in exploring the benefits to be gained from
The Chevalier Farm Training Centre, Fiji

Amongst the most underprivileged youth in Fiji are children from broken homes and backgrounds of poverty, school drop-outs, youth recently released from prison and shoe shine boys.

While it was possible to have younger boys re-enter the education system, the problem group was those between the age of 17–25, who had little education and virtually no opportunity within the existing systems.

Father Kevin Barr established the Chevalier Farm Training Centre at Wanadoi, near Suva, to provide security and affection for homeless youth. It began in 1991 with 25 young men and has 34 this year.

Skills taught include welding, woodwork, block laying, plumbing, small engine repair, farming techniques, simple accounting and leadership.

Success or failure in these programs is difficult to measure but if ability to gain employment for graduates is one yardstick, Chevalier has succeeded. Between 60–70 per cent of those passing through the institution have gained employment. Others have returned to their villages with new skills, self esteem and confidence, enabling them to take an active and productive part in the community.

The training centre does require a small fee ($30 per annum) but this merely serves to strengthen the resolve of those participating to succeed.

All students are expected to involve themselves in farm work, growing traditional crops, caring for livestock and pond grown fish. In this way, boys are encouraged to be interested in the land, new farming techniques and financial management practices which can be carried with them into the outside world, either in a village or an individual environment. Farm produce is used to feed the students while the surplus is sold to help offset running costs.
active regional cooperation and liaison. Initially, this could be expected to be in the development of training materials and the training of trainers, as well as in the general interchange of ideas on how to avoid pitfalls and do things in better ways. There already exist regional groups which could act in a coordinating role such as the Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific, the Commonwealth Youth Program, various church groups, the University of Papua New Guinea, the University of the South Pacific and the Pacific Islands Distance Education Association.
The Ministry of Education is responsible for formal education, whereas non-formal education and training activities are undertaken by other government departments and non-government organisations (Third National Development Plan for Vanuatu, 1992–1992:142).

At present there is no systematic government policy on non-formal education. Churches and NGOs carry out their own activities on a fragmented approach. Their efforts are seldom or rarely supported by government agencies (A provincial government official in Papua New Guinea reporting to his superiors on a national conference on non-formal education held in Port Moresby:5–7 May 1995).

While these comments might seem to imply an official disregard for the involvement of non-government organisations in non-formal education in Melanesia, such is not the case. From the point of view of the four governments these organisations play a wide-ranging and cost-effective role in providing training facilities for those not participating in the formal education system. Rather, the problem of recognition appears to stem from an unwillingness or inability on the part of governments to become involved in the potentially costly task of providing appropriate training (additional to that already offered) to those who are obliged to leave the formal education system.
Given that there appears to be a need for non-government organisations to expand and perhaps restructure their role in non-formal education two things seem to be important

- to persuade national governments to ally themselves more closely with the activities of non-government organisations
- to establish the present state of non-formal education in Melanesia.

The 1995 Port Vila workshop on non-formal education, in discussing the present state of the discipline, concluded that, while there were obviously many highly committed organisations and institutions involved in providing training for those outside the formal education system, there was little precise information as to the nature and extent of programs on offer. The following is a summary of a survey undertaken by Father Kevin Barr of the current state of non-formal education in Melanesia (Barr 1996).

**Papua New Guinea**

A 1991 review of reform in education identified four major areas of non-formal education

- literacy for the adult population is made up of 79 programs taught in 258 classes. To prepare children for community primary education there are 2,000 *Tokples* schools involving 4,000 volunteer teachers and 80,000 pupils; the schools teach literacy, numeracy, science, community life and physical education
- national youth programs, which in the Madang Province alone number 1,161. Operated by the Province in cooperation with religious bodies these programs offer workshops for out-of-work youth in leadership, bookkeeping, management skills and small scale agriculture. Mini loans of up to $2,000 are available through the Madang Provincial Government under terms of the National Youth Program
- women’s programs exist in all provinces coordinated through the Social Development Divisions of the Department of Provinces. In Madang Province, the program organises
Awareness Courses (including health, family care, hygiene and law and order), Training Courses (workshops involving administration and management skills, planning, programming and budgeting and self employment through small business) and Literacy Courses

• library services.

Non-government organisations interviewed by Father Barr included

• the Business Enterprise Support Team (BEST) which provides training in business practices, confidence building in women and training of trainers

• Grass Roots Opportunities for Work (GROW)—village projects for a better lifestyle

• PNG Integral Human Development Trust, which aims to provide literacy and awareness for social change in villages and urban settlements

• Village Development Trust, focusing on training for better village development

• YWCA school-leaver program for girls, child care programs and adult literacy

• Individual Community Rights Advocacy Forum (ICRAFT), which provides courses in human rights, women’s rights, legal assistance, law and order and the Constitution.

• Vocational schools, numbering 125 in 1994, provided training for 7,710 male and 3,522 female students. The curricula offered is wide ranging and caters for both rural and urban youth

• the PNG–GTZ Farmer Training Program—a joint effort between the Government of Papua New Guinea and a German non-government organisation is directed at both trade and farmer training using a Competency Based Training approach which involves national trade testing and certification.
Solomon Islands

A number of Ministries are involved in non-formal education: Trade operates trade training courses (electrician, woodwork, plumbing and mechanics); Health offers awareness courses in health, hygiene, nutrition and population; Agriculture and Fisheries has centres in the provinces organising training for community groups. In the Education Department, the Director is responsible for the Rural Training Centres, disbursing grants and arranging staff training.

Non-government organisations are particularly active in Solomon Islands

- the Solomon Islands Development Trust is concerned with the development of the people and operates through 57 mobile teams which conduct nationwide training programs. Topics have included rural water supply and sanitation, disaster awareness and preparation, population education, resource management, malaria control and AIDS education.

- the Community Secondary School seeks to provide training for Standard 6 drop outs (some 6,000 each year). The program has operated for three years in Honiara with an initial intake of 185 in the 3-year course—a fee of $200 per annum is charged. The curriculum includes secondary school English and maths, public speaking, shop keeping skills, work experience, conducting surveys and interview techniques.

- Rural Training Centres (RTCs), of which there are 30, have an enrolment of 1,000 students. They offer training over two to three years in carpentry, small engine mechanics, home economics and agriculture. They are primarily organised by individual churches but their activities are coordinated by an association of RTCs with a steering committee consisting of both government and church representatives. The European Community recently made a grant of $6 million for curriculum development, revolving loans, materials and equipment and staff training.
• The Literacy Association of Solomon Islands (LASI) offers training in villages to both pre-school children and adults. It has a target of the whole population of Solomon Islands being literate by the year 2000.

• Village Education Program, sponsored by the major church groups, provides training in nutrition, gardening, and health education. In 1993, 600 workshops involved 18,500 villagers.

Vanuatu

Although there are not yet any formal government programs in non-formal education, individual departments offer training in small business and in women’s interests; trade testing is available. Non-government organisations are particularly active and include

• Literacy Training Programs offered by World Vision, Baha’i Faith and the Summer School of Linguistics.

• The Rural Skills Training Program responds to identified needs by village communities and has organised programs in village sanitation, water supply, rubbish disposal, better housing, nutrition and health. It is funded by the New Zealand Government and is active on the islands of Epi, Santo and Paama.

• Rural Training Centres are operated by church and community groups and offer courses in carpentry, mechanics, home care, agriculture and business. There are 15 centres in Vanuatu which enrolled 334 students in 1995, of whom 30 per cent were women. The centres activities are monitored by an umbrella organisation, the Vanuatu Rural Development and Training Centres Association, made up of both non-government organisation and government representatives.

• Agricultural training for single men or married couples with their own land has been run by Charles Rogers since 1982. Course graduates form the Farm Support Association which is aimed at providing ongoing support through advice on new farming techniques.
EDUCATION IN MELANESIA

• The National Council of Women offers a wide training program in leadership, home economics, business development, family health and literacy. It operates at the village level and in urban centres through 13 Island Councils and 77 Area Councils.

• Church groups are active, offering both long term and short courses in woodwork, mechanics, carpentry, agriculture, bookkeeping, home economics, block making, secretarial skills and leadership. The Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific organises training in health, the environment and forestry and provides training for managers of Rural Training Centres. The Wan Smolbag Theatre group plays a community educating role through plays that address social, health and environmental issues.

Fiji

Through the Ministry of Youth, Employment Opportunities and Sport the Government of Fiji offers a range of training opportunities for unemployed and disadvantaged youth in both the urban and rural areas. These include the National Youth Scheme, the Fiji Craft Centre, the Youth Employment Options Centre and the OISCA International Program. Courses include tailoring, child care, typing, computers, small engine repairs, sewing machine repairs, small business management, first aid, accounting, personal development and office skills.

The National Council of Women, made up of 39 affiliated groups, provides courses in literacy, nutrition, leadership, environmental issues, waste management and small business, to name but a few. The Fijian Soqosoqo Vakamarama promotes culture and tradition through training in a diverse range of programs. The Fiji Women’s Rights Movement seeks to enhance the status and empowerment of women through education.

Other opportunities for training outside the formal system are

• Marist Training Centre at Tutu on Taveuni island which offers courses in leadership, agriculture, family issues and village development
- Fiji Community Education Association promotes community and adult education in a wide range of subjects in both the rural and urban environment, regardless of ethnic background and religious affiliation
- Family Planning Association of Fiji
- AIDS Taskforce of Fiji
- Fiji Council of Social Services, an umbrella organisation for 266 non-government organisations provides training in management, welfare, accounting services, family life and drug abuse
- Montfort Boy's Town provides a 3-year residential program for disadvantaged youth in topics such as carpentry, agriculture, farming and fisheries
- Chevalier Farm Training Centre provides residential training for disadvantaged youth in metal work, welding, farming and leadership
- University of the South Pacific, Fiji Centre for Continuing Education, offers a wide range of courses for individuals anxious to enhance their skills as a basis for employment
- Fiji National Training Council, a statutory body, assists employer bodies in the identification and implementation of training needs for industrial development
- Churches in Fiji of all denominations are active in the provision of training opportunities for youth of the nation including agriculture, home economics, leather work, house construction and family budgets.

This summary is an indication of the non-formal education activities now offered to those in need. The disparate nature of the offerings and the range of organisations involved underlines the complexity of the non-formal education question and the need to introduce a degree of formality without dampening the obvious enthusiasm and commitment of those now engaged in the development and delivery of programs so essential to the future of the people of Melanesia.
Whatever programs might be developed as part of the non-formal education system, and irrespective of whether they are directed towards the individual or the community, they should have a well-defined and understood purpose. An important purpose will be income generation and it is here that governments can make the most positive contribution, particularly in encouraging the informal economic sector. Within Melanesia there is a strong subsistence sector but only modest activity in the informal sector, involving mainly retail trade and services carried out by families or individuals. The informal sector must be linked with non-formal education to create a greater awareness of the benefits that each can bring to a growing section of the island communities. There is large scope for expansion in the informal sector, aided by training (non-formal) coupled with positive action by governments by way of appropriate regulations (and the abandonment of unnecessarily restrictive legislation and regulation), provision of credit facilities and locations for trading operations. Women in particular are well placed to benefit from informal sector activities as they have a strong motivation to earn and control their own incomes. Perhaps there is no better example of the acumen of Melanesian women in the field of informal sector business than the Centrepoint Market in Port Vila. Here women rent floor space in a former supermarket and offer for sale a range of mats, baskets, island style garments, toys and artefacts, mainly to foreign visitors. The women of Port
Vila clearly demonstrate how benefit can be extracted from access to modest amounts of credit and this could well form the basis for further activity aimed at encouraging greater participation in income earning activities.

Arrangements need to be set in place to measure the success or failure of non-formal education programs and the way in which they might be sustained after the withdrawal of any external support. It will be important also for those spearheading the expansion of this type of training to demonstrate in a practical manner that there is real benefit for people to remain on the land; those involved in the programs must experience a sense of ownership and accept that success is more than ‘getting a job’. Rather it is measured by achieving a better quality of life and the development of a sense of self worth and achievement. Eventually the community will learn to audit their own levels of performance but initially non-government organisations and the state (where possible) will need to provide essential back-up and after care so that the recipients of training do not feel isolated or abandoned. New ideas flowing from central organisations can help sustain enthusiasm and maintain momentum. Also important, particularly where outside funding is involved, will be the design and implementation of procedures for ensuring accountability of both funds and material resources.
There is no question that non-formal education is thriving in the four Melanesian states, and that it is fostered and driven by dedicated and hard working enthusiasts. There is also no question of the long-term importance of non-formal education as a contributor to the way of life of the individuals and communities of Melanesia. What is open to question is the effectiveness of non-formal education as available in its present format. Governments are certainly not obstructive, the people are appreciative and there is no lack of vision on the part of those dedicated to the cause. All the ingredients are in place but the mix has yet to be fashioned into a dynamic, pro-active, format that will see non-formal education begin to play an effective role in the region. This is a sweeping statement which will undoubtedly be challenged by the committed few. But it is designed to challenge and confront those leaders, political, bureaucratic and educational, who have the ability and capacity to recognise the long term benefits of non-formal education.

Of primary importance is recognition by governments that non-formal education has a critical role to play in their country and to convert this recognition into policy. The objectives of non-formal education, as envisaged by those consulted in the preparation of this paper, can be readily turned into a policy document which should find acceptance by all political persuasions and hopefully by the more at-risk parties, namely the nation's youth and their parents.
Once a national policy is in place and nominated as the responsibility of an appropriate government agency, it will not be difficult to establish formally a national coordinating body that will take cognisance of existing resources and match them to the needs of individuals and groups in both the rural and urban environments. Those charged with this critical task of developing a more focused approach are urged to ensure that non-formal education is structured to enhance people’s knowledge and skills, particularly those which might be involved with the effective use of natural resources, to give them a wider range of opportunities for livelihoods whether in the formal or informal sectors. It should be seen as an education system more clearly identified with the needs of the rural economy, but not to the exclusion of the growing groups of urban dwellers.

But while subsistence is important, the need for cash must be recognised and training which offers access to financial rewards must be supported by policies of the state which encourage initiative and enterprise in the informal economic sector.

Both formal and non-formal education are vital elements in the future of the Melanesian states and both have their advocates. Formal education is well established and its role recognised by governments and the people. This situation should remain, tempered by the knowledge that it does not, nor can it be expected to, offer all things to all people. Non-formal education has a vigorous and dedicated band of supporters but lacks a formal national image. Perhaps this seeming disinterest on the part of governments reflects an attitude of leaving non-formal education, for the most part, to the non-government organisation community. If the reasons for this are largely budgetary then it is understandable. But disinterest is not in the national interest and there is a role for governments in the evolution of non-formal education, but not necessarily involving a substantial financial commitment. The governments of Melanesia must recognise the role of non-formal education now to ensure the future social and economic well-being of their countries. This will involve, in addition to the direct provision of services now offered through a range of
departments, a coordinating, supporting and monitoring role which ensures that the energies and resources of those individuals and organisations dedicated to the implementation of non-formal programs of education are channelled to the advantage of all citizens and the progress of the nation.
References


Resource Papers presented at the workshop on non-formal education in Melanesia held in Port Vila, April 1995. Quotations from the papers are acknowledged by showing the name of the author and his or her affiliation or country. Papers are available on request from the National Centre for Development Studies, Canberra.
Of major concern to those associated with the Pacific 2010 project since it was launched in 1993 has been the importance of conveying to those concerned for the welfare of the countries upon which it focused, the conclusions reached in the individual studies arising from the project. It has never been the intention of those responsible for the direction of the project that it should seek to determine policy but rather it should stimulate debate, suggest options for change and above all alert those responsible for the future of the island nations of the Pacific to the possible down side effects of population growth, in order that appropriate action might be considered and acted upon while time was still on the side of the decision makers. It has also been the hope of the project sponsors that by gaining an understanding of the objectives and conclusions of the various studies within the project, island leaders would embrace at least some of the findings and seek to own them as a critical part of their own policy framework for effective government.

The dissemination of the results of the individual studies has been primarily through a series of Policy Papers but in 1994 a seminar involving both islanders and Australian academics associated with the project considered and endorsed a summary of conclusions to that date in a paper The Future, a matter of choice. Later in the same year a series of seminars were held in Vanuatu at the request of the Prime Minister to discuss a paper entitled Strategies for Vanuatu. As with all other work associated with the project costs of seminars and publications were funded by AusAID as an important component of Australia’s development assistance program.

Opportunities for Non-formal Education in Melanesia was presented in draft state as a focus for discussion at the initial conference on non-formal education held in Honiara, Solomon Islands in August 1996. The critical role that non-formal education might play in the
future wellbeing of the people of Solomon Islands will have become apparent to those who have read this paper. It was a matter of some satisfaction, therefore, to those associated with Pacific 2010 that the paper was able to offer a degree of guidance, to those individuals and agencies represented at the conference, in the formulation of a draft National Policy on Non-formal Education in Solomon Islands which will be presented to the Permanent Secretary for Education in response to a request made by him. A copy of the draft policy statement follows.

It is intended that seminars will also be held on this topic in Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Vanuatu in association with the national governments, supported by AusAID. The unusual step of including this Postscript in a Pacific 2010 paper underlines the role which the project is capable of playing in the development of national policies for the future welfare of the people of Melanesia.
Solomon Islands National Policy for Non-formal Education

1. Overview

Non-formal education is structured to enhance people’s knowledge and skills so as to give them wider range to improve the quality of their lives and to offer more opportunities for livelihoods, whether in the formal or informal sectors. It should be seen as an education system more clearly identified with the economic needs of both the rural and urban groups.

Non-formal education can be thought of as organised programs of learning which normally takes place outside the traditional classroom. The programs are usually shorter and more narrowly focused than programs of formal schooling. It can be concerned with occupational skills or with subjects such as literacy or citizenship but would best be linked to better and more varied use of local resources to enhance people’s livelihoods and to improve the quality of their lives.

2. Framework

The non-formal education system should be

- outside the formal examinable system and not necessarily attempt to reach nationally recognised standards
- organised, but not hierarchically structured
- flexible in content, duration and location
- people focused, aiming to develop the whole person and incorporating traditional skill and values
- related to all aspects of human development; aiming to improve the quality of life and help those involved to understand and control their own lives, while at the same time providing a basis for livelihood
- available to people of all ages, women and men, young and old
- carried out by a wide range of non-government organisations, government departments, agencies, churches and local communities.

3. Participants

Often the participants in non-formal education programs are adults. However, the older youth population (young school leavers) with greater maturity could be strengthened by this form of training.

Special attention would be focused on the needs of women and people with disabilities to be better skilled to use their local resource base more productively.

4. Objectives

To heighten the awareness of people in both rural and urban areas as to what is happening in their own areas, in the country and in the world around them.

To help link rural and urban groups with their cultural and natural resource base, informing them of their worth and the need to protect them for sustainable harvesting not only to guard the environment but to increase employment opportunities and income prospects.
To enhance village communities' efforts to be more active and outward looking. People must be aided to become more involved with their own wellbeing, increase their wealth production capacities and be more committed to higher productivity.

To improve people's level of knowledge about health, quality of life issues and physical wellbeing.

To assist people to identify and help solve group problems and issues. Non-formal education could help people mobilise joint efforts which will instil a sense of pride and satisfaction.

5. Partners in non-formal education

The people. The most basic strength in non-formal education must be to call upon the people's understanding, awareness and participation in the program. Non-formal education cannot be imposed from above but will only thrive when villagers, landowners, youth, urban dwellers and the whole of the population have a good grasp of what non-formal education is about.

The people will signal to non-formal education deliverers—teachers, trainers, organisations, departments—what it is they require. On account of past inequalities in education, women are emerging as a group in need of support as well as those who have never had opportunity to attend school, such as the elderly.

The government. The demands placed on governments in the field of education are enormous and growing. Solomon Islands, already contributing 19 per cent (1991) to the yearly budget, knows that demands on it can only grow in the years to come. Non-formal education offers government a chance to reach out to its people without at the same time calling for huge budgetary increases.

Governments will need to work closely with non-formal education deliverers to lay down a policy framework, setting benchmarks against which the performance of the wide range of service providers can be measured. Policy guidelines should state quite clearly just what support non-formal education delivery organisations can and cannot expect from the administration.

The service deliverers. Government ministries, non-government organisations, RTCs, churches, villagers themselves, community school, business houses, etc. would be some of the major players in servicing communities with non-formal education.

The non-formal education deliverers would work to have non-formal education patterns reach out to all parts of the nation and do its best to minimise duplication of efforts.

6. Summary

Both formal and non-formal education are vital elements in the future of Solomon Islands. Formal education is well established and its role recognised by people and government. Non-formal education, although practised for centuries by Solomon Islanders, currently lacks a formal national image.

The Solomon Islands Government, then, should recognise the role of non-formal education to ensure the future social and economic wellbeing of the country.
## Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organization</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rodney Cole</td>
<td>Islands/Australia Program, National Centre for Development Studies, The Australian National University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geoff Bamford</td>
<td>Consultant, Summertown, SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Toa</td>
<td>National Planning Office, Port Vila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannington Alatoa</td>
<td>Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific, Port Vila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob Loughman</td>
<td>Rural Skills Training Program, Port Vila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isabel Donald</td>
<td>Rural Skills Training Program, Port Vila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suliana Siwatibau</td>
<td>Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific, Port Vila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne David</td>
<td>Curriculum Development, VRDTCA, Port Vila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Jonathon</td>
<td>Coordinator, VRDTCA, Port Vila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Roughan</td>
<td>Adviser, Solomon Islands Development Trust, Honiara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue Mackie</td>
<td>EC/SIARTC Project, Honiara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paula Kunabuli</td>
<td>Director of Youth, Employment Opportunities and Sports, Suva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apenisa Seduadua</td>
<td>Methodist Church of Fiji, Suva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father Kevin Barr</td>
<td>Chevalier Hostel, Suva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daphne Vakacegu</td>
<td>ADFIP, Fiji Development Bank, Suva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Goldring</td>
<td>C/- Pacific Regional Advisory Group, Suva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pala Wari</td>
<td>Assistant Director, Research Policy, Communication and Research Branch, Waigani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pani Tawaiyole</td>
<td>Head of Education Research Division, National Research Institute, Boroko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arietta Kairey</td>
<td>Project Coordinator, Project 2000, Department of Religion, Home Affairs and Youth, Boroko</td>
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</tbody>
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### Observers

Kali Vatoko, James Kick, Melinda Barrett, Sam Etola, Kathy Fry, Tony Hughes, Chief Malekoa, Henry Vira.
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## Brisbane editorial workshop

### Participants

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father Kevin Barr</td>
<td>Chevalier Hostel, Suva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodney Cole</td>
<td>Consultant, Islands/Australia Program National Centre for Development Studies The Australian National University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron Duncan</td>
<td>Executive Director National Centre for Development Studies The Australian National University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arietta Kairey</td>
<td>Project Coordinator, Project 2000 Department of Religion, Home Affairs and Youth Boroko</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paula Kunabuli</td>
<td>Director Youth, Employment Opportunities and Sports Suva</td>
</tr>
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<td>John Roughan</td>
<td>Adviser Solomon Islands Development Trust Honiara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suliana Siwatibau</td>
<td>Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific Port Vila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ila Temu</td>
<td>Research Director Islands/Australia Program National Centre for Development Studies The Australian National University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kali Vatoko</td>
<td>Director Christian Education Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The provision of adequate and appropriate education is a challenge faced by all governments. The particular challenge faced by both government and non-government policymakers in Melanesia is to ensure that, where 'mainstream' education is inappropriate or unavailable, opportunities for self improvement exist alongside the formal education system.

There is a clear need for non-formal education in Pacific island countries but it must be focused in order to satisfy the needs of the people it is intended to target. Here, local success stories highlight the potential benefits of an integrated non-formal education system.

This book examines the need for non-formal education to become an integral part of education planning in Melanesian countries and offers guidelines for decisionmakers.

Rodney Cole initiated the Pacific 2010 Project in 1993 as Director of the Islands/Australia Program at the National Centre for Development Studies.