

From *Homo Civicus* to *Homo Politicus*: Civil Society, Civic Education and Democratic Governance in Fiji. Case Study: The UNDP-Fiji Parliament Civic Education Initiative

Steven Ratuva

Abstract

This paper provides an overview of the complex inter-relationship between civic education and democratic governance and the potential role of civil society in this process. It focuses on an ongoing civic education project by the UNDP and Fiji Parliament as a case study. The paper does not attempt to be comprehensive, but seeks instead to raise some important issues which may need further discussion in light of Fiji's recent turbulent history. The paper offers a broad definition of civic education and its role in the transformational process from homo civicus to homo politicus and the role of civil society in this regard. Secondly, it examines the link between civic education and democratization of political culture. Thirdly, it looks at the UNDP-Fiji Parliament civic education initiative as a case study of cooperation between the state and civil society in creating an atmosphere of 'good' and appropriate governance. The paper concludes that, in order to be effective, civic education must be a sustainable and culturally embedded process.

Civic education: From *homo civicus* to *homo politicus*

Civic education refers to the development and enhancement of people's norms, perception, skills and values with the aim of making them 'good citizens'. The term good citizen here is used in a broad and loose sense, mindful of the fact that there are diverse interpretations of what good citizenship entails in the modern world. For some

good citizenship is associated with unquestioned acceptance of state values and conforming to generally accepted norms. This is a classical notion of civic education, which has been dominant over the years in countries as authoritarian as North Korea or as democratic as the United States of America. This paper argues that civic education should be based on changing people and transforming society rather than just serving the ideological interests of the state elites. In conflict-prone societies like Fiji, it should be conceptualized and defined in relation to creating a climate of peace, goodwill and stability. It should focus on developing people's potential to make rational decisions and acting rationally in an informed way to maximize good relations amongst people and enhancing the potential of the country to sustain political unity and economic development.

Civic education for democratic governance must be based on the premise that humans possess unlimited consciousness, free will and independent rationality and are not mere passive creatures, who readily and mechanically respond to the tyrannical whims of cultural and political forces and systems. Civic education must tap and nurture these capabilities to ensure that people develop creative and innovative responses to emerging social and political issues and problems. The underlying theme here is that people can be changed from *homo civicus* or passive citizenry, who are readily and easily influenced by others to carry out things they may not agree with, to *homo politicus* or conscious and active citizenry who can rationalize independently and act constructively for the broader social good.¹ Along this logic, one of the important conditions for healthy and sustainable democratic governance is the creation, nurturing, encouragement and sustenance of an open-minded, conscious and active citizenry.

¹ See Dahl, R. (1989). *Who Governs: Power and Democracy in an American City*. Yale University Press: New Haven. The terms *homo civicus* and *homo politicus* were first coined by Dahl to refer to the distinction between passive and more politically conscious citizenry. I use the terms here not in a dichotomous sense as Dahl would have intended but on the assumption that there is a complex inter-relationship between both where the *homo civicus* also have a certain degree of political consciousness. Being 'passive' is also a state of political being and does have direct political consequences, the same way that refraining from voting is in itself a form of vote, which eventually makes some difference in the final election result. Thus I use the terms as dynamic categories; as a convenient way of understanding potential transformation of political culture through civic education.

Institutional reform versus human transformation

There are basically two broad assumptions regarding the logistics of political reform; changing people and changing institutions.

Some argue that structural and institutional changes involving the type of government, electoral reform, constitutional reform and other structural tinkering are the only means to achieving (re)democratization, national (re)construction and peace-building in conflict-prone societies like Fiji. Within this school is the argument that electoral engineering and constitutional reform alone could provide answers to political stability (see Reilly, 2001; Fiji Constitutional Review Report, 1995). Experience, as in the case of Fiji, shows that electoral and constitutional engineering are useful only in as far as they facilitate the mechanics of political representation and do not necessarily lower ethnic and political tension. In fact in some cases, they may even encourage ethnic mobilization and exacerbate embedded tensions. This was the case in Fiji after the 1997 constitution was enacted. It did nothing to arrest the ethnic tension, which finally led to the 2000 coup.

Others argue that there are certain universal ideals of institutional 'democracy' that are applicable in all situations, no matter what the circumstances are and institutional reconstruction must be based on these universal values (see Diamond, 1999 and Huntington, 1993). This assumption fails to take into consideration firstly, the diverse socio-cultural and historical contexts in different societies; and secondly, the fact that democratic values are defined and applied differently in ways which suit the strategic, economic and political interests of the countries involved. Sometimes the prepackaged 'democratic values', especially the ambitiously and sometimes violently marketed 'Western' variant, are not even practised by those who propagate them (see Anelauskas, 2003; Blum, 2000; Zinn, 1980). Paradoxically, violent intervention has over the years been perceived as an inherent imperative for democratization (Blum, 2003). This is a fundamental aspect of the Bush administration's current 'neo-conservative' approach.

These approaches tend to be instrumentalist in nature in the sense that it is assumed that institutional engineering alone provides the magical potion to prevent and cure socio-political instability and conflict. History has repeatedly shown the naivety of some of these assumptions. It is thus important that prescription for (re)democratization, national (re)construction and peace-building must take into cons-

ideration other diverse forces which shape institutions, human behaviour and social norms in particular societies and must include diverse approaches which incorporate institutional reform, constitutional engineering and creation of a political culture which is conducive to effective and appropriate nation-building. The creation of an appropriate political culture is fundamentally important and one of the ways in which this can be done is through civic education. Civic education is directed at changing people, their mode of consciousness, knowledge, values and norms as active agents of social transformation.

Political culture and civic education

Political culture refers to norms, perceptions, ideologies and behavioural dispositions associated with participation in the political process. The nature and dynamics of political culture have to be understood in the context of the historical, cultural and political development of a society. The political culture in Britain for instance has been shaped by its feudal and monarchical past and later the liberal democratic ideals. Over the years, in many parts of Europe the political culture was shaped by revolutions and political turmoil and the attempt to create nation-states out of diverse ethnic groupings. Liberal democracy and associated values such as individual rights and suffrage became later additions to the ongoing political dynamics. Particular variants of these institutions were transplanted in colonies and became the basis on which political institutions, processes and ethos were conceptualized and measured (Larmour, 2002). The local socio-political formations were modified (and not destroyed as some argue) and evolved into a synthesis of European liberal democratic and local 'traditional' systems in a seemingly contradictory, yet accommodating relationship. In some cases, the contradictions dominate the political landscape and in some cases, there is harmony between the two systems and in other cases a mixture of shades of both. For post-colonial societies the complex inter-relationship between the liberal democratic and the local political discourses shape the political configuration and the workability of participatory democracy in a significant way.

The constant interplay between these two modes defines the broader political culture of many post-colonial states. Let's consider the Pacific, where in some cases, the liberal democratic political culture is considered dominant and legitimate, and in other cases, it is

seen as just one set of political norms and institutions, amongst others. For instance the post-colonial liberal democratic experiments in PNG, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Tonga and Fiji are all different and thus the nature of the political culture, in each case, is distinctive. Some have more doses of 'traditional' institutions and values than others while some have more established liberal democratic values than others. In some cases, the dialectic inter-relationship between the two has synthesized into unique political norms, which have characterized local governance. It is really the area of intersection between the two and the political culture and mode of governance which emerge from this dynamic interplay, which has been a major problematic aspect of democratic governance in the Pacific.

In ethnically diverse post-colonial societies the liberal democratic system is sometimes seen as the 'neutral' political arena where different ethnic groups interact and negotiate. In the case of Fiji, the liberal democratic system has been re-adapted to facilitate diverse communal representations. Fiji represents an example of a 'communal democracy', a system, which attempts to establish a common national identity and at the same time provide for distinctive communal interests (Ratuva, 2003a). This is where political tension lies. Tension revolves around, on the one hand, the need to create a national identity around the state, which subsumes differences, and on the other hand the need to preserve distinctive cultural and communal identities which reflect the diverse cultures and religions. The state becomes the site for power contestation. This has made the political culture even more complex, with liberal democratic norms and traditional-nationalist modes of politics engaging each other in sometimes tense and sometimes accommodating ways.² The continuing tension over state power by the two major ethnic groups (indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians) has created conditions, which have given rise to forceful usurpation of liberal democratic norms by nationalism through extra-legal means (coups). The continuing interplay between diverse ethnic, religious and political discourses makes Fiji's political culture complex and shifty. Consequently the perception of what is politically 'right' or 'wrong' differs considerably between and within ethnic communities (Ratuva, 2001).

² The term which has been used to refer to states where there is the conflicting, yet accommodating political systems and norms is 'syncretic state'. See Ratuva (2003).

Perception is a powerful factor in shaping the form and normative characteristics of political culture. One of the ways in which perception and understanding of political culture can be changed is civic education. Along this logic, one of the major projects being conceived by the Fiji Parliament and UNDP in Fiji at the moment is civic education as a way of nurturing a governance and political culture which would contribute to nation-building as a long term goal. Fiji has had three coups since independence in 1970 (two in 1987 and one in 2000) and despite institutional and constitutional engineering ethnic tension continues. Civic education is seen as an appropriate alternative approach to access and change individual and group psychology in a direct and deeper way, beyond mere institutional tinkering.

The UNDP-Fiji Parliament civic education initiative

As part of the UNDP-Fiji Parliament civic education initiative, a nation-wide survey was carried out by a team (led by the author) from the State Society and Governance in Melanesia project of the Australian National University, from February to April 2003 to determine the level of 'political literacy' of the population at large. This was important to gauge people's sentiments, understanding and perception of various political institutions, political norms and processes as a basis for putting in place a national civic education program (Ratuva, 2003b).

It was part of the broader interest in exploring ways and means of addressing the problems of ethnic and political conflict in Fiji, especially after the 2000 coup when the country was thrown into turmoil, affecting inter-ethnic relations, political stability and socio-economic well-being. Instead of simply tinkering with institutional and structural reforms, the idea was that it was important to also directly engage with the people themselves through community education and dialogue. This entailed developing and assisting in the implementation of a comprehensive, long-term civic education initiative involving a range of stakeholders such as the government, private sector, religious organizations and civil society organizations (UNDP, 2002). The survey was an attempt to identify the collective and individual sentiments, knowledge and perception of the Fiji population of various institutions, processes and norms of governance. The Participatory Peace Appraisal (PPA) technique was used to ensure indepth dialogue,

democratic participation and local community empowerment. The aims of the survey were to:

- 1 identify some important issues which are fundamental to good governance in Fiji;
- 2 gauge people's knowledge, perception and attitudes towards these issues;
- 3 examine the socio-cultural and political basis of these attitudes;
- 4 identify and analyze the pattern of differences in perceptions and attitudes;
- 5 identify people's 'potential for learning' in the light of the proposed civic education program;
- 6 identify some of the factors which may inhibit civic education;
- 7 provide data and recommendations useful for constructing a national civic education framework.

To do this the survey attempted to capture the various levels of individual and collective perception and psychology shown in the matrix given in Table 1.³

The range of governance issues involved are shown in Table 2. These issues are wide-ranging but largely connected and are classified either as political process, political institution or political values.

Selected Summary Results of the Survey

Below are just some of the selected results of the survey, presented in a very brief manner. While most of the survey was qualitative there were also some quantifiable results.

Understanding of political institutions

There was a diversity of views with regards to perception of governance. Governance is perceived in three basic forms. The first is in relation to the formal institutions of rule; the second is in terms of applied policy; and the third is more to do with value judgments about what governance should be. An overwhelming majority of the respondents have not read the Constitution. Those who claimed to have read

³ Full details on the survey methodology are given in Ratuva (2003b).

it, read certain parts only. Those who had some knowledge of the constitution learnt from other people or heard and read commentaries in the news.

While a large number (66 per cent) claimed they knew about the function of the government, their knowledge is generally scanty and general. 33 per cent admitted that they did not have any idea of the function of the government. Knowledge of the function of cabinet is relatively low; 48 per cent of the respondents had some idea of the function of cabinet while 52 per cent had no idea at all.

Figure 1: Aspects of individual and collective psychology gauged during survey

Focus	Details
Mode of Perception	Identifying people's views and thoughts. People's perceptions are shaped by a whole range of social forces. Often perception changes due to changing situations. This research attempted to engage both individual and group perceptions. Often perceptions of ordinary people are not considered in matters of importance to the nation, so this research was a means by which some of the 'hidden' subaltern voices were heard.
Level of Knowledge	Because of the focus on civic education, the research has a focus on identifying levels of knowledge of the various governance issues. This is important in terms of conceptualizing and designing a civic education program.
Attitudes	Attitudes are sometimes linked to people's mode of perception and knowledge. They often reveal the inner feelings and mood of individuals or groups.
Collective Views	The research, based on the participatory collective appraisal technique, is based on gauging collective views of people in focus groups. Collective views are important in terms of generating either consensus or differences in views simultaneously.
Individual Views	Apart from collective views, individual views were also collected.

Figure 2: Governance issues included in survey

Issues	Mode	Features / Aims
Governance	Political process	The operational meaning and essence of the term.
Political institutions	Formal institutions	Government, cabinet, parliament, judiciary, civil service and opposition.
Sources of information	Formal institutions/ political process	How people get their information about political institutions, political processes and political values.
Democratic electoral system	Political process	Relevance, knowledge and acceptability of elections.
Public participation	Political process	Citizens' involvement in affairs of the nation.
Non-governmental organizations	Formal institutions	Role and significance of the NGOs.
Democracy	Political process	The relevance, acceptability and function of the democratic process.
Human rights	Values	Awareness of human rights issues.
Plurality and equality	Relationships	Awareness of the importance of various aspects of plurality and equality relating to culture, gender, religion and ethnicity.
Human values	Values	Significance of human values in governance.
Rule of law	Relationships	Importance of rule of law in the governance process
Accountability and transparency	Values	The need to address the questions of corruption, dishonesty, lack of integrity etc.
Conflict resolution	Relationships	Importance of stability in a multicultural society.
Civic education	Political process	Awareness of the need for civic education.

There was a high level of understanding of the general role of the opposition. This is attributed to the self-explanatory nature of the concept of 'opposition'. The majority (67 per cent) had a general understanding of the role of the judiciary but still lacked specific knowledge of its key roles. 33 per cent claimed not to have any knowledge of the function of the judiciary.

The civil service was readily identifiable through the specific

roles of particular categories of civil servants such as teachers, policemen and medical professionals who come into contact with the people everyday. 63 per cent were familiar with the function of the civil service while 37 per cent were not. A relatively large majority (70 per cent) was familiar with some of the functions of Parliament while the rest (30 per cent) had no understanding of any of the functions of parliament. Even those who knew about the function of Parliament only knew selected aspects of it.

Electoral Democratic Governance and Public Participation

There was consensus that election is the best way to choose national leaders in the modern era. There was overwhelming agreement (95 per cent) that elections are very important in the local and national governance process in Fiji. Only 5 per cent suggested that leaders should be nominated by traditional or church leaders.

Fewer than half of the respondents (48 per cent) were not familiar with the new Alternative Voting (AV) system and 52 per cent said that they had some knowledge of certain aspects of the voting system. Even amongst some of those who had some familiarity with the AV system, their knowledge of the electoral process was still sketchy and general.

People were not fully aware of their role and rights with regards to citizen participation in the public affairs of the country. Such participation is also constrained by a number of social, cultural, political and psychological factors. These are outlined in Table 3.

Non-governmental organization (NGOs)

There was general familiarity with the work of the NGOs and a general feeling that they play a very important role in the process of governance, service delivery, welfare, charity and education. There was also suspicion that some NGOs were politically biased and could not be trusted.

Perception of democracy

A minority (42 per cent) said that they had some knowledge of democracy while 58 per cent said that they did not. A majority (54 per

cent) said that democracy is a relevant system for Fiji; 30 per cent said that it was not, while 16 per cent did not bother about whether it was relevant or not.

Figure 3: Factors Restricting Public Participation of Citizens

Factors	Characteristics
Lack of awareness	Lack of 'civic literacy', i.e. knowledge of civic rights and responsibilities.
Fear of authorities	Feeling of intimidation. People feel comfortable just 'following'.
Fear of 'unknown'	Inability to fathom what the future or consequences might bring.
Fear of social consequences	Fear of ostracism, criticism and marginalization.
Cultural restrictions	'Traditional' values and beliefs undermine individual initiative.
Religious restrictions	Interpretation of certain religious beliefs and doctrines keep people subservient.
Satisfaction with status quo	People happy to go along with existing system.
Uncomfortable with change	Change is seen as disruptive.
Lack of interest	People have other personal and community interests, which keep them occupied.
Reliance on others	A feeling that only certain people like community leaders, lawyers, politicians, civil servants etc. deal with civic matters, not the ordinary people.

Human rights

56 per cent agreed that human rights principles were in harmony with traditional values and 44 per cent thought that they were contradictory to traditional values.

Plurality and Equality

A large majority (86 per cent) responded that multi-culturalism was desirable and was good for the country. However, 14 per cent responded that multi-culturalism was not good for Fiji. A majority - 70 per cent - said that there should be equality between men and women;

30 per cent disagreed.

58 per cent agreed that all religions should be equal and have the same rights. 42 per cent rejected the idea of religious equality. 90 per cent of the respondents agreed that ethnic equality was desirable in Fiji. 10 per cent of the respondents disagreed that ethnic equality is desirable.

Human Values

There was consensus that important social and moral values need to be protected. This should be the responsibility of the entire community. 86 per cent of the responses were that there was indeed a marked deterioration in social and moral values. 14 per cent said that there was really no deterioration in values but instead there have simply been dramatic changes in people's way of life.

Rule of Law

There was a general understanding of the role of rule of law in the community. People were generally familiar with the function of laws and some of the institutions such as the police, courts and prisons, which are associated with law enforcement.

There was consensus that ordinary citizens have the responsibility to help maintain law and order. Traditional means of reconciliation and maintenance of law and order was also considered appropriate as supportive and supplementary means of maintaining peace in the community.

Accountability and Transparency

There was consensus on the importance of accountability in decision-making at all levels of society. However, 60 per cent of the respondents were not sure whether mechanisms for accountability existed. The other 40 per cent were able to identify some of these mechanisms.

There was overwhelming agreement that leaders should be more accountable. However, there was a minority perception that poor people were too weak and powerless to make the powerful more accountable.

Conflict Resolution

There was general consensus that conflict resolution was very important in maintaining good relations within the community. Traditional forms of conflict resolution were important in empowering members of the community to resolve their own conflicts.

Civic Education

A large majority (90 per cent) of the respondents expressed the view that their knowledge of the various governance issues discussed in this project was inadequate and that there was a need to carry out a very thorough civic education program that dealt comprehensively with the various issues discussed. 5 per cent were satisfied with the knowledge of governance issues they had, although they said that continuous civic education programs is important. Another 5 per cent did not express any opinion.

It was generally felt that civic education should be the responsibility of the whole society. It should involve the government, civil society organizations and community groups and should take place at the national as well as local levels.

Assessing Levels of Significance of Various Categories

There were some identifiable differences in the level of understanding in relation to the various categories such as regional differentiation, ethnic background, urban-rural background, gender, socio-economic status, age and educational level. The levels of significance of these variables were roughly categorized as 'low', 'mixed' or 'high', depending on the extent to which they determined peoples understanding of various governance issues. These are shown in Table 4.

Identifying Potential for Civic Education

The survey also made a sociological exploration of the potential or 'readiness' of the people for civic education based on focus groups' observations and qualitative analysis of responses. This was done by examining and ranking a number of social variables according to 'low', 'mixed' or 'high'. Results are summarized in Table 5.

Figure 4: Levels of Significance of the Various Sample Categories in Relation to Knowledge and Understanding of Various Governance Issues in Question

Category	Significance		
	Low	Mixed	High
Regional			
Ethnic			
Urban/Rural			
Gender			
Socio-economic			
Age			
Education level			

Figure 5: Identifying Potential for Community Civic Education

Social Variables	Ranking		
	Low	Mixed	High
Receptivity			
Enthusiasm			
Curiosity			
Innovation			
Confidence			
Social security			
Motives			
Cultural acceptance			
Socio-political values			
Ethnic consciousness and preju-			
Religious restrictions			
Literacy level			
Exposure level			
Overall Assessment			

Civil Society and Civic Education

For any civic education project to be successful, it needs to be responsive, sensitive and appropriate to the social context. It must not be imposed into an unknown social context on the basis of generalized assumptions about people's behavior, perceptions and socio-cultural background. It is, thus, important to have an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of people's cultural psychology and the complex interplay between people's socio-cultural existence and their perception of institutions, processes and values. Civic education must not be based on imposing new ideas in a culturally coercive way. Rather it must be based on a willing transformation of people's perceptions, values and attitudes in a self-critical and conscious way. This means shaping a new culture in a creative and innovative way, which transcends existing suppressive restrictions to create a more harmonious, united and stable society.

The results of the survey show a great need and potential for civic education in Fiji and the significant role that civil society organizations (CSOs) can play. A number of CSOs have been involved in civic education over the years, focusing mainly on their particular areas of interest such as gender rights, legal rights, human rights, development initiatives and democratic rights. In many cases these initiatives are uncoordinated because CSOs have their independent agendas, which they pursue. In some cases tension between CSOs make coordination difficult.

Tension could be based on different ideological positions, territoriality (jealously protecting own operational and professional 'space' from being encroached on), personality differences and competition over resources, especially if there is a common funding source. There are also sometimes tension within CSOs or between CSOs and the state. These differences could be overcome through collective agreement and consensus on a common agenda such as a common civic education program which encompasses the diverse interests of diverse civil society actors.

To this end, the research recommended the establishment of a national civic education framework, based on the need to create an environment of unity, tolerance, harmony and long-term stability, and which would see the direct and active involvement of civil society organizations.

The involvement of civil society is significant in Fiji because of their strong embedded-ness within the community and dynamic role at various levels of social engagement. This is more so in relation to the need to transform perceptions and relationships through civic education as a way of consolidating a common national culture and consciousness, while respecting the culture of diverse communities. The objectives of the framework must relate to such things as improvement in governance values and virtues, better human relations, good understanding of law and order issues, improved appreciation of human rights, accountability, transparency and equality, improved knowledge of state institutions and processes and should include such things as individual and collective development. These entail, firstly behavioural change (that is, people to learn and transform their individual and group cultures), and secondly, how this finds expression in changes in values at the institutional and state levels.

Learning Focus of Civic Education

The main focus of civic education ought to be development of civic knowledge, civic skills and civic virtues.

Civic knowledge refers to ideas, concepts and information, which people must know to become effective and responsible citizens. For instance, this includes such things as knowledge of how the Fiji government, Fiji parliament, judiciary or civil service function. It must also introduce people to the importance of concepts like democracy, good governance, equality, human rights, inter-ethnic relationship, rule of law and constitution and foster awareness of these issues. These concepts must not be approached as distant abstract entities but must be dealt with in the context of people's everyday life and experiences. Many people take these things for granted as being 'known'. However, it is important to contextualize and operationalize them in ways that are meaningful. This is only possible if they are assimilated into people's everyday applied knowledge.

This may be easy for the urban-based and educated groups but not so for the rural-based and lesser educated. The best way would be to use multi-pronged approaches such as culture-based mediums like story telling, plays or the use of participatory dialogue techniques.

Civic skills include applying knowledge to practical situations or using knowledge to critically evaluate situations to arrive at one's own

informed conclusion. For instance, using knowledge of the importance of elections and knowledge of the electoral system to be able to make informed decisions while voting. Another example would be using knowledge of individual or group rights to make public submissions on parliamentary bills or to voice public concern or protest within the framework of the rule of law. In a less formal way, civic skills would refer to developing the capacity to engage in dialogue, consensus, making constructive criticisms, conflict resolution skills, peace-building skills, sharing information and ideas in a mutually engaging way (as opposed to imposing ideas), listening to and acknowledgement of other's ideas, public service and engaging in transparent and accountable ways at all levels of governance and relationships. These are very much applied aspects of knowledge and virtues.

Civic virtues include values and norms which help to guide people's behaviour, perception and relationships to each other, to the state, to the public generally and even within their work places, families and social groups they belong to. These relate to such things as ethnic tolerance, equality, discipline, integrity, honesty, patriotism and national consciousness. In many cases, these are inseparably bound to civic skills and civic knowledge.

The three aspects of contents noted above are in many ways inseparable. They should not be approached as autonomous entities on their own but as inter-linked. Human society is complex and most aspects of our thinking, behaviour and dispositions shape each other. In a multi-ethnic society like Fiji, these three aspects must take a trans-ethnic and trans-religious approach.

Designing and implementing a civic education program must involve all the stakeholders such as the state, local government agencies, academic institutions, the Human Rights Commission, private sector, CSOs and religious organizations. They must be linked together by a nationwide network. This network and program should harmonize with and incorporate existing civic education initiatives. It's important to ensure that this process does not undermine or threaten the autonomy and integrity of the various organizations and institutions involved and to learn from their history.

Public credibility and universal legitimacy of the civic education process depends to a great extent on its impartiality and non-partisan nature, and importantly, on the perception that this is so. Thus, care must be taken to ensure that the civic education program must not be

used for political campaigns, ethnic propaganda, misinformation and political mobilization.

Political sensitivity must also encompass cultural sensitivity. The latter is important because civic education is associated with cultural transformation, that is, learning new ideas, principles and values to broaden and enlighten relationships. It is, therefore, important to approach communities with care and sensitivity. This entails understanding the local culture (perception, behavior and values) as a starting point because failure to do so may provoke negative reactions which would not be easy to counter. Once this happens, it will not be easy to repair the damage. Community norms and beliefs could in fact be utilized as means of civic education delivery. At the same time there should be pro-active sensitivity to gender interests.

The learner rather than the deliverer must be the centre of the epistemological process. It should be a process of community empowerment rather than an exercise in delivery and passive responses, as in mainstream education. This is where community dialogue and culturally innovative means such as role-playing, storytelling, family sessions, etc., become important. This is to empower people to feel that they are part of and 'own' the process. Furthermore, it is important that civic education must be associated with community development and social rehabilitation because people need to see that it is directly linked to improving the standard of their daily lives. Values such as accountability, transparency and democracy for instance, which are being 'taught' must also be reflected in the methodology of civic education.

For long-term effectiveness, civic education needs to be constantly monitored and reviewed. But for this to be workable a national database needs to be set up to ensure ready availability of information.

These suggested civic education approaches fit well into many of the Fiji CSOs' agenda and expertise. Some of the CSOs are already involved in these issues and are using some of the approaches suggested. There, however, needs to be a broader front which links CSOs together in a common purpose. Some CSOs have more flexibility, resources, potential and innovation than others; it is important for the more endowed to share with the more unfortunate ones.

Conclusion

Civic education must be a sustainable and culturally embedded process, and not just a formal and institutionalized schema. Rather than simply indoctrinating people to adhere to some pre-defined concepts and principles it must awaken people's sub-consciousness to the need to expand their knowledge and awareness about their conditions and how these could be improved through applied good governance. It is also important to understand people's communal psychology and uncover how they think and what their level of understanding and perception are in relation to governance.

The UNDP-Fiji Parliament research was an attempt to examine this issue nationwide in a systematic way. The results of the survey show the complexity and diversity of perception at the everyday level. The local governance discourses are shaped by the immediate and broader socio-political and cultural factors. Understanding these factors is important for civic education. Civic education is an important supplementary strategy to institutional engineering and reform. Changing people is as important as changing institutions, and perhaps more important. Ideally human and institutional transformation should go hand in hand.

Fiji's political crisis in the last few years has led to renewed interest in conflict resolution, peace-building and changes in the political culture. The role of civil society in this is of fundamental importance because CSOs constitute an important link between the state and the population at large. In the case of Fiji the CSOs are amongst the most resourceful groups and their role in civic education would be crucial in the future. They are potentially effective instruments for the transformation of citizens from *homo civicus* to *homo politicus*.

References

- Anelauskas, V. (2003) *Discovering America As It Is: Still Dreaming the American Dream*. New York: Zed Books.
- Blum, W. (2003) *Killing Hope: The US Military and CIA Interventions Since World War 2*, 2nd ed. Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press.
- Blum, W. (2000) *Rogue State: A Guide to the World's only Superpower*. Monroe,

- Maine: Common Courage Press.
- Diamond, L. (1999) *Developing Democracy: Towards Consolidation*. LA: John Hopkins University Press.
- Huntington, S. (1993) *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Larmour, P. (2002) 'Westminster Constitutions in the South Pacific: A Policy Transfer Approach'. *Asia Journal of Political Science* 10 (1): 41-54.
- Ratuva, S. (2001) *Participation for Peace: A Study of Inter-ethnic and Inter-religious Perception in Fiji*. Suva: Ecumenical Center for Research Education and Advocacy.
- Ratuva, S. (2003a) 'Political versus Communal Identity in a Post-Colonial Communal Democracy: The Case of Fiji', in A. Alahar, (ed.). *Ethnic Conflict in Post-Colonial States*. Forthcoming.
- Ratuva, S. (2003b) *Attitudes and Perceptions Towards Democratic Governance and Civic Education in Fiji: A UNDP-Fiji Parliament Project*, Survey Report.
- Ratuva (2003), S. 'The Paradox of Multi-culturalism: Managing Differences in Fiji's Syncretic State', in A. Faberon, (ed.). *Pluri-Culturalism and Differences in the Pacific*. Brussels: Bryant Publishers; pp. 165-81.
- Reilly, B. (2001) *Democracy in Divided Societies: Electoral Engineering for Conflict Management*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.
- UNDP. (2002) *Terms of reference for baseline study on civic education needs towards democratic governance in Fiji*. Suva: UNDP.
- Zinn, H. (1980) *A People's History of the United States*. London: Longman.

Steven Ratuva is a Senior Research Fellow of the Pacific Institute of Advanced Studies in Development and Governance, University of the South Pacific.