M*bu* – a proposal for a pluri-cultural perspective to culture in education in Papua New Guinea*

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Introduction

In Papua New Guinea (PNG) the catchcry prior to political independence and since has been to protect our cultures from being eroded by outside influences and consequently be diminished as authentic cultures. This call to recognise each culture as unique and therefore needing recognition and maintenance in schools seems on an immediate level to be well-meant and deserving of accolades. The case is argued even more passionately in the context of the current influx of western values and beliefs and material goods. There is a strong desire to cling to the various PNG cultures as a way of opposing these influences, and Papua New Guineans by and large have a strong desire to clutch on to their cultures and develop curricula that are responsive to each culture. Teaching methods and languages that are based on specific cultures will, it is hoped, remedy the sense of cultural loss and debilitation.

However, this way of emphasising cultures and culturally responsive teaching practices can become constraining and counter-productive to some of the aspirations that may underlie the development of cultural pluralism and a multicultural society in PNG. I will explore the rationale for culturally responsive curricula and teaching practices by analysing the key concept of culture. This process may enable Papua New Guineans to make choices surrounding culturally meaningful education processes that are *really meaningful and significant*. For the purposes of this paper the question is then: What model of culture in education will best suit PNG in its aspirations to create a plural and multicultural society?

What is culture?

It seems almost ubiquitous to refer to culture as a marker for people. This view of culture has become quite popular and has come to dominate much of the thinking in education and culture. It has its roots primarily in anthropology. One of the first to develop this view of culture was E.B. Tylor (1871:1) who described culture as a way of life in which 'knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society'. The basic assumption was that human beings, wherever they lived, maintained their lives on the basis of scientific thinking. Based upon the notions of reason and evidence the assumption was that people gathered information and evaluated it to construct ideas that explained their world.

Closer examination and study of various societies, however, revealed that not all people had that way of thinking. People in some societies lacked any sense of reason or the scientific ways of explaining and doing things. In fact, the people seemed to be more prone to magic.

Another view that diverged from Tylor's emphasises uniqueness, difference, continuity and relativity. In enculturation processes, culture is treated as an entity. Rather than using the language of science to identify universal structures these anthropologists argued that people in various societies had distinctive ways of living. Each society has a distinct set of values, beliefs and practises that determined how they saw their world and manipulated things accordingly. Even more notably from that perspective, notions like knowledge, truth and rationality were only relative. Cultures within this view are seen as distinctive and quite separate. Each culture has its own ways of seeing and knowing. Each member of the culture conforms to this particular view because ... culture is not just shared, it is intersubjectively shared, so that everyone assumes that others see the same things they see' (Andrade 1984: 115). From this perspective there was nothing magical about how other cultures saw and explained things compared to western laws of science. Both ways of explaining things were equally magical as they were scientific.

Educational research has used this view of culture as a foundation for research; underlying which has been the view that western culture as a system of knowledge and its accompanying processes and practices of teaching and learning is different from aboriginal cultures. The chasm between them is perpetuated through the languages of cultural difference and cultural incompatibilities.

This latter view of culture needs further comment and discussion because it underlies the way in which education and culture have been researched. Discussion will focus on three perspectives of culture to establish their narrowness.

1. Culture as a transcendental entity

The identification and sustained maintenance of cultural traits of a particular people must be seen as a limiting practice. The fact is that culture is removed from people and essentialised and re-presented in various practices. Culture in this way has been taken as an autonomous principle, a historical and transcendental entity, which guided people in their everyday actions and interactions. Research extracted a culture's blueprints and these were held up like a picture for people to look at, talk about and manipulate. The perception of culture being a primordial and unique entity slips almost inevitably into moral relativism and puts forth the very defensible case that all values and beliefs are worthwhile and are meaningful within each context. The argument in the context of this paper is that such exercises are a case of chasing phantoms.

Seeking to establish the deterministic role of culture closes culture and refuses any inherent sense of vitality and robustness in culture. In wanting a sense of totality and completeness in the re-presentation of culture, the historical and political dimensions of culture are excluded. More specifically, as much as culture is about maps and blueprints, people actualise these. Both are very necessary sides of

the same coin. As people come into contact with others from within and without, culture will inevitably change.

Without doubt the ways in which people talk and conduct themselves are influenced by the presence of the researcher as he/she is by them (Clifford & Marcus 1986). The researcher is an important contributor and participant in the interactions between him and the locals. In this situation any observations the researcher notes are inter-subjective and dialogic – not reflective of an object called culture. People through social contact and interaction influence and determine the maps and blueprints for action. As such the cultural maps that emerge in any social circumstance are not permanent and are fully liable to imperceptible changes.

2. Cultural relativity

Cultural traits and maps proclaim an affinity with the idea of cultural relativity. Relativisation is a useful avenue to claim that all cultures are meaningful in their own context and therefore co-equal. While there is a universal appeal to this view of accepting all cultures, who actually identifies and essentialises the culture and for what purposes? I am of the view that the framing of a culture and its production and maintenance serves specific discourses and consequently supports a process of political and cultural domination.

Other cultures and people that were different from it have throughout its history, fascinated the west. Indeed, western powers expropriated and represented other cultures in various categories and practices (art, religion, anthropology, education and so on). Sustaining its various practices, the language of cultural relativity has been a key aspect in the creation of cultural contexts that seemed real and antithetical to it (Said 1978).

Valorisation of other cultures by the west was self-serving at best and at its worst saw the subjugation and denigration of people. This position is made more explicit and clearer through the psychoanalytic

language of colonisation as eruditely articulated by Fanon (1967). In particular Fanon's conception of the political and cultural violence of colonisation as a neurotic condition located as a split and identified, as a "Manichean delirium" is useful. Fanon wrote that the coloniser always preached and worked to establish the virtues of humankind and society but at the same time denounced and alienated the colonised and their ways of life. The west, in its determination to set order and civility and to educate and civilise, created alienated images of chaos, primitivity, the uneducated, and the uncivilised. These alien images were transformed by western researchers into cultures that became fixed as differences.

3. Cultural difference and other cultures

The salient questions in this context are: Are these cultural entities actual realities, intact and without history and always in opposition to the west? Do cultural differences relate to an entity? Is cultural difference an a *priori*? What is most pertinent now is for us to begin to look at and discuss the very act of reading and substantiating cultural differences from Fanon's perspective. Homi Bhabha (1994:44) describes this process aptly where, if we can paraphrase him, the maintenance of cultural differences is a process of perversion by the west in which the west is:

> ... tethered to, *not* confronted by, [its] dark reflection, the shadow of the colonised, that splits [the west's] presence, distorts [its] outline, breaches [its] being.

Cultural difference is not the confirmation of a reality but is a location of ambivalence and desire where the represented other "...makes present something that is absent — temporally deferred — it is the representation of a time that is elsewhere, repetition" (Bhabha 1994: 51).

What needs greater awareness in making cultural difference as the centrepiece to any culturally sensitive project is to acknowledge that yes, cultural differences do exist. This is because of the fact that other cultures are real. But what has continued to be a fundamental flaw in the west's observation and discussion of other cultures has been that specific cultures — their people and their lives — have not been realised on the basis of their <u>relationship</u> to the west. Instead the west's language of cultural difference has always been maintained under the banner of cultures as entities that remain quite apart from and outside of the west. Cultures and cultural differences are seen as objects devoid of change, immune to influences by people, and indeed removed from space and time — history.

What is needed now is for a model of culture that recognises others through a sense of <u>otherness</u> wherein the *other* is real and exists within its own specified discourses and relationships because any relationship is a game of position and power and therefore a motile enterprise. Any one culture involved in relationships affects other cultures as others can affect it.

What is now needed for any meaningful dialogue about culture is to begin to look for an alternative perspective; to move away from this idea of culture as a 'thing' and abstain from viewing culture as a communitarian entity that shapes and moves a collective.

An alternate model of culture

Having now established the biased view of culture and cultural differences as the mainstay of developing culturally responsive curricula and pedagogical practices we need to provide an alternative. What needs critical rethinking is this view of culture. Culture is as much about ideas as it is about individuals. Culture at a symbolic level relates to the values and beliefs people identify with in a relationship. Equally important is the fact that people within the relationship maintain their beliefs and values through social, political, economic and various other situations. Therefore, culture is as much about ideas as it is about the practicalities of living. Clifford and

Marcus (1986: 18,19) make a valuable contribution in this sense of culture:

> Cultures are not scientific "objects" (assuming that such things exist, even in the natural sciences) ..." culture" is not an object to be described, neither is it a unified corpus of symbols and meanings that can be definitively interpreted. Culture is contested, temporal and emergent. Representation and explanation — both by insiders and outsiders — are implicated in the emergence.

In advocating culture as an emergent notion, we need to see it as a concept that is fairly fluid. Culture through a framework of flexibility is a process in which various people come into contact with each other and represent, formulate and construct ideas (Wagner 1975). Such a view of culture begins to place more emphasis on the individual players in a particular context. It is indeed the "... subjects who in the routine course of their everyday lives, are constantly involved in understanding themselves and others, producing meaningful actions and expressions and interpreting the meaningful actions and expressions by others" (Thompson 1990:21).

This way of looking at culture has poignancy in PNG today. Many Papua New Guineans can proudly claim their own sense of originality because of where they come from. They were born into a particular community and while being a member of it, they learnt the language and acquired particular ways of behaviour and conduct. In time they have had to shift because of education and work commitments, and these have meant that they have had to learn to live and work with other people from other communities. In this process they have had to relate to others in different situations. This has meant that they have had to negotiate their positions (values, beliefs, expectations and so on). It is inevitable that the net result of each contact and influence will provide imperceptible changes to their own cultural maps.

From within this perspective of culture and its implication for education and culturally sensitive projects, the need is to focus on the individual. Individuals need not be limited and constrained within the prison walls of their own culture. While acknowledging their own communities, people should be enabled to develop a healthy awareness of other communities. In a contemporary PNG context in which there are many cultures and consequently many voices, each of these should be available for critical reflection by all Papua New Guineans. This may enable individuals to acknowledge and even accept difference and also negotiate and make changes as situations arise. Each individual cultural player should be granted full autonomy as a rightful player to determine his/her place in a particular context. Anthropology and later education research in PNG have historically subscribed to the view of culture that has emphasised individuals who conformed and forfeited their individuality. It is time to look beyond that view and give the individual the autonomy to keep, create and change culture.

Within PNG, this view of a culture that privileges the individual over the community is not necessarily a new concept. Many contexts in PNG have valued each individual member and their contribution to transforming their community. But this valuing of the individual over the community did not mean that there was no social organization or rather, and I prefer this term, social relationship. Organization can quite easily mean structures, blueprints and maps in terms of culture. I have thus far argued against it. The social relationship was a process and not an entity. Each individual within the community subscribed to a relationship. Social relationships call for a view of culture that privileges the individual and his/her ideas and the need for negotiation and understanding with others. This is a very strong arena for debate and consensus.

Mbu, *Na* and *Nanga Noman*

Within my own context of the Mogei in the Highlands of PNG the imposition of order and meaning upon the complex and confusing

cauldron of phenomena is achieved through *Noman* (Mel 1996, 1995). *Noman* is an inclusive term relating to thinking, feeling, knowing and understanding, remembering, creating and living. Each individual in the Mogei context is a *Iamb* and each one has *Nanga Noman*. *Nanga* means my and the *Iamb* is accredited with the *Noman* and therefore *Nanga Noman* is an inseparable relationship. This relationship is symbolised in the Mogei metaphor of *Mbu*, which means seed in the literal sense. As a metaphor *Mbu* symbolises identity, knowledge, and relationships. The way the world is seen and ordered is based around *Mbu* (Geertz 1973). *Mbu* is further structured in a triadic system with the notions of *Mbu Iamb* (people), *Pulg Iamb* (relationships) and *Mbu Ulg* (things we do for seeds). (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1   **MBU**
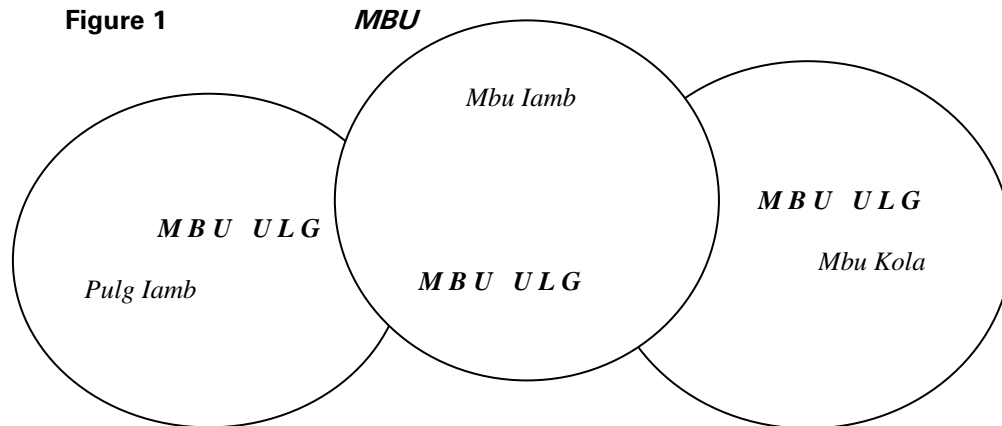
The triadic system should not be seen as a conceptual framework and therefore treated as an entity or as a cultural blueprint for the Mogei. Strictly speaking *Mbu* does not determine the Mogei people's interactions and relations. Mogei people, in other words, do not go around saying, living or even thinking on the basis of the triadic system. Berger and Luckmann (1967:82) provide an important pointer in reading people's actions by saying that:

> The logic [of the various aspects/knowledge of a culture does] not reside … in their external functionalities, but in the way, these are treated in reflection about them. Put differently, reflective consciousness superimposes the quality of logic on the [order and placement of the aspects/knowledge in a culture].

For each *Iamb* what is of prime importance is the relationship between each other. From the outsider's point of view what may seem like coherent interactions based on a cultural blueprint are in fact relationships that are developed and enhanced and indeed relinquished within a competitive terrain. If we couple Foucault's conception of power and the very basis of performance in the Mogei context, the sense of *Mbu* as a relationship becomes even more potent:

> What gives [*Mbu*] its hold, what makes it accepted is quite simply the fact that … it runs through, it produces things, it induces pleasure, it forms knowledge, it produces discourse; it must be considered as a productive network which runs through the entire social body … (Morris & Patton 1978:36).

Clearly, the foundations for each individual person or *Iamb* and their performances and relationships relate to productivity and creativity. This will be clearer if we can transpose the private experiences of the *Na* onto the conceptual framework of *Mbu*. There is a very dynamic and lively relationship between *Nanga Noman* and *Mbu*. What does this mean in terms of the individual person, their relationships, and positions and of authorities and boundaries? Quite clearly the *Na* or each individual is at the forefront implicating and questioning *Mbu* (and the overlapping tripartite) and *Mbu* is empowering and constraining the *Na*. This is the dynamic and processual location of the Mogei world in which there is constant struggle for meaning, control and power.

However, there is a need to offset any misconceptions in relation to the possibility of seeing *Mbu* and *Na* as two total entities of power. In this context Foucault's (Crosz 1990: cited in Gunew 1990:89) delineations of the workings and structures of power are quite useful.

> [P]ower runs *unevenly* through social formations, no event can be regarded as outside its grid ... Power is not exterior to knowledge or to social relations but is their condition of existence. Because power can be conceptualised as an ever-changing grid with specific points of intensity, sites of greatest force, it can also be seen as a grid that necessarily *generates* points of resistance.

Mbu is a tripartite, but each part can be broken down into smaller units and each unit contends, resists, negotiates, imposes and relinquishes power. The relationships between *Nanga Noman*, and *Mbu* can best summed through the analogy of a plant. The plant grows from a seed. It sprouts in conditions that allow this process to occur. Roots are sent into the earth to draw nutrients to succour growth and provide firm and sturdy support while the trunk, branches and foliage locate the plant in the landscape. In time, the plant, while maintaining its uniqueness, grows in the company of others. Such a process of livelihood alludes to images of serenity and homogenetic bliss. But *Mbu* in such romantic enclosures is misleading, or rather, full of deception. Let me draw more from the image of the plant. The plant continually has to fend for itself, compete for food, protect itself from the elements, and defend itself from other plants to ensure it has the strength to maintain a sturdy and confident outlook. All this is underwritten with a strong sense of commitment to order because the plant is but one piece among the many pieces that compete to complete the jigsaw puzzle of the social and symbolic landscape.

Teaching and learning: the Mogei perspective

Learning in the Mogei context is to nurture and develop the *Noman* in each person. Each person as an individual becomes the focus because Mogei people view that nurturing the *Noman* will lead to *Mbu Noman*. *Mbu Noman* is related to many things: to an individual's skill and dexterity in articulating language; to knowledge of history and social relationships; to the ability to reason, argue and negotiate problems and issues within the local context and with outsiders; and to have respect for the family and relatives. The attainment of these skills and values by the individual attains the quality of *Nuim*. *Nuim*-ness in education and learning for the Mogei individual means being morally responsible while at the same having intellectual skills. Individuals who are seen as *Nuim* reflect the triadic relationship of *Mbu*.

Regarding teaching and learning, each Mogei child is recognised as having a *Kangambulga Noman* (children's *Noman*). This means that children are viewed as having an inherent ability to think and interpret the world. Knowledge, like language, that is necessary for the child to establish contacts and find a niche is given early. Gradually children can be acknowledged as achieving *Mbu Noman* and that relates to the qualities of being *Nuim*.

In terms of teaching and learning as processes, these are contained in the concept of *Mbu*, meaning seed. In this context the image of the seed I provided above would be a useful analogy. Parents, relatives and members of the Mogei community allow children to be involved in activities to reinforce language and at the same time enable new experiences. This is an integrated process where:

> ... sometimes children observe parents and relatives and eventually attempt the activities themselves. These observations and attempts mean that the children have more control over activities. The children have an influence on the length of time and the pace of activities. The children also can engender changes to particular procedures if they feel the need to. Children also are aware that parents and relatives are available for consultation and to answer questions. Apart from observations, at other times there is

direct contact between parents and relatives. During these sessions parents and others sit alongside the children to demonstrate or explain how things are done and tell them about their history and beliefs and values (Mel 1995: 690-1)

What is of prime importance is that the Mogei child is an '... individual with a *Noman* to enquire and acquire, and in so doing is able to create his/her own knowledge. The individual *Na* is the prime location for learning what is deemed necessary for the individual to create and to live meaningfully' (Mel ibid). *Mbu,* as a process of education, involved the young acquiring knowledge and skills through listening, watching, questioning, discussing, practising, participating and ultimately creating their own knowledge. Each child was granted the *Noman* to make decisions and come to know the necessary knowledge and skills for their survival. In sum, learning within the Mogei context is located very much with the student. Each individual finds a need to locate him or herself within a location and therefore ventures to learn in order to communicate and make sense of others.

Teaching and learning: from the western perspective

Researchers, predominantly from the west, have researched how other cultures teach and learn. The basis of their research has been informed by the view of culture earlier described: that culture is an entity and the members of the particular culture conform to their particular worldview irrespective of place, time and history of the individual performers. The initial point of departure of studying other cultures and their practices is that other cultures are viewed as different from western culture. As Harris (1980:9) said when writing about Aboriginal culture: "the nature and degree of the difference between Aboriginal and European culture is so great that the only honest conclusion we can arrive at is that they are largely incompatible". Even closer to PNG, Ninnes (1991:7) working in Solomon Islands identified that "there are significant contrasts

between Melanesian and Western societies, these differences include the way children are educated".

From this perspective, researchers spent countless hours on observation, interviews, and discussions with villagers to establish the worldview of the culture and in particular how the processes of teaching and learning became realised. The prognosis was that the children from other cultures carried their culture's worldviews into their western classrooms.

Based on the collection of data, researchers determined that Papua New Guineans saw school as places where knowledge was sought or given rather than a location in which individuals pursued knowledge (Lindstrom 1990, Young and Bartos 1977). McLaughlin (1991:34) intimated that traditional Melanesian learners acquired new knowledge with no encouragement to "question and innovate" which was "at complete odds with analytic thinking and deep approaches to learning necessary for success in Western education". McLaughlin's description of Melanesian learners can be related to Lindstrom's (1990) conclusions of Melanesian worldviews. He identifies another determinant of Melanesian culture, which influences classroom behaviour: for Melanesians, knowledge is given or provided by an external source whereas the western learner focuses on the individual to create knowledge. This is because, Lindstrom (1990:7) argues, "in systems of knowledge production that stress creativity, people believe in individual 'intelligence'. In [the Melanesian context] ... intelligence in its Western sense does not exist". Furthermore, aboriginal cultures are identified as closed (Ninnes 1991; Horton 1971). Closed systems of knowledge are determined to be lacking in speculative and analytic strategies for learning which are common practices within in western worldview.

Having established the worldview, the researcher went on to establish the strategies Melanesians use in teaching and learning processes. Basically, it seemed that Melanesian youngsters acquired new knowledge through a variety of methods that included

observation, imitation, repetition, and trial and error. Harris (1980:22) provides an interesting taxonomy of what has been popularised as formal and informal strategies, comparing western methods and aboriginal ways of learning:

> In informal learning a child will learn a particular concept, say 'fishing', by observing other children fish, and fishing by himself a number of times. Later, he will understand the verbal term for fishing, having learnt the concept by a process that moved from concrete experience to verbal representation. In [formal learning] the opposite happens. Here the child will probably hear many descriptions and discussions about fishing until he forms a generalised rule or definition about what fishing is. Then he will eventually have the experience of fishing, having learned the concept by a process that moved from verbal representation to concrete experience.

Given such an approach to education by aboriginal children, any answer to their antithetical classroom behaviour seemed to be totally dictated by their 'home' culture.

As well as the village, the classroom is a prime location where the researcher collects data. It is but one location out of many in which the cultural performers come into contact with other people and their ideas. From this perspective there is little doubt that the behaviour that is displayed within — the interactions between teachers and students, between students themselves and between students and others — provides for complex relationships that cannot be reduced and located as behaviour reflective of a particular culture. Students come to school as individuals and at the same time are representatives of the wider community, equipped with an unlisted inventory of processes and relationships that are continually being negotiated, shaped and re-shaped. Interpreting a display of contradictory behaviour by Melanesian students as reflective of their culture will continue to perpetuate the myth that they lack the ability

to devise solutions to problems and situations in western-style classrooms. The pedagogical assertion that Melanesian students acquire knowledge almost entirely through observation and imitation, trial and error and repetition will continue to categorize and simplify complex social-behavioural and historical processes (McCarty *et al*, 1991:54).

Learning in the West has been predominantly developed as a process that is located almost entirely within an individual. Indeed, discourses like psychology, theories of learning and child development have always had the individual as the centre of attention. In contrast, learning through processes like observation, imitation, and trial and error have been considered as methods with low educational value because these processes have been identified as very mechanical and requiring very little from the pupil in terms of individual contribution and intellectual enterprise.

Clearly, under the pretext of cultural difference, individual-centred learning processes take centre-stage, while modes and methods of learning which have very little value in the west are relegated to the periphery and on to other cultures. There is now a strong need to shift focus to non-western processes of learning. These do not lack individual focus. Learning is as much an individual process as it is social. (See Mel 1996 and 1995 for further discussions.)

It is from this perspective that the displays of nonverbal, non-analytical or non-participatory behaviour by Melanesian students in the eyes of the west are quite cogently identified as cultural differences. However, I would argue that the categorization of complex behavioural processes as 'differences' point more to sustaining the dominance of the west's system of knowledge. Indeed, culture differences are constructed in relation to and against the west. In that way, the differences are made transparent in order to substantiate and institute its own knowledge and power. The west constitutes itself by differentiating itself from others; it uses other cultures to impose its own position. Moreover, for researchers to

simply summarise Melanesian students' performances as contradictory and contrary to the aspirations of the western classroom is in fact an articulation of a voyeuristic nature in which the west completes its own position of power and control.

In sum, western researchers' study of other cultures, their knowledge systems and modes of teaching and learning has continued to maintain the dominance of a western worldview. There are a number of ways in which this view of culture is limited in terms of the present and future needs and aspirations for a pluri-cultural location like PNG. It is particularly pertinent for Papua New Guineans who may be in positions of power in relation to education (educators, administrators, planners, curriculum writers and teachers) to recognise this way of conceptualising and framing our people and their behaviour embedded in supporting a particular regime.

The future in the PNG context

Without doubt, the Mogei context and its proccesses are complex, as are the other contexts within PNG. Certainly there is a need for individuals and institutions alike to be aware of the local processes of thinking and knowing. More importantly, these processes are also part of a continually shifting reality as we engage with others from within and without. The Mogei child, like any other in PNG, bring into the classroom vast elements and aspects of life that are part of a larger picture of history and change and not reflective of specific cultural certainties. This calls for an understanding of culture that recognises each individual (*lamb)* as having the capacity to engage and find meaning.

While there is a perceivable value in grounding children in their 'home' cultures, to take culture as a static and contained notion as the basis to develop culturally rich individuals from diverse groups needs rethinking. Cultural differences are by the very nature of their construction, positions, and therefore imperceptibly privilege one culture over another. Western researchers' establishment of 'learning styles' of other cultures are platforms that compromise people's actions and behaviour. Moreover, cultural differences and 'learning styles' do not necessarily reflect an objective location and have the effect of reducing and stereotyping people's performances. What needs urgent attention is a refocus of this process, where each individual performer must be seen and understood as an active and engaging individual with a capacity to change their reality.

Each individual grows up in a particular context and therefore comes to school with prior experiences and knowledge. However, a cultural education program that engenders the view of maintaining collective cultural traits over individual rights is oppressive because people are truncated in neat boxes called cultures. The Mogei child learns and finds him/herself in relationships through negotiation and consensus. People do not live in their own cultural cocoons. Each person sees others and tries to understand them as much as others try to understand them. It is this process which can be identified as *Mbu Ulg* (things we do for seeds). Creating new knowledge, forging new relationships, better understanding, agreeing to disagree and so forth are seeding processes.

The classrooms in PNG are composite classrooms with children from varied backgrounds. The focus of research in PNG classrooms by western researchers has been to explain apparently deviant behaviour on the basis of cognitive inadequacies and cultural relativity. I have in this paper aimed to establish that western interpretations of cultural performances do not quite account for the political aspects that may underlie and drive student's behaviour. If we can shift our perspective from seeing PNG students as cultural deviants to seeing them as *lamb* in the Mogei context, their behaviour and actions may become clearer. I have established earlier *lamb* in relation to *Mbu* in that each *lamb* is a seed that has to grow and make a niche in *Mbu Kola*. *Mbu Kola* is a competitive terrain and the growing plant has to fend for itself and negotiate and deal with situations as they arise. Indeed, *Mbu Kola-Nanga Noman* is a

relationship — a dialectic — the two are interrelated and interplay to provision the human agency of reality.

In the PNG context then, clashes with various cultures both from within PNG and outside is a positive process. The inclination to arch back to some primordial past or event, to focus on finding and maintaining each authentic culture is a journey that is more about myths then a reflection and engagement with contemporary PNG society. This is not to say that our past was not important. Our past gave us a sense of history, a sense of place and belonging. At the same time our history provisioned a capacity to engage with the present that is new and different.

PNG students as individuals, while they know about their own cultures, need to be made aware of and be given opportunity to learn and find out about other cultures. It is the meeting point between the cultures, a clash of sorts, and a nexus that I believe will contribute significantly to a contemporary multicultural context. Indeed, reminders of an individual's own roots and sense of belonging will become clarified and defined in the face of contrasts, contradictions, challenges and shifts. Papua New Guinean students should be allowed and even provided with opportunities through the curriculum and pedagogical processes to look at and talk about other cultures as much as their own. Each cultural location in PNG in their history had debates, discussions, agreements, and choices that provisioned for cultures that have always shifted. Today, this should continue to be a fertile arena for seeding new and different ways of looking at and talking about ideas and issues that affect Papua New Guineans.

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