PROMOTING SOCIAL TOLERANCE AND COHESION THROUGH EDUCATION

Report 2: Operational Assessment - Solomon Islands

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The focus of Report 2 has been the extent of nexus between the rhetoric of education policy, especially in curriculum documents, and the realities of school and classroom practices in the area of social learning.

It has been argued that teaching and learning involves all of the acquisition of knowledge, the development of skills and the formation of values. It is the view of the researchers that in both countries of study, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, the issue of what's worth knowing (knowledge) is undergoing considerable debate both in schools and in the broader community. This study revealed that the current curriculum policy is seen by most practitioners in schools in both countries as being out of date, lacking local cultural knowledge, and, in the area of social learning, mostly irrelevant to young people. The application of Prior's six dimensions of citizenship revealed that no key learning area in the curriculum and no school explicitly addresses all dimensions. In some schools, the principal and teachers had devised activities and revised areas of the curriculum to achieve a specific element of citizenship. There were very few of these schools in either country, but it was the view of the researchers was that, once identified, the ministry of education should publicise these case studies as being best practice.

There is a severe slippage between the expectations of curriculum policy makers and the expectations of teachers (and parents). This may be a somewhat unfair comment on the curriculum writers, for the reality is, in both countries, there are currently no social education curriculum writers. The documents analysed for this study mostly were written by outside contract curriculum writers over 10 years ago and since this time only minor revisions have been made.

Current political uncertainties, combined with the heavy reliance on outside funding, have not assisted policy makers and practitioners in their quest for curriculum renewal. It has been stated earlier that curriculum is a cultural expression of both what is seen to be valued and what is hoped for in the future. In the context of uncertainties in national leadership, it is not surprising that there is little sense of a set of national goals of schooling upon which to plan future directions. The uncertainties associated with outside funding support, which hang over both countries, have resulted in an inability to plan long term and in an unequal distribution of existing funds to the various provinces. As a generalisation, schools are grossly under-funded for the very basic necessities for teaching and learning. However, a common comment by practitioners in both countries and supported by the observation of the researchers, is that some favoured schools are much better resourced than others. When governments allow such a situation to occur, regardless of their motives, they feed social disharmony and undermine the public perception of social justice in government policy and the public service bureaucracy.

It became very clear, very early in this project, that the promotion of social harmony and cohesion are sub-set elements of much broader issues which cohere under the banner of 'national goals'. By discussing what it means to be 'socially educated' and to be a 'good citizen', participants in the study revealed many insights into what it means to be an individual and what it means to be a member of a community, or of multiple communities. Issues of national identity quickly arose. Issues of the acceptance of diversity of cultures arose. And these issues were embedded in both individual and collective memories, which on occasions betrayed prejudice and expressions of stereotypes. Current education policies and school practices are not addressing these tensions. It has been argued in this report that citizenship is contestable, problematic and in need of constant revitalisation. The failure to recognise and allow for diversity in a broad framework of defining a citizen can only lead to social disharmony. The evidence is that this

tension of citizenship is being played out in the current political situation. The newly developed 'Strategic Priorities for the Ministry of Education 2002–2005', with its mission of assisting people to 'live in harmony with others', is a direct response to the recent tensions, which connects with this project's orientation.

The issues embedded in identifying the extent to which schools and teachers actively encourage student involvement in decision making, and student engagement in social action, are very complex. On the one hand, support for these strategies involves a particular view about teaching and learning. Another component involves beliefs about the relationship between schools and their local communities. We believe that there is now sufficient evidence to support the view that the formal inclusion of topics and subjects in the curriculum with a focus on citizenship is not, in itself, effective in enhancing student ideas about making a positive contribution to their community. Nor is the use of national icons and symbols of themselves, an effective strategy for enhancing social harmony. But when many of these strategies are adopted and adapted and linked, in ways which make sense to particular school communities, then there is the possibility of an effective coherent and sequential program.

It has been argued elsewhere in this report that a defining element in assessing the effectiveness of a school in promoting social tolerance and harmony is the role of the school administration and specifically the role of the principal. This study revealed that the idea of the democratic classroom or democratic decision making processes by the school community were both unknown by most school practitioners. There is some evidence that a disbelief in these notions is culturally based within the broader value of respect. Yet in private conversations many teachers were bitter about their undemocratic treatment as teachers and as individuals by both the education bureaucracy and the principal. Other teachers wanted students to be more active participants in their classes. The conclusion reached was that the pedagogies of values education associated with promoting social harmony and citizenship are largely unpractised by teachers and that a great deal of professional development will be required. The introduction of these democratic pedagogies will also need to be introduced during pre-service training of teachers.

SECTION 1: PROCESS OF CURRICULUM AND OPERATIONS REVIEW

Purpose of this Report

The focus of this report is a review of

> present school-based practices regarding cultural understanding, democratic participation and social cohesion. The activities in this sub-component will include an analysis of civic/multicultural values in the prescribed curriculum and textbooks, as well as observable related school activities, classroom behaviour and management practices.

The research team considered this focus as an opportunity to document the juxtaposition between the rhetoric of educational policy documents, the expression of those policies in curriculum documents and the reality of actions and practices taking place in schools and classrooms in the Solomon Islands and in Vanuatu. This report complements and augments *Report 1: Stakeholders' Assessment*, for which the fieldwork was undertaken simultaneously. Both this report and Report 1 will inform the development of a policy framework to enhance social tolerance in the South Pacific region, which is the focus of Report 3.

Overview of the Operational Fieldwork in both Countries

A detailed description of the Research Methodology used in this project was provided in Section 4 of Report 1: Stakeholder Assessment. The review of the operational elements of both systems took three approaches to data collection and it was undertaken using a common set of data sources:

Documentary review and summary:

- Ministry of Education published policies and reports;
- Syllabuses and other curriculum documents;
- School policy documents
- Teacher guides
- Student resource documents
- Student writings.

In the Solomon Islands, curriculum documents were collected from several Ministry of Education sources, from the Curriculum Development Centre, and from various other organisations and NGOs operating in the country. In Vanuatu, curriculum documents were likewise collected from several Ministry of Education sources, from the Curriculum Development Centre, the Vanuatu Teachers' College, and from various other organisations and NGOs operating in the country.

In both countries difficulties were experienced, for a number of reasons, in obtaining a complete set of curriculum documents and current policy documents. In some cases no school or organisation had a copy of a particular curriculum document. On other occasions, and for whatever reasons, some policy documents were not made available to the research team. This section of the report therefore is based on an incomplete set of documents.

In the sections of this report dealing with the Solomon Islands, use has been made of the texts written by students for the newspaper essay competition held in March 2001.

Interviews with practitioners [principals; inspectors; teachers] and students

In both the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu a range of schools were visited by the research team. The selected schools represented diversity in terms of location, sector, affiliation and focus. For a list of the schools visited, see Section 2.

For the second round of fieldwork in the Solomon Islands, visits to a range of primary and secondary schools of various types in three provinces (Guadalcanal, Malaita and Western Province) were arranged by officials of the Ministry of Education and Training. In the event, not all the schools recommended could be visited for various logistical reasons, and other schools were substituted after consultation with provincial education offices.

On most school visits in both countries, the researcher was accompanied by an official of the Ministry of Education. When this occurred, it was designed to facilitate the visit, as some schools were unaware both of the timing of the visit and the nature of the project. The research team believes that the attendance by the Ministry of Education officials did not interfere with the responses provided by the school practitioners.

Interviews were obtained with as many such people as time and school schedules permitted. Conditions varied: in some schools, general meetings of quite large numbers of staff could be convened for our visit. Sometimes, however, we only interviewed the principal and maybe one or two other teachers. The most common pattern was to interview the principal and teacher(s) of Social Studies, on the grounds that this learning area was the one most likely to address issues of social tolerance. Most interviews were tape recorded with the permission of the participant(s); no requests for such a procedure were refused. During other interviews, notes were taken.

On all occasions, the discussions with practitioners were open, frank and free of any suggestion of influence by Ministry of Education officials. In fact, the practitioners appreciated the opportunity to discuss substantive issues which the project raised.

Observations of actual practice

Wherever it was possible, the researchers were welcomed by teachers into their classrooms when lessons were in progress. However, opportunities for this activity varied according to the site. In some cases the researchers were invited to participate in, or to lead classroom activities. In some cases the students were not present at the school on the day of the visit, due to a lack of power or water or the absence of a teacher.

The complexity of this operational review process is indicated by the common school-based interview schedules (See Attachment 1) and the following questions: Were we:

- looking for whatever vestiges of moral precepts might exist in a specific formal syllabus (or across the whole curricular offering)?

- looking to see how much weight the moral curriculum has/should have/might have within a student's total school experience?

- analysing specific subjects, for example, Social Science; Religious Education; Agriculture, for evidence of current social learnings or for trends or important changes over time?

- looking for some sort of balance between national and personal 'interests' in the educational materials available to its teachers?

- specifically looking for evidence of a whole range of moral, personal, social, familial, community and national 'values'?

- looking for evidence of a chance during the whole school experience of a child for internalisation of values or precepts?

Inevitably, given a brief as wide as this, the project was, to some extent, doing all these things.

Conceptualising the educational process

The educational process, and specifically the curriculum, is both a personal and social construct. Curriculum therefore has different meanings attached to it (Brady & Kennedy, 1999). For stakeholders within the education sector it is tempting to consider curriculum as some sort of private arrangement between teacher and student. On one level in the classroom it probably can be described as this sort of private contractual arrangement. However the nature of curriculum is much broader than a classroom context. It is a part of the social, political and economic structures of society. In seeking to understand the school curriculum the task is also to understand the complex forces and patterns that characterise the operation of society. The educational process and curriculum therefore are fully embedded in the goals, aspirations and values of society.

In *Report 1: Stakeholders' Assessment*, stakeholders defined the education process and curriculum from a wide range of perspectives. Stakeholders in the business community saw the role of schools as delivering outcomes that have relevance to employment opportunities and needs. The view of education of those parents who had had a formal education was shaped by their own experiences as students. They saw the operation of schools as a vehicle linked to a set of values – respect for traditions and cultures for example, and not merely as some form of academic abstraction. Students had a very wide range of views about the nature of their school experience. Writing for the *Solomon Star* newspaper essay writing competition, many students saw schooling as a means for regenerating social harmony. Other students, in both the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, saw schooling as largely meaningless; unconnected to their lives.

School operations, as expressed through the curriculum, are essentially about the future. Education policy makers come from the dominant hegemonic group, carrying a baggage of values and assumptions about society. Curriculum is therefore contestable and represents the values of a dominant group at a particular time. This places curriculum under continuous stress from groups in the community with different curriculum orientations.

The educational process comprises many different pieces, centred on three key areas: *curriculum*, (what's worth knowing), the *pedagogy* (which enacts it), and the *assessment* (the results of this pedagogy expressed in outcomes of student learning). Around these keys can be placed other areas of student experience, both in formal and non-formal settings, which can be expected to influence the three central ones, and without which any picture of the student learning process is incomplete. These outlier areas include learning done 'elsewhere', during experiences of the *extra-curriculum* (these experiences might include, for example, gardening work done by students after school hours).

What's worth knowing in the education process may not always be explicit. The *hidden curriculum* describes those student experiences which are not explicitly stated in policy documents or are not formally enacted in school operations. Examples of experiences arising from the hidden curriculum are often in the area of social learning. This is therefore of particular interest for this project as values like social tolerance, respect and love are learned outside of the formal curriculum and the learning of such values may take place, for example, during play in the school ground.

The positioning of educational goals, such as the promotion of social tolerance and good citizenship, in operations of schools cuts across the formal and informal line. It may appear in curriculum documents, and to this extent the research team was able to analyse both the nature of the social learning and evaluate the values and assumptions underpinning it. In this study the opportunities given to the research team to observe informal student social learning was often limited by the formalities of the visits to schools. The common school-based interview schedule developed by the research team primarily explored aspects of this informal social learning and the hidden curriculum. The views reported in the Analysis of School Operations (see Section 4) were expressed during interviews with principals and teachers and therefore came from their perspective, rather than from direct observation by researchers.

Many stakeholders in schools we interviewed were at pains to point out that school experience and syllabuses for mainstream primary and secondary students do not give a full educational picture in the area of social learning. They argued that principled values, attitudes and behaviours are first inculcated in the home, the village and the wider community (and to some extent directly by the churches). This development continues once the child goes to school, and is ideally joined by reinforcement and additional opportunities during schooling. It is at school that the randomness of social learning is replaced by the formality of a (hopefully) sequenced curriculum.

Curriculum is often defined as those learning experiences which are embedded in some structured set of systematic experiences, usually in the context of a school. In deciding what is worth knowing, communities are usually not just talking about the acquisition of knowledge. The development of skills, for example psycho-motor skills or social skills, and the social development of children in terms of attitudes and values are also part of the broad goals of education. The existence of differences between curricula is often demonstrated by the different emphases given to these three areas of knowledge, skills, and attitudes and values. This is not to say that the three areas are mutually exclusive. For example, it is not possible for a person to develop ethical attitudes without an understanding of the basis of ethical options.

Curriculum is also often described as a way of knowing. In the context of this project, where a significant proportion of the focus is on values learning, some understanding of the processes of learning in general, and valuing in particular, is important if the dissemination of curriculum documents and school operations are to be effective in enhancing social learning. This is not the place for a detailed examination of research into the effectiveness of teaching and learning processes. However, the research of Howard Gardner (1983), we believe, is of critical importance in framing curriculum in such away as to utilize the concept of multiple intelligences, regardless of cultural contexts.

Gardner argues that curriculum should be constructed in such away as to allow students opportunities to experience multiple usage of children's' intelligences, including linguistic, musical, logical-mathematics, spatial, bodily-kinaesthetic, personal and social dimensions. In the global context of support for an outcomes-based model of curriculum in which outcomes are largely directed at enhancing the economic goals of a nation, linguistic and logical-mathematical are emphasised. As a result the more non-measurable and personal aspects of intelligence, for example, the social ability to understand the motives, feelings, and behaviours of other people, are down-played as being of lesser importance. This is one of the practical challenges for this project, in that any support for curriculum renewal in the area of social learning will need to recognise the implications of Gardner's research.

Values in the Curriculum

The effectiveness of the enhancement of social learning in curriculum and in school operations, in the case of this project in the area of social tolerance, will also need to recognise the findings of research into the acquisition of values. Dewey (1966) described valuing as

> *Primarily to prize, to esteem, but secondarily it means to apprise, to estimate. It means, that is, the act of cherishing something, holding it dear, and also the act of passing judgement upon the nature and amount of its value as compared to something else.*

Five successive stages of development in the acquisition of attitudes and values can be identified:

1. Identifying and prizing one's beliefs and behaviours

2. Choosing one's beliefs from alternatives and in consideration of consequences

3. Exposure, attainment of basic knowledge and initial engagement;

4. Opportunities for experience, acting on and development of deeper understanding and a wide range of relevant skills;

5. The appearance of internalised, consistent and repeated attitudes and behaviours.

An example of the application of this schema, using 'respect for others' as a key attribute might be as follows. The application in this example combines aspects of the process, so that there are three stages… but each aspect of the schema is present.

The first stage (identifying and exposure) manifests itself as opportunities offered for learning to play, and then learn, with others;

The next stage (experience and practice) involves the development of skills and opportunities to practise teaching one's juniors;

The third stage (internalised and acting on) might include for example, volunteer community work.

The most cited purposes or goals for including values education in the curriculum and school and classroom practices are to address the following needs:

- To develop a set of values that can be used to help young people to think reflectively in order to fulfil their responsibilities as members of their community and as citizens.

- To assist young people to develop analytical skills that can be applied to events and issues.

- To promote the development of worthy personal values.

- To clarify and explain the role of values in human affairs from the past and present.

- To teach a systematic means to identify and clarify the practices and habits that exist in differing cultures.

Both affective and intellectual capacities and competencies are required by students engaging in learning about values and controversial issues. These capacities can be encouraged and enhanced in schools, both from the perspective of the formal curriculum and in the daily practices of schools and teachers.

The prime focus in this review of school operations was to collect data of what happens, or what the nation says ought to happen, to promote the positive social development of young people. The assumption underlying this precept is that there is a common understanding, shared by politicians, administrators, social and community leaders, teachers and parents, of what constitutes 'positive social development' of a nation's youth. If countries have a set of stated specific 'Goals of Schooling', such matters would certainly be part of what such a document reveals about what the nation intends for its junior (and later senior/adult) citizens. The absence of such a charter means that, for example, any 'intention' to inculcate spiritual, moral or behavioural values can get buried in the detail of the ordinances: syllabuses, teachers' guides and the like. Sometimes overarching aims or objectives for teaching a given unit or sequence of instruction, or for a program generally, are stated in a curriculum document. But even then it is often hard to find out how such aims will or might come to life in classroom or playground.

Conceptual framework used to analyse curriculum and school based practices

As explained in Report 1, the Stakeholders report for this project, we have found Prior's (1999) model of citizenship in the context of a democratic society as the most useful framework for both coding the views of stakeholders about the role of schools in promoting social tolerance, and in deconstructing the discourse in curriculum documents. This model is also useful in that it encompasses and gives a cohesive view of the various characteristics of a 'good citizen', as outlined in the Terms of Reference for this project. For example, promoting respect and dialogue between cultures, strengthening democratic processes, promoting social tolerance and supporting community participation.

Prior's six dimensions of citizenship are:

Dimension 1: Civic knowledge – for example, understandings about political organizations, decision making processes, institutions, legal requirements.

Dimension 2: A sense of personal identity – for example, a feeling of self-worth, belonging efficacy, resilience.

Dimension 3: A sense of community – for example, locating oneself within a community(s), some perhaps imagined communities.

Dimension 4: Adoption of a code of civil behaviours – for example, civil and ethical behaviour, concern for the welfare of others.

Dimension 5: An informed and empathetic response to social issues – for example, environmental issues, social justice, equality and equity.

Dimension 6: A skilled disposition to take social action – for example, community service, active participation in community affairs.

SECTION 2: CONTEXTUAL ISSUES TO AN OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF SCHOOL-BASED PRACTICES: SOLOMON ISLANDS

Schools Visited

Malaita province:	Auki Primary School	urban
	Auki Community High School	urban
	Aligegeo National Secondary School*	semi-urban
	Faiako Primary School	rural
	Gwaunaroa Community High School	rural
Guadalcanal province:	Nguvia Community High School	rural
	Nguvia Primary School	rural
	St Josephs' School* Tenaru [Nat. Sec. School]	rural
	King George VI National Secondary School*	urban
	Bishop Epalle Secondary School	urban
Western province:	Gizo Community High School	urban
	Goldie College, Munda*	island
	Dunde Community High School, Munda rural	rural
	Goldie Community High School, Munda rural	rural

* Boarding schools

The opportunity was taken to interview staff members from **Ruavatu Primary School** during a visit they made to Honiara, since the school site, though chosen by the Ministry, proved to be inaccessible.

General Comments on the Solomon Islands' Education System

Writing an overview of the education system in the Solomon Islands is a challenging task because the available data were very limited or unavailable to the research team. In particular, there does not appear to be a collection of annual reports, nor statements of national educational goals. Recent redundancies and other changes in staffing within the Ministry of Education, and ongoing political unrest have resulted in an understaffed administration which largely appeared to be concentrating on the pragmatics of keeping the system going. As a result, school practitioners, in discussions with the research team, commented on how disenchanted they were with the lack of support offered by the central administration.

The review of curriculum documents and policy statements and the observations of school operations in the Solomon Islands needs to be seen in the broader context of a country which has, in mid 2001, declared itself bankrupt. The economic situation in mid 2001 does not allow for any self funded curriculum review or for significant improvements in teaching and learning facilities in schools.

Most of the curriculum documents examined for this project were written in the 1980s or earlier by writers from outside of the Solomon Islands. Any recent revisions in curriculum have been small scale and spasmodic and usually initiated by outside donor financial support. There are currently so few staff at the Curriculum Development Centre that they are largely unable to even distribute to schools what limited teaching and learning materials they do have.

Early in the last decade, it was common practice for the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) to mount panel reviews (by practising teachers) of curriculum documents as they were being prepared. However the numbers of practitioners involved were few, the choice of who attended was reported as arbitrary, and the clientele for such occasions would have seem to have been predominantly teachers from Guadalcanal province.

At the time of the fieldwork for this report, the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE) had been unable to commence the academic year as there were insufficient funds to repair the students' accommodation buildings and to print teaching materials.

The impact of the lack of funding for education was felt in the three locations visited by the research team. Provincial Education Offices were severely under-resourced and could only offer very limited support of any kind to schools and teachers. There was strong resentment out in the provinces with a practitioner perception that, on the one hand, the central administration in Honiara demanded a centralised curriculum model, but on the other hand appeared to do little to support the implementation of the curriculum in the provinces. Teachers regularly complained of their inability to obtain basic curriculum documents and materials from the administration in Honiara.

Any understanding of the education system in the Solomon Islands needs to consider the impact of the examination system. Although specific information about the examinations was difficult to access, it was obvious from the comments made by stakeholders as described in Report 1, that the examinations served at least two functions. Firstly, the examinations were largely a test of numeracy, and especially, literacy skills and largely ignored other aspects of learning, including social learning. The examinations dominate the curriculum and teaching and learning pedagogies. Secondly, the examinations acted as a deliberate culling process to exclude unsuccessful students from continuing at school.

Subsequent to the exam results being published a large number of students are excluded at the conclusion of primary level (after grade 6). These students had had little opportunity to learn any relevant vocational skills or to obtain other understandings, skills and values to equip them to contribute to their communities. A final often-heard observation about the examinations was that the results for some students were 'massaged' at the political level in order to secure a place in a desirable secondary school. All of these practices, or perceptions of practices, resulted in social disharmony by creating a sense of distrust in the policy makers in education. It also contributes to significant youth unemployment and disillusion. No social cohesion is being demonstrated by these practices.

A final general comment about the education system in the Solomon Islands is that the impact of 'created' nation is everywhere felt in the discussions about the appropriate language of instruction to be used in schools. The tensions created by geographic and distance issues, the desire by communities to preserve vernacular languages and the tradition of maintaining boarding secondary schools have all contributed to social disharmony. The recent violent conflict is the most recent manifestation of tension and a growing sense of mistrust in the country.

Contextual Comments to Curriculum Analysis: Solomon Islands

Teacher training and professional development

The Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE) is the major provider of teachers in the Solomon Islands. Discussions with the Head of the Education Faculty highlighted a number of issues which affect the use by beginning teachers of pedagogies which would enhance social learning. Student teachers came from within an education system which was predicated on an

assessment system which undervalued social learning. This Head believed these student teachers had experienced neither co-operative learning styles nor inquiry learning approaches, during their own schooling.

Research about the teaching practices of beginning teachers indicates that they are more likely to continue the pedagogies that they were exposed to at school rather than experiment with new strategies initiated at teachers' college. Other factors like large class sizes, the lack of teaching and learning resources, the absence of curriculum advisors and the continuing impact of the examination system, all contribute to a situation which maintains the status quo.

Beginning teachers are at the whim of the Ministry of Education for their placement in schools. No account appears to be taken of the cultural background of the beginning teacher, so they are often placed in schools far from their village. In this situation they have few local cultural resources and little understanding of local cultural practices. This practice is unlikely to enhance social harmony and is a wasted opportunity for the beginning teacher to make a contribution to their local community, where it might be assumed they could assume leadership positions.

Beginning teachers reported that they left SICHE with an incomplete set of curriculum materials only to then discover that, in some schools, there was also a lack of these materials. The beginning teachers met during this project in the Solomon Islands were full of enthusiasm for teaching but were mostly ill-prepared to cope with opportunities for showing initiative in incorporating social learning into their classroom practices.

Opinion varies as to whether there are untrained teachers actually practising in Solomon Islands' schools. Notices on school noticeboards proclaiming special arrangement for the pay of such people suggests there are some, but the number and distribution of them is unknown.

If some large program were to be mounted to enhance learning about issues concerning citizenship and values education there would of course be a corresponding need to sensitise teachers to such issues, and to offer models for school and classroom behaviours and pedagogical practice. The most commonly used format for such exercises in the Pacific is some variant of the 'cascade' or train-the-trainer approach, but overall the impression is that some more definite and in-depth strategy might need to be used in the case of the Solomon Islands teaching force.

Several teachers put out a call for national and provincial workshops on an on-going basis. Others made the point that principals have no management training. Generally the feeling was:

> *Teachers do not lack skills but they lack reinforcement and learning support.*
> *(Malaitan primary school principal)*

The most common complaint from teachers was that, professionally, they felt totally stranded when it came to in-service education and other forms of professional development. One teacher with a career length of 20 years pointedly complained that she had never received any training beyond her initial certification courses:

> *There is a total lack of extension PD in basic areas – it is long overdue. Some like me graduated 20 years ago and there's been no upgrading since then. We need refresher courses, locally or even overseas.*
> *(Malaitan primary teacher)*

Teacher morale

This is a considerable issue for the Solomon Islands teaching force, and it impinges on much of this project also. Most common, amongst primary teachers, was the suggestion that personal confidence and expertise across all subjects was often insufficient, particularly for dealing with

the 'Our Community' and 'Our Environment' syllabuses. Subject specialisation may be needed in primary as well as secondary schools.

> *Any other subject like citizenship that was added on, it would be too much for us. We are overloaded, unlike subject specialists in secondary school who concentrate on one. One cannot be good at everything and materials are scarce, so subject teaching in primary schools should be allowed.*
> *(Malaitan primary teacher)*

Morale was hard for one English teacher to sustain: in her junior secondary school, she was the only such specialist, and taught the whole school, for 32 of the 35 available periods. The school was lucky to get her – she had moved from Honiara because of the recent ethnic tension. The principal further complained about a serious shortage of English specialist graduates from Solomon Islands College of Higher Education.

Payment of teachers is an issue, in relation to methods of payment and whether pay is maintained. Many teachers have to take days away from their schools in order to travel into town to place their cheques in larger bank branches, since closer bank outposts will not accept cheques, and teachers have to be able to pay their bills. In May many teachers had not been paid for weeks, and some newcomers to the service had not been paid since the commencement of the school year. In Malaita and Guadalcanal, there were threats of a teachers' strike and the Prime Minister had gone to world finance agencies avowing the country was indeed bankrupt. Such financial insecurity and the need to take time away from classes undermine professional confidence and morale.

In this context of salary and career uncertainty, teachers are unlikely to seriously consider the extra work load required in introducing new elements of curriculum into their daily routines. Curriculum renewal rests heavily on classroom practitioners. Teachers in the Solomon Islands are unlikely, as a group, to take a positive view of introducing social issues like social justice and democratic participation in decision making, if at the same time they are struggling on a regular basis with a breakdown in basic governmental responsibilities and social services.

Teacher readiness for cultural and social curriculum

Rarely was there any observed evidence of pedagogical practice having moved beyond a fairly standard top-down, chalk-and-talk process: 'the lecture pedagogy'.

> *We have straight blackboard teaching – we never take them outside except for sport. The way of teaching must change, involve more action and more group work, but teachers feel untrained even when they are **trained**.*
> *(Malaitan primary school principal)*

Research about the management of change in educational organisations is predicated on the notion of 'teacher readiness'. This works at a personal level in which teachers personally feel a need to change their practices because they have reflected and identified an aspect of their teaching performance which they want to improve. They also feel that by initiating and embracing some form of change, they, and the change, will be valued. Some were quite prepared to adopt such an approach, if conditions were right.

> *The curriculum is not too crowded: we could do it if we had the resources, and the right sort of resources. As it is, teachers have to work too hard to extract relevant information from very sophisticated materials.*
> *(Malaitan secondary agriculture teacher)*

Teachers too carry around with them the broader cultural baggage of their personal experiences. They will need to value the inclusion of more social learning in the curriculum as an element of broader community aspirations. The long established teaching and learning classroom practices of lecturing and 'chalk and talk', so apparent during visits to schools is another area which

requires a huge cultural change of teachers. The 'readiness' to embrace a more 'democratic classroom' pedagogy will inevitably confront the expectations of teacher colleagues, students and administrators about traditional classroom practices.

The examination system

As was commented in *Report 1: Stakeholders Assessment,* the provision of formal education systems is a very costly item in national budgets, and in the context of global economic uncertainties the desire to get value for money is strong. Currently there is a worldwide interest in ways and means of measuring school effectiveness both in terms of student learning and in terms of general cost-effectiveness. Countries have adopted a range of evaluation mechanisms including school reviews, the use of inspectors and the use of formal examinations. In each case underpinning the chosen mechanism is a set of values and assumptions about the role of schools and the nature of teaching and learning.

In the Solomon Islands, formal externally set examinations are used at the end of primary school at grade 6 and then again at middle and senior years of secondary school. This practice indicates either a particular value being placed on external examinations as a reliable form of measurement of student learning (and teacher performance) and/or is a practical mechanism for ranking students, some of whom will given the opportunity to continue on the higher grades.

One teacher commented on the impact of the examination system:

> *The Standard 6 exams dominate, and we teach all four subjects. But in the Community Studies course, the final test has too few questions compared with the huge syllabus, and they ask almost the same things every year. In fact the whole curriculum is too crowded and the proportion sampled in testing is too small. The Cambridge test [pre 1988] was better.*
> *(Malaitan primary teacher)*

Discussions with teachers and principals in schools reported that the impact of the examination system on the value that many parents and students placed on examinable subjects created a hierarchy of subjects. Those subjects that were not examinable were less valued. One teacher commented that students reject the electives –

> *the core is holy ... once you've made the elite, you hang in there, and reject [elective] options.*
> *(secondary school teacher, Western Province)*

The provision of assessment procedures in education systems is a natural outcome of explicit statements of goals and objectives for the system. However in the Solomon Islands where no explicit statement of national learning goals appears to exist, the examination system assumes a role, ambiguous in terms of its official educational purpose (i.e. assessment of learning), and at the same time a disproportionately important role in dominating the curriculum.

> *Because of the recent political tensions, the Standard 6 examination in 2000 was missed by many children in Guadalcanal, who have to repeat the year in 2001. On other islands, for example, Malaita, most schools stayed open*
> *(Deputy principal, Guadacanal secondary school).*

At present, principals and teachers report that some parents want an academic curriculum supported by the examination system, the leading route to what they hope will be future economic success for their children. The reality for most parents is that the stringent 'culling' process of the examinations result in the 'failure' of a majority of students in the grade 6 examination. These 'failed' and very young people are ill-equipped to enter most forms of paid employment. They lack both specific vocational skills and core generic skills like numeracy and literacy. In this context the current examination system is socially divisive, creating an elite minority of students who are deemed suitable to continue on with their schooling. The social areas of learning are not emphasised in the curriculum and are therefore not emphasised in the

examinations. The creation of an under-class of young and not readily-employable people is unlikely to contribute to social harmony.

Nevertheless, despite their commitment to the importance of teaching academic courses, some teachers called for more vocational education, particularly in Forms 3 to 5, where they are quite rare. Many schools, in preparing balanced and focussed courses for their students, offer elective subjects which attempt, in a small way, to leaven the direct academic teaching. These are most commonly found at Forms 1 and 2 (sometimes 3), and commonly include "Industrial Arts" (usually woodwork), agriculture and home economics. The elective courses can be dovetailed to local village-oriented needs and possibilities.

Others looked for a larger policy change:

> *They should be able to go out to specialised schools once they've finished here, there should be a system designed to help mass drop-outs, pushed out at [Form] 3 or 5 ... provide learning that is rural-centred ... w hy did the government abandon vocational education? (Malaitan secondary Social Science teacher)*

Vocational education is seen as being in opposition to the current system of examinations. Examinations, as one mechanism to evaluate the extent of achievement of learning objectives, can play a critical role in giving directions to teaching and learning in classrooms. In fact examinations can be used as instruments to achieve social change as the nature of the questions asked in examinations determines the type of learning you want to occur. Examination of vocational learning outcomes could be undertaken if they were regarded as being of sufficient importance. This would loosen the grip of the current examination regime on curriculum and pedagogy in the Solomon Islands.

Physical conditions in schools

The concept of the democratic classroom with connotations of inclusiveness, equity and active participation, requires at least the ability to physically structure the classroom environment to incorporate such activities as group work and co-operative learning. It was the experience of the researchers that the physical conditions in schools varied greatly across the three visited provinces.

In the Western Province conditions vary. There is some overcrowding due to returning families, but little or no damage due to the recent ethnic tension. In other provinces, of course, the situation is very different, with schools suffering extensive damage as a result of the ethnic conflict. Furthermore, even in a post-Tension environment, staff in two of the Malaitan schools visited reported that the land on which the school had been built was the subject of land claims and squabbles.

Physically, conditions in schools could often be described simply as 'atrocious'.

> *The pump on the water tower was vandalised last August, and we have had no water since. We have a generator, but the primary school over there has no water and no power. Skin diseases are rampant. When this school was set up we were lucky, but it was looted. Gas, the stoves that were in this room, all textbooks and support materials, labs and chemicals. The staff houses were emptied. We used to have an agriculture program but it was shut down during the Tension, so there are no more practicals because there are no tools. (Guadalcanal secondary teacher)*

The main complaint at several schools was the poor quality of the boarding accommodation (part of these, at one school, had been closed in 2000 as a health risk and had still not re-opened) and the boarders' food.

Elsewhere, there was rarely any relief to a depressingly plain ambience – posters were rare, as was the posting of student work or other decoration. During the Tension resources were taken; one school had been stripped of literally all its print materials – syllabuses, teaching materials, books, papers – as well as equipment and much of its furniture.

Difficulty getting to school because of poor transportation conditions was often a problem:

> *Some students and teachers come in [40 km] all the way from Auki. If they miss the bus, they miss school, and the road's getting worse.*
> *(Malaitan secondary school principal)*

Teaching and learning resources in schools

The whole issue of the availability of basic resources in schools was perhaps the most common operational matter raised by principals and teachers. It is unlikely that any school had 'a complete set of curriculum documents/resources available to teachers', as the interview schedule asked. Other schools reported incomplete holdings of basic national curriculum documents (e.g. Gizo Community High School uses Papua New Guinea English syllabuses for Forms 2 and 3), and a common cry was *'we have only one copy of ...'* particular items. Often the copy was mutilated or incomplete.

The "updated-ness" of syllabi was another common issue. Many teachers alluded to the documents prepared and issued in the late 1980s and early 1990s, as trial versions which had never reached final form. Schools were incensed they had to pay for the Curriculum Development Centre-originated materials which they felt ought to have been on free distribution. Frequently orders sent off were not received.

> *I am happy with the curriculum, but not about the lack of class materials.*
> *(Malaitan primary school principal)*

Several buildings were seen to be signed, somewhat optimistically, as 'Library'. One had a single row of damaged books – another was quite empty. In one school, the only sign of any books was a large pile on the principal's office floor. At another:

> *In 2001 we borrowed one textbook for each subject, so everything has to be written on the blackboard. We have no photocopier, and it's all inefficient – students make small notes. We have to pick out what we can do from the syllabus.*
> *(Guadalcanal secondary teacher)*

The absence of appropriate teaching and learning resources to enhance social learning is a serious impediment towards any improvement in social learning. The most vocal complaint by teachers about teaching and learning resources was the 'out-datedness' and the almost total absence of relevant culturally sensitive material.

The co-curriculum or extra-curricular activities

The so-called 'co-curriculum', involving extra-curricular activities in sport; inter-school visits; cultural activities; language activities of various kinds, is a very fertile field for exploration and enactment of civic virtue and values, but can be missed in a review of the formal curriculum documentation. Some schools, as part of the Physical Education syllabus have their pupils engage in organised sport activity per week. Additionally the students (more often the boys than the girls) engage in ball games in the break times. These activities connect to self-respect, health learning and socialisation objectives. In some schools a flow-on is within-school competition and in some schools, interschool competition.

> *Interschool tournaments, with town and country children, after the Standard 6 exams are bringing excitement and enjoyment to students.*
> *(Malaitan primary teacher)*

Many schools could not provide for sport activities

> *We have little sport. There is no money for equipment.*
> *(Guadalcanal secondary teacher)*

One school had organised what it called an Expressive Arts Day, involving particularly Standard 6 children late in 2000 after the examination period:

> *There was dancing and singing, and it was very popular. The children were really involved.*
> *It was a show mostly for parents but the whole school was involved too. Good feedback from*
> *parents – they were very impressed and the other children really enjoyed it too.*
> *Expressive Arts should be in all school timetables but they're not taught because teachers*
> *don't have the background knowledge. And in town schools the multicultural nature of kids*
> *makes it even harder for teachers than in bush schools.*
> *(Malaitan primary school teacher)*

But generally speaking the children are on the streets each afternoon. Youth clubs cannot solve this problem. One student in the essay competition neatly summarised the issue:

> *Law and order will not be a problem when people are busy.*
> *(Form 3 boy, Western Province)*

One teacher remarked:

> *They leave school and go out on the streets to be devils. When they leave after Form 5 and*
> *still can't get a job, we have created a race of educated devils, better able to make guns and*
> *dynamite things.*
> *(Malaitan secondary teacher)*

The formal curriculum is not the only, and may not be the best, place to introduce real changes to the curriculum. Changes to learning outcomes for subsets of students like potential drop-outs might better be effected in the extra-curriculum.

Parent participation in school communities

Parent-teacher associations do occur, but do not abound. More often, parent involvement seems to be limited to working parties, for either building or maintaining school premises. Some committees for these purposes appeared to function well, but there was plenty of grumbling about slowness (or lack) of response by parents to schools which called for building help.

> *There's a new building due to start this month, but …. the parents were called but only a few*
> *came. We'll be doing more effort this weekend. We've got the funds all ready.*
> *(Malaitan secondary school principal)*

Sometimes it was the sheer size of the student catchment area (those who lived close-by got called out too often): sometimes just the difficulty of finding time when so much time and effort needed to be spent by families, in the prevailing straitened economic circumstances, just to keep themselves fed. As several teachers remarked:

> *Parents are too busy working in town, if they can get a job, to contribute much to the school.*
> *(Malaitan secondary social science teacher)*

Parents were often described as reluctant to pay fees and/or to visit the school, and these two observations may be closely intertwined. Some schools could count on their parents contributing.

> *Teacher and pupil attendance drops sharply on wet days, so the school board will meet today*
> *to discuss a new staff house. The money will come from school fees, bring-and-buys and*
> *bazaars.*
> *(Malaitan primary school principal)*

Other Malaitan schools have a regular school bazaar, to raise money for school fees of desperate families, and for additional funds for the school. Children often receive social and economic

experience by running these themselves, even in primary schools. At another school, parents assisted by the local branch of Rotary, had put a new storey on the existing building, and then had paid a local worker "a mere pittance" to finish the job. But elsewhere, the situation was, or had been, different:

> *During the Tension it was the local community who looted the school.*
> *(Guadalcanal secondary teacher)*

There were few examples of schools using parents as this school principal intended.

> *Next month teachers are being told to plan for greater parent involvement for the second semester, to help with hearing reading, etcetera. None at present.*
> *(Malaitan primary school principal)*

This project has identified a sense of community as an important dimension of citizenship. Schools are sometimes the major common experience for members of a community. If the members of the community feel positively about the effectiveness of the school, education assumes a critical role in making a community a cohesive unit. The enhancement of social tolerance and cultural harmony relies on the continuation and sometimes modification of traditional cultural values. The development of community schools with genuine respect for community involvement and participation in policy making by central administrators is a very powerful resource in the enhancement of social harmony.

The language of instruction

The whole issue of what is the appropriate language of instruction is fraught. But there appears to be no systematic policy response being adopted to the issue. The formal position is that English is the language of instruction. But many parents and teachers want to value and maintain vernacular languages. This is a culturally-based position. The reverse positions include the usual reactions associated with the 'weakness' of a spoken language when in written form, as if spelling is the most important aspect of written language. Urban dwellers are inevitably more likely to be familiar with the formal written language (in this case, English) than those whose home culture does not include reading or signage.

Thus regional and equity principles are embedded in this issue, which drew an extremely mixed, regionally-based response from teachers and principals. The Malaitan view seemed to be that there were simply too many different local languages for any formal account to be taken of them at all. Yet a teacher in Gizo complained that there was no instruction in or of the local dialects. Similarly, reactions to Pijin were mixed. Some teachers discounted, even scorned, it and used only English. Others admitted its usefulness, and in places its necessity as a communication channel. The most common response was '*we use Pijin for speaking, and English for writing*'.

> *In English information doesn't move quickly, so it's supported by Pijin.*
> *(Malaitan secondary school principal)*

At an urban primary school, a teacher made the following comment:

> *We use Pijin usually. But it's interesting, Auki (that is 'main town') kids are smarter, and being exposed to different entertainments, they use more language, and talk more than country kids.*
> *(Malaitan primary school teacher)*

Variations in language use make for difficulties in resolving what is the best approach. Local approaches are most likely to be the most appropriate, rather than a centralised policy which attempts to create nation-wide decisions.

SECTION 3: SYLLABUS REVIEW: SOLOMON ISLANDS'

Introductory Comments

As was commented in *Report 1: Stakeholders' Assessment,* difficulties were experienced in collecting the syllabus documents. The documents reviewed do not constitute a complete set by any means, and this mirrors the situation in all the Solomon Islands schools we visited, where none appeared to have a complete set. Initially no one could provide us with a copy of the syllabus in Social Studies for Forms 1–3, clearly a crucial item, given our task description. Some teachers claimed never to have seen a copy, though one was located in a rural school late in the second visit.

Some of the curriculum documents which were read and reviewed have not been reported in detail with the others in Section 3. Judgements about inclusion were made, generally supported by teacher opinion on the use they made of the material, as to the appropriateness of some syllabi to the social cohesion context. Those judged to not be clearly contextualised do not appear in the review. One special case in point is the Nguzu Nguzu series. The Standard 3 Teachers Handbook was obtained from the CDC, but no teacher mentioned it in response to the curriculum questions asked of them, and no further copies of it were seen in classrooms. This is not surprising, given that it is an English (as a foreign language) course. We noticed that the course values the children's' own experiences, as a basis for much of their writing and that it promotes child-centred pedagogy. But it is not known how it is implemented in classrooms, and having no teacher feedback to amplify this point, we have not included it in the review. It models diverse and participatory pedagogy, and has potential as a model of this style of pedagogy.

One difficulty when reviewing syllabus and course materials, as was referenced earlier in Section 1 of this report, is how to determine the strength of the link between what stands ready to be developed in the document's content and what might become of such prompting in the classroom when the teacher enacts the materials. Classroom observation would need to be very extensive to enable generalisations to be made about links being manifested between syllabus documents and pedagogy. This project did not allow time for such classroom observation.

There is a need for the reader of this syllabus review to distinguish between teacher and student materials, for they are quite different in their content and objectives. One gains the impression that in many of the teachers' handbooks accompanying the syllabus prescriptions, the content is only designed to give teachers factual information (or access to it), in order to enable them to keep one step ahead of students in their knowledge acquisition. Suggestions for classroom treatments of any content included as information are rare indeed. Given the caveats mentioned earlier in relation to the limited range of pedagogies experienced by trainee teachers, both in their own schooling, and also in their training, the paucity of teaching strategies in the syllabi suggests that little by way of variation from the 'chalk and talk' style of teaching occurs in the Solomon Islands classrooms. Certainly the researchers saw little teaching at primary or secondary level which varied from this model.

The syllabus documents were analysed for their relevance to the knowledge and the issues which relate to social cohesion and tolerance. The syllabus review, which follows in this section, uses tables to map the content topics in the syllabi which have the potential to connect to such knowledge and issues. Prior's Citizenship Dimensions are again used to provide a locus for the interpretation of the substance of the materials. Section 4 of this report provides a detailed analysis by practitioners in Solomon Islands schools of how they teach the curriculum, and this syllabus review and mapping serves as context for that operational assessment.

Syllabus Analysis: Solomon Islands

Solomon Islands Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development. (1986, trial version). *Social Studies: Forms 1–3 Syllabus*. Honiara: Curriculum Development Centre.

Notes:
The syllabus is divided under theme headings, numbers corresponding to a Form level:
1   SOCIAL CHANGE
2   ECONOMIC CHANGE
3   POLITICAL CHANGE
Despite its importance, the notes on this syllabus are somewhat scanty, as the document was only seen in a rural school and hand notes taken: no photocopy or hard copy was available.

Reference	*Comments*		*Six Dimensions*
Form 1: emphasis on social change	1.1.5	Rules and leadership	D1, D4
	1.1.6	Communes and villages	D3
	1.2	Families (history; lineage; inheritance)	D2
	1.2.6	Duties, sharing and co-operation	D3, D5
	1.2.7	Authority and decision making	D1, D3-4,
	1.3	Communities	D6
	1.3.3	Case study of a community: themes include:	D3
		• emphasis on change in both SI and Pacific;	D1, D3
		• social and physical interactions and differences;	D3
		• co-operation and competition.	D4, D6
Form 2: emphasis on economic change	2.1	Physical environment and its relationship to humanity	D1
	2.2	Use of resources in the SI	D3
	2.2.1	Shifting cultivation	D3
	2.2.3	Plantations and their economy	D5
	2.2.7	Tourism	D5
	2.2.8	Manufacturing	D5, D6
	2.2.9	Preservation and conservation	D3
	2.3	Resources overview	
Form 3: emphasis on political change	3.1	History of political change in SI	D1
	3.2	Leadership and government	D1
	3.2.5	Law	D4, D6
	3.2.6	Pressure groups and labour	D1
	3.3	Systems: USA and USSR	
	3.4	Development and change	D1, D3
	3.4.3	Money	D1
	3.4.4	Population	D1, D5
	3.4.5	Urbanisation and employment	D1

	Curriculum Development Centre. (1996). ***English Syllabus for Forms 1–5 in Solomon Islands Secondary Schools***. Honiara.

Notes:

The Overview (p.5) points out the important fact that for many students English is a third language, given the existence of indigenous languages and Pijin, and that all three are complementary components to language learning.

Reference	Comments	Six Dimensions
General aims (p.7)	The aims are standard, heavily slant ed towards grammar and usage, and relatively straight -forward. Three refer to relevant social science dimensions: • give the student the opportunity to gain personal enrichment; • reflect in English programmes the relationship between English and the cultures and languages of the Solomon Islands; • recognise English as an important SI language which gives Solomon Islanders an effective means of communication at an international level.	D2 D3 D1
Specific aims and objectives	Like the aims, the objectives are standard, heavily slanted towards grammar and usage, and relatively straight-forward. There are only two references in the long list of objectives to interaction and participation in group activities: one to class discussions and seminars, one to part icipation in role-plays and other dramatic performances: both of these as "Speaking" objectives.	D5, D6
Community and *kastom*	Modern Solomon Islander-written literature does not become apparent until Form 5, though collections of 'Custom Stories' are prescribed at the first two grade levels.	D1, D3
The place of Pijin	Pijin gets one mention: aim # 3 of the Literature syllabus reads: experience the dramatisation of literature in its various forms in both Pijin and English". (p. 16)	D1-3
Literatu re	Some of the student texts depend more on rote learning than might be deemed wise, and Pacific literature and issues may well be buried in others. But the syllabus makes no emphatic or key statements about classroom use of such literature, and the text -book lists for reading seem both sophisticated and extra-national.	D3
Critical Literacy	Only two mentions are made of critical literacy (of speech or text) as a crucial language learning factor, or a as a key guideline for teacher lesson -planning. One is in terms of text selection, rather than attention to authorial stance: the other is couched as "read critically and make value judgements" and applies at Forms 4 and 5 only.	D5, D6

Solomon Islands Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (1998, 2nd ed.) *Social Studies: Forms 4 and 5 Syllabus*. Honiara: Curriculum Development Centre.		

Notes:

The syllabus is divided under theme headings, one per semester:

Form 4:

- Conflict and Co-operation in the Modern World
- People and their Development

Form 5

- Industrial and Urban Growth
- Continuity and Change in the Solomon Islands

Theme 4 is dealt with in a separate student resource book, *Social Change in the Solomon Islands*, of which no copy could be obtained or sighted.

There is an interesting trifurcation of the Content descriptions into Content/Key Ideas/Opinion.

Reference	Comments	Six Dimensions
Basic aims	Students should: • be well-informed about their own and other selected countries social, economic, political and belief systems: • develop an awareness and understanding of the changes that have occurred in the past, and are now occurring in the social, political, and economic life of the Solomon Islands ….; • develop an awareness of their society's human and physical resources, the use of these resources to improve the quality of life, and the importance of conserving these resources and the environment in which they live; • develop an understanding and appreciation of the diversity yet interdependence of the peoples in the national and international communities; • develop the skills and attitudes need for them to be committed to play an active, useful and responsible role in the life of their own community, nation, and world as a whole.	D1 D1, D3 D1 D1, D3, D5 D2, D4-6
Skills to be mastered	All process skills (acquiring, analysing and interpreting information). There is no application of the Six Dimensions to be made in this section.	
Theme 1: Conflict and Co-operation in the Modern World	Ideology, conflict, war and attempts a co-operation are studied globally rather than with explicit reference to local conditions. No-one would gainsay the importance of realising just how recent history has developed, not the importance of issues such as apartheid, but one has the anxious experience of wondering just what was going on in their own communities when the students were in school learning about South Africa or regional co-operation in the rest of the Pacific. For example, the list of documents under 1.5 on p. 12 includes the Balfour Declaration (1917).	D1, D5

Theme 2: People and their Develop-ment	This theme includes matters such as human rights, social justice, and the uneven spread of aid and other benefits do get a look in. There is also a greater emphasis on the impact of various issues on the Solomon Islands themselves, and there is a whole section devoted to explaining what it is that students should have "formed an opinion on" during experience of the various pieces of course material. However, the treatments of: • 'economically active' and 'dependent' populations; • 'push-pull' factors in migration; • the "cycle of poverty"; seem to be solely in terms of benefits and disadvantages. This is an opportunity missed for discussion and propositions about solutions short and long term. Nor does there seem to be any attempt at a holistic treatment of many of these issues, which might assist the students' synthesis of major propositions for the civil society, and practice at evaluation of such matters.	D1, D3, D5
	Several key ideas are worth quoting: • "development is not just about developing economies, it is also about the development of people, their living standards, and ideas and hopes for the future." (p. 21)	D5, D6
	• "it is sometimes the "wrong" people who benefit (e.g. the rich, urban dwellers and foreign aid donors) whereas the most needy people get little; e.g. the poor, women and rural dwellers." (p. 23)	D3, D5

Theme 3: Industrial and Urban Growth	This theme seems to contain a large amount of material which could be called a 'post-colonial hangover'. The 3-field system of pre-industrial Britain does not seem germane to the rural life of the Solomons, though many of the 'side' issues relating to industrialisation and urban development as they affect the latter country are touched on at least. One would have preferred that the focus be local, and the historical treatment peripheral, rather than the reverse.
	    Throughout the treatment of this theme, there is a heavy emphasis on conceptual definitions, and the matters on which students are expected to form opinions are often irrelevant or at best weakly related to the society in which these children are growing up. An opinion about 'whether the Solomon Islands has an adequate infrastructure to support modern industry' (p. 45) is not going to take long to formulate.
	    Other prompts to learning, such as deciding 'whether it is a good thing to plan the growth of cities' (p. 47), are marginal at best, like the attention given to urban problems such as traffic congestion, green belts, and the special problems of inner city areas in the developed nations such as life in high-rise apartment blocks.
		D1, D5

Some opinions to be formed	A brief selection: • the values and dangers of nuclear testing in the Pacific (theme 1, 4); • the successes and failures of regional co-operation (theme 1, 9); • how democracy and human rights will encourage development (theme 2, 1); • how the education of women affects birth rates and growth rates (theme 2, 2.1); • whether Solomon Islands should adopt a transmigration policy to relieve pressure on overcrowded islands (theme 2, 3.4); • whether the characteristics of Solomon Islands [agriculture] are changing, and whether this is good or bad (theme 2, 5.1); • whether the Cycle of Poverty is a problem in the Solomon Islands (theme 2, 5.2); • what would be the best types of manufacturing industry to develop in the Solomon Islands (theme 3, 2.2); • what aspects of situation may help or hinder the growth of a settlement (theme 3, 3.6); • which of these [urban growth] problems may be found in Solomon Islands urban areas and what solutions if any have been tried (theme 3, 3.10); • why [shanty town] people are so poor, and have nowhere else to go (theme 3, 3.12).	D5 D1 D4 D5 D3 D1 D5 D1 D3 D3 D4, D6

Solomon Islands Ministry of Education and Training, Department of Primary Curriculum. (1987). *Community Studies Syllabus*. Honiara.

Notes:
"One important task of any educational system is to transmit the culture from one generation to the next, to preserve social stability and to pass on knowledge and skills. … The Community Studies syllabus seeks to give primary school children an understanding of this social change and to build bridges between the old and the new value-systems."
The syllabus for each of Standards 1–6 is organised around six key concepts:
- Needs;
- Groups;
- Change;
- Resources;
- Rules;
- Environment

Reference	Comments	Six Dimensions
Needs	- Basic needs; - Mass media; - Knowledge of the diversity of Solomon Islands culture; - Recognition of the desire to establish a national cultural identity.	D1 D1 D1-3 D1-3
Groups	- Custom, culture and outside influences; - regional and international organisations and agencies.	D1, D3 D1
Change	- understand factors associated with current social change and relate to standards associated with acceptable social behaviour in the community; - demographic study (population, settlement, family, religion and transport).	D1-4 D1
Resources	no relevant topic material	
Rules	- local, provincial and national government systems; - understand why standards are set which define acceptable social behaviour in the community; - knowledge of groups and organisations responsible for community safety and upholding law and order.	D1 D2, D4 D4, D6
Environ-ment	- knowledge of ecological and other characteristics of the Solomon Islands	D1

| Attitudes which cut across all the above segments | • develop a tolerance of others like and unlike themselves;
• gain a set of values on which to base personal behaviour (honesty; sincerity; responsibility);
• value the importance of planning for the future;
• value the need to preserve some traditional practices;
• appreciate the need for groups and communities to live by a set of rules;
• value the need to consider change carefully;
• recognise the need to conserve natural and human resources;
• develop a willingness to help others for desirable group goals;
• develop an appreciation of the need to care for the environment. | D3, D4
D2, D6

D5, D6
D1, D3
D4

D5
D5, D6
D3
D5 |

Department of Education and Human Resources Development. (2000). **Handbook for Curriculum Writers**. Honiara: Curriculum Development Centre. Working Draft, 27 March, authors Franco Rodie and Janet Davy.

Notes:
As well as discoursing on the issues in the table below, this work includes comment on a number of technical issues, such as:
• guidelines for writing a syllabus;
• guidelines for writing a student book;
• guidelines for writing a teachers' guide;
• style, editing, format and layout.

Reference	*Comments*	*Six Dimensions*
Gender issues and the national school curriculum	sections on: • gender meanings; • gender differences; • gendered role concepts; • status of women; • gender in education; • social construction of language; • stereotyping and demeaning.	D1-6
Cultural issues	• strengthening beliefs and values in the school curriculum; • recognitions of cultures, customs and values; • making cultural contexts explicit; • how much change is to be encouraged; • alienation of people from cultures.	D1-3, D5-6
Sensitive issues	• sex education; • evolution theory.	D1

Summary Comments on the Syllabus Review

As is commented in the equivalent section of this report for Vanuatu, social tolerance starts with a knowledge and understanding one's own society, then those of others. The syllabuses are indicative of what needs to be known – and teachers were critical of the content, in terms of its minimal local content and the Euro-centredness of much of which is prescribed:

Teachers who wanted to address social tolerance and related issues asserted they had to adapt what they had in the official documents, and the researchers support this position. There are comments about 'diversity yet interdependence of peoples in the national and international communities' or about people playing 'an active, useful and responsible role in the life of their community, nation, and world as a whole' (Solomon Islands, Social Science, Forms 4–6, p.2). But as has been demonstrated, the syllabus provides little encouragement and the exams little incentive to address such issues or adopt teaching strategies which might allow a divergence of views to be expressed in classrooms.

In the syllabi and other documents, social science 'skills' loom large, particularly at the factual acquisition and basic interpretation levels. Some of these we have classified elsewhere as 'civic knowledge'. Communication finds a place, but hardly ever the higher-order skills of testing of hypotheses, evaluation, and demonstration of personal commitment to the values and attitudes (let alone the actions) which are crucial to tolerance, harmony and co-operation.

Additionally, from the curriculum materials in the syllabus review and in the curriculum which teachers spoke of in the interviews, there is little explicit examination of attitudes such as tolerance, or respect for and celebration of difference. Nor is there any suggestion of how such attitudes might be enacted on a daily basis, what they might mean in practice. No mention is made of the difficulties we or others might have in reaching harmonious interactions and relationships. One Western Province teacher remarked: *'Schools need to teach social justice directly.'*

The most noticeable characteristic of the documentation accessed during this review process was the over-all ad hoc development of the syllabus over a number of years. There is a strong sense of the documents being written by different people, and with different agendas. There is no sense of a sequential and incremental framework. As with the acquisition of knowledge and the development of skills in any other area of learning, the enhancement of social tolerance and harmony needs a structured and developmental framework to be integral to the curriculum.

The syllabus review demonstrates that the mere writing of a syllabus cannot enable an observer or a participant to know what is being taught. Only the construction of a curriculum, where the pedagogy must be outlined and where it be as much the focus of the document as the content, will enable teachers to know what are the desired learning outcomes, and how possibly she or he may reach them. In no area of human learning can this be truer than it is of values and attitudes learning. The next section of this report provides an opportunity to hear the voices of the Solomon Islands' practitioners on matters associated with the actual operations of these curricula, in schools, and how these operations affect social cohesion, in the schools themselves, and in the broader society.

SECTION 4: ANALYSIS OF SCHOOL OPERATIONS THROUGH THE SIX CIVIC DIMENSIONS: SOLOMON ISLANDS

Evidence of student acquisition of the dimensions of citizenship in schools can come from a range of sources. The most obvious is the extent to which the dimensions appear explicitly in curriculum documents. Another source of data came from discussions with stakeholders in schools – principals, teachers and students. Observations by researchers during visits to schools were a valuable source, particularly in the area of the hidden curriculum and informal school practices.

Dimension 1: Civic Knowledge

Civic knowledge refers to those understandings about the civic processes in any community. This is not to imply that these processes will take exactly the same form in every community. For young people to contribute to, and participate in, decision-making processes, they need a well-developed understanding of the institutions involved and the actual democratic processes of engagement as they relate to the institutions and in their society. Examples of civic knowledge include:

- Understandings about the decision-making processes in the community, for example, the role of village chiefs, pressure groups, elections and government

- Knowledge about civic institutions, for example, courts, parliament, schools, village chiefs

- Understandings about the legal requirements and obligations of citizenship, for example, becoming a legal citizen, paying taxes, voting at elections

- Understandings about the historical and cultural contexts in which a community exists, for example, knowledge about different island cultures, use of vernacular languages

Stakeholders in schools, including principals and teachers and parents, referred many times to the absence of topics in the curriculum regarding understandings about cultural traditions, civic institutions and democratic processes. Teachers in different parts of the country were often dismayed at the lack of suitable curriculum materials, particularly materials which focused on island traditions and practices.

> *Syllabuses are not geared towards certain islands and their cultural practices*
> *(Secondary social science teacher, Malaita)*

When asked the question about how to make schools and programs more sensitive to local variety, and students more knowledgeable about civic institutions and more responsive to cultural differences, the same teacher was clear:

> *Malaitans are very sensitive to certain words and about certain social actions which might go unnoticed on other islands. These things need to be sought out and collected, and included.*

Students frequently acknowledged the absence of topics about civic knowledge in the curriculum throughout their school life and expressed both their ignorance and disinterest in political matters. They commented that most teachers rarely commented on current political processes. There were some notable exceptions to this approach. A minority of teachers in different locations related to the researchers how they tried to actively engage their students in enhancing their understandings about democratic participation and traditional decision making practices. One teacher in a remote secondary school told how he regularly used newspapers and radio broadcasts to discuss current events.

> *No, it's not in the curriculum or in the exam, but I think it is important. I have… some trouble convincing students if it's not in the exam.*
> *(Secondary teacher, Gizo Island)*

The most common complaints from teachers were about minimal local content and the Euro-centredness of much of what is prescribed.

> *Much of the social science syllabus is from the 1980s and the copies say it is still in draft; when are we going to get the real thing? Much of it seems irrelevant – the USSR and the Berlin Wall have disappeared, and I leave out the section on plantation management and economy – plantations have gone too.*
> *(Secondary teacher, Malaita)*

Social science teachers, especially secondary, sometimes felt marginalised by the prevailing attitudes in schools, and felt their subject to have reduced status, and not only because of examination-directed learning.

> *English, maths and science are only useful if you get a job in town, a collar job. The distinctions between 'core' and 'minor' subjects should be abolished.*
> *(Secondary social science teacher, Malaita)*

The conclusion drawn by this study is that teachers mostly do not include classroom practices about civic knowledge, as it is not examined in the external exams at Grade 6 and Form 9. Teachers so closely followed the national syllabuses in preparing students for the exams that any additional topics were often seen as distractions to the purpose of schooling. Students, as a result, remain ignorant of current political events and increasingly ignorant about their own cultural heritage. This absence of understandings about their own cultural traditions is particularly noticeable among students who live away from their home village and those who live in urban areas.

There were, however, some noticeable examples where a principal clearly articulated what he saw as a loss of traditional civic knowledge in the current national curriculum. In these instances, civic knowledge usually did not take a political form, but rather linked 'modern' economic knowledge to the world of paid work, and to understandings about traditional economic practices.

> *In forms 1 and 2 we teach them how to run a trade store, and in form 3 we teach single entry book keeping and traditional economic systems.*
> *(Principal, Guadalcanal secondary school)*

In this school this particular form of teaching and learning of civic knowledge was very well received by all members of the school community. Parents could see the relevance of the curriculum and were willing for their children to participate in the program. The program was outside of the formal curriculum, was not examined, but served a very useful social purpose. Programs like this appear to exist, however, in a small minority of schools.

A lack of civic knowledge as expressed in curriculum and daily school practices in the Solomon Islands is a serious impediment to the enhancement of social tolerance and democratic participation. While the acquisition of values, like social tolerance, is an element of the formulation of attitudes, students in schools need a foundation of civic knowledge in order to base their attitudes not on ignorance, but rather on informed judgements. In its place is the potential for prejudice, xenophobic behaviours and ignorance about appropriate democratic participatory practices.

Informal discussions with students in a range of schools re-enforced the view that they mostly lacked 'basic' understandings about the processes of government. To some extent this is not unusual as several other studies in other countries, for example, in Australia, in the 1990s, revealed similar ignorance (and disinterest) by young people about political processes. If

governments want young people to be active participants in their communities (and this is an assumption) then young people in schools need to be informed about, and to practice, participation in decision making in schools. This does not appear to be the case in the Solomon Islands.

Dimension 2: A Sense of Personal Identity

The psychological theories of the development of positive personal identity, or a feeling of self-worth, are well grounded in the belief that the level of an individual's self-esteem is critical to that person being able to, or wanting to, relate or bond with another person or group. A willingness to empathise with, and be tolerant of, other diverse cultural groups or individuals is predicated on a sense of self worth and personal well being.

Respect was the single most powerful value label which interviewees mentioned in response to questions about school goals in the development of student personal value structures and good citizenship. A typical response by a teacher was as follows:

Self-reliance, good attitude, respect for others, teachers and one another; respect for their own learning and others' learning
(Secondary teacher, Malaita)

During discussions in schools, some principals and teachers reported that parents wanted an 'academic' curriculum, the leading route to what they hope would be a successful economic future for their children. It was not clear to the researchers what were the attributes of such an 'academic' curriculum, and there were doubts about the popularity of this desire. The suspicion was whilst most parents may hope their children would succeed in the exams, few were pleased with the educational outcomes for their children hat such parents were a very small sample of the total Solomon Island population. Some stakeholders in the Ministry of Education also reported that in their view that is what students want, too. It is one of the premises about good citizenship held by the researchers that a sense of personal identity, of self-esteem and a developed sense of efficacy are significant initial personal attributes required before generating a broader concern for the welfare of others.

An analysis of both curriculum documents and the allocation of time to various key learning areas as demonstrated on school timetables, clearly re-enforces the view that schools in the Solomon Islands spend little time assisting young people to develop other aspects of their well-being, apart from intellectual development. An examination of school programs revealed precious little time was devoted to both the physical and aesthetic development of students. These important elements in the development of a well-rounded identity were mostly missing from school operations. SICHE for example, does not currently have in training any future teachers of physical education.

Some schools, in preparing balanced and focussed courses for their students, offered elective subjects which attempted, in a small way, to leaven the direct academic teaching. These were most commonly found at Forms 1 and 2 (sometimes 3), and commonly included 'Industrial Arts' (usually woodwork), agriculture and home economics. This curriculum approach represents an effort at providing a schooling for students who were not suited to the mainstream. (Such programs were absent from any primary school with which the researchers came in contact.) One new secondary principal hoped to be able to

Design and run a big vocational education project, probably in agriculture. It will get kids together, raise money, and give them locally useful skills and experience.
(Malaita, secondary school principal)

One impact of the examination system was the growing number of 12/13 year old 'push-out' students who lacked any form of vocational skills. Work experience and careers programs only

loomed large in one secondary school visited by the researchers. This school in Gizo mounted a four-week program for its Form 5 students.

> *It helps their self-reliance, maybe makes them industrious, and it helps us place some of our*
> *Form 5 leavers.*
> *(Gizo secondary Social Science teacher)*

The point was repeated by others in discussions about the development of self-esteem:

> *We have to think about their life after Form 3, but there is no work experience here yet.*
> *Form 3 is just a full stop. I'm thinking about encouraging them to get involved in electrical*
> *shop-work with a firm that does courses in Auki – repairs not computers or anything like*
> *that. I've written for brochures. The parents would have to pay. Form 3 should not seem*
> *the end, but it often does.*
> *(Malaitan secondary school principal)*

One area of the curriculum which appeared, both on paper in curriculum documents, and in the daily school operations, to consider the development of the whole person was the key learning area of Religious Education. Christian Education, however titled, was a common adjunct to the state-ordained core curriculum. The experience for students varied from nothing much more than singing religious songs and prayers to following a designed syllabus. In one school, it was slightly more important:

> *We have religious education with teachers from the churches for thirty minutes a week. And*
> *the class teachers take Christian Education for another thirty minutes, which is*
> *interdenominational.*
> *(Malaitan primary teacher)*

When teachers were asked directly where, for any student, the school experience focussed on personal values and personal development, the most common answer was "Christian [or Religious] Education":

> *It is here we talk about personal, moral and ethical issues in the Solomons*
> *(Western Province secondary social science teacher)*

A common regime in primary schools was to have Christian Education for half an hour a day, with stories, prayers, and singing in accordance with the primary syllabus. Religion is a powerful force in the Solomon Islands and any consideration of the good citizen needs to take into account religious foundation of peoples' daily lives. One explanation (Wintle, 1994) for the power of the Church (whatever denomination), rather than the nation, as a guiding source of morality and values, is that kastom finds it difficult to reconcile changes of party government with the long-standing traditional emphases on continuous authority, and indeed continuous respect, by those subject to this authority.

The personal identity aspect of citizenship is confronted in the Solomon Islands by the cultural notion of the collective good. This focus on community rather than individual has the potential for the collective good in family, village and island life. On the other hand teachers commented on how it manifested itself in classrooms with rooms of passive students who showed little initiative and who much preferred to be told what to do, rather than thinking for themselves.

Dimension 3: A Sense of Community

People generally live in communities and generally undertake some form of interaction with that community. This social behaviour of belonging is rarely simple, as a complex set of rules and customs determine membership to a community. In some cultures, the family, the village, the clan, for example, became the belonging unit to which members had both rights and obligations. These rights and obligations may have been both formal, like the obligation to defend the community in times of war, or informal, like an expectation to marry within the community.

One of the major complexities and contestables now facing communities in the twenty-first century is that the sense of locating oneself in a community has undergone profound changes. The Solomon Islands has not escaped these recent global pressures on where people might locate themselves. The most recent ethnic tensions, more obvious over the past two years, has only brought to the surface the sensitivities involved in attempting to cohere diverse communities in one location.

A sense of community is rarely static and persons can locate themselves in a number of communities. So locations are not mutually exclusive. In the Solomon Islands a centralised, national, rather than a local or provincial, education system is in place. There are a number of cultural and historical explanations for this management model. The earliest forms of formal schooling were organised by churches and not local communities. The recent achievement of nationhood shifted the balance of management from the churches to the nation and again local communities played an insignificant role in developing the nature of school education. Post-colonial schools therefore generally have only marginal connections with local communities. This situation is exacerbated by the continuation of the tradition, started by missionaries, of creating boarding schools at the secondary level. The very recent development of the establishment of community schools by the national government could be seen as an attempt to redress the isolationist factor in schooling. A cynical view might be that it is an attempt to shift the financial responsibility of running schools from the national government to the community.

A positive disposition towards social tolerance requires a sense of community and the fieldwork visits to schools investigated the prevalence of this dimension in schools. On one level, schools themselves are communities, but to what extent do schools in the Solomon Islands consciously promote a sense of belonging? The answer to this question may well be part of the hidden curriculum, although some symbolic evidence was examined. Students generally wore a school uniform and this is an example of a symbol of community. At the primary school classroom level, in particular, teachers worked hard at promoting tolerance through supporting pedagogies.

> *Teachers stimulate co-operation, and sort of 'put the children' together for a sense of school community, so they understand what the school is. And we hope they go back and do the same for their villages ... we have a huge catchment area – some kids walk two hours each way – and the villages are not necessarily in the same clan area or speak the same language.*
> *(Malaitan primary principal)*

The most eloquent and encompassing statement of the issue (and some specific suggestions for how to improve the school programs) came not from a teacher but from a student writer in the essay competition:

> *One of the ways of bringing back and maintaining peace and harmony is to use the socio-political structure of the village, by making use of the village chiefs who arrange programs for the community. Programmes that will help teach the people about the importance of working together and building a better community through inductive teaching, learning self-decision making and through drama and social activities we can also focus on helping the people, especially parents, who can then teach their children to make better decisions on life that will help maintain peace permanently.*
> *(Form 5 boy, Guadalcanal province)*

Another student in the essay competition summarised the issue clearly, and took the argument a stage further:

> *As a community of different backgrounds it is vital that people live with respect for one another, tolerate our differences and being supportive. In relation to this, our community must work together in reconciliation rather than seek for state governing.*
> *(Form 2 girl, Guadalcanal province)*

The need for social tolerance and social harmony at the national level, as a panacea for bringing disparate and sometimes warring sections of the community together, was mentioned over and over again by stakeholders in schools. Yet the researchers found little evidence of practical and

simple symbolic actions being undertaken by schools to promote social harmony at the local level. This lack of effort to "localise" the curriculum was reported as the business of the national system, not the local practitioners:

> *Teachers should be specifically trained to teach culture in schools.*
> *(Malaitan primary teacher)*

At one school in Gizo, the principal complained that there was no instruction in locally important creative arts styles and techniques. At this school, there was something of a call for 'basic skills' instruction, using local traditions, stories, and myths. The school principal told researchers that at the top of this 'wish list' was the building of a community 'kastom' hut. Researchers could neither establish why he had not gained community support for such an activity, nor implemented it.

Nevertheless, some individual teachers were active and skilled in 'massaging' the curriculum to incorporate local community perspectives and incorporating pedagogic practices like co-operative learning into their classroom activities. But such teachers were rare finds.

It was the cause of surprise to researchers that the National Anthem was never reported as being sung, and one school had just ordered its first-ever national flag, which it intended to fly when it arrived. When such obvious customs of social cohesion are unsupported by school systems, it is hardly surprising to find few examples of symbolic cohesion happening in classrooms. The research team concluded that there was little evidence of whole school approaches to the promotion of a sense of community, whether it be at the school, local village and/or the national arena.

The big impression is that schools were so overwhelmed with 'survival' issues that they rarely speculated about how things could be changed to be different or better. As a result schools were not seen as part of the community, but rather a place where children went for part of the day. Secondary schools are seen as being quite distinct from their location, generally not part of the local community at all. An important consideration for policy makers, therefore, is how to harness the energies of local communities to support public education. Part of the answer lies in curriculum renewal. The other part lies in giving schools permission and the power (and the confidence) to engage the local community in policy making in their schools. Given the complex geographic nature of the Solomon Islands, an increase in the role and authority of provincial education offices is clearly warranted.

Dimension 4: Adoption of a Code of Civil Behaviours

Members of communities of all types operate within a code of behaviours which collectively form the values and customs and traditions of the community. Communities generally have ways and means of initiating new members into the community (and of excluding them), maintaining the code of behaviours and, if necessary, adjusting them to changing conditions and environments. The term a 'civil society' describes those communities in which some form of cohering, peaceful and harmonious consensual agreement has been reached by its members, in order to maintain the code of behaviours. The symbols, ceremonies and other activities which illustrate the values and assumptions that underpin codes of behaviours, may vary from community to community, but single communities need to come to some form of agreement among its members about codes of behaviour in order to maintain social harmony.

Civil societies embrace codes of civil behaviours which support community values and traditions. Schools can play a critical role in laying the foundations for young people of the codes of behaviour expected in an adult civil society. Values like tolerance and social justice carry with them appropriate ways of behaviour which enact the values. Schools can support positive civil behaviours in a number of ways. In a formal sense the curriculum can include topics and issues

about a 'civil society'. Schools can adopt rules and activities which promote civil behaviours. And on the level of the hidden curriculum teachers can model, consciously or not, certain behaviours which it is hoped young people will emulate outside of school.

Under Dimension 1 the role of religious education as a form of civic knowledge was discussed. In the religious education curriculum it was noted how aspects of moral and ethical behaviour were formally promoted as a basis for life long action. Apart from this curriculum aspect of approaching teaching and learning about appropriate civil behaviours, there appears to be little other evidence of formal positive approaches.

One teacher made the claim that:

> *All our school rules are derived from Christian principles.*
> *(Malaitan secondary social science teacher)*

Three discipline policy modes were observed. In one primary school, corporal punishment was resorted to for fairly major misdemeanours. In most schools visited, the leading punishment strategy was school maintenance and grounds work after hours, generally on a fixed schedule, though in one school, such punishment was always delivered 'on the spot'. Misdemeanours could be classified as minor (e.g. lateness; swearing; failure to obey teacher commands) and major (e.g. defacement and graffiti; destruction or theft of others' property; violent behaviour in varying degrees). It was rare that parents became involved in the discipline process except for major misdemeanours such as theft, when often the police became involved as well, especially if the crime was committed off-site (two such cases were being investigated from schools visited).

This school utilised cultural knowledge in its approach to student discipline.

> *Villages have their own list of by-laws. There are shell-money penalties for things like*
> *drunkenness and disorder. We photocopied them so we wouldn't make mistakes.*
> *(Malaitan secondary principal)*

Another formulated its discipline policy and goals slightly differently:

> *We try to work on behaviour, attitudes, such as respect for teachers, other students – and*
> *teach them to hold back from provocation in kastom disputes.*
> *(Malaitan secondary school principal)*

Yet another Malaitan secondary school developed a work and maintenance strategy in relation to discipline. It had unexpected side effects:

> *Interviewer: Is the school the place to promote values?*
> *Respondent: Yes, in its discipline policies. But our discipline policy – brushing, cleaning,*
> *maintenance after school – rebounds. They like the work, they find it fun, and the fat ones*
> *lose weight...*
> *(Malaitan secondary teacher)*

It was the impression of the researchers however that very few schools offered opportunities for positively rewarding students who demonstrated appropriate civil behaviours. There appeared to be, for instance, few opportunities for students to be involved in decision-making in their schools.

As a student in the essay competition put it:

> *Co-operation is a medicine that kills the sickness of hatred.*
> *(Form 2 girl, Makira province)*

The appointment of prefects and dormitory leaders were usually seen by teachers as an adjunct for 'peace-keeping' in the school. Leadership potential was equated with skills in policing.

Officials of the Solomon Islands' Ministry of Education were, at the time of the second visit, conducting what was called a strategic review of the educational operation, the third such in as many years. This top-down administrative structure of the Ministry and Provincial operations is

mirrored in school processes. Teacher modelling can be an issue too. Such principled values, attitudes and behaviours as do appear in some syllabuses are not necessarily modelled by teachers, in the Solomon Islands, for example, with absenteeism and various other sorts of unprofessional behaviour apparently, or at least reportedly, rife.

The observation of school operations in the area of civil behaviour in the Solomon Islands has to seen in the context of the continuing political unrest. Schools from all three locations visited by the researchers reported some form of dislocation to 'normal' student behaviour and directly attributed this to the violence associated with the tension. In some cases schools were closed for months at a time while disturbances occurred at their very entrance. Other schools reported looting of teaching and learning resources. Others reported teacher intimidation by visiting and armed gangs.

> *In Form 3 there are only eighteen (students) but they are coming back. In the Tension and since, the kids were very unsettled: they find something hard, they leave.*
> *(Guadalcanal secondary teacher)*

To a large degree this context forms the rationale for this project, and school have had to cope with these situations as best they can with little, if any, support from the national government through the Ministry of Education. Some schools squarely faced the disruptions by adopting a very positive and encouraging approach.

> *The returning students are usually eager to learn, but a few haven't settled and need counselling. We have no punishment at all. It's talk; reinforcement; support; counselling. And it's working. It's [counselling] done first by the deputy principal, and then all staff. Based on questions exploring family background. It's much better than punishment.*
> *(Guadalcanal secondary teacher)*

The research team was left with the impression that the impact of a hierarchical model of school management, re-enforced as it is by the same approach within the bureaucracy, left students with few opportunities to initiate and engage in behaviours which might contribute to social harmony.

Dimension 5: An Informed and Empathetic Response to Social Issues

As much as we might like to think that many communities operate as socially harmonious units, twenty-first century pressures emanating from individuals, groups and global forces, invariably impact on the daily practices and values of communities. These pressures, and the varied impacts they cause, simply cannot be ignored in a society already under considerable tension. Most communities engage in making some form of accommodations and adjustments to these pressures and issues. One of the tensions for communities and their education systems is the extent to which information and understandings about contentious social issues can be discussed within the communities. Even acknowledgment of the existence of issues such as AIDS, gender discrimination, teenage pregnancies, youth ennui and poverty immobilises some communities.

An effective democratic community is one that encourages discussions about contentious social issues and addresses them using inputs from the community. Social cohesion will not be achieved in an environment of ignorance, prejudice and complacency. The recent reported increase in the use of drugs amongst the young in the Solomon Islands and even the now widespread use of outboard motors using high priced fuel, are just two other examples of changing practices which are placing huge pressures on traditional values and are creating a range of social tensions and adjustments.

A sense of citizenship requires both an informed understanding of social issues and also a sensitive and empathetic response to the issues. The disposition towards social tolerance and mutual understandings cannot be fully developed with just an emotional response. It requires both a cognitive response and an attitudinal response.

In the current context of national curriculum which focuses on the recall of unproblematic aspects of knowledge and the development of a limited range of cognitive skills, there was little evidence of students actively engaging in discussions about social issues. Obs ervations of school and classroom activities indicated that students were mostly uninformed about current social, political and economic issues and therefore were unlikely to form an empathetic disposition towards issues outside of their experience or know ledge. To some extent this situation reflects a particular philosophical approach to teaching and learning and is embedded in discussions about what's worth knowing.

It is the view of the researchers that the assumptions and values underpinning the current curriculum model, whether they be consciously held or not, reflect a transmission, rather than a transformative, model of education. For the most part the examination system re-enforces this approach to learning by posing questions which require little more than memory recall. It has been mentioned in other places in this report how the examination could be used as a means to give a different focus to teaching and learning.

Some schools reported little or no discussion of pertinent social issues.

> *The examinations don't ask for them... The students aren't interested... At this school it is difficult to keep up with outside current events and issues.*
> *(Western Province Social Studies teacher,)*

In the issues that are included in the more senior years of the secondary curriculum, teachers complained about an undue focus on large problems and conflicts, rather than more-easily understood and more basic issues which are smaller in scale.

> *In the current social studies syllabus, the inclusion of issues about the Cold War are of no relevance to my students. What we need is encouragement in the curriculum to choose local issues.*
> *(Gizo teacher of Social Studies)*

Social Science teachers, especially secondary, sometimes felt marginalised by the prevailing attitudes in schools, and felt their subject to have reduced status, not only because of examination-directed learning. Until this is no longer a live issue, teachers of Social Studies will be disappointed and under-utilised.

It is the view of the researchers that culturally appropriate social issues should be included in the curriculum. A willingness to respond positively to cultural diversity and to engage in some form of social action is hallmarks of citizenship education. The decision about which issues is clearly one for educational policy makers in the Solomon Islands. It is the observation of the researchers however that issues like conflict resolution, conservation of cultural heritage, drug use, AIDS, and environmental awareness, are worthy of consideration. The social studies curriculum appears to be the most obvious key learning area for the inclusion of social issues. It is in this area that the rhetoric of skill development espoused in the current curriculum documents could be applied to the investigation of social issues.

Dimension 6: A Disposition to take Social Action

Asking the question, " What do you think education should be for?" is a provocative question in a discussion about the purposes of schools. The role of citizenship education in the school curriculum is like this big question in that it makes no sense at all if it lacks a purpose, or a practical application. Like the goals of education, the goals of citizenship are both contestable and problematic. An agreed vision of the world in which you hope young people might live happily and productively is needed, in order to give definition to conceptualising citizenship. It is a values clarification exercise, linking visions of the good life to the role education can play as an instrument of change.

Formal schooling is but one stage in learning, so to confine citizenship learning to the classroom divorced from the realities of the real world is largely a waste of time. There is little point in being a 'classroom citizen', because only a few people benefit from your actions. The bottom line for any effective social education programme is that students actually have the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge, skills and values which they willingly and purposefully offer to the broader community. In other words they become active contributors to their community. A 'good' citizen is one who does pick up rubbish in the community, who does vote, who actively engages in community affairs. In other words they take some form of action.

Some examples of how social action might be demonstrated by young people in schools include:

- Being actively engaged in community service

- Writing to newspapers about social issues.

There is now a large body of evidence that indicates that taking action mostly doesn't come naturally. (Knight, 1999) School is an appropriate place in which young people can learn to take action. For young people, to develop a positive disposition to contribute to their community, they need to practice taking action, facing the consequences, and becoming contributing independent members of the school community. Schools need to develop structures and practices which allow young people to practice citizenship. When young people do not have experiences in showing initiatives and taking action, they lack a repertoire of appropriate actions from which to choose.

In this study, this dimension of citizenship received limited acknowledgment. Stakeholders from the education sector and usually with experiences of studying overseas were enthusiastic about child-centred learning, constructivist curriculum and the democratic classroom. When teachers were questioned about 'child-centred pedagogy', only a few understood the meaning of the term and its implications for their practice. When further confronted with the term 'democratic classroom', few teachers were aware of its meaning or implications.

However, in one school in Malaita, the latter expression had meaning, and the principal reported a successful example of school practice of social action. The secondary school concerned wished to ignore a Ministry edict that schools should lower the school fees by 20 percent, given the worsening economic crisis in Solomon Islands society. The staff agreed but first students were asked to confer with their families about the possibility of keeping fees as they were. Class meetings were held, and the students voted that the school should follow the edict, and fees were lowered accordingly. When questioned about the student response to this process, the principal suggested that a stronger sense of 'school community' had developed amongst students after that opportunity.

More conventional modes of student participation, such as prefect systems or class captaincy, were usually in place in most secondary schools. Student Representative Councils were however, not a common feature. The most common response to questions about student governance or participation in management was *'Children have no say.'* (There were also occasions when staff commented that they had no say in decision-making, let alone the students.) Some schools saw student participants in terms of assisting in the maintenance of school rules.

> *In our school, all Standard 6 pupils are 'prefects'. And class captains supervise and control lower grade pupils during health inspection.*
> *(Malaitan primary teacher)*

Other examples include all students from one school having participated in general community activities, such as the 'clean-up' of Auki town organised by the International Peace Monitoring Team earlier in the year, and a significant percentage engaging in regular community service arranged by the church youth groups they belonged to.

One student, writing in the essay competition, had a very clear view of the importance of this civic dimension, for individuals and governments.

> *For the betterment of us all, leaders must work together with the ordinary people at all times. People must insist on the partnership and dialogue with leaders in the government and other organisations. The government must encourage people to participate effectively in the process.*
> *(Form 5 boy, Guadalcanal province)*

Summary Comments on the Operational Assessment by Practitioners

Visits to a wide range of schools in three location in the Solomon Islands to assess the extent to which school practitioners incorporated issues of social tolerance and harmony into their daily practices, revealed a great disparity between what might be called the 'good intentions approach' of practitioners and the realities of what actually operated in schools.

The most common groups of practitioners interviewed by the researchers were principals and teachers of Social Studies. Principals (all males) were sympathetic to the inclusion of social education in their school operations and they commonly expressed the view that schools have an important role to play in the enhancement of social tolerance. In no school was a whole school plan in place to promote social learning. Rather, some principals could point to a particular school activity which they argued enhanced social learning. It was the impression of the researchers that this lack of a whole school approach was the most significant impediment to the enhancement of social learning in schools in the Solomon Islands. At a symbolic level, the flying of the national flag and the singing of the national anthem are minimal cost activities which can be easily incorporated into every school's operations. On no occasion were these two activities observed, and, in fact, most principals commented that the school did not own a flag. Here is a lost opportunity to enhance social harmony and to strengthen national citizenship.

Some teachers and principals expressed support for the development of their students as citizens, but few saw this as the central aim of the present school curriculum. The most common argument was that assisting students to pass the examinations was what schools were mostly about. This view was sometimes said in tones of despair and this suggested that some practitioners want change. The reality is that on both scores the system is failing students. A vast majority of students cannot continue on at school after grade 6 while at the same time social learning directed towards future citizenship is mostly ignored.

Visits to schools revealed that practitioners, both principals and teachers, were uncertain about appropriate school and classroom pedagogies to promote social learning. At the school level, for example, few opportunities appeared to be given to students to demonstrate civic initiatives. The practice of student leadership positions was generally reported by practitioners in the context of assisting teachers to enforce school rules. At the classroom level, for example, teachers, particularly in secondary schools, appeared uncertain about giving students responsibility for aspects of their own learning.

Since Social Studies is not part of the examination system, it is less likely to occupy teaching time than it nominally should. However, ideally, as one teacher wanted, schooling should be the big opportunity to '*balance spiritual, academic and social expectations and development*', and Social Studies has the potential to play a big role in this development. However Social Studies teachers, especially secondary, sometimes felt marginalised by the prevailing attitudes in schools, and felt their subject to have reduced status. This was not only because Social Studies is not examined, but it is not seen as contributing directly to employment.

Discussions about the kinds of skills all students need for their future lives has the potential to enhances the role of Social Studies in schools, but teachers and principals in particular need to be

able to see a range of ways in which these skills can be delivered to students. An emerging interest in the generic competencies might be a foreshadowing of the re-emergence of Social Studies. Social Studies has the potential to play a substantial role in the curricular and pedagogic development that relates to a emphasising of the social domain. With its emphasis on evidence, hypothesising, working together in groups, the power of values and empathy, and a sensitivity to a range of ways of problem-solving etc, Social Studies is well positioned to embody those social learning competencies.

Teachers supported curriculum renewal especially in social education. A key issue for them in promoting social harmony was the total lack of teaching and learning materials about the cultural diversities of each of the Provinces in the Solomon Islands. Teachers often made the argument that students often lacked a detailed understanding of their own island culture and that teachers who taught in provinces not of their own background, also lacked knowledge and teaching materials about the cultural practices of their school community. The teachers were not surprised at their students' lack of interest in the cultures of other provinces given students had not been encouraged to learn about their own personal cultural customs and practices. Frequently teachers were not able to provide any detail, and this lack of knowledge indicates a low level of interest, which will need addressing.

The culture in the school had a major impact on the capacity, and preparedness, of staff to step outside the models of 'real knowledge' as defined by the exam questions or by a minimalist reading of the syllabi. Whilst most practitioners professed great interest in the issues of social coherence and the future of the nation… they did not allow it to impinge on their practices.

Schools were generally very undemocratically organised, with most students having little chance to develop or practice empathy or leadership, except of the most moribund nature. Having to be in charge of things (such as achieving silence in the classroom) or for the disciplining of others is not sufficiently akin to being responsible for oneself, to be a useful learning experience. Schools which have boarders should be able to create communities which are vibrant and self-managing, and there appear very few of those.

SECTION 5: CONCLUSIONS

The <u>major</u> conclusions to be drawn from this operational assessment of school practices regarding cultural understanding, democratic participation and social cohesion can be applied to both the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. It has been stated earlier that the approach to this project was not as a comparative study, but more a case study approach. To that extent what follows is not comparative, but more in the realm of commonalities. The researchers are very conscious of the extent of differences between the two countries and the diversity within each country.

The focus of Report 2 has been the extent of nexus between the rhetoric of education policy, especially in curriculum documents, and the realities of school and classroom practices in the area of social learning.

It has been argued that teaching and learning involves all of the acquisition of knowledge, the development of skills and the formation of values. It is the view of the researchers that in both countries the issue of what's worth knowing (knowledge) is undergoing considerable debate both in schools and in the broader community. This study revealed that the current curriculum policy is seen by most practitioners in schools in both countries as being out of date, lacking local cultural knowledge, and, in the area of social learning, mostly irrelevant to young people. The application of Prior's six dimensions of citizenship revealed that no key learning area in the curriculum and no school explicitly addresses all dimensions. In some schools, the principal and teachers had devised activities and revised areas of the curriculum to achieve a specific element of citizenship. There were very few of these schools in either country, but it was the view of the researchers was that, once identified, the ministry of education should publicise these case studies as being best practice.

There is a severe slippage between the expectations of curriculum policy makers and the expectations of teachers (and parents). This may be a somewhat unfair comment on the curriculum writers, for the reality is, in both countries, there are currently no social education curriculum writers. The documents analysed for this study mostly were written by outside contract curriculum writers over 10 years ago and since this time only minor revisions have been made.

The current political uncertainties in both countries, combined with the heavy reliance on outside funding, have not assisted policy makers and practitioners in their quest for curriculum renewal. It has been stated earlier that curriculum is a cultural expression of both what is seen to be valued and what is hoped for in the future. In the context of uncertainties in national leadership, it is not surprising that there is little sense of a set of national goals of schooling upon which to plan future directions. The uncertainties associated with outside funding support, which hang over both countries, have resulted in an inability to plan long term and in an unequal distribution of existing funds to the various provinces. As a generalisation, schools are grossly under-funded for the very basic necessities for teaching and learning. However, a common comment by practitioners in both countries and supported by the observation of the researchers, is that some favoured schools are much better resourced than others. When governments allow such a situation to occur, regardless of their motives, they feed social disharmony and undermine the public perception of social justice in government policy and the public service bureaucracy.

It became very clear, very early in this project, that the promotion of social harmony and cohesion are sub-set elements of much broader issues which cohere under the banner of 'national goals'. By discussing what it means to be 'socially educated' and to be a 'good citizen', participants in the study revealed many insights into what it means to be an individual and what it means to be a member of a community, or of multiple communities. Issues of national identity quickly arose. Issues of the acceptance of diversity of cultures arose. And these issues were

embedded in both individual and collective memories, which on occasions betrayed prejudice and expressions of stereotypes. Current education policies and school practices are not addressing these tensions. It has been argued in this report that citizenship is contestable, problematic and in need of constant revitalisation. The failure to recognise and allow for diversity in a broad framework of defining a citizen can only lead to social disharmony. The evidence is that this tension of citizenship is being played out in the current situation in both case study countries. In Vanuatu, the role and the effectiveness of two recent policies – the Education Master Plan (1999) and the Comprehensive Reform Program (1997) – will be critical in cohering a long term strategy to promote social learning. Likewise, in the Solomon Islands, the newly developed 'Strategic Priorities for the Ministry of Education 2002–2005', with its mission of assisting people to 'live in harmony with others', a direct response to the recent tensions, which connects with this project's orientation.

The issues embedded in identifying the extent to which schools and teachers actively encourage student involvement in decision making, and student engagement in social action, are very complex. On the one hand, support for these strategies involves a particular view about teaching and learning. Another component involves beliefs about the relationship between schools and their local communities. We believe that there is now sufficient evidence to support the view that the formal inclusion of topics and subjects in the curriculum with a focus on citizenship is not, in itself, effective in enhancing student ideas about making a positive contribution to their community. Nor is the use of national icons and symbols of themselves, an effective strategy for enhancing social harmony. But when many of these strategies are adopted and adapted and linked, in ways which make sense to particular school communities, then there is the possibility of an effective coherent and sequential program.

It has been argued elsewhere in this report that a defining element in assessing the effectiveness of a school in promoting social tolerance and harmony is the role of the school administration and specifically the role of the principal. This study revealed that the idea of the democratic classroom or democratic decision making processes by the school community were both unknown by most school practitioners. There is some evidence that a disbelief in these notions is culturally based within the broader value of respect. Yet in private conversations many teachers were bitter about their undemocratic treatment as teachers and as individuals by both the education bureaucracy and the principal. Other teachers wanted students to be more active participants in their classes. The conclusion reached was that the pedagogies of values education associated with promoting social harmony and citizenship are largely unpractised by teachers and that a great deal of professional development will be required. The introduction of these democratic pedagogies will also need to be introduced during pre-service training of teachers.

The focus of Report 3 will be on establishing a generic framework for the development of a social education curriculum, specifically tailored to the promotion of social tolerance, social harmony and good citizenship in the Pacific islands.

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APPENDIX A: ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – School-based Stakeholders Interview Framework

Curriculum documents/policies

Does the school have a complete set of current Ministry curriculum documents?
If not , why not?
To what extent are Ministry curriculum documents/resources available to all teachers?
To what extent are these curriculum documents used as curriculum planners by teachers and schools?
To what extent do students and parents have an understanding of the contents of the curriculum documents?
To what extent do curriculum documents drive/dominate teaching and learning?
To what extent can teachers adapt curriculum documents to suit the locality/their own style?
To what extent do curriculum documents focus on local/island/national/global issues?
Do you support the idea of a national curriculum and/or do you support locally/provincially developed curriculum? Why? What are the benefits? Who should be involved? How would you like to be involved?

School governance

What are the traditional processes/patterns of decision making/leadership in the local community?
How do these processes work? In what ways does the community benefit?
Are modifications to the traditional processes possible, and if so how might they be initiated?
Should these traditional ways of decision making be encouraged/taught in schools?
How would you describe the decision making style of your school?
Who and/or what factors determine the style of leadership/school governance in the school?
To what extent do individuals/collectively teachers contribute to decision making in the school?
In what ways do students contribute to decision making in the school? Examples?
In what ways do parents contribute to decision making in the school? Examples?
When/what was the last time you participated in some aspect of your local school activities?
What would be the most appropriate style of school governance for your community or school? Why?

Classroom practices

To what extent do examinations drive classroom practices? Is this OK?
Can you name some social issues that have been discussed in your classes?
Why were these particular issues raised in class?
To what extent do teachers encourage/allow for the addressing of social issues in classrooms?
If so, how is this done?
Do you think teachers impose their values on the students? When?
What are the blockers that prevent active student engagement in social issues?
To what extent and in what ways do parents and others contribute to classroom practices?
What is the most commonly used teaching and learning pedagogy? Why is this the one? Who decides?
What do understand by the term 'democratic classroom'?
Do you support a democratic classroom?
How do you as a teacher /parent feel about sharing decision making with students?
How important is it for students to be taught and learn in their own local language?

How often does this happen in your school/ classroom? Why this often? Under what conditions?
Is there a punishment/reward regime in this school?
How often have you experienced/witnessed intolerance, culturally insensitive behaviour and verbal/physical abuse in your classroom/school?
How important do you believe modelling in school and family are to young people learning and practising tolerance?

Curriculum content

What are the most important things students should learn in school?
What skills are important?
Who should decide which values are the important ones for young people to learn?
Should school teach values? If yes, what values?
Can schools teach young people to be a 'good citizen'?
How important is it for students to practice how to be a 'good citizen/person at school?
How might this be done?
How important is it for schools to include topics that encourage social tolerance and cohesion in the curriculum? Why?
Do you think schools are in fact engaging in the teaching and learning of these values already?
Is it important that religious education is part of the school curriculum?
Is religious education the appropriate curriculum area to teach about values?
How important is it that the curriculum allows for/encourages the teaching and learning of local issues/skills/ content?
Should students develop a global perspective?
What are the most important aspects of the curriculum? Why?
To what extent do you think schools/the current curriculum are providing what you want out of education for young people? What's missing?
Has the curriculum changed since you were at school? If so, for the better? Why?

The possibilities

What's the best thing that schools are doing at the moment?
What's the thing that they could do a lot better?
In an ideal world what would you most like changed at your school?
What do hope that your school can most offer to all of its young people ?
What can the school system do for the young people who drop out of school, say after grade 6?
What are schools for?
What do you understand by the term 'social tolerance'? What are some of its essential parts?
What goals can you envisage coming true for you and your place?
What is the role of social tolerance in this picture?
While acknowledging the recent tensions how would you describe the extent of 'social tolerance' in your community/country now?
What are the biggest obstacles preventing peace/social tolerance in your community?
When you think about the future of your country/province/village, what sort of picture do you have in your mind?

In this project we will be organising a reflective workshop in mid year. What would you like to tell decision makers to consider in their deliberations on what schools can contribute to social tolerance, community participation and democratic processes?