

Curriculum Reform in Solomon Islands: A Shift from Eurocentrism to Solcentrism in Curriculum Making

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Abstract This article focuses on school curriculum documents. It specifically investigates teachers' perceptions of curriculum in the Solomon Islands context. Using a questionnaire as a means of gathering data, a sample of 35 teachers were asked to provide their perceptions about the curriculum documents for three subject areas, using criteria developed by Print (Curriculum development and design, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1993)—interest, authenticity, appropriateness, organization and balance, and technical quality. The analysis of the data suggests that the local curriculum documents for Social Studies have been received by teachers much more positively compared with the foreign curriculum documents in English and Mathematics. This implies that in both curriculum development work and the delivery of education, it may be preferable to contextualize the curriculum documents to suit the local context. The study has implications for curriculum development in other Pacific Island countries that were colonies of metropolitan powers and even in other small island developing states worldwide.

The authors coined the term Solcentrism to refer to curriculum made specifically for the Solomon Islands context.

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Introduction

The term “curriculum” is defined in numerous ways by people, reflecting their varying perceptions. For example, curriculum is simply all planned and organized learning and teaching process at school (Thaman 2009). Another definition refers to curriculum as a sum total of resources such as intellectual and scientific, cognitive and linguistic, textbook and other supplementary materials that are brought together in a learning environment for the purpose of teaching and learning (Luke 2012). Even though resources like intellectual and scientific, and cognitive and linguistic are often utilized in debates, the focus in this study is specifically on the mandated government documents utilized by teachers to teach in specific learning areas. As instruments of state control over education these documents generally contain statements of pedagogy as well as knowledge, scope, and sequence. What happens in the classroom environment is shaped by not only the professional background of the teachers but also the curriculum materials selected for learning and teaching (Drake and Sherin 2009; McDuffie and Mather 2009; Luke 2012). All these factors together with others combine to make curriculum decision-making and implementation highly contested. In Pacific Island countries this is most certainly the case. The first curriculum, introduced by the missionaries, focused on basic literacy and simple arithmetic. The curriculum was western-oriented and the intention was that people, once able to read the Bible, would be more easily converted to Christianity (Thomas and Postlethwaite

1984). Generally, the missions were concerned primarily with religious and humanitarian efforts. Their aim was to “civilize” the islanders by Christianizing them and everything else was second to religious instruction (Wasuka 1989). In view of the mission’s purpose, the curriculum in those early days was simple and consisted of only a few subjects (Wasuka 1989). This illustrates the nature of the curriculum used by the missionaries to achieve the specific purpose.

Later, the colonial government looked increasingly to education to train members of the elites from the local population so that eventually they would be ready to take over the affairs of their own country and at the same time speed up economic development. As a result, the colonial government took an active part in the provision of education by streamlining the educational activities and by providing financial assistance to schools, even going to the extent of broadening the school curriculum to address the economic needs of the colonies (Thomas and Postlethwaite 1984). What this illustrates is the implementation of a curriculum by the colonial governments for the purpose of economic development. What surfaces here is a number of debatable curriculum issues because the curriculum was mediated through colonial imagination which London (2001, p. 45) refers to as “contrived to the disbenefit of the other.” The purpose of the curriculum is one focal point of debate and other contested areas include for example, curriculum content, curriculum materials, and medium of instruction (Luke 2012).

Overall, in each one of the small island states in the Pacific there is very little known about the nature of the curriculum due to lack of research conducted on curriculum issues. As a result, transfer of research findings and best practices of western countries are used to inform developments in education generally and curriculum specifically in the small island states such as those in the Pacific region (Crossley 2010; Crossley and Vulliamy 1997). In particular, research literature on the perceptions of stakeholders on the nature of school curricula in the Pacific is notable for its paucity. This means that more research is needed to provide insight into the nature of school curriculum in each one of the countries in the Pacific region.

In light of this, the purpose of this study was to explore teacher’s perceptions on the curriculum materials that were used in one of the countries in the Pacific region, namely, the Solomon Islands, a former British colony. The Solomon Islands is a small developing nation. Like other small developing nations in the Pacific, the Solomon Islands relies heavily on funding from donor agencies for development in education and other sectors of the economy (Sanga 2005). Specifically, the study focused on the product of curriculum writing, that is, curriculum materials

of three subject areas, namely, Mathematics, English, and Social Science used in the Solomon Islands primary schools. The following primary research question guided the study: What are the classroom practitioners’ perceptions of the imported and locally produced curriculum materials?

Theoretical Framework

In this study, London’s (2001) work which advocates curriculum as a *cultural practice* provides the theoretical platform for the study. This means that curriculum should be context-specific and therefore, should consider the socio-cultural context of both the learners and teachers (Teasdale 1995; Thaman 2009). If curriculum is viewed as cultural practice then any curriculum development work should give due recognition to the cultural and social realities of learners and teachers (Kanu 2003; Semali and Kincheloe 1999). However, during colonialism the colonial powers, with notions of power, superiority and greed (Nandy 1983) imposed western education systems on the colonized. Power and control were exercised through a formal body of knowledge which the schools were mandated to distribute through the curricula (Luke et al. 2012). Some writers rightfully claim that those things embedded in the curriculum could be one way of controlling what official knowledge the people should learn (Apple 1990; Giroux 1983). This was the case in most of the countries colonized by imperial powers such as Britain which imposed its “cultural practice” on the colonies through education. Due to contextual differences, transferring of curriculum and curriculum materials from one country to another without due consideration to the contextual factors therein such as local cultures and histories may pose considerable difficulties in curriculum implementation (Crossley 2010; Crossley and Vulliamy 1997). This calls for an ongoing process of curriculum making in individual countries in order to meet the contemporary demands rather than importing curriculum from another country with the view that *one size fits all*. In other words, curriculum making should be context-specific and a continuous process whereby interpretation, adaptation, modification, and revision of the prescribed documents are vital for the ever changing needs and demands of an individual country.

Analysis of the Literature

Colonization and Curriculum

As the Solomon Islands Report pointed out, education in most former colonies of Britain remains a legacy from that educational heritage (Educational Policy Review Committee 1973). Likewise, Udagama (1979) expressed similar

sentiments when he stated that imported or imposed metropolitan education systems, with their examinations and standards, impose restrictive curricula in many colonies. A restrictive curriculum was put in place simply because the colonial power's intention was for economic gains at the expense of social and cultural development of the indigenous population.

Similarly, Thaman (2009) states that the curricula in most colonies were basically the manifestations of Eurocentric curriculum and were greatly influenced by colonial consultants and curriculum decision makers. She further added that the dominant cultures and ideologies of the colonial powers have affected not only traditional education but also various other aspects of national life such as economics and politics. This observation by Thaman (2009) is certainly true of most Pacific Islands countries. Even some Pacific Island countries continue to use imported curriculum materials and also tend to use Eurocentric approaches to curriculum development and implementation (Altbach and Kelly 1978; Thaman 2009; Tikly 2010). The imported curriculum or foreign curriculum does not necessarily meet the contextual needs of the recipient country (Thaman 1993; Taufe'ulangaki 2001). Thaman (1993) refers to this curriculum as *undemocratic school curriculum* because it excludes students and their home cultures. Also, the key decisions about curriculum philosophy and paradigm were made in the colonial power's homeland by education systems and societies there and not by the people in the colonies. The exclusion of indigenous cultures, histories, knowledge, and skills from the mainstream curriculum would greatly disadvantage the teachers, students, and the local people. Such a situation could lead to discrepancy between goals of foreign curriculum and the cultural goals of the indigenous population, as suggested in the literature (Serpell 1993). Various commentators and observers of education in the Pacific have expressed concern that most of the time during the colonial era, the economy was the driving force toward curriculum policy, content, process, and even assessment (Hindson 1982; Roughan 2002; Pene et al. 2002) and not culture.

Similarly, reporting on the situation in the Solomon Islands, Watson-Gegeo and Gegeo (1992) pointed out that children's culture was kept out of the classroom and also the curriculum documents used were alien to the children's real-life contexts and lived experiences. Added to that, the teaching and learning styles and the medium of instruction used were basically foreign. The educational heritage has made English the medium of instruction in most schools in the Pacific region (Udagama 1979). Teaching was abstract and not connected to student's culture, and there was emphasis on book-based learning which is not common in indigenous communities. In children's everyday life learning is utilitarian with real-life experiences. This style

of teaching promoted a *linear* approach to thinking and doing things compared to a *circular* approach to thinking and doing things in most indigenous cultures of the Pacific island states (Thaman 2009). Together with this, the colonial and missionary style of teaching was common in schools which meant that students were treated as individuals rather than groups and this was quite often contrary to the student's home culture (Thaman 2009). It is important therefore, to recognize indigenous people's cultures, histories, knowledge, and skills, and approaches to learning in any curriculum development work which hitherto were marginalized.

All these changes introduced into the life of the local people by both the missionaries and the colonial government led to the erosion of most of the traditional learning practices as well as social, economic, and political changes in the colonies (Goldsmith 1993). With the forces of globalization and modernization, more changes are likely to happen in future and this calls for the protection of the cultures of the Pacific Islanders (Crocombe and Crocombe 2003) by having a locally made curriculum.

In the case of Solomon Islands, Wasuka (1989) comments that overall, the educational changes as well as changes in social, economic, and political life have been beneficial and it is impossible to reverse the situation. The achievement of political independence fostered a strong feeling of self-identity and the government intended to tailor education to the needs of the local people and the country (Wasuka 1989). Nonetheless, recognition of practicalities means that the curriculum and the curriculum documents put in place by the metropolitan power, that is, the colonial governments have continued at least temporarily in this, as in most, Pacific Island countries despite political independence.

During the colonial era, curriculum development for most Pacific Islands countries did not give rise to any grave concern: it was taken as given that the colonial government provided the curriculum and the curriculum materials. The countries under colonial rule used materials produced in the colonial power's homeland. For instance, in the case of Fiji and Solomon Islands, materials used were produced in Britain (and used extensively throughout the Empire). After independence, however, for most of the newly independent countries, assuming responsibility for their education systems and curriculum development work such as writing of the curriculum and preparation of the curriculum materials was a major struggle due to various reasons such as lack of expertise (Thomas and Postlethwaite 1984).

Postcolonial and Curriculum

Even during the post-independence period, the school curriculum in most countries in the Pacific persisted with

an academic-orientation and was generally based on Eurocentric models. In some countries strong concerns were voiced on the need to move away from such models in order to harmonize the school curriculum with the local context (Thaman 2009; Taufe'ulangaki 2001). In this regard, curriculum workers were intended to ensure relevance of content and materials in the school curriculum as well as pedagogy to suit the local context, that is, to contextualize the curriculum (Fiji Education Commission 2000).

With the passage of time, the necessity for Pacific Island countries to give serious thought to curriculum development for their own education systems became more apparent. During the period 1970–1980s, some attempt was made to use a regional approach to curriculum development (Thaman 2009). The attempt, like regionalization across other sectors (Hau'ofa 1993) was problematic for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is the great diversity of cultures and the different stages of economic development which is a characteristic of different parts of the Pacific. A regional approach to curriculum development appeared to be inappropriate and the individual countries were left to grapple with curriculum development work on their own and at their own pace. Some countries were quick to put appropriate mechanisms and structures in place to work toward curriculum development and others were fairly slow. Fiji is one of those countries to take the lead by setting up a Curriculum Development Unit in 1970; and later the Kingdom of Tonga, with financial support from the New Zealand government, followed suit (Thaman 2009).

Without foreign funding assistance most of the Pacific Islands countries, would find it difficult to undertake curriculum development work (Taufe'ulangaki 1987). In this case when donor agencies fund curriculum development work they insist that Pacific Islands use consultants from universities and organizations of the donors (Ruru 2011; Sanga 2005). For example, the large scale curriculum reform at the primary level in PNG was carried out by consultants and curriculum advisers from Australia (Joskin 2012). This then means that the consultants from abroad could very well influence curriculum decision-making in the Pacific Island countries due to lack of professional expertise in the countries of the Pacific region.

In this regard, the *Re-thinking Pacific Education Initiative for the Pacific by the Pacific Peoples* (RPEIPP) emphasizes the need to revisit the school curricula for the purpose of better contextualizing the curricula (Penetito 2009). However, the choice for developing countries is far more complex than either the over-determined adoption of a western type of education or a renaissance of “traditional world man” (Udagama 1979). This illustrates that it would be best for a nation not to isolate itself from the rest of the

world in contemporary times, but to arrive at a position where curriculum reflects the complex embrace of both tradition and modernity in the Pacific region. Macro-considerations such as ones based on economic, cultural, or political arguments would pave the way forward for all to become global citizens (Bartlett et al. 1996; Udagama 1979). Therefore, it is imperative to put in place a curriculum which would help develop relevant skills for participation in a globalizing world and at the same time help in social and cultural development domestically.

Teachers' Interactions with Curriculum Documents

As far back as the 1970s, Hughes (1973) emphasized the need for active teacher–participation in curriculum making. Teacher participation in curriculum making is professionally sound for many reasons not the least of which is teachers' intimate understanding of the needs of children and families through living and working in communities (Burnett and Lingam 2007). Through their everyday work teachers acquire a comprehensive picture about curricular reasoning that is, how to plan, assess, and adjust and implement curriculum (McDuffie and Mather 2009). This would contribute toward a positive *dynamic interaction* in the learning environment whereby meaningful learning will take place (Clandin and Connelly 1992). As Schnepf (2009, p. 197) asserts “one of the most significant factors in teachers' use of curriculum materials is how they position themselves in relation to those materials”. This means that when teachers are familiar with the curriculum materials they would maximize the curriculum potential by adapting, adjusting, or by using supplementary materials to suit their particular school and community settings (Ben-Peretz 1990; Luke 2012). As Ben-Peretz (1990, p. xiv) states “curriculum materials are far richer in their potential than is envisaged by their developers, and offer teachers a wide array of possible uses.” With experience and expertise with a particular set of curriculum materials they are likely to achieve this (Drake and Sherin 2009). In fact literature suggests teachers remain faithful to curriculum materials especially those grounded in their cultures and knowing them well enhances learning and teaching (Jackson 1986).

Conversely, with foreign curriculum materials teachers and students are likely to face difficulties in using them as they were intended for a different context. The teacher-proof curriculum which focused on textbooks (Remillard 2005) was common in the colonial era and these textbooks were published in the colonial power's homeland and used in the colonies. These textbooks were made specifically for a distinctive group of students and teachers for a particular context and as such this made it difficult for the local teachers to use them. As Tikly (2010, p. 7) cautions there is

danger in “transferring and transplanting of Eurocentric and irrelevant... curricula and textbooks to different settings.” Insensitivity to the context can lead to undesirable consequences such as failure of whatever is transplanted in another setting and this calls for more attention to cultural and contextual factors (Stephens 2007). With regard to Pacific Island students, they generally positively engage with curriculum materials which are based on their own socio-cultural context (Daudau 2012). Such a curriculum would interest them and at the same time promote a participatory and interactive approach to learning.

Although curriculum decision-making processes are centrally controlled in the Pacific Islands countries, there seems to have been a tradition of wide consultation prior to determining and making decisions concerning the contents of the subjects in the national curriculum. The geographically dispersed nature of each country and the high proportion of untrained teachers in some countries’ systems such as the Solomon Islands (Lingam 2010) undermine what is generally considered to be the professional soundness of this approach.

What emerges from the preceding literature is that some small developing nations are still grappling with curriculum development work. Despite several decades of independence some countries in the Pacific region continue to cling to the metropolitan countries for curriculum documents. The situation in Solomon Islands is very similar to that of most of the other Pacific Islands countries where colonial influences in education are still evident and quite conspicuous even in contemporary times. Also, the literature illustrates teachers interaction with curriculum and curriculum materials is enhanced when they are well versed with them. This would help maximize children’s learning outcomes. The key theme that arises out of the review of literature is the need for adequate consideration of the context to meet the specific needs of a country to ensure a *democratic* curriculum is put in place.

Method

Instrument

The questionnaire utilized in this study used self-assessment items and also used open-ended questions for respondents to write their comments (Bryman 2004). More specifically, the survey questionnaire was designed with a 5-point Likert scale for rating the curriculum documents, 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest. The teachers were asked to rate each of the curriculum documents according to the following criteria: interest, authenticity, appropriateness, organization and balance, and technical quality. Also, the teachers were asked to provide comments relating

to the ratings for each criterion. These comments helped capture the respondents’ views on the curriculum documents in greater depth. The above criteria adopted for evaluating the documents, advocated by Print (1993), were considered suitable for the present study. The measures are appropriate for evaluating curriculum in multiple contexts (Print 1993).

Data Collection Procedure

Before administration of the questionnaire, each of the items in the criteria list was thoroughly explained to the participants. The explanations provided to the participants were consistent with the principles of curriculum design found in the University of the South Pacific teacher training program. These include:

Interest: Are the materials of interest to the students and do they stimulate their curiosity?

Authenticity: Are the materials factually accurate and up-to-date and were the curriculum writers qualified for the work?

Appropriateness: Do the materials fit into the national curriculum, school scheme, and class program? Are the materials appropriate for the level for which they have been prepared?

Organization and balance: Are the materials constructed on sound principles of learning, such as sequencing, levels of difficulty, and clarity?

Technical quality: Are the materials produced attractive to students, durable, and functional?

The participants were then asked if they had any difficulties understanding the criteria. Since there were no clarifications sought, it became clear that all of them understood the criteria and were then asked to respond to the questionnaire after critically reflecting on the curriculum materials for the three subject areas. The teachers were given approximately 40 min to respond to the questionnaire. The principal researcher personally administered and also personally collected the completed questionnaires from the participants.

Sample

Since this is the first study on curriculum issues conducted in the Solomon Islands, the researcher considered it appropriate to target a specific group and in this case those teachers who attended a University of the South Pacific flexi school on curriculum development. This resulted in a purposive sample of 35 primary teachers to whom an invitation was extended to participate in the study. They all held teaching qualifications from their local teachers’ college and were studying through the University of the South

Pacific to upgrade their qualifications. On average these teachers had served in the primary teaching service for almost 18 years.

In doing so the teachers who were the participants of the curriculum development course provided their perceptions on three sets of curriculum materials, that is, for Mathematics, English, and Social Studies. The Mathematics and the English curriculum materials were imported from Australia and Papua New Guinea, respectively, and the Social Studies materials were prepared locally. These curriculum materials were chosen because they were selected and approved for use in schools by the Ministry of Education. Also, the three subject areas for which the materials were chosen for the study formed part of the core curricula. The Solomon Island government had been able to secure funds and technical expertise from the UK to help in undertaking major curriculum reform and at the time of this research the Social Science curriculum materials were already being produced locally (Ministry of Education 2006).

Data Analysis

As mentioned earlier, the curriculum materials evaluated included Mathematics (HBS), English (PNG), and the local Social Studies curriculum materials, which were locally produced by the Curriculum Development Division (CDD) of the Ministry of Education, Solomon Islands in 2009. On the basis of the criteria, simple descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were considered appropriate along with some content analysis of open-ended survey responses to determine teachers' perceptions of the curriculum materials (Creswell 2009).

Result

The analysis of the data is presented in Tables 1, 2, and 3. With reference to Mathematics (HBS, Australia), the two items rated above the group mean of 4 include the technical quality, and organization and balance of the curriculum materials (Table 1). Interest and appropriateness of the curriculum materials were rated the lowest when compared with the other criteria such as authenticity and technical quality. Some of the typical comments from the teachers were: "The mathematics curriculum material was quite advanced and difficult"; "Not appropriate for the Solomon Islands rural context"; "The language used was difficult for the children to understand"; "The material was durable as it was sewn with cotton"; "The curriculum material was good but most of the examples and readings were based on the Australian context."

Table 1 Mathematics (HBS, Australia)

Criteria	Likert scale (1 = lowest; 5 = highest)	Standard deviation
Interest	2.67	0.68
Authenticity	2.93	0.77
Appropriateness	2.17	1.14
Organization and balance	4.85	2.10
Technical quality	4.11	0.96

With regard to the English (PNG), all the ratings were below the group mean of 4 (Table 2). The highest rating received was for the technical quality of the curriculum materials and the lowest rating as shown in the table is for the appropriateness of the materials, which has a group mean of 3.0. Some of the typical comments received were: "Not much interest as most of the illustrations and characters used were from the context of PNG"; "The English curriculum material was contextualized for PNG so the materials did not fit well into our education system"; "In the passages, a lot of names of persons, places, and other things were in the PNG language"; "Does not really stimulate interest because some words used in PNG language and people's names mean bad words in our language."

With reference to the Social Studies curriculum materials, all the items received a mean rating of above 4.0 (Table 3). Interest in the curriculum materials received the highest rating of 4.89. Added to this, the technical quality of the curriculum material has a mean of 4.44. As examples, the following comments demonstrate the teachers' high level of positive perception with the materials for the Social Studies curriculum: "Very attractive cover page with colorful pictures especially local photos"; "It is contextualized and has up to date information with a lot of activities"; "The level of English used in the material is easy for children to understand and there is a glossary provided in the book. The Social Studies curriculum material suits the learning ability of the students here"; "The quality of the material is very appealing to students"; "Those who develop the materials know our context well."

Discussion/Implications/Conclusions

The analysis of the data, both quantitative and qualitative, illustrate that the English and Mathematics curriculum materials that were imported and used in the primary schools were not really suitable for the Solomon Islands context. The ratings demonstrate that the teachers did not have a high level of perception with the materials for those

Table 2 English (PNG)

Criteria	Likert scale (1 = lowest; 5 = highest)	Standard deviation
Interest	2.58	0.84
Authenticity	2.63	0.90
Appropriateness	2.50	0.90
Organization and balance	3.63	1.06
Technical quality	3.78	1.03

Table 3 Social studies (local)

Criteria	Likert scale (1 = lowest; 5 = highest)	Standard deviation
Interest	4.89	0.39
Authenticity	4.41	0.62
Appropriateness	4.67	0.61
Organization and balance	4.22	0.68
Technical quality	4.44	0.56

two subject areas. As a result of lack of interest with the foreign materials, teachers may not have taught the materials wholeheartedly and with vigor (Hughes 1973; Remillard 2005; Schnepf 2009). In the same vein, students may not have benefited much from the foreign curriculum materials based on the two subject areas, as their teachers showed little interest in them which may have inadvertently affected their teaching of them (McDuffie and Mather 2009). The ratings for the curriculum materials for Mathematics were higher than those for English. In terms of educational development, Australia is quite advanced in comparison to Papua New Guinea and the higher rating for the Mathematics material may reflect a better level of preparation of these materials.

In comparison with the Australian Mathematics curriculum material, the ratings for the Social Studies curriculum material exceed the ratings for the Mathematics as for the English curriculum materials on all criteria except the organization and balance. Since the curriculum developers were specifically writing the Social Studies curriculum materials for Solomon Islands primary school children, they may have effectively contextualized the materials for the benefit of both the teachers and children (Harris 1991; Penetito 2009; Stephens 2007; Thaman 2009; Tikly 2010). The curriculum materials for Mathematics and English, on the other hand, were based upon the needs of students and societies in Australia and Papua New Guinea, respectively. The Social Science curriculum materials were judged to have greater relevance to the Solomon Islands context (Thaman 2009; Wasuka 1989). This may have raised the

positive responses of the teachers on all criteria. The highest satisfaction rating of 4.89 was given to the level of interest (Table 3), doubtless because of the appropriateness of the materials to their local context. As a result, they may now have a better level of understanding of the Social Studies curriculum material and in turn its application in the classroom and in everyday life (Daudau 2012; Luke et al. 2012; Taufe'ulangaki 2001).

From the analysis of the feedback, it is possible that the teachers feel "ownership" of the curriculum materials that were developed in Solomon Islands by their own compatriots in the curriculum development unit (Penetito 2009; Stephens 2007; Taufe'ulangaki 1987; Thaman 2009; Tikly 2010; Udagama 1979). Apart from the people in the curriculum development center, teachers from selected primary schools were also involved in curriculum development work for the new materials. This is a good practice, giving teachers hands-on experience in writing the materials and valuing their input which improves their curricular reasoning (Hughes 1973; McDuffie and Mather 2009). Also, if teachers are going to be actively involved in curriculum development then more opportunities need to be afforded to them. The possibility of future training programs during school holidays to improve teachers' skill in curriculum development work certainly seems worth pursuing. Their participation would enrich their own understanding of the curriculum materials and in turn, ensure better delivery through improved teaching and learning, leading children to achieve better learning outcomes (Hughes 1973). Furthermore, teachers' participation can help bridge the gap between the curriculum materials and the actual teaching-learning processes in the classroom (Hughes 1973).

Implications

The people and the country feel pride in having their own curriculum materials instead of importing from overseas countries curriculum materials that feel "foreign" to them. As this study has shown, the lack of interest and the inappropriateness were felt acutely in the Mathematics and the English curriculum materials, which were imported from Australia and PNG, respectively, for use, unmodified, in the Solomon Islands primary schools. In fact, these materials were specifically tailored to meet the educational needs of students in the countries for which they were developed and not for the Solomon Islands educational context. The teachers may have also lacked confidence and expertise with the two curriculum areas and this is likely to have adversely affected children's learning in these areas. Curriculum materials are important documents for both teachers and students and if these are inappropriate for a particular context then surely children will suffer in their

schooling (Luke et al. 2012). For the sake of children's education, it would be wise if countries, in the face of some practical limitations *adapt* the curriculum materials of other countries instead of merely *adopting* them into their education system. Consideration of Crossley's (2010) suggestion, that context matters, would pave the way forward for success in various educational initiatives and developments. In addition, macro-considerations are worth pursuing in any curriculum development work to ensure that the people and the nation are not insulated from the rest of the world (Bartlett et al. 1996; Udagama 1979).

Conclusion

Solomon Islands does not have a buoyant economy and depends considerably on foreign aid for educational development purposes. Through funding from aid agencies it has embarked on significant reform of the school curriculum. One of the major reforms is the local production of contextualized curriculum materials. With technical assistance from the UK, the curriculum materials are being written by teachers selected from the school system together with curriculum writers from the Curriculum Development Section of the Ministry of Education. With the passage of time, it is expected that curriculum materials in all subject areas will be locally produced. This should result in more relevant materials, responding more appropriately to the needs of the country, whereas the curriculum materials in the past, as well as the language of instruction, reflected priorities of the metropolitan power, in this case Britain.

The study, though small in scale, has demonstrated that the teachers, who are the key people responsible for curriculum implementation at the school level, have a low level of perception concerning foreign curriculum materials. Their higher level of perception with the locally produced curriculum materials seems to arise from the belief that consideration has been given to the cultural context in which curriculum development and implementation is to take place. The locally produced curriculum materials for Social Studies have greater relevance in terms of interest, authenticity, appropriateness, organization and balance, and technical quality. Apart from teachers, the people of Solomon Islands may be proud as they have full ownership of the curriculum materials. Thus, the move by Solomon Islands to produce its own curriculum materials is a step in the right direction.

Since this is a pioneering investigation on teachers' perceptions of the curriculum materials in a small developing island state in the Pacific by using a small sample size, the notion of transferability is an issue. However, the study is not concerned with generalisability of the findings to other educational settings. Despite this, transferability

may take place when individual readers interpret and reflect on the findings as representative or similar to their educational context (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Further inquiry into matters relating to the nature of curriculum is warranted. Also, inquiry into teacher's capability of adapting and modifying prescribed materials to fill up any gaps with imported curriculum materials. Embarking on such studies would generate useful information to countries in the Pacific region and at the same time provide deeper insights about classroom practitioners' engagement with curriculum materials and their ability or inability to revise/adapt imported curriculum materials. In the same vein, such studies could unravel best practices from local teachers toward curriculum making.

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