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Volume 16, Issue 2: 2011

A large, stylized graphic on a purple background. It consists of a thick yellow wavy line that starts on the left, dips down, and then rises to form a series of three overlapping arches. A black railing with white vertical bars is superimposed on these arches, suggesting a path or a bridge.

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Funds of knowledge: Developing a Diploma in Teaching in Early Childhood Education in the Solomon Islands

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Abstract

This article discusses how three early childhood teacher educators, from the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education School of Education and the University of Waikato Faculty of Education, worked in partnership together and with others to develop a new Diploma in Teaching Early Childhood Education (ECE) for the Solomon Islands. We argue that the knowledge and understandings that we shared about New Zealand early childhood education and its bicultural curriculum Te Whāriki made our task easier from the outset. So too did our shared “funds of knowledge” and expertise, particularly the Solomon Islands women’s indigenous knowledge and abilities to reflect on teaching and learning in their nation and New Zealand, two contexts they understood well. As we worked through a range of issues related to the development and delivery of courses, the primacy of relationships and historical, cultural and social contexts for learning were reinforced. Broad understandings of relevant education pedagogy for adults and young children were incorporated through the diploma development process. The result was a new Diploma in Teaching Early Childhood Education and new ways of teaching and learning embedded in Solomon Islands contexts, blending the best of local and imported knowledge. This article adds to a small body of literature related to ECE in the Solomon Islands and the Pacific region.

KEY WORDS

Early childhood education, Solomon Islands, teacher education, funds of knowledge.



Historical ECE context—training, qualifications and partnerships

Prior to the mid-1990s there was little government involvement and very limited provision of early childhood education (ECE) services in the Solomon Islands. The few early childhood centres that existed were mainly kindergartens and preschools sponsored by private schools, church groups or children's charity organisations (Foote & Bennett, 2004). Staff or volunteers had limited access to any formal training. At that time, there were general concerns about the quality of programmes and specific concerns founded on evidence of a downward push of what was happening in formal school settings, that is, teacher-directed, academic-oriented, transmission-based, rote-learning methods of education (Koya-Vaka'uta, 2002). There was an increasing desire for change consistent with changing views internationally of education philosophy and pedagogy (Bishop, 2010; Koya-Vaka'uta, 2002). Images of the child away from the idea of a passive child, to whom knowledge is imparted, were being replaced by the notion of a child who is an active and competent co-constructor of learning (Ministry of Education, 1996).

In 1995 the Solomon Islands government set a goal to “maximise quality kindergarten programmes for young children” (Daiwo, 2002, p. 89). A partnership, aimed at realising this goal, was entered into with Dunedin College of Education, funded by the New Zealand government. This was the first of such partnerships between the two governments and tertiary education providers that have supported the growth and ongoing development of ECE in the Solomon Islands (Daiwo, 2001, 2002). It laid the foundations for the University of Waikato Partnership focused on the redevelopment of the initial teacher education qualification at the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education School of Education (SOE).

The team from Dunedin recommended that an effective system of teacher education was an important key to quality (Foote & Bennett, 2004). This is consistent with international research that shows a characteristic of good quality ECE supporting child outcomes is that adults working with children hold ECE teacher qualifications (Mitchell, Wylie, & Carr, 2008; Smith, Grima, Gaffney, Powell, Masse, & Barnett, 2000). A two-tier system was developed and implemented: the first “a basic programme to provide immediate ‘on the job’ teacher education for existing teachers throughout all provinces, and the second a substantive teacher education programme to be delivered at the Solomon Islands College of Education” (Taylor & Foote, 1995, as cited in Foote & Bennett, 2004, p. 2).

The development and growth of “on the job” or “field-based training” (FBT), and the collaborative approach between the New Zealand team from Dunedin and local women pioneers is well documented by Daiwo (2001) in her doctoral thesis. Foote and Bennett (2004) identify keys to the success of that project as relationships based on collaboration and active participation, a team approach, a shared vision, and a strong sense of agency on the part of Solomon Islands professionals. These hallmarks of this early partnership are evident in this subsequent one.

Funds of knowledge and expertise

The redevelopment of the ECE teaching qualification at the SOE was also a collaborative endeavour with the initial work being shared between Dr Joanna Daiwo,

Viola Malasa (two local Education Studies team teaching staff at the SOE) and the author, Janette Kelly from the University of Waikato (UOW). In our work together we drew on the “funds of knowledge” and expertise that each of us brought to the Partnership. The underlying premise of a “funds of knowledge” approach is that “people are competent, they have knowledge, and their life experiences have given them that knowledge” (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005, pp. ix-x).

Our knowledge and experiences were complementary. Joanna and Viola were experts, insiders in their cultural contexts: the Solomon Islands and the education systems therein. Meanwhile, I (Janette) was an outsider, with extensive knowledge of ECE in Australasia and beyond. I also had recent experience as an ECE teacher and current experience as a teacher educator at the UOW. As there was an expectation from the outset that the new Diploma of Teaching ECE would be both internationally benchmarked and steeped in Solomon Islands socio-cultural contexts, our combined “funds of knowledge” were important to the partnership and necessary to inform our primary task, the new diploma.

Joanna Daiwo was a primary trained teacher from Temoutu Province who had completed higher education qualifications in Australia, the US and New Zealand. She had been back working at the SOE since the completion of her doctoral study and was the Assistant Head of School: Academic at the time of our working relationship. Joanna’s PhD from the University of Otago was a comprehensive and valuable thesis that chronicled the history and development of ECE in the Solomon Islands including teacher education and training (Daiwo, 2001). Joanna’s experiences living and studying in a range of international contexts contributed to her understandings of Western ways of seeing and knowing including contemporary education theories and practices.

Viola Malasa was appointed to the vacant ECE lecturer’s position at the SOE in April 2008 and became the ECE Programme Coordinator in 2009. Originally from Choiseul, she too was a primary teacher and had completed an ECE qualification at the Dunedin College of Education/University of Otago. Her teaching experience in primary schools and ECE settings also proved invaluable in our course development work. Viola was heavily involved in the constitutional reform process, under way during the term of our project. Her goal was to see more women elected to Parliament and she has travelled extensively throughout the Solomon Islands doing grassroots work for the past five years or more. Viola and Joanna are multilingual women who are passionate about the future of their nation and the education of its youngest citizens. Their peers hold both women in high regard.

In my first year as an ECE lecturer at the Faculty of Education at the University of Waikato, I became the UOW’s ECE academic on the Partnership. I was keenly interested in the project, having recently completed my Masters of Education including papers in ECE curriculum theory and development; and I had taught many children of Pacific heritage during my ECE teaching career in New Zealand. My brief was to work alongside my Solomon Islands counterparts and over two years (2007–2009), I visited the SOE five times (10 weeks in total). I was involved with the development of the two-year Diploma in Teaching ECE. This programme replaced the Certificate in Teaching ECE programme. It began in 2009 with students taking nine courses and going on teaching experience for six weeks.

The “funds of knowledge” approach was reflected in the roles we took up and the ways we worked together. We placed emphasis on holding sustained discussions to

clarify our different points of view and experiences and to develop shared understandings specifically about our work as well as the role of ECE in preparation for school and citizenship. In this way we were able to generate thoughts and ideas that built on each other and went beyond what one person alone could produce.

Communal funds of knowledge were also extensive, shared and brought to bear during the course development process and the subsequent teaching. SOE staff often had three languages, or more: their vernacular (or several from each of their parents), Pijin and English as a third language. This strength of being multilingual brought rich understanding of Solomon Islands languages and culture that were incorporated in teaching and course development. Conversations in a number of languages occurred, ranging from social justice, politics, peace and prosperity, the future in terms of increasing urbanisation and technological advances to climate change, global warming and possible ancestral links with New Zealand Māori and other indigenous peoples from around the globe. Many SOE staff besides Joanna and Viola had studied overseas and these experiences contributed further shared meaning.

Other authors in this special edition journal describe the partnership model of capacity building central to this project. This model required UOW staff to work alongside SOE staff, supporting and advising but not directing. Joanna describes our roles from her perspective:

Janette played an advisory role: she suggested most of the topics in our ECE courses, discussed and helped put together course structures, provided, or named and pointed out possible and appropriate readings for the different courses, then the actual writing of our two courses (*Fundamentals of ECE*, and *Historical, International and Local Perspectives of ECE*) in the form that we are teaching them was done mostly by us [Joanna and Viola]. (Joanna Daiwo, e-mail, January 10, 2011)

On each visit our work was based on terms of reference that determined which proposed ECE courses would receive attention. This course development work occurred alongside other Partnership expectations such as professional development around ECE curriculum and pedagogy for teaching staff. Joanna, Viola and I developed and jointly facilitated several sessions for non-ECE staff, many of whom would be teaching ECE student teachers for the first time as part of the new diploma programme.

Initially, Joanna, Viola and I fleshed out the introductory ECE course outlines—*Fundamentals of ECE*, and *Historical, Local and International Perspectives of ECE*—and identified potential readings and other resource materials. We then worked with other staff from the UOW who were supporting local teacher educators in the Education Studies, Language and Expressive Arts, Science, Maths and Technology and Social Science departments to develop ECE courses in their specialist subject areas.

Joanna and Viola continued to take a keen interest in the development of the whole diploma and together we three kept a watching brief, from time to time contributing specific ECE examples or content for generic courses such as *Professional Studies*, *Preparation for Tertiary Learning*, *Human Development* and *Curriculum and Assessment*. We constantly stressed to other teacher educators the importance of using ECE examples in generic principal lectures and tutorials to reduce the alienation of

ECE student teachers through the absence of material relevant to their sector. This partnership work served as reciprocal professional development for us all.

Viola and Joanna stressed that our work was building on or improving existing ideas and perspectives in the Solomon Islands ECE. Hence, we were always mindful of the efforts and progress made by women before us prior to the new diploma being developed. We three shared a vision of quality ECE for children throughout the Solomon Islands and, like others before us who had contributed their communal funds of knowledge to develop ECE in this nation, saw teacher education as one of the ways to achieve this goal.

The Solomon Islands' socio-cultural context

Messages about the importance of curriculum relevant to the specific cultural contexts of the Solomon Islands are clearly visible throughout the Partnership documentation. These messages were echoed by stakeholders and my Solomon Islands colleagues throughout the course development process. This remained central to all of us and mirrored that of early partners and partnerships; for example, Foote and Bennett (2004) note:

The theoretical underpinnings of the work [developing FBT] were grounded in ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1972). The unique features of Solomon Islands had to inform the programme ... It was recognized throughout the development and implementation phases that unless this programme of teacher education reflected the cultural context of the country and was meaningful for the teachers, children and their families it would not be effective. (p. 2)

Our work in the Diploma in Teaching ECE built upon the foundations laid by previous New Zealanders who had “imported” the New Zealand curriculum, *Te Whāriki* to the Solomon Islands while it was still in its infancy. This document (Ministry of Education, 1996) includes a diagram of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model, described as a set of nested Russian dolls, which we discussed in an early planning meeting. Joanna and Viola both insisted that adaptations were called for in the version of the model they would use in their future work with student teachers. “The church”, “the wantok system” and “helpen fren” (helping friends was how they referred to the Partnership team as well as the many aid agencies operating in the country) needed to be included and clearly highlighted as significant other spheres of influence surrounding a child and their family’s learning environments. Whilst these institutions and structures are not generally part of mainstream thinking in New Zealand ECE contexts, they were clearly significant in this culture and affected children’s lives and learning. Hence the following terms were added to the model in both English and Pijin:

- students and children—Pikinini;
- teachers and student teachers—Tisa an student tisa;
- parents and families—Famali an wantoks;
- ancestors—Tubunas an bubu;
- churches, ministers, pastors, priests, elders, Mamas;
- villages an Communities; and
- consultants and stakeholders—Helpen fren.

Christianity is very important in the lives of the Solomon Islands people and most villages throughout the Solomon Islands have a church. In all areas of the country visitors are encouraged to respect the people's Christian beliefs, as well as their traditional customs (Solomon Islands Visitors Bureau, 2009). Consistent with my knowledge of Māori in New Zealand, Christianity and traditional spiritual practices co-exist in this cultural context.

The significant place of religion throughout the new diploma curriculum quickly became apparent as we looked for ways to incorporate both religious and kastom (custom) knowledge into many courses in ways appropriate to young children. In the early days of development for *Making Sense of the World* (a science, maths and technology paper), I told a childhood story where my mother explained that thunder was not scary, it was just "God playing marbles with the angels in heaven". Local staff related with ease to this story as it fitted with both their traditional kastom and religious stories. It appeared to give them licence to include similar stories from their areas/islands into their lectures and tutorials. They also considered inviting student teachers to share stories from their localities to highlight the similarities as well as differences between people from different ethnic, provincial and language groups.

Wantok, a major part of Melanesian culture in the Solomon Islands, refers to a communal support system of family and clan associations involving people of the same language group (Solomon Islands Visitors Bureau, 2009). Ratliffe (2010) highlights that family responsibilities and obligations are high in Pacific Island cultures where identity is connected to a strong collectivist orientation—family, village, community and island. In terms of students and their families, Ratliffe argues that teachers need to be cognisant of these facets of identity along with the associated obligations. These responsibilities, typical in Micronesian cultures, also relate to extended family and are not optional. Therefore, wantok featured in the diploma course content where it was to be formally recognised and articulated in terms of a child's sense of belonging, their obligations and values. It would also be acknowledged in student teachers' well-being in terms of arrangements on campus, teaching experience and as they entered the teaching profession.

Cultural differences also exist beyond what we see. In a useful "cultural iceberg" model, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998, as cited in Terreni & McCallum, 2001) show how many aspects of culture are implicit rather than explicit, existing in the submerged part of the iceberg invisible beneath the water surface. Often very different from one's own, these aspects are more difficult to access and require sensitivity and understanding. This model was deemed useful by Joanna, Viola and other SOE lecturers for furthering student teachers' understandings about cultural differences across ethnic and provincial groups within the Solomon Islands.

Other significant cultural aspects highly relevant to Solomon Islands contexts are the existence of three distinct ethnic groups; Melanesian, Micronesian and Polynesian, hundreds of islands, nine provinces and 87 different languages. Whilst nation building is a government priority following the ethnic tensions and unrest of the recent past, ongoing recognition of the diverse and distinct peoples of the Solomon Islands was important from our perspective as external partners. English was the language used in formal meetings; however Pijin was the language predominantly used by staff when they were relating to each other informally, as it is throughout the Solomon Islands (Solomon Islands Visitors Bureau, 2009).

ECE context

The pioneers of many of the early kindergartens were the wives of expatriates or missionaries. The number of ECE centres grew exponentially from a reported 41 in 1996 to 297 in 2003 (Foote & Bennett, 2004). This trend has continued and by 2007 there were 455 centres throughout the nation (Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development [MEHRD], 2008a). The growth in the number of centres has been accompanied by many challenges, mostly related to the provision of qualified staff, funding, resourcing and the sustainability of government and community-based initiatives (Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, 2008a).

ECE centres, generally those in urban areas sponsored by private, charity and aid organisations, are well staffed with qualified teachers, low teacher:child ratios and an extensive range of traditional and Western ECE resources, whereas provision in rural areas or islands beyond Guadalcanal is often very basic. Children attend in huts with dirt floors have unpaid or volunteer teachers (who may or may not have begun/completed the 50 hours of FBT), natural materials and hand-made equipment and little or no purchased equipment or resources. The government recently began paying an annual grant of \$600SBDⁱ per annum to all ECE centres. Officials reported their concerns that it was often being spent on expensive acrylic paints and cartridge paper as these were seen as better than traditional natural resources such as paint made from mango bark. They noted the expense of these resources and that they were short lived and quickly used up (B. Ha'amori, personal communication, November 3, 2008).

Challenges for diploma development

As we sought to prepare beginning teachers to work in a wide variety of ECE centres and settings, we grappled with many issues including relevant course content. What should the Diploma in Teaching ECE include and how should it be taught? Koya-Vaka'uta (2002) articulates a continuing need for curriculum change in three key areas of education in the Pacific: relevance of content and process, teaching methods, and the production of quality teaching aids and texts. Koya-Vaka'uta argues that often Pacific education is still based on passive rote learning that is academic-centred, content-based and examination-driven. The SOE staff confirmed this view, particularly in relation to their children's education in schools and whilst this was not specifically the case in ECE, the trickle-down of these practices was still an ongoing concern to us, as it had been in the mid-1990s.

Context-specific and culturally relevant curriculum, resources and changing teaching methods were foci of our work through the Partnership in terms of the revised ECE qualifications. In the early days of the development process we were mindful of the absence of a national ECE curriculum specifically for the Solomon Islands. The influence of *Te Whāriki*, the New Zealand ECE curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1996), was evident in centres as a result of "field-based training" being heavily based on it. Whilst *Te Whāriki* is non-prescriptive and invites each ECE centre to weave its own programme perspective into the fabric of the curriculum, understandably, the MEHRD officials and others in the sector wanted their own "context-specific" national curriculum.

In the latter stages of the diploma development process, the MEHRD began work on the development of a Solomon Islands national ECE curriculum, employing a New

Zealand teacher educator as their technical adviser. The draft curriculum produced was called *Valium smol pikinini blong uimi* (Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, 2008b); this Pijin title literally translates as “valuing small children that belong to us”. Modifications were made to course outlines for the new diploma to include references to, and sections from, this new document, which not surprisingly bears a strong resemblance to *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996).

Scarcity of relevant and context-specific ECE resources was a widespread issue. Even some of the resources developed for schools were not widely available to ECE centres or the SOE staff, for example, the *Nguzu Nguzu* series of early readers. These hard to come by children’s books, developed by the MEHRD curriculum development staff, portray “kastom (custom) knowledge”, that is, traditional stories with moral messages. Cost, as well as reliable means of distribution, was a significant factor preventing these and other resources from becoming widely available. As well, paper copies of resources, videos and DVDs do not last long in tropical conditions.

An extensive set of ECE textbooks that I had selected and purchased in New Zealand with Partnership funds was available to us to use in course development. We spent hours pouring over them to find suitable readings both in terms of content and level. Much of the material contained in the textbooks, while useful to understanding ECE generally, was written from a Western perspective. What resonated most with my Solomon Islands counterparts related to indigenous peoples, particularly Māori in New Zealand and Aboriginals in Australia. Most of these resources talked about indigenous people being part of minority culture yet here the “white fulla” was the minority.

Nevertheless, material focused on understanding and respecting diversity and difference was seen as useful in terms of the government’s nation-building aims and improving relationships between different provincial groups of Solomon Islanders. Little had been written about ECE teaching and learning in the Pacific or in the Solomon Islands, with the exception of Joanna’s work (Daiwo, 2001, 2002). Several reports from government focus specifically on education and early childhood education (Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, 2007, 2008a), while others from non-government agencies such as UNICEF (2004) and UNESCO (2007) report on the state of Pacific ECE generally including barriers, constraints and recommendations for the future.

At an ECE stakeholders meeting a number of issues and concerns were raised that related to the proposed diploma content. There was unanimous support for knowledge of the Solomon Islands contexts to occupy a central place in the new diploma. Teachers and officials alike emphasised the need for culturally responsive teacher education. We heard from government officials that, in their observations, planning and assessment of children’s learning were often missing from ECE teachers’ current practice. Concerns were also raised about the lack of suitable resources available to children in many ECE centres and the high value placed on the resources that beginning teachers have traditionally made during their teacher education and brought with them to ECE centres. Despite scarce resources, children were inventive in their adaptation of everyday items as play materials.

I heard a noteworthy example of cultural contexts when I asked teachers about the school starting age for children from Vutu Kindergarten. Teachers in this rural coastal kindergarten answered that children enter school when they were able to cross the river, regardless of their age. This example highlighted the importance of socio-cultural

contexts for children’s learning in this country. It also served to reinforce that literacy, numeracy and strategies for teaching reading needed to be included in the new diploma curriculum specifically for the benefit of older children attending ECE centres.

Culture-based learning, encouraging the use of local materials and resources, and the use of the mother tongue for acquiring a second language have all been identified by Camaitoga (2007) as recommendations for the way forward for ECE in the Pacific. These issues resonated with the Solomon Islands teacher educators and we sought to address them as we developed course outlines for *Fundamentals of ECE*, *Expressive Arts and Language*, and *Literacy and Communication*. However, in an oral society with multiple languages, finding things written down for student use or having the time to record information relating to indigenous and local knowledge was problematic. We concluded that ways to tap into, and share, the rich repertoires that student teachers brought to the tertiary classroom would need to be continually sought by teacher educators.

Other noteworthy examples of local “context” and relevant curriculum resources seen were a replica RAMSIⁱⁱ Jeep, made by soldiers and donated for children at a kindergarten to play on; a photograph of a model of the local tuna cannery made by children at an ECE centre in Western Province (Daiwo, 2001); and used car tyres being used as playground equipment at each centre I visited and in children’s home “backyards”.

Relevant ECE knowledge in the tertiary setting

As we developed the framework and course outlines for the Diploma in Teaching ECE and associated professional development programme for SOE teacher educators, Joanna, Viola and I drew on our knowledge of ECE pedagogy and practice and our qualifications and experiences in ECE and teacher education. These “funds of knowledge” supported us as we brainstormed key ideas that we felt were vital knowledge about teaching and learning approaches, applicable in both ECE settings and ECE teacher education programmes, for the SOE staff teaching across programmes, that is, newcomers to the culture of ECE. These were seen as reminders for some of us, and shifts in thinking for others, if the programme was to be a success. The synergy between teaching in ECE and ECE teacher education is apparent in the ideas and inclusions in the italicised text:

1. ECE and ECE teacher—not transmission mode;
2. learner centred—*student teachers also* learn through their relationships with people, places and things;
3. integrated curriculum based on *what student teachers need to know in the context of SI ECE*, incorporating their interests and strengths and developing their dispositions towards learning;
4. context important (both micro and macro);
5. inquiry based learning;
6. importance of intersubjectivity—shared understanding;
7. communities of learners—teachers, children, parents, families, wantok; and
8. teaching strategies include; *lecturing*, modelling, facilitating, acknowledging, directing, demonstrating and collaborative strategies such as scaffolding (*explaining*) and co-constructing.

(Source: Partnership notes, Janette Kelly, November 2008)

In professional development sessions with individuals and groups of non-ECE staff, we shared the following pedagogical strategies, which Joanna, Viola and I had jointly agreed were priorities and reminders that the new Diploma in Teaching ECE needed to be taught differently.

1. The relevance of the principles and strands of *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996);
2. Group presentations/seminars to develop student teachers' confidence, leading to standing up and presenting alone;
3. The place of interactive tutorials; emphasis on collective experience;
4. Not over-assessing a student's learning or students;
5. The importance of teaching staff as role models;
6. The importance of teamwork and mentoring in ECE; and
7. The value of micro teaching at the model centre at SICHE SOE, in the ECE classroom.

(Source: Partnership notes, Janette Kelly, November 2008)

The next chapter

The new diploma programmes for ECE, primary and secondary teaching were launched on 26 February 2009. Viola's email to me several days later captures the excitement:

The launching went well, the students were entertained with panpipe music and it was a great day of achievement, despite the heavy rain in the morning. It was like a feeling of huge success in everyone especially when the Coordinator of NZAID (Rebecca Spratt) was there congratulating and acknowledging the contributions and efforts of all staff and giving special recognition in asking all SOE Staff to stand and everyone applauds. The PS [Private Secretary] for Education Ministry was present to witness the occasion too.

By the end of the first year retention rates were high for ECE student teachers. Of the initial 51 students enrolled, only two had withdrawn during the year and the rest would be moving into their second year subject to pass requirements (Strachan, 2009, p. 33). At that time an internal review of the first year of the new diploma programmes took place and interviews were conducted with students and staff. Both groups saw the shift from teacher to learner-centred approaches as empowering and enabling for students, teachers and children as the following quote from the review report illustrates:

ECE students said that learner centred approaches build their confidence, make them feel confident to explore the various information provided and others [information] that relate to their work. The interaction they have with their peers is a new thing that they learn. They learn from each other during the discussions. The learner centred approaches help them discuss, debate and make compromises on answers to learning task and assignments. (Solomon Islands College of Higher Education, 2010, p. 10)

This is gratifying as it is the shift in Pacific education that Koya-Vaka'uta (2002) and others have argued for in terms of teaching methods. However, more work is

involved for everyone in terms of ongoing assessments rather than examinations, and other workload issues, according to comments from a staff member in the review report. In the report it was also noted that culture played a part in whether or not the new approach was accepted by teacher educators and/or student teachers because the old ways are deeply ingrained as they have been part of everyone's teaching and learning experiences over many years (Solomon Islands College of Higher Education, 2010).

Conclusion

Challenges remain but the vision, and reality, of quality education for all Solomon Islands children will endure as more qualified teachers graduate from the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education. Positive changes will occur for children in education settings as the knowledge and learning from redeveloped teacher education qualifications is spread by new and existing ECE teachers. Borrowing words from my colleague Joanna, "Their sense of ownership, shared understanding and commitment to what they are doing will help their approach to evolve and endure over time" (Daiwo, 2001, as cited in Foote & Bennett, 2004, p. 9), as will their funds of knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Through this Partnership the people responsible for teacher education in the Solomon Islands have been deeply affected by our work together. The foundations are strong. Relationships with others and understandings about the vital importance of context in the education of children and adults are cornerstones of ECE and key concepts in the new Diploma in Teaching ECE (Solomon Islands).

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ⁱ \$600SBD equates to about \$100NZD.

ⁱⁱ RAMS1 Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands.



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