

PACIFIC CURRICULUM NEWS

Editor's Note: This first item is reprinted with the kind permission of UNESCO.

1995- A Year of Tolerance

The UN General Assembly, in response to a UNESCO request, has proclaimed that tolerance is an essential factor to world peace, and has declared 1995 as A Year of Tolerance. This is especially in view of:

- * ethno-nationalist conflicts;
- * discrimination against minority groups;
- * acts of xenophobia, against refugees, asylum seekers, migrant workers, immigrants;
- * racist organizations and ideologies, and acts of violence;
- * religious intolerance; acts of violence and intimidation committed against writers, intellectuals, and other individuals exercising their freedom of opinion and expression;
- * intolerance fostered by political movements/ideologies;
- * intolerance expressed through marginalisation and exclusion from society of vulnerable groups, or violence and discrimination against them.

A year-round program of activities has been planned in connection with this event, as well as a series of publications to promote tolerance.

Further information from the Unesco Year of Tolerance Secretariat or Office of Public Information, UNESCO, 7 Place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris, France.

CURRICULUM RE-DIRECTIONS IN SOLOMON ISLANDS

Donald Malasa

Education in Solomon Islands is at a crossroads. Before the introduction of the formal education system, our societies had their own systems of traditional education, by which knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for each society were passed on.

The western or formal education system was introduced to teach knowledge, skills and attitudes of the colonisers. Traditional skills and values were not part of this school experience.

Attendance at school and gaining paid employment came to be seen as proof of a successful formal education, and thus are closely related. The introduced formal education system we have inherited was designed to prepare our children to meet the manpower needs of the market economy.

Unfortunately, however, the number of young men and women pushed out from this system has over the years outnumbered the number of jobs that are available in the paid employment sector. Many of these school leavers return to their communities where there is, and always has been, traditional work for them. However, their education has not prepared them for this reality. Many feel failures and no longer value village life, traditions and obligations.

A contributing factor to the development of these unrealistic ambitions is the irrelevance of much of the content of our existing school curriculum. Over the years the system has accorded a very important role to achievement in academic subjects. Few of these are basic to survival in the communities where most of our children will live.

In Solomon Islands, tradition is extremely important and because it affects the vast majority of the people, must play a central role in curriculum directions. For any system to be acceptable and relevant, it has to take into account the current three levels of culture that

have developed in the country over the years. These are village/rural, urban and international. At village or rural level, custom and language are still traditional. At the urban level, there is a mixture of people from different cultural backgrounds and there is a breakdown of traditional customs and local vernaculars are being replaced to a large extent by Pidgin. At the international level, we are exposed to outside customs and experiences, knowledge acquisition and international languages such as English.

Recent curriculum re-directions in Solomon Islands are aimed at greater integration of academic, vocational and cultural knowledge. The main aims of these proposed changes will be to achieve an education system that integrates the individual and society, encourages a strong sense of indigenous identity and at the same time maintains an international identity and, importantly, promotes the cultural and social foundations of education. These changes, we hope, will redirect our school curriculum towards greater relevance and community participation.

References

- Davis, D. (1992) *Secondary Curriculum Renewal*. A position paper prepared for the Solomon Islands Government and Government of Australia, Centre for Pacific Development and Training.
- Brewer, W. (1992) *Review of the Curriculum Development Centre*. Consultant's Report to the Solomon Islands and Australian Governments. Centre for Pacific Development and Training.

THE IDEAL TEACHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM FOR THE PACIFIC

Editor's Note: The following was developed at a June (1995) Pacific Teacher Education Consultation held at the University of the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji. It is a result of a variety of presentations, group discussions and feedback sessions.

The participants, including six teacher training college principals, took the view that a teacher education curriculum should be guided by an ideal teacher profile. The profile developed would, of course, need adapting by each country. Participants felt, however, that there was sufficient commonality across the region to develop the profile.

An 'Ideal' teacher education curriculum should produce a teacher

1. who has a holistic view - who is concerned for the overall physical, mental, cultural and spiritual development of the child.
2. who recognises the cultural underpinning in the various disciplines and uses these to advantage.
4. who has a thorough understanding of human development in the Pacific, and of the roles of education in Pacific societies.
5. who views education as preparation for life, not merely for employment, so that she/he develops each child's potential to become a worthy member of society.
6. who has sufficient flexibility not only to draw on the strengths and inspiration of his/her cultural roots, but who can cope with and educate children for societal and technological changes. (The ability to balance western and traditional cultural values and methodologies would be valuable.)