

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE 'EDUCATION' PROGRAMMES AT COOK ISLANDS TEACHERS' COLLEGE, SOLOMON ISLANDS TEACHERS' COLLEGE AND NASINU TEACHERS' COLLEGE AND THE DIPLOMA IN EDUCATION PROGRAMME AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC.

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Introduction: While a Fellow at the USP Institute of Education during Semester II, 1977, I visited the Cook Islands, the Solomon Islands and very briefly the Republic of Nauru.

While my principal objective was to study the 'Education' programmes at the various Teachers' Colleges, I was also able to establish strong links with the various Teachers' Colleges and the USP Institute of Education, and it is sincerely hoped that the links will strengthen and grow.

PROGRAMME STRUCTURE AT THE COLLEGES:

COOK ISLANDS TEACHERS' COLLEGE:

The students undertake a three year course at the end of which they are awarded the Cook Islands Teachers' College Certificate. The Cook Islands Trained Teachers' Certificate is awarded after satisfactory completion of a probationary year in the schools. During 1977 the roll of the College was as follows:

1st year students	—	15
2nd year students	—	31
Total	—	46

There were no 3rd year students in 1977. The principal aim of the College is to develop teachers who are well trained in the theory and practice of teaching, and who have a flexible approach to their task so that they can adapt to changing methods and conditions, ever conscious of the evolutionary process of education, and of their role as catalysts in this process.

THE SOLOMON ISLANDS TEACHERS' COLLEGE:

This college offers a two year course and the students are awarded the Solomon Islands Teachers' Certificate at the end of two years. The Solomon

Islands Trained Teachers' Certificate is awarded after successful completion of a two year probationary period. During 1977 the roll was:

1st year students	—	60
2nd year students	—	58
Total	—	118

The main aim of the College is to train teachers who are proficient in both the theory and practice of teaching and who are able to adjust to the changes in the society.

THE NASINU TEACHERS' COLLEGE, FIJI:

The College offers a two year programme at the end of which students are awarded the Primary Schools Teachers' Certificate. These teachers are absorbed in the Government's teaching fraternity. During 1977, the roll of the College was:

1st year students	—	128
2nd year students	—	121
Total	—	249

In addition to offering the two year programme, the College offers a one year programme for the untrained (licensed) teachers who have been teaching for a number of years. In 1977, these students numbered 105.

The College also offers in-service courses each year for serving teachers in the following one-year programmes:

Industrial Arts
Home Economics
Phys. Ed., Music & Art & Craft (PEMAC)

After successfully completing the one year course the teachers are appointed to secondary schools to teach the above respective subjects.

THE USP DIPLOMA IN EDUCATION COURSE:

This is a three year programme which prepares teachers for Junior Secondary Schools in the South Pacific Region, the primary aim of which is to prepare teachers who are knowledgeable in at least two curriculum areas and who have the instructional skills and competencies necessary to teach Forms I — IV (possibly to Form V) in both rural and urban South Pacific schools.

'EDUCATION' PROGRAMMES:

COOK ISLANDS:

The general aims in the 'Education' programme are as follows:

— To develop within the students an understanding and appreciation of the developmental characteristics of Cook Island children which include cognitive, physiological and social aspects of developments.

— To make students aware of effective teaching techniques, understand the importance and appropriateness of these, and develop the skills necessary for effective teaching techniques.

— To present to the students various theories of learning that are relevant for classroom learning.

— To help students understand the concept of 'education' and the historical and present day aspects of the concept.

The content of the course is as follows:

- Year 1 — What is 'Education'?
- Cook Islands Education
 - Other contemporary Education systems
 - Introduction to Child Development
 - Techniques of teaching
 - Child Development (The Primary Child) physiological, psychological, social and emotional growth
 - Jean Piaget — his theory and Cook Islands children
 - Learning theories — how do we learn?
 - Great educators of the past
- Year 2 — Education & Society — contemporary issues
- Language development (psychological and practical perspectives)
 - The Curriculum (methodology and rationale)
 - Testing in school: Uses and abuses
 - Statistics in Education
 - Heredity vs. Environment
 - Adolescent Development

Year 3 — (For 1978 3rd yr. st.)

- Education in Cook Islands
- Principles of Learning
- Adolescent Development
- Perception
- Motivation
- Concept formation
- Remembering & Forgetting
- Personality Development
- Theories of Intelligence
- Testing
- Methods of Planning and Organisation
- Meeting individual differences
- Discipline
- Use of teaching aids
- Teacher and community
- Teachers as professionals

THE SOLOMON ISLANDS:

The general aims in the education programme are similar to those of the Cook Islands Teachers' College. The content is as follows:

Part 1 — CHILDREN

- Unit 1 Thinking about Psychology
- 2 Why do children behave as they do?
- 3 Growing up — physical development
- 4 Growing up — personality development
- 5 Growing up — mental development

Part II — LEARNING

- Unit 6 How do children learn — Part 1
- 7 How do children learn — Part 2
- 8 How can I help children to understand?

Part III — SCHOOLS

- Unit 8 Why do we go to school?
- 9 Organising an educational system
- 10 Custom education
- 11 The beginning of school education
- 12 The New Policy
Solomons Education Policy
- 13 Education in some other developing countries
- 14 A community study

NASINU TEACHERS' COLLEGE, FIJI:

The Education programme aims at:

- 1.1 the development of competence in classroom practices, the encouragement of positive attitudes to the teaching profession and an understanding of the children whom the students will teach.
- 1.2 examining the role of the teacher within Fiji's educational context.

The following content forms the education programme at the College:

- Year 1** — Teaching Strategies — nature and importance of lesson preparation; the relation of objectives to lesson content and procedure; motivation and interest; students' involvement, self and pupil evaluation.
- Child Growth and Development
 - Philosophy
 - Psychology
 - Audio-visual aids
- Year 2** — Teaching Strategies — advanced teaching techniques; simulation; micro-teaching; multiple/group teaching.
- Assessment — prediction, diagnosis, ranking, performance; types of tests — advantages and disadvantages.
 - Curriculum construction — types of curriculum; programming within a subject.
 - Team teaching — characteristics, advantages / disadvantages.

USP DIPLOMA IN EDUCATION PROGRAMME

The Education Course content is as follows:

- Year 1** — Child Development
- Education and Society
- Year 2** — Classroom Learning and Curriculum Studies
- Year 3** — Contemporary Educational Issues in the South Pacific
- Educational Evaluation
 - Selected studies in Leisure and Community.



In many ways the 'Education' programmes at the three Colleges and the USP Diploma Course are similar. For example the Child Development Course appears quite early in the programmes and the course in Contemporary Educational issues is offered towards the end. Many topics in the content of the course are similar although the terms may differ in some cases.

Methods:

All the Colleges while involving key lectures, make use of seminar/discussion groups, practical workshops, observations including demonstration lessons and peer and microteaching activities. In the Diploma in Education programme at USP, Peer Tutorial system is also used. A large percentage of the 1st year USP students feel that 'Peer Tutorial' is one of the best features of the methodology issued in the Education programme.

Assessment:

In all the three Colleges and at USP, the students' assessment is progressive in nature involving assignments, essays, observations, exercises, research, etc. and there are also examinations at the end of the year in the case of the three Colleges and at the end of each semester in the case of USP.

Curriculum Development:

At Solomon Islands Teachers' College about 20 teachers are working with the staff of the College on Curriculum development for Primary schools in the Solomons. Apart from working on the theory of curriculum development the teachers are also writing new and relevant materials in different subject areas, helped and guided by a tutor especially appointed for the curriculum development area. I was impressed with the progress made.

At the Cook Islands Teachers' College a similar setup was envisaged. Unfortunately, only two teachers are involved in curriculum development work assisted by a tutor appointed in that area. Obviously, with only two teachers not much progress has been made.

In Fiji, there is a Curriculum Development Unit with adequate staff working in different subject areas. Teachers in schools also play very important roles in curriculum development work in Fiji. Apart from being on different Committees in different subject areas, they help in trialling new materials and in evaluating the relevancy of the different units.

School Experience:

School experience is an integral part of the education course and a very important part of the entire teacher training programme.

The major objective of teacher training is to produce teachers who are well trained and competent in both the theory and practice of teaching. During the school experience programme students are given the opportunity to develop the necessary skills and techniques as classroom teachers.

At the Cook Islands Teachers' College (in 1977), the 1st Year Students had a total of 8 weeks School Experience, the 2nd Year Students, a total of 12 weeks. Recently the staff decided that during the 1st year, the School Experience programmes be extended by four weeks and that all students spend up to 50% of their College course in schools.

At the Solomon Islands Teachers' College, the 1st Year Students have a total of 7 weeks School Experience, the 2nd Year Students a total of 15 weeks.

In the Solomon Islands approximately 50% of the teachers in the primary schools are untrained. About 60 Second Year Students at the College are sent to the primary schools mainly in the outlying islands to replace 60 untrained teachers who attend the College for 12 weeks during the entire second term. These teachers are certificated after a year of probation. Personally, I am not certain about the wisdom of sending 2nd Year Students to the outlying islands and supervised by the Administrators; however, this is one way in which the Government of the Solomon Islands is attempting to overcome the shortage of trained teachers.

At the Nasinu Teachers' College, before posting, the students observe children at work, class organisation, observe demonstrations by staff, study class sessions on video tapes.

During the two-year course, there are four Teaching Experience Postings of 3 weeks, 4 weeks, 4 weeks and 5 weeks respectively, totalling 16 weeks.

The 3-year Diploma in Education Programme at USP has the following School Experience Programme:

Year 1 – Short visits for observation and research assignments related to the Education Courses.

Year 2 – Semester 1 – Half day (Thursdays) visits for work related to Education courses e.g. microteaching and small group teaching in upper primary classes. Observations in Secondary Schools.

Semester 2 – 3 week block practice in Secondary Schools.

Year 3 – Semester 1 – 4 week full-time 'School and Community' project in a rural school.

Semester 2 – Half day (Fridays) per week followed by 4 week block.

The Diploma in Education students who are being prepared to teach in the lower forms of Secondary Schools opt for either the Arts subjects or the Science subjects which they teach after graduating after a 3 year course at USP.

School Experience Organisation:

In all the three Teachers' Colleges the students are given different primary school classes in their different school experiences. Child study is also undertaken by the students while they are in schools and the students are involved with children in a practical way.

At the Cook Islands Teachers' College each lecturer supervises, guides and assesses about 4 to 5 students during each session. Moreover, the Principal and the Vice-Principal attempt to visit all the students while they are in different schools. Twelve schools in Rarotonga are used for the School Experience programme.

At the Solomon Islands Teachers' College each lecturer has about the same number of students to supervise as in the Cooks. The Principal and the Vice-Principal also endeavour to see as many students and as often as possible. Eight schools on the island of Guadalcanal, in the radius of 10 miles of the Teachers' College are used for the school experience programme.

At the Nasinu Teachers' College each lecturer has the responsibility of supervising, on the average 5-6 students during each session. If a supervisor wishes to give an A, D or E grade to a student, the grade has to be confirmed by a Zone Supervisor or the Principal Supervisor, who almost invariably is the Head of Education of the College.

The students doing the Diploma in Education programme at USP are observed by a general supervisor and also by a subject tutor either in Arts or Science.

The Cook Islands Teachers' College students travel to their schools since all of them live off the College Campus. The students at both Solomon Islands Teachers' College and Nasinu Teachers' College travel by bus or if the distance is not great, walk to their respective schools.

At Nasinu Teachers' College students not performing satisfactorily during the School Experience programme are given added periods to improve their performance. Should they fail their final school experience they are not certificated and are asked to teach in schools in the following year ranging from 4 to 12 weeks duration. If they do satisfactory work they are then certificated.

Both in the Cook Islands and the Solomon Islands the students are given a Teachers Certificate after a year in schools after finishing the course at the College and only when doing satisfactory work at their respective schools.

I prepared a questionnaire to evaluate the School Experience Programme. Details of the evaluation are given in a separate paper. I hope the results will help us all to have a fresh look at our school experience programmes.

Major Educational Problems:

A common problem faced by all the three countries is that of communication. Because of the scattered nature of the islands many schools in the outlying areas are not visited often enough by the advisors and the officials of the Ministry of Education. Transport is found to be difficult especially where water transport is necessary.

Allied to the above problem is that of despatching text books and other school materials very much needed by the pupils especially where pupils hardly have any access to reading materials and who almost entirely depend on the text books sent by the Ministry of Education.

At the Teachers' Colleges in the Cook Islands and the Solomon Islands there is a great range in the academic qualifications of the students doing the courses there. The intake varies from Form 2 students to Form 5 students. At Nasinu Teachers' College and USP, however, a very high percentage of the students have done Form 6 work. Both at Cook Islands Teachers' College and Solomon Island Teachers' College the lecturers have to spend a lot of time with individual students and the lecturers have to base their teaching at the students' level especially when the English language level of the students is not very high.

A major problem faced by the Cook Islands and which is uncommon to Fiji and Solomons is that Cook Islanders, having automatic N.Z. citizenship can leave for N.Z. at any time they wish. It is not uncommon to find good teachers and teacher-trainees leaving for New Zealand when the country is in dire need of them.

This takes us to another major problem in education encountered not only by the Cook Islands but also by Solomon Islands and Fiji; it is that of shortage of trained teachers in all the three countries. All the three countries are making all efforts to overcome this problem. In Fiji another Teachers' College opened in Lautoka in 1977 where 120 licensed teachers are being trained.

Nasinu Teachers' College has had 105 licensed teachers in 1977 and they will all add to the list of already trained teachers. Cook Islands Teachers' College has increased its intake at the College recently and the Solomon Islands Teachers' College is running a course in the 2nd term of each year for untrained teachers in the hope that in the next five to eight years the problem will be alleviated if not entirely solved.

Pidgin English is rather prevalent in the Solomon Islands and many teachers resort to Pidgin English while teaching even in class 4 upwards. Because of the grammatical structure of Pidgin the transfer is apparent in the oral and written English not only of the pupils but also of the teachers. In a few cases I observed that the student teachers of the College taught in Pidgin English in the lower classes but the pupils knew only their own dialects. Since the student teachers did not have the knowledge of the particular dialects they experienced problems in communication. This problem is not faced either by Fiji or Cook Island teachers for vernacular is the medium of instruction for the first three/four years and English after that.

One of the biggest problems faced by all the three countries is the expectation on the part of the parents. Almost invariably the parents expect their children to obtain white collar jobs after they have gone through the school system. In reality, there are very few white collar jobs in the three countries and, for that matter, in the other South Pacific countries.

Another problem prevalent in the Solomons and the Cooks, as seen by the teachers of the two countries, is lack of continuity and progression in the primary school course. For example, in the Cooks, classes 1 and 2 use one type of maths text book, classes 3 and 4 another, and classes 5 and 6 yet another type. In the Solomons, for example, work books in maths are sent to the teachers but quite a number of them are not acquainted with the content and the methodology. This, to some extent, is also true of Fiji.

For far too long the curriculum used in the schools in all three countries has been, to a large degree, irrelevant. In all three countries educationists have been only recently appraising and evaluating the curriculum taught in the schools.

English has been given top priority in all the three countries and consequently the vernacular languages have suffered. In fact in the Cooks, Cook Island Maori has suffered as a language and in Fiji, both Fijian and Hindustani have suffered. This has gone to the extent whereby people are forgetting their own culture — traditions and customs. Again, educationists are having a very serious look at this aspect of education and are coming up with many ideas of re-introducing the cultural aspect in the education system.

Conclusion:

Apparently, quite a number of educational problems faced by one country are also encountered by the others in the South Pacific.

The aims, content, and methods in the 'education courses' in the three different Teachers' Colleges are very similar. This is also true of the Diploma

in Education programme at USP. The big difference, of course, is in the academic background of the students entering Teachers' College in Fiji as compared with those entering the Solomon Islands and Cook Islands Teachers' Colleges.

In concluding I must say that I was most impressed with the agricultural programme carried out by the Cook Islands Teachers' College. The College vegetable gardens are exemplary and many farmers come to the College seeking advice on successful vegetable gardening. The students have developed a sense of responsibility, organising ability and knowledge and skill to help their economy, especially by exporting various vegetables to New Zealand.

When most Pacific islands are so dependent on agriculture for its food and economy, what is more sensible and relevant than getting not only students at the College, but in all the institutions and schools, to grow more food for self-reliance and a healthy economy. Perhaps Nasinu Teachers' College could give serious thought to this important aspect and include it in its programme at College.

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