

Engaging with our Pacific Neighbours: A pre-service teacher education program in Solomon Islands



Achievements stemming from a partnership between ACU and Solomon Islands.

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Our Partnership

- Commenced in 2009 with Bishop Epalle Catholic School (BECS), Honiara, Solomon Islands
- Involves 3rd year pre-service teachers (PSTs) in a classroom teaching experience for 4 weeks
- Immerses PSTs in the life and community of Solomon Islands
- 147 PSTs over 11 years



Background Context

Solomon Islands offers a significant cultural contrast to Australia:

- 36% of the population complete Years 7-9;
- 10% or less complete Years 10-12 (MEHRD, 2017)
- 1% of teachers are qualified to Bachelor level (MEHRD, 2017);
- gender inequity manifesting in physical and sexual violence (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2015);
- English is spoken as a third or later acquired language;
- classrooms are crowded and ill-equipped (Sharma, Simi, & Forlin, 2015) and technology is next to non-existent;
- access to power, internet, fresh and/or running water is unreliable or unattainable (Sharma et al., 2015).

Human Development Index

(UNESCO, 2016)

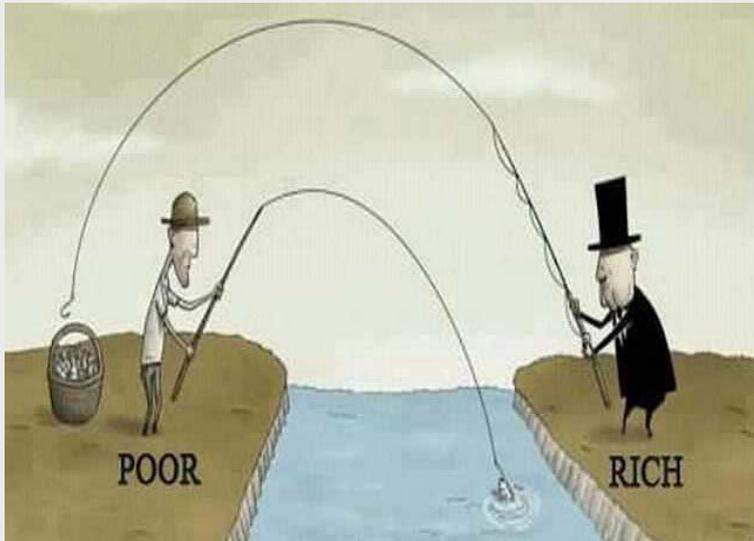
A composite statistic reflecting the relative economic development and welfare of the world's countries

	1	Norway	0.953
	2	Switzerland	0.944
	3	Australia	0.939
	4	Ireland	0.938
	5	Germany	0.936

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	152	Solomon Islands	0.546
	153	Papua New Guinea	0.544

Just 1% of the world's population share 43% of the world's wealth



19% of the population share the next 51.5% of the world's wealth

80% of the world's population share in just 5.5% of the world's wealth

POOREST

RICHEST

Rationale

Symptoms of such a world:

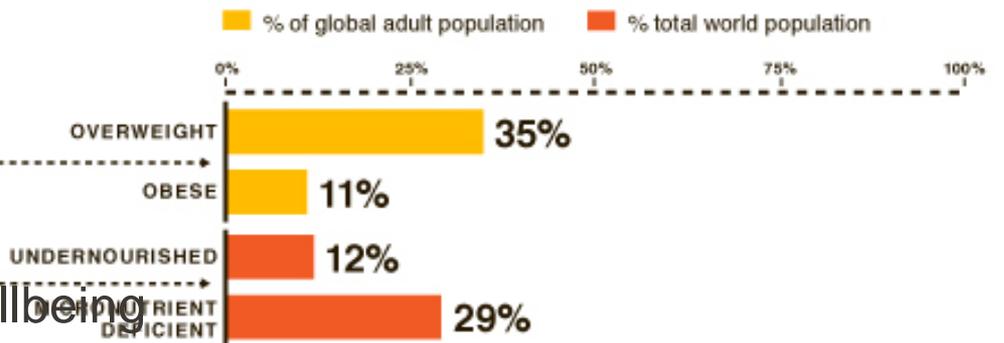
- over-consumption of resources;
- excessive waste;
- food security risks;
- loss of biodiversity
- detrimental climate change
- exploitation of peoples from disadvantaged communities
- Forced child labour
- threats to the livelihood and wellbeing of current and future generations.



In 2008, **1.4 BILLION** ADULTS were overweight



66 MILLION PEOPLE were undernourished.



Rationale

We see education, and specifically, teacher education, to be a critical catalyst for promoting change and agency for change.

Campaigning for a better and more equitable world should not just be the concern of activists but rather, of all citizens of the world, and **education plays a central role in addressing the needs of humankind.**

(Hopkins, 2013)



Through education, there is a greater chance of **fostering dispositions** that engender the knowledge, values, attitudes **and desire to take the actions** required to secure a more sustainable, equitable and ethical citizenship.

Conceptualisation of the Partnership

Sen's (1993) Capability framework:

- focuses on a person's capability to achieve what they value given their circumstances
- looks beyond achievement to the underlying equity and justice that individuals face in realising their goals

Transformational education (Mezirow, 1991):

- focuses on active citizenship
- provides authentic curriculum connecting learning with local and global community
- incorporates active participation in measures to improve conditions for the greater good.



Outcomes – Solomon Island Partners



Key areas reported by teachers:

- New pedagogies
- Utilizing students' knowledge
- Planning and preparation for teaching
- Use of available resources
- More energy
- Increased Confidence

New pedagogies

*...I think because of our, the way of teaching strategy that we used...we write on the board and then we explain to the **children** and we expect children to have all these things in their brain which I don't believe everybody got it...*

Shifting the '**where**' teaching takes place- teachers understanding the need to move around the classroom, to get down to students levels.



New pedagogies



*...we experience a lot of things... I ...**apply new ways of teaching** in my class...something that I learn from my teacher, this **rotation of learning**...different activities and the children rotate from table to table, doing different activity, maths, English and ...they do it in their own ways.... I don't know how to do it or go about it but I'll plan for it because...I learn it's... good for the children...*

*(rotation activities)..it really occupies them... no one is left out...[students] are very busy doing what they are doing, **the teacher is there only to supervise and guide and help the children.** And... **it's a new approach** I think we, we might learn it but we don't apply it in the classroom...*

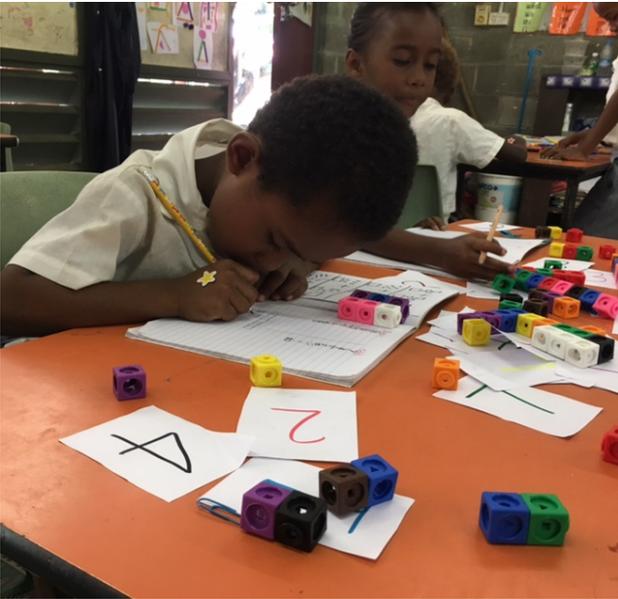
Utilizing student knowledge

*It's very important because the children – **sometimes we think that children don't know anything** but I think they have the ... knowledge about graphing because they see it every day but for teachers – for me, I think they don't know...they're just students. **I'm the teacher giving them knowledge** – no, no, I think they have - already have idea of tally or whatever ...*

*...Because **they must have brain storming activities** so that they get their own information. It's better for students to get their own information than we teachers just giving them the information...*



Planning and preparation for teaching



*And what I saw in their work is it is a **well prepared and resourced activities**, which is provided by them and also I learnt a lot from that, of the work that they prepared.*

*And I learned that **children learn better** when they **do hands on activity** and through games and fun and more on **material things where they can touch, feel and see...** the kids, they're more engaged in their work and have **no time to do unnecessary things that we always have problems with**. So I learn that, that, that's a very important thing to **provide materials for the kids**.*



Use of available resources

...the disposal materials that we think that is not useful, they use them,, we throw them in the rubbish but when they came, they used them.

...And we see, this is how we should, use these things recycling in our classroom...



*...The things, cups that we use, ... and bring those disposable plates, we eat from them and then throw them away those are the things we saw them colouring, the things that are around in the environment. **So I think it's possible for us we can apply the same activities.***

More ‘energy’

All the teachers said it gives them *“more energy”* and *“motivates them”* to continue to do the best for their children, especially at the end of the year when everyone is bored and tired- *“It really boosts us up”*...

Teachers spoke about their discussions and reflections when they come out of class: *“...we all come out and then...wow that’s good...we talk to each other about how they teach and ...we’re learning things like this today, they are so good, they help us here, they really want to meet us and some more energy-ness”*.

... when they bring those new ways of teaching strategies it really motivates... us as teachers and it puts more energy, it energise our, our knowledge so that we continue to, to do the best for our children.



Confidence

...helped me to **gain confidence in teaching** a subject in different subject areas, as well it helped me as well to gain confidence **more in speaking English** in classroom when I teach. And broaden my knowledge in **different teaching strategies and techniques...** I saw when they're here, the children really engage in their learning through the games and hands on activity that they prepared...



Other School Outcomes

- Increased literacy outcomes in National performance exams
- Increased confidence in students, and their agency in learning
- Increased enrolments at the school
- Increased retention of students in secondary school, particularly girls
- Leadership has also reported that new teachers to the school are not as pedagogically strong as those who have worked in our program, even though these new teachers tend to have higher levels of qualifications.



Pre-service teachers have reported:

Professional Learning

- General attributes
- Teacher Identity
- Communication EAL/D
- Cultural Competence
- Knowing the individual child
- Part of a community

Personal Learning

- Importance of Education
- Nature of Education
- Confidence
- Worldview

Teaching Intention

- Raise awareness in Australia
- Teach in disadvantaged communities



Findings

Increased awareness of the disparity between their lifestyles and that which they witnessed

*“I think this experience really allowed me to ... really **acknowledge how great our education system really is**”*

*“I have **a new appreciation for life** and for the things I take for granted”*

*“I got to witness first hand, a country that has a vastly different culture to my own and to learn to **appreciate certain aspects of my life** more”*



Findings

A shift in values away from materialism and towards relationships with others

“You don't need much but family to be happy in life”

*“Since I came back there were a few people that **I'm now no longer friends with** because I did realise that **we were on such different pages** in our lives and they were sort of... more that sort of materialistic people, and I think it sort of opened my eyes to the fact that, yeah, **you do need to appreciate the people in your lives ... not the things.***



Findings

Personal growth and change

*“I think **it’s changed me** because ... coming back and seeing it in practice or in real life in a way it’s kind of made me **way more stressed here** because I hate seeing what goes on around the world. But at the same time, **it’s made me more proactive to make things better** and **it makes me want to do the right thing** because I’ve seen how it should be as opposed to, I suppose **falling under what everyone seems to fall into here.**”*



Findings

Personal growth and change

*I think **I am a very different person now** than I was before I went to the Solomon Islands. ...to be in a community where they lived so simply and so happy ... **they were just the happiest people I've met in my life**, and I took from that that **I can be that way too** so coming back, ... I try not to let things stress me out like I did before. So I was having panic attacks and those have stopped; **I'm really a different person now, a whole different person** I think.*



Findings

Reinforce the value of education and desire to impart a curriculum of a social justice in their own teaching

*“It really **puts into perspective how important education is** and as a teacher it really hit home why I’m becoming a teacher... I’ve seen what kids don’t have in parts of the world and...**I can bring that home and teach other students like that.**”*



Findings

Indicated actions to impart a curriculum of a social justice in their own teaching

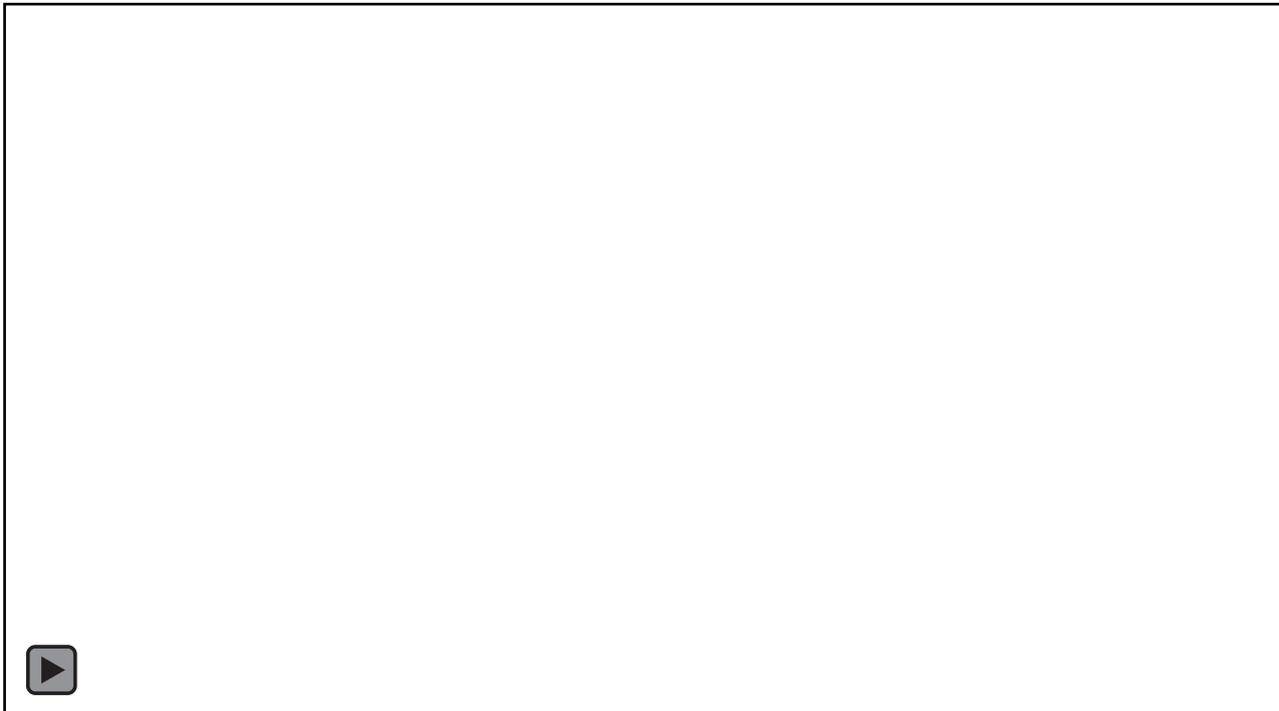
*“I’d very often pull out pictures from the Solomon Islands and I’d have discussions with them about just being **grateful for what we have here, the education we have here, the facilities we have here** and I’d kind of show them a different perspective, a different side of the world ... and the kids, like some kids were almost in tears and some kids were like **“Mr ... that is just the saddest thing I have ever heard”**. And they were like “we understand” – like these are six-year-old kids and **they really kind of understood that they have a lot.**”... So I asked them **“well, what choices and decisions will you make now?”**”*



Findings

Indicated actions and/or intention to impart a curriculum of a social justice in their own teaching

“I want to make changes in kids’ lives here, to want to be better human beings and help them change the world”



Additional Actions...

- Donation of funds to women's education charities
- Sponsorship of a Solomon Islander teacher's teaching course
- Increased awareness of and actions to decrease waste, particularly in regard to plastics
- A number who have established partnerships between their own schools and schools in Solomon Islands
- A number who have become vegetarian



We've been affected too...



Help Jackson get his Heart Surgery

\$7,075 raised of \$50,000 goal



Contact

Donate

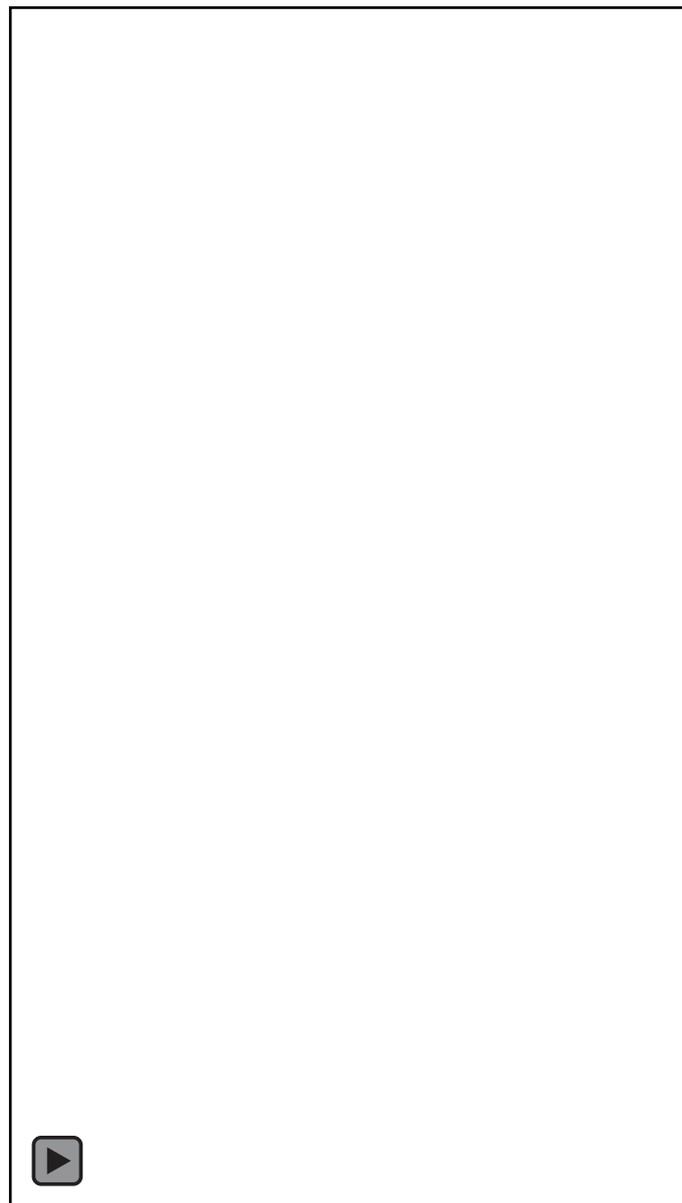


Every girl that receives an education is more likely to make education a priority for her children. It's a ripple effect of positive change in the community and country.

Discussion

There results are attributed to:

- The affordances that come from sharing the richness of two very different cultures and lifestyles
- A shared commitment to education and a belief in its transformative potential
- The relationships that have been built with one another through a sustained commitment to mutual care and learning



Conclusion & Implications

Given our position of world privilege, service learning and community engagement is more than an imperative for the future of teaching and teacher education – it is a responsibility.

We are a global community – we need to think, behave and **educate** in a way that reflects this.

