Changes in teachers’ world of work in a developing context: The case of Solomon Islands

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the perceived magnitude of changes that have occurred in teachers’ world of work in the Solomon Islands. The survey-based inquiry consisting of both structured and open-ended questions was administered to a cohort of 38 teachers undertaking a flexi-school run by the University of the South Pacific at the Honiara Campus in Solomon Islands. The findings of the study indicate that most of the changes were of considerable magnitude. In terms of changes that teachers would like to see in future, most of them indicate the need for more professional development opportunities to enable them to manage and cope better with changes in their work. The other change they would like to see is the use of ICT in all schools. These changes have implications for the continuous professional development of teachers to meet the new demands of work so that they are better able to promote and maximise children’s learning experiences and outcomes.

Keywords: changes; teachers’ work; professional development; intensification; Solomon Islands
INTRODUCTION

In contemporary times, education systems worldwide are faced with unprecedented changes that have significant impacts on teachers’ world of work. Their work becomes more demanding and challenging as they have to respond more effectively to the manifold changes occurring in education systems. Invariably the success or failure of these changes depends on teachers’ coping ability. Without being sufficiently familiar with the rationale for and ramifications of any educational change, teachers are unlikely to produce high-quality practices and in turn, their inadequacy could adversely affect children’s success in learning. Since teachers are widely recognised as a critical input in children’s education, they must be familiar with and also able to cope with all changes that affect their world of work (Delors, 1996; Kerr, 2006). In light of this, their ongoing capacity building deserves considerable attention, more so in contemporary times than ever before, due to manifold transformations occurring in education. Teachers require relevant knowledge, skills and competencies to ensure they meet the new demands of their work during changing times (UNESCO, 2010, 2005). Given numerous educational reforms, this preliminary study reports on teachers’ perceptions of the changes they are experiencing in their work in a small island developing state in the Pacific region, namely Solomon Islands.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In the mid-1970s, Braverman’s (1974) research was as percipient, applicable and relevant to teachers’ world of work as to so many other fields. His study raised considerable interest in the nature of the work carried out by teachers and advocated the need to analyse their work in terms of both content and control. With regard to work content, the emphasis on what teachers do and control would mean why they do what they do, and also who decides what they do (Ingersoll, 2003). Teachers’ work is not framed on the basis of some abstraction but is continually shaped and reshaped by factors, including historical, ideological and sociopolitical ones (Smyth, 2001). Teachers may have considerable autonomy in determining their classroom practices, but they still have to operate within the power structures of the schools, local authorities and the state within which they operate (Stevenson, 2007).

In recent times, the growing complexity of education systems has placed greater pressures for accountability on teachers in all areas of children’s education. The role overload, complexity and tension they are experiencing arise from introduced educational reforms (Bell & Stevenson, 2006; Cardno & Howse, 2005; Stevenson, 2007; Sungalia, 1990). As early as the 1990s, researchers from developed countries had framed relevant themes such as intensification and accountability to illustrate the range of changes taking place in teachers’ work and in turn their workload; for example, Hargreaves (1994) in North America, Boyle and Woods (1996) in the United Kingdom, and Mander (1997) and Seddon and Brown (1997) in Australia, have all commented about the changes occurring in teachers’ work. In North America, Hargreaves (2003, 1994) highlighted how globalisation, restructuring and market driven systems of education provision together with changing world climate in learning and teaching have had significant effects on teachers’ work. Likewise in Australia, Smyth and his colleagues (2000) have identified various changes, notable among them being work intensification that puts a lot of pressure on teachers.
in their work settings. The case is similar in the UK (Boyle & Woods, 1996; Stevenson, 2007). Thus, the complexity and ever-changing demands of teachers’ work is well documented in most of the developed countries of the world. According to an OECD (2006, p. 95) commissioned report, changes ‘have broadened and deepened teachers’ roles’. Likewise, Sloan (2007) points out that the changes have increased schools’ expectations and in turn, in most jurisdictions, have enlarged the work of teachers, especially in the areas of greater responsibility and accountability. In the small island states of the Pacific, some of the changing realities of work relate to the infiltration of ‘new cultural practices and media texts, hybrid cultural identities, emergent social formations and institutions and changing structures of work and economy’ as suggested by Luke (1997, p.10), and these have substantial implications for teacher preparation and professional development. Generally, the findings of the studies highlight curriculum and structural changes as features common to most school systems.

In the post-independence period in the Pacific, most of the countries have engaged in curriculum development work to contextualise the curriculum better (Thaman, 2009; Taufe‘ulungaki, 2001). For example, in the Solomon Islands new curriculum materials were prepared in different subject areas because for many years schools continued using imported curriculum materials which were academic-oriented and irrelevant (Lingam et al., 2013; Watson-Gegeo & Gegeo, 1992). The shift towards localising the curriculum so that the school curriculum is better aligned to the local cultural and contextual factors is a wise move (Stephens, 2007). In this regard, curriculum workers need to ensure relevance of content and materials in the school curriculum as well as pedagogy to suit the local context (Fiji Education Commission, 2000). Such change will require the up-skilling of serving teachers on the new curriculum and in teaching approaches; indeed, improving teachers’ professional knowledge and skills to keep pace with the ever-changing reforms in school curriculum is crucial.

However, a study conducted in Fiji pointed out the limited opportunities for ongoing professional development and in-service training of teachers, especially those serving in rural schools (Tuimavana, 2010). In this way, urban teachers benefit in terms of knowledge and skills needed for any changes in their work, while their rural counterparts miss out. This could be a reason why children in rural schools in some contexts, including Fiji, show lower levels of academic achievement than their urban counterparts and probably also explains some of the teacher reluctance to accept rural postings (Burnett & Lingam, 2007; Narsey, 2004).

The literature demonstrates the emergence of and increasing emphasis on quantification and measurement of teachers’ performance as a source of extra pressure on them (Stevenson, 2007). In some contexts changes in teachers’ appraisal has put extra workload on school leaders and this requires support for them in carrying out evaluation authentically or else it could lead to unintended outcomes (Derrington, 2011). Likewise, in the Republic of Marshall Islands teachers are struggling with the School Improvement Planning model (Pallotta & Lingam, 2013).

Perhaps the field of most pervasive and rapid change occurring the world over is that of information and communications technology (ICT) (Bacchus, 2008). To keep Pacific educational workers abreast of communications technologies, on-going education and training are vital in these areas (Chandra, 2004). Since ICT is moving towards permeating every aspect of children’s life, even
in the developing world, it is encouraging to see governments making some initiatives to expose children to ICT. In Fiji, for instance, the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the School of Education, The University of the South Pacific, has begun mounting training programmes for primary teachers on One Laptop Per Child (OLPC). Such initiatives are important for the currency of our education systems and for the long-term benefit of our children. Teachers, too, will have to be prepared in ways that will enable them to employ a range of pedagogical practices to enhance the delivery of education using ICT. Also, the use of different information technologies will make learning and teaching more exciting and meaningful to children. Wherever possible, teachers should use these tools in teaching, rather than relying solely on conventional pedagogies. Unless teachers are prepared for making use of information technology, they will continue to employ the conventional methods of teaching – and their pupils will be adversely affected in reaching their full potential as they move ill-prepared into an unknown future.

In their research which determined graduates’ study experiences, Burnnett and Lingam (2007) found that most graduates expressed awareness on the need for knowledge and skills in counselling. Due to the pace of social change, teachers now encounter a range of problems such as those relating to children’s behaviour, discipline and attendance. Also, as a result of rapid globalisation many external values and attitudes infiltrate and can negatively influence school culture, thereby affecting the everyday life and work of all, including children (Prosser, 1999). In the case of Fiji, the drug and substance abuse by school students has become a growing concern due to the dangers and risks associated with it (Lingam, 2004).

Implementation of international initiatives in education, such as Pacific regional countries’ growing commitment to the achievement of Educational For All (EFA) will, after all, rely on better qualified, competent and well motivated teachers at the primary school level. The initiative is likely to lead to an increase in numbers of children attending school. Similarly, in the USA, the commitment to No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has led to more children attending school, which in turn has increased teachers’ workloads considerably (Valli & Buese, 2007).

Apart from documenting the changes occurring, literature debates the relative importance of the coping reactions versus the resistance strategies employed by teachers in the face of successive top-down, management-driven changes (Ingersoll, 2003). In recent years, rapid and substantial educational reforms have swept through not only developed countries but are also gaining momentum in developing countries (Stevenson, 2007). Teachers in the service without any professional upgrading are unlikely, to cope with the myriad of changes taking place in their work. Several writers attribute the pressure for change to a variety of contexts – political, social and economic conditions – and these have an impact on educational systems in all settings (Ball, 2005; Ingersoll, 2003; Kerr, 2006; Schratz, 2003; Smyth, 2001).

Undoubtedly these new demands, challenges and external pressures warrant the provision of suitable ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers (Bush, 2007; Wong, 2004). Similarly, Crow (2006) affirms that in light of the complex changes occurring within schools and the changing environment of schools, knowledge and skills are likely to become obsolete and thus teachers require on-going training and learning. Such considerations lead Lumby, Crow and Pashiardis (2008) and Bush (2008) to emphasise the significance of continuing professional
development for all teachers in all contexts, but more so in developing ones, in the interest of their performance. Relying solely on previous knowledge and training can no longer satisfy the complex nature of the teaching enterprise and the changing roles of teachers. What Taylor and his colleagues (2002, p. 353) conclude about school leaders – that the ‘global challenges now occurring, demand approaches to training that are profoundly different from those that have served well in the past’ – equally applies to all teachers. Such demands require highly skilled and well-prepared teachers with the necessary tools in continuing to provide quality education to the children. Otherwise they may be seen to be ‘lacking as [teachers]’ (Coleman & Fitzgerald, 2008).

The picture that emerges from the literature is that in most contexts teachers are asked to do more and at the same time, various stakeholders’ expectations are always rising (Smithers & Robinson, 2001). In terms of changes introduced in education systems, governments argue about their commitment to modernise education (Ozga, 2002) and in the process of modernising education, teachers’ workloads have increased and intensified (Selwood & Pilkington, 2005). Inevitably, this calls for professional development opportunities for teachers, as changes are more rather than less likely to occur in education systems in the future. Otherwise changes can become a nightmare for teachers rather than a pleasant dream (Campbell & Neill, 1994).

AIM OF THE STUDY

The study reported here was undertaken to explore teachers’ perceptions of the changes in their world of work. Since this was a preliminary investigation, one fundamental research question guided the study: What is the perceived magnitude of the changes that have taken place in your work as a teacher and what changes you would like to see in future?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The paucity of studies conducted in the small island states of the Pacific on changes in teachers’ world of work makes it difficult to determine teachers’ ability to cope effectively with or alternatively manage educational change in schools. In general, the change literature on the topic is based on research undertaken in developed countries (Haber & Davies, 1997) and not much is documented about the issue in developing contexts such as in small Pacific island states. Nevertheless, beyond the Pacific region there is a much wider discussion, and several studies have been carried out on teachers’ work and how well teachers are coping with these changes.

Since the research literature for this region is not yet abundant (Crossley et al., 2011; Sanga, 2012) the findings of the study can be seen as contributing towards building of local and international educational change literature in a variety of ways. The outcomes of the current study may stimulate extensive discussion in schools and in different sections of the education ministry such as the curriculum development unit about the impact of the changes. The findings could also help teacher education institutions to revisit their programmes in order to strengthen them further to cater for the changes occurring in teachers’ world of work. Likewise, the findings may prove useful and helpful to the in-service section of the education ministry in designing suitable short in-service programmes to cater for the professional needs of teachers to ensure they cope well with changes in their work. Additionally, the findings could provide information
and insights helpful to the ministry in formulating appropriate policies relating to teachers’ professional upgrading. As such the findings may propel the government to look for ways to prepare teachers better to ensure they continue to provide quality educational experiences to children. Furthermore, the outcome of the study may act as a catalyst for other researchers to undertake more studies on teachers’ world of work in different educational contexts within and even beyond the Pacific region.

**CONTEXT OF THE STUDY**

Solomon Islands is a small developing nation in the South Pacific (Figure 1), located between 5 and 12 degrees south latitude and 155 and 170 degrees east longitude, adjacent to Papua New Guinea and about 1,860 kilometres north-east of Australia (Stanley, 1993). The 922 islands are scattered across a vast area of ocean (about 1.34 million square kilometres) with a total land area of 28,369 square kilometres. The country is divided into nine provinces: Choiseul, Isabel, Western, Malaita, Central, Guadalcanal, Rennell and Bellona, Makira/Ulawa, and Temotu. The distance between the most western and the most eastern islands is about 1,500 km (Maebuta, 2008). The Santa Cruz Islands are closer to the northern islands of Vanuatu and are the most isolated islands and this gives some indication about remoteness of many school contexts in the Solomon Islands. The capital city, Honiara, is located on the island of Guadalcanal. The total population of the country is about 500,000 (Moore, 2004), most of them live in rural areas (ESCAP, 2004), is increasing rapidly and this calls for the establishment of more schools and teachers to cater for the increase in enrolment (Maebuta & Phan, 2011).

Despite the scattered distribution of the islands, the efforts of the government and various religious denominations have established schools even in the most remote settlements to enable children to have easy access to education. Apart from teachers, no other public servants are found serving in remote and isolated communities. The country’s economic resources are unevenly distributed and this appeared to be a cause for the ethnic conflict in 1998 (Maebuta, Dorovolomo & Phan, 2010). Overall, Solomon Islands is not a rich country in economic terms, and it depends on overseas aid for most of its educational development projects. Various educational reforms have led the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MoEHRD) to realise the significance of leadership preparation and to seek funding assistance from NZAID to help with the training of school leaders (Sanga & Houma, 2004). At the time of this study, three cohorts of school leaders, each consisting of about 30 leaders, had completed the training programme and received their Diploma in Educational Leadership.
METHOD

Data collection was conducted by use of a questionnaire, and the instrument is widely endorsed as an effective means of gathering data from a large sample size (Gay, 1992). As highlighted by Smyth (2001, p.10) ‘work, organisation and change ought to be considered from the vantage point of those who live and experience it’, and this study considered this a useful suggestion to guide its design. The questionnaire consisted of a three-part survey to determine changes in teachers’ work. In the first part, the respondents were required to provide information on demographic details such as their initial training and teaching experience. The second part consisted of a list of possible changes that the researchers identified based on a similar study conducted in Fiji (Booth et al., 1996). The teachers were asked to rate each change on a 5-point Likert scale, 1 being minor and 5 being major. Below each they were also asked to comment on the impact of the change on their work. The third part of the questionnaire provided the respondents opportunities to express their views on what changes they expected to see in future in light of the current changes in their work.

As part of research ethics, consent was obtained from these teachers about their willingness to participate in the study; assurance was given that the data collected were only for the purpose of research and participants’ confidentiality and anonymity were fully protected (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). They were informed that they could refuse to participate at any point during the research and could also decline to answer any question with which they were uncomfortable. It
is noteworthy that all the teachers (38) agreed to participate in the study and the return rate of the completed questionnaire was 100 per cent. The qualitative data collected were analysed on the basis of themes that emerged from the responses (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2012) and the quantitative data were analysed using common descriptive statistical analysis techniques, in this case means and standard deviations (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

**SAMPLE**

For this study, the researchers considered it professionally sound to target a specific group – in this case, those teachers who were enrolled in the University of the South Pacific’s (USP) leadership course offered during the summer flexi-school in January 2014, which was the seventh in the series of courses in the Diploma in Educational Leadership programme for the cohort. The 38 teachers in the sample were experienced professionals with an average teaching experience of 18 years. This purposive sample size – exceeding Cohen and Manion’s (1994) minimum sample size of 30 for statistical analysis – was considered more than desirable. These participants represent different schools and provinces throughout the country.

All the participants in the sample completed an initial two-year Teachers’ Certificate from Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE) in the 1990s. These teachers entered the teacher training programme when the entry qualification was quite low, Form 3 (Grade 9) or Form 4 (Grade 10).

**FINDINGS**

**QUANTITATIVE DATA**

The analysis of the quantitative data is presented in Table 1. The table illustrates on the basis of teachers’ rating, 8 of them as major changes (as indicated by the high mean scores) and 3 of them as minor. The table shows that all teachers are faced with some changes in their day-to-day work.
#### Table 1: Changes in teachers’ work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changes experienced in work</th>
<th>Mean (N = 38)</th>
<th>Standard deviation (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole school development planning</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountable for school funds</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School roll</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher appraisal</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching method</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Discipline</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master trainer</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### QUALITATIVE DATA

When asked to list and comment on two of the major changes experienced in their work, the majority of the teachers pointed out whole school development planning, accountability for school funds, teacher appraisal and curriculum. Teaching approach, increase in school roll, student discipline, and assessment followed quite closely. In what follows, teachers’ responses are given in essence.

#### WHOLE SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

All of the teachers (100 per cent) expressed whole school development planning as a major change in their work. School development planning is about developments that schools would like to see happening within three years from the time of the survey. The MoEHRD provides some guidelines on the basis of which the schools are supposed to prepare their school development plans. The following typical comments from the teachers about whole school development planning are indicative of a high degree of hesitation, uncertainty and perhaps reluctance in being actively involved in it:
School development planning is new to Solomon Islands. It was introduced in 2008 and it needs to be developed in collaboration with teachers, school boards, and the wider community to encourage participation in planning.

It requires a lot of time to do school development planning.

School development planning has brought more work and pressure for all.

TEACHER APPRAISAL

All of the teachers (100 per cent) indicated that there have been changes in teacher appraisal approaches and methods. Teacher performance appraisal is vital for ongoing improvement of the teaching workforce but for the incumbents to benefit from such an exercise, it must be conducted well. Again, some of their comments suggest reluctance and lack of confidence:

- The MoEHRD held workshops last year to prepare school leaders to carry out teacher appraisal. Before, teacher appraisal used to be done by the Provincial Education Authority... now it is additional work for me [school leader].

- We have not gone through the formal workshop on appraisal. To be frank, not all school leaders are introduced to this but they are required to carry this out.

- Most of the work is now done by school leaders. We have to ensure we appraise teachers properly. This was initiated by the MoEHRD.

CURRICULUM

With respect to school curriculum, all of the teachers (100 per cent) pointed out that several changes are taking place which are heavily affecting their work. The following sample of responses demonstrates the change in school curriculum:

- We started receiving new materials from Curriculum Development Division that were printed in PNG and Australia. At the moment no instruction is provided to teachers on how to use the materials, may be it will given later.

- Teachers are confronted with new curriculum materials known to be outcome-based education curriculum text books such as in health, social science and science syllabus for Years 4, 5 and 6, which are designed for students to use by themselves with little bit of guidance from the teachers.

- We have been introduced to a new curriculum called the Nguzunguzu. Majority of the teachers do not know how to teach this curriculum.

- No prior training to all teachers was done by the Curriculum Development Division before implementing the changes.
ACCOUNTABILITY FOR SCHOOL FUNDS

All the teachers (100 per cent) reported that this is a major change from the past practice. The Provincial Education Authority was responsible for school funds and now schools are to be responsible for the grants sent to schools. In schools, school leaders are required to look after the funds. Some of their concerns, at times amounting to resentment, are exemplified in these comments:

- Now the school leaders were mandated to be the accounting officers of their school finances.
- We are not accountants and this can be a set back to our work.
- Looking after the school funds is very challenging to me … it is a critical area of my work. I have no qualification like an accountant to do all financial documentation. I can be terminated if funds go missing.
- Creates more workload, must be accountable and transparent to ensure that the funds are wisely spent, carefully recorded and kept.
- Head teachers and principals are now accountable to school funds. This is extra work. Spending on this funds need to follow the MoEHRD policy closely.

TEACHING APPROACH

In terms of teaching approach, teachers (70 per cent) reported this as major change in their work. For example, comments relating to change in teaching approach include:

- Currently the MoEHRD has imposed on teachers to use a more student centred approach in the classroom to encourage more on enquiry learning.
- Teacher-centred approach is discouraged by MoEHRD. Group work and other student-centred approaches are to be used by teachers.

SCHOOL ROLL

Relating to school roll, teachers (65 per cent) pointed out that the school roll is increasing and this is affecting their work. The teachers indicated that the Education For All (EFA) policy emphasised by the government and Fee Free Education Policy (FFEP) are the reasons for the increase in student enrolment. These are some of their comments:

- Now the current school enrolment has increased by 50 per cent. Because of this increase, more classrooms, desks, teaching and learning resources are needed to cater for this increase.
- There is overcrowding in the room and teachers find it difficult to do work effectively.
DISCIPLINE

With regard to discipline, teachers (65 per cent) expressed student discipline as a major change affecting their work. They indicated in comments such as those listed below that discipline is spiraling downwards:

Discipline is becoming a problem. Teachers not only have the task of teaching academic subjects, but also they have to change the lives of the children to become good citizens of the nation.

In the past years discipline was good because of corporal punishment, but now it is lacking due to children’s right in the country. It is not effective as students are doing a lot of wrong things.

Discipline affects teachers’ work. Teachers are now required to do more counselling. Teachers have to provide pastoral care and this is extra work for them to do.

The current system where children’s rights are advocated is causing students to ignore respect ... they do not fear because there is no corporal punishment. It is challenging for teachers to take right approaches and decision making on how to control children’s attitudes and behaviour when their rights are promoted.

ASSESSMENT

For assessment, teachers (60 per cent) pointed out that there has been a change in assessment. For example, now more subjects are included for assessment, unlike in the past years when only a few core subjects were examined. These are some responses relating to this change in their work:

Formative and summative assessments are emphasised by MoEHRD to be conducted daily as well as on termly basis. All these assessments are now to be stored in each student’s folders.

Now we are to do more formative assessments and keep all records. This is more work.

Before only Mathematics and English were examined in external examinations whereas now the examination includes Social Science and Science plus there is a General paper. Also, at Year 11 schools have to carry out their own assessments on the Optional subjects.

MASTER TEACHERS

About 30 per cent of teachers highlighted this change. Master teachers are those teachers selected from schools to help in the training of untrained teachers. At the moment, teachers from two provinces are affected by this change, and it is anticipated that it will be extended to other provinces as well. These are the views expressed by the teachers:

Since the introduction of training for the untrained teachers in 2012, the MoEHRD has appointed some teachers in each school to help in the training of these untrained teachers. These trainers in the school are called Master Teachers. This adds more to the workload of teachers.

This needs more time for me to spend in preparing and training teachers.
INFORMATION COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

With reference to ICT, about 25 per cent of the teachers pointed out this change in their schools. These are the feedback from the teachers:

*We now have two laptops, a portable printer and a huge photocopier machine. These electronic machines have brought a lot of changes to the work of teachers in my school.*

*Teachers are proud because we now have computers in our school. Computers are totally new and they are very motivating to the teachers in their work.*

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Most of the teachers (95 per cent) expressed the view that there were few opportunities for professional development. In times of rapid changes, there is a need for more professional development opportunities to up-skill teachers to cope better with the changes. Some of the typical comments from this group of teachers illustrate this:

*We still have very limited opportunities for professional development.*

*The Ministry of Education does not provide enough in-service programmes but keeps introducing changes in our work.*

FUTURE CHANGES

In terms of what changes teachers would like to see in future, most of them indicated professional development opportunities (95 per cent), ICT (80 per cent) followed by providing relevant quality education to the children (60 per cent). These are some of their typical comments:

*More refresher courses for teachers to teach the children better.*

*I would like to see more teachers to access further training and get more qualified in their work.*

*Increase teachers’ salaries and other terms and conditions similar to other countries.*

*Since we are in technological age, we need ICT in all Solomon Islands schools. At the moment we are far behind. ICT can help teachers in improving learning outcomes. ICT can also help students to know better the outside world … and broaden their mind and understanding of ICT. Therefore Solomon Islands should rise and implement ICT in all schools.*

*Change in education that will help children to develop positively as individuals that possess knowledge, skills and attitude required to build a united and progressive society. All children are provided with quality education.*

*I do not want to see students develop only their intellects, but also they develop physically, socially and spiritually in life.*
DISCUSSION

This study has explored teachers’ perceptions of the severity of changes in their work in the Solomon Islands. The analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data illustrates the magnitude of changes teachers have experienced in their work. This is consistent with the findings of the OECD (2006) commissioned study and other well documented studies in the literature (Boyle & Woods, 1996; Hargreaves, 2003; Ingersoll, 2003; Smyth, 2001; Stevenson 2007). The implementation of these changes has definitely enlarged as well as intensified the work of teachers and the findings of the present study lend support to the findings of several other studies (Bell & Stevenson, 2006; Sloan, 2007; Smyth, 2000; Valli & Buese, 2007).

Looking at the changes, it becomes abundantly clear that they were imposed on the teachers by the MoEHRD through centrally driven policies. There appears to have been a relentless succession of initiatives from the MoEHRD, and teachers have had to be responsive to a greater range of imposed demands. This top-down, management driven change is reported in the literature (Ingersoll, 2003) and is also evident in the findings of the current study. For example, whole school development planning and accountability for school funds resulted directly from a mandate by the MoEHRD. As reported by the teachers, these changes were entirely new and they were not well versed in them. This finding is consistent with the findings relating to School Improvement Planning in the Republic of Marshall Islands (Pallotta & Lingam, 2013). Some of the changes that were implemented were the result of the routine pressures of improving the profession, such as teacher appraisal and the use of teachers in the school known as Master Teachers to help in the supervision of untrained teachers posted to certain schools. Some of the changes introduced reflect MoEHRD recognition of the importance of keeping pace with accelerating rates of social and technological change and adapting to the needs of the future (Derrington, 2011; Ozga, 2002). For example, children need exposure to ICT as this will have a growing impact on their lives, and thus, continued integration in school work is crucial to better prepare them for future life and work (Bacchus, 2008). Without suitable changes, the education system would become stagnant and lag behind other countries both within and beyond the region. However, change should not occur simply for the sake of change, lest it lead to confusion or lack of understanding of change and ultimately to failure of the change programme.

With regard to school finances, school leaders need to have a good grasp of basic knowledge and skills in financial management. Without this knowledge, they may not be able to handle financial matters prudently and this could adversely affect school finances. For discipline, teachers need to manage behaviour using suitable skills in counselling. This is warranted because in the past teachers used to resort to corporal punishment to discipline students, but this is now banned by law. Issues of children’s behaviour and discipline should not deflect the attention of all stakeholders and more so the principal stakeholder. Some education and training on basic counselling would help teachers in their work especially in ensuring children receive the best advice from their teachers in order to enhance students’ balanced development (Burnett & Lingam, 2007). This is because the future of any nation depends on the children, and schools are responsible for building their good future. Generally, every change introduced in teachers’ work is to enhance the learning and performance of children, but if they are not able to implement the change effectively then it is unlikely that anything will be improved.
For Solomon Islands after independence, like other newly independent countries, assuming responsibility for their education systems with curriculum development work such as writing of the curriculum and preparation of the curriculum materials was a major struggle. This was for a variety of reasons, notable among them being the lack of expertise (Thomas & Postlethwaite, 1984). Teachers were grappling with changes they reported in the curriculum, especially the local production of contextualised curriculum materials and assessment practices (Lingam et al., 2013; Luke, 1997; Taufe’ulungaki, 2001; Thaman, 2009) in the process of trying to modernise their education system. Teachers must be well versed in changes in the curriculum materials and assessment practices in order to carry out their role in the teaching and learning process effectively.

Another change reported by the teachers is the increase in school roll. This could reflect population growth as well as support from the Government’s fee free education policy. Some international initiatives, such as that by UNESCO, have propelled some countries in the Pacific to adopt the EFA policy, which emphasises the importance of school attendance for all school age children (UNESCO, 2010). In combination with governments’ commitment to millennium development goals, the EFA initiative may have contributed to an increase in school rolls that is similar to the boost in school enrolments accompanying NCLB in the USA (Valli & Buese, 2007). As a consequence, the heavy workload teachers have to carry detracts from their ability to pay individual attention to each student. Work of the best quality is possible only when teachers can carry their workload comfortably. Thus, the government should start planning for both quantitative and qualitative improvements in its teaching workforce.

Changes that are unfamiliar to teachers - who are supposed to implement them - have little chance of being successfully implemented. To implement changes without consideration of teachers’ understanding of them, let alone their professional capacity to cope with them, is tantamount to a death sentence for those changes. Attention to teachers’ professional needs must be supported to ensure meaningful and high quality delivery of services to the clientele at all times. The need to focus on the quality and improvement in educational provision is further reinforced in the context of this study through the feedback obtained from the teachers; and this is consistent with the UNESCO (2010, 2005) recommendations for developing and supporting a professional teaching force that is simultaneously responsible and responsive to both learning and the learners. However, this study has shown that in Solomon Islands a lack of in-service training of teachers exists which is consistent with Tuimavana’s (2010) findings from an earlier Fiji study.

CONCLUSION

As in other Pacific Islands countries, the Solomon Islands endeavour to improve its education system is driven by central policies to influence change in teachers’ work. As demonstrated in the literature, change in teachers’ work is a common phenomenon not only in developed but also in developing countries, in the scramble to keep pace with the ever changing needs and demands to which all individual countries are subject. The forces of globalisation and modernisation seem certain to stimulate further reforms in education in future with further impacts on teachers’ world of work.
Since teachers are the key input in children’s learning, it is important that they are thoroughly familiar with the operation of any change introduced that affects their work. If teachers are bombarded with sweeping changes in their work, then their lack of preparation is likely to have adverse effects on the quality of children’s learning experiences. In ignorance of the why and how of the changes being imposed on them, teachers may struggle to implement the changes and are less likely to improve children’s learning outcomes. The study, though small in scale, has shed useful light on some potentially relevant information about changes in teachers’ work in a small developing nation in the Pacific. Since this is a preliminary study, more in-depth empirical inquiries are vital to determine the types of changes and teachers’ capability of coping with changes in their work. Embarking on such studies will help generate useful information and provide deeper insights into practitioners’ engagement with changes in their work.

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