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TOWARDS A PROMISING FUTURE:

**SOLOMON ISLANDS EDUCATORS' PERSPECTIVES ON
THE INCLUSION OF ARTS AND CULTURE CURRICULUM
IN SCHOOLS**

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
of Master of Education at The Faculty of Education

By

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University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand 2013

Abstract

In the Pacific Islands, ‘arts’ and ‘culture’ are not separate entities, since traditional Pacific cultures encode recollections of the past in song, dance, art and craft, naming and story-telling, all of which contribute to recording their histories. The encompassing nature of culture has drawn scholars to also recognise the role of education in transmitting culture. One’s view of the world and one’s place in it can be communicated to a young person through family, but also through arts education within schooling. When school curriculum only embodies a culture that is alien to the family culture of students, that curriculum may induce failure in its students.

A concern about the cultural appropriateness and limited accessibility of school education in the Solomon Islands, has led to a process of major curriculum reform. One area currently in development is a proposed Arts and Culture Curriculum. This research invited five experienced Solomon Islands educators to take part in an interview process regarding their perceptions about the inclusion of an Arts and Culture Curriculum in Solomon Island schools.

The findings revealed that a key reason for the inclusion of culture within an arts curriculum in the Solomon Islands was the desire for locally situated, locally appropriate curricula that would place high value on the preservation of cultural identities and heritage skills. Secondly, the inclusion of non-academic, practical and creative educational pathways was being established in order to provide balanced opportunities in Solomon Islands schools. Findings indicated challenges to be overcome in order to further develop and implement this Arts and Culture Curriculum currently in draft form. Proposed implementation has implications for resourcing, teacher training, and processes of community consultation in curriculum development.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the assistance and support of my Master's supervisors Karen Barbour, Graham Price, and Jane Strachan. Their encouragement and belief in the importance of my research topic has been a source of inspiration throughout my research journey. I thank them for their wisdom, patience and enlightened guidance. Exchanges with them always left me with a replenished desire to delve deeper into my topic. Thanks also to my Librarians Heather Morrell and Alistair Lamb for their expert assistance.

I thank my wonderful husband Ken for his endless patience, love, encouragement and support during the process of writing this thesis and I thank my children Caley, Daniel, Joshua, Sarah, Rory and Iona for believing in me and waiting for me to finish writing. I thank my parents for providing the example and passion for study, for continuing education and for the Solomon Islands.

To my good friends Nigel, Jocelyn and Dawn, I owe you a debt of gratitude for many hours of time and inspiration.

I thank God (the infinite-personal God of the Christian Bible) for giving me the passion and gifts to pursue this task.

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Chapter One: Introduction

This introductory chapter sets the context for the research by providing a brief overview of the socio-cultural context and the progress of educational reform in the Solomon Islands. It highlights issues currently surfacing in the reform process of this specific nation, and provides reasons why this study is being undertaken. The chapter ends with a brief outline of what will be covered in the following chapters of this study.

1.1 Overview: Socio-cultural context and educational reform

The Solomon Islands is made up of 992 islands in nine provinces where cultural diversity is evident in the 75 languages spoken. Despite being drawn together since 1892 under the British Protectorate, the people have retained a certain island separateness due to geographical distance and diverse cultural systems. The Solomon Islands can be considered a post-colonial state, independent of British rule since 1977 (after 85 years as a British protectorate). It is also a Christianised country, its cultural heritage ruptured through conversion from 1894 onwards (Kenilorea, 2008, p. 18) and traditional art forms previously associated with pre-Christian beliefs re-established in new ways from the 1970s onwards (G. Wilson, personal communication, September, 2009). Internal ethnic tensions have attracted international attention and intervention, particularly within the last decade.

“Civil unrest set in place a structure and culture of violence that permeated even the highest institutions of the state.” (Kabutaulaka, 2005, p. 292). Many village communities suffered from the inability of the state to maintain or even provide education, health, transportation and other social services (Field, 2005). By mid 2003, the Australian Howard government led a regional intervention in Solomon Islands. The major objectives of the Regional Assistance Mission Solomon Islands (RAMSI) intervention were restoring law and order and rebuilding the nation.

In 2013 the Solomon Islands is still regarded as an economically underdeveloped nation with limited resources but growing educational opportunities. According to the Solomon Islands 2007 Demographic and Health Survey ¹, only 65.4% of the nation attends primary school. The Solomon Islands comprise diverse cultures, languages and customs. With a population of about half a million, 93.3% are Melanesian, 4% Polynesian and 1.5% Micronesian (Malasa, 2007). Although there are seventy-five languages spoken in Solomon Islands, Pijin English is understood by most. Christianity is the major religion in the Solomon Islands with five 'mainline' Christian denominations (Anglican, Roman Catholic, South Seas Evangelical, United and Seventh Day Adventist) dominant in membership.

The Solomon Islands Education system is administered under the Education Act of 1978, with much administration of the country's education system being decentralised to the education boards of the nine provincial governments and the Honiara City Council (Malasa, 2007). This structure is necessary because of the geographic isolation and cultural diversity of the country (Sikua, 2002). The present education system manages over 600 primary schools with a student enrolment of 85,000, 140 secondary schools with a student enrolment of 29,000 (MEHRD, 2004a) and a teaching establishment of over 4000.

Conflict in the Solomon Islands between 1999 and 2003 devastated the national economy and traumatised many. As a consequence Solomon Islanders began to reflect critically and to plan for the future (MEHRD, 2005). Upon reflection, there was general acceptance in the community that education had increased tensions within communities, by its promotion of and focus on economic advancement alone. Many people felt that social and cultural values, upon which Solomon Island communities were based, were disconnected from the education system. There had been a concern amongst parents and communities in

¹ The Demographic and Health Survey on the Solomon Islands was a pilot project without follow up. The Solomon Islands National Statistics website does not contain more recent data.

both urban and rural communities about the increasing number of students leaving the school system not adequately prepared for their lives in the Solomon Islands (Beuka, 2008; MEHRD, 2004a; Pollard, 2005; Treadaway, 2003). Another significant concern was loss of cultural identity.

These issues of concern about development of an economy, relevance of the education and preservation of cultural identity were met by governmental response, which included the creation of an Arts and Culture Curriculum for Solomon Island schools. Therefore the curriculum reform process is a key part of a wider education reform process. There is now a clearly articulated desire that the curriculum should help economic progress, but should also function to preserve cultural identity and play a role in uniting diverse cultures into one cohesive society (MEHRD, 2005).

1.2 Statement of the issue

This thesis focuses on the Solomon Islands curriculum. Therefore an historical perspective of the relationship between Solomon Islands art and Solomon Islands culture and the school curriculum is explored. Also explored are current and future directions of the education system focused on the arts. In the literature only a few brief comments are recorded about how arts have been taught in the past in Solomon Islands schools. Information is currently not widely available concerning how arts or culture might be approached in the curriculum and what the present status is of this emergent curriculum.

Nothing has been written about this topic by Solomon Islands researchers. Therefore the purpose of this research is to record the perspectives of Solomon Islands educators about Arts and Culture Curriculum. This research will fill a gap in the literature for the Solomon Islands and potentially more broadly for Melanesia.

Currently perhaps only a few secondary schools teach an Arts and Culture focused syllabus. A new Arts and Culture Curriculum and Syllabus do exist for School Years 7-9 students. In draft form since 2007 and in final draft form ready for release in 2012, implementation has now been pushed out to 2013. No Arts

and Culture Syllabus exists for secondary levels beyond School Year 9 and there is no written primary level syllabus.

The question of whether the Solomon Islands education system should include an Arts and Culture Curriculum, as perceived by experienced educators, has not been formally investigated. No literature has surfaced that discusses the development of an Arts curriculum that includes a focus on Culture in the Solomon Islands written from an indigenous or any other perspective. Therefore it seems of value to investigate this topic and to explore underlying issues. In this research, I seek to contribute to ongoing Arts and Culture Curriculum development by seeking to give voice to the perceptions of experienced Solomon Island educators.

While much research about specific educational settings and issues has been carried out in the developed or [some other] developing countries, very little has been undertaken in Melanesian countries (MEHRD, 2005). The key findings of this study may be useful in revealing local knowledge linked to broad arts curriculum goals. It is also timely for surfacing interest and concerns at the time of the impending release of a new, School Year 7-9 Arts and Culture Syllabus. In view of this, the study is underpinned by the following questions.

1.3 Research Questions

What are the perceptions of experienced Solomon Islands educators about the inclusion of an Arts and Culture Curriculum in the Solomon Islands?

Sub-questions:

How has Arts and Culture Curriculum been positioned in the curriculum?

What is the appropriateness of an Arts and Culture Curriculum?

What recommendations can be made for developing such a curriculum?

1.4 My interest in Arts and Culture Curriculum in the Solomon Islands

The vision for this research began in Honiara in 2006. I was nearly ready to return to Auckland after doing some voluntary arts teaching and supporting the redevelopment of a rural training centre, when I was asked to come back again to the Solomon Islands and teach music. This request opened up a long conversation and a series of questions in my mind about why someone would teach formal music in the school setting in the Solomon Islands when, from my perspective, they are so full of music. Over a few years of background research, I became informed about developments in curriculum reform, the community perceptions about the school system as reported by Solomon Island post-graduate researchers and the existence of a Draft Arts and Culture Curriculum document that was seeking further development to be followed by implementation.

The understandings I gained revealed gaps in the literature. The preservation of Arts and Culture is an international issue, but nothing had been written about it by a Solomon Islands researcher, nor by someone else recording their perspectives. Eventually this led to this research design and the posing of questions to Solomon Island educators about their perceptions of the inclusion of an Arts and Culture Curriculum in Solomon Island schools. The research interviews have been conducted with a focus on recording Solomon Island voices. Clearly as the researcher I must choose how to receive and present these findings within my own acknowledged bias and background.

How I am situated in the field as a researcher

Born in the Solomon Islands, I grew up in Honiara as a child of European missionaries. After coming to New Zealand in 1972 my parents retained strong links with the Solomon Islands and hosted visiting Islanders in New Zealand. I developed life-long links with the country and its people, visited in 2006 and 2010, and continue to correspond with friends living in the Solomon Islands. Since my personal history and experience is important in the construction of this study, part of situating myself in this study is to explain my connection to the field. My interest in this topic has developed from this early relational background but also from my practice in the arts, my qualifications in education and commitment to the arts.

In the past I have been invited to work with teachers in Honiara who have expressed a desire to implement local arts curriculum in their school. However the questions arose: What might this arts work look like? What does the syllabus contain and is there a culturally appropriate pedagogy for delivery? In order to address such questions, and as preparation for any future fieldwork, I offer a review of relevant literature (in chapter two) and these interviews with a sample of Solomon Island educators—thus establishing some ground views of the draft Arts and Culture document.

Embarking on cross-cultural study necessarily involves reflective consideration of thought and behavior. As interpretation differs across cultures researchers must be prepared to challenge their own assumptions. Some aspects of Solomon Islands cultures may challenge Western cultural thinking. Research design challenges will be discussed in chapter three.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This research aims to make recommendations to Solomon Island stakeholders for future curriculum development, from the perspective of research participants. This inquiry was driven by a belief that findings may contribute to the curriculum development process. This research may contribute to growing discourse in Melanesia and the wider Pacific about reassessing and developing curriculum content to include Arts and Culture.

This is a timely study, since dialogues across Melanesia, the wider Pacific and around the globe are focusing on these two relevant educational priorities.

1.6 Structure of this thesis

In this introductory chapter, I have introduced this thesis research and stated why I am interested in considering Solomon Islands educators' perceptions about the inclusion of an Arts and Culture Curriculum in Solomon Islands schools. Chapter Two contains a literature review in which I examine current literature about curriculum development and Arts and Culture Curriculum, in both Western and developing countries and of course particularly in the Solomon Islands. The third chapter presents the research design I utilised and includes the research methods

and ethical considerations. In chapter four I present a summary of findings and illustrate the themes and ideas that have emerged during the study. The fifth chapter is my discussion of the findings in relation to the literature in this area. Lastly, in the conclusion I bring together and summarise my research, describes the limitation of this study and provide suggestions for further research. I also offer my recommendations to initiate change, based on discussion of the perspective of the perspective of Solomon Islands educators.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In order to provide a context in which the inclusion of an Arts and Culture Curriculum in the Solomon Islands can be discussed, this chapter will present a critical review of some pertinent literature. Firstly I present a description of the Solomon Islands context, followed by defining arts and culture, and then curriculum, for the purpose of this study. Since there is a growing body of literature that describes the socio-political context of curricula for developing nations an appraisal of writing about developing Pacific Island education is necessarily focused on Pacific curriculum issues and UNESCO initiatives in the region. Literature defining arts curriculum and the shift to Arts and Culture Curriculum is discussed in the light of trends in both Western and developing countries. The voices of Solomon Islands artists examine the relationship between arts and culture historically and in the present.

A key reason for the inclusion of culture within an arts curriculum in developing nations is the desire for locally appropriate curricula and preservation of cultural identity. The inclusion of culture within an arts curriculum is central to literature I have reviewed.

The documents reviewed come together to provide a background to the Solomon Islands context and focus this research toward the main question, **What are the perceptions of experienced Solomon Island educators on the inclusion of an Arts and Culture Curriculum in Solomon Island schools?** This question remains unconsidered in other literature.

2.2 Solomon Islands curriculum development: Contemporary socio-political demographics and policy directions

Demographics

The Solomon Islands is in the Pacific Ocean and part of Melanesia, which is one of the world's most fragmented regions in terms of diverse cultural groupings. Melanesia contains roughly a quarter of all the world's known languages making

the region the most ethno-linguistically diverse society in the world (Reilly, 2004). Solomon Islands' is a relatively young nation by world standards. It is still developing the institutions and practices that are required to establish a dynamic stability. It is a nation established through colonisation that underwent the disruption of World War 2 and whose fragmented cultural identities have been coalesced under Christianity. It experienced political unrest from 1990 to 2010 with 2003 military intervention that has remained as the RAMSI presence to this day. When these histories are viewed, the fragile and emergent nature of contemporary Solomon Islands society can be appreciated (Rohorua, 2007).

Solomon Island peoples have generally retained local island identities through the geographical isolation of island systems. In addition is an identification within an extended *wantok*² system. Population numbers are around 500,000 (Dinnen, 2002). Over 80 per cent of the population lives rurally, often in communities of less than 200 people (Tolley, 2011). The village lifestyle could be described as a 'semi-subsistence lifestyle'. However the village is a strong and resilient structure that has remained in existence since documented history. The indigenous people of the 992 islands, and 75 languages (Ethnologue, 2013) now constitute a single political entity. To understand Solomon Islands, it is necessary to understand its diversity, the variety of its peoples, its lands and its customs. Sustaining a political cohesion across such diversity is key to the Solomon's future.

Britain, the country's colonial administrator until 1978, "did little to develop the country and infrastructure, and provincial services to this day remain poor" (Tolley, 2011, p. 42). The capital was located in Honiara after World War II, which drew migrants from around the country to the island of Guadalcanal searching for employment opportunities in government bureaucracies and businesses and later in the gold mine. Resentments grew towards 'settlers' perceived as prospering at the expense of locals. This created tension and also reinforced the desire for maintaining separate island identities (Dinnen, 2002). Solomon Islands society, as defined constitutionally, is a recent development, the

² *Wantok* is a Melanesian term that means someone that speaks the same language or a member of an extended community.

imposition of an external unity, defined by the British colonists. Nationhood was inconsistent with custom (*kastom*)³, the basis of Solomon Islands society (Rohorua, 2007). In the absence of a strongly unified national identity (Dinnen, 2002) most people's primary loyalty is to their *wantok* (Reilly, 2004).

The spread of Christianity by the mid nineteenth century was so extensive that nearly all Solomon Island communities are represented by at least one branch of Christian faith. The Church, therefore plays a significant role in peoples' perceptions of Constitutional law and traditional practices (Rohorua, 2007; Tolley, 2011) .

The three institutions of Solomon Islands life are the traditional culture ('custom'), the church and the civil state, listing them in the order in which they reached the Solomon Islands. Over the past century, the first two have been strong, the third weak. This is still the case (Rohorua, 2007, p. 113).

Nowadays, the church still plays a vital role in the provision of education, particularly at primary school level. It is common for an extended community *wantok* to be similarly aligned to a specific Christian sect thus strengthening a chosen identity.

In 1992, a few years before the ethnic tensions erupted, the United Nations (UN) had classified the Solomon Islands as a Less Developed Country (LDC) because of its low living standards, little industry and a comparatively high dependence on foreign aid. Inside of that grouping, the classification Small Island Developing States (SIDS) were recognised as a distinct group of developing countries facing specific social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities (United Nations, 1992). The Solomon's was categorised there too. Programmes of action for the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) have been in place since 1994. Since independence, overall Melanesian living standards and personal security have declined (Reilly, 2004).

³ *Kastom* is a pidgin word for 'custom' used to refer to traditional culture, including religion, economics and art in Melanesia. It is the basis of Solomon Islands society.

Ethnic Tensions

The effects of the ethnic tensions and coup between 1998 and 2003 left Solomon Islands essentially bankrupt and the central state in near collapse. Education was severely disrupted. The civil unrest brought about a structure and culture of violence that spread right through to the top of the state [ref]. Many village communities suffered from the inability of the state to provide education and other social services. The term ‘failed state’ was first applied by the The Australian Strategic Policy Institute in 2003 (Reilly, 2004).

The Solomon Islands Government requested help and the Australian government responded in 2003 through RAMSI: Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands. Two of the major objectives of the RAMSI intervention were restoring law and order and building the nation (Reilly, 2004). In conflict resolution in Solomon Islands, the state often plays a tertiary role since *wantok* and Church have greater cohesive influence. For this reason, a wide variety of stakeholders featured prominently in the processes of peace building (Rohorua, 2007; Tolley, 2011). In 2004 the Solomon Islands had an education system emerging from a time of turmoil. The nation was now classified as a Failed State, but with an agenda for survival and regional support and foreign aid resources to assist in the journey.

History of Formal Education

The emergence of the formal education system in the Solomon Islands in the early 1900s came from missionaries and then the British Colonial power. Early formal education says Toben (1991) met the needs of the churches and then the colonial administration. In 1946 the first draft of education regulations was made and it was agreed that the government should control all education in the protectorate, but in collaboration with the missions. In 1947 the first department of education was set up (Toben, 1991).

Education in the colonial era is considered to have truly commenced with the establishment of King George VI School in 1954. Students were powerfully transformed by a style of education that disconnected students from village language and culture and prepared them for British administrative roles in a

colonial bureaucracy. Elite students were sent overseas for schooling. The man that would go on to be the first Solomon Island's Prime Minister was among these students: Sir Peter Kenilorea (Kenilorea, 2008).

The first Educational White Paper was produced in 1962 and introduced examinations and a senior leaving certificate (Toben, 1991). There was no reference to the arts in this early curriculum. The system created a disappointing scenario, since children not passing examinations could not proceed any further in the education system. These "failures" became regarded as second-class citizens particularly clustered in urban settings where they may have been 'educated out of' village life. Therefore by the 1970s the community had started to question the aims of the education system (Toben, 1991). An education review committee was established in 1973 and presented their report entitled *Education For What?* (Educational Policy Review Committee, 1973). "The Solomon Islanders had taken a close look at the Western-style education system foisted upon them and clearly disapproved of much of it" (Saunders, 1977, p. 163).

Solomon Island parents wanted the school system to be both relevant and applicable to village situations and to meet the demands of a Twentieth Century society. Agriculture, Industrial Arts, and Art Crafts were to be introduced to meet these expectations. Solomon Islanders wanted to see their customs and culture strengthened and maintained in schools (Educational Policy Review Committee, 1973). Singing, customs, art and craft, social studies and religious studies were added to the primary curriculum. A Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) was also established (Toben, 1991). *Education For What?* (Educational Policy Review Committee, 1973) argued that the value of education could not be measured in terms of only meeting manpower and economic requirements, but should be concerned with living—a social issue.

By 1975 the government implemented a national curriculum. Those directly involved in constructing this curriculum were all educators, while several expatriates – particularly from Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Fiji – with different cultural perspectives, were involved in constructing the curriculum material as subject syllabi. Existing post-primary schools were designated National Secondary Schools (NSS) (Toben, 1991).

1978 brought the political independence of the Solomon Islands as a state and the National Education Act. Much of the administration was decentralised to the education boards of the nine provinces and to Honiara City Council. The six church sponsored secondary schools and the one government-funded secondary school all extended their curriculum to the Solomon Island School Certificate (School Year 11) from 1978. The Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) developed syllabus material for primary schools. Its staff was small, and minimal curriculum materials were developed. There were few clear guidelines for teachers.

By 1984 a complete review of SI primary curriculum was sought. Funds came from the World Bank (Toben, 1991). However the 1991 Curriculum Review paper said that the primary school system had not been reviewed since 1972. At that time (1984) the curriculum was deemed academically biased. This related to the teaching towards the grade six Hicks Test. The test publicly privileged a pair of curriculum areas: numeracy and literacy. Students had to pass selection examinations at the end of primary school to receive any secondary schooling. Selection examinations still exist today (2013), but the exams at the end of primary school (School Year 6) will soon be phased out to allow greater access to secondary school (F. Rodie, personal communication, February 2013).

2.3 Defining Culture

This study follows the tradition of cognitive anthropology where *culture* is defined as “central to the understanding of human relationships, and acknowledges the fact that members of different cultural groups have unique systems of perceiving and organising the world around them” (Thaman, 1993, p. 242). Tongan educator Thaman opens up this definition, describing culture as “the way of life of a people which encompasses their language, values and knowledge systems” (Thaman, 1993, p. 243). Cultural groups share values, traditions, world-view and relationships. They are usually people who are bound together by a common history, geographic location, language and religion.

The role that culture might play in an arts curriculum has been an international concern in a range of educational literature (E. Eisner, 2000; Potter,

2005; Regional Conference on Arts Education, 2002; Thaman, 1993; UNESCO, 2005a, 2005b). Questions have arisen about the nature of the ways in which arts and culture are both separate and linked and will be explored in section 2.7. A key reason for the inclusion of a cultural dimension within an arts curriculum in developing nations is the desire for locally appropriate curricula and preservation of cultural identity. This can be seen in the Solomon Islands Draft Arts and Culture syllabus rationale:

This syllabus hopes to provide an anchorage for our identity and culture... Art and culture are an integral part of the human functions... incorporating these practices into the national curriculum will enable learners to have a better understanding and appreciation towards the various cultures we have” (MEHRD 2012, p. 8).

2.4 Curriculum: its definition, function and drivers

Curriculum: definition

. The term curriculum applies across a range of levels from national curricula through to specific school curricula and classroom curricula, and to what actually takes place in the classroom (Bell, 2005; Bell & Gilbert, 1996; McGee, 1997). For the purposes of this study, curriculum is defined as a set of instructions about plans and activities, to be carried out by teachers in formal school settings. Curriculum is acknowledged as a subset of the culture of a society. It is recognised as value laden and politically motivated in both its content and delivery. (Lawton, 1975; McGee, 1997; Rohorua, 2007; Sade, 2009).

Official State curriculum documents are inclusive of policy statements, strategic plans and goals, syllabus documents, teacher’s manuals, assessment plans, programmes of study and course related books. Both curriculum development and instructional strategies potentially affect curriculum implementation, and together they create the enacted curriculum (Ross, 2001). The term ‘syllabus’ is usually defined as an outline and summary of topics to be covered in an education or training course. It is descriptive (unlike the prescriptive or specific curriculum). ‘Curriculum’ and ‘syllabus’ are often fused. Syllabi are

used to ensure teachers know what must be taught and what is not required (extraneous) and to ensure consistency between schools.

Curriculum: function

The curriculum functions to define the purpose of a State's education. The curriculum has the potential "of deciding people's future destinations" says Davies (2011, p. 158) and readying young people for adulthood. Hodgkinson, from a functionalist perspective, divides the functions of education into three categories: the economic, aesthetic and ideological (Hodgkinson, 1991). These functions of education are embodied in the state curriculum. Education's function as Saviour is implied in many instances. Education's role of addressing and solving serious societal problems gives it a Saviour-like status.

Education is purported to bring economic advancement and reduce poverty. Potter (2005) says the curriculum functions to economically advance a whole nation. It may "develop the skills to work productively and satisfyingly in the jobs of tomorrow" (OECD 2013). International development agencies posit views about the importance of basic education in reducing poverty. They tend to strongly influence the philosophical position of individual countries' curriculum development plans by focusing on economic functions of education. Hodgkinson warns that "Educators alone cannot 'fix' the problems (of society) because dealing with poverty's root causes must involve health care, housing, transportation, job training, and social welfare bureaucracies" (Hodgkinson, 1991, p. 8).

Education is purported to embed students in their local cultural context through the aesthetic function of education, which works to transfer an aesthetic or cultural system. Arts and culture are a significant part of this curriculum function. An aesthetic system is socially constructed and part of a larger belief system that underlies social action. An aesthetic system is embedded in local culture (Kaeppeler, 2008) and describes ways of viewing artistic products, and the criteria that decide their value. Several writers (Jenkins & Jenkins, 2005; McGrath, 2010; Thaman, 2002a) suggest that education embeds students in their culture. This dates back to Dewey who suggested that by studying local content

students feel more connected to the culture they are immersed in (Dewey, 1939). Conversely, a lack of localised content may produce cultural alienation (Thaman, 1993).

Education is purported to transfer ideologies. Sanga (2000) notes that the ideological function of education refers to its overall purpose. He argues that an important purpose of education is to transmit the culture of the society within which the education takes place, noticing that education is value-laden and reflects certain worldviews. Other writers concur and indicate that education should be locally specific (Chimombo, 2005; Thaman, 1993; World Bank, 1995). The UN advocates education functioning for the preservation of cultural heritage.

I hope to determine the current ideological purpose of education in the Solomon Islands through this review of literature and through interviewing stakeholders. Discussion of this can be found in chapter 4.4.

Curriculum: drivers

Given the socio-political underpinning of curriculum goals, it is worth considering the major influences on a curriculum's current form. Colonialism has had a pervasive impact on curriculum choices in the Solomon Islands, driving people's ways of knowing, their views of who they are, and what they consider worthwhile to teach and learn. As indicated, essentially the early curriculum served the growth of colonial bureaucracy. In recent years the dominance of Western philosophy, content and pedagogy in the education has been challenged by previously colonised nations like the Solomon Islands (Sanga, 2000; Thaman, 2002a). McGovern writes that educational "knowledge forms from Europe and the United States have been spread around the world as part of colonial practices and a faith in modern development programs" (McGovern, 2000, p. 523). These knowledge forms have driven curriculum development extensively in Pacific settings.

Economic imperatives are also dominating curriculum development. The Solomon Islands 1973 report *Education for What?* observed this saying "today it is widely accepted that if an underdeveloped country is to successfully develop it must invest in education in order to produce educated and trained manpower"

(Educational Policy Review Committee, 1973, p. 31). As international agencies like the United Nations became established their influence on curriculum choices became more pervasive. Steiner-Khamasi (2004) and Robertson (2005) both identify that international organisations' ideologies become powerful drivers of curriculum. "Since the mid 1990s the idea that we live in a global knowledge economy that has come... to dominate policy talk" (Robertson, 2005, p. 152). This motif reinforces the message that education should be redesigned in the Pacific towards economic goals (Coxon & Munce, 2008; Zajda, 2005). Such literature claims that it is virtually impossible to attain high levels of economic development and a high standard of living without a highly educated workforce (Brown, 2003). Research that supports this ideological premise, includes the 1996 report by the OECD (Delors, 1996). It identified the most significant factor in reducing poverty and increasing participation by individuals in the economic life of their societies was the attainment of basic literacy and numeracy skills. Hence, curriculum theories have shifted from traditional models that regarded education as exogenous to economic growth, to newer 'human capital' models developed by economists. The result is that the success of education in the Solomon Islands may possibly be measured by economic parameters, disregarding ideological and aesthetic aspects. *Education for What?* (Educational Policy Review Committee, 1973) challenged this limiting view.

Education is concerned with living rather than the narrower concept of making a living. Education which is concerned with these wider issues... is designed to meet the needs of the people it serves (p.30).

As well as economics, curriculum is also driven by specific international pressures since there are "internationally agreed upon goals that the nations of the world have united on and promised to achieve" (Robertson, 2005, p. 152). These include Education For All (EFA), which is one of the Millennium Development Goals (United Nations, 2010). Nearly every country is a member of the United Nations (United Nations, 1985). Declarations to fulfill educational goals of universal access and accompanying funding are powerful influences on curriculum philosophies in the Pacific region. Solomon Islands as a developing nation is a client of funding agencies who seek to inform all choices towards a development model.

Another driver of an education system may be to build social cohesion (McGrath, 2010). Education has been seen extensively in the literature as a conscious process of nation building (McGrath, 2010; McNeely, 1995; Potter, 2005; Rohorua, 2007). Cheng (2003) gives examples of the connection between national visions and educational goals in Malaysia and Singapore where national leaders took a strategic view of education in their plans for nation building. He describes educational reform as an instrument for promoting national unity, social equality and economic development. Melanesian Governments advocate the use of education for greater conformity and nation building (Cochrane, 2007). Smith (2007) purports that,

Cultural theorists claim that schooling has a responsibility to educate for an equitable democratic society. Multicultural art education theorists argue that art education can make a significant contribution towards democratic practices (J. E. Smith, 2007, p. 1) .

“Arts practices have the capacity to stimulate societal partnerships and solidarity where its citizens cooperate in an atmosphere of peace and well-being” (Joubert, 2002, p. 1).

An early stated aim of education in the Solomon Islands was “To enable Solomon Islanders to become sound citizens... to promote racial harmony and unity in the country” (Educational Policy Review Committee, 1973, pp. 31, section 4.06). Memua (2011), Solomon Islands researcher, argued more recently that “education should encompass the promotion of understanding, respect, caring, tolerance and friendship,” (p. 55) and Fito’o (2009) argued that “the state’s capacity to unite people of different ethnic ⁴ groups remained a huge challenge” (p. 8). The implications of this for a Solomon Islands curriculum concerned with the arts, is that the multi-ethnic society is still seeking ways to build social cohesion, and Memua’s vision could possibly be fulfilled within such a curriculum. It may have the potential for drawing together a nation made up of

⁴ *Ethnicity* or *ethnic group* is a socially defined category based on common cultural heritage, shared ancestry, history, homeland, language or dialect, and also other aspects such as religion.

separate island identities. The draft Arts and Culture Curriculum document invites this when it seeks to,

create a framework for the creation of better understanding between the existing communities... accept the diversity of culture that Solomon Islands has... apply their creativity and their understanding of cultures to solve conflict related problems (MEHRD, 2012, pp. 8–9).

Colonialism, economic parameters, international pressure and a desire for social cohesion have all driven the Solomon Islands curriculum choices. The context of curriculum development will now be described.

2.5 Contemporary Curriculum Development

For a curriculum to get on the pathway towards development there will need to be political will and financial resources from the State (Guthrie, 1986). Written plans and curriculum development staff then follow. Curriculum is an important issue for developing nations such as the Solomon Islands who do not have education in place for all youth. Consequently, they are under serious international pressure to develop their curriculum and extend educational opportunities to all their people. Meanwhile through international donors they are supported and resourced towards this goal. The resources are limited and therefore meeting the international expectations is difficult. Questions arise for developing nations around how to appease donors. Coxon and Munce (2008), in an article about the global education agenda, draw attention to,

the need for a more critical awareness of the increased tendency for the solutions implied by the global education agenda of the international development community to be applied to perceived regional and national education problems regardless of contextual difference (p. 147) .

This awareness is important in developing Pacific region nations whose curricula have previously been seen to be contextually inappropriate. There are cautions that Western ideas may still be driving things. Maori academic Linda Tuhiwai Smith points out that globalization engenders “the erosion of national identities and the unprecedented losses of indigenous languages and cultures under the

homogenizing pressures of global capital” (L. T. Smith, 1999, p. 38).

If a developing nation has a political will for its curriculum to be reformed and developed, then that new curriculum needs to reflect local cultural practices and the needs of the nation. That deep consideration must be given to the link between curriculum and culture was already emerging in the literature 20 years ago (Crossley, 1993; Teasdale & Teasdale, 1992; Thaman, 1991, 1993). International discourse advocating for local, culturally specific curriculum in the Pacific region was still prevalent in recent years (Collier, 2007; Coxon & Munce, 2008; Jenkins & Jenkins, 2005; Schweisfurth, 2010; Thaman, 2002a; “Trends in educational reform in the Asia-Pacific region,” 2003).

A curriculum is the product of the identity and backgrounds of the people who write it. Literature recommends (Bolstad, 2004; Hewitt, 2006; McGee, 1997; Potter, 2005) that groups of people with a vested interest in a curriculum (the stakeholders) should operate together to construct and deliver a curriculum. “Stakeholder groups include the government, teachers, students, parents, business people and others such as medical and social workers and tertiary educators” (Potter, 2005, p. 52).

In the case of the Solomon Islands such groups were previously represented by Solomon Island curriculum development officers, some teachers and with input from expatriate advisors mainly from New Zealand and Australia. The teacher is a key factor in curriculum development and change (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). For this reason in this research I have particularly sought the views of teachers concerning curriculum development. Since teachers are key players, pathways of curriculum development must include pre-service and in-service training for teachers (McGee, 1997).

I have identified that the pressures on a nation’s curriculum are numerous since education has many aims. However in a developing nation pressures particularly exist in the areas of resourcing the curriculum with finances, buildings, staff and expertise (Kosack, 2009; Sade, 2009). Other pressure points exist in the areas of education assisting with economic advancement, in the creation of an appropriate workforce, in the social pressures felt through change,

modernization and the global marketplace and in the tensions between community wishes and Government aspirations (Beuka, 2008; Rohorua, 2007; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004; R. M. Thomas, 1993a). All these forces vie for attention in establishing the purposes of a nations education system. Many of the Pacific Islands have struggled with conflictual pressures and so have the Solomon Islands (Potter, 2005; Rodie, F. et al., 2001).

In 2003, the year commencing the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) arrived, the opportunity to review education was considered by Julian Treadaway (2003) when he revisited the founding education review document, *Education For What?* (Educational Policy Review Committee, 1973). His perspective was that the Solomon Islands education system was producing young people frustrated by an educational system, which led to little. They were in danger of becoming militants and rascals. He argued that people can be well educated, but sometimes with knowledge and skills that are inappropriate for their context. With the arrival in July 2003 of RAMSI overseas aid money began flowing towards education. An educational review of secondary elective practical subjects began in October 2003, and “a full review of all secondary subjects began in 2004” (Potter, 2005, p. 15). This was the beginning of plans for Arts and Culture Curriculum.

In 2004 an Education Sector Investment and Reform Programme (ESIRP) was published. In it the MEHRD stated,

The academically orientated curriculum is seen to focus on students who progress to higher education and to the formal sector of employment, and is considered by many as unconnected and antagonistic to the social and cultural values of the Solomon Islands society (MEHRD, 2004a, p. 23).

Aspects of limited access to education in the Solomon Islands included the imposed constraints of examinations that prevented students moving up through the school system a lack of rural schools near each village (Potter, 2005), as well as “the need to respond to the lack of curriculum materials, [and] insufficient trained teachers” (Rodie, F. et al., 2001, p. 11) . It was now the stated intention to make education available to all young Solomon Islanders, regardless of gender,

ethnicity or socio-economic background (MEHRD, 2004a, p. 7). A collaborative approach to curriculum construction unfolded in the context of an evolving partnership with aid providers.

Partnership with New Zealand

The relationship between the Solomon Islands Ministry of Education (MEHRD) and New Zealand's bilateral aid programme came through a formal partnership agreement and began promptly once RAMSI was in control of security. A National Economic Recovery and Development Plan (NERDP): 2003-2005 (Solomon Islands Government, 2003) was devised and education development was seen as a key component of economic recovery. Within the New Zealand-Solomon Islands partnership, the importance of building local ownership was identified as a key to achieving goals. The aim was for a 'partnership as empowerment' with shared power and trust (Tolley, 2011).

The idea of partnership is vital to development practice today. When the Pacific entered a period of reform from around the year 2000 and educational reform was afforded high priority by governments and donor agencies, financial partnerships were necessary. Writers (Jenkins & Jenkins, 2005; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004; Thaman, 1993, 2002b) acknowledged that many Pacific nations were being supported through aid that was allowing them to develop their education systems extensively. However writers also acknowledged that tensions were present between the educational agendas of international agencies, or individual donors, and the contextual realities of those receiving assistance for education within the Pacific Islands. These tensions between donors' educational agendas, and donees' contextual realities are a key theme in literature and have been described by many; see (Coxon, 2002; Coxon & Munce, 2008; Sanga & Taufe'ulungaki, 2005). Certainly the influence of foreign investment on educational policy and practice is especially marked in the Pacific region, since "on a per capita basis, it is the most aided region of the world" (Luteru & Teasdale, 1993, p. 300). Curriculum development funded through donors is likely to always be influenced by the ideologies of the donors. Coxon and Tolley (2005) argue for proper attention to the particular regional or national contexts of the Pacific, where the continuing

dominance of Western philosophy, content, and pedagogy must be challenged in the lives and the education of Pacific peoples (Thaman, 2003a).

Ongoing Curriculum Development

In the Solomon Islands the partnership of finance and expertise was fruitful and the first Education Strategic Plan (MEHRD, 2004b) was quickly developed with three long term strategic goals around equitable access to quality basic education, to provide access to education that would meet individual, regional and national needs, and to manage resources in an efficient and transparent manner.

Schooling in the Solomon's had already led to "a loss of respect for traditional communities" said Treadaway (2003). The Ministry endorsed 'culture in curriculum' in its ESIRP 2004-2006 plans saying, "The curriculum should transmit culture in such a way as to encourage students to explore and respect traditional beliefs and ways of thinking, reasoning and understanding" (MEHRD, 2004a, p. 14). There was no music in the curriculum, although singing was supposed to be included, and Creative Arts existed in the curriculum but was generally not being taught (Davy, 2000). There was a low emphasis on other creative practical subjects such as Home Economics and Industrial Arts. Culture has a very important relationship with education and the curriculum, yet traditional culture had not been a part of schools.

Writers acknowledge that the curriculum is a conduit for cultural transmission and ensures that the foundations of a society are transmitted to the next generation (Dawson, 2005). Those foundations were crumbling through lack of continuing cultural transmission (Lidimani, 2011). Solomon Islands as a nation has always been socially and culturally diverse and there was a need for a broad understanding of that diversity and of its implications for all development activities. Global recognition of every nations increased multi-ethnic, multi-cultural nature has increased the need for curriculum to acknowledge this diversity.

It is important, in the Solomon Islands, to notice that there is a difference between the political dimension of development at a national level and the cultural dimension of development at the rural level, where custom and local structures

like the church are most influential. Rohorua (2007) points out that there is room for more research here, “Further studies that focus on different groups within Solomon Islands and that look more closely at the role of the church (and the potential for the church to play a role in development) would provide useful input into development thinking” (p. 239).

As the curriculum went into review and reform, two long-term technical assistants were appointed to the Curriculum Development Centre to build the capacity of local curriculum writers for curriculum development and delivery (Rodi, F. et al., 2001). An academic partnership project between the School of Education at Solomon Islands College of Higher Education, (now Solomon Islands National University (SINU)) and the Faculty of Education at University of Waikato, New Zealand, also facilitated a flow of assistance as they worked together for educational change (McGee & Rodie, 2011).

The Solomon Islands ESIRP emphasised the need to review and develop a new, “needs-based, culturally relevant and appropriate national school curriculum, aimed at improving access to and quality of primary and secondary curricula” (Coxon, 2008, p. 5). The Curriculum Review and Reform Project (CRRP) also emphasised a shift. Curriculum had been seen as a mainly academic programme. Now the emphasis would be what learners were expected to know and be able to do, and one that placed more emphasis upon practical subjects. A key pedagogical shift came with a change from teacher-centred to student-centred classrooms so that subject knowledge could be linked in practical ways to students’ everyday life experiences. This seemed to be another Western educational construct being appropriated and raises questions about how its expression will be localised? Jansen (2009) offers a critique of the transferability of learner-centred education to developing nations. In his article, *Big change question: Can and should school change in the developing world be guided by research from the developed world?*, he explains that learner-centred education is believed to embed democratic ideals within the practise of education and is also believed to lead to improved learning among children. However, learner centred education assumes political cultures and social traditions that support and embrace notions of the individuality of the child. Many developing countries have different traditions. For example, the Solomon Islands commitment to community may be upheld much more strongly

than commitment to individuals (Susanne Maezama, personal communication, June 2013).

The pace of change in the Solomon Islands in 2004 was fast. The curriculum reform plans were presented in two documents: the Curriculum Reform Management Plan 2005-2009 (CRMP), and the Curriculum Review and Reform Project Implementation Document (CRPID), 2004. They involved the development of syllabuses, provision of textbooks and the provision of in-service support to the teachers in the implementation of the reform of school curriculum. While the Education Strategic Plan 2004-2006 described the main goals of education in Solomon Islands (MEHRD 2005), the Curriculum Reform Management Plan referenced specific and detailed shifts in emphasis stating that education should be relevant and include “traditional knowledge, skills and attitudes...music, art and craft... traditional language, literature (including oral tradition), culture, history, as well as modern technologies, the sciences and the arts” (MEHRD 2005, p. 2).

Had the previous Solomon Islands curriculum policies, processes and practices been locally specific? The literature tells us ‘no’ (Rodie, F. et al., 2001). However the Review and Reform Project had clearly moved in that direction. The Policy Statement and Guidelines for the National Curriculum, 2009 described themselves as the outcome of the ESIRP and promote a shift to an outcomes based education. They also claimed to link the aims of the school curriculum to the national education aims and to five other policy documents including Solomon Islands National Education Action Plan, 2007-2009 and the Education Strategic Framework, 2007-2015. The curriculum reform in progress in the Solomon Islands sits within the context of Pacific curriculum reform and development, which will now be described.

2.6 Pacific education: literature informing curriculum development

Pacific Context

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, nearly all islands of the Pacific became annexed to European, American or Japanese governments, either

as colonies or as protectorates (R. M. Thomas, 1993a, p. 237). Solomon Islands became a British protectorate. The acceptance of Christian faith right across the South West Pacific went some way to drawing together separate, multiple identities. Although united in faith, the South West Pacific region has considerable environmental and cultural diversity. It has retained cultural diversity both between and within its groups.

The Pacific region also underwent the disruption of World War 2, which included disruption of schooling and the ignition of “a world-wide movement of colonised peoples seeking to gain political independence” (R. M. Thomas, 1993a, p. 239). During the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s South West Pacific nations mainly became independent states ⁵ (Thaman, 2002a). The Solomon Islands achieved independence from the British in 1978.

The island countries of the region have been recognised as posing particular challenges for the elimination of poverty (Coxon & Munce, 2008) and the region has faced complex security challenges (Henderson & Watson, 2005). Education is seen as a critical mechanism to reduce poverty and prevent conflict both regionally and nationally (Prokop & Pavia, 2003). It is therefore evident that there is a strong political agenda driving Pacific Education.

The Pacific and School Education

Education in pre-colonial times was a participatory activity, intimately embedded in the daily life of the villagers across the region. Even though these century-old patterns of culture were interrupted when foreign colonialists arrived, Pacific societies today still display strong vestiges of indigenous educational methods, such as the situated learning that Cochrane (Cochrane, 2007) describes in PNG where learning by doing, in community settings, can be a significant learning mode. This is in contrast to classroom pedagogy, which is characterised by containment in one room and expository teaching. This is also intimated by Terrell and Payne (2003), Mohandras, Wei & Keeves (“Trends in educational reform in the Asia-Pacific region,” 2003) and by Thaman (2003a).

⁵ American Samoa and French New Caledonia are exceptions.

In exploring the origins of formal school education in the Pacific region, Thomas (1993a) notes that Christian missionaries exerted the greatest influence. Cochrane (2007) notes this about the Melanesian region of the Pacific in particular and Beuka (2008) notes it specifically about the Solomon Islands. Christian missionaries introduced literacy to oral societies (Griffiths, 1977, p. 118). After 1950, the church-sponsored schools were gradually supplemented by secular schools that were under the auspices of each Island's colonial government (R. M. Thomas, 1993a; "Trends in educational reform in the Asia-Pacific region," 2003).

The language of instruction in schools was an issue of concern. In some nations only the colonialist's language was allowed in secular schools (Kenilorea, 2008; R. M. Thomas & Postlethwaite, 1984). Solomon Islander Sir Peter Kenilorea described his experiences of only being allowed to speak English in school in the 1960's (Kenilorea, 2008). In communities that were sparsely populated or difficult to reach, casting reading matter into a local language was impractical. Such was the case in Papua New Guinea, where "the number of languages exceeds 850" (Bray, 1992, p. 197). There, a pidgin form of English evolved, so that instruction in many primary schools during much of the twentieth century would officially be in English, but in practice would assume a variant of pidgin. Schools echoed this practice right across Melanesia.

A significant publication in the 1980s, *Schooling in the Pacific Islands: Colonies in Transition* (R. M. Thomas & Postlethwaite, 1984), outlined key issues that were emerging in Pacific Education. Pacific curriculum policy included examination structures that restricted access to higher schooling and used foreign languages of instruction and education in the Pacific was not underpinned by Pacific values and cultures (Puamau, 2005). Thaman described Pacific Island cultural values as 'trust, reciprocity, creativity, restraint, compassion and their interdependence' (Thaman, 2002c, p. 135).

Discourses about colonialism in education dominating Pacific schools became prolific in the literature (Brookfield, 1972; Burnett, 2002; Thaman, 2002a). It was argued that education in the region had been based on foreign cultural values and delivered in a foreign language (Thaman, 1993). Colonialism had impacted people's ways of knowing and their views of who they were and

“what they consider worthwhile to teach and to learn” (Thaman, 2003a, p. 2).

The Pacific and Curriculum Development

Since curriculum privileges the knowledge that it imparts, Thaman (1993) queried who should choose those aspects of Pacific cultures that are considered valuable or worthwhile? This was an important question since Pacific curricula, for just over a century, had embodied the dominant ideologies and cultures of Europe and the USA and this was having an erosive effect upon the region's indigenous cultures. Access to formal education increased in the Pacific in the 1990s wherever resources made it possible, but some village parents believed the school did not equip their children to pursue life in traditional society any better than if the children stayed home and worked. “Thus, to save the cost and bother of sending their offspring to school, and to avoid the risk of having their young alienated from village life by questionable values and ambitions promoted in the school, some parents choose to keep their children at home” (R. M. Thomas, 1993a, p. 244). This was the result of inappropriate education.

Thomas described educational issues he believed to be of critical concern within the Pacific. They were “the choice of educational delivery systems; increasing access to education; the supply of educational personnel; the funding of education; and the revision of the curriculum” (R. M. Thomas, 1993a, p. 241). Crossley (1993), writing from a comparative educational perspective, also identified these issues for the South Pacific.

The question of who actually benefits from aid projects has been scrutinized. Sanga (2003) critically examined the effect of educational aid in the Pacific Islands, just as Coxon (2002) and Thomas (2002) had done in 2002. Sanga's key idea was the development of partnerships where Pacific Island people determine their own future, supported financially to achieve the best results. Thomas suggested changing project designs to facilitate more productive partnerships. Coxon considered the theme of profiteering in educational relationships and called New Zealand's approach into question. She suggested that New Zealand is profiting from its Asian connections and pushing Pacific countries toward a neoliberal ideology by promoting it as the only approach to

development. Through this, she suggested, they are threatening the traditional Pacific ethics of “redistribution, reciprocity and inclusiveness” (Coxon, 2002, p. 72).

Ongoing investigations into contextualised teaching and learning approaches in Pacific Island countries have scholars acknowledging the need for indigenous paradigms in their school curriculum and practice (Gegeo, G. W., 1998; Gegeo, W. D., & Watson-Gegeo, A. K., 2002; Thaman, 2009; Pacific Islands Forum, 2009; Rodie, 2004). The broad focus of educational reform in countries such as Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Fiji and Kiribati is similar to other nations of the Pacific with particular scrutiny of curriculum reform, student assessment, teacher training and teachers’ professional development (Dawson, 2005).

In the Pacific Islands, traditional cultures encode recollections of the past in song, dance, art and craft, naming and story-telling, all of which contribute to their histories (Rohorua, 2007). Including these cultural-artistic practices in formal education arguably may assist indigenous cultures to survive. This belief is expressed in the Solomon Islands’ strategic plan:

“the curriculum should transmit culture in such a way as to encourage students to explore and respect traditional beliefs and ways of thinking, reasoning and understanding” (MEHRD, 2004b, p. 14).

The desire for situated, appropriate curricula and equal partnerships with donors, led Thaman to envision the Reforming Pacific Education International (RPEI) (van Peer, Laura, 2007). The intention was for Pacific educators to lead the educational development of their own communities, to make *heritage* foundational to learning agendas and for newer funding relationships to allow greater autonomy to aid. This initiative was operational by 2001.

The role of the RPEI is significant in organizing and connecting all Pacific countries and peoples in the educational reform they are undertaking (van Peer, Laura, 2007). Certainly the work and insights of Pacific researchers should be given increased recognition in the rebuilding of curricula (Thaman, 2003a) if the real problems facing education in the region are to be more realistically addressed.

2.7 International Trends in Arts Curriculum

Since this is a thesis around the notion of developing arts curriculum, it is informed by international debate about what constitutes an arts curriculum and what should be part of it in the light of changing definitions. Arts education has a social-historical context and Western art education models have tended to influence the rest of the world, particularly through UNESCO initiatives. The 1970's – 1990's saw an international emphasis on *Discipline Based Art Education* (DBAE). Efland stated in 1990 “the conflict in art education has been between those intent upon teaching the content of art and those seeing it as self-expression” (Efland, 1990, p. 263). Efland's 2002 view of the purpose of the arts was that the function of the arts is the task of overall development of the mind. He shows how art helps individuals construct cultural meaning which he argues is a crucial component of social communication (Efland, 2002). These shifts from the expressive, to a concern for the transmission and understanding of culture, have infused the current UNESCO goals.

The arts construct representations of the world. The purpose of teaching the arts is to contribute to each individuals understanding of the social and cultural environment that they live in (Efland, 1990). In the Solomon Islands curriculum, these contemporary sentiments are reflected in the Draft Arts and Culture syllabus rationale.

Creative Arts and Culture aims to provide opportunities... incorporating Solomon Islands cultural knowledge of their natural environment, practices, values and beliefs into the learning materials (MEHRD, 2012, p. 9).

Eisner (2000) agreed that arts education has something important to say about the social, political, and economic world that children inhabit. He like Efland (2002) also claimed that the arts are powerful resources for the development of mental abilities. That is, the arts are a way of growing the mind. There is more than one legitimate agenda for arts education and the arts can be justified in relation to their distinctive and unique educational contributions.

Advocacy concerning the impact of learning in and through the arts flows from political bodies like the UN clearly articulating its benefits. Cases are made for mainstreaming the arts, joining arts with culture and the promotion of arts education and creativity at school as part of the construction of a culture of peace (UNESCO, 2005a). The *Road Map for Arts Education* claims that the arts provide “perspectives which cannot be discovered through other educational means” (United Nations, 2006, p. 4).

The arts are recognised not only as carriers of value but as forces that help shape values (Dewey, 1916; Hollway, 2005; R. M. Thomas, 1993b). Fito’o (2009) argued for the implementation of values through education in the Solomon Islands, but with an important consideration. He questioned where among the diverse cultures, the values will be derived from? He suggested an answer to this by reporting on research interviews he had conducted where “one respondent expressed that values of virtue and morality have to ‘derive from the common values of the local cultures and the religious values common to people in the Solomon Islands’ which include, ‘respect for one another, their culture and religion, the environment and people’s backgrounds’,” (Fito’o, 2009, p. 90). He raised an important issue for consideration. Diverse cultures may mean diverse value systems and that brings up questions about which values and practices to incorporate into the curriculum, and who should choose and record those meritorious values?

In recent years, as well as perceiving arts as carriers of values, and the growing interest in the forms of thinking that the arts engender, there has been interest in the usefulness of those forms in domains outside of the arts. Hence arts education has been deemed instrumentally important for the development of cultural identity, creativity, social understanding, value shaping, employment opportunities and further politically motivated social agendas (Cochrane, 2007; Duncum, 2011; E. Eisner, 2000; Garber, 2011; Shaheen, 2010). UNESCO research has also found that arts education can be effective in teaching creativity and entrepreneurial skills (UNESCO, 2005b). Therefore an effective arts learning experience would be one that embraced creativity and entrepreneurial skills – bringing about a valuable functional outcome for the local community.

Arts education in New Zealand schools refers to four discipline areas that may be taught separately or sometimes together. They are music, dance, drama and visual art. The Solomon Islands has chosen to organise its Arts and Culture Curriculum into three strands: *visual arts, music and, dance & drama*, while *culture* is inbuilt among the strands (MEHRD, 2012). The lack of separation between dance and drama reflects an indigenous holistic viewpoint. This is also the view taken inside the separate arts curriculum developed by Maori for use in kura kaupapa schools.

It is becoming increasingly obvious within Pacific countries that traditional music and dance and crafts have often been divorced from school life and not valued within society as an educational outcome (Thaman, 2002b). In many Islands, education aims to ‘fit people out’ for future employment, which is limited or non-existent. A strong connection to cultural arts and traditions has not been found in many schools. Nor is a connection to contemporary arts and their employment or business opportunities. This is changing as can be seen in the Solomon Islands where the Arts and Culture Curriculum states that it aims to “promote a contemporary and comprehensive arts education” (MEHRD, 2012).

The Shift: Arts and Culture Became Linked in Literature

An aesthetic system is embedded in culture. We cannot completely understand a society without knowing the objects, songs, dances and poetry, which structure its reality (Kaepler, 2008) because they communicate societal meanings. “Art is not something separable from the rest of life... but part of social action and interaction” (Kaepler, 2008, p. 58). However the relationship between arts and culture has not always existed in formal education as a lens to view arts curriculum or as a possible way to structure the arts subjects in schools. There has been a shift.

In Pacific countries arts and culture are considered interdependent. “They are not compartmentalised, nor are they practiced in isolation from everyday life. Indeed, they are part of the very fabric of people’s existence, expressing values and beliefs, and ensuring the stability of social relationships” (Teasdale & Teasdale, 1992, p. 9). This has been the Pacific Islands relationship between arts

and culture historically. Since the earliest times, art has been active in reflecting and structuring Pacific Island society. The arts have helped express cultural and social identity, have defined beliefs and have helped Pacific people to situate themselves in relation to one another (Teasdale & Teasdale, 1992).

When the link between arts and culture became a UNESCO focus its prominence grew. The Dakar Framework for Action (Barry, 2000) said that the curriculum contents at primary level should include the arts. Quality art education programmes should be judged to be those which include and are based on the specific indigenous culture's knowledge systems and art -- that of the country in which that programme is offered. This, it postulated, would ensure that the curriculum being developed was both culture-sensitive and culturally inclusive.

The UNESCO regional conference *Arts Education in the Pacific Region: Heritage and Creativity* was held in Fiji (2002). It identified the need to teach skills, which enable youth to explore innate creativity. The conference birthed a new group called: Pacific Art Action Coalition (PAAC), whose mission was "Revitalisation of cultural and economic development and sustainability of Pacific countries/ territories through the arts in education" (UNESCO, 2002, p. 76). One of the groups initial aims was "To promote new links between culture and the education system so as to ensure full recognition of culture and the arts as a fundamental dimension of education for all, develop artistic education and stimulate creativity in education programmes at all levels" (UNESCO, 2002, p. 77). 'Arts Education for Development' was another innovative UNESCO programme described in the conference report. It aimed to "empower Pacific artists of all disciplines as the new bearers of cultural traditions across the region" (UNESCO, 2002, p. 5) .

The Roadmap For Arts Education (United Nations, 2006) outlined essential strategies for effective arts education including developing individual capabilities and promoting the expression of cultural diversity. It stated that "Culture and the arts are essential components of a comprehensive education leading to the full development of the individual" (United Nations, 2006, p. 3). Reports from the two world arts conferences (Aoun, 2010; UNESCO, 2005b, 2010) influenced educational ideology and practice in the Pacific and the reports'

arts education aims can be found incorporated in contemporary curriculum plans and documents in the Solomon Islands. For example, the Curriculum Reform Management Plan, 2005-2009, includes reference to the importance of culture and the arts being included in Solomon Island schools (MEHRD, 2005).

2.8 The Function of Pacific Artists

Contemporary Pacific artists function as examples of the interdependency of art and culture. They do not practice their art and culture in a compartmentalised manner. For example, Pacific Island artists are continuing to make objects for their communities that are valued by reference to an ancestral heritage (Cochrane, 2007), as well as forging independent artist identities within the modern world. Giles Peterson, curator and lecturer in Pacific Art History commented on the work of new generation Pacific artists, “They are really referencing the past but creating art by experimenting with new media carrying over the values of the old or the traditional but creating new work that speaks to today’s audiences” (Regional Conference on Arts Education, 2002, p. 12).

In talking to colonised artists, who are now in a contemporary practice, there is a tension. This tension is located within the sense of ambiguity between tradition and change, between the past and the present, but still they are demonstrating the interdependency of art and culture. “These tensions provide a vibrant and enigmatic cultural location and the artists as individuals... put their case – their vision” (Cochrane, 2007, p. 3). They are challenging the stereotyping of their arts from a mere repetition of customary art toward fighting to have their identity perceived beyond the stereotype.

Some Pacific artists are grappling with their desire to create artistic works that tell the stories that they want to tell, rather than the one’s that the tourist dollar requests. For example Lemi Ponifasio, Mau Pacific dance artist says, “Don’t tie me to the past. Before the missionaries came, we were killing each other, eating each other.” (Uale, Casserly, Bracey, & Mason, 2003). He is making the point that the past is not a place to invest romantic ideals because there is also a dark untold history.

Social realities within the Pacific region are more problematic than the conventionally condensed discourses about tribalism and the struggles between dominant and marginalised cultures (Cochrane, 2007). In narratives made through Pacific art, artists are raising issues relating to history, heritage, cultural identity and gender. They do not only address issues around the loss of tradition in the face of modernisation. They are seeking to reflect more deeply and critique old discourses as they contribute to regional debate. Their contribution to the debate about tradition and modernity, globalisation and the indigenous, is significant. Some see these artists as the visionaries, the prophets in our times (Cochrane, 2007).

The Link Back to Arts and Culture Curriculum

The work of these artists' links back to Arts and Culture Curriculum because these artists are the adults that manifest what the curriculum might look like and what it might further generate. Cochrane (2007) speaks of schools when she argues,

Institutions and individuals in Melanesia must play an important role in identifying and supporting new visions that Melanesian artists bring forth... Melanesian artists have a role to play where they can bring about in other Melanesians an appreciation of a deep sense of connection with and loyalty to their own places and cultures (pp. 7–8).

2.9 Solomon Islands Exemplars of Customary and Contemporary Arts Practices

Evidence exists of a current, vigorous, customary-contemporary arts practice in the Solomon Islands through the scores of performance and visual arts groups that appeared at the Festival of Pacific Arts in Honiara in 2012 (Shennan, 2013). Cochrane (2007) details the festival and market as forces for artistic innovation in Melanesia. This arts practice demonstrates energy, innovation, and collaborations of custom and the contemporary. It provides examples of a uniquely Solomon

Islands indigenous expression of arts that is alive and progressive and can be linked into Arts and Culture Curriculum.

Artists in the Solomon Islands are taking traditional and contemporary cultural material and creating indigenous responses, which are expressed in many art forms. These practices are found in rural and urban settings. A small amount of literature exists that describes this, for example *Art and Life in Melanesia* (Cochrane, 2007, pp. 91–94) describes village based enterprises in different provinces based around making paper, carving printing blocks and then exhibiting and selling prints in an urban setting. Bilums (which are traditionally Papuan) are now being made in the Solomon Islands and have developed into intricate artistic bags and clothes with experimentation into new colours and designs driven by local competitiveness (Cochrane, 2007).

“Many Solomon Islands sculptors continue to fashion the forms they are familiar with from *kastom*” (pidgin for ‘custom’) (Cochrane, 2007, p. 105) but sell them to the tourist market or innovate to make timber wall panels or reinterpret and re-present regional elements but with no traditional purpose. Others create drawings and paintings of Solomon Islands landscapes and people but present them in Western pictorial styles (Thursby, 1995).

A vigorous music industry is evident in the Solomon Islands with young people creating bands, performing concerts, touring Melanesia and making CDs and DVDs. While obstacles like lack of copyright laws (Cochrane, 2007) have dogged musicians, the energy and activity prevails. Bands and dance crews have sprung up that use popular music and dance forms, but with local innovation. Front man, Jonathon Anua from band “Jah & I” who sing, dance and makes music videos and CDs said:

We wanted to try and blend... because of how popular hip-hop is these days and R & B. Cause Reggae is more embraced here by the Islanders so we tried to fuse that in too. And then we wanted to at least try and put something traditional in. We wanted to try the wooden drums, try the panpipes... The idea was to try to fuse everything together... then it had... our traditional sound too. Our roots. Creating and innovating as

musicians... 'cause we've got great moves from our traditional dances... Some you usually see people doing especially in villages... and then you think you know this would fit with something like hip-hop (Martin cited in Rowe & Buck, in press).

Examples of Solomon Islands arts practice's that are specifically unique to these islands demonstrate the creativity and life that could be enhanced through raising their value by including them in school curriculum. Two examples of unique art forms are the Pan Pipe band Narasirato and the SSEC Marching Bands.

In the 1970s, ethnomusicologist Zemp's recordings of Solomon Islands panpipes music, introduced many listeners internationally to these traditional instruments, particularly in ensembles by 'Are'are musicians of Malaita. The 'Honiara Bamboo Band' played at the opening of the Sydney Opera House in 1973 (*Pacific Islands Monthly*, October 1973) bringing international exposure to the bamboo band, which was a variation of the panpipe groups and had originated as far back as the 1920s (Kokonge, 1989).

Solomon Islanders are adept at modifying traditional instruments to meet new musical demands. According to some accounts (Niles, 2005), the bamboo band developed on Ranongga Island in the Solomon Islands, from bamboo tubes originally struck on the ground. People tuned the bamboos to a diatonic Western scale, bound them together, and struck them with a thong, sometimes with panpipes accompaniment as well as singing and dancing, creating a vibrant new sound, now associated with the Solomon Islands. Kokonge (1989) records that Bamboo Bands originated in Roviana with Simeon Tava Eke experimenting as far back as the 1920s. Following World War 2 the Bamboo Band became associated with Boogie Woogie music due to exposure to such music through American GIs in the Solomon Islands. Oral accounts include that the American GIs provided the first rubber thongs used in striking the bamboo pipes.

The distinctive sound and exciting show that these bands created was exported through international tours of the Narasirato Pan Pipe band which has up to 20 members and has traveled extensively through the Pacific and Europe, performing in New Zealand most recently in 2012. When the group began has not

surfaced in literature yet, but it has existed over a few decades, changing members but not its form and function. Many other bamboo bands have also formed and traveled, for example to New Zealand Pasifika festival in 2012.

South Sea Evangelical Church (SSEC) Marching Bands are a Solomon Island indigenous creation. Janet Alafi describes the conditions under which this came into being.

When Solomon Islanders converted to Christianity. That was from the early 1900's. No more dancing and singing custom songs. No more. They said all of our dances belonged to our old religion. They used to use them to invoke spirits. We couldn't do them anymore (Martin cited in Rowe & Buck, in press).

SSEC groups developed a new cultural-arts practice, called Marching Band, sometime in the first half of the twentieth century, but the origins are not clearly remembered. The new genre with Biblical context meant they could still sing and dance but with new songs and new movements. It was not like British marching bands, and was their own adaptation. The bands have anywhere between six and 20 members and are single sex groups. Members carry a loicane or bamboo stick for beating, with a coloured string tail attached to the end. The stick may be split at the end for loud beating. Some band members use cardboard or a hymn book to beat on; some only use their hands, while everyone wears a costume.

With loud singing and loud beating and walking in circles and lines they move diagonally, forwards and backwards to a variety of different songs, originally all gospel songs. Janet Alafi shares the impact on communities.

In the South Sea Evangelical Churches this has been our dance for decades, in the Solomon Islands. It's while we had no other dance... we just got the interest because that's the only thing that involves young people in the village... It made us feel happy (Martin cited in Rowe & Buck, in press).

The reinforced sense of located identity provided by this genre is underscored when a marching band from one village will seek permission from

another village if they can come with their marching band. “That’s what they are doing now days. I think here in Honiara, people can perform any time... Every wedding at ceremonies” (Martin cited in Rowe & Buck, in press). It is hoped through an Arts and Culture Curriculum that the initiative to describe, practice and celebrate such indigenous innovations can be recorded and shared. Many variants exist but the performing arts always remain vulnerable if the occasions for continued performance are not fostered. Their survival depends heavily on continued transgenerational participation.



Figure 1 Janet Alafi

(Source: Martin, cited in Rowe & Buck, in press). Reprinted with permission.



Figure 2 Janet Alafi with Marching Band

(Source: Martin cited in Rowe & Buck, in press. Photo supplied by SSEC Central Women's Band). Reprinted with permission.

2.10 Solomon Islands: Previous Creative Arts and Culture Curricula

The 1973 government inquiry, with a report entitled *Education for What?* (Educational Policy Review Committee, 1973) held extensive consultations to learn what the Solomon Island people wanted from their education system. They indicated a desire for a core curriculum of subjects that would offer young people opportunities for employment and also opportunities to engage in cultural

activities that would enhance and strengthen their knowledge of their cultural heritage (ref, 1973). Agriculture, industrial arts, and art and crafts were to be introduced in the secondary school curriculum. Singing, customs, art and craft, social studies, and religious studies were added to the primary curriculum (Joubert, 2002).

Unfortunately, available resources placed limits on what could be achieved and the arts were mainly left to the community through village and home life. The richness of the artistic heritage tended to lead educational planners to believe the community was the best place for the arts to flourish. Schools catered to the arts through custom days and special cultural celebrations that encouraged students to present their heritage through displays and performances (Joubert, 2002). Culture was also sidelined in the curriculum, although it was given some coverage in social studies and religious studies, it had very little emphasis.

Despite these additions of arts and culture to the primary curriculum in 1973, Thursby reported in 2002 that the Solomon Islands do not have “a primary arts education syllabus... Primary education... has opportunities for students to make visual art and participate in performances such as choral singing. The arts are not offered at primary level as distinct subjects” (Joubert, 2002).

In the early late 1980s the Curriculum Development Centre reviewed the existing secondary arts curriculum and recommended a more relevant, broadly based approach that included Visual Arts, Music and Performance with an emphasis upon the study of Solomon Island art forms as part of cultural heritage. In 1990 they published a new secondary Creative Arts Syllabus, School Years 7-11 that featured art production & performance, cultural study and historical study of arts forms from the Solomon Islands, Pacific region and the world (Joubert, 2002).

The Secondary Creative Arts Syllabus, 1990, School Years 7-11

The 1990 Syllabus outlined creative processes that assisted students to become more knowledgeable of their own artistic heritage and provided experiences in art making techniques and experiences with materials that would allow them the freedom and independence to create art as self-critical learners (Thursby cited in

Joubert, 2002, p. 10).

There existed in the syllabus the potential for a mix of traditional and Western art making techniques. In the syllabus teachers were encouraged to draw on the resource of the community and invite local artists to demonstrate their artistic skills, teach those skills and talk with students about their work as part of the continuing tradition of Solomon Islands arts (Joubert, 2002). Thursby reported a lack of success of such artist-in-schools ventures because the value of such linkages was not recognized financially. Another resource was made available to schools. In support of the study of cultural forms the National Museum of the Solomon Islands offered schools access to their collection and provided travelling exhibition boxes containing art and artifacts to schools outside Honiara (Joubert, 2002, p. 10).

References referring to the implementation of this curriculum are difficult to find. Here-say says it was not taught much. In a curriculum report, Davy affirmed this when writing, “in the Solomon Islands with no Music in the curriculum, creative arts in the curriculum but not being taught” (Davy, 2000, p. 10). In 2002, Thursby reported, “At this point in time only four secondary schools in the Solomon Islands have had the teaching personnel and resources to implement the Form 1-5 Creative Arts Syllabus and only in the visual arts strand” (Joubert, 2002, p. 10). Clearly there was a will for inclusion of this curriculum, but its level of priority was not high enough to vie for the limited resources available. Links to community artists failed in Solomon Islands because many artists could not economically afford to give the time necessary and the school system could not afford to pay them (Joubert, 2002).

Other references referring to the content and implementation of this curriculum have not been accessible. There is a wide gap in the literature here that requires further research.

2.10 Solomon Islands: Proposed Creative Arts and Culture Curricula

The Ministry of Education (MEHRD) outlined their vision for the Solomon Islands Curriculum in 2005, including that the future generation must gain more culturally relevant knowledge and that curriculum development should focus on diversity and flexibility to suit the needs of students in different school contexts. They also envisioned a partnership-based, collaborative approach to curriculum development (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, 2005). The Policy Statement and Guidelines for the National Curriculum, 2009 state the aims of the curriculum reform. Two aims of importance and bearing on this study are:

To ensure that the National School Curriculum helps to develop a sense of national identity based on the concept of unity in diversity: respecting the value of all the diverse cultures in Solomon Islands and the strength of having many cultures, while recognising the uniting factors which make us one nation.

To develop culturally relevant and improved curriculum, teaching and learning and assessment resources (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, 2009, pp. 9–10).

The placement of these aims at the beginning of the National Curriculum document, gives prominence to national identity and culturally relevant curriculum in a way that requires teachers and curriculum developers to give these aspects serious consideration. Hence it is not surprising that a first draft of the document “Arts and Culture for Secondary School Years 7-9” was complete in 2007. A further developed draft was complete in 2012 (MEHRD, 2012) but has not yet been released to schools in the middle of 2013. It includes a detailed syllabus section where a learning programme is laid out.

UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova told the Second World Conference on Arts Education in 2010, “A broad arts education teaches the importance and value of cultural diversity... This cultural awareness is of

immense benefit in our increasingly multicultural modern societies, where to understand another culture is to better understand one's neighbor" (UNESCO, 2010). This internationalized discourse has made its way into the Solomon Islands curriculum documents.

The Introduction, rationale and aims of this curriculum document lay out its foundations. The subject is compulsory, not an elective, and requires participation. It is grouped into three strands: visual arts, music and drama and dance. Culture is inbuilt within the strands. It integrates modern and local knowledge and describes arts practices as central to local lifestyles and expects the course to equip learners with fundamental concepts and skills essential for worthwhile living. "This syllabus hopes to provide an anchorage for our identity and culture in the face of the social challenges our learners and societies continue to face daily" (MEHRD, 2012, p. 8).

The curriculum document explains strands and sub-strands, lays out processes and skills (perceiving, responding, organization, application and evaluation), key learning outcomes and teaching and assessment approaches. Importantly, it acknowledges the cultural diversity that exists within the Solomon Islands and makes teachers responsible to accommodate difference in teaching and learning activities.

For the first time, the subject area has been tied into national assessment with a School Year 9 written and practical examination of learning outcomes as well as assessment tasks during the course of study, which must be recorded accurately with reporting of learning outcomes. This elevates the subject from its previous unexamined status. The time allocation to arts and culture is a compulsory eighty minutes or two periods a week. In the Syllabus section detailed learning outcomes, activities and assessment tasks guide teachers through the transmission of the elements of the three stated strands of the arts: visual arts, music and drama, and dance.

The Visual Arts learning outcomes and assessment events are clear and seem achievable within locally specific circumstances. In School Year 7 they centre around three sub-strands of elements of art, realism, and Solomon Island

designs. These are built upon in School Year 8 with colour, design, and printing. The School Year 9 learning sub-strands are based around weaving, carving and jewellery making. Included in Specific Learning Outcomes are requirements for students to explain the role of that artwork from their own cultures. This assists in supporting and embracing traditional and culturally diverse indigenous art practices.

The Music learning outcomes and assessment events begin with a sub-strand on music elements, but there may be some confusion in the terminology from a western perspective. The School Year 8 music sub-strand focuses on traditional musical instruments but in its learning outcomes uses modern instruments as well. School Year 9 includes singing, guitar playing and an interesting sub-strand on creativity as applied to music.

The elements of dance and drama are introduced in School Year 7. This is followed by an introduction to mime. There is one reference to dance in a Solomon Islands style, in the School Year 7 syllabus but found in the music strand. The “Performance - Major Project” requires students to put on a performance using skills already gained. The School Year 9 communication and movement skills sub-strand includes the selection and performance of local traditional Solomon Islands dance but not story. The creative improvisation sub-strand includes traditional Solomon Islands story and dance. This is followed by a study of scripted drama. The integrated project strand requires understanding of the elements of the three other strands and the integration of them.

In personal communication with the School of Education leadership (October 2012), it was revealed that student teachers are only studying the existing art and music courses, but not the more recent addition of dance or drama. This raises questions about the preparedness of teachers to implement an Arts and Culture Curriculum. However, the School of Education offers a “Culture and Citizenship Education Course” for primary school trainees. It aims to help the trainees to understand their role in educating pupils and colleagues about the society they belong to.

2.11 The Desire for Arts and Culture Curriculum

The historical desire for this curriculum is evident in literature describing the Solomon Islands journey with education in recent decades. The discourse in Pacific education, particularly in UNESCO documents, has been around the importance of the indigenous arts in education and for all Pacific nations to make shifts in their school curriculums to embrace arts and culture.

Solomon Island educators conducting research and writing theses in the last decade about education in the Solomon Islands have not addressed this study's Arts and Culture Curriculum focus, directly or comprehensively. There is a need for this study and for further research. However Beuka (2008) in her thesis asking about the educational aspirations of parents for their children, gave her interview sample some questions that elicited responses that are pertinent here.

For example in Beuka's findings a parent commented, "Schools should introduce subjects with practical skills. This should be taught by specialised people alongside the academic subjects" (Beuka, 2008, p. 67). She also recorded that some parents saw the importance of not only teaching academic and vocational subjects but the teaching of local values, virtues, principles and work ethics. In Potter's thesis about curriculum and societal needs, she states:

The content of the secondary curriculum provides much useful knowledge, but some gaps need to be filled, particularly in the area of the cultural, historical, geographical and global contexts of the Solomon Islands. Thirdly, the heavy emphasis on knowledge largely disregards students' moral, spiritual, physical, aesthetic and affective faculties (Potter, 2005, p. 1).

UNESCO (2000, 8) considers a high regard for oral culture and knowledge a desirable outcome of schooling. The Solomon Islands' MEHRD (2004, 7) would certainly agree, as it recommends the inclusions of indigenous language, literature (including oral tradition), culture and history. MEHRD also considers (2004, 31) the preservation of indigenous knowledge and skills vital for the

sustainable development of the Solomon Islands.

In “Social Change in Melanesia: Development and History” Paul Sillitoe (2000) reports that many school systems in the Pacific have recognised the importance of a wide-ranging school curriculum that includes the arts. Educators throughout the Pacific have kept promoting the arts as fundamental to the education of young people, but many Pacific nations cannot afford the cost of implementation when literacy and numeracy remain important priorities. This has also been the case in the Solomon Islands where advocacy for arts and culture has existed since the 1970s but resources are limited and literacy and numeracy are prioritised. Tragically, “educators are beginning to recognise that it is not the students who fail but the education system that fails them and society” (Sillitoe, 2000, p. 209). The 2012 culture mapping report in the Solomon Islands, which asserted that more than 50% of indigenous traditional knowledge base has been lost, argued that culture must be included in school curriculum (Lidimani, 2011).

The Implementation Process

Solomon Islands educator Rose Beuka, situated in the current reform process, posited that “An arts curriculum will not be more than plans and policy documents unless it is received, embraced and implemented by teachers and communities” (Beuka, 2008, p. 76). Her comments are affirmed by Dawson who reflected on curriculum reform in neighboring Papua New Guinea, showing that most reforms fail if they are not implemented and embedded within the school culture.

“The real test for the Department of Education and donor agencies is to make sure the curriculum and the teaching, learning and assessment processes that it promotes, are embedded in the work of schools. Only then will the nation realise the benefits of the curriculum development process. This is the challenge for every Pacific Islands country implementing reform” (Dawson, 2005, p. 8).

New Zealand educator Eve Coxon who assisted in the Solomon Islands curriculum review process, was commissioned to produce a report “Independent Review Of The Solomon Islands Curriculum Review & Reform Programme”

(Coxon, 2008). She described the review and reform process, named the key documents published along the way, and made recommendations to assist in the further development and implementation of the curriculum. Her understanding of the project from the inside was thorough and her recommendations are instructive.

Coxon identified a key factor in curriculum reform failure as a failure to provide aligned teaching and learning resources in sufficient quantity to enable teachers to deliver the new curriculum. Therefore she identified the importance of the current contract in place to produce teachers' guides and students' books and also the need for delivery strategies to get resources out to all the remoter provinces.

Another key issue raised in Coxon's report is the provision of in-service support to schools right throughout the country so that new curriculum materials can be used effectively. Here Coxon recommends a three-year, two-level junior secondary in-service training strategy be developed. This is so that every School Years 7-9 teacher "receives three cycles of professional development through both school-based and subject-specific clusters and that these be delivered by Key Teachers in each province" (Coxon, 2008, p. 13) .

Coxon also recommends that the means of financing the practical equipment required by every secondary school be identified, before the introduction of School Year 7 curricula in these subjects. This strategic awareness of the implementation phase will provide sound support for any new curriculum.

2.12 Summary

Curricula's function, its pathways of development and curricula's socio-political context in developing nations, provide a background for the choices that have been made in Pacific schools and their curricula over the last 40 years. Shifts in Arts curriculum and the shift from Creative Arts to Arts and Culture Curriculum in the Solomon Islands, elevate the value of an arts education in the culture within which Pacific people live. As educative philosophies and contexts change over time, it is important to assess whether curricula retain their relevance. Literature

contends that transmitting culture is an important job of the curriculum, though developers must be careful to ensure that what is transmitted is appropriate to the local culture in its contemporary context.

Lastly, this chapter focused on a Solomon Islands educational overview and considered Arts and Culture Curriculum for Solomon Islands schools. Most importantly, the literature gives insight into the apparent tensions that have existed between the Solomon Islands education policies, their practices and the communities expectations (Treadaway, 2003). New ground is being taken to remedy such tensions through a review and reform programme. In addition it seems to suggest that some of form of Arts and Culture has existed in the curriculum since the mid-1970s. A curriculum called Creative Arts has been in existence in Solomon Islands secondary schools since the early 1990s for School Years 7 - 11 and at times has had some teaching.

The degree to which these understandings are shared will now be investigated through interviews, informed by the main question: **What are the perceptions of experienced Solomon Islands educators on the inclusion of an Arts and Culture Curriculum in Solomon Islands schools?** And the sub-questions: **How have Arts and Culture been positioned in the curriculum? What is the appropriateness of having an Arts and Culture Curriculum? What recommendations can be made for developing the Arts and Culture Curriculum?** In the next chapter I discuss this study's research design and the methodology used to achieve this.

Chapter Three: Methodological Research Design

3.1 Introduction

To gain understanding of the topic of this study it was necessary to select participants and discover their perspectives within an interview setting. In this research I set out to collect and analyse perceptions about the inclusion of an Arts and Culture Curriculum in Solomon Islands schools. The participants were experienced Solomon Islands educators who were stakeholders connected with the development and implementation of the Solomon Islands curriculum. The specific focus of this research design is captured in the following question: **What are the perceptions of experienced Solomon Islands educators on the inclusion of an Arts and Culture Curriculum in Solomon Islands schools?**

In this chapter I discuss research methods chosen for this research and seek to demonstrate dependability – the establishing of a research process with integrity; and confirmability – ensuring that the research accurately reports data that emerged from the study (O’Leary, 2004). Firstly I explain the theoretical perspective that underpins the research methodologies as well as the qualitative characteristics of this research. I then describe the participants and the interview procedures, and focus on the ethical considerations identified as relevant to this research. Finally, I outline the method used to analyse the empirical findings.

3.2 The Research Instrument

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) write that “ontological assumptions give rise to epistemological assumptions” which “give rise to methodological considerations” and these, in turn, “give rise to issues of instrumentation and data collection” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000, p. 3). The broad methodology utilised in this research is qualitative and the particular method is semi-structured

interviews. This methodological choice is underpinned by a qualitative theoretical ontology and constructionist epistemology.

Ontology: Qualitative paradigm

A research paradigm is a set of perspectives that a researcher considers should be adhered to while carrying out research. Cohen et al (2000) defines research paradigms as “numerous branches and schools of thought embraced by different research groups” (p. 22) to guide their research. Qualitative research is a well-established branch of research, that has upset the false stability inherent in the idea of objectivity (Heshusius, 1992). In deciding which study design a researcher should embrace it is common sense to consider the philosophical perspectives of the researcher and also “fitness for purpose” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 1). For the purpose of this research, a qualitative paradigm was selected as the best fit.

In a qualitative paradigm, reports are descriptive, incorporating expressive language and the “presence of voice in the text” (E. W. Eisner, 1985, p. 36). The research has an interpretive character, aimed at discovering the meaning events have for the individuals who experience them. These meanings are discovered through a collaborative participatory process between researcher and participant (Heshusius, 1992). In this qualitative research I focus on the emerging process of discovering meanings as well as the outcomes or product of the research (M Crotty, 1998). Qualitative researchers also pay attention to the idiosyncratic or quirky as well as the pervasive or all-encompassing, seeking the uniqueness of each case (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). This research embraces this paradigm.

Epistemology: Constructivism

Epistemology is concerned with the nature or theory of knowledge embedded in a perspective (Creswell, 2007). This research is based on a constructivist perspective, where knowledge is created by an interaction between the knower and the known, between the researcher and the outside world, between the participants and the researcher. Guba (1992) postulates that there are many realities to a phenomenon, depending on peoples’ social construction. Crotty (1998) describes how “Subject and object emerge as partners in the generation of

meaning” (p. 9). Heshusius (1992) challenges the subjective-objective dichotomy and advocates participatory knowing that is, knowledge created through the construction of researcher and participant. The constructivist paradigm I embrace in this research confirms Heshusius’ philosophy and I attempt to discover the perceptions of the participants while recognizing the participatory, constructed nature of the interviews. Keeping in mind as Kathleen de Marrais & Stephen D. Lapan (2004) note,

researchers become acutely aware that their studies are collaborations between themselves and their participants, who may cooperate or not, reveal or conceal information, and even allow or refuse to grant the researcher any access at all (deMarrais & Lapan, 2004, p. 175).

Merriam (2009) emphasises the importance of ontological as well as epistemological beliefs that underpin research. Within post-positivistic orientations researchers recognise that knowledge is “relative rather than absolute” but “it is possible, using empirical evidence, to distinguish between more and less plausible claims” (Paton, 2002, p. 93).

3.3 Methods: Semi-structured interview

Cohen (Cohen et al., 2000) tells us that the most common method of collecting data in the constructivist, qualitative paradigm is interviewing. Interviews were chosen in this research with the intention to illuminate and explicate understandings of why Arts and Culture Curriculum have or have not been included in Solomon Islands schools. Interviews are a method of data collection that range from unstructured interactions, through to semi-structured conversations, to highly formal interaction with participants (Kvale, 2009). In this research I used an approach termed ‘semi-structured interviews’ (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Creswell, 2007) with an interview schedule in which the questions are chosen beforehand by the researcher, but their order and substance are sometimes modified or added to.

The purpose of an interview is to assist in entering into another person's perspective and to construct as complete a picture as possible about the topic of focus from the words and experiences of the participants (M Crotty, 1998). Thus the qualitative interview must use open-ended questioning. To fulfill this purpose and achieve this goal the researcher is supposed to manage the conversation in such a way that the interview exchanges provide in-depth knowledge about the particular phenomena and experiences (Berry, 1999). Roulston (2010) suggests that as the researcher endeavors to make sense of the data, they consider how the data was co-constructed, whether the interviewee was given space to do most of the talking, and whether the data reflects the research questions posed.

Tuckman (1988) and Berry (1999) recommend that the researcher should manage the interview through following an interview schedule in order to maximise the neutrality of the interview method and the consistency of the findings. An interview schedule can allow the researcher to gather different assessments of the same topics by asking the same questions of different people (Roulston, 2010).

Qualitative interviews rely on developing good rapport with participants because interview exchanges create a co-constructed result (Denzin & Lincoln, 2007). The interviewer's role is to create a relaxed and friendly interview atmosphere, to build rapport, to show neutrality, to promote a non-hierarchical relationship and to gain in-depth knowledge from the informants (Berry, 1999; Roulston, 2010; Tuckman, 1988). The importance of relationship building has been emphasised by McNae & Strachan: "We believe that cross-cultural research should involve building mutually respectful relationships" (2010, p. 5). Reinharz (1992) also endorsed this idea writing about "the necessity of having close relations before the interview takes place" (p. 26).

The setting of the interview, the recording device, any documentation sheets and the relaxed emotional state of the interviewer are important considerations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2007). Open-ended questions should be asked to allow the participants to share their views without overt influence from the researcher. However, the flexible sequencing of questions may inadvertently omit important and salient topics, while modifying questions may reduce the comparability of

responses. Since different participants bring different experiences, a breadth of responses is valuable and questions may be modified to access the knowledge that the researcher perceives a particular interviewee may hold. But these modifications may bring about the limitations mentioned above.

Another important consideration in interviewing is power relations (Fontana & Frey, 2005). According to Cohen et al., (2000), power differences between researcher and participants mean differences may never be completely eliminated, although they may be reduced. Attempting to promote a flat and non-hierarchical relationship between the participants and researcher, as far as possible, assists in reducing power differences. Listening, caring, and trying to identify with the participants' worlds are relevant skills to researchers (Mcnae & Strachan, 2010). Rapport building, informal meetings with participants before formal interviewing and consideration of the social, cultural, personal and gender details of the interviewee before and during the interviews, also assists with power differences (Manderson, Bennett, & Andajani-Sutjahjo, 2006). Other useful strategies employed may include creating a relaxed and friendly interview atmosphere, explaining the research to the participants without ambiguity and arranging interviews to take place in the home of the interviewee, if this is appropriate.

3.4 Interview procedures

Reflexivity

It is common practice in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009), for the researcher to examine their own biases and reflect on assumptions they have about the topic before embarking on a study. I spent time thinking about and noting assumptions I had about the inclusion of an Arts and Culture Curriculum in the Solomon Islands. This made me aware of my own thoughts and biases and provided time to consider how I could try to conduct interviews without imposing personal bias. Tolich and Davidson (1999) emphasised the notion of reflexivity and its importance in research because it makes researchers aware of the values that they bring to the research. Researchers must “self-consciously reflect upon what they

did, why they did it, and how they did it” (Tolich & Davidson, 1999, p. 39). Roulston (2010) provides considerable discussion about data obtained through qualitative interviewing and suggests that careful reflection may improve the quality of qualitative interviews markedly.

Reflexivity is important in relation to ethics, in that researchers need to examine the basis of their ethical convictions, because that is what will be used to resolve ethical problems arising during the research. Researchers are responsible for the integrity of the research process (O’Leary, 2004) and therefore must ensure that “in all steps of the research process, researchers need to engage in ethical practices” (Creswell, 2002, p. 13). This means protecting the interests and identity of research participants so that they feel able to speak honestly and openly about the main focus of the study, without their comments being traced directly back to them. This was particularly important to consider in this study since the participants had all held positions of leadership that made them readily identifiable to many, and in a small nation. While they had valuable opinions to contribute they also had the right to privacy.

Validity

Qualitative research methods are founded on an understanding of research as a systematic and reflective process for development of knowledge (M Crotty, 1998). The researcher must be prepared to use strategies for questioning findings and interpretations, instead of taking findings for granted; assessing their internal and external validity, instead of judging them obvious or universal. Validity tells us whether an item measures or describes what it is supposed to measure or describe (Cresswell, 2007). This means that research studies can be judged based on whether they produce conclusions that can be trusted. To achieve this researchers need first to endeavor to develop trust from their participants, as this affects the data collection and so the interpretation of gathered data.

Hall (cited in Coxon, E., & Tolley, H, 2005) names nine ways of satisfying validity and therefore helping to make sure that a study measures what it purports to measure. They include “talking little and listening a lot; recording accurately; writing early; offering informed interpretations; reporting fully; being candid;

seeking feedback; rigorous subjectivity; and writing accurately” (Hall cited in Coxon, E., & Tolley, H, 2005). Qualitative researchers must be aware that their own bias and subjectivity can reduce data validity, and must make every effort to be reflexive and maintain the integrity of their research (Creswell, 2007; Flick, 2006; Wallen & Fraenkel, 2001).

The Participants

When selecting a participant as an interviewee, researchers use information-oriented sampling, as opposed to random sampling. “Finding informants involves identifying those people who have the knowledge about the society being studied” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 180). A ‘good’ informant, is one who has the necessary knowledge, information and experience of the issue being researched (Morse, 1994). The five participants invited to take part in these interviews were identified from a list of Solomon Islands educators currently undertaking further tertiary study in New Zealand.

They were selected because they were experienced Solomon Island educators, with experience in teaching, educational leadership, curriculum development or in lecturing teacher trainees. Some were selected because they also had experience teaching arts curriculum in schools or teaching arts in the community. They are informants who have expert knowledge of Solomon Islands society and schooling, and whose accounts I considered to be of great consequence (Cohen et al., 2000) for this study.

The interviewees included two females and three males who ranged from 35 to 50 years of age. The participants do not provide a representative picture of Solomon Islands teachers; rather, they are people who have roles of leadership and are stakeholders in Solomon Islands education. They know each other and have shared the journey through the period of reform in Solomon Islands education that has been in progress since 2003. Therefore I argue that the knowledge and understanding that these informants bring is crucial for better understanding the process of including an Arts and Culture Curriculum in Solomon Island schools.

Engaging participants was undertaken through discussions with University of Waikato staff. A University staff member made initial informal approaches on

my behalf to experienced educators from the Solomon Islands, who were conducting their own research. The project was briefly explained and potential participants were asked if I could email them with some information about the research and to ask if they would consider participating in interviews. As researcher I then approached them informally by email, at which time they were provided with some information about the project. If they were interested in finding out more then their reply by email was followed by an informal meeting where we got to know each other, discussed the project and read through the participant information sheet together. Participants were given pseudonyms for purposes of identifying a speaker without disclosing their specific identity. These procedures were adopted to ensure good ethical practice in relating to informants within this study.

Each informant grew up in the Solomon Islands, trained in teaching there or elsewhere in the Pacific and has since undertaken further study. Two of the participants returned to the Solomon Islands before I could formally interview them face-to-face. They have shared their valuable perceptions by email. All names and places mentioned have been changed to protect each participant's confidentiality.

The five informants have a range of experiences that affect their opinions. The group includes men and women from diverse islands within the Solomon Islands provinces. Each one has been a teacher in a Solomon Island high school, has held educational leadership positions and each has lived through social upheaval and shifting cultural roadmaps. Within the group, members are experienced in curriculum development and have experience across urban, rural and church schools.

Conducting the interviews

My purpose in this research was gathering the perceptions of experienced Solomon Island educators on the inclusion of an Arts and Culture Curriculum in Solomon Islands schools. My purpose has informed the choices of methods, the intended knowledge to be obtained and ethical considerations. Interviewing was considered very appropriate for this study because of "its context relevance to the oral tradition of the Solomon Islands community" (Beuka, 2008, p. 41). The semi-structured interviews were conducted based on an interview schedule. I used a

reflective approach to the knowledge sought and considered the interpersonal relationship of the interview situation (Kvale, 2009).

The interview questions were devised from a survey of literature, balanced with my personal experience of the Solomon Islands. Questions were first viewed by my supervisors and deemed appropriate, and then the interviews were carried out over two weeks in December 2011. Informants were interviewed once, for approximately one hour. All participants were offered a copy of the draft *Arts and Culture Curriculum For Secondary Schools, Years 7-9* to read in the lead up time to the interview. No informant chose to take up this opportunity. Each participant was given a copy of the interview questions at least one day before the interview. The questions provided the framework for each interview, but the question order was varied to better suit the flow of the conversation. The open-ended questions were sometimes modified and clarified to try to increase the relevance of interviewees' responses. The questions were also supplemented by probing and clarifying questions, to give greater depth to the data; a technique suggested by Berry (1999).

Since in qualitative interviews participants may not be willing, or perhaps even able, to divulge all information available, I sought to try and address this limitation during the interviews. As the researcher I tried to quietly wait, nod, and say little when the interviewee paused, sensing if they might have something else to say. At other times a gentle prompt was given by asking the interviewee for clarification.

However, upon reflection on the transcripts, the recommendation for the interviewer to 'talk little and listen a lot' was not fulfilled in significant sections of the first two interviews. My own thoughts and opinions were expressed often. These parts of the interviews had to be flagged as unusable in the findings since my opinions may have considerably led the participant's responses. As a consequence of reflecting upon my experiences in the first two interviews, I was concerned about the quality of the interviews and sought to talk less and listen more in the following interviews.

In this study I tried to achieve trust before formal interviews through

informal meetings that sought to demonstrate empathy and kinship and to create an atmosphere where the interviews could be quite relaxed and conversational.

Hammersly and Artkinson (1983) noted in relation to qualitative interviews “even the most willing informant will not be prepared, or perhaps even able, to divulge all information available to him or her” (p. 176). Consequently, it is important to consider how this phenomenon might have an effect on the data gathered in this study and what limitations it might impose. Although this limitation can exist in any qualitative interview, it more particularly may exist since I was interviewing participants from another culture. Born in the Solomon Islands, I grew up in Honiara as a child of European missionaries, and I am still an outsider. This is a limitation of this research. The research interviews were conducted with a focus on Solomon Islands voices, but it is acknowledged that researchers choose how to receive and present those voices as findings within their own acknowledged bias and background. No literature had surfaced on this topic, neither by a Solomon Islands researcher, nor by anyone else recording their perspectives. Therefore it seemed valuable to try and fill in this gap in the literature by interviewing Solomon Islands educators, by building mutually respectful relationships (Mcnae & Strachan, 2010) and drawing on the experience that I have of the field.

In general terms, the Solomon Islands have undergone great social trauma in recent years (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, 2004a, p. 5). This greatly affected education generally and the delivery and assessment of the curriculum. Being mindful of this, I was careful with any questions linked to the delivery and assessment of the Arts and Culture Curriculum; articulating to interviewees that I was mindful of the difficulties and obstacles they had already faced.

Transcribing the interviews

A transcription represents the translation of an oral, interpersonal meeting into written language (Cohen et al., 2000). This inevitably means a limitation - the loss of data from the original encounter and the possibility of changing interpretations (Mishler, 1991). There is no single, correct method of transcription, but rather a

transcription should be useful for the research. In transcribing these interviews, I recorded the dialogue, but also noted the pauses, interruptions and simultaneous speaking that occurred. These different kinds of data assisted me in capturing as much of what was happening in the room during the interview as possible (Cohen et al., 2000) and enhanced the quality of my transcription (Poland, 2003). Transcripts were written soon after interviews with attention to accurate and full writing. Interview transcripts were returned to participants for checking and followed up with an email asking if any clarification was needed. I also requested formal agreement in writing to the use of each transcript in the study.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethics of access, consent and participation

Informed consent is a fundamental principal in research, which forms the basis of the relationship between the researcher and the participants and serves as the foundation on which other ethical considerations can be considered (Cohen et al., 2000). The participants in this research were informed of the purpose and procedures of the study in an invitation email and in an informal meeting. I sought to ensure that they understood the nature of the research and had the opportunity to ask questions. Participants were invited to read and sign the consent form as an agreement to participate in the research project (See Appendix E).

The participants had the right to decline my invitation to participate in this research. They were also made aware of their rights to withdraw from this research without fear of any consequences. Participants were advised that they could withdraw up to confirming the accuracy of their interview transcript. Maintaining anonymity for participants can be a challenge, in view of the small and close-knit communities in the Solomon Islands. Steps (such as coding and secure storage outlined below) were taken to ensure that the identities of the participants were not publicly revealed. Identification codes were used to connect data to participants and to ensure anonymity. Raw interview data and recordings have been securely stored.

3.6 Analysis of the Findings

Data condensation, display and conclusion drawing

Data analysis is an integral part of the research process and there are many ways of analyzing qualitative data. This research followed a framework for data analysis based on a guide by Miles and Huberman (1994). This framework suggests breaking analysis into the three stages of data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The categories used to analyse data were not pre-established, but were derived from the data itself. Following the use of interviews to collect data, I collated, reviewed, summarised and coded the data, noting patterns, themes, clusters and categories. I began by posing this question “Did the interview transcripts provide data that may be used to examine the research questions posed?” (Roulston, 2010, p. 200). Evidence was searched for in transcripts and notes made. Data was then organised and assembled in two formats. Firstly, it was represented in a table that displayed questions, participants’ names and responses. This was the beginning of eliciting emergent themes from the interviews. Secondly, I cut and pasted in a collage and grouped responses around both sub-questions and themes. These displays allowed me to conceptualise the data, come to preliminary understandings, to theorise and to move towards interpretation and conclusion drawing.

Thirdly, I questioned whether quality data had been generated in the interview, by searching for the presence of spontaneous, rich, relevant answers from the interviewees. Some rich and relevant descriptions could be found that did respond to questions. I also searched for evidence of attempts to verify my interpretations of the interviewee’s answers, in the course of the interview. Fourthly, I questioned whether the interviewees shared their own perspectives. When I noticed that at times I had talked too much and was likely to have ‘led’ the participant’s responses, I chose to discard those parts of interviews as unreliable data.

Because of a constructivist epistemology, I next considered how the data was constructed in the interview and made notes about it, as this informed the analysis of what had been discussed (Roulston, 2010). For example, I checked

whether questions had been asked in a sequence that seemed to generate self-disclosure (as recommended by (Roulston, 2010). At times I could see I was successful. Sometimes I seemed to have interrupted a participant's direction or train of thought. I noticed that sometimes they led off in another direction they felt strongly about. I further organised the data by searching for details that answered research questions clearly and inserted fragments into the collage. When I discovered what I thought was a theme, I checked the transcripts of other participants and compared responses for similarities and differences, noting common occurrences (Cohen et al., 2000). As I compared and contrasted and reflected on the interview data, I noted patterns, discovering what seemed to be important and plausible. I also drew on research from the review of literature to make sense of the new data.

3.7 Summary

A qualitative approach was critical to this study in obtaining descriptive accounts of participant's perceptions of Arts and Culture Curriculum in the Solomon Islands, as was the constructivist epistemology that underpinned it. Semi-structured interviews proved to be an appropriate research technique in collecting data for this research project and in allowing the participants to tell their stories. Their perceptions and their voices were intended to be the focus of the interviews. The presence of spontaneous, rich, relevant answers from the interviewees was an indication that their perceptions were the main focus.

In the next chapter I will discuss the interpretation and representation of the research findings, which derive from the thematic data analysis.

Chapter Four: Findings

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present findings of my qualitative study that sought to investigate questions that had emerged from gaps in the literature. Questions emerged for me from reviewing the literature, such as ‘Why has there been a shift to include culture within curriculum in the Solomon Islands?’ and ‘How is this perceived by stakeholders in the Solomon Islands?’ The focus of these research findings is five very experienced Solomon Islands educators and their perceptions about the inclusion of a new Arts and Culture Curriculum in Solomon Islands schools. Through interviews these educators expressed their perceptions in their own words. The interaction I facilitated within the actual interviews generated quality data that informed the research questions posed. The main purpose for analyzing interview data is to identify what is important, why it is important, and what may be learned from it (Gay & Airasian, 2000), and then to represent this data as research findings. Participants are often quoted in this chapter, providing a vivid picture of local realities in the Solomon Islands.

Analysis of these interviews revealed recurring themes that the participants indicated are of importance. These themes are, firstly, (in sections 4.2 and 4.3), that arts and culture have had some place in the curriculum but a process of educational reform has brought some shifts, and current strategic plans seek to lift the status of arts and culture.

Secondly, (in section 4.4) participants all express desire for an Arts and Culture Curriculum in schools because they believe it is essential for fulfilling the ideological purpose they identify for student development. In particular these are to impart values, maintain survival skills, promote harmony in diversity and preserve traditional cultural identities.

Thirdly, (in section 4.5), an Arts and Culture Curriculum is seen to have relevance for all levels of school education because it will open non-academic pathways and access to income streams for children in their future lives.

Fourthly, (in section 4.6), the participants identify their vision for the content and function of an Arts and Culture Curriculum.

Lastly, (in sections 4.7 and 4.8), the participants identify that the further development and implementation of an Arts and Culture Curriculum has some challenges to overcome and must be contended for if it is to successfully address curriculum intentions. Allocation of new buildings, financial resources, partnership with community Arts and Culture experts, pre-service and also in-service training for teachers, must be provided, in order for the curriculum to be implemented. Arts and Culture Curriculum's further development also requires additional defining of content and piloting of materials.

In the following description of findings, the five participants in the interviews are referred to using the pseudonyms Sarah, Ephram, Olivette, Gregan, and David. Also, names of people and institutions mentioned in interviews have been disguised or removed to protect anonymity.

4.2 Status of Solomon Islands Arts and Culture Curriculum: Previous Position in the Curriculum

Arts and culture have had some place in the curriculum but a process of educational reform has led to strategic plans that seek to lift their status. Each of the research participants shared experiences of the education context in the Solomon Islands. They related information about experiences they have had with Arts and Culture Curriculum in recent years and when they first attended or taught high school. Emerging from interviews was an identification of the place that arts and culture has played in schools up until now and a picture of what these experienced Solomon Islands educators would like to see happen in the future. After being drafted in 1988, from 1990 a Creative Arts Curriculum for secondary School Years 7-11 was part of the curriculum in Solomon Islands schools as an

optional, elective subject. Primary schools were supposed to teach music, art and crafts in their curriculum from about 1980.

A consensus across the participants was that although arts were clearly in the curriculum documents they were not delivered very much. Sarah and Gregan said this was because they were not emphasised or not offered and not a part of the timetable. Olivette said that academic subjects received emphasis, not practical subjects. Sarah also said: “It is not being taught because it is seen as natural aspects of children’s development within the family, community and society”.

Creative arts were taught in only a few locations and mostly outside the timetable according to Sarah, Ephram and Olivette and arts generally included weaving, carving, painting and screen-printing as Gregan and David commented. Ephram also described a music band, panpipes and dancing in an urban secondary school, and Sarah described singing and dancing for festival days. Most secondary schools did not offer a creative arts course any more since many areas of curriculum broke down in the process of civil unrest which saw schools close for a long time in many areas. Some arts subjects have also been delivered through other curriculum areas such as drama in English classes.

Culture has also had little emphasis in the curriculum but had a very limited presence in social studies and religious studies, according to Gregan. It has been seen to some extent in visual art through the use of traditional materials and designs, commented Olivette. Throughout the interview process it was very difficult to get details about exactly what cultural content social studies and religious studies classes have had, since participants did not always know details and subject syllabi could not be obtained. However, the perspectives of two participants provide some historical context as outlined below.

Historical perspective from two participants

During my interviews, two participants offered their perspectives on cultural content in Solomon Islands' schools in the past. Sarah was the only participant to give an early historical perspective in which she described experiences of attending primary and then high school in an urban setting in the 1980s. She remembered primary school painting classes, singing and Maori poi dancing, and secondary school cultural dancing for special events like Malaita Day. She noted that no arts or culture was assessed or examined. Her comments suggest it was an 'add-on', rather than a valued curriculum area. Sarah also described experiences of teaching in an urban community high school from 1999 until 2006. The community high school did not have any inclusion of creative arts or culture as separate subjects within the timetable, although drama was taught and assessed in the English curriculum. The primary school on the same campus delivered unassessed visual art classes. She elaborated,

In the schools that I taught in, when I started teaching, um, there wasn't much emphasis on the Arts and Culture Curriculum in there, because it just wasn't part of the school timetable... and probably it's how our syllabus has been written where the Solomon Islands syllabus, where it's all emphasised only maths, English, social studies and science and not really um, um, emphasised on the Arts and Culture. (Sarah)

In contrast to all the other participants, Ephram was the only educator who described experiences of personally teaching Arts and Culture Curriculum. He was teaching in high schools in the Solomon Islands from the 1990s. Ephram explains how the arts came to be taught in his first urban provincial high school teaching position: "I was a mathematics teacher... The principal was very supportive so... I talked to him about my interest. That I'm... also a creative art teacher." Ephram had studied arts at an overseas university. The arts teaching was driven by this teacher's initiative and willingness to give time after timetabled school hours. The supportive principal managed to access funds for materials and

the class content was based on Ephram's skills, experience and willingness to try new things.

“We did a bit of visual art, drama and music... we made a band.” (Ephram)

The following year Ephram went to work at a different urban National High School. He commented, “That is where we actually put it in the timetable... I became the Head of Creative Arts... They gave me a building”.

Ephram implied that creating a classroom for a subject changes its status and adds perceived value. Placing creative arts in the timetable of classes and creating a department of creative arts also lifts the status markedly. The emphasis found at that school was in contrast to other participants' reports of a lack of emphasis on arts and culture subjects in schools and a lack of teachers to teach the subjects.

Ephram then identified a name change that is in process: “In my time as a teacher in the Solomon Islands we called this subject Creative Arts”. Any teaching of the subject as a separate entity has been called Creative Arts. The new syllabus (not yet released to schools) is called ‘Arts and Culture’, signalling a change in how the subject is conceptualised. Ephram explained:

Before it was just Creative Arts... for me as a teacher I totally just forgot about the culture because the term ‘culture’ was not there. Not until I went to (a particular urban secondary school)... oh my goodness it was a big thing at (this secondary school)... I talked with John Doe (name changed) and um he gave me the idea of, it is something to do with your culture as well. So it's culture. So when it comes to music, we played cultural music, because Malaita (Island) is famous for the panpipe... I think arts and culture is the way for us Solomon Islanders... We amalgamated the panpipe and the girls cultural dancing and it was, it was through that project, I mean um, through the idea of culture and arts. And we had opportunity to go to Australia in 1995. Taking part in what they call the Victory in the Pacific. The girls, you know, were wearing the grass skirts and they were dancing those cultural, local dance movements. Like they get some dance

patterns from Guadalcanal and Malaita... and the boys blowing the panpipe. (Ephram)

Ephram described other classroom activities he facilitated:

We did (made) some panpipes. We also did weaving... The local ones (female community members) were very good at weaving. . I talked to them and I learnt from them as well. So we went and we find the Pandanus leaves... And we planted some Pandanus there... They know about the process, the (women), they helped me do that. And the students weaved very nice mats, bags, baskets... when you study culture or do something about the culture, it's very important that you put it in the form of art as well... see in that way your culture is alive and your culture is meaningful. (Ephram)

As Sarah and Ephram's comments reveal, there were limited teachers and limited examples of creative arts in Solomon Islands schools from the 1980's onwards. This is despite the inclusion of creative arts in the Solomon Islands Curriculum from 1990.

Curriculum resources historically

Curriculum resources are an important part of curriculum delivery. In discussing which syllabus, resources or guidebooks are being used or have been used by teachers that have delivered arts programmes in schools; the consensus was that the main resources have been the teachers themselves and whatever they carried with them. Ephram's comments above support this. Creative Arts Curriculum that has been delivered was strongly dependent on local and personal island identities and memories. No one identified a resource such as a guidebook or a textbook. No one mentioned the visual arts traveling exhibition boxes, containing art and artifacts, available for loan from the National Museum, indicating they may have been unaware of this resource. Ephram identified some physical resources. For visual art there were some purchases of materials funded by a High School Principal, as well as use of naturally available materials for making musical panpipes and weaving. For music making Ephram identified the release of school funds for the purchase of two guitars. Ephram commented on this: "But then add

on to that the other students brought their own instruments and we made a band”. Ephram also identified that community arts experts were a resource to draw on.

When delivering culture programmes in social studies or religious studies, teachers should have had access to a Social Studies Student Guide Book and a Teachers Guide Book from Primary through to Secondary level, where as nothing has surfaced to indicate that creative arts had any guide books or other document resources.

4.3 Current Position in the Curriculum

The current educational reform process that began in 2004 has included developing new Arts and Culture Curriculum for the School Years 7-9 (junior secondary school). Nothing has been written for arts and culture at the primary school level although David said “ it is wanted” and Gregan said “it is being pursued”. This is due to a development timeline in process at present, that is addressing reform at the top of the basic education years (School Years 7-9) first (Coxon, 2008). There is nothing in the timeline for senior secondary school curriculum currently according to Gregan. The School Years 7-9 Arts and Culture Curriculum has been finalised but not printed.

Although Gregan commented that the curriculum was to be printed and distributed to schools before the end of 2012, according to the Curriculum Development Division (CDD) plan, it has now been pushed out to 2013 (personal; communication, F. Rodie, December 2012). Although curriculum changes are coming quickly, they must be implemented in line with resource releases (Coxon, 2008). Currently many school teachers may not be aware that the draft Arts and Culture Curriculum is close to being released, although schools were sent the previous 2007 draft for commenting on and for trial. Schools were invited to on the four key areas of ‘approach’, content, level and timing, and return written comments to the Curriculum Development Centre

How the Arts and Culture Curriculum is being developed

Two interviewees gave their perceptions about how the Arts and Culture Curriculum (which also contains a syllabus)⁶ is being developed. Gregan explained that development came through the participation of teachers and of selected people on an advisory committee with in-depth knowledge about art and culture. He believed that the community was widely consulted. Olivette's perspective was that there were workshops and community consultation but not community participation in curriculum development. Olivette made this critique:

What is missing in the current curriculum development is that mostly they only use teachers... The people in the community are just there to support but then they are never involved in the initial arrangement of curriculum. (Olivette)

Two of the educators, Olivette & Sarah, explained that since 2009 there has been inclusion of arts (but not culture) content in teacher training courses at School of Education (SOE), Solomon Islands National University (SINU, previously SICHE—Solomon Islands College of Higher Education). This inclusion has been compulsory at the primary level, and mainly covered art and crafts. There is no new syllabus to connect to this teacher training yet. It has been optional at the secondary training level as a third teaching subject but only music and visual art have been offered. Drama and dance courses have not been offered. One of the teacher-educators, Sarah, brings a perspective from visiting schools with teacher trainees. Sarah comments that she has not seen arts or culture classes taught while on teaching practicum. This is despite the arts training they have been receiving.

One participant particularly expressed her hopefulness about the positive outcomes of the educational reform and shifts in approach that are being pursued in the Solomon Islands and in this curriculum:

I think now-a-days we have people who, who understand the system and who understand what needs to be done for a different system so that we

⁶ The use of the terms curriculum and syllabus are defined in chapter 2.

can be, we can be training and we can be educating the kinds of citizens that we want. I feel it is coming... We are more informed. (Olivette)

Within the current Solomon Islands curriculum there only exists to date, an Arts and Culture Curriculum for school School Years 7-9. Participants' comments suggest that a primary and senior curriculum is wanted. At least some of the participants are hopeful about the direction of Arts and Culture Curriculum development.

4.4 Arts and Culture Curriculum is Wanted

Participants all express desire for an Arts and Culture Curriculum in schools because they believe it is essential for fulfilling important ideological purposes for education. Arts and culture are joined in the Solomon Islands (Rohorua, 2007) and perceived as bringing enrichment for student's lives. They believe it will promote harmony in diversity, impart values, provide necessary skills, value cultural identities and preserve indigenous heritage.

An essential component of students' development that brings enrichment

Two participants highlighted personal development of students' social abilities as a benefit of arts and culture study. They identified the development of attitudes and understandings and David said "Arts and Culture Curriculum is one powerful instrument for students' empowerment in confidence, courage building and development". Gregan, another participant added, "I have had discussions with community-church leaders who have expressed the importance of arts and culture". (Gregan) He is referring to community-church leaders belief that this curriculum will develop attitudes that they value.

Beuka (2008) described the traditional Solomon Islands education system as a participatory process that enabled the child to productively participate in the society for its wellbeing. According to David, the formal Solomon Islands education system needs to bring about similar results and Arts and Culture Curriculum can facilitate social participation. "arts and cultural knowledge, skills,

competencies and values... would enable young student to become useful, productive law-abiding citizens in communities and society”. (David)

Promoting Harmony Despite Diversity, and Imparting Values

The Islands are characterised by variety in both language and culture. Participants recognise there are different island groups and different recognisable crafts and a richness in cultural activity, not least in the form of cultural dancing, art and music. Olivette who talked about Isabel Island weaving patterns described regional variations. Another informant referred to something specifically from Malaita Island, and another referred to another island where, the Church still forbids any form of dance (presumably that which links to pre-Christian beliefs).

Two interviewees were of the opinion that Arts and Culture Curricula can impart values and understanding of diversity, which may help bring about national and even international harmony. They stated that understanding, respect, consideration and tolerance could be imparted through arts and culture education. Gregan said:

We have diverse cultures and therefore our young people need to learn about each other’s cultures so that they can understand, appreciate and respect their way of life as well as other people’s culture and live in harmony. (Gregan)

Gregan sees cultural diversity as a source of conflict in Solomon Islands that can be alleviated through education.

I strongly believe that the conflicts experienced in my country and the rest of the world - especially in the most troubled spots - is due largely to people having different belief systems and customs. If everyone appreciates each grouping’s belief systems through Arts and Culture Curriculum, I am sure the world can reduce conflicts. (Gregan)

While David commented:

Society will be able to maintain harmonious and peaceful co-existence despite diversity... Arts and Culture Curriculum could help society to have respect, consideration and tolerance. (David)

Literature espousing these ideals I have earlier referred to (see chapter 2.4) as carrying the theme 'education as Saviour'. While formal education in the Solomon Islands has not been 'salvational' in the past 40 years, there is a desire for education to be Saviour in the future. This will require deep insight from curriculum developers in considering how to best combine arts and culture together. This need for deep insight in those who develop the curriculum further is a perspective expressed by all participants.

Two interviewees stated that understanding, respect, consideration and tolerance can be imparted through an Arts and Culture Curriculum. Since the church plays such a strong role in rural communities, Gregan believes that the first step is to provide church leaders with educational awareness about how arts, culture, religious belief, values and ethos have common characteristics. His argument is:

Creating such understanding would reduce sensitivity around arts, culture and spirituality... Church leaders should then be encouraged to work collaboratively with communities and community leaders in the integration of religious beliefs, values and ethos such multi-facets of love such as respect, consideration, tolerance, forgiveness, acceptance and peaceful co-existence. This is because Arts and Culture Curriculum, religious beliefs, values, ethos and spirituality have overlapping features. (Gregan)

Participants' comments suggest that there is a hope that Arts and Culture Curricula could contribute significantly to community acceptance of diversity and the building of values.

Providing necessary survival skills

Most participants raised the critical importance of providing necessary survival skills for Solomon Islands life. It is essential to restore skills for the survival of the people in village life. Gregan postulated that “The Arts and Culture Curriculum has the potential to preserve the cultural heritage, transmit the culture’s accumulated knowledge (and) skills”. Olivette reiterated, “The introduction of art and culture in our curriculum, I hope... not I hope I know... should bring in the things that we have lost in the past”.

Indigenous cultural traditions, developed over generations, are being lost. Participants felt strongly about this as a genuine reality. A body of accumulated knowledge and understandings, skills and practices, beliefs and values are disintegrating. Interviewees describe the negative implications for Solomon Islands society below. Olivette said,

It’s disheartening to go into a home and people just sleep on the floor because they don’t know how to weave mats. It’s disheartening to see someone asking someone to use someone’s canoe to go to a garden. Just because they cannot build a canoe... It’s also for their own benefit as people surviving in the culture of the Solomon Islands. (Olivette)

Ephram explained “the activities that we do... we (have) now lost some of them”. While Sarah believed that “if the people back home would see that one day in the future, most aspects of their culture will be lost” they would embrace this change in curriculum. David indicated that “the sustainability of Solomon Islands communities and society hinges on arts and culture in many aspects”. Therefore, educational leaders are looking for solutions to assist in economic progress.

The knowledge and skills, that Solomon Island schools have previously been imparting, have had a very small component of indigenous arts and culture, according to participants. The predominant cultural knowledge communicated has been foreign. This privileging of foreign culture in schools has had a great impact on general society. Solomon Islands communities are losing skills rapidly. It is the belief of interviewees that schools must assist students in acquiring skills to create

objects used regularly in their lives, like mats and canoes. This is necessary for people surviving in the culture and environment of the Solomon Islands. Participants were not describing the preservation of some cultural relic, but of an essential ingredient of subsistence survival, that the physical resources of the Solomon Islands can still provide.

Valuing cultural identities and preserving traditional cultural knowledge

The research participants want culture taught in schools and they see arts as an integral part of that. The arts are aligned with traditional cultural knowledge, which has not been valued as a pathway to personal or national development by commentators such as Rohorua (2007), Lindstrom & White (1994). The participants believe that artistic and cultural aspects of Solomon Islands society have not retained their importance because they have not been valued in schools. Concern about the relevance that the school curriculum has had to everyday life in the Solomon Islands was raised. Academic and often irrelevant learning, for examinations, has been the predominant emphasis said participants. Academic knowledge has been seen as the pathway to personal advancement. However, participants believe that introducing an Arts and Culture Curriculum to all schools will serve to restore what is being lost and empower young people to participate fully in the life of their communities. Gregan explained, “I value our art and culture and so do the rest of Solomon Islands. It is our identity and we must allow our children to learn about and inherit them”. Sarah elaborated, “if they (the people back home) can see the importance of having culture being embedded into the school curriculum and we would see some of our culture being preserved”. Olivette argued that, “It’s already in the curriculum statements that arts and culture has to be (there)” and David added:

The inclusion of Arts and Culture Curriculum is fundamental to Solomon Islands communities and society. It should be included (in schools)... Identity and survival, also the sustainability of ... communities... hinges on arts and culture. (David)

Participants believe the curriculum intent should be to preserve aspects of indigenous cultural identity and heritage; therefore they support an ideological

shift away from creative arts to arts and culture. Powerful forces of standardisation, which have homogenized cultures, have foregrounded a Western economic development model and the values of individualism. These values differ from the values participants want emphasised. School, for most Solomon Islanders, has been a place where culture was transmitted, but this was a culture that was largely foreign to most of the children. David believes Arts and Culture Curriculum will benefit students in that,

Students' culture will be preserved from the negative impacts of globalization... Arts and Culture Curriculum is one powerful instrument for students' empowerment... Arts and Culture Curriculum would help society to have respect, consideration and tolerance. (David)

Modernisation and globalisation are forces that were identified by interviewees as affecting the Solomon Islands. Particularly negative impacts of these forces were described as a loss of heritage - the heritage of skills, languages, arts and wisdom. These Solomon Islands educators believe that negative impacts can begin to be alleviated through Arts and Culture Curriculum. Gregan said "It could benefit students by equipping them to preserve their identity and heritage... from the negative impacts of globalisation".

4.5 Arts and Culture Curriculum is Relevant

Participants identified that Arts and Culture Curriculum is relevant because non-academic, practical and creative pathways must be offered to students. While it is recorded in the literature that Solomon Island parents have requested this of their education system since the 1970s, Sarah announced a current problem, which is that she does not think any parents are currently supportive of Arts and Culture Curriculum. She perceives the nature of the resistance within the community like this:

At the present, the ones back home don't really see the importance of having an Arts and Culture Curriculum ... But the thing that the parents do not really understand is that not all the children are intellectually gifted...

If only parents can see that probably some other children really have gifts and talents for the arts. And if they could support the children... I think it comes back to the notion of - you have a white collar job. That's the biggest notion. When parents send their kids to school, they expect their children to get white-collar jobs. (Sarah)

Sarah goes on to describe a possible solution:

Most of the parents' minds are geared towards just the English, Maths and that stuff... If people could see that the Solomon Islands is unique in its own way... they could push to have an arts and culture... aspect really firmly grounded in the school curriculum. It would really help the future generations. (Sarah)

Sarah suggests that parents have not considered school the place for arts and culture learning. Sadly, arts and culture in everyday village life has also declined. Students have lost a sense of pride in their personal and cultural identity according to interviewees. They insisted that they need cultural identity and skills to be equipped for lifelong involvement in Solomon Islands. Sarah said:

In the community I don't think it (arts and culture) is being emphasized that much... if it was in the schools where students go every day, Monday to Friday... I think the message would really ring loud and clear. (Sarah)

Not all participants shared this view, as two interviewees believed parents would definitely support an Arts and Culture Curriculum at all levels; except possibly as a compulsory senior high school subject.

Interviewees described a desire for a renewed role for schools that includes attention to practical learning, rather than just academic learning and therefore greater access to schooling for more students. They described a desire for greater relevance of the curriculum to Solomon Islands life, and schools fulfilling a function in cultural preservation.

Economic opportunities and income streams exist in the arts

All participants recognise the economic opportunities and income streams that exist in the arts and that should be opened to students. “In the arts you can make a living”. (Ephram) The emergence of a global economy that privileges the ascendancy of the market model over other politico-economic models has impacted Solomon Islands villages. Olivette described a shift in thinking and lifestyle among Solomon Islanders. Previously they did not see any monetary value in objects they made in their communities. Mat making, music making and lava lava dyeing were just things they did. There has been a shift to selling to one another in the markets. Olivette said:

They are slowly understand(ing) that making money is not just about being a doctor, being a teacher... you can earn money from your own experience... Like before they said, why do you want to sell that bag? No? But now they are there. Now they are selling with each other, out in the markets you know? And I know there are people in the Solomon Islands who have the skills. Like music you know? (Olivette)

Gregan argued that skilled artists can earn a living and Ephram believes that art and culture is “the subject that can promote improvement... in the way they live”. Ephram is referring to financial improvement and he has vision for economic growth through tourism:

Our culture is unique and it can be something that can be an attraction, because nowadays people throughout the world look for something that they want... ‘this is a bit different’ ... ‘I’d like to go and see this place because I’ve never seen this before.’ You see? And if the Solomon’s can do that and that can be a form of attraction... (Ephram)

His entrepreneurial vision also extends to trade over the Internet:

When you talk about the communication technology – the IT - I think in four or five years time ... there will be Internet in the rural villages, in the communities. So they can promote their art through those. (Ephram)

Ephram also provided an excellent example of how his visual art teaching provided an income and a career for his students and also opportunities for international migration:

And we did a bit of screen printing at the time and a little bit of Sign writing.... So it's kind of giving them opportunity and then guiding them... A good number of students have used this opportunity and they became employees to the sign printers... One of them, whom I was giving them the opportunity, he's almost world famous now, he's in Canada. He was so good in sign writing and he worked with one of our very outstanding sign writers in Honiara at the time... his work was... recognised and he was given a scholarship. He studied in Canada. He got married in Canada... and now is living there and is making good money there... I met his parents just before coming in, and they were so thankful. And they said 'Oh, we are really thankful, you helped our son.' I said 'Oh it's alright. He was a natural artist on his own', he's very good, very good. (Ephram)

Sarah commented on an example of a panpipe group that dances and makes music CDs for a living and travels internationally, showing that this is possible for Solomon Islands students to aspire to.

You can make a living out of your painting and out of dances. Like just an example, there is a pan pipe dance group that have been called Narasirato and they came over to the Cloud (an Auckland venue)... They've been to Japan, they've been to Europe. (Sarah)

In summary, participants described a shift in thinking and lifestyle from Solomon Islanders not seeing any monetary value in objects, to selling to one another in the markets. Since the global economy has impacted Solomon Islands villages, participants want the curriculum to open income streams to students.

4.6 Solomon Island Educators' Visions For the Future of Their Education

The Solomon Islands educators in this study have a vision for the future of their education system. They indicate that they have already been negotiating the challenges of reform for several years and are committed to outcomes that deliver a new-look formal education system for their people. Decisions for change have been born out of a deep concern about the relevance of the current system. They expressed their commitment to their unique cultural heritages and want them recognized, protected and perpetuated. They recognize the place that this curriculum can have in achieving this and want content carefully defined. David's picture extends to envisioning a society that "Maintains harmonious and peaceful co-existence despite diversity with many cultures, traditions and languages". He wants to see schools produce learners able to "become useful, productive, law-abiding citizens in communities and society" (David). 'Law-abiding' is not always associated with Western art activity. Clearly, this is to be a Solomon Islands curriculum where the arts voice is one of maintenance of the social order.

The content of an arts and culture curriculum

Those participating in this research described the cultural and artistic content they want to see included in Solomon Islands schools as history, genealogies, visual art, indigenous crafts, knowledge and skills, music, dance, drama, the story of the land, and languages. Olivette imagines:

If I was to teach my children my culture, I think music is there. Dance is there and then the other art part goes with it, because to me they are not separated. Because when you sing a song, you sing it in a language. And when you sing a song in that language the dance goes with it. And with that dance, like the movements there, those are the movements that we can portray in an art form. (Olivette)

David's description of arts content included "paintings, traditional craft and designs. Traditional dances, story-telling and miming, drama, creative dances, carving and weaving". While Gregan said:

Everyone needs to know and be aware of some aspects of art... our traditional art as well as contemporary art... Skilled artists can make a living by selling their artwork or by performing their dances. (Gregan)

Sarah explained that some people are uncomfortable about dance because,

back home they always associate dancing with night clubs... So they were thinking you know, what does dance have to do with (school)? But I think if there were guidelines... probably what type of music to dance to... Some of the cultural dance that I see now, that people back home do, they have... some modern-like actions to them... but then they still play it to the cultural music. (Sarah)

Ephram discussed sensitivities around kinds of dance and pointed out that,

We ask what type of dance you are talking about. So here we talk about the traditional, cultural dance items. They are still acceptable... When we produce the syllabus or the curriculum we need some communication there about, when it comes to dance. (Ephram)

Participants believe that every Solomon Islander needs to know not only their own culture but also the cultures of other Solomon Islanders. David said:

Culture studies should include the ways of life - including customs, taboos, and ways of doing things by different ethnic groups in Solomon Islands. It should also include virtues, and beliefs passed down from one generation to another, including language, religion, rituals, moral and spiritual values in interpersonal and human relations, norms of behaviours such as laws and morality. Also shared responsibility, respect for the worth and dignity of individuals. (David)

Gregan's list was similar but also included "traditional fishing, building, hunting and farming... traditional beliefs and values such as sacred chants and songs should be included". Ephram pointed out that:

Culture is not only about singing and dancing but it also goes back to the story of the land... when you study culture ... it's very important that you

put it in the form of art as well. You see in that way your culture is alive and your culture is meaningful. (Ephram)

Ephram commented that integrating culture and arts effectively is the challenge for them: “That’s the challenge for us... talking about culture, and how we can, express it in the form of arts. Because it used to be when you think of art you think of a tribe, of our culture”. David said that

Their way of life centres on their unique arts and culture. Their arts and culture enables them to have certain world views that could be different from other communities and societies... There should be equal emphasis on arts and culture subjects as they compliment each other. (David)

4.7 Challenges facing development and implementation of curriculum

Participants identify that the further development and implementation of an Arts and Culture Curriculum has some challenges to overcome if it is to successfully address the curriculum intention. Allocation of financial resources and partnership between the Ministry of Education and academic bodies is identified as important. Partnership with community, parents and arts and culture experts needs a well-planned process, including the development of locally specific definitions of arts and culture for each province. Pre-service and also in-service training for teachers must be provided and the status of the subject as core and assessed must be accepted in order for the curriculum to become implemented.

Allocation of financial resources

Funds need to be made available in key areas to continue a process of implementing this new curriculum. Rural schools need building, and guidebooks and practical equipment are needed in all schools. Teachers need rewarding if they are to take up and lead this new curriculum area. Sarah commented on development practicalities such as access to schooling and the building of more rural schools.

Our education system, it's a bottleneck system... because of the exams that cut people out... They're hoping that it (the exams) would go..., the grade, um, Year 6 I think... (but) then, they have to have more schools. There must be more schools. There must be more ... properly trained teachers. And um, you know the Solomon Islands. Some students paddle to school. Some students walk hours to school ... I'm hoping that each community back home will have a school so that each student could just go to the local schools in their own communities, and that we would have properly trained teachers. Most of the teachers, especially in the rural areas, are not properly trained. (Sarah)

Sarah's personal perspective about funding and development needing to change from an urban to a rural focus is a passionate one. "It is my, my goodest wish that people like myself go back to the rural areas and really develop our own communities back home" in their villages. She would like to see that "most of the (teaching) jobs in Honiara were decentralized". She said that people think "the schools in Honiara are the best, but that is not true.... I've been teaching in Honiara." Sarah finds it

sad to see, um, what schooling is like in the urban areas... There's more higher teacher absenteeism in the urban areas. Yeah, that's the sad thing about it. And most of the parents want the children to go to the urban areas. Which creates a lot of problem for the relatives living in the urban areas. Because sometimes the relatives living in the urban areas will have their house full of students... And the poor students don't have a proper place to study at night. In the rural areas they have their difficulties as well, but then a sense of community is very close knit. Like, the parents have more attachment to the school... Because they all live together in um, the community. But if we would have, each community back home would have their own schools, the problem would be solved because back home every one in the rural areas, everybody has their own house. (Sarah)

All schools must also have funds to purchase practical equipment needed in delivery of this curriculum and teacher and student guidebooks need to reach all rural schools. As a previous high school principal Ephram shared, "because when

it comes to resources, you don't have the money to... to even cover the basics". Olivette explained how a much needed process is now in place to help facilitate delivery of curriculum materials:

They have been contracted... to be published in Australia – by Pearson... they do the printing and they do the... delivery to the schools. The ministry to the ERU- you know? Education Resource Union. They charter a boat, you know. Probably to an island. Probably quarterly or maybe twice a year... and deliver the materials to them. And there's been funding for doing that. (Olivette)

Schools also need funds so that teachers can be rewarded for taking up this new curriculum area. Ephram's opinion was,

That is one thing that is really lacking in the education system, there is no motivation to... We do lots of good things but people say we are very... you know we do much but we are not paid well...: So I think motivation must go with all this... Because nowadays, when we talk about motivation, the teachers would like a bit more of a reward in terms of salary. (Ephram)

Partnerships

Participant Olivette called for strong partnerships between the Ministry of Education and academic bodies. The Solomon Islands educational strategic plan says that leadership of curriculum development comes from the Curriculum Development Division (CDD). CDD indicates a will to develop an Arts and Culture Curriculum. This is a hugely positive step forward into valuing arts and culture. Olivette indicates that there needs to be a strong partnership between the CDD, the Ministry of Education (MEHRD) and the School of Education. She said that as the curriculum is developed further, the three groups should all work together:

When we had the review of the teacher education programme... we had a big stakeholders meeting where we invited people in the ministry, as well as people in the community like the grandparents, parents, some people

who had graduated. That is a big meeting we took to start off – Where? Where are we in our teacher education now? (Olivette)

Findings indicated that partnership with community, parents and arts and culture experts needs a well-planned process, including the development of locally specific definitions of arts and culture for each province. Participants described the importance of partnership in local contexts in order to develop and implement this curriculum.

If you want to have a curriculum that is for the nation, that is for everyone, then we should go down to the, to the community level. And I think there are ways we can do that. For example teachers who could have say ah, workshops where we invite the people in. Especially with art and culture. It's very important that we have these people in the community to come in. And I think that is easy to organise. (Olivette)

An obstacle identified by one participant was the need to find a leader that could guide partnership processes, despite cultural diversity. Olivette believes that a person of special understanding is needed to help the process:

A culture like the Solomon Islands ... is so diverse... you have Malaita people, who are different from Isabel people. We have the Anglican who believes differently from the SSEC (South Seas Evangelical Church) or SDA (Seventh Day Adventist). We need to have someone with an open mind, who can try to understand all these diverse cultures and thinking what we have in the Solomon Islands. (Olivette)

All participants chose to comment on what they thought might contribute to the development of an Arts and Culture Curriculum including that crucial to its development is wide community consultation and the creation of a co-constructed, localized curriculum. Ephram has a strategy to enlist wide support through raising awareness and understanding:

I think there's got to be a big awareness to the whole community... Its not just calling the parents together... you need to talk to some of the elders first. . So you cannot call the whole group together, you need to talk to

some elders first. Explain to them... so it's a process... once they understand it, they will be the ones to support you when you call the whole community together. (Ephram)

He also described a process with schools:

In the Solomon Islands, it's a real need now for the community high school Principal in the schools to form what we call the collegial groups, because it is upon those groups that they can talk about those (cultural arts) festivals. (Ephram)

David believes that an important step is to provide church leaders with educational awareness about "how arts, culture, religious belief, values and ethos have common characteristics". He argues that creating such understanding would reduce sensitivity around arts, culture and spirituality. Others also affirmed the sensitivity of Arts and Culture to a wide range of people. Gregan said that they should "involve them (church leaders) in writing of the Arts and Culture Curriculum". David added:

Church leaders should then be encouraged to work collaboratively with communities and community leaders in the integration of religious beliefs, values and ethos such multi-facets of love such as respect, consideration, tolerance, forgiveness, acceptance and peaceful co-existence. This is because Arts and Culture Curriculum, religious beliefs, values, ethos and spirituality have overlapping features. (David)

David emphasized that it is important that the forms of art or culture introduced do not offend students and there is need of some guidelines on how teachers should teach the sensitive topics.

Ephram focused in on the creation of a co-constructed, localized curriculum when he commented:

When you talk about Culture, there are people from within the communities who know the culture so well and we should put them in... people who (have) some knowledge and experience in the arts and then the

teachers, and they walk along with us, they walk along with the community, with the elders and leaders. (Ephram)

Olivette said “We should draw people from the community. That would be from the churches, from elders in the community, even youth”. Olivette has previously worked on developing another curriculum and has been on a curriculum advisory committee. She believes that previously educators have taken little advice from the community and things must be different in the development of this curriculum:

We are assuming that we know everything... I think... teachers could have ... workshops where we invite the people in. It’s very important that we have these people in the community to come in... because probably none of us, who have been educated, know a lot about the culture ourselves. (Olivette)

Participants all agreed that teachers may lack skills in arts and culture and so the subject should be approached in a way that involves collaboration with community cultural experts. The localised content of the Arts and Culture Curriculum belongs to the elders in provinces. Delivery of the subject is to do with pedagogy. Olivette comments on the knowledge of the culture being in one place and the knowledge of the pedagogy elsewhere. Still on this theme Ephram stated:

When it comes to culture there are people within the community who can (teach) that... but I think choosing the right people... they don’t have the knowledge of teaching things logically as a teacher should do. They share all kinds of things without working on objective learning outcomes. (Ephram)

Ephram recognises here that it is helpful if the teacher structures learning objectives in collaboration with community members or in response to what community members offer. The teacher offers the language of educational structure. They may also remain engaged in the learning experience along with the students and community expert. He wonders about any financial reward for community experts visiting classrooms.

... Like nowadays once we go doing those things we need some finance or support you know. Because people will feel – ‘oh I just wasted my time, I need a reward for this’. So if that can be supported, by way of some funds... (Ephram)

Participants stressed the need for a school community partnership in preparing students for life. The participants said much about the importance for the school and community to work in partnership to teach the students the social and cultural knowledge, skills and values of their communities. Two participants emphasised that more rural schools will be needed to achieve this.

One of the participants elaborated:

I look at the establishment of Community High Schools near most rural parents and communities as a prerequisite for teaching and learning of social and cultural knowledge and values of the communities. (Ephram)

It was acknowledged by all five interview participants that holders of cultural knowledge are likely to be community members and not necessarily teachers. They have been educated away from their communities in two ways. Firstly, they have been educated away in location, because the city – Honiara – or overseas, is where they went for secondary school study. They have also extended their tertiary study abroad. Secondly, they have been educated away from their communities by the content of the education they received. It did not include learning about local botany, geography, history or language, but privileged foreign information, language and pedagogies. Sarah indicated that knowledgeable community members are likely to be the very old and noted that, “Only the older people ... are the ones that are weaving the baskets, and carving the artifacts”.

She expressed concern that when the older people of this generation pass on, these things will be completely lost. All informants saw a window of opportunity to save these things through these elderly community members collaborating with curriculum developers and with teachers in classrooms to re-establish knowledge in the young.

Pre-service and in-service training for teachers

Most of the participants believed that teachers already in service, and previously trained for teaching in Solomon Islands (before 2009) are unprepared for teaching arts although they have some limited preparation for teaching culture within other subject areas. They did not receive arts training at the School of Education (SOE) or since then through in-service training. Some teachers train abroad and then bring these skills to the Solomon Islands context; Ephram is an example of this. Getting in-service training right out to all islands has been a problem up until now. Olivette explained:

In the recent review, they would want... that lecturers go and do the in-servicing, instead of the curriculum people. Because with that thing about the outcome based syllabus. And the college is now looking at the learner centred approach of delivery of learning. And so the ministry is saying that it should be SICHE lecturers (now SINU who go out there and do that in servicing.... I hope they would do that and begin that process. (Olivette)

School of Education, Solomon Islands National University (SINU previously SICHE) is now training new school teachers in arts, but not culture, since 2009. The first graduates of the new training have now gone out to schools. Emphasis on arts training is in place for all primary teacher trainees. Arts are offered to secondary school teacher trainees as a third teaching subject. As Olivette says:

That is the new curriculum of our teacher education and we are hoping that this is what will go out to the schools, and this calls for art to be part of the curriculum. (Olivette)

Gregan believes it is important that pre-service teacher trainee courses prepare teachers for this curriculum because the best teachers to deliver it are “Most preferably trained and qualified arts and culture teachers” (Gregan). Culture has been taught to teacher trainees limitedly as part of social studies and religious studies up until now. So primary school and junior secondary school teachers have some experience in that, interviewees said. A new School Years 7-9 social studies and religious studies curriculum has been written, but is not yet

finalized. This is part of an overall reform at that level. At the primary school level the current syllabus will stand. Since only a School Years 7-9 Arts and Culture Syllabus has been written, a clear and comprehensive understanding of this curriculum across Solomon Islands schools is not yet available for anyone.

Ephram suggested that teachers at Secondary level need to be encouraged to take up art and culture and that they could be offered recognition and salary reward and also receive in-service training. He comments:

Because in-service is a good thing, which I would see it as all part of provisional learning development, ah, but then the college, the lecturers, they would have to come together with the principals... But then coming back to the subject of arts and culture, if there's no training, then we have to find out who is interested in taking up the subject, which may also involve maybe some recognition for them. That's one way of encouraging them. (Ephram)

Olivette offered a critique about what teacher trainees are learning in the Solomon Islands. She wants to see critical thinking stimulated; thinking about the product and the process of curriculum development and delivery:

Currently the understanding of those who teach art and culture especially in the colleges there, they ... don't really understand themselves. And for them, art is just drawing... They are not theorising or thinking beyond to what art and culture should be. (Olivette)

Arts and Culture Curriculum as core and assessed must be accepted

In the secondary school setting in the Solomon Islands some subjects are core and some are elective. If Arts and Culture Curriculum was fully developed, and introduced into all levels of schooling, it could be present in either capacity. Interviewees gave their views on this subject. Everyone was convinced that it should be a core subject at primary and junior secondary school levels. There was some debate about its status at upper secondary school level. Olivette said "It's a major; it's a core subject that the students should be studying." Sarah agreed but wondered if an introduction as an elective subject was more acceptable to the

community, with a change to core status later on. Practical suggestions such as timetabling were also shared. Ephram said this subject's value must be raised by "Putting it in the timetables and there should be a provision of a classroom... And then we can encourage teachers to approach it...it is an important subject".

Olivette noted that at School Of Education, SICHE (now SINU) the subject status had been discussed:

At one stage ... the music and art teachers in the college, they were wanting their subject to be a major as well... because there might be people that want to come and be a music teacher ... And we were also having conflicts in that... They wanted it to be a core as well (for teacher trainees). (Olivette)

4.8 Contending for the Curriculum

Curriculum in arts and culture must be argued for in the Solomon Islands, since there are many challenges facing its development and implementation and few have advocated for arts and culture in recent years.

Villages have not been advocating for arts and culture, however, interviewees said that important aspects of custom are not being attended to in the villages in the way they were in the past, to the extent that languages are dying out. Ephram explained that locally based skills are being forgotten: "The activities that we do like, we now lost some of them". Olivette described a loss of customary skills that are needed for survival in Solomon Islands life. They worry that the village and family are no longer doing their taking a role in these areas. The village is not about custom any more. Since villages have not upheld custom what about schools?

The classroom has been about literacy and numeracy and the village about custom in past educational practise in Solomon Islands schools said interview participants. But this has become a practice that now raises questions and uneasiness among many thinking people. A tension around these ideas was

evident in interviews with Solomon Islands educators. Interviewees indicated that they are not happy that maths and English have been emphasised almost exclusively in schools by parents. Sarah said:

Most of the parent's minds are geared towards just the English, maths ... If people could see that the Solomon Islands is unique ... to the rest of the world. They could push to have arts and culture in the school curriculum, it would really ... help the future generations ... If we as a people do not really see the importance of these... important parts of our culture they will be lost... Right now some of our languages are dying out. That's because ... some parents wouldn't care to speak it anymore. And they think it's not really important ... English is always emphasized in schools.
(Sarah)

Olivette commented:

There needs to be education for parents like their mindset if they want their child always to be a white collar job person. That needs to change in the mindset of Solomon Islanders, and it takes time. But it will not change unless we, you know, we pursue some of this. Because you know like people in the Solomon Islands they won't believe us until they see what is happening. So currently now when they see people making money out of music, you know people are going to it... So they are seeing it. I think it is time that they would slowly understand that making money is not just being a doctor, being a teacher... you can earn money from your own experience you know... that we have a rich culture... The introduction of art and culture in our curriculum, I hope, not I hope, I know, should bring in the things that we have lost, in the past. (Olivette)

Since at this point only a School Years 7-9 curriculum exists for arts and culture, participants discussed what else could assist in contending for development across all school levels. Informants indicated that leadership from the government level in the Parliament was needed. Sarah does not believe that the will of School of Education, and the Curriculum Development Division is

adequate to implement this curriculum. She believes there is a need for some higher politician to push it. She said:

Parliament... has a strong voice for this one... I think if it can be seen at the leadership level how important arts and culture is, I think the message will go down to the community. I think, I think. (Sarah)

Two other participants also indicated that leadership from the government level in the Parliament would be advantageous as would leadership from School of Education visiting communities, and the support of elders and church leaders. Gregan suggested that curriculum development could go ahead “by piloting the materials developed in certain schools to see how students, teachers, parents, church leaders react to them”. If acceptance and implementation comes for the School Years 7-9 curriculum, further development can continue.

4.9 Summary

In this chapter I have presented findings in eight sections. These have included that firstly, arts and culture have had some place in the curriculum but a process of educational reform has brought some shifts and seeks to lift its status to core and assessed in the future. Secondly participants all expressed wanting an Arts and Culture Curriculum. Thirdly an Arts and Culture Curriculum is seen to have relevance and benefit for all levels of school education. Fourthly they identify their vision for the future of the curriculum, and lastly participants identify that the further development and implementation of an Arts and Culture Curriculum has some challenges to overcome. These challenges must be thoroughly considered and addressed at Government, school and community level if development and implementation is to successfully address the intentions of the Arts and Culture Curriculum.

Key findings of this research include the need for current and future teachers to be provided with professional development, which is geared towards implementing the new curriculum with a thorough understanding of the essential elements of the Arts and Culture Curriculum content. Teachers will also need a

thorough understanding of teaching processes in terms of community involvement in constructing and delivering the curriculum in a collaborative and locally specific way.

Also of importance is the revelation that this curriculum needs to be contended for if it is to be implemented at all and if it is to be developed across all school levels, which participants truly hope for.

In the next chapter I will develop discussion of the findings of this study.

Chapter Five: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I seek to make links between pertinent literature and findings, which represent the perceptions of five Solomon Islands Educators who participated in semi-structured interviews. The focus of this research lies in the main question: **What are the perceptions of experienced Solomon Islands educators on the inclusion of an Arts and Culture Curriculum in Solomon Islands Schools?** This question remains unexplored in other research to date.

Previously, little has been published on what might underpin an Arts and Culture Curriculum in the Solomon Islands or on how much has been taught and how appropriate it has been to wider curriculum needs and issues. The key findings in this research are useful in disclosing local knowledge linked to broad Arts and Culture Curriculum goals. I will discuss those findings in this chapter.

The first theme that emerged from the findings is, that a long-term desire for the inclusion of an Arts and Culture Curriculum has existed in the Solomon Islands and the development and implementation of such curriculum has now been prioritised. This can be linked to literature advocating this practice in the Pacific, particularly since 2002 (UNESCO, 2002). In section 5.2 and 5.3 I discuss historical and current positions of arts and culture in the curriculum, while in 5.4 and 5.5 I discuss why this curriculum is desired.

Secondly, there are specific elements that the participants envisage are very important to include in the new curriculum. The elements are locally specific but also reflect international literature. In section 5.6 I describe the content that is wanted and I focus on where these visions are congruent with the Solomon Islands Curriculum Reform Management Plan (Davy, 2000) and where other literature supports the findings. The inclusion of culture as well as arts in the curriculum is also considered in detail.

Thirdly, there are several challenges that must be overcome for this curriculum to be successful. In section 5.7 I consider finances, partnerships and

holders of cultural knowledge. I also address teacher training and the possible future status of Arts and Culture Curriculum. I suggest that this curriculum must be contended for if it is to reach implementation stage. Finally, in section 5.8, I draw the discussion together and highlight the matters of importance that have emerged from the findings. I begin with discussion of the first theme below.

5.2 Status of Solomon Islands Arts and Culture Curriculum

Arts and culture have been positioned in the Solomon Islands curriculum as desirable but virtually unresourced and undervalued subjects. A long-term desire for inclusion of an Arts and Culture Curriculum has existed in the Solomon Islands, and was expressed in a foundational report in the 1970s (Educational Policy Review Committee, 1973) as the nation established independence and its National Education Policies. The report described the wishes of parents for practical, non-academic courses and cultural content in schools. Interview participants identified that these early wishes had not been fulfilled and a highly academic curriculum, lacking practical courses and cultural content had been the norm. Research participants considered this a problem since “society’s way of life and livelihood hinges on arts and culture in many aspects such as identity and survival”. (David) Although arts and culture have had little space in the curriculum over the last 40 years, the current needs in the nation and process of educational reform have brought a shift and an Arts and Culture Curriculum is being pursued.

It has been pursued before, but as the “Creative Arts Curriculum”, with a School Years 7-11 syllabus released to high schools in 1990 (Davy, 2000). Some arts were also meant to be included at the primary level, even though a separate syllabus was not released (Joubert, 2002). Based on participants’ perspectives, I have established that although arts were clearly included in the curriculum, they were delivered sporadically. Findings showed that culture has also had little emphasis in the curriculum but there has been some inclusion of culture within social studies and religious studies. This lack of inclusion has been common practice across Pacific schools but a shift in ideology, driven partly by UNESCO

publications (Aoun, 2010; UNESCO, 2002, 2005b), has highlighted culture as an important curriculum area, especially for developing, indigenous nations.

The current pursuit of Arts and Culture Curriculum in the Solomon Islands raises important questions. What might need to be different from 1973 or 1990, if this new Arts and Culture Curriculum is shortly released into schools for implementation? How might it move beyond plans into a living curriculum? Since culture has now been joined with arts in the curriculum, what differences might this make? The answers to these questions may require ongoing consideration, but participants offer insights as I reveal in this discussion. Also relevant is Thursby's UNESCO report (Joubert, 2002) in which he explains that available resources in the Solomon Islands were stretched and that this placed limits on what could be achieved. As a result the area of arts and culture was mainly left to the community to pick up within home and village life. Dawson states that arts and culture have not been implemented in school curriculums across Melanesia, except in Papua New Guinea (Dawson, 2005). In recent times, with civil unrest at its height in the Solomon Islands between 1999 and 2003, many areas of curriculum broke down in the process of civil unrest. Therefore many schools did not offer a creative arts course at all (Davy, 2000). The earlier position of arts and culture in the curriculum was further discovered through the memories of two interview participants.

In the findings, I outlined the ways in which two participants described an historical perspective on creative arts in school settings. Sarah's memory of experiencing primary school arts classes as a child, included painting and cultural dance, but no arts or culture was assessed or examined. This suggests these subjects were an 'add-on', rather than a valued curriculum area. Ephram described experiences of personally teaching the Arts and Culture Curriculum in two high schools. At one school creative arts was extra-curricula and at the other school it was a timetabled subject. Ephram commented that placing creative arts in the timetable, creating a classroom for the subject and creating a department for arts, changes its status and adds perceived value. Sarah said that assessing a subject changes its status.

The draft School School Years 7-9 Arts and Culture Curriculum establishes the subject as core (not an elective) with assessments at the junior high school level. Potentially this will require a separate classroom space, although it might not require a separate department. This reconceptualisation of arts education being joined to culture seems appropriate for Pacific nations where, literature tells us, “Art is not separable from the rest of life” (Luteru & Teasdale, 1993). Findings show that any previous arts curriculum was taught differently in different places, if taught at all. There was some attempt to make curriculum relevant at the local level. Thaman (2002b) supported this practice articulating that it is important for an Arts and Culture Curriculum to be local and situated and thus regional variation may be present.

In Solomon Islands schools, participants described how the teachers themselves have resourced any teaching of the arts because there were limited curriculum resources. The Creative Arts Curriculum that has been delivered was strongly dependent on local and personal island identities and memories. Other Solomon Islands studies have shown that lack of resources in terms of guidebooks, practical resources, teaching personnel, and buildings; have posed frustrating problems in the Solomon Islands for many years (Coxon, 2008; Memua, 2011; Rodie, F. et al., 2001). It has also been noted by Thursby (Joubert, 2002) that limited teaching of the Creative Arts Curriculum was due to available resources being stretched to their limits. Resource limitations also have implications for future implementation of a curriculum, which will require resourcing in all the ways mentioned above. Both the areas of arts and culture previously had limited resourcing and limited implementation in the school curriculum in the Solomon Islands. In the following section, I will consider new curriculum development.

5.3 Arts and Culture: Curriculum Development

Participants described how development of a new Arts and Culture Curriculum came through an advisory committee, with the participation of teachers and of selected people with in-depth knowledge about arts and culture. It was reported by

participants that the community was widely consulted. The 2012 draft Arts and Culture Curriculum document acknowledged the input of the Arts and Culture Advisory Committee and the Curriculum Development Division (CDD). However, participants also indicated that while there were workshops and community consultation, this was not the same as community participation in curriculum development. The criticism was made that the community are called upon to support initiatives, but are never really involved in the arrangement of curriculum. Olivette, in particular, was advocating the importance of community involvement with arts and culture in curriculum content and development.

A curriculum is the product of the identity and backgrounds of the people who write it. Therefore groups of people with a vested interest in a curriculum (the stakeholders) should co-operate together to construct and to deliver a curriculum (Bolstad, 2004; Hewitt, 2006; McGee, 1997; Potter, 2005, p. 52). Potter argued that “stakeholder groups include the government, teachers, students, parents, business people and others such as medical and social workers and tertiary educators” (Potter, 2005, p. 52). In the case of this curriculum, participants pointed out that stakeholders should also include community arts experts. In this research all participants advocated for the inclusion of community stakeholders in the development and implementation of this curriculum. Furthermore, participants advocated giving voice and creating space for teachers, students, parents and communities to engage in reflection and dialogue about how they can enhance students’ lives through meetings and workshops about the Arts and Culture Curriculum. Memua, (2011) commented that a lack of school and community partnership in the Solomon Islands may have contributed to the failure to achieve of many school students. In the past, he commented, children’s education has been perceived as the responsibility of schools alone (Memua, 2011), and thus there was little community and school involvement.

Cochrane (2007) argues that Melanesian artists have a role to play in bringing about an appreciation and deep sense of connection with and loyalty to their own people, places and cultures. Perhaps these artists will form part of the partnership of curriculum writers in the future.

Two of the educators, Olivette and Sarah, explained that since 2009 there

has been inclusion of arts, but not culture, content in teacher training courses at the School of Education (SOE), Solomon Islands National University (SINU). This teacher training has been compulsory at the primary level and mainly covered art and crafts. There is no new syllabus to connect to this training yet. A search of courses in 2012 revealed SOE is now offering a ‘Culture and Citizenship Education’ course for primary teacher trainees. It has been optional at the secondary training level to include arts as a third teaching subject but only music and visual art have been offered.

5.4 Arts and Culture Curriculum is Wanted

As early as the 1980’s writers reported that curriculum developers were wrestling with the contextual differences between the needs and practices of Pacific Island nations and their Western counterparts (R. M. Thomas & Postlethwaite, 1984). In 1973 the Educational Policy Review Committee was also grappling with the contextual needs of education in Solomon Islands. Its report summarised ‘the aims of education in the Protectorate’ (sic). Within those aims they reported that,

“Solomon Islanders want to see their customs and culture revived, strengthened and maintained in the schools. There were repeated requests from the people that... [those] knowledgeable in ways of custom should be employed as teachers of custom in schools...”. The report recommended the teaching of “customary arts and crafts, songs and mythical stories, behavioural patterns... the committee therefore recommends strongly that schools be situated in or near villages, so that the learning of customs and native culture would be at least facilitated.” (Educational Policy Review Committee, 6.12, p. 54)

Clearly Solomon Islanders wanted arts and culture in schools and declared it 40 years ago. Interview participants in this research also expressed a desire for an Arts and Culture Curriculum in today’s schools. The reasons for these early wishes remaining unfulfilled are complex but Solomon Islands reports particularly indicate the lack of funds, lack of school buildings and practical resources, and the

lack of trained staff, in order to meet these desires (Davy, 2000; Rodie, F. et al., 2001) .

Education transmits culture (Dumais, 2002; Sanga, 2000; Thaman, 2009) and literature advocates for the inclusion of both arts and culture in school curricula, to promote creativity and heritage (UNESCO, 2002). In the Pacific, traditional cultures are encoded through the arts (Rohorua, 2007). The Solomon Islands strategic plans advocate for the transmission of culture through the curriculum (MEHRD, 2004b) and personal development of students' social abilities is a benefit of arts and culture study, according to participants. But the questions arise: What will be the reality? How will the Solomon Islands Arts and Culture Curriculum specifically target the enrichment of students' social abilities?

The Solomon Islands, like the rest of Melanesia is characterised by variety in both language and culture (Cochrane, 2007), crafts and cultural activity. Participants voiced a strong hope that arts could usefully contribute to the building of values and community acceptance of diversity, which may help bring about national and even international harmony. They hoped that understanding and tolerance could be imparted. The MEHRD draft Arts and Culture Curriculum document (2012) records similar aims, naming appreciation of cultural values, acceptance of cultural diversity, and preservation of cultural identity.

Since the church plays such a strong role in rural communities, participant Gregan believes that the first step towards the curriculum promoting community values is to provide church leaders with educational awareness about how the arts, culture, religious belief, values and ethos have common characteristics. His argument is that creating such understanding would reduce sensitivity around the arts, culture and spirituality. Church leaders would then be encouraged to work collaboratively with communities and community leaders.

Since, as Thaman (2009) suggests, Pacific sustainable livelihoods are linked to cultural survival and continuity, it is essential to restore skills for the survival of people in village life. Findings show that participants believe that the Arts and Culture Curriculum has the potential to preserve cultural heritage and "bring back the things that have been lost in the past". (Olivette) Findings also

show that some people no longer have the skills to weave mats or to build a canoe, both of which are basic to Pacific lifestyles. A body of accumulated knowledge and understandings, skills and practices, beliefs and values are disintegrating. Therefore the sustainability of Solomon Islands communities and society hinges on Arts and Culture (such as local weaving and carving) in many aspects. These concerns about survival and sustainability are discussed in the literature. For example McGee and Rodie (2011) write: “The Solomon Islands is one of the poorest countries in the Pacific region; many are employed in subsistence activities, unemployment is high” (p. 8), demonstrating that subsistence skills are still necessary for survival.

This research has shown that in Solomon Islands schools, transmitted knowledge and skills have had limited indigenous arts and culture content. The privileging of foreign knowledge and culture in schools has a great impact on society [ref]. Since research (McGee, 1997) suggests that teachers are actively engaged in the valuing of knowledge that is considered of most worth, the absence of locally specific cultural content, and locally specific ways of teaching, is frowned upon by many educational writers. Thaman (2009) noted that the school curriculum in many Pacific Island nations continues to be euro-centric and criticised this practice. Huffer & Qalo (2004) also addressed the need for the development and integration of Pacific thought into educational curricula. The Solomon Islands Arts and Culture 2012 Curriculum document now states that indigenous arts and culture must be included in schools (MEHRD, 2012).

Participants want culture taught in schools and arts are an integral part of culture. The arts are aligned with traditional cultural knowledge, which has not previously been valued as a pathway to personal or national development, but is now being viewed this way. The educators in this study believe the curriculum intent should be to both value and preserve aspects of indigenous cultural identity and heritage. Therefore they support an ideological shift away from a curriculum of creative arts to ‘arts and culture’.

Modernization and globalization are forces that were identified by interviewees as having negative impacts on Solomon Islands heritage, particularly the heritage of skills, languages, arts and wisdom. These Solomon Islands

educators believe that negative forces can be lessened through the Arts and Culture Curriculum. This thinking reflects educational philosophies disseminated through UNESCO conferences and publications over the last ten years. UNESCO has focused on heritage being foundational to learning agendas, namely the focus has been preservation of indigenous cultures and joining Arts and Culture together (United Nations, 2010). The potential to counter negative impacts of globalisation, re-establish traditional identities and survival skills, transmit community values and build unity are all good reasons for the Arts and Culture Curriculum to be desired. But the question arises: What school levels would this curriculum be most desirable at?

5.5 Arts and Culture Curriculum is Relevant

When I explored whether the five experienced Solomon Islands educators supported the implementation of an Arts and Culture Curriculum in primary and secondary schools, all five were in support. They believe that the Arts and Culture Curriculum is relevant at all levels for several reasons. One reason participants identified for the Arts and Culture Curriculum being relevant was that non-academic, practical and creative pathways must be offered to students, which has not been the case in the past.

The curriculum has privileged English and maths said participants. This practice clearly has a long history since the 1973 Solomon Islands Educational Report stated,

Many people felt that the syllabus and timetable in schools are too biased towards English and arithmetic... There is an overemphasis on English and mathematics and not enough on religious education, practical subjects and arts and crafts (Educational Policy Review Committee, 1973, p. 51 para 6.5-6.6).

However in recent times, practical and creative content has been introduced into the curriculum through Solomon Islands review programme documents, which require their inclusion (MEHRD, 2007). Therefore interview participants support

of the new Arts and Culture Curriculum seems to be in agreement with the direction that their Ministry of Education's reform programme is heading.

Will parents in the community be in support of a greater emphasis on practical and creative content? Literature records Solomon Islands parents requesting this content of their education system since the 1970s.

Parents want their children to be taught... curriculum... geared to the needs of Solomon Islanders... What is taught and learnt in schools must first of all be meaningful in the context of the Solomon Islands and at the same time be able to meet the demands of a 20th century society... education should... enable the Solomon Islander to overcome the everyday problems with which he is faced (Educational Policy Review Committee, 1973, p. 51).

Interview participant Sarah warned that she does not think parents are on board with the idea of the Arts and Culture Curriculum now. She perceives that they do not value an Arts and Culture Curriculum and that the problem stems from the parents aims they have for their children to gain white-collar jobs.

However, some participants believed parents would definitely support an Arts and Culture Curriculum at all levels, except as a compulsory senior high school subject. They believe that parents do understand arts and culture's relevance for schools. Sarah recommends parent education through community meetings. She believes in the uniqueness of the Solomon Islands and wants to have Arts and Culture firmly grounded in the school curriculum. She argues that it would "really help the future generations". (Sarah)

Although some parents may have stopped considering school the place for arts and culture learning, they have also stopped fostering arts and culture in everyday village life, resulting in students losing a sense of pride in their personal and cultural identity, said interview participants. They insisted that they need cultural identity and cultural skills to be equipped for lifelong involvement in Solomon Islands. Sarah's perspective is supported by arguments in literature (Thaman, 2003b) and also by the 2012 cultural mapping report in the Solomon Islands, which asserted that more than 50% of the indigenous traditional

knowledge base has been lost and must be included in the school curriculum (David B.Lidimani, 2011). That the curriculum should have greater relevance to Solomon Islands life, and that schools should fulfill a function of cultural preservation, is a clear message from both participants and the literature.

Olivette described a shift in thinking and lifestyle among Solomon Islanders, in relation to economic opportunities and income streams in the arts. Previously they did not see any monetary value in objects they made in their communities; mat making, music making and lava lava dyeing were just things they did. There has been a shift now to selling to one another in the markets and an understanding is coming that making money is not just about being a doctor, or teacher, but you can earn money from your own experience and skills. Participants argued that skilled artists can earn a living and that arts and culture is a subject that can promote financial improvement in the way they live, perhaps even through the tourism industry. All participants indicated that economic opportunities and income streams that exist in the arts should be opened to students. The emergence of a global economy that privileges the ascendancy of the market model over other politico-economic models has impacted Solomon Islands villages (Cochrane, 2007).

The literature shows that customary and contemporary arts practices are alive and vigorous and creating incomes for some artists in Solomon Islands communities (Cochrane, 2007; Niles, 2005; Peterson, 2009; Rowe & Buck, in press). Interview participants described visual artists, bamboo bands, carvers and weavers as practicing, income earning artists in the Solomon Islands. The works of these artists' links back to the Arts and Culture Curriculum because these artists are the exemplars that show what the curriculum might invigorate or generate. Examples of Solomon Islands arts practices that are specifically unique to these islands demonstrate the creativity and life that could be enhanced through raising their value by including them in the school curriculum. Having discussed the relevance of arts and culture in the curriculum, I now shift to considering the participants visions for this curriculum.

5.6 Solomon Island Educators' Visions For the Future of Their Education

The Solomon Islands educators, in this study, gave details of a vision for the future of their education system and made recommendations that they hope will support a new-look formal education system, well suited to Solomon Island people. Most importantly, they expressed their commitment to their unique cultural heritages, which should be recognised, protected and perpetuated within schools. They believe that the Arts and Culture Curriculum can play a significant role in fulfilling this commitment. This belief is supported by Pacific educators Sanga (2000) and Thaman (2009), who argue that education transmits culture and culturally relevant curriculum can ensure that the foundations of a society are transmitted to the next generation (Potter, 2005).

The relationship between arts and culture has been linked in literature extensively. UNESCO published the *Dakar Framework For Action* (Barry, 2000), which included arts in primary school and defined quality art education programmes as those which are based on the specific indigenous cultural knowledge systems and art. This, it postulated, would ensure that the curriculum being developed was both culture-sensitive and culturally inclusive (Barry, 2000).

Similar ideals can be found in Solomon Islands education policy documents that are emerging to guide curriculum development. The Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD) endorsed 'culture in curriculum' in its ESIRP 2004-2006 plans saying that "the curriculum should transmit culture in such a way as to encourage students to explore and respect traditional beliefs and ways of thinking, reasoning and understanding" (MEHRD, 2004a, p. 14). The Curriculum Reform Management Plan stated that education should be relevant and include "traditional knowledge, skills and attitudes...music, art and craft... traditional language, literature (including oral tradition), culture" (MEHRD, 2005, p. 2) .

In discussing the content of an arts and culture curriculum, interview participants reflected on the Curriculum Reform Management Plan and other

literature when they described wanting to provide a wide range of opportunities to Solomon Islands students, so that they can learn necessary skills and knowledge required to survive in their world. Findings indicate that the Solomon Islands Curriculum has not previously placed value on some important aspects of their past, has not enhanced students development as well as it might and has not imparted practical skills for satisfying work. Participants clearly support the review and reform programme bringing positive changes in these critical areas. Similar thinking surfaces in literature by the OECD, which suggests that the curriculum functions to ready young people for life. It means “people ... can develop the skills to work productively and satisfyingly in the jobs of tomorrow” (OECD, 2013).

The curriculum content recommendations made by participants include a list of arts and culture elements and a list of values (see chapter 4.6). Participants had clear ideas about what they wanted to see included in this subject. Preservation of cultural identities was the most important element, along with instillation of values.

Participants believe that every Solomon Islander needs to know their own culture and also appreciate the cultures of other Solomon Islanders. David said that culture studies should include different “customs, taboos, and ways of doing things by different ethnic groups in Solomon Islands. It should also include virtues, and beliefs passed down from one generation to another, including language, religion, rituals, moral and spiritual values in interpersonal and human relations, norms of behaviors such as laws and morality”. Also the values of “shared responsibility, respect for the worth and dignity of individuals” were important (David). The participants’ list of cultural content aligns with literature by Pacific educators like Thaman (2003b), who argue for Pacific values and pedagogies to be taught in Pacific schools.

Cultural education in the Pacific has come to be seen as a critical mechanism to prevent conflict both regionally and nationally (Prokop, M., & Pavia, A. L, 2003). The Solomon Curriculum Reform Management Plan says that it is essential for the curriculum to “recognise traditional, social and cultural values and the important stabilizing role of rural, village communities. It is

especially important that basic education be anchored in the community” (MEHRD, 2005, p. ii). The belief in education’s role as Saviour is apparent in this document. In the Melanesian countries where there are alarming signs of cultural and tribal disintegration, and in some places conflict, Melanesian Governments are advocating the use of education for nation building (Cochrane, 2007). The Solomon Islands Ministry of Education acknowledges that the curriculum has previously been considered by many as antagonistic to the social and cultural values of its society (MEHRD, 2004a). This reform has a goal of including relevant social and cultural values and aims to strengthen cultural identities.

Clearly, social cohesion and conflict prevention are outcomes that participants also sought from an Arts and Culture Curriculum. One participant expressed that the conflicts experienced in the Solomon Islands are due largely to people having diverse belief systems and customs. Gregan makes the recommendation that teaching appreciation of different belief systems belongs in this curriculum, because it can reduce conflicts. McGrath argued that one of the drivers of an education system is to build social cohesion, (2010) while Memua (2011, p. 55) says that “education should encompass the promotion of understanding, respect, caring, tolerance and friendship”.

This argument follows the line of reasoning that education can deliver social change in terms of solidifying of cultural identities, imparting values and a sense of unity, and dissipating conflicts (UNESCO, 2010). This hope of promoting social cohesion through an Arts and Culture Curriculum was echoed by participants who hoped that students would develop attitudes and understandings about the world in which they live that would lead to a demonstration of respect for one another and living in harmony. They think that the Solomon Islands nation now has the potential to create a different school system where they can educate the kinds of citizens that they want.

Education has been seen, in literature, as central to ideas of development and of nation building (McGrath, 2010; McNeely, 1995; Potter, 2005; Rohorua, 2007). The vision of the Solomon Islands for its education, can be seen in detail presented in the National Education Action Plans 2007-2009 and 2010-2012 (MEHRD, 2007, 2010). Here there is evidence of educational reform as a strategic

tool for nation building. The plan envisions a united and progressive society, with social equality and members skilled to earn a living. The participants in this research shared their vision for the future of education, and it is apparent that their vision is congruent with the National Education Action Plan.

5.7 Challenges of Implementation of an Arts and Culture Curriculum

Findings show that challenges to further the development and implementation of the Arts and Culture Curriculum are real and there is careful planning needed in order to contend for this curriculum in schools. Pressures particularly exist for developing nations, in the areas of resourcing the curriculum with finances, buildings, staff and expertise (Kosack, 2009; Sade, 2009). Other pressures exist in the areas of education assisting with economic advancement; in the creation of an appropriate workforce, in the social pressures felt through change, modernization and the global marketplace. There are other tensions between community wishes and government aspirations (Beuka, 2008; Rohorua, 2007; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004; R. M. Thomas, 1993a). Interview participants raised every one of these issues. They identified that the further development and implementation of an Arts and Culture Curriculum has some challenges to overcome if it is to successfully address the curriculum intention. I discuss these challenges below.

Allocation of financial resources is a clear challenge. Funds need to be made available to build more rural schools where the cultural content of each local area can be incorporated into the curriculum. However, lack of funds has previously prevented the establishment of these schools (Memua, 2011). Sarah's personal perspective about development needing to change from an urban to a rural focus is a relevant one. She would like to see most of the jobs in Honiara decentralised. In the first half of the 1900s when rural schools were being established in villages, there was a passionate response among Malaitans whereby communities came together and built their own schools Griffiths (1977). If that enthusiasm and energy could be rediscovered and rural communities could own the need for their own high schools, perhaps change could come more quickly.

Even in the schools that already exist, funds must be prioritised to purchase practical equipment needed in delivery of this curriculum and student guidebooks need to reach all rural schools. Olivette explained how a process is now in place to help facilitate delivery of curriculum materials, published in Australia by Pearson. Pearson is responsible for printing and delivery to Honiara and funding is now allocated for this. Coxon (2008) recommends that the procurement of funds for practical equipment and teacher and student guidebooks be prioritised before any implementation of new curricula is attempted.

Findings indicate that there needs to be a strong partnership between the Curriculum Development Division (CDD), the Ministry of Education (MEHRD) and the School of Education. A participant said that as the curriculum is developed further, the three groups should all work together. Catherwood and Taylor's (2011) report made the same observation calling for continued growth in these relationships.

Partnership with the community, parents and arts and culture experts is embraced by participants and also by the Solomon Islands Curriculum Reform Management Plans. With the need for a well-planned process, including the development of locally specific definitions of arts and culture for each province, participants suggested community workshops as a way to facilitate this process. Lindstrom and White (1994) have described a process for developing cultural policy in Melanesia. It includes the establishment of provincial cultural centres in the Solomon Islands so that culture mapping has a place of focus and recording can be archived. Hopefully, links between these centres and schools can be developed further?

It was acknowledged by all five interview participants that holders of cultural knowledge are likely to be community members and not necessarily teachers. Knowledgeable community members are likely to be elders and all informants saw a window of opportunity to collaborate with elderly community members in curriculum development and with teachers in classrooms to re-establish knowledge in the young. UN literature also advocates for heritage knowledge to be brought into schools (UNESCO, 2002).

The Pacific Education Development Framework (PEDF) 2009-2015 described the need for in-service preparation of teachers.

Plans and strategies for the initial preparation and ongoing professional development of teachers are central elements of the process and dynamic of achieving goals and targets relating to quality, access and equity in education (Pacific Islands Forum, 2009, p. 13).

As experienced educators themselves, research participants described a pressing need for in-service preparation for existing teachers, without which implementation of the draft Arts and Culture Curriculum will not be possible.

Emphasis on arts training is in place for all primary teacher trainees at the School of Education. Arts are offered to secondary school teacher trainees as a third teaching subject. It was not clear from the findings or from literature what training pre-service teachers are receiving in culture, dance and drama, or whether the arts could be established as a first teaching subject for secondary school trainees. Participant Ephram suggested that teachers at the Secondary level need to be encouraged to take up art & culture and that they could be offered three things: in-service training, recognition and salary reward.

5.8 Summary

An Arts and Culture Curriculum in the Solomon Islands needs advocacy to be successful. Since only a School Year 7-9 Arts and Culture syllabus has been written, a clear and comprehensive understanding of this curriculum across Solomon Island schools is not yet available for anyone, although findings indicate that the development of the year 1-6 primary level curriculum for Arts and Culture is being pursued. It seems evident that any curriculum in Arts and Culture must be contended for in the Solomon Islands since parents and schools have previously undervalued it. Sarah does not believe that the will of the School of Education and the Curriculum Development Division alone is adequate to implement this curriculum.

Arts curriculum is perceived as valuable in educational literature. Advocacy concerning the impact of learning in and through the arts flows from the top level. That is to say, political bodies like the UN clearly articulate its benefits. Two interview participants indicated that advocacy for Arts and Culture Curriculum from the Solomon Islands government level in the Parliament would be advantageous and get the message through to communities.

In this discussion I have highlighted the perceptions of experienced Solomon Island educators on the inclusion of and Arts and Culture Curriculum in Solomon Island schools and I have linked these perceptions to literature. I have shown how, at this point only a draft, a School Years 7-9 Curriculum exists for arts and culture. Participants describe what else could assist in seeing development across all school levels. This discussion has affirmed much of the current international educational discourse on the value of Arts and Culture Curricula. In particular the need is clear for current and future Solomon Islands school-teachers to receive professional development for implementing the new curriculum with a thorough understanding of the essential elements of the Arts and Culture Curriculum content. Teachers will also need written plans and a thorough understanding of teaching processes in terms of community involvement to construct and deliver the curriculum in a collaborative and locally specific way.

I have revealed that leadership at the government level in the Parliament, leadership from School of Education visiting communities, and the support of elders and church leaders would be advantageous because if acceptance and implementation comes for the School Years 7-9 curriculum, further development can continue.

Also of importance is the revelation that this curriculum needs substantial advocacy if it is to be implemented at all and if it is to be developed across all school levels, as participants hope. These issues raise important considerations for leaders in Solomon Island education who are responsible for further development and implementation of this new curriculum.

In the concluding chapter of this thesis, I summarise discussion of the research questions, note the limitations of this research, make recommendations about what can be done to address the issues arising from the study and give further suggestions for future research.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

In this thesis I have worked from a qualitative paradigm based on a constructivist perspective, where knowledge is discovered or co-constructed by an interaction between the participants and the researcher. Within this paradigm I set out to explore the research questions. As with any research I have an appreciation of limitations as well as an appreciation of new insights. Conclusions drawn from the findings of this thesis concerning the original research questions are set out in section 6.2. In section 6.3 I discuss some of the limitations in the research and recommend further studies. In section 6.4 I make recommendations based on the findings, and in section 6.5 suggest topics for further research.

6.2 The research questions

In this research I interviewed five experienced Solomon Islands educators about their perceptions on the inclusion of an Arts and Culture Curriculum in Solomon Islands schools. A contextual overview and a review of relevant literature helped to locate the interview data and reveal that concerns, about the appropriateness and accessibility of education in the Solomon Islands, are being confronted through curriculum reform. Many new syllabus documents have been developed and are being gradually implemented in schools.

Concerns about schools catering only for academically capable students at the expense of the majority of students, have prompted actions like the shift to make more subjects non-compulsory and the introduction of practical subjects. These observations and an awareness of the development of a draft document, “Arts and Culture For Secondary Schools Years 7-9”, formed the basis of the research questions, which will now be discussed. Semi-structured interviews proved to be an appropriate research technique in collecting data to answer these research questions and in allowing the participants to tell their stories. Their

perceptions and their voices were the focus of the interviews and of these conclusions.

The main question guiding this research was:

What are the perceptions of experienced Solomon Island educators on the inclusion of an Arts and Culture Curriculum in Solomon Island schools?

Three sub-questions were derived from the main research question.

How has Arts and Culture Been Positioned in the Curriculum?

Despite a long-term desire for inclusion of an Arts and Culture Curriculum existing in the Solomon Islands and being expressed in a report as early as forty years ago (Educational Policy Review Committee, 1973) arts and culture have had a very small place in the curriculum until now. From 1990 a Creative Arts Curriculum for School Years 7-11 secondary school levels was part of the curriculum in Solomon Islands schools as an optional, elective subject. Primary schools were supposed to teach music, art and crafts in their curriculum from about 1980. However, as reported in the literature, the arts were not offered at primary level as distinct subjects (Joubert, 2002). In secondary schools there existed “no Music in the curriculum, Creative Arts (was) in the curriculum but not being taught” (Davy, 2000, p. 10). Culture has been embedded in social studies and religious studies to a small extent. A consensus across the participants was that the creative arts were taught in only a few locations (mostly outside the timetable) and culture has not featured much in the curriculum. From 2003 a curriculum reform programme has been in place and from 2007 a draft document has existed for a curriculum: *Arts and Culture for Secondary Schools Years 7-9*. Both the published literature and the participants’ perceptions lead to the conclusion that arts and culture have had very limited positions in Solomon Islands’ curriculum.

What is the appropriateness of having an Arts and Culture Curriculum?

A question about the appropriateness of having an Arts and Culture Curriculum formed sub-question two in this research and was explored in chapter four.

Participants all expressed a desire for an Arts and Culture Curriculum in schools, and perceived it as an essential component of a student's development that brings enrichment for students' lives. The arts are aligned with traditional cultural knowledge, which has not previously been valued as a pathway to personal or national development, but is now being viewed this way. The development and implementation of an Arts and Culture Curriculum has now been prioritised.

Some interview participants were of the opinion that an Arts and Culture Curriculum can impart values and understanding of diversity, which may help bring about national and even international harmony. Findings show that participants believe that an Arts and Culture Curriculum has the potential to preserve cultural heritage and bring back the things that have been lost in the past. Therefore the sustainability of Solomon Islands communities and the entire society may well be supported by the arts and culture. There is a need to re-establish cultural knowledge in the young. It is clear that the inclusion of arts and culture in Solomon Islands Curriculum is perceived as appropriate for many reasons.

What recommendations can be made for developing an Arts and Culture Curriculum?

A curriculum is the product of the identity and backgrounds of the people who write it. It is recommended in the literature (Bolstad, 2004; Hewitt, 2006; McGee, 1997; Potter, 2005) that groups of people with a vested interest in a curriculum (the stakeholders) should co-operate together to construct and to deliver a curriculum. Findings show that development of this new curriculum came through an advisory committee, with the participation of teachers and of selected people with in-depth knowledge about arts and culture. It was reported that the community was widely consulted.

The study found that all participants advocated the inclusion of a variety of community stakeholders in development and implementation of this curriculum. Furthermore, participants advocate giving voice and creating space for teachers, students, parents and communities to engage in reflection and dialogue about how they can enhance student's lives through meetings and

workshops about an Arts and Culture Curriculum. Memua (2011) argued that a lack of school and community partnership in the Solomon Islands may have contributed to the failure to achieve of many school dropouts. In the past children's education has been perceived as the responsibility of schools (Memua, 2011). The Solomon Islands Curriculum Reform Management Plan, 2005-2009 (MEHRD, 2005) reflects the sentiments of those participating in this study. Participants described the cultural and artistic content they want to see included in the continuing development of the Arts and Culture Curriculum for Solomon Islands schools. This included customs, history, genealogies, visual art, indigenous crafts like carving and weaving; local survival knowledge and skills like fishing, hunting and building; music, dance, drama, the story of the land, and languages. They also want spiritual values, morality and respect for the worth and dignity of individuals to be included. Participants believe that every Solomon Islander needs to know not only their own culture but also the cultures of other Solomon Islanders. David said that culture studies should include the ways of life including customs, taboos, and ways of doing things by different ethnic groups in Solomon Islands. It should also include virtues and beliefs passed down from one generation to another, including language, religion, rituals, moral and spiritual values in interpersonal and human relations, norms of behaviors such as laws and morality. Shared responsibility, and respect for the worth and dignity of individuals should be included also. Findings also indicate that social cohesion and conflict prevention are outcomes that study participants seek from an Arts and Culture Curriculum.

In conclusion, recommendations for meetings that facilitate dialogue between a wide range of stakeholders were made by participants. The recommendations for content of the curriculum emphasised a range of arts, cultural knowledge from different provinces being shared, and a strong emphasis on values.

6.3 Limitations of the current study

Research studies can be judged on whether they produce conclusions that can be trusted. Researchers must "self-consciously reflect upon what they did, why they

did it, and how they did it” (Tolich & Davidson, 1999, p. 39). Studies may produce interesting and useful findings but every study has limitations. In this study I sought to present Solomon Island voices and perspectives as much as possible, while recognizing, as mentioned in chapter three, the limitation that I am an outsider and may have misunderstood or misinterpreted interview discussions.

The importance of relationship building has been emphasised by McNae & Strachan: (2010, p. 5), Reinharz (1992). I am an outsider and this is cross-cultural research, which is a limitation of this study, however family connections and shared histories exist between me and some of the participants and this was drawn on to further build rapport and relationship.

In considering how I could try to conduct interviews without imposing personal bias, I wrote down and reflected on any assumptions I had about the inclusion of an Arts and Culture Curriculum in the Solomon Islands. Mindful of the social trauma in the Solomon Islands in recent years I was careful with any questions linked to the delivery and assessment of the Arts and Culture Curriculum. I was also interested in protecting the interests and identity of research participants so that they might feel able to speak honestly and openly about the main focus of the study, without their comments being traced directly back to them. I offered reassurance about this protection of identity. The processes used to analyse findings and develop interpretations of this study have been discussed in chapter 3.6 while context and the collaborative process of research were addressed in chapter 3.2.

An extremely important limitation to note is that since this research interviewed only experienced educators, it did not canvass community perceptions. Findings identified that the participation of a wide range of stakeholders in the community is very important in the development of this Arts and Culture Curriculum. Yet this research did not include a wide range of community stakeholders. Therefore limitations exist in the generalised applications of the findings. Further research including a wider range of stakeholders is advisable.

6.4 Recommendations: Considerations for Arts and Culture Curriculum development

The conclusions of this study are based on a reflective process of comparing interview data with literature. They have a number of important implications for future practice. Possible recommendations arising from the data are many and complex. These are outlined below.

If curriculum at primary and upper secondary school levels is pursued a curriculum development officer may need to be appointed or technical assistance provided for the Arts and Culture Curriculum development. If there is no one with the right expertise for the role at present, then a Solomon Islander could be trained for this role.

Since literature, particularly in other Solomon Islands research in the last ten years, shows that social studies curriculum developers' have similar goals to those of this Arts and Culture Curriculum, I suggest they could work closely together to support and connect each curriculum in joint aims to develop citizenship, social cohesion/national identity and cultural values.

If the Arts and Culture Curriculum is developed further, it might address specific findings of this study. For example, in the curriculum document's description of aims it is recommended that the document should specifically name citizenship and social cohesion/national identity. In the Learning Outcomes section, under *values*, inclusion could be made of the values mentioned by participants of understanding, respect, consideration and tolerance.

In order to further prepare teachers for the new curriculum it seems advisable that School of Education introduces courses in dance, drama, and integrated arts project to cover all curriculum areas. The School of Education might also consider teaching modules about the process of community and school collaboration in Arts and Culture Curriculum, since this is a somewhat new way of working but was emphasised by participants.

Participants described the need for teacher's guidelines on how to present the sensitive topics and also the need for in-service training. These could be joined with Coxon's (2008) specific recommendations about in-service training for all teachers, which embraced the three level cascade in-service training model. In this model "every junior secondary teacher receives three cycles of professional development, covering the three curricula aspects, over the three year period of the introduction of new materials" (Coxon, 2008, p. 8) . Coxon (2008) also suggests radio broadcasts could possibly be utilised by the CDC to prepare teachers and communities to collaborate on an Arts and Culture Curriculum.

In order to resource the new curriculum and enable its implementation to be successful, findings recommend that advocacy for an Arts and Culture Curriculum from the government level in the Parliament would be advantageous and get the message across to communities.

Coxon, (2008) in her report, recommends that the procurement of funds for practical equipment and teacher and student guidebooks be prioritised before any implementation of new curricula is attempted. Findings suggest that teachers should be offered incentives to go and work in rural schools and that communities are encouraged to build more rural high schools. This would allow more communities to impart their own cultural identities to the youth of high school age, and help with the fulfillment of the provision of equitable access to quality education for all children throughout the country.

Interview participant Ephram described villages where there are no festivals with traditional arts happening at all. He suggested: "So if that can be supported, by way of some funds, by having some people to organise and promote it then it should be still going on in the villages." Fito'o's (2009)thesis findings showed that a sense of oneness or nationalism that is usually seen at large sports events where the flag is raised and the national anthem is played, is lacking in the Solomon Islands, but could be promoted through festivals. The need for leadership and organisation of activities and events to invigorate Arts and Culture in rural areas was noted by Ephram. The appointment of a salaried "Schools Arts and Culture Event Coordinator" is one possibility, with their role being to organise festivals at regional, provincial, and national levels.

The number of groups involved in an Arts and Culture Curriculum construction could be expanded. This reflects research findings. However, partnership with community, parents and arts and culture experts needs a well-planned process and may need to be specifically described in the curriculum document. I suggest a leader could be appointed who would guide curriculum development collaborations and partnership processes, as described by participants; holding meetings with elders first, then community workshops with wide consultation. The identification of arts and culture experts in each region would be important. These experts could be those who are willing to participate in ongoing curriculum development and delivery. Findings also indicate that remuneration for community experts visiting classrooms is important. I suggest communities may decide on a way for students to show reciprocity as thanks to arts experts.

If locally specific definitions of arts and culture, for each region and province, were developed through community discussions, this might lead to the creation of co-constructed, localised curriculum activities which the curriculum document calls “flexibility in design of tasks” (MEHRD, 2012, p. 24). I further suggest links are strengthened between provincial cultural centres and schools. Findings suggest Church leaders work collaboratively with communities in the integration of religious beliefs, values and ethos into an Arts and Culture Curriculum. Then a local and a sensitive curriculum can emerge.

It seems probable that ongoing parent education should be considered at regular intervals during initial implementation of the new curriculum. I note Coxon’s warning, “For families to accept their young people proceeding through a pathway other than an historically established ‘academic’ one they will need to be convinced of the potential return for themselves and the nation” (2008, p. 8).

Further recommendations for content are many and so are summarised here. Participants urged that students have better access to appropriate education that protects and perpetuates cultural heritage. They stressed that every student should know not only their own culture but also the cultures of other Solomon Islanders. It should also teach society’s social and cultural values in order to build national understanding, respect and social cohesion. Participants want the

curriculum to specifically include customs, history, visual art, indigenous crafts like carving and weaving, music, dance, drama, the story of the land, and languages. Christian spiritual values are also wanted. The curriculum should provide a wide range of opportunities to students including opportunities for creation of artworks with relevant skills to earn a living. There is also a vision for the curriculum to develop creativity through a combination of global and local material.

6.5 Recommendations for further research

Several issues related to the Arts and Culture Curriculum could be profitably researched further.

1. I recommend that further research be conducted about obstacles to teachers choosing to implement this curriculum, students choosing to fully embrace this curriculum and parents giving full support to this curriculum.
2. Beuka (2008) described the traditional Solomon Islands education system as one that enabled the child to participate productively in society. Participant David, suggested the formal Solomon Islands education system, needs to bring about similar results, and the Arts and Culture Curriculum can bring it. This raises questions about how traditional education is going to be incorporated into the curriculum, and how it will encourage productive participation in society. A recommendation is made for research in this area.
3. Lindstrom and White (1994) described a process for developing cultural policy in Melanesia. It includes the establishment of provincial cultural centres in the Solomon Islands so that culture mapping has a place of focus and records can be archived. I recommend that establishing of links between these centres and schools be studied further, and consideration is given to how these links will help preserve cultural identities.
4. Further research could also investigate whether arts could be established as a first teaching subject for secondary school trainee teachers.

5. There is worthy research to be done documenting the arts identity already created in the Solomon Islands. These are the fusion of influences such as traditional culture, American visitors, various missionaries and hip hop.
6. Further study could describe Indigenous arts initiatives, then discuss the way these artists acquired their skills. This may provide pedagogy for an arts curriculum apprenticeship.
7. Development of students' social abilities, and acquisition of values that promote unity despite cultural diversity across the nation, were highly desired outcomes of this curriculum. I recommend further research defines how the curriculum can achieve these outcomes.

6.6 Conclusion

In this thesis I said that in the Solomon Islands educational reform is in progress. The process of curriculum reform and development is occurring in partnership with NZAID which offers access to funds. In recent years research from Solomon Island educators has questioned the appropriateness of the curriculum and has recommended that more practical subjects be included and esteemed. Music and art have been specifically advocated for, as have dance and drama (Potter, 2005). These recommendations and changing needs and objectives in the nation have prompted changes in policy statements and guidelines for the National Curriculum in which new aims to include arts and culture have been described (MEHRD, 2009) and then pursued in a draft syllabus.

No literature has surfaced that discusses the perceptions of experienced Solomon Islands educators about the development of an Arts and Culture Curriculum. Therefore it seemed of value to investigate this and to explore underlying issues. In this research I gathered and analysed perceptions of a small group of experienced educators regarding the inclusion of an Arts and Culture Curriculum in Solomon Islands schools.

Firstly, I discussed how arts and culture have been positioned in the Solomon Islands curriculum as a desirable but mainly unimplemented,

unresourced and undervalued subject. Secondly, I questioned the appropriateness of having an Arts and Culture Curriculum in Solomon Islands schools and reported that the participants believe it is not only appropriate but also very important to include in schools.

Thirdly, I discussed recommendations that could be made for developing the Arts and Culture Curriculum further. I showed that participants had clear ideas about what they wanted to see included in this curriculum and that preservation of cultural identities was the most important element. I also showed that challenges to further development and implementation were real and there was careful planning necessary in order to contend for this curriculum in schools.

In conclusion, I hope that stakeholders continue in partnership, developing and implementing curricula for all school levels. An Arts and Culture Curricula may help to ensure all students access practical and creative education in Solomon Islands, while also catering for students who are gifted in the arts. This research has gone some way towards enhancing understanding of how an Arts and Culture Curriculum might be developed and implemented in the Solomon Islands. The world of arts practices can be a medium for life, promise and achievement. The arts pass like fire from spirit to spirit. “Spirit lies in the essence of culture; of hearts, hands and voices around the world expressing artistic creation simultaneously with ethnic and indigenous issues” (Joubert, 2002).

In closing, attention is drawn to the wisdom of Eve Coxon who said, “How well the new curriculum is taught and assessed, and under what physical and material conditions, will do much to determine the life chances of every young Solomon Islander” (Coxon, 2008, p. 8).

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Appendices

Ethics committee permission

MEMO

To	Margaret Martin	From	FOE Research Ethics Committee

CC	Assoc. Professor Jane Strachan; Dr Karen Barbour; Carl Mika	Date	26 August 2010

Subject	Supervised Postgraduate Research –Ethical Approval FOE080/10		

▼ Margaret,

Thank you for submitting the amendments to your research proposal:

The complexity of developing a curriculum in the arts for Solomon Island schools

I am pleased to advise that your application has received ethical approval.

Please note that researchers are asked to consult with the Faculty's Research Ethics Committee in the first instance if any changes to the approved research design are proposed.

The Committee wishes you all the best with your research.

Dr Rosemary De Luca

Chairperson

Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee

Draft Interview Questions

Main Question: What are the perceptions of experienced Solomon Island educators on the	inclusion of an arts and culture curriculum in Solomon Island schools?		
Sub-Q 1: How is Arts and Culture Curriculum being taught? How has	Where is it being taught? Why is it being taught or not being taught?	Which arts are being emphasized or have been emphasized?	What resources are being used? Are syllabus guidelines being used or the ideas of individual teachers being used?
How has the current Year 7-9 Arts and Culture Curriculum been developed?	How has the community been involved in the development of the Arts and Culture curriculum?		
What do you think about the preparedness of teachers for this curriculum?	Are there teachers to teach Arts and Culture curriculum?		
Sub-Q 2: What is the appropriateness of having an arts and culture curriculum?	What is your opinion about the inclusion of an Arts and Culture Curriculum? Should it be included in schools? If so, why? If not, why not?	How could an arts and culture curriculum benefit students in school?	How could an arts and culture curriculum benefit society when students graduate from school?
In your understanding, do community leaders and church leaders have opinions about the inclusion of an Arts and Culture Curriculum?	Do you think Arts and Culture should be taught to students in both primary and secondary schools. Why?	Do you think Arts and Culture should be a core subject or an elective subject at primary level?	Do you think Arts and Culture should be a core subject or an elective subject at secondary school level?
In your understanding, will parents support inclusion of an Arts and Culture Curriculum?	In your understanding, will parents support students choosing Arts and Culture as an optional subject at secondary school?		

<p>Sub-Q 3: What recommendations can be made for developing the arts and culture curriculum?</p>	<p>What would you like to have included in an Arts and Culture Curriculum?</p>	<p>What content would be appropriate for societal needs?</p>	<p>What emphasis should be placed on different arts and culture subjects?</p>
<p>What spiritual or religious guidelines should be included in an Arts and Culture Curriculum?</p>	<p>How should this curriculum be further developed? With whose leadership? With whose input?</p>	<p>How should church leaders be involved in its development, considering the sensitivity that exists around arts and culture and spirituality?</p>	<p>Who would you like to see teach such a curriculum?</p>
<p>What involvement should community have in teaching this curriculum?</p>			

Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet



Dear Participants,

I am studying for a Master of Education at the University of Waikato, New Zealand, and this research is part of the degree. The research critically analyzes the curriculum for arts and culture in the Solomon Islands. It critiques curriculum documents and asks for perceptions of this curriculum from experienced Solomon Island educators, who are currently studying in New Zealand. I hope that you will be willing to help me.

Born in the Solomon Islands, I grew up in Honiara as a child of SSEC missionaries. After returning to New Zealand my parents kept strong links with the Solomon's and hosted some visiting islanders in New Zealand. I developed life-long links with the country, visited in 2006 and 2010 and continue to correspond with islanders. My ideology has developed from this background, my practice in the performing arts and my qualifications in education and the arts. In the future I wish to work with teachers in Honiara who have expressed a desire to implement arts curriculum in their school. Creative Arts is an approved subject that is supposed to be taught in schools. Prior to this sort of work I see the value of a critical analysis of arts and culture curriculum documents.

As you are an experienced educator from the Solomon Islands, I would like to listen to you talking about the theories and practices you see underpinning Solomon Island educational documents in arts and culture and their relationship to your experiences. I would like to ask questions about your beliefs and perceptions

about the appropriateness of the arts and culture curriculum and ask you to share how these perceptions might influence your thoughts about any future curriculum development.

If I interview you, it should take about one hour. You would be provided with access to Solomon Island Arts and Culture curriculum documents, should you wish to read them before the interview. You could decline to answer any questions in the interview. I would like to record the interview with your permission and I would ask you to give consent and sign a written form prior to the interview. You would be provided with an information sheet and informed that you may choose pseudonyms for yourself and for other people we might discuss during the interview, for anonymity purposes. If some aspects of the interview need to be clarified, a shorter follow up interview would be requested. Any interview between us would remain confidential and only I would listen to recordings. Only my supervisors and I would see transcripts, which would contain pseudonyms.

You would receive a transcript of your interview for checking and making any amendments and later, to receive a summary of findings. You would be able to withdraw from the project up until the time you signed off your transcript. Sign off on transcripts would be offered within three months of interviewing.

The information collected would be used to write a research report for my thesis and an electronic copy of the thesis would become widely available, as Masters theses are required to be lodged in the Australasian Digital Thesis (ADT) database.

It is also possible that publications and reports may be the outcome of the study. All the information about you and your responses would be kept confidential and only my supervisors and I could access transcripts of your interview. The findings would be presented in such a way that you would not be named, however you might recognize yourself. The transcripts and recordings would be stored for a period of six years before they were destroyed.

If you take part in the study, you have the right to refuse to answer any particular question, to check and make any amendments to the transcripts of your interview.

You may contact me by email at any time during the study. You will be able to withdraw from the research up until the time you sign off your transcript. You can ask any further questions about the study that occurs to you during your participation and you will be given access to a summary of findings from the research when it is concluded.

Please read through this information sheet carefully. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to email me at flipsides@ihug.co.nz or contact one of my supervisors at the addresses below:

Associate Professor Jane Strachan

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Thank you very much for your help!

Margi Martin

References for figures

Figure 1: Rowe, N. & Buck, R. (In press). *Talking dance: The South Pacific*. London, UK: IB Tauris.

Figure 2: Rowe, N. & Buck, R. (In press). *Talking dance: The South Pacific*. London, UK: IB Tauris.