

Background

One of the key challenges constraining the quality of primary and secondary education in the Solomon Islands is the number of unqualified teachers working in education. The New Zealand Aid Programme provided support for the Solomon Islands to address this issue through the Teachers-in-Training (TIT) Pilot Programme. This was developed and implemented by School of Education in conjunction with Waikato University, Solomon Island Ministry of Education and the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education. This project provided an opportunity for unqualified teachers to participate in a two year course, consisting of four blocks of six weeks training during school breaks. Of the 250 participants, 220 graduated from the programme with a Certificate in Teaching Primary or Secondary.

Purpose and Objectives

Primarily, the evaluation aimed to assess whether the TIT had improved teacher practice and competency, and to identify lessons learnt for future teacher training in Solomon Islands. By identifying discernible changes in teacher behaviour, before and after teachers undertook the course, the evaluation focused on assessing the suitability and effectiveness of the TIT as a means of improving teaching behaviour. The evaluation was conducted through interviews and observations of trained and untrained teachers, as well as drawing on feedback from key stakeholders.

Main Findings

The evaluation found the TIT pilot programme was successful at improving teaching skills and the project design was appropriate and effective at targeting changes in teacher behaviour. In particular, the findings indicated that compared with untrained teachers, a significant number of TIT performed better at: providing specific and long term lesson plans; using student, rather than teacher centred approaches; engaged students during class time; and improving or considering the learning environment. However, assessment and reporting remained a weak area for both TIT and untrained teachers.

Overall, school leaders and students provided positive feedback about the TIT pilot programme, noting it was implemented in an appropriate way that was enjoyable for participants, improved motivation and self-confidence. However, weaknesses included: lack of follow up on teachers performance, after the training, and class room observation and feedback; limited English experience; limited resources and support for completing assignments.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Some key recommendations for future teacher training projects in the Solomon Islands were the: introduction of classroom observations and feedback for teachers following graduation; inclusion of English language training; provision of training located in the provinces or at schools; development of annual teacher training needs workplans by the education authorities; and additional supervision skills training for school principals.