

EVALUATION OF NEW ZEALAND AID PROGRAMME SUPPORT TO THE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT DIVISION OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION & HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

BACKGROUND

The Solomon Islands Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD) has engaged in a reform process to improve the quality and relevance of basic education, including curriculum development. As part of wide-ranging support to the Solomon Islands education sector, the New Zealand Aid Programme has provided assistance to MEHRD's Curriculum Development Division (CDD) to improve learning outcomes in Solomon Islands. Specifically, the Aid Programme has provided technical assistance to design and write new curricula and accompanying materials through UniQuest Pty Ltd. Other funds directed to MEHRD (the education sector budget), indirectly support the editing and publication of curriculum documents and accompanying materials.

The evaluation provides independent advice to inform MFAT's future funding decisions. It assessed the effectiveness and efficiency of the support in improving access to, and quality of, basic education in Solomon Islands, and the contextual relevance of the support. In doing so, the evaluation considers the outputs and outcomes of support in light of expected achievements.

WHAT WORKED WELL?

The evaluation found support was relevant for those involved. Materials produced aligned well with the Solomon Islands National Curriculum Statement. The support assisted in the development of high quality teaching and learning materials that improved access to and quality of basic education in Solomon Islands.

The collective evidence suggests that the support was effective overall, albeit with mixed results regarding the effectiveness of output delivery, capability development, and assistance to teachers and learners in the Solomon Islands. Technical Adviser (TA) support was utilised by the Director and some staff in the CDD. TAs were used by the CDD to edit the content of classroom resources, ensuring the content aligned with learning outcomes for students.

For students, the new curriculum materials included activities to promote effective student learning that will help to meet their needs. Materials also included engaging, informative and contextually relevant content, reflective of Solomon Islands society.

The evaluation noted that materials for teachers prompted a more active, problem-solving approach to implementing the curriculum, set a clear purpose for learning and aligned with evidence about good assessment practice. Materials produced also helped teachers to understand the new pedagogy.

The support was efficient insofar as it used short-term TAs between 2010 and 2014 to provide expertise across a range of subject areas. The allocation of resources was suitable to deliver quality materials while developing local capabilities, thus achieving good value for money. Processes necessary to achieve quality materials were implemented, resulting in some, albeit few, delivery inefficiencies.

WHAT IMPROVEMENTS COULD BE MADE?

Engaging TAs effectively and efficiently was an ongoing challenge for both the CDD and UniQuest.

Materials for students were in limited supply, which meant fewer learning opportunities inside and outside the classroom. Materials for teachers did not provide enough pedagogical and content knowledge to help teachers to take a problem-posing approach.

The Activity experienced a number of delays and inefficiencies. While the support assisted in the development of the agreed suite of 32 materials, there were many delays throughout the delivery period due primarily to the iterative process of developing curriculum materials which included many individuals. Support was not utilised consistently well, with some advisers unable to deliver completed products while in-country /available. A refocus of effort to finalise materials ensured their completion by the end of the contract period.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the support achieved many of the intended outputs and outcomes. It provided relevant support in light of the Solomon Islands context, effectively providing assistance to the CDD in a cost-effective way. Continued support remains relevant to the New Zealand Aid Programme priorities and Solomon Island Government/MEHRD needs.

The evaluation recommends:

1. MFAT modify support provided to the CDD, and that any future funding arrangements encourage an efficient delivery, and effective and sustainable results as a condition of funding;
2. Both organisations identify and agree on the most appropriate support that will enable access to quality education in the Solomon Islands with the greatest effect; and
3. MEHRD/CDD develop clear processes and procedures to enable efficient and effective use of any future support.

OUR RESPONSE

Further support for CDD is being considered for the next phase of our education sector support (2016-2020). This includes consideration of recommendations from this evaluation and MEHRD recruitment of key associated staff. Appropriate recruitments will contribute to improving the strategic leadership that was identified as the major constraint under this activity.

DETAILS ABOUT THE EVALUATION

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Year published: May 2015

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