

Peace Education Curriculum Development in Solomon Islands: Issues, Challenges and Prospects

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Abstract

Peace education curriculum development in Solomon Islands has emerged as an important strategy for post-conflict nation-building, social cohesion, and sustainable peacebuilding. Following the ethnic tensions of 1998–2003, education was increasingly recognised as a critical mechanism for addressing the root causes of conflict, promoting reconciliation, and strengthening national unity. This paper critically examines the development of peace education curricula in Solomon Islands, focusing on the historical evolution of peace education initiatives, indigenous foundations of curriculum design, curriculum integration processes, policy frameworks, implementation challenges, and prospects. Drawing on research studies, policy documents, and community-based peacebuilding initiatives, the paper argues that effective peace education curriculum development must be culturally grounded, contextually relevant, and systematically integrated into formal and informal education systems. The paper further identifies major challenges, including policy-practice gaps, inadequate teacher preparation, fragmented implementation, limited curriculum resources, weak monitoring systems, and insufficient integration of gender and environmental dimensions. Despite these constraints, significant opportunities exist through curriculum reform, regional partnerships, competency-based learning approaches, and indigenous pedagogical frameworks. The paper concludes that peace education curriculum development in Solomon Islands requires a holistic and decolonised approach that integrates indigenous epistemologies, participatory pedagogy, and sustainable development principles to strengthen long-term peacebuilding and social resilience.

Keywords: peace education, curriculum development, peacebuilding, indigenous pedagogy, Solomon Islands.

1. Introduction

Peace education curriculum development in Solomon Islands must be understood within the broader context of the country's post-conflict reconstruction and nation-building processes. The ethnic tensions between 1998 and 2003, largely involving armed conflict between groups from Guadalcanal and Malaita provinces, resulted in significant social, political, and economic disruption. Communities were displaced, livelihoods destroyed, and social relationships fractured. The conflict also exposed long-standing structural inequalities associated with uneven development, land disputes, migration pressures, governance challenges, and weak state institutions.

Following the Townsville Peace Agreement and the intervention of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) in 2003, peacebuilding became a national priority. While security interventions restored stability, there was increasing recognition that long-term peace could not be sustained through policing and governance reforms alone. Education emerged as a critical pathway for rebuilding social cohesion, promoting reconciliation, strengthening civic values, and preventing future conflict.

In this context, peace education curriculum development emerged as an educational response to post-conflict recovery. Schools were increasingly viewed as important spaces where learners could develop the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and values necessary for peaceful coexistence. Peace education was therefore integrated into broader national discussions concerning curriculum reform, citizenship education, indigenous knowledge, and sustainable development.

Peace education in Solomon Islands encompasses both formal and informal learning initiatives. These include curriculum integration within schools, community-based reconciliation programs, church and faith-based peacebuilding activities, technical and vocational education and training (TVET), youth leadership initiatives, and indigenous systems of conflict resolution. Collectively, these initiatives seek to nurture peaceful relationships, intercultural understanding, restorative justice, and responsible citizenship.

This paper critically examines peace education curriculum development in Solomon Islands by analysing its historical evolution, theoretical foundations, curriculum integration approaches, policy frameworks, implementation challenges, and prospects. Central to this discussion is the argument that the peace education curriculum in the Solomon Islands must be culturally grounded, contextually relevant, and informed by indigenous epistemologies, such as the concept of *nōwe* from Temotu Nendo. The paper further argues that peace education curriculum development should move beyond fragmented donor-driven initiatives toward a coherent and sustainable national curriculum framework capable of addressing the country's contemporary social, environmental, and developmental challenges.

2. Historical Development of Peace Education Curriculum

2.1 Post-Conflict Educational Reconstruction

The ethnic tensions fundamentally reshaped educational priorities in Solomon Islands. During and after the conflict, schools themselves became affected by violence, displacement, trauma, and economic instability. The post-conflict period, therefore, generated increased awareness of the need for education systems to contribute directly to reconciliation and peacebuilding.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), established in 2008, highlighted the importance of healing, dialogue, and historical understanding in rebuilding communities. Educational institutions were increasingly expected to contribute to these processes by promoting tolerance, conflict resolution, and national unity among young people. Consequently, peace education began to emerge as an important curriculum priority within wider educational reform agendas.

The Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD), with support from international development partners, gradually incorporated peacebuilding concepts into national curriculum discussions. Curriculum development efforts increasingly emphasised social cohesion, unity-in-diversity, human rights, civic responsibility, and resilience.

2.2 Early Peace Education Curriculum Initiatives

One of the earliest peace education curriculum initiatives in Solomon Islands was the development of the “Practising Peace: Come Together, Talk Together, Work Together” module in 2004. Developed through collaboration among the Curriculum Development Centre, AusAID, and UNICEF New Zealand, this curriculum resource was designed to support post-conflict peacebuilding in schools.

The curriculum consisted of four modules emphasising cultural diversity, restorative justice, leadership, human rights, communication skills, and peaceful conflict resolution. Importantly, the curriculum content was developed through community consultations and reflected local experiences of conflict and reconciliation. The initiative represented one of the first attempts to contextualise peace education within the Solomon Islands educational setting.

Initially piloted in primary and secondary schools, the “Practising Peace” curriculum later informed broader curriculum integration efforts across different subject areas, particularly social studies and citizenship education.

2.3 Curriculum Expansion Through International Partnerships

International agencies played a significant role in expanding the development of peace education curricula in the Solomon Islands. UNESCO collaborated with MEHRD to integrate peacebuilding, resilience, and social cohesion into national curriculum frameworks. UNICEF supported curriculum review processes emphasising gender inclusion, child protection, and social inclusion.

The People First Network (PFNet), established in 2001 with support from UNDP and UNESCO, also contributed indirectly to peace education by fostering community connectivity and dialogue. By linking isolated rural communities through communication technologies, PFNet facilitated information sharing, social participation, and peace dialogue among historically disconnected communities.

Between 2012 and 2015, the Human Security Project, implemented by the ILO, UNDP, and UNICEF, combined peacebuilding activities with vocational training and livelihood support. The initiative supported over 7,600 citizens, including ex-combatants, through pre-vocational education, trauma recovery programs, and community reconciliation activities.

More recently, major curriculum reform initiatives supported by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), UNICEF, UNESCO, and PacREF have strengthened efforts to incorporate peacebuilding, resilience, inclusion, and climate education into national curriculum frameworks. These initiatives increasingly position peace education as part of broader competency-based curriculum reform aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 4.7.

3. Indigenous Foundations of Peace Education Curriculum

3.1 Indigenous Knowledge and Curriculum Development

A central challenge in peace education curriculum development in Solomon Islands concerns the relationship between imported educational models and indigenous systems of knowledge. Much of the early peace education literature emphasised universal peace concepts derived from Western peacebuilding frameworks. However, research in Solomon Islands increasingly demonstrates that peace education

curricula are most effective when grounded in local cultural realities and indigenous epistemologies.

Maebuta (2010) argues that peace education in Solomon Islands must be culturally meaningful to learners by integrating indigenous understandings of peace, reconciliation, and community relationships into curriculum design. Indigenous knowledge systems provide culturally legitimate ways of understanding conflict, healing, social responsibility, and coexistence.

3.2 The Concept of *Nōwe* as Curriculum Foundation

One of the most important indigenous concepts informing peace education curriculum development in Solomon Islands is the Temotu Nendo concept of *nōwe*. In the *Natgu* language of *Nendo* Island, *nōwe* refers to peace as calmness, harmony, and relational balance. The concept is symbolically associated with the calmness of the sea following disturbance such as a storm or tsunami.

Maebuta (2010) explains that *nōwe* represents more than the absence of conflict. Rather, it reflects a holistic condition in which relationships between individuals, families, clans, communities, and the environment are restored and maintained. Peace is therefore relational, spiritual, communal, and ecological. Conflict is understood as a temporary disruption of communal harmony that must be addressed collectively to restore balance within the community.

The metaphor of the sea is particularly significant in understanding the philosophy of *nōwe*. Just as the sea returns to calm after a storm or tsunami, communities are expected to actively restore harmony after social conflict. This restoration process involves reconciliation, dialogue, apology, forgiveness, restitution, and collective healing. Such understandings provide a culturally grounded framework for peacebuilding education.

Within curriculum development, *nōwe* offers an indigenous conceptual framework upon which peace education content, pedagogy, and learning outcomes can be developed. Rather than relying solely on imported Western peace concepts, curriculum developers can draw upon indigenous understandings of peaceful coexistence that learners already recognise within their cultural environments.

The integration of *nōwe* into curriculum design has several important implications:

- It strengthens cultural relevance within classroom learning.
- It validates indigenous knowledge systems as legitimate educational knowledge.
- It enables learners to connect peace concepts to their own lived experiences.
- It supports decolonising approaches to curriculum development.
- It promotes culturally responsive pedagogy and community participation.

In practical curriculum terms, *nōwe* can inform curriculum themes such as:

- reconciliation and restorative justice;
- communal responsibility and cooperation;
- cultural identity and belonging;
- environmental stewardship;
- dialogue and conflict resolution; and
- respect for diversity and relationships.

The concept can also shape pedagogical approaches. Indigenous peace practices in Solomon Islands often

emphasise storytelling, dialogue circles, communal reflection, oral histories, observation, and experiential learning. These approaches align strongly with participatory and learner-centred pedagogies promoted within contemporary peace education frameworks.

Importantly, the incorporation of *nōwe* into curriculum development challenges the dominance of externally driven curriculum models that often marginalise indigenous epistemologies. In this sense, peace education curriculum development becomes part of a broader decolonising educational project aimed at reclaiming indigenous voices, identities, and knowledge systems within formal education.

3.3 Indigenous Conflict Resolution and Curriculum Content

Research by Tekulu (2023) on indigenous conflict resolution within the Luqa community further highlights the importance of customary governance systems in peacebuilding education. Indigenous reconciliation practices emphasise dialogue, kinship obligations, restorative justice, communal accountability, and traditional leadership structures.

These customary systems are important curriculum resources because they provide learners with practical and culturally familiar models for resolving disputes and maintaining peaceful relationships. Such approaches stand in sharp contrast to adversarial and punitive conflict management systems often associated with formal state institutions.

The incorporation of indigenous conflict resolution systems into curriculum content also supports the preservation of cultural heritage and the intergenerational transmission of knowledge. Elders, chiefs, church leaders, and community mediators possess valuable peacebuilding knowledge that can contribute significantly to curriculum development and classroom learning.

Similarly, Gegeo et al. (2025) emphasise the relationship between environmental stewardship, indigenous ecological knowledge, and peacebuilding. Their research demonstrates that peace in Solomon Islands communities is deeply connected to land, sea, kinship, and ecological sustainability. Environmental degradation, resource disputes, and climate pressures can therefore threaten both social harmony and cultural identity.

Consequently, peace education curriculum development in Solomon Islands increasingly requires the integration of environmental peacebuilding and eco-pedagogy. Such integration enables learners to understand the interconnectedness between social peace, environmental sustainability, and community resilience.

Together, these studies demonstrate that peace education curriculum development in Solomon Islands must be grounded in indigenous worldviews, community practices, ecological relationships, and culturally situated understandings of peace. Indigenous concepts such as *nōwe* provide not only culturally relevant curriculum content but also alternative philosophical foundations for rethinking peace education within Pacific educational contexts.

4. Peace Education Curriculum Integration in Schools

4.1 Integration into Social Studies Curriculum

The integration of peace education into the secondary school social studies curriculum represents one of the most significant curriculum developments in Solomon Islands. Maebuta's (2012) doctoral research investigated how peace education concepts were integrated into junior secondary social studies classrooms in three community high schools. The study demonstrated that peace concepts such as conflict resolution, dialogue, cultural respect, reconciliation, and restorative justice could be effectively integrated into classroom teaching when linked to local cultural experiences. Importantly, the study found that culturally grounded peace concepts enhanced student engagement and classroom participation.

The research also highlighted that the integration of peace education was most effective when teachers contextualised learning through local examples, indigenous stories, and community experiences. This reinforced the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy within curriculum implementation.

4.2 Pedagogical Approaches in Peace Education Curriculum

Peace education curriculum implementation in Solomon Islands increasingly draws upon participatory and dialogical pedagogies. These approaches move away from traditional teacher-centred instruction toward interactive learning processes emphasising discussion, reflection, problem-solving, and collaboration.

(Paulo) Freirean problem-posing approaches are particularly relevant in post-conflict educational contexts because they encourage learners to critically examine social realities, structural inequalities, and the causes of conflict. Participatory learning methods also create opportunities for learners to develop empathy, communication skills, and collaborative problem-solving capacities.

Restorative approaches are similarly important within peace education pedagogy. Rather than emphasising punishment, restorative pedagogies focus on repairing relationships, rebuilding trust, and promoting reconciliation. Such approaches align closely with indigenous systems of conflict resolution in Solomon Islands communities.

Experiential learning approaches are also increasingly used within peace education initiatives, particularly in community-based and TVET settings.

4.3 TVET and Community-Based Peace Curriculum Models

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has emerged as an important model for peace education in the Solomon Islands. Research by Maebuta (2011) demonstrated that vocational training programs contributed significantly to post-conflict healing and social reintegration.

TVET centres provided practical livelihood skills while simultaneously fostering cooperation, communal participation, and social inclusion. These programs were particularly important for ex-combatants and marginalised youth, providing pathways to economic empowerment and constructive community engagement.

The study concluded that peace education extends beyond classroom-based instruction and can be

effectively integrated into practical skills training, community development programs, and informal education initiatives.

Community-based and faith-based initiatives also contribute significantly to the development of peace education curricula. For example, World Vision Solomon Islands’ “Gudfala Laef” program uses Bible stories, interactive learning, and relational values to promote peaceful living among children and youth. Collectively, these initiatives demonstrate that peace education curriculum development in Solomon Islands is multi-layered, extending across formal schooling, community learning, faith-based education, and vocational training.

5. Policy Frameworks and Curriculum Governance

5.1 National Education Policies and Peace Education

The Solomon Islands Government has increasingly integrated peace education into national education policy frameworks. The Education Strategic Framework 2016–2030 identifies social cohesion, resilience, inclusion, and citizenship education as key educational priorities.

Similarly, the National Education Action Plan (2016–2020) emphasises peacebuilding, gender equality, disaster preparedness, and inclusive education. These policy frameworks align strongly with Sustainable Development Goal 4, particularly SDG 4.7, which promotes education for peace, human rights, sustainable development, and global citizenship.

The 2023 Education Act further reinforces the importance of education in promoting social harmony and national development.

5.2 Curriculum Governance and Institutional Structures

MEHRD’s Curriculum Development Division plays a central role in curriculum design, review, and implementation. Peace education curriculum integration has largely occurred through cross-curricular approaches within subjects such as social studies, citizenship education, religious education, and life skills.

Regional frameworks such as the Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF 2018–2030) have further influenced curriculum reform by promoting competency-based learning, culturally responsive pedagogy, and improved teacher professional development systems.

Partnerships with UNESCO, UNICEF, GPE, UNDP, and other development agencies have supported curriculum review processes, teacher training initiatives, educational data systems, and curriculum resource development.

5.3 Alignment with SDG 4.7

Peace education curriculum development in Solomon Islands aligns strongly with SDG 4.7, which calls for education systems to promote sustainable development, peace, human rights, gender equality, and global citizenship.

Current curriculum reforms increasingly emphasise:

- intercultural understanding;
- civic responsibility;
- environmental stewardship;
- gender inclusion;
- resilience and disaster preparedness;
- critical thinking; and
- social participation.

This alignment positions peace education curriculum development within broader international educational reform agendas while simultaneously requiring contextual adaptation to local realities.

6. Issues and Challenges in Peace Education Curriculum Development

6.1 Policy–Practice Disconnection

One of the major challenges facing peace education curriculum development in Solomon Islands is the gap between policy intentions and classroom implementation. Although national policies strongly support peace education, practical implementation remains uneven across schools and provinces.

Many schools continue to rely on outdated curriculum materials, and peace education often remains peripheral rather than systematically embedded within curriculum delivery.

6.2 Limited Teacher Capacity

Teacher preparedness remains a major constraint. Many teachers have limited training in peace pedagogy, restorative practices, conflict-sensitive teaching, or participatory learning methodologies.

Professional development opportunities are often irregular, donor-dependent, and concentrated in urban centres. Teachers in remote and outer island schools frequently have limited access to curriculum orientation and support.

Without sustained teacher development systems, effective curriculum implementation remains difficult.

6.3 Fragmented Curriculum Integration

Peace education is frequently treated as an “add-on” topic rather than a fully integrated cross-curricular competency. Curriculum integration approaches remain inconsistent across schools and subject areas.

This fragmentation limits the curriculum's coherence and weakens opportunities for learners to develop deeper peacebuilding competencies across different educational experiences.

6.4 Urban–Rural Inequalities

Geographical dispersion across the Solomon Islands archipelago creates major challenges for curriculum delivery and resource distribution. Schools in remote provinces often experience shortages of qualified teachers, curriculum materials, digital resources, and professional development opportunities. Such inequalities contribute to uneven curriculum implementation and limited educational access.

6.5 Dependence on Donor-Funded Initiatives

Many peace education initiatives have relied heavily on external donor support. While international

partnerships have contributed significantly to curriculum development, donor dependency raises concerns regarding sustainability and long-term institutional ownership. Short-term project cycles often result in fragmented implementation rather than sustained curriculum reform.

6.6 Limited Indigenous Curriculum Resources

Although indigenous knowledge is increasingly recognised in policy discussions, there remains a shortage of locally developed curriculum materials that reflect the cultural contexts, languages, and peacebuilding traditions of the Solomon Islands.

Much existing curriculum content still reflects externally derived educational models that may not fully resonate with local learners and communities.

6.7 Gender and Inclusion Gaps

Despite policy commitments to inclusion and gender equality, women remain underrepresented in peace education leadership, curriculum development, and decision-making structures.

Similarly, limited attention has been given to disability inclusion, youth voice, and gender-responsive pedagogy within peace education curriculum frameworks.

6.8 Weak Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

Monitoring and evaluation systems for peace education remain underdeveloped. Existing Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) focus largely on enrolment and academic indicators rather than peace-related learning outcomes.

There is limited systematic data concerning:

- student attitudes toward peace and diversity;
- conflict reduction outcomes;
- civic participation;
- reconciliation processes; and
- social cohesion indicators.

Consequently, evidence-based curriculum review and policy refinement remain constrained.

7. Prospects and Future Directions

7.1 Curriculum Decolonisation and Indigenous Knowledge Integration

One of the most promising prospects for peace education curriculum development in Solomon Islands lies in the decolonisation of curriculum frameworks. Integrating indigenous epistemologies, customary governance systems, local languages, and culturally grounded peace concepts can strengthen curriculum relevance and learner engagement.

Future curriculum development should prioritise locally authored curriculum materials, indigenous

storytelling traditions, and community-based knowledge systems.

7.2 Competency-Based Peace Education Curriculum

Current curriculum reforms aligned with PacREF provide opportunities to strengthen competency-based peace education approaches. Such approaches emphasise transferable competencies, including:

- communication;
- empathy;
- critical thinking;
- collaboration;
- civic participation; and
- conflict resolution.

Competency-based frameworks also support assessment approaches that focus on attitudes, behaviours, and practical skills rather than on memorisation alone.

7.3 Teacher Professional Development

Strengthening teacher professional development systems is critical to the sustainable implementation of peace education curricula.

Future teacher education programs should include:

- peace pedagogy;
- restorative practices;
- conflict-sensitive teaching;
- indigenous pedagogies;
- inclusive education; and
- participatory curriculum approaches.

Continuous in-service training and mentoring systems are particularly important for rural and outer island teachers.

7.4 Climate Change and Environmental Peacebuilding

Climate change represents an emerging area for peace education curriculum development in Solomon Islands. Environmental pressures, resource competition, displacement, and disaster vulnerability increasingly intersect with social conflict.

Integrating environmental peacebuilding and eco-pedagogy into peace education curricula can strengthen learner understanding of sustainability, resilience, and collective responsibility.

7.5 Digital and Community Learning Models

Digital technologies and community-based learning platforms provide new opportunities for curriculum access and delivery, particularly in geographically isolated communities.

Building upon earlier initiatives such as PFNet, future peace education strategies can utilise digital learning

systems, radio education, and blended community learning approaches to strengthen outreach and participation.

7.6 Regional and International Partnerships

Regional and international partnerships remain important for technical support, teacher development, curriculum reform, and resource mobilisation.

Partnerships with UNESCO, UNICEF, GPE, PacREF, UNDP, and regional universities can support:

- curriculum innovation;
- research;
- teacher training;
- educational leadership; and
- policy development.

However, future partnerships should prioritise local ownership, sustainability, and contextual relevance.

8. Proposed Peace Education Curriculum Framework

The proposed peace education curriculum framework for Solomon Islands integrates indigenous knowledge systems, critical pedagogy, environmental sustainability, and competency-based learning.

8.1 Curriculum Principles

The following principles guide the framework:

1. Cultural relevance and indigenous knowledge integration.
2. Participatory and dialogical pedagogy.
3. Inclusivity and gender responsiveness.
4. Environmental sustainability and resilience.
5. Competency-based and learner-centred education.
6. Community engagement and restorative practice.

8.2 Theoretical Foundations

8.2.1 Critical Indigenous Pedagogy

This framework emphasises the integration of indigenous peace concepts such as *nōwe* into curriculum design. It recognises indigenous knowledge systems as legitimate educational foundations for peacebuilding.

8.2.2 Critical Pedagogy of Place

Drawing on Greenwood’s critical pedagogy of place, the framework emphasises culturally and environmentally situated learning that connects learners to local communities, histories, and ecological realities.

8.2.3 Problem-Posing and Emancipatory Pedagogy

Inspired by Freirean educational philosophy, this approach promotes dialogue, critical reflection, and social transformation.

8.2.4 Ecopedagogy and Environmental Peacebuilding

The framework integrates environmental stewardship and sustainability within peace education to address emerging ecological and social challenges.

8.2.5 Competency-Based Learning

Aligned with PacREF and SDG 4.7, the framework focuses on developing practical competencies necessary for peaceful coexistence and responsible citizenship.

8.3 Curriculum Learning Outcomes Classified

The expected learning outcomes can be classified under Cognitive, Affective, and Behavioural Outcomes. (Table 1)

Cognitive Outcomes

Students will:

- explain peacebuilding concepts;
- analyse causes of conflict;
- understand restorative justice approaches; and
- appreciate cultural diversity and human rights.
- apply conflict resolution strategies;
- participate in community peacebuilding activities;
- engage in collaborative problem-solving; and
- demonstrate responsible citizenship.

This framework positions peace education curriculum development as a transformative educational process that can strengthen social cohesion, resilience, and sustainable peacebuilding.

Affective Outcomes

Students will:

- demonstrate empathy and respect;
- value non-violence;
- appreciate cultural diversity; and
- develop positive social relationships.

Behavioural Outcomes

Students will:

- apply conflict resolution strategies;
- participate in community peacebuilding activities;
- engage in collaborative problem-solving; and

- demonstrate responsible citizenship.

This framework positions peace education curriculum development as a transformative educational process that can strengthen social cohesion, resilience, and sustainable peacebuilding.

9. Conclusion

Peace education curriculum development in Solomon Islands represents a significant educational response to post-conflict reconstruction, nation-building, and social transformation. Since the ethnic tensions, peace education has increasingly become integrated into curriculum reform efforts, educational policy frameworks, community-based initiatives, and teacher development programs.

Research demonstrates that culturally grounded peace education approaches informed by indigenous epistemologies, such as *nōwe*, provide important foundations for curriculum relevance and effectiveness.

At the same time, classroom-based studies reveal that participatory pedagogy, restorative approaches, and contextualised curriculum integration can significantly strengthen learner engagement and social cohesion.

However, substantial challenges remain. Policy-practice gaps, inadequate teacher preparation, fragmented implementation, urban-rural inequalities, donor dependency, limited indigenous curriculum resources, and weak monitoring systems continue to constrain effective curriculum implementation.

Despite these challenges, important prospects exist through curriculum decolonisation, competency-based learning reforms, teacher professional development, environmental peacebuilding, digital learning approaches, and strengthened regional partnerships.

Ultimately, the future of peace education curriculum development in the Solomon Islands lies in integrating indigenous knowledge systems, transformative pedagogy, inclusive policy implementation, and contextually grounded educational reform to nurture peaceful, resilient, and socially responsible citizens.

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