EMERALD STUDIES IN TEACHER PREPARATION IN NATIONAL AND GLOBAL CONTEXTS

Teacher Preparation in Papua New Guinea

Past and Present

TOM O'DONOGHUE
JOHN MORTIMER

Teacher Preparation in Papua New Guinea

EMERALD STUDIES IN TEACHER PREPARATION IN NATIONAL AND GLOBAL CONTEXTS

Series Editors: Teresa O'Doherty, Marino Institute of Education, Dublin, Ireland; Judith Harford, University College Dublin, Ireland; Thomas O'Donoghue, University of Western Australia, Australia

Teacher preparation is currently one of the most pressing and topical issue in the field of education research. It deals with questions such as how teachers are prepared, what the content of their programmes of preparation is, how their effectiveness is assessed and what the role of the 'good' teacher is in society. These questions are at the forefront of policy agendas around the world.

This series presents robust, critical research studies in the broad field of teacher preparation historically, with attention also being given to current policy and future directions. Most books in the series will focus on an individual country, providing a comprehensive overview of the history of teacher preparation in that country while also making connections between the past and present and informing discussions on possible future directions.

Previously Published

Historical Perspectives on Teacher Preparation in Aotearoa New Zealand
By Tanya Fitzgerald and Sally Knipe

Teacher Preparation in Northern Ireland
By Séan Farren, Linda Clarke and Teresa O'Doherty

Catholic Teacher Preparation
By Richard Rymarz and Leonardo Franchi

Teacher Preparation in South Africa
By Linda Chisholm

Teacher Preparation in Australia: History, Policy and Future Directions
By Thomas O'Donoghue and Keith Moore

The Emergence of Teacher Education in Zambia
By Brendan Carmody

Teacher Preparation in Scotland
By Rachel Shanks

The Peripatetic Journey of Teacher Preparation in Canada
By Rosa Bruno-Jofré and Joseph Stafford

Historical Development of Teacher Education in Chile
By Beatrice Ávalos and Leonora Reyes

Teacher Preparation in Singapore: A Concise Critical History
By Yeow-Tong Chia, Alistair Chew and Jason Tan

Teacher Preparation in the United States: History, Current Conditions, and Policy
By Kelly Kolodny and Mary-Lou Breitborde

Forthcoming in This Series

The History of Teacher Education in Finland
By Jussi Välimaa

Teacher Preparation in China: Pedagogy of Obedience
By Christine Cunningham and Wei Zhang

Teacher Preparation in France: History and Policy
By Imelda Elliott and Ewen Lecuit

Teacher Preparation in England: Historical Perspectives
By Tom Woodin and Nazlin Bhimani

This page intentionally left blank

Teacher Preparation in Papua New Guinea: Past and Present

BY

TOM O'DONOGHUE

The University of Western Australia, Australia

AND

JOHN MORTIMER

The University of Western Australia, Australia

United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited
Emerald Publishing, Floor 5, Northspring, 21-23 Wellington Street, Leeds LS1 4DL

First edition 2024

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-83549-078-5 (Print)
ISBN: 978-1-83549-077-8 (Online)
ISBN: 978-1-83549-079-2 (Epub)

Denis McLaughlin

For his outstanding contribution to teacher education in Papua New Guinea over many decades.

This page intentionally left blank

Contents

This page intentionally left blank

Chapter 1

Introduction

The western half of the island of New Guinea, which is to the northwest of Australia, is part of Indonesia, while the independent State of Papua New Guinea (PNG) consists of the eastern half of the island and smaller offshore islands, principally New Britain, New Ireland, Bougainville and Manus.[1] With over 700 languages spoken there, this is one of the most culturally diverse places in the world.[2] Also, while the region is generally described as having a hot and humid climate all year round, it has very high mountain ranges, which means that it is somewhat cooler in the highlands, where occasionally there is even frost and snow.

While infrequent contacts between Europeans and locals were documented as early as the 1500s, the island of New Guinea remained isolated somewhat from Western influences until the 19th century. Between 1828 and 1848, the Dutch annexed the western half. Then, in 1885, the eastern half was divided, with Britain taking the south of it and Germany taking the north, which it named *Kaiser-Wilhelmsland*. Later, Britain transferred control of its portion to Australia, and it was renamed Papua.

The first permanent European settlement in what is now PNG commenced in the early 1870s, when groups of Christian missionaries and traders began to establish themselves there.[3] Australia seized the northern region during World War 1 and, under a League of Nations mandate, later assumed complete control of all eastern New Guinea. From 1918 until the Japanese invasion in 1942, Australia governed the area in two separate 'territories', with the administrative headquarters for Papua located in Port Moresby and those for New Guinea

[1]S. Dorney. *Papua New Guinea: People, Politics and History since 1975* (Sydney: Random House, 2000).
[2]K. M. Sumbuk. 'Papua New Guinea's languages: Will they survive?' In D. Cunningham and E. Ingram (Eds.). *Language Diversity in the Pacific: Endangerment and Survival* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2006), pp. 85–96.
[3]J. Sinclair. *Middle Kingdom: A Colonial History of the Highlands of Papua New Guinea* (Adelaide: Crawford House Press, 2018).

Teacher Preparation in Papua New Guinea, 1–10

doi:10.1108/978-1-83549-077-820241001

located in Rabaul.[4] Then, following the establishment of an Australian trusteeship by the United Nations after World War 2, the Territories of Papua and New Guinea were combined under a single administration, with its headquarters in Port Moresby. Eventually, self-government was achieved in 1973 and national independence in 1975. Since then, the nation has functioned as a parliamentary democracy, with the capital in Port Moresby. The country is divided up into administrative provinces. About 15% of the population lives in major urban areas and the rest live in rural areas.

Notwithstanding the nature of the general situation as portrayed above, the Territory of New Guinea was never an Australian Territory in a legal sense. Rather, it was a Trust Territory under Australian administration. That meant that it was considered not to be part of Australia Thus, for nationality purposes, persons connected with it were Australian-protected persons rather than Australian citizens. On the other hand, the Territory of Papua was officially an external territory of Australia. As a result, those born or naturalized in the Territory of Papua were Australian citizens on the same basis as those in any other part of Australia. Nevertheless, people of indigenous descent were not automatically entitled to reside in the rest of Australia, although it was possible in some circumstances for such persons to apply for, and be granted, a right of residence.

PNG nationals consider themselves to be not only Papua New Guineans, but also South Pacific Islanders more broadly, and thus a subset of the total population living on the inhabited Pacific Islands. The Pacific Ocean itself is the world's largest body of water, covering over 35% of its surface. It also contains thousands of islands, quite a lot of which go to make up independent sovereign states that were formerly part of the British Empire.[5] They include PNG, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Western Samoa, Kiribati, Tonga, Tuvalu and Nauru. These countries are populated by representatives of the three groups into which anthropologists have traditionally classified the indigenous people of the Pacific, namely, Polynesians, Melanesians and Micronesians.[6]

Most of the states of the South Pacific are very beautiful and exotic. However, they also face enormous problems. Travel outside of one's home nation is both difficult and costly due to the huge distances between it and the rest of the world. The small size and scattered nature of each country's land area and population also puts the achievement of significant economic development beyond reach. Furthermore, apart from the mineral wealth of PNG and New Caledonia, the region is relatively poor in natural resources.[7] These factors and others have made the transition process from traditional self-sufficient island communities to modern nation states difficult.

---

[4]C. Spark, S. Spark, and C. Twomey (Eds.). *Australians in Papua New Guinea 1960–1975* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2014).

[5]R. M. Thomas and T. N. Postlethwaite (Eds.). *Schooling in the Pacific Islands* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1984).

[6]A. K. Chignall. *An Outpost in Papua* (London: J. Murray, 1925).

[7]A. Rumsey and J. F. Weiner. *Mining and Indigenous Lifeworlds in Australia and Papua New Guinea* (Oxford: Sean Kingston Publishing, 2004).

A way of thinking about the geography of PNG itself is to imagine that one could take Switzerland and drop it into the Southern Ocean near the Equator. One could then overspread its mountains and valleys with tropical vegetation. Protectors could further guard its borders by putting in a wide barrier of malarial swamps. They could then add more defences by inserting tropical diseases and an assortment of poisonous snakes and insects. By imagining thus, an appreciation of why the Island of New Guinea remained one of the last spots on earth for adventurers to explore and map can be achieved.

As in all post-colonial nations, education in PNG did not arrive with Western governments or with the different Christian missions. Traditional education long predated the advent of both.[8] This featured revealed truths, sacred or secret knowledge and technical skills. Moreover, what was offered and achieved was appropriate since it assisted not only in the survival but also in the propagation of the largely Melanesian population on the island of New Guinea.

A major difficulty in attempting to describe traditional education practices in PNG is that there is no culture that is common to the population overall. Certainly, as Jones pointed out back in 1974, 'there are many similarities among different groups, but there are also a lot of differences'.[9] This observation, which has consistently been confirmed by anthropological studies, forms the basis for considering difficulties in generalizing about traditional education practices. Having said that, the following judicious portrayal of the situation by Camila Wedgewood in 1938, has proved to be insightful for interested parties over decades:

> The principal factors which affect a child's environment are its sex upbringing; the rank and status of its parents; the domestic setting, as for example whether it lives in polygamous or monogamous household, and whether the individual family of which it is a member is large or small...the marriage may be patrilocal or matrilocal or neither, divorce or death of a parent, legitimacy,

---

[8]T. E. Barrington (Ed.). *Papua New Guinea Education* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1976).

[9]M. G. Jones. *The Charity School Movement. A Study of Eighteenth Century Puritanism in Action* (London: Frank Cass, 1974), p. 4.

> and the very common custom of adoption may also mould profoundly the conditions under which a child grows up.[10]

Coyne's position is also insightful.[11] In a study of traditional education practices in PNG, he made it clear to readers that the scarcity of anthropological studies on life there made it impossible to generalize across all tribes on most aspects of life.

At the same time, some specific studies revealing various perspectives on traditional education conducted on populations living in East Sepik, the New Guinea Islands region, Madang and Morobe, did demonstrate the extent to which there was variety amongst them.[12–14] Evidence from The Highlands revealed other perspectives yet again. For example, Lawrence warned that 'in the Goroka and Hagen areas (Highlands), for instance, empirical knowledge appears to be highly valued in itself and may be conceptualized as derived largely from the human intellect', which clearly is not the case elsewhere in PNG.[15]

What can be said with reasonable certainty, though, is that traditional education has existed in PNG for a very long time and has been an integral part of community life there. Those who experienced it, as many still do today, learnt how to view life through the lens of the tribe to which they belonged. They also learnt the skills needed to maintain oneself throughout life as villagers. To use the language of European education, most of the attendees 'passed' the traditional examinations and very few were able to drop out of the system until they had completed 'the course'. Also, the 'teachers' were wise. They knew the names of all plants and animals in the district. They had explanations for most things. They had their own knowledge as to why everything in nature was as they perceived it. They had folklore, legends and stories about all activities in which members of the tribe were forbidden to engage. Moreover, they passed those on from generation to generation.

---

[10]C. Wedgewood. 'Life of children in Manam.' *Oceania*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 1938, p. 3. Wedgwood was born in England in 1901 and studied English and anthropology at the University of Cambridge. In 1932, she was awarded a fellowship by the Australian Research Council to conduct fieldwork on Manam Island off the north coast of PNG on the border of what are today Madang and East Sepik provinces. After World War 2, she took a position at the Australian School of Pacific Administration, which was responsible for training Australian colonial officers and administrators. She continued in this role until her death in 1955.

[11]G. Coyne. 'Educational practices in traditional societies of Papua New Guinea.' In Department of Education (Ed.). *Curriculum and Research Bulletin* (Port Moresby: Department of Education, 1974), pp. 1–2.

[12]A. Chowning. 'Child rearing and socialisation.' In P. Ryan (Ed.). *Encyclopedia of Papua New Guinea* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1972), p. 14.

[13]P. Lawrence. 'Religion and magic.' In P. Ryan (Ed.). *Encyclopaedia of Papua New Guinea* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1972), p. 21.

[14]K. Read. 'A cargo situation in the Markham Valley, New Guinea.' *South Western Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 1958, pp. 273–294.

[15]P. Lawrence. 'The background to educational development in Papua New Guinea.' *South Pacific*, January–February, 1959, p. 58.

In general, the tribes had two types of knowledge even if its members did not formally have such a categorization.[16] First, they had practical knowledge. Then there was knowledge about the things that were considered sacred. Within their own minds, though, all knowledge was integrated, partly because they viewed it as coming from their gods and from their ancestors.

Many depended on specific knowledge on practical matters for survival. For example, those who lived in the vicinity of Madang, a small city on the north coast of the main island, used special drums to communicate with each other when they were anything up to 100 kilometres apart.[17] On Ponam Island, which is close to the much larger Manus Island, rudimentary tools were used for centuries to make large sailing boats.[18] In the interior of the main island of PNG and high up in the mountains, complex methods were used to cultivate the land.[19] Those who lived there knew how best to grow taro and cane sugar; taro flourishes when cultivated on the side of hills since it does not grow well in wet land. By contrast, cane sugar thrives when it is surrounded by a plentiful supply of water.

Children learnt about plants, animals, reptiles, insects and fish. They also listened to traditional stories that gave explanations about how the Gods made everything, including what was required to be able to subsist, and they committed that to memory. In addition, they learnt the practices required to be able to use implements for gardening, hunting and fishing. They also had to learn how to engage in battle. The anthropologist, Margaret Mead, has given us accounts about these matters.[20] Among those are vivid descriptions of the physical skills involved in swimming, climbing and sailing. She illustrated also how the possession of such skills was important not just for practical purposes but also for the development of self-worth.

Adults used various teaching approaches when giving instruction. Those included criticizing, encouraging, penalizing and bribing. They also taught skills to do with determining directions and giving orders. The importance of paying attention to instruction and not being distracted by other matters was also impressed on the young.

Those who taught used repetition a lot, especially when teaching songs. They used to break up what they were teaching into sections which the children learnt by heart. Then, once learners had memorized each part, they learnt to put them together. The same approach was used for the teaching of folklore. Boys also learnt from their fathers how to build a house, how to prepare a garden on

---

[16]E. Tylor. *Primitive Culture* (London: John Murray, 1871).

[17]A. Lomax and G. Arensberg. 'A world-wide evolutionary classification of cultures by subsistence.' *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 1977, pp. 659–708.

[18]D. Lancy. *Cross-cultural Studies in Cognition and Mathematics* (New York: Academic Press, 1983).

[19]W. Foley. *The Papuan Languages of New Guinea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

[20]M. Mead. *Growing up in New Guinea* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1930); M. Mead. 'The Arapesh of New Guinea.' In M. Mead (Ed.). *Co-operation and Competition among Primitive Peoples* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1937); M. Mead. 'Our educational emphasis in primitive perspective.' *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 48, 1943, pp. 633–639.

uncultivated land and how to kill a pig, clean it, cut it up and put it in the ground to cook it amidst large roasting hot stones.

Both boys and girls also had to engage in practices at special ceremonies where they were initiated into manhood and womanhood.[21] In certain tribes, the event was preceded by each gender group being separated and living in a deserted place, usually for around three months. While there, some elders educated them in magical knowledge associated with gardening, hunting, health and the weather. Boys learnt about the actions that would be required of them when they would become men. That included learning how to discipline their wives so that they could not use their magical powers against them. Girls equally were taught special knowledge by their aunts.

Traditional education reflected, as well as promoted, cultural beliefs and customs that once underpinned, and to some extent still underpin, PNG society. Its aim was to honour and sustain 'the Melanesian Way'.[22] Clearly, it was successful since until recently traditional village life provided purpose and a means for survival and identity for Papua New Guineans. This cannot be said of modern education.

In relation to formal schooling, education leaders in PNG have for a variety of reasons, embraced a Western-type system, though its relevance and its efficiency have been questioned.[23–26] Also, some, like Jones, argued that many issues could be resolved if an approach he termed 'involvement' was adopted.[27] The underlying assumption is Freire's position that knowledge is not to be viewed only in a

[21]P. Townsend. *The Situation of Children in Papua New Guinea* (Port Moresby: IASER, 1985).

[22]P. Matane. *A Philosophy of Education for Papua New Guinea* (Port Moresby: Ministry of Education, 1986).

[23]H. Phelp and M. Kelly. 'Cognitive development and the Papua New Guinea education system – some findings.' In. J. Brammall and R. May (Eds.). *Education in Melanesia* (Canberra: Australian University Press, 1974), p. 275; A. Tololo. 'A consideration of some likely future trends in education in Papua New Guinea.' In T. E. Barrington-Thomas (Ed.). *Papua New Guinea* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 5; G. Smith. *Education in Papua New Guinea* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1975), pp. 42–55.

[24]P. Matane. *A Philosophy of Education for Papua New Guinea*, pp. 22–27.

[25]P. Chatterton. 'PNG tax hangover for soft drinkers.' *Pacific Islands Monthly*, October 1973, pp. 8–9; J. Sukwianomb. 'A decade of educational provision in Papua New Guinea during 1975–1985: Some success stories and broken promises.' In G. Fugmann (Ed.). *Ethics and Development in Papua New Guinea* (Port Moresby: University of Papua New Guinea, 1986).

[26]R. Cox. *Discussion Document III* (Port Moresby: University of Papua New Guinea, 1985); S. Kenehe. *In Search of Standards: Vol. 2* (Port Moresby: Ministry of Education, 1981).

[27]R. Jones. *Qualitative Concepts, Vernaculars and Education in Papua New Guinea* (Port Moresby: Education Research Unit, University of Papua New Guinea, 1974); R. Jones. *Classification Systems, Vernaculars and Education* (Port Moresby: University of Papua New Guinea, 1976).

transmission context but 'has to be made and remade by (the learner's) action and reflection on reality'.[28] In an earlier era, Lawrence had adopted such a position in an address he gave to neophyte Australian teachers bound for the Territory of Papua and New Guinea, when he stated,[29]

> . . .in bringing a programme of Western education to any underdeveloped country we are not educating in a vacuum. In every native society there are already in existence both an epistemological system and some means of transmitting it from one generation to the next...they are systems, which are fully integrated with the total way of life of the people. It is this that gives them their inherent logic and consistency, so that they cannot be regarded. . .as a mere ragbag of uncorrected information and beliefs. . .The failure to recognise these facts. . .is especially dangerous. It has undermined education schemes in the past. . .I refer to the common attitude of the recruit to the mission field and the teaching profession, that the grateful native will be as clay in his hands. What he has to learn. . .is the clay [that] is not as pliable as he thinks. Not only is it already shaped but fired and glazed as well.

The view was that anyone adopting this perspective accepts that the learner has a set of cultural and learning experiences that favour and interpret reflection on new knowledge.

The importance of considering accounts of traditional education like that detailed so far is because tradition continues to be influential in students' everyday lives in PNG. On that, Ochs and Schieffelin pointed out back in 1984, that in the early childhood socialization process of the Kaluli tribe in Southern Highlands Province, young children gained their identity through learning constructs from their elders and siblings that defined them as members of their group.[30] 'In this communal culture, unbounded by Western notions of psychology or constructivist learning', Ochs and Schieffelin went on, 'young babies were largely ignored by the group', their early efforts at language production were neither valued nor even recognized as language, and their thoughts and feelings were of no consequence to members of the tribe.[31] Eyford pointed out too that for teachers, local knowledge systems are an important

---

[28]P. Freire. 'Liberation through literacy.' In J. Brammel and R. May (Eds.). *Education in Melanesia* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1975). p. 246.
[29]P. Lawrence. 'The background to educational development in Papua New Guinea.' *South Pacific*, January–February 1959, p. 52.
[30]E. Ochs and B. B. Schieffelin. 'Language acquisition and socialization: Three developmental stories.' In R. A. Shweder and R. A. LeVine (Eds.). *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self, and Emotion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 276–320.
[31]*Ibid.*

component of the deep cultural paradigms that they bring to the classroom and that strongly affect the pedagogy they use and that students accept intuitively.[32]

The latter matter, Guthrie pointed out, goes a long way towards explaining why seven of the best-documented progressive curriculum innovations in relation to education in PNG over the last 60 years failed in the sense that none had any apparent sustained professional success at replacing formalistic teaching with more enquiry-discovery based approaches.[33] Of those, three of them, which were top-down change efforts, including in mathematics education and generalist teaching, were allowed to fade away. A fourth, Guthrie argued, which was based on the Secondary Social Science Syllabus that was taught from the 1960s to the 1990s, was so heavily revised that its precepts eventually bore little resemblance to the initial ones.

The fifth initiative was the Secondary School Community Extension Project (SCCEP). That received World Bank funding and considerable international attention in the 1980s.[34] However, it had sustainability problems and faded away by the end of the decade. The influence of Australian financial aid supporting the sixth initiative, the Community Teachers' College staff development project of the 1990s was also short-lived.[35] Finally, the seventh initiative, the Education Reform project that was commenced in the early 1990s, led to the introduction of system-wide structural changes but associated classroom curriculum innovations were, in many instances, unsuccessful.

Much of the history of formal schooling in PNG is directly tied to the history of the work of the various Christian missions, which commenced there in 1873. In that year, the London Missionary Society (LMS) in Port Moresby established its first literacy programme and teacher training school.[36] The major concern of its leaders and those of the other Christian missions with education was to use it for the conversion of the people to Christianity. Christian dogma implied that people

---

[32]H. Eyford. 'Relevant education: The cultural dimension.' *PNG Journal of Education*, Vol. 29, No. 1, 1993, pp. 9–20.

[33]G. Guthrie. 'The failure of progressive classroom reform: Lessons from the Curriculum Reform Implementation Project in Papua New Guinea.' *Australian Journal of Education*, Vol. 56, No. 3, 2012, pp. 241–256.

[34]M. Crossley. *Strategies for Curriculum Change with Special Reference to the Secondary Schools Community Extension Project in Papua New Guinea* (Unpublished doctoral thesis. Melbourne: La Trobe University, 1983); G. Vulliamy. *School Effectiveness and Provincial High Schools in PNG* (Port Moresby: Education Research Unit, University of Papua New Guinea, 1987).

[35]R. Guy. 'Formulating and implementing education policy.' In R. J. May (Ed.). *Policy Making and Implementation: Studies from Papua New Guinea. Studies in State and Governance in the Pacific No.5. Canberra: State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Program* (Canberra: Australian National University, 2009), pp. 131–154.

[36]G. Lindsay. *From Darkness to Light: The London Missionary Society in Papua, 1872–1972* (Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea: The United Church in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, 1972).