

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

COUNTRY REPORT

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: THE WAY FORWARD

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1. BACKGROUND

Papua New Guinea has a population of 5.2 million people inhabiting locations of great diversity. Over the years, the country has developed an extensive unified education system of primary and secondary education. Prior to 1991, the Department of Education had attempted to address the educational needs of children with disabilities in a systematic way. Such services were left to a few voluntary non-government agencies and over the years, several educational programs developed in a few centres.

1991-1993 PERIOD OF INVESTIGATION AND PLANNING

In 1991, the National Education Board surveyed the existing educational services for children with disabilities in Papua New Guinea and in its Special Education Report of November 1991, came up with 12 recommendations as a blueprint for future directions. This initial report was very much in the spirit of the **1991 UNICEF CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD** and the **1988 UNESCO CONSULTATION ON SPECIAL EDUCATION**.

On the basis of the report the Department of Education moved in the direction of serious implementation by the development of a National Special Education Plan and a Statement of Policy and Guidelines for Special Education were approved by the National Executive Council.

2. NATIONAL SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICY

Before 1992, Papua New Guinea had no policy related to Special Education. The National Executive Council (by Cabinet decision) adopted a Policy in respect to Special Education in 1993, which was defined for Papua New Guinea in terms of all children with disabilities having the right to be enrolled in regular schools and all teachers having the responsibility to teach children with special needs within the context of the regular classroom.

By the Ministerial Policy Statement that followed, this policy was to be implemented in all educational institutions at all levels. It is to be noted that while the words “inclusive education” were not used at that time, “special education” was defined in inclusive terms (enrolment of children with disabilities to be in regular schools) and there was no specific provision made for distinctively exclusive “special schools” within the education system.

This Policy was developed by a Committee appointed by the National Education Board under the chairmanship of an Assistant Secretary of the Department of Education, representatives from appropriate Government Departments and Non government agencies that comprised the committee. The policy, once approved by the National Education Board, was translated into a Plan which was presented to

Cabinet (the National Executive Council/NEC) by the Minister of Education.

On approval by the NEC, the Prime Minister directed the Department of Education to include the provisions of the Plan in future recurrent budgets.

The main components of the Policy are as follows:

- 1) All children with disability to be enrolled in regular schools.
- 2) Some few special schools existing at that time (1993) choosing to enter the education system to be transformed into Resource Centres to support regular teachers in mainstream schools in exercising their responsibilities in regard to teaching children with disabilities in their classes.
- 3) Teachers comprising staff of the new Resource Centres to hold funded teaching positions given to those Resource Centres, and to receive government salaries.
- 4) Resource Centres to be twinned to Teachers Colleges in order for resource staff to provide tutorial and practical support and supervision in training student-teachers in the several town locations where respective Resource Centres and Colleges were situated in proximity.
- 5) An additional government-funded special education lectureship position to be established in all Teachers Colleges (primary and secondary) and special education to be included in the pre-service training curriculum for all regular teachers.
- 6) A Special Education Unit to be established within the Staff Development & Training Division of the Department of Education and a Special Education Committee of the National Education Board to be established.
- 7) Resource Centres (at least one) to be established in all Provinces of the country with sub-centres being established in districts of the provinces.
- 8) The recent/current plan emphasises Degree programmes in special education/disability studies for staff of Teachers Colleges, Resource Centres and staff of regular schools in order to enhance in-country capacity for service delivery and quality of educational services.

3. National Education Plan

National Education Plan on the provision for Inclusive Education.

There have been two successive Plans which were outgrowths of the Government policy adopted in 1993. These plans have aimed at implementing Inclusive Education across the unified education system in Papua New Guinea.

4. Budget for Inclusive Education activities

Currently, the national budget through the Department of Education supports salaries for teaching staff of the Resource Centres, Special Education lecturers in Teachers Colleges and Universities. There is some money also for inspections, curriculum, resources and operations.

The K1.2 million (approx.) allocation of the Department of Education is likely to be 1% (approx.) of the annual inclusive education budget.

The Department of Health also assists with operations. This is an approximate total of K200, 000 per annum. Some non-education disability projects obtain a share of this. Each Resource Centre would obtain approx K6, 000 per annum from this source for operations.

The Department for Community Development (Social Welfare) also provides funding support for each Resource Centre for operations.

Funding support from International Donors

Chrsitoffel Blinden Mission (CBM of Germany) has a partnership relationship with 7 Resource Centres; thereby supporting Inclusive Education and Community Based- Rehabilitation programs. It also has a partnership with the European Union funding to support Inclusive Education & Community Based Rehabilitation programs for few centres.

Likewise Light for the World (Austria) has a partnership with 3 additional Resource Centres and has secured a partnership with the European Union to finance establishing and operating **20 Deafness Education Resource Units** attached to regular schools across PNG, promotion of enrolment of children with hearing impairment in additional regular schools in rural areas, and prevention of hearing impairment in elementary and primary school children.

The CBM contribution has been approx K 600,000 per annum not including the cost of co-workers; Light for the World (Austria) approx K200, 000 per annum. These annual grants cover salaries not covered by the Department of Education, operations (admin, transport and training) technical equipment, and subsidies for the poor.

5. Development of Inclusive Education

See Section 2. In short, the point of entry of Inclusive Education was initially at a pre-service teacher education level and activity followed in accord with the steps indicated below:

- a) a vision by Callan Services (NGO) and supported by the Department of Education of making possible the enrolment of children with special needs in regular schools by piloting the training of all student-teachers in one Teachers' College in inclusive education (Wewak 1991-1993).

- b) advocating with the National Education Board to approve a comprehensive Plan including extension of inclusive education training to all student-teachers in all colleges; also bringing existing private special schools into the system as resource centres; and with the aim of having the Plan endorsed by the Cabinet of Government/National Executive Committee. (1993)
- c) Exposure of student-teachers in colleges to one-to-one encounters with a child with disability (through the Home-contact service.) Hence numbers of graduating young teachers were fired with a motivation for inclusive education, for higher studies in this field, for inclusive education in the schools, and for staffing the growing number of resource centres.

The key stakeholders in Inclusive Education

- a). *At the national and provincial levels:* The Government, NGOs and Church education agencies.
- b). *At the local level:* Parents, parishes and Local level governments (LLGs).

6. Government support in Inclusive Education

The Government as an agency has not established Resource Centres directly itself as State institutions. NGOs and Church Education Agencies (e.g. Dioceses of Anglican, Catholic and Lutheran Churches which have significant school networks within the education system) apply for partnership with the Government to establish Resource Centres. These Resource Centres serve and support all schools of whatever denomination that request assistance, children with special needs irrespective of religion, and their teachers of all denominations.

The Government provides overarching supervision of the developments and the operations of the Resource Centres, salaries for their teachers, quality assurance monitoring and inspections and some finance for programmes. Also the Government takes a similar role in ensuring inclusion of inclusive education training in all Teachers Colleges and addressing curriculum development.

More is to be done in addressing inspection procedures across all schools of the system.

7. Definition of Inclusive Education in Papua New Guinea Context

In Papua New Guinea, Inclusive Education means children with disabilities being enrolled in a regular school and being educated alongside their peers without disability in the regular classroom with learning and barriers to learning being addressed in the context of the regular classroom.

In some instances a special multi-grade unit may be established attached to a school such as a Deafness Education Resource Unit (DERU) to give focused attention to communication skills for children with hearing impairment who are allocated also to regular classes in the school. Such a Unit may also be of support to distant teachers who have a child with hearing impairment and who are in need of technical help and resources.

8. Statistics

At the time of the year 2000 Census, Papua New Guinea had a total population of

5, 190, 786 people and population growth rate of 2.7%. The Census asked those 10 years and older who were not economically active whether they had a disability and concluded that 13, 688 people had some form of disability.

The Department of Education currently does not have an accurate record of students with special needs enrolled in the mainstream schools. The statistics of students with special needs in schools and those under the community-based rehabilitation programs provided annually by the Inclusive Education Unit Resource Centres (IERCs) are the only information the department has. The Department also has not established its system of Quarterly Statistical Returns to include reporting on children with disability specifically.

The facilities managing statistical returns are operated by government authorities.

Apart from capabilities of concerned government officers at the national level, there are thorny issues for them as well as for teachers in the field perhaps: definitions, categorisation, knowledge and skills; judgments in regard to distinguishing for example between incidental learning difficulty and significant learning disability. These issues undoubtedly are a significant factor in slowing progress in including disability consideration in systemic statistical returns.

Some few years ago a Regional Workshop (Pacific Region) on school data collection conducted in Port Moresby by a UN agency was requested (with the Secretary for Education supporting the request) to include treatment of the matter of statistics of children with disabilities in schools in the workshop. The request was considered by the organisers to be too difficult to respond to.

The Department of Community Development in 2006 launched a School Census programme which is expected to include children with special needs, not yet identified.

9. Teacher Training on Inclusive Education

Since 1994, it has been Government policy to train all regular pre-service student-teachers in special education (understood as being defined in an inclusive education sense.) The 8 Primary Teachers Colleges attempted this as soon as possible after the promulgation of the Policy but for several years only half of them were able to recruit overseas lecturers to implement the training programme. Now however, the Teachers' Colleges and Universities are moving to the stage of having Degreed national lecturers in special education. Now all secondary pre-service student teachers undertake a required Unit in Inclusive Education.

The aim over the last decade has been to have all new graduating teachers from all colleges trained in inclusive education.

In one College, some 70 graduates per year have obtained an additional Certificate in Studies in Disabilities on an elective basis over and above their Diploma which includes inclusive education studies. This Certificate is based on 11 X 30 hours of workshop training plus 20 sessions of practicum with 20 related tutorials of one hour per tutorial.

The University of Goroka in recent years has been graduating about 15 teachers per year with Bachelor of Education In-service with a major in Special Education.

Divine Word University is delivering with the support of Callan an in-country

In-service Bachelor of Special Education is the flexible learning mode. Approximately 15-20 teachers per year are expected to graduate from this programme. Units include:

- 1) Disabilities and Disability Issues
- 2) Inclusive Education
- 3) Education of the Vision Impaired Child
- 4) Education of the Hearing Impaired Child
- 5) Learning Difficulties
- 6) Severe Disabilities
- 7) HIV & AIDS
- 8) The Ethical Educator

Since the Department of Education and the Teaching Service Commission have recognized the call of the **Salamanca Conference** concerning the complementarity of Inclusive Education and Community Based-Rehabilitation have agreed to provide teaching positions in Community Based Rehabilitation Education as well as Inclusive Education in Resource Centres, Divine Word University with the support of Callan, plans to offer a Bachelors Degree in Disability Studies to include Units in Child Development and Disabilities, Community Based Rehabilitation, and Mental Health

10. Issues

Teacher Education and Inclusive Education

- a) Recruitment of national lecturers for Teachers Colleges who have not only Degree studies in disability areas but hands-on, background experience in teaching and working with children with disabilities.
- b) Since the policy is one of availability of inclusive education opportunity in every school and college, the demand for well-qualified and experienced staff in training colleges, resource centres and systemic schools is great; therefore the issue of building quickly an in-country capacity for higher level education in disability studies and special education is a pressing one as opposed to the more expensive option and practice of sending teachers overseas for higher studies.

c) Research

A substantial pilot project researching Incidence of Disabilities in three areas of PNG has just been completed. It is believed that in such surveys of the general population, children tend to be missed and so are under-represented.

It is clear from this that research focused specifically on children with disabilities needs to be piloted. There has been no significant research done yet on inclusive education and/or Special Needs Education in PNG.

11. Challenges

Some key challenges faced in the education of special needs children in an inclusive education setting are:

- 1) A nation-wide programme of in-service for seasoned, field teachers across the schools of the country; all teachers not exposed to inclusive education in their initial training.
- 2) In-service of administrators and school inspectors in inclusive education and the inclusion of relevant expectations in the inspection process.
- 3) Early childhood programmes bringing children to the point of readiness for school.
- 4) Programmes for training of teacher-aides (with appropriate guidelines for) assisting children with disabilities in the classroom under the direction of the teacher.

- 5) Research projects on disabilities of children in PNG, disabilities in relation to education, and inclusive education.

12. Strategies

Identify practical strategies that can move Inclusive Education forward in Papua New Guinea include the following:

Issues in Section 8 on Statistical collection need to be addressed preferably with regional involvement and support.

Strategy 1: Regional workshop to develop a suitable method of obtaining

Data from schools of the Pacific region, concerning children with disabilities enrolled.

Issues in Section 10 on Teacher Training are a basis for strategies.

Strategy 2: Develop further the strategic alliance between Callan Service and Divine Word University in Madang with a view to developing Master-level special education degree programmes.

Strategy 3: Develop further the strategic alliance between Callan and the National Department of Education with a view to establishing in-service/field, diploma programmes in specific disability areas, of applied education for resource centre staff.

Section 10. Research on incidence of impairments and/or disability in children and also on inclusive education is called for.

Strategy 4: Research surveys on:

- a) incidence of impairments in children in PNG
- b) inclusive education in PNG

The first 4 **critical challenges in Section 11** listed above, are also the basis for 4 additional Strategies that relevant authorities need to address.

Strategy 5: A nation-wide in-service programme (National In-service Week using materials developed)

Strategy 6: In-service programme for regular school inspectors and administrators of the education system.

Strategy 7: Developing materials for a programme for children with a range of disabilities at the nursery and infancy stages leading to readiness for schooling.

Strategy 8: Development of training materials (and guidelines) for Teacher-aides who will assist those children with disabilities in the regular classroom for whom such assistance is necessary.

11. Summary

In summary it is believed that teacher education as a point of entry to establish inclusive education in the system was an appropriate strategic move for Papua New Guinea but much has yet to be done implementing inclusive education across the system, in ensuring quality support services by centres planting outreach sub-centres in the districts and pressing for quality outcomes for child-clients across the provinces; also buttressing the services in the schools through the establishment of effective Community Based Rehabilitation programmes operating in the community and supporting inclusive education in schools.