

Chapter 8

Formulating and Implementing Education Policy

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Early policies in education

Formal education in Papua New Guinea is of relatively recent origin. Literacy and numeracy programs were first offered to adults in the 1890s in schools established by missionaries to facilitate evangelization. The British administration, at the time, encouraged the establishment of such schools to assist with its policy of 'pacifying the natives'.

By the 1920s there was some concern by the administration with benefiting the natives, rather than white settlers, and emphasis was placed on the transformation of 'the tribe of disappointed warriors into a race of more or less industrious workmen' (Murray 1929, 8). By 1926, technical, industrial and agriculture training in Papua received 95 per cent of the total government education budget. By the 1930s, government policy was more concerned with a blending of cultures in which the best of the old culture was 'vastly enriched and enlarged by contributions from our own' (Williams 1935, 6).

A further shift in education policy took place immediately after the Second World War with greater government involvement in the provision of primary schools. Paul Hasluck, the Australian minister for Territories who then had responsibility for Papua and New Guinea, established a set of definitive policy statements for education (Hasluck 1959). These policies stated that universal primary education would be the focus; all children in controlled areas would be taught in English; church schools would be encouraged and a system of grants established to support these schools; attention would be given to developing local teachers; and manual training would be developed at primary schools. Secondary education was not given any priority and high schools were not introduced on a widespread basis until the 1960s.

Hasluck was criticized for his gradualist policies and not identifying an indigenous elite for future leadership roles. The United Nations (1962) and World Bank (1964) reports insisted that secondary schools be expanded and that planning for a university start immediately to satisfy the impending human

resource needs of the country. The University of Papua New Guinea commenced operations in 1966.

Education, prior to independence, was for the few and it was gender specific. The curriculum was academic and strongly oriented to Western forms of knowledge as part of the modernist project for Papua New Guinea. Teaching and learning was carried out in English and the majority of teachers were from overseas; they used Queensland or New South Wales curricula. Teachers were encouraged to adapt the curriculum to the contexts of Papua New Guinea, but few teachers took up the opportunity. The country fell far short of universal primary education despite continuous government rhetoric about attaining universal primary education, embodied in a 1960 government directive and subsequently revised to 1973 (Roscoe 1958).

Policy directions since independence

Policy formulation is best understood by reviewing a number of key documents that established the policy framework for education since independence. Six fundamental issues have consistently underpinned the formulation and implementation of education policy during this time, namely: universal primary education; the nature of the curriculum; language of instruction; financing education; decentralization; and development partners.

The granting of independence was an appropriate occasion to make a substantial break from the past. Alkan Tololo, a Papua New Guinean, chaired a committee (Tololo Committee 1974) that was given the task of reviewing the first five-year education plan from 1969–1973, and to set the parameters for the important education plan for the period 1976–1980. The committee consisted of only Papua New Guineans and outlined several radical policies for education in an independent Papua New Guinea:

- self-reliance as the cornerstone of policy achieved through a community-based education program;
- forms 1 and 2 from high school to be transferred to community schools as Grades 7 and 8, to speed up the process of universal community education;
- teaching for the first three Grades to be in the ‘functional language of the community’;
- opportunities for education to be expanded to all Papua New Guineans including girls, children from isolated areas, and disadvantaged children; and
- curricula that ‘is relevant to the life that students will have to live after school’.

The Committee’s recommendations were not adopted. Despite the advent of independence in 1975, the education plan that was formally adopted in 1976 reconfirmed the policy laid down by Hasluck in 1959.

The Education Plan (1976–1980)

The Education Plan (1976–1980) set the direction for education immediately after independence. Policy formulation, curriculum design, inspections and standards, employment of teachers, and pre-service and in-service training for teachers clearly remained the responsibility of the Department of Education. Provinces were responsible for community schools, vocational centres and provincial high schools, and the implementation of policies.

There was some recognition within the Education Plan of the need to expand opportunities, which was done by constructing additional community schools and provincial high schools. Nonetheless, gross enrolment rates show that just 56.6 per cent of the 7–12 year age group was enrolled in Grades 1–6 and just 15.9 per cent of the 13 year age group enrolled in Grade 7 in 1977 (Department of Education 1977).

Significant debates developed at this time as to the relevance of education in Papua New Guinea. The Waigani Seminar report (Brammall and May 1975) presents a range of responses available to education. There is evidence of some innovation at the time, which hinted at the realization that alternative policies were needed. The Secondary Schools Community Extension Project (SSCEP) was introduced in 1978, which connected Grade 10 graduates with a more realistic understanding of the life chances that would be experienced by the majority of those returning to rural environments.

Research at the time indicated that academic results were maintained at the SSCEP schools, and students found employment, or further training, that would not have been available if they had left school at Grade 8 (Crossley and Vulliamy 1986). However, parents rejected this approach, because of the commonly held view that education was an investment in their children, and the return was the securing of formal employment in urban areas and a fortnightly pay cheque. SSCEP was withdrawn from schools as an alternative curriculum model to the academic model by 1986.

National Education Strategy

The National Education Strategy (NES) was formulated in 1978. A committee, chaired by Professor Cyril Rogers of the University of Papua New Guinea, with a mixture of national and expatriate educators, laid the groundwork for the second education plan from 1980–1984. The report provides valuable understanding of the policy framework for education through to the 1990s. Some of its major policy recommendations were:

- English to be the official language of instruction;

- existing general aims of community-based education to continue, but the curriculum systematically tilted in the direction of greater competency in basic subjects such as language, numbers, science, and the social sciences;
- 30 per cent progression of students from Grade 6 to Grade 7; and
- nationally administered examinations to select students for progression to high school.

The NES revisited the goal of universal primary education and optimistically stated that ‘the earliest target for universal first level education was 1990... the Committee feels it to be realistic’ (IASER 1979, 25).

There was growth in numbers, but the goal of universal primary education was still a long way off. That goal was further compounded by poor participation and retention of males and females in schools. This had been a long-term issue for Papua New Guinea. Some 35 per cent of children in each cohort eligible to enrol in school were unable to do so because schools were not available, the cost of education was too high, or there was little encouragement from (some) parents to participate in schooling. Many of those children who did start school had left by Grade 2 and many others left school at the end of Grade 6 because there were no places available for them in the high schools. Less than 1 per cent of children who enrolled in Grade 1 went on to complete Grade 12 at school by the end of the 1980s.

Matane Report

The influential Ministerial Committee Report on a Philosophy of Education (Department of Education 1986) proposed a radical philosophy of education based on a notion of ‘integral human development’. The Report, better known as the ‘Matane Report’, was officially adopted by the government of the day and states:

This philosophy is for every person to be dynamically involved in the process of freeing himself or herself from every form of domination and oppression so that each individual will have the opportunity to develop as an integrated person in relationship to others. This means that education must aim for integrating and maximising: socialisation, participation, liberation, equality (Department of Education 1986, 6).

The report was particularly concerned at the loss of relevance of education for the majority of students, and the lack of early childhood education opportunities; it urged that the language of instruction be in the language spoken by the child — that is, one of the over 800 languages that exist in Papua New Guinea. This last point was a daunting challenge, but it was underpinned by a strong maintenance approach to Papua New Guinea cultures and ‘ways of doing things’. The report was not fully appreciated at the time of its release, but it forms an

important prologue for much of the policy documentation and literature on education in Papua New Guinea today.

Jomtien Agreement

Papua New Guinea was a signatory to the 1990 Jomtien Agreement that endorsed the policy of Education for All (UNESCO 1990). This policy was in effect a continuation of the goal of universal primary education advocated by Papua New Guinea education authorities since the 1950s. The issues and the strategies, which arose from Jomtien, were already evident in the minds of senior educators.

The Education Sector Review

Human resource development has been a high policy priority area of past and present governments in Papua New Guinea. In 1991, consistent with this priority, the government of the time commissioned an education sector review to be carried out by a task force of national and expatriate educators and community representatives. It was to identify, document and develop policies and strategies to rectify problems that had become endemic in the education system during the fifteen years since independence.

The Education Sector Review (Department of Education 1991) confirmed: inordinately high rates of attrition at the primary level, pointing out that universal primary education was unlikely to be achieved in the then policy climate; low transition rates at the post Grade 6 and Grade 10 levels; a largely irrelevant curriculum; weak education management and administration; declining resource allocations combined with high unit costs; and a severe imbalance in the allocation of funding to higher education at the expense of other sectors of education.

The Sector Review suggested that to do more of the same was unlikely to have significant effects and was prohibitively expensive. The review raised the issue of universal primary education and pronounced 'that by 1999 all citizens reaching school age will have the opportunity to obtain at least six years of basic education' (Department of Education 1991, 5).

The sector review ushered in radical policy renewal in education in Papua New Guinea. The reforms advocated at the time of independence by the Tololo Committee, and reinforced in the Matane Report, were finally taken up officially some twenty years after their conception.

Reforming education in Papua New Guinea

The reform of education has initiated major policy shifts in education in Papua New Guinea. The reform commenced in two provinces in 1993 and continues in the current planning cycle, though 'there is still much to be done to reach our targets' (Department of Education 2005, v). The reform set out to improve

access, equity, retention and quality at elementary, primary and secondary levels of education and established a lower-cost base at each level of education.

The reform occurred within the context of the *Organic Law on Provincial Government* (1976), the *Education (Amendment) Act*, 1995 (which established the new structure of the education system), the *Teaching Service (Amendment) Act*, 1995, and various major government policies introduced from time to time such as the downsizing of the public service, a user pay policy, and supporting delivery of services at the provincial and district levels.

Although development partners do not engage in direct policy formulation in Papua New Guinea, the policies and forms of assistance provided by development partners have the potential to drive policy formulation. The World Bank, for example, in the mid 1990s, was prepared to support only development projects that targeted universal basic education and would not entertain forms of assistance at the tertiary level of education. Education receives considerable development assistance from the Australian government. AusAID projects account for some K60 million of expenditure each year in addition to the national government budget expenditure. The Curriculum Reform Implementation Project (CRIP), for example, has been criticized on the basis that its technical advisers drive policy decisions and the development of the national curriculum for Papua New Guinea through project activities. The Curriculum Development Division (CDD) of the Department of Education, on the other hand, strongly refutes this criticism and points to the leading role that CDD officers take in designing the curriculum and developing curriculum materials for classroom use.

The new reform structure has been progressively introduced since 1993, and runs parallel with the existing education system in many parts of the country. Thus, one system is expanding, and the other diminishing, until the reform is complete. For the foreseeable future, there will continue to be community schools offering Grades 1 to 6 and provincial high schools offering Grades 7 to 10.

The reorganization of education involved the establishment of a three-year elementary education program, which consists of a preparatory year followed by Elementary Grades 1 and 2. Teaching is conducted in the child's first language, and elementary schools are located in villages to minimize travel by small children, and to acknowledge the local responsibilities for this form of education.

There is a formal connection between elementary schools and the newly designed primary schools, which replace the former community schools. After three years in the elementary school, students are enrolled in Grade 3 at primary school.

Primary schools provide education from Grades 3 to 8. The number of places for students at the upper primary school level has increased significantly as a result of this policy initiative and at a relatively low cost (World Bank 1999). In

the past, many students were denied access to Grade 7 because of the shortage of Grade 7 spaces in conventional high schools.

A number of high schools remain as provincial high schools in the new structure and continue to offer Grades 7 to 10 until such time as sufficient primary schools are available to take all Grade 6 graduates. In those places where community schools continue to operate, students will be able to move from Grade 6 at the community school to Grade 7 at a provincial high school.

A number of provincial high schools in each province has been redeveloped as secondary schools to provide upper secondary education from Grades 9 to 12. The original policy regarding secondary schools envisaged the development of one secondary school in those provinces that did not have a national high school (NEB 1995). In effect, this would result in the development of fourteen secondary schools. Politicians, in particular, and provincial education authorities have disregarded the policy and there are sixty-five secondary schools in Papua New Guinea in 2005. As a result, there has been a substantial increase in the number of Grade 12 graduates who are competing for scarce formal employment opportunities and places in a tertiary education sector which has seen little, if any, growth in student places over the past decade. The successful reform of the school system is inconsistent with the lack of reform at the tertiary level. Support for university facilities and programs has a low level of priority within national government circles and also within the concerns of most development partners.

National Education Plan (1995–2004)

The National Education Plan (1995–2004) was released in 1995. It built on the policy directives contained in the Education Sector Review and the education reform agenda. The NEP avoided a timeframe for universal primary education, but indicated that it was an on-going objective: ‘The right to education and the right to learn unfortunately still constitute a vision rather than a reality’ (Department of Education 1995, 8). The Plan set a number of targets to be achieved by 2004 at the elementary level:

- enrolment in elementary schools to reach 460,000 by 2004;
- some 14,000 elementary teachers needed to cope with the projected elementary school enrolment by 2004;
- the development of an integrated activity-based elementary program with strong community inputs;
- the attainment of initial literacy in the language the child speaks by the end of elementary school;
- equal access opportunities for males and females by the year 2004; and
- 100 per cent transition of children from elementary schools to primary schools.

At the primary level:

- all children to have the opportunity to complete nine years of basic education;
- improvement in the Grades 1 to 6 retention rate; and
- participation and completion rates for females to improve.

The NEP stated that 50 per cent of Grade 8 students from primary schools will progress to Grade 9 at secondary school. Overall, some 30 per cent of students starting elementary school will progress to Grade 12 as these reforms take effect.

So what kind of progress has the reform of education made so far? At the time of writing (2005), the reform appeared to be taking effect. Enrolments had increased by 67 per cent and more children than ever before have the opportunity to enrol in elementary school and continue to Grade 8. There has been a reduction in the gender disparity in schools as well, although more needs to be done in this regard. The national female participation rate in 2000, for example, was 44.9 per cent of the overall primary student population (Department of Education 2002).

The gross enrolment rate was 81 per cent in 2005, a significant increase over the past few years. Nonetheless, 19 per cent of children remain outside the education system without any likelihood of joining education. The progression rate from one year to the next suggests that more students are staying at school, but that a significant number of children attend school for less than six years. A total of 43,245 students, for example, withdrew from Grades 6 to 8 between 1998 and 1999.

One of the major reasons for the high attrition rate (Guy and Paraide 2001) is the high cost of education, which has been brought about by a reduction in the subsidies provided by government relative to the rising costs of education. The national government was unable to increase the size of the subsidies and introduced a 'user pay' policy in 1995, and moved the burden for the payment of school and tertiary fees to students and their parents.

'Free' education policy

The cost of education began to emerge as an issue requiring policy consideration in the 1980s as greater numbers of children had opportunities to enrol in schools and more and more parents sought education for their children. Parents, at the time, were charged two fees: a school fee and trust account (SFTA) fee of K1.50 per year to purchase basic classroom materials, and a board of management (BOM) fee to fund the administration of the school, usually set at K10 per year although it could be as high as K30 in urban areas (Bray 1984).

Mahuru Rarua Rarua moved a motion in parliament in 1981 (Hansard 1981, 1/13/3/1) that reads in part:

... that education be made compulsory for all the children of Papua New Guinean origin who reach the age of six years at the commencement of

1982 primary or community school year and to continue studies up to Grade 10.

There was a great deal of support for the motion, although there was a lengthy debate over the wording of it. The full motion was eventually passed in 1982, but the word 'compulsory' was replaced by the word 'free'. The policy of free education was born. The fees that were paid by parents would henceforth be the responsibility of provincial governments consistent with their responsibilities as outlined in the Organic Law on Provincial Governments and Local-level Governments, 1995 (LPGLLG).

The provinces were unhappy with this policy direction and the failure of national parliamentarians to consult with them over the matter. Their grievances were resolved by the national government offering provinces funds to cover the cost of fees in 1982 as long as no other provincial fees were charged to parents. Five provinces rejected the offer because they felt that provincial government autonomy was at stake, and because there was no guarantee that the funds would continue after 1982 and provinces would inherit the additional costs.

The disbursement of funds to the provinces, and eventually to schools, was always based on inaccurate enrolment statistics and the majority of provinces were unable to cover all of the cost covered by the SFTA and BOM fees on the basis of the funds that were forwarded to them in 1982.

In June 1982 national elections resulted in a new government, which promptly terminated the free education policy. The government emphasized the important role that parents had in supporting the education of their children. Three policies were put in place by the new government, which allowed schools to charge fees; exempted children from paying school fees on the basis of hardship; and introduced a fee-subsidy scheme in which funds were paid to provinces to support the enrolment of children from low income families at community schools, high schools and students at the College of Distance Education.

Ivarature (1995) points out that this latter policy was flawed in that there was a ministerial statement in 1972 stating that students could be exempted from paying fees on the basis of hardship that had not been withdrawn as a result of the free education policy initiative. He concluded: 'Policy makers and implementers seem to have little or no knowledge of existing policies. Hence, it is probable that policy makers create new policies that are redundant' (*ibid.* 24).

The administration of the subsidies had encountered problems over the years, especially in 'mismanagement and abuse' of the funds. There had been very little impact in terms of quality and physical appearance of many schools. According to a ministerial policy statement (1/2000, 1): 'This has resulted in the general state of school buildings and facilities, curriculum and basic materials

and equipment, and the morale of teachers deteriorating to the extent that the implementation of the education reforms is being compromised’.

User Pay Policy

In the lead-up to the national elections in 1992, political parties developed policies aimed at financing the ever increasing cost of education. The incoming government introduced yet another ‘free education’ policy in 1993. This led to a rapid rise in enrolments and it became clear to government that free education would not be sustainable over the long term. By 1994, a ‘user pay’ policy was introduced by government and schools were forced to reintroduce school fees and project fees payable by parents. This was unpopular and schools were forced to terminate students because of their inability to meet the high cost of school fees. Many schools, however, allowed students who had not paid fees, or part paid fees, to continue, which in effect meant that full fee-paying students were subsidising non-fee paying students, and the level of school resources and the quality of education deteriorated.

School Fee Subsidy Policy

A school fee subsidy (SFS) policy was reintroduced in 1996 at a total cost of K32 million for all levels of schooling. The national government continued the subsidy in 1997 and 1998 at that level.

The payment of subsidies raised a number of logistical issues and methods of payment varied from one year to the next. Some schools did not have bank accounts and found it difficult to cash cheques for large amounts in rural areas. It was found that very remote schools would spend most of their subsidy on airfares to purchase basic school supplies in urban locations and on freight charges to transport materials back to the school. The amount of subsidy varied by grade and students in upper primary Grades 7 and 8 received a much higher loading than children in lower grades. This encouraged a greater number of students to stay on at school even though they were not coping with the academic requirements of school.

The period from 1999 to 2005 resulted in constant policy changes to the SFS that caused considerable confusion amongst those administering the scheme, and for boards of management and head teachers to whom the funds were directed.

The appropriation from the national government for fees subsidy has remained mostly constant since 1999 at K60 million, of which K40 million is allocated to the Department of Education and K20 million is allocated to the provinces. In effect, real funding per student, as a result, has declined significantly because there has not been any allowance for inflation and enrolments have increased substantially as a result of the reform during this time.

In 1999, the Department of Education was responsible for SFS payments for quarter one and quarter three and the provincial authorities were responsible for subsidy payments for quarter two and quarter four. The national funds were forwarded to provincial education authorities for distribution for first and third quarters. Most schools reported receiving those funds (NRI 2002), but the provincial payments for quarters two and four were often not received by schools, or were paid at a lower rate than that set by the National Education Board. This failure by provinces to pay the full subsidy payment continues.

A number of the recurrent activities of the Department of Education received little or no funding in 1999 and the Department retained a portion of its allocation for subsidies to support its recurrent budget. A total of K5 million from the national component was set aside to support the operational activities of the inspectorate; to pay an 'establishment grant' to community schools that were taking on their first Grade 7s because of the failure of provincial governments to pay this cost under transfer arrangements included in the OLPGLLG; and to meet the cost of the administration of the national Grades 10 and 12 examinations.

In 2000, the government appropriation for SFS continued at the rate of K40 million for the national component and K20 million for the provincial component. A change was introduced in 2000 to overcome the problems that remote schools continued to face in cashing cheques and purchasing basic materials at competitive rates.

A Government Assistance to Quality Education Program (GAQEP) came into existence in 2000. The objective of this program was 'to improve and sustain relevance and quality of teaching materials and their modes of delivery' (Secretary's Circular 12/2000, 1). One of the GAQEP programs was the Curriculum and Basic Material Supply Program which had two elements: the first supported the bulk purchase and direct delivery to the school doorstep of curriculum and basic materials supply for elementary, community and primary schools to a total of K7.6 million; the second component provided direct cash grants totalling K15 million to post-primary institutions.

In 2001, the government appropriation for SFS received a slight increase to K61 million, which consisted of the national component of K40 million and the provincial component of K21 million. The national component of the subsidy was distributed on the basis of the continuation of GAQEP arrangements.

A number of problems were encountered by the Department of Education in tendering the supply of basic materials in 2000 which resulted in the government's reverting to cash grants for basic school supplies, paid to schools in a lump sum through the provincial education offices in 2001. A total of K7.65 million was allocated for the provision of basic school supplies and curriculum materials for elementary and primary schools, and was paid to provincial authorities. Each province was allowed to bulk-buy school materials and

distribute them to schools, or to distribute the full cash grants to individual schools, or a combination of these two methods. This policy resulted in considerable 'leakages', mostly at the provincial level, and schools either received less than they were entitled to or did not receive any funds at all from the provincial distribution (NRI 2002).

Free Education Again

In 2002, the national government was elected to office on a 'free education' platform and the SFS increased to K150 million. The entire subsidy was paid direct to the Department of Education as a result of the difficulties encountered in forwarding monies through the provinces in 2001. Parents, according to the announced policy, would not be requested to contribute money to the school because the government would meet the total fee. In reality, a number of schools charged school fees and project fees claiming that they could not operate schools for a full year on the amount of the subsidy paid by government.

This particular subsidy policy was well received by schools and parents in 2002. The majority of head teachers received their subsidy cheques early in each quarter and accessed those funds within two weeks of receiving them.

Financing Education as a Shared Responsibility

The national government decided in 2003 to reduce the level of education subsidies because of the financial burden of the higher SFS in 2002. The subsidy policy reverted to that of 2001 in which the Department of Education and provincial authorities shared the responsibility for quarterly payments. Parents were included as part of an articulated 'shared responsibility policy' and were expected to make significant financial contributions to schools through the payment of school and project fees.

The national component of the subsidy payment for 2003 was intended for use as a 'school infrastructure maintenance grant' (Department of Education 2003, 1). Schools were instructed how this money was to be used in a secretary's circular: it could be spent on activities such as painting, roof renovation, replacing pipes, moving pit latrines, repairing or replacing doors, locks, water tanks and furniture. The cost of purchasing basic materials and supplies for classroom use would come from the payment of school and project fees by parents.

Provinces were not given any guidance in the Circular regarding the area, or areas, of education that the provincial component of the subsidy was meant to support. This decision remained with the province, as well as the schedule of provincial payments to schools. Provinces could, for example, use the subsidy funds to support infrastructure activities, or use it to support the bulk purchase of basic materials for classroom use.

The SFS appropriations for 2004 and 2005 remained at K40 million for the Department of Education and K20 million for provinces. The funds are to be used for infrastructure and maintenance, but schools are allowed to use subsidy funds for the purchase of basic school materials where parental fee payments are insufficient to meet such costs.

The Department of Education continues to use a significant proportion of the subsidy funds for operational costs, such as travel by inspectors to oversight standards, support for national examinations, support for live classroom broadcasts, in-service activities for teachers, audit function support, support for churches, and support for the Literacy and Awareness Secretariat, which cannot be met from the recurrent budget. A total of K12.5 million (32 per cent) of the education subsidy appropriation to the Department of Education was used for these purposes in 2004.

Policy formulation in education

Independence brought with it a rapid process of decentralization and the establishment of nineteen provincial governments and the National Capital District. There were now many more stakeholders than ever before and greater levels of interest in education policy formulation.

Political parties establish policy guidelines and make them known to the electorate. These policies may or may not be adopted. The national government is ultimately responsible for the direction of policy in education and has expressed this in the Medium Term Development Strategy 2005–2010 (MTDS). The National Executive Council (NEC) recommends to the government policy directions that are developed by the Department of Education through a series of internal committees and processes. The annual Conference of Education Ministers' Council is an important layer of policy making and endorsement of policy decisions in education in Papua New Guinea.

Medium Term Development Strategy (2005–2010)

The MTDS provides 'an overarching development strategy that will provide the guiding framework for prioritizing the Government's expenditure program, as expressed in the annual budget' (MTDS, iii).

It continues to highlight the attainment of universal primary education as its major focus:

A key focus of the MTDS will be to support the continued implementation of reforms aimed at achieving the international goal of Universal Primary Education (UPE). In Papua New Guinea, this goal is reflected in the Government's objective of Universal Basic Education (UBE) by 2015 (*ibid.* 38).

The MTDS sets three targets for UBE to achieve by 2015, namely: a gross enrolment rate of 85 per cent at the primary level; a cohort retention rate of 70 per cent at the primary level; and a Youth Literacy rate of 70 per cent. These goals are realistic and are achievable within the timeframe that has been set, as long as adequate funding is provided to support their attainment. The role of the budget process is to ensure that adequate resources are allocated to achieve government policies and targets. Table 8.1 explores the pattern of budget allocations to the Department of Education for 2004 and 2005.

Table 8.1: Percentage Changes in Budget Allocations between 2004 and 2005

	2004 (K,000)	2005 (K,000)	Percentage change
Policy and general admin	49,001.3	52,446.9	7.0
Education standards	9,274.7	6,644.5	-28.4
Primary education	15,704.2	14,978.1	-4.6
Literacy and awareness	474.1	461.6	-2.6
Secondary education	9,711.5	10,612.5	9.3
Vocational education	2,550.5	3,273.4	28.3
Technical education	10,313.7	8,228.7	-20.2
Teacher education	10,826.6	14,768.9	36.4
Library services	969.6	1,087.0	12.1
Govt. records and archives	341.8	382.4	11.9
Total	109,168.0	112,884.0	3.4

Budget priorities are not always consistent with government policies. UBE is the foremost priority of the national government, however the budget appropriation for 2005 was some 4.6 per cent less than expenditure in 2004. The reform has increased access to education, but it is also necessary to ensure that adequate standards of education in classrooms are met. Table 8.1 indicates that there has been a reduction in the appropriated amount for education standards of more than 28 per cent.

The MTDS points out other priority areas such skills acquisition and adult literacy. The Department of Education has made vocational and technical education its second highest priority. Table 8.1 indicates an increase in expenditure on vocational education of some 28.3 per cent, but a decline in expenditure on technical education of 20.2 per cent. The allocation for literacy and awareness activities has also decreased over the period.

National Education Board

The National Education Board (NEB) has a primary role in policy formulation in education. It is chaired by the secretary of Education and has the responsibility, as defined by the *Education Act, 1995* (S. 17(1) (d)), ‘to advise and make recommendations to the Minister on such matters relating to education as he refers to it, and on such other matters relating to education as seem proper’.

The Department of Education is organized on the basis of four divisions, one of which is known as the Policy, Planning, Research and Communications Division (PPRC). One of the objectives of PPRC is ‘To advise and assist the Minister in the development of relevant policies in accordance with the legislative requirements and national education objectives’ (Department of Education 2001, 38). The activities of the PPRC in relation to policy involve:

- provision of executive services to meetings of NEB, Top Management Team (TMT), and Senior Staff Meetings (SSM);
- provision of executive services to annual Senior Education Officer and Education Ministers Council meetings; and
- co-ordination of policy submissions to NEC and assist in drafting ministerial policy statements, secretary’s circulars and ministerial statements to parliament (*ibid.*).

The Division is not a policy think tank as such, but rather a service unit of the department.

How is policy formulated? The Top Management Team (TMT) is the central unit in the policy formulation process. It has steered several major policy initiatives through NEC in recent years, including: TechVoc Corporate Plan (1999–2004); Literacy Policy (2000); National Skills Policy (2000); Self-reliance Policy (2001), and Gender Policy (2002). Ministerial policy statements and secretary’s circulars are forwarded to key Education personnel at the national, provincial and district levels and to head teachers of schools and higher education institutions, to advise them of new and revised policy initiatives.

A recent Review of Organisational Capacity (ROC) noted, ‘the policy capacity within the PRC Division was not as strong as it had been previously’ (ECBP 2005, 24). The ROC review has proposed a separate Policy Development, Review and Co-ordination Branch with the following roles:

- provision of executive support to the key policy and decision making committees in the Department of Education;
- coordination of policy development and policy advice to the Minister, Secretary and NEB when the matter crosses more than one division;
- advice to divisions on the policy development process and establishing a common framework for policy statements;

- monitoring and evaluating the collective policy across all divisions of the department;
- monitoring and evaluating the implementation of policy across the department; and
- provision of an annual report on the status of Department of Education policy to the SSM (*ibid.* 24).

Policy implementation

Education has been one of the most stable national departments since independence. A major reason for this has been the continuity of departmental secretaries. There have been just five secretaries for Education since independence. The continuity and the quality of those secretaries explain much about the progress of education in the thirty years since independence.

The same cannot be said for provincial divisions of education. Not only have they been less stable, but the quality of political leadership and the poor continuity of provincial education advisers (PEAs) in recent times have created difficulties. One province has had eight PEAs between 1985 to 2005, coinciding with the eight provincial administrators appointed during the same period.

Organic Law on Provincial Governments and Local Level Governments (1995)

The OLPGLLG represents a major effort by the national government to redirect focus towards districts and local communities.

National departments are no longer executing agencies for programs at local levels. Rather they are required to concentrate on policies and program frameworks (Rawlinson and Josephs 2001, 7).

The organic law stipulates that the Department of Education is responsible for:

- developing national policies and plans and co-ordinating their implementation in provinces and districts;
- supporting provinces with planning, professional services and standards;
- supporting provinces in research, training and professional development;
- building capacity to implement public investment projects;
- providing extended services in provinces and districts; and
- controlling curriculum at all levels.

On the other hand, provincial offices of education are responsible for:

- the administration of primary, secondary, vocational and technical schools within national policies and plans; and
- provision of support for the activities of the extended services of national departments.

The devolution of functions from central authorities to provincial and local-level governments has changed the role of central departments and increased the scale and level of responsibilities to be undertaken by provincial and district administration and by local-level government. For example, inspectors are placed in provinces and in districts. They are deemed to be national officers and responsible to the Inspections and Guidance Branch of the Department of Education for professional matters, but answerable to the provincial PEA in relation to administrative matters. Officers are unsure of their responsibility and commitment to the province and the district. The Teaching Service Commission (TSC), which is the employing authority for teachers, has delegated its appointment procedures to provincial education boards, and the Department of Education has decentralized some payroll functions to twelve provinces.

In the case of Education, with an existing decentralized structure, there have been fewer major adjustments required than for most other departments. The education reform agenda, and the National Education Plan, have provided a sound platform for provincial and district level initiatives. The changes that are most needed to facilitate the reform are in the areas of planning, resource allocation and management.

There is poor delivery of services at the provincial and district level and the OLPGLLG recognizes the need for capacity building at all levels of government. Provincial education plans are developed, but are often disregarded in preference for ad hoc planning decisions. There is a number of issues in this shift of responsibilities for education as a result of the organic law, for example:

- district planning and budget priority committee members are not fully aware of, or fully understand, the shift in responsibilities;
- officers do not have the required skills to carry out basic planning and budgeting activities;
- Education personal are uncertain as to roles and responsibilities; and
- there is a high turnover of public service staff to administer complex pay and TSC regulations.

Public servants at the provincial, district and local levels must be given ample opportunities to become conscious of, and understand, their responsibilities in terms of education planning, funding, effective decision making and the provision of appropriate services.

Two case studies

Policy implementation at the provincial level

In a study undertaken in 2001, managers of education, such as PEAs, district education administrators, primary and secondary inspectors, and education planners were asked a series of questions relating to policy to do with enrolments,

attendance, discipline, language in the classroom, repetition of grades, student food, and appointment and supervision of teachers (Guy *et al.* 2000).

Table 8.2 lists responses to several of the questions. The first column refers to the broad policy area. The second column indicates the official national policy in relation to the broad area. The third column indicates the understanding that the managers of education responding to the survey had of the official policy. The fourth presents a range of reported views from the managers of what happens in reality in their particular province.

There is considerable diversity of views from the managers of education. It appears that policies are initiated not only at the national level, but also at the provincial level, and the individual school level, with some head teachers setting their own policy even where it is clear that a national or provincial policy is in place. In practice, policy decisions undergo a further level of interpretation, commitment and implementation that is not adequately controlled by the Department of Education. There is considerable concern that policy directives that aim to enrol children in schools, and keep them at school, are not understood throughout the teaching service or by provincial and national managers of education. The policy landscape is littered with misunderstood and poorly implemented policies.

There is an additional element of time, which affects the implementation of existing policies. Guy *et al.* (2000) noted that few teachers and inspectors were aware of Secretary's Circulars Nos. 36/89 and 9/90 that encourage flexible timetabling and relevant education practices, at a time when teachers were bemoaning the apparent rigidity of the education system, which they saw as preventing flexibility in timetabling and relevant education approaches.

A good case can be made in these circumstances for a manual of current policies in education to be produced and distributed to key stakeholders in education.

National high schools: selection policy and process

National high schools are national institutions under the *Education Act*, 1995. Six national high schools were established in the 1970s. They were conceived as: national institutions drawing students from all parts of the country; selective institutions enrolling the top five per cent of students based on academic results at the Grade 10 examinations; the sole providers of Grade 11 and 12 education opportunities; and as a mechanism to foster national unity.

Table 8.2: The Interpretation and Practice of Policy by Managers of Education

Policy Area	Official Policy Statement	What is Your Understanding of the Official Policy?	What Happens in Practice?
Attendance	Attendance is compulsory in order to receive school certification The maximum number of days absent is 30 days after this students will be dismissed from school (Sec. Circular and Ministerial Policy Statement No. 2/94)	Attendance should be compulsory	Schools turn a blind eye
		Attendance is compulsory There is no policy on attendance There is no specific policy on attendance and number of days allowed for absences There is a 30 day rule Secretary's Circular 2/94 is clear No strict policy in primary schools There is no restriction as to whether attendance is a must A minimum of 10 days absence and truancy rules apply Provincial policy is to follow the 30 day national policy	Not all children attend classes Head teachers do their own thing Schools use punishment or call parents in for interview It is enforced in this province PEB overthrows decisions Students miss classes whenever they feel like it and return at their own discretion Teachers formulate own rules to counter poor attendance Policy not well implemented
Language in the classroom	Bilingual education in primary schools. (Secretary's Circular 38/99)	Schools are instructed to use English as the medium of instruction. No policy in place	Children are punished if they do not use English Encourage children to speak English
		English is the medium of instruction while Motu, Pidgin and vernaculars are used when situation allows Open language policy Upper primary and above is English. Lower Grades are mother tongue Not very strict English is official language at secondary school English is still enforced as the medium of instruction in schools	There is a tendency in this province to close schools early each term The use of vernacular is breaking through to the schools as part of the reform policy Children taught in own language up to Grade 5 Pidgin is commonly used at all levels Pidgin is used a lot In reality a lot of Pidgin is spoken Children are free to use own language more often
Repetition of Grades	Repetition is not allowed except in special circumstances	No repeating allowed There is no policy PEB can agree to repeating in genuine cases No repeats allowed Secretary's approval is required Repeats allowed on medical grounds and approved by PEB There really is none in place.	Children dismissed from school Some headmasters allow wantoks to repeat PEB makes a decision on the merits of each case Requested by BOM if school is closed or high levels of vandalism No repeat of Grades happens A lot of repeats in community schools. Repeats based on genuine reasons
		There is a policy of no repeats at Grade 6 and 8 but nothing for other Grades. No repeats at Grade 6 except for very good reasons	Schools ensure that no child who sat for a national exam repeats that Grade the following year. Those students performing below expectations are allowed to repeat

The model has been placed under considerable stress over the past ten years as a result of a substantial decrease in the allocation of funds to support national high schools; changes in official policy formulation; an ad hoc approach to the implementation of policy in relation to the management and administration of national high schools; and an unplanned and unbudgeted rapid increase in the number of secondary schools offering Grades 11 and 12 education.

The Australian government's Papua New Guinea Incentive Fund has played a strong financial role in supporting the redevelopment of a number of secondary schools, rather than national high schools, which has helped to shift the balance of public opinion about the relative merits of education in favour of secondary schools.

The *Education Act* clearly states the role of the NEB to establish policy decisions on behalf of the provincial authorities. However, the NEB has adopted several policy decisions in recent times that have resulted in the present set of circumstances that question the role of the national high schools.

Section 17 of the act attributes a number of specific functions relating to the national high schools to the NEB. These include:

- f) to allocate quotas of students to national institutions, other than exempt national institutions; and
- g) to establish national criteria for the selection of students to attend high schools and national institutions.

The national high school model underwent a significant change in 1994, and the selection criteria for entry into Grade 11 privileged the position of the newly created secondary schools by stating:

2. The selection authority for Grade 11 is currently the National Education Board.

3. Preliminary selection for Grade 11 in 1995 will be done by a committee comprising of the Principals of the National High Schools and the Principals, or provincial representatives, of all Secondary Schools.

6. a) the top 120 students from High Schools in the provinces that have got Secondary Schools will be directed to the School in their respective provinces provided that they have achieved an average of an Upper Pass in each of the four core subjects with an Upper pass, or better, in both English and Mathematics.

b) Once the students above have been identified, students will be selected for the national high Schools ... provided that their provinces have indicated their willingness to accept students from neighbouring provinces.

c) Following this selection, 70% of the eligible students from provinces with National High Schools should be selected for the 'National High School' within these provinces (Secretary's Circular 58/94 of 14/9/94, 1–2).

The selection policy decisions were made on the basis that the new secondary schools needed to establish acceptance in the community that they were capable of achieving academic results comparable to those of the national high schools, and the Department of Education was aware that the cost of transporting students from all parts of the country to the national high schools would become a sizeable burden. The requirement that the top 5 per cent of students based on academic ability be placed in national high schools was thus effectively removed.

The selection policy was revisited in 2004. A submission presented to the NEB in August 2004 outlined three options for selection criteria. It acknowledged that passes at a lower level than those canvassed in the three options would have to be accepted, noting that in 2003 nine provinces 'struggled to find eligible students to fill the secondary schools capacity' (Submission to NEB 17 August 2004, 2).

The submission reiterated that a committee was meeting annually to select Grade 10 students to pursue upper secondary education, but also noted that provincial selection committees had developed and that, 'Normally Principals are not members of these committees, therefore have no say in provincial selection activities' (*ibid.* 3). The main function of the provincial committees is to select students who have missed out because a poor result in one subject deemed them ineligible for selection.

The NEB (Circular 03/2004 of 23/11/04) reiterated that national high schools will select 70 per cent of their students from the host province and 30 per cent from neighbouring provinces, provided they meet the selection criteria. The minimum requirement for selection was upper passes in the four core subjects in the Grade 10 examinations. A selection committee, comprising the principals of those institutions offering Grade 11 education and an officer from the Department of Education, recommends students to the NEB for approval to enter Grade 11. There is no reference to directing the top academic students to any particular institution, and the policy decision of 1994, in which the top academic students would be directed to secondary schools, remained by default. National high schools now accept students with upper passes and, in a few cases, students who have one or two passes at the Grade 10 examinations.

In a recent study (NRI 2005), stakeholders were asked to describe the selection process of students entering secondary schools and national high schools in their province. All claimed that the province followed the national guidelines for the selection of students into Grade 11. In fact, there are several selection systems in place: in one province, the secondary schools and the national high school

share the pool of academically strong students equally — which is consistent with national policy; another province has developed a ‘feeder system’ of Grade 10 students to the upper secondary level, but only after the secondary schools have had the opportunity to retain the best students; several other provinces allow secondary schools to take the strongest academic students, while second and third tier students are sent to the national high schools.

Decisions made by the NEB, such as the 70/30 percentage distribution of students, and allowing secondary principals first choice of Grade 10 students, have unwittingly strengthened the position of the provinces and the secondary schools in the allocation of students to national high schools, and the distribution of Grade 11 and Grade 12 students to the detriment of the national high schools, whose performance and morale has declined correspondingly. The role of the NEB also has been appropriated by the provinces and secondary schools as a result of its 1994 decisions.

Conclusion

The Department of Education has been productive over the years, developing a range of policies directed at overcoming problems that constrain the development and delivery of education services. Some of these policies have been fortuitous, some have been flawed, and others have been forgotten.

The business of education has become much larger and much more complex as a result of the education reform agenda. Good policies that are understandable, can be implemented, and prove to be effective are required if the successful reform of education is to be continued over the next twenty years.

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