

Literacy in Papua New Guinea

Susan Malone

Part One: Community-Based Literacy for Adults, Youth, and Children in Papua New Guinea

Over the past decade, increasing numbers of vernacular literacy programmes for adults, youth and children have been established throughout Papua New Guinea. These programmes were initiated in response to the recognition by community, provincial and national leaders of several basic facts:

- People who are denied access to education as a basic human right are also denied the resources to contribute to their personal well-being, and to that of their families, communities, and nation.
- children, youth and adults who learn to read and write in a language that is familiar to them have a distinct advantage over those who are forced to gain literacy skills at the same time they are learning a foreign language.
- literacy programmes that are taught in local languages affirm local cultures and traditions and encourage the maintenance of local languages.

In response to the widely felt need for literacy among all segments of the population, the Department of Education has established a nation-wide programme to promote and support literacy efforts in both the formal and non-formal education systems in Papua New Guinea.

This paper describes the principle aims of PNG's national literacy

programme, outlines the main strategies and activities which have been developed to achieve the aims, and describes several special initiatives which have been developed to support PNG's literacy efforts.

Aims

The principle aims of the NDOE's literacy efforts are:

To support opportunities for adults, youth and children to

- gain basic literacy skills in their mother tongue and transfer their literacy skills into a national language
- maintain and expand literacy skills in both their mother tongue and national languages

To support local communities in developing their own libraries of locally produced literature which relates to the needs, goals, and the experiences of community members, and affirms readers' sense of identity with their traditional culture as well as their identity as citizens of Papua New Guinea.

To initiate and support the development, production and distribution of graded resource materials which can be adapted and translated into local languages.

To initiate and support the development of on-going systems of training and materials production at community, provincial, and national levels, with a priority on training trainers.

To initiate and support research in language and education; to maintain and expand the data base of existing literacy programmes, literacy personnel, and agencies and organisations involved in literacy.

To initiate and support evaluation of all aspects of literacy programmes.

Strategies

Strategy #1:

Maintain the Literacy and Awareness Secretariat within the Department of Education to co-ordinate and support community-based literacy and awareness activities within the non-formal sector.

Activities:

- 1) Maintain position of Director, Literacy and Awareness Secretariat.
- 2) Establish positions for 2 officers within the Literacy and Awareness Secretariat:
 - Literacy Training Co-ordinator
 - Literacy Materials Production Co-ordinator

Strategy #2:

Maintain the National Literacy and Awareness Council

Activities:

Provide funds for twice-yearly NLAC meetings, and for Executive Committee meetings and sub-committee meetings as required.

Strategy #3:

Maintain the Language and Literacy Section within the Curriculum Development Division to support literacy activities throughout the country.

Activities:

- 1) Train provincial trainers who will conduct teacher training courses in their provinces.

- 2) Train provincial trainers who will conduct Materials Production courses in their provinces.
- 3) Maintain and expand the capacity within the L&L to prepare and distribute resource materials to Provincial Literacy Centres.

Strategy #4:

Maintain and expand a comprehensive data base with information on language situations, literacy programmes and personnel, agencies and organisations involved in literacy.

Strategy #5:

Support the establishment and maintenance of Initial Literacy, Bridging and Vernacular Component classes within the formal education system.

- 1) Complete trial of Tokples Prep Curricula; adapt as necessary, and print for distribution.
 - 2) Produce, trial, adapt, and print curricula for Grade 1 and Grade 2 (Bridging).
 - 3) Produce, trial, adapt and print curricula for Grades 3-8 (Vernacular Component).
 - 4) Develop, publish and distribute resource materials for translation/adaptation into vernacular languages for use in Vernacular Component classes in Grades 2-8.
- 5) Support publication of vernacular literature (original and translated) for use in community and high schools.

Strategy #6:

Support the establishment and maintenance of community-based literacy activities for adults, youth and children.

Activities:

- 1) Trial, adapt, and print and distribute Basic Level Adult Literacy and Awareness Curriculum.
- 2) Produce, trial, print, and distribute Intermediate Level Adult Literacy and Awareness Curriculum.
- 3) Develop, trial, print and distribute Transfer and Independent Levels of Adult Literacy and Awareness Curricula.
- 4) Support publication of vernacular literature (original and translated) relating to the interests and needs of adults and youth in local communities.

Strategy #7:

Provide financial assistance to provinces, NGOs, and local communities to support established literacy programmes for the purpose of

- Training
- Vernacular materials for non-formal Literacy programmes
- Literacy programmes
- Subsidies for teacher salaries

Strategy #8:

Provide assistance to provinces and NGOs in developing long-range plans for literacy activities.

Activities:

At their request, assist provinces and NGOs in developing long-range plans for developing and maintaining large-scale literacy programmes, and in conducting programme planning workshops in which local communities plan their own literacy programmes. Distribute *Planning*

for Literacy in PNG to literacy co-ordinators and supervisors.

Strategy #9:

Support provincial and NGO literacy efforts by conducting training workshops.

- Research
- Programme Planning
- Teaching Methodologies
- Literature Development and Production
- Evaluation

Train experienced literacy workers as trainers in all aspects of literacy activities.

Activities:

- 1) Support government, NGO, Teachers College, and other training efforts through the provision of staff, materials, and financial assistance and through training trainers.
- 2) Produce Training Manuals for each literacy component.

Strategy #10:

Support efforts to develop resource materials for translation and/or adaptation into local languages for use in vernacular literacy programmes.

Activities:

- 1) Conduct workshops for training personnel of information-producing agencies in the production of graded resource materials.

- 2) Conduct workshops in provinces for the purpose of identifying specific needs of youth and adults and for training youth and adults to develop shell books for use within their provinces.
- 3) Publish graded resource materials on a wide variety of topics relating to needs and goals identified by youth and adults in PNG.
- 4) In cooperation with libraries, and with government and non-government agencies and organisations, develop a system for distributing resource materials to provinces, NGOs and communities.

Strategy #11:

Establish and support on-going systems of monitoring and evaluating all aspects of literacy programmes.

Activities:

- 1) Travel to projects to evaluate teaching methods, materials, training methods, curricula, community support and attitudes.
- 2) Train literacy workers to conduct participatory evaluations.
- 3) Prepare and publish evaluation reports.
- 4) Identify and contract an outside agency to evaluate the national programme.

Part Two: Supporting Adult Literacy in Papua New Guinea

Within the past 12 months, there has been an increasing call for adult literacy. Parents, educators, and community leaders have recognised the benefits of vernacular preparatory classes for children, and are expressing the need for literacy for youth and adults. In 1991 the Department of Education began supporting adult literacy through the following initiatives.

Curriculum

The adult literacy curriculum currently being developed for PNG, is based on interests and needs of people in their local communities, and recognises the holistic worldview of Papua New Guinea people. The curriculum is being developed so that it can be adapted to each learning group.

The adult literacy curriculum will be divided into 4 parts:

- **Level One, Basic Literacy** (in which adults gain basic reading, writing and numeracy skills).
- **Level Two, Intermediate Literacy** (in which they gain fluency in their literacy and numeracy skills).
- **Level Three, Literacy Transfer** (in which they transfer their literacy and numeracy skills into their second language).
- **Level Four, Post Literacy** (in which they continue to expand and use their literacy and numeracy skills in their daily lives).

The adult literacy curriculum will be developed so that it is appropriate for adult learners who have

- 1) a great deal of experience and knowledge, so the curriculum and teaching methods will build on the learners' experience and knowledge.
- 2) a great many responsibilities and time pressures, so the classes will be conducted at the times most suitable to the learners.
- 3) already identified their own special needs and goals, so the materials that are used in the classes will be developed to help the learners meet their own needs and goals.
- 4) a community language which they use for their everyday lives, so they will learn to read and write in their community language, and transfer to a second language when they have become fluent readers.

Materials production

Because adult literacy programmes in PNG are "community-based", the primary responsibility for materials production for adult literacy rests with community literacy workers, with support from provincial and national governments and NGOs.

The primary emphasis of materials for Level 1 (Basic Literacy) is to help learners gain basic reading, writing, and numeracy skills. Materials focus on topics of interest to learners. New information is communicated through oral activities. Written materials for new learners contain familiar information so that the learners can concentrate on the task of learning to read.

Once the adult learners have gained basic literacy skills, they are encouraged to use their skills to learn new information. Materials for Levels 2, 3 and 4 concentrate on topics which the learners have identified as important to them. Materials are graded according to reading levels and according to amount of new information.

Local people are encouraged to write, edit, illustrate and produce their own original materials for all levels of literacy. NDOE funds are used to provide paper, stencils, ink, and silkscreen printers for continuing local materials production.

In addition, government and non-government agencies produce and distribute resource materials which are translated and adapted into local languages. Resource materials will be developed for each level of literacy and will relate to topics which have been identified by different interest groups.

Training

In 1991, two distinct groups have expressed interest in establishing large-scale literacy programmes. Women's groups at national, provincial, and local levels are identifying trainers and co-ordinators for women's literacy classes. The Correctional Institutions Services has identified a co-ordinator and trainers for literacy classes in the nation's prisons.

The NDOE conducted four Adult Literacy and Awareness Training Workshops this year. Of these, two were regional workshops (for the Highlands Region and for the Papuan Region). Workshops for the Islands Region and the Momase Region will be conducted in early 1992.

The priority at each of the regional workshops is to train trainers from NGOs and provincial governments. Twenty trainers who have been identified at past workshops are receiving further training as trainers at follow-up workshops. This will enable regions, provinces and NGOs to continue training within their areas. The NDOE will continue to support and assist in adult literacy workshops, but will not take the lead in training after the 4 regional workshops.

Note:

This paper is reprinted with thanks to the National Department of Education, Goroka, Papua New Guinea.