

Sustainable Curriculum Development and the Implications for Teacher Training – A perspective from Inservice Training

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Introduction

The curriculum reform issue has been an agenda for the Curriculum Development Division (CDD), the Curriculum Reform Implementation Project (CRIP), and the Teacher Education and Staff Development Division (TE&SDD). The syllabi for Elementary and Upper Primary sectors were developed and published. These were based on the outcomes-based approach while those for the Lower Primary sector were developed using the objective-based approach. The syllabi for both the Elementary and Upper Primary were distributed to schools throughout the country while the syllabi for Lower Primary were re-developed and written using the outcomes-based approach. These were recently distributed to schools throughout the country.

In order to implement the reform curriculum effectively, a number of training workshops were organised for selected teachers, inspectors, and provincial education authorities by both CRIP and PNG Education Institute. Training through the workshops was conducted over three years, and are still being conducted.

This paper visits the training workshop activities that were used in preparing the participants to assist with the implementation of the reform curriculum in schools, the types of problems they encountered, and whether the (in-service) training had any impact on assisting the majority of teachers in implementing the reform curriculum or not. The paper concludes by highlighting areas implicated as been obstacles in implementing the reform curriculum in schools and suggested measures to be taken by Provincial Education authorities, particularly the inspectors to correct the mistakes, if any, and improve strategies.

Part A: Background information on the training workshops for Upper Primary Assessors Training.

A total of six upper primary assessor-training workshops were organised in 2003 and 2004 for the participants in the four regions of the country. These were held at Goroka (Highlands), Port Moresby (Southern), Lae and Madang (Momase), and Kimbe (Islands). The 5th and 6th Upper Primary Assessor Training Workshops were conducted in Port Moresby. Facilitators were selected from the Primary Unit of PNGEI, TESD, and CRIP. Materials (stationery, copies of the National Curriculum Statement, National Assessment and Reporting Policy), and the five in-service units were provided by CRIP. CRIP also met all expenses relating to the six workshops.

The five inservice units are:

- Unit 1: Philosophy of Curriculum Reform
- Unit 2: Upper Primary Curriculum reform
- Unit 3: Outcomes-Based Planning and Programming
- Unit 4: Learning and Teaching for Outcomes
- Unit 5: Assessing and Reporting Achievement of Outcomes

Structure of the Training Workshops

Participants selected were those who were graduates of the PNGEI Diploma of Education in Primary (In-service). The facilitators were those with lecturing background experiences at the Teachers' Colleges. Week 1 was a face-to-face mode with facilitators conducting training at a central venue. Participants were taken through intensive training. Days 1 and 2 were spent mostly on formalising of agreements between the participants and PNGEI while the rest of the week was spent on participants acquainting themselves with teaching strategies and completing Task Sheets for the four modules in each five in-service units. Each participant selected a particular In-service Unit s/he wanted to specialise in and then commenced preparation of Facilitator's Guide (FG), Indicators and Rubrics on the selected unit towards end of Week 1. They then returned to respective schools and continued working on outstanding tasks including one week's work of FG, Rubrics and Indicators for four weeks. During this period, participants were also expected to prepare for Week 2 face-to-face mode.

The Week 2 training was also intensive. Participants continued working on the three major tasks and at the same time continued working on the outstanding tasks. Participants are expected to complete the training by end of week 2 and achieve all 15 outcomes, particularly outcomes 11 - 15 (End of Course Outcomes). However, the principles of outcomes-based approach is important so participants are given time to complete all outstanding tasks using this model and submit completed tasks to the respective assessors for assessment.

Part B: Impact of the Training Workshops

The training workshops focused on providing knowledge and skills in training other teachers waiting upgrading of qualification from certificate to a diploma level. Those who undertook the formal training were allowed by PNGEI to conduct training while those who were fully endorsed as Assessors of the In-service Units were authorised to facilitate at trainings as well as assess participants' work. The prime role of the Assessors is to conduct training for PNGEI rather than been directly involved in implementing the reform curriculum.

Accreditation

Upon successful completion of training, Assessors were awarded credit points that they were able to bank with PNGEI for future accreditation purposes particularly with University of Goroka (UOG). Teachers who formally enrol with PNGEI and undertake training in completing individual In-service Units successfully are awarded 4 credit

points while those who completed individual lower primary units are awarded 3 credit points.

The new series of training this year prepare participants to undertake training in the revised In-service Units, which are a combination of the previous lower and upper primary in-service units. Additional units have also been developed recently.

Complications of Implementing the Reform Curriculum

A number of issues have been raised at the Provincial Briefing Workshops regarding reticence in been actively involved in in-servicing teachers to use the new teaching approach. Many teachers are still using the objective-based teaching approach simply because there is little or no in-service training at all on how to use the outcomes-based education to assist them implement the new curriculum.

CRIP had emphasised at the number of workshops it conducted the use of the assessors who are suppose to be actively involved with in-service training on the new curriculum. However, there are many complications that have emerged. The major one being that the inspectors feel inferior and threatened if/when assessors conduct training on the new curriculum. The feeling of insecurity to their employment overwhelms them the most. Other reasons include the number of years teaching experience, seniority, status and reputation in the school and community, lack of confidence in the use of outcomes-based approach, etc.

The outcomes-based approach is a dilemma to many teachers and inspectors, including many of those who have undertaken the in-service training workshops on the approach. The latter is a new experience that many are desperately trying to make sense of and accommodate in their day-to-day practices of teaching and learning. In order to be comfortably talking about and dealing with outcomes-based education, one must be clear in mind and understand what it is all about. Even those who have undergone training workshops are still trying to make sense of the new approach while teachers and inspectors are waiting to be in-serviced. Teachers College lecturers who undertook training have expressed similar sentiments, particularly reforming the method courses. Schools that have actually embarked on using the outcomes-based approach have voiced concern that new graduates from teachers' colleges teaching in these schools lack the knowledge and skills to use the new approach. Supervisors at these schools provide extra supervisory role in assisting the graduates - an extra responsibility that should have been addressed at Teachers' Colleges.

The Department of Education through the Minister of Education issued instructions for the full implementation of the new curriculum at the beginning of 2005. With the forecast of the first Basic Education Examination (Grade 8) using the outcomes-based approach in 2007, there is no time to waste.

Findings from the Workshops - Moderation for Lower Primary and Provincial Briefings

A series of moderation workshops were conducted throughout the four regions. The main purpose of these workshops was to establish ways of standardising assessment

throughout the country so that there was consistency in the assessment given to participants by Assessors.

During these forums, participants reported a number of interesting developments. Many practising teachers continue to use the objective-based approach for a number of reasons (1) They are used to using it and feel comfortable in using it in all aspects of the teaching and learning process. Many find it rather difficult/impossible to change to the new approach overnight. (2) There are no materials and resources at the schools to supplement the implementation of the new curriculum. Even if these are available, teachers need to be given in-service and regular supervision in the use of the materials and the resources. (3) Primary School Inspectors will have to reform their practices, beliefs and attitudes within the day-to-day operations. Their approaches have a lot of impact on the way teachers' approach teaching and learning. The authority they have is significantly important because promotion to higher levels is dependent on the type of report they compile. Although many teachers may have the knowledge and skills to use the outcomes-based approach, they are reluctant to use it when their inspectors will readily allow them to use it. Failure to comply with inspectors' instructions normally results in teachers been reprimanded unnecessarily, mainly through inspection reports.

The Primary School Inspectors, however, approached the implementation of the new curriculum from a different perspective. They expressed that the external assessors did not consult them on their activities therefore many assessors were told not to carry out training activities. On some occasions, it was obviously true that many PNGEI external assessors did not get approval from respective provincial education authorities to carry out in-service training activities because these sessions were either conducted during instruction hours or straight after school. The External Assessors were instructed during the Primary Assessor Training Workshops to conduct training activities during the weekends or not within instruction hours. Other authorities did not approve of the assessors carrying out training because the latter was not NDOE activity but that of the PNGEI alone. One issue seen by authorities as an obstacle that stood out was the payment of the assessors by PNGEI. Many authorities regarded this as been a breach of The Teaching Service Act and the Education Act. No specific sections of the acts were referred to.

Other potential participants preferred enrolling under actual lecturers from PNGEI rather than under the External Assessors. This posed problems for the speeding up the implementation of the new curriculum. This was seen to be a possible threat in slowing down the implementation process. No clear consensus was established on the extra responsibility of the External Assessors. While this tussle went on, one of the pre-service teachers' colleges took advantage and conducted training in the five in-service units and benefited from the fees paid by the participants. Authorities from one provincial education division put a ban on the External Assessors in conducting training and allowed the teachers' college in the province to conduct training instead.

Another major obstacle was the confusion that loomed within the external assessors, and I personally sympathise with them. Their prime role in the field was to conduct training on the five in-service units on behalf of PNGEI. However, the external assessors were

expected to assist with the implementation of the new curriculum as it was thought by many education authorities that the assessor training was more focused on the new curriculum. The underlying motive was that the external assessors take an active role in in-servicing teachers during school-based and provincial in-services on the use of the new curriculum while performing PNGEI duties after hours or on weekends. The latter should not, in any way, distract the normal teaching duties.

Full responsibilities of continuing the provision of printing and dispatching of the printed material are now the responsibility of PNGEI. Many teachers who have enrolled with PNGEI in undertaking training in the in-service units have expressed frustration in not receiving material from the institute although in-service fees are paid in full. No reasons have been given to the teachers by PNGEI as to why materials are not available. This is another obstacle that slows down the implementation of the reform curriculum.

Part C: Implications for inservice training in implementing the reform curriculum

In order to sustain curriculum development and effective implementation of curriculum change in the future, findings from Provincial Briefing Workshops, Lower Primary Moderation Workshops, Teachers' College Workshop, and the Upper Primary Assessor Training Workshops must be taken into close consideration by Teacher Education & Staff Development Division, Curriculum Development Division and Inspections and Guidance Division. From findings highlighted from the forums stated above, the three divisions ought to work as a team and work out strategies that will effectively address the problems hindering the implementation of the reform curriculum as well as other issues related to sustaining curriculum development and implementation in the future.

The following needs to be closely considered:

1. The strategies undertaken by TE&SD and CRIP need to be closely examined. As revealed by information from the workshops, it is obvious that the approaches and strategies used in the past training workshops did not quite have an effect on implementing the outcomes-based education approach.
2. The teaching and learning practices currently being used by the practising teachers are so deeply imbedded within them that these are difficult to change. Therefore, they continue to use them despite instructions to use the outcomes-based approach.
3. There are several other reasons why they may be reluctant to use the new approach.
 - They are incompetent to use the new approach. Undergoing training may not have any effect at all on changing to the new approach.
 - They feel comfortable and secure in using the old approaches.
 - Lack of resources and material support to use the new approach while there are materials for the old approach to be used.

- Lack of provision of relevant and appropriate in-service training. Do not have the *know how* to use the new materials and resources although these may have been already available in schools.
 - Lack of support from administrators and inspectors, etc. in using the new approach. Its use by those willing to may affect the possibilities of promotion to higher levels.
4. That the Inspections and Guidance Division work alongside TE&SD Division so the Head-teachers and inspectors are well acquainted with the use of the new approach, and encourage teachers to implement it with close supervision.
 5. The Primary External Assessors be given recognition and utilised in the in-service trainings, and that the Inspectors and provincial education authorities support them.
 6. That the past strategies in providing in-service training be critically evaluated and that alternative strategies be organised. Teacher training be seriously considered as the main alternative towards implementing the new/reform curriculum.
 7. A massive campaign needs to be mounted on the implementation of the new curriculum. The stakeholders must take all efforts in this course. It takes time for things to fall in place.

Conclusion

The curriculum reform was mainly targeted at changing the curriculum in the lower and upper primary sectors. The Syllabi and Teacher Guides were developed on time while the in-service component of the curriculum reform was given less emphasis. The Assessor Training Workshops for both lower and upper primary had different focus - decentralising PNG Education Institute's Diploma of Education in Primary - In-service (DEP-I). There was no direct training for the implementation of the reform curriculum apart from the briefings carried out by the Primary Section of CDU and CRIP in 2003.

New strategies have to be planned and organised so that all those involved in implementing the curriculum are well versed with the new approach. Teachers' College trainings be the new focus as students now undergoing training are fresh with no experience of the past approach (objectives-based) that may influence the use of the new curriculum. All efforts must be made to ensure that the students undertaking teacher training are exposed as much as possible so that they are well prepared to embark on the implementation of the new curriculum and also be confident in actively in-servicing the practising teachers in the field. This, in the long run, will sustain curriculum development and effective teaching and learning for teachers and children in the schools.