

*Topic: "Parental and Community Support towards Elementary Schools in Lae City: Policy and Practice".*

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## **“Parental and Community Support towards Elementary Schools in Lae City: Policy and Practice.”**

### **Background**

This mini research was intended to emirate and evaluate the outcomes of support from parents and communities toward elementary school. The study was conducted around the selected elementary schools in and around Lae city and a total of fifteen (15) elementary schools were identified for use with a total of sixty five (65) subjects. Of the total subjects, ten (10) were Head-teachers, twenty (25) classroom teachers, five (5) trainers, five (5) parents and five (5) senior elementary officers. The predominant focus on the topic was to discuss the parental and community support towards elementary schools in and around Lae city. In order to acquire this, the researcher took into consideration the following dimensions, and those were:

- Parents and communities supporting the elementary schools in their areas.
- The support is lacking because the elementary teachers are working in isolation.
- Both the teachers and parents have a bad working relationship towards the school.
- The ineffectiveness and failure of the school Boards of Management in performing their duties.
- Lack of professionalism between the teachers and the school administrators.

### **Design**

As this involves a single universe (Lae City), a mini scale comparative study was scheduled to observe and assess the types of support the elementary schools receive from the parents and their respective communities. From the universe, a total of 15 samples were drawn out to assist in this study. The samples identified include: Poasang, Pimigo, Butibam, Talair, Unitech, Tenth City, Boundry Road, Yongo, St.Mary's, Yambo, A total of sixty five (65) subjects were identified to assist in the study.

### **Subjects**

Most empirical studies require a random of representative sample, and for this study the samples were drawn from the Lae city elementary schools population. The sample comprises of fifteen (15) selected elementary schools which contributed sixty five (65) people who were used as the subjects of this study. Apart from the city schools, a good number of schools were also drawn in from the neighbouring district (Nawaeb) which includes schools from the Situm cluster and only one from Yambo elementary school in the Labuta LLG area. (Refer to Table 1 on page 2)

### **Instrumentation**

A questionnaire or the research pro-forma of ten (10) standard questions were designed and developed based on the topic or problem investigated. The first stage involved searching the literature and using the relevant data gathered to generate items for the instrument. The items generated covered five (5) bulleted areas as stipulated under **background** of this paper. The instrument consist of the ten (10) items (questions) with a 5 point Likert scale responses of 'Strongly Agree' (1), 'Agree' (2), 'Not Sure' (3), 'Disagree' (4) and 'Strongly Disagree' (5).

## **Sample and Procedure**

All the identified /selected Teachers in Charge, Teachers, Parents, Board of Management members and few Elementary Education officers from the selected samples with the universe formed the population of the study. The study sample was based on the randomly selected schools and the dedicated classroom teachers who voluntarily accepted to participate in the research and subsequently completed the questionnaire. There was a return rate of 100 %, which is all the sixty five (65) questionnaire forms sent out were completed and sent back to the researcher.

The administration of the questionnaire was taken care of by Mrs.Singin (Inspector, Elementary Education in Morobe Province) and the researcher. Only those subjects who accepted to be part of the sample were served with the questionnaire, and took about three (3) weeks on the average to complete. The data collected were analysed using the statistics of frequencies, analysis of variance, and reliability.

An added feature was the inclusion of qualitative data gathered through focus individuals/subjects written statements about their experiences as trained and qualified teachers in elementary schools.

**The table below summarized the elementary teachers, senior elementary officers and parents sample characteristics.**

**Table 1 :** Elementary teachers, senior elementary officer and parents population characteristics.

UNIVERSE	SUB UNIVERSE	SAMPLE	GENDER		TOTAL NO.
			Male	Female	
	Ahi	Poasang E/School	1	2	3
	Ahi	Pimigo E/school		2	2
	Ahi	Butibam E/School	1	2	3
	Ahi	Talair Co.E/Sch.	1	2	3
Lae City Schools	Ahi	Unitech E/School		3	3
	Ahi	Tenth City E/Sch.		6	6
	Lae Urban	Boundry Rd. E/S		3	3
	Lae Urban	Yongo E/School	1		1
	Lae Urban	St.Mary's E/School	1	4	5
	Lae Urban	Milfordhaven E/Sch	1	2	3
	Lae Urban	Elementry S/Staff	3	1	4
	Lae Urban/Ahi	Parents	3	4	7
Nawaeb District	Situm Cluster	Gobari	1	2	3
		Flriel	2	1	3
		Emmanuel	1	2	3

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		<b>Pohaom</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
		<b>Senior</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>
	<b>Labuta LLG</b>	<b>Yambo E/School</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>21</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>65</b>

### **Instruments**

The instrument used for collecting data was a questionnaire with ten (10) standard questions. This was disseminated to the selected subjects drawn out randomly from the legible sample population within the prescribed universe. The instrument will not be used to make a comparison, however, the subjects will use the questionnaire to facilitate replication of the research or study itself.

**(Refer to Appendix 7.1 for the ten (10) questions.)**

### **Related Literature Review**

Elementary schooling in Papua New Guinea was initially intended to begin in its own setting. It takes place in the child's own language and own setting or environment. (National Education Plan, FMV/CP March 1998 : 4)

This study has shown that the physical support given to elementary schools by parents and the communities is rated very low, as is a source of stress to most teachers. From the data collected, most teachers have confessed that they are copying with the problems mainly due to their experiences as well as their and qualification, know very well that the causes are deeply rooted in their own societies and not in Lae city alone.

Elementary education is the first three (3) years of a child's education in the child's own setting or community.

As a requirement and by law, a child must be at least six (6) years old when he or she can start school. As a common practice nation wide, a community plays a significant role in ensuring that the land or an area is allocated for the development of the school; liaise with those in authority to decide on a common language to be used – which shall be a vernacular language the child already speaks. (At this point in time, it is the opposite of what the law says.)

The community (parents and guardians) are, or may also required to assist by proposing or suggesting the names of those suitable to be elementary teachers, as well as to help teachers select what needs to be taught (curriculum) what ever it is, it must relate to the children's community.

From the researcher's perspective, the introduction of the elementary education and making it a law was to strengthen the education restructure as well as the curriculum reform programme for the country.

(Bagley, I., 1997: 1-7)

### **Policy Problems associated with elementary education in Papua New Guinea and other countries.**

The study revealed that obviously all elementary schools have problems which are of peculiar nature and pertain to the communities in which each of the school's is operating. Nevertheless, there are certain problems which confront all elementary education activities in the country.

In contrast to Papua New Guinea, Pakistan stands among the countries with the lowest participation rate at elementary and primary levels. In spite of the fact that ever since the creation of Pakistan's education system, all the policies and plans have been firmly committed to universal primary education, the prevalent situation is not encouraging. At present hardly 50 % of the relevant age group (5-9 years) are attending school. (Asian Development Bank, 1987:179)

Other studies have also revealed that, the Korean educational system is based on the six-three-three-four year pattern: six years of elementary school, three years of middle school, three years of high school and four years of university or college. The Korean education system has expanded significantly at all levels because of an intense desire for education on the part of the people and the increased investment in education and the human resource development by the government.

Enrolment in elementary schools is stipulated by law for all children who have reached the age of six, elementary and primary education is free of charge. The rate of enrolment for school age children in elementary schools is almost 100 %. One of Korea's current problem of elementary and primary education is **congestion**, especially in large cities. Due to classroom shortages, some elementary schools have to operate in two daily shifts and some of the existing school facilities are **absolute** and **inadequate**. (Asian Development Bank, 1987:251, 259).

From the data collected, the use of vernacular was the original concept of introducing the elementary schools in Papua New Guinea, as well as a medium of instruction in the child's own cultural setting and or the environment he or she is confined to. This has not been the case, as most schools are being set up in multi-cultural societies where you have children from all over the country attending school together, and as such the children can not speak their parents vernacular, but to use the language or a language commonly used. In most of the

samples visited, the children were taught in tok pisin and they all communicate in tok pisin. Only one school (Butibam Elementary School) used their local Jabem dialect as a medium of instruction in their school. The children must be taught in a language they can understand and communicate fluently in. (Primary Handbook: Community Awareness Edition, 1999:1)

### **Parental and Community Support to Elementary Schools in Lae city and the surrounding areas.**

From the results obtained, most parents and teachers (subjects) who were randomly interviewed said the elementary school belongs to them and their children. The committed parents and communities have supported and have been supporting their elementary schools by means of providing their services free of charge when help was urgently needed.

In return most teachers have expressed satisfaction and gratitude to those parents and communities who have assisted in one way or another in order to keep their elementary schools operating. A good number of elementary Head-Teachers and members of the Board of Managements spoken to expressed similar satisfaction to parents and communities for their positive contribution and continued input as well as support on how best they should run their elementary schools.

Finally, education of a child in any level of education or schooling is a shared responsibility. It is a shared responsibility in a sense that a wider sector of the community must be involved and not parents and their respective communities. These others would include:

- ❑ **Boards of Management;**
- ❑ **The Local Churches;**
- ❑ **All Levels of Government (Local, Provincial and National);**
- ❑ **District, Provincial and National Educational Personal;**
- ❑ **The Business Sector;**

By law, the parents and the communities must:

- ❑ **Physically and meaningfully support any changes that will or might come about;**
- ❑ **Be responsible for any infrastructure development that will come about;**
- ❑ **Liaise and work closely with the District and the Provincial Education authorities,**  
**as well as the Local level government in the overall planning of their schools.**
- ❑ **Contribute ideas and meaningfully as to how best they can produce school materials.**
- ❑ **Co-operate with their elementary school authorities in ensuring that their school is**  
**effectively ran and properly managed, as well as to protect the school property,**  
**teachers and**  
**and the children.**

### **Data Analysis**

Indicated below are the overall responses from the 65 subjects selected in answering the ten (10) items under each of the five (5) values.

**Table 2 : Overall responses by the entire population of 65 subjects**

<b>NO</b>	<b>ITEMS</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
1.	Parents and guardians are not assisting your school at all.	<b>8 (12.3)</b>	<b>21 (32.3)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>27 (41.5)</b>	<b>9 (13.8)</b>
2.	The parents and guardians do not assist or support your elementary school because the teachers do not work closely with them.	<b>4 (6.15)</b>	<b>11 (16.9)</b>	<b>5 (7.6)</b>	<b>33 (50.7)</b>	<b>12 (18.4)</b>
3.	Teachers and parents have a bad working relationship towards the school.	<b>3 (4.6)</b>	<b>17 (26.1)</b>	<b>7 (10.7)</b>	<b>23 (35.3)</b>	<b>15 (23.0)</b>
4.	Nearly all the or most of the parents are working class, and as such they do not have time to assist the school in one way or the other.	<b>4 (6.5)</b>	<b>11 (16.9)</b>	<b>4 (6.15)</b>	<b>21 (32.3)</b>	<b>25 (38.4)</b>
5.	The support your elementary school is receiving from your community is very good.	<b>10 (15.3)</b>	<b>24 (36.9)</b>	<b>4 (6.15)</b>	<b>21 (32.3)</b>	<b>6 (9.23)</b>
6.	Your school has a poor working relationship with the community.	<b>12 (18.4)</b>	<b>21 (32.3)</b>	<b>2 (3.07)</b>	<b>24 (36.9)</b>	<b>6 (9.23)</b>
7.	Your school is getting a lot of support and assistance from the Provincial Education authorities.	<b>4 (6.15)</b>	<b>22 (33.8)</b>	<b>15 (23.0)</b>	<b>15 (23.0)</b>	<b>9 (13.8)</b>
8.	Your school Board of management is not working effectively which leads to the parents and community not giving support to the school.	<b>20 (30.7)</b>	<b>21 (32.3)</b>	<b>6 (9.23)</b>	<b>11 (16.9)</b>	<b>7 (10.7)</b>
9.	The teachers in your school do not cooperate and work closely with the Head-teacher which makes parents and community loosing interest in assisting the school.	<b>2 (3.07)</b>	<b>7 (10.7)</b>	<b>6 (9.23)</b>	<b>31 (47.6)</b>	<b>19 (29.2)</b>
10.	The parents and the community do support the school very well.	<b>7 (10.7)</b>	<b>23 (35.2)</b>	<b>2 (3.07)</b>	<b>23 (35.2)</b>	<b>10 (15.3)</b>

## Conclusion

Considering the fact that Papua New Guinea has a large number of children and youth who need to be educated, the current education system is paving way for nearly all the children to have some form basic education starting from the elementary to senior or national high schools. With the optimal utilization of the limited resources available, the elementary teachers are trying their utmost best to bring the vulnerable group of the society into the folds of education the country offers. A modest beginning has been made, but for the sustenance and survival of the elementary education system, the country looks forward to a more decentralized effort. The results of the survey showed that, despite all the hindrances and problems faced (day in – day out), the elementary teachers have continued to served under very difficult and extreme conditions.

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**Appendix 7.1 for the ten (10) questions.)**

*Topic: Lack of Parental & Community Support Towards Elementary Schools in Lae City.*

**by Martin K. Surab  
(Head of Community Development Strand)**

**(Research Questionnaire)**

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gauge (get) your views and or opinions about the type of support and assistance you and your school get from the parents and community of your elementary school.

A total of ten (10) elementary schools and about 50 subjects/teachers have been identified to assist in this research. Of the fifty (50) subjects, 10 will be the Head-teachers, twenty (20) classroom teachers, ten (10) trainers and five (5) other elementary senior officers.

**Instructions:**

1. Read and understand the questions carefully before answering them.
2. Place or put a tick (v) in the box provided for your confirmed answer.
3. All information/details provided will be treated as strictly confidential.

**Your Questions:**

1. Parents and guardians are not assisting your school at all.

Strongly	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly
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<b>Agree</b>				<b>Disagree</b>

2. The parents and guardians do not assist or support your elementary school because the teachers do not work closely with them.

<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>

3. Teachers and parents have a bad working relationship towards the school.

<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>

4. Nearly all the or most of the parents are working class and as such they do not have time to assist the school in one way or the other.

<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>

5. The support your elementary school is receiving from your community is good.

<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>

6. Your school has a poor working relationship with the community.

<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>

7. Your school is getting a lot of support and assistance from the Provincial Education authorities.

<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>

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8. Your school Board of Management is not working effectively which leads to the parents and community not giving support to the school.

<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>

9. The teachers in your school do not cooperate and work closely with the Head-teacher which makes parents and community losing interest in assisting the school.

<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>

10. The parents and the community do support the school very well.

<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>

Feel free to make any additional comments below:

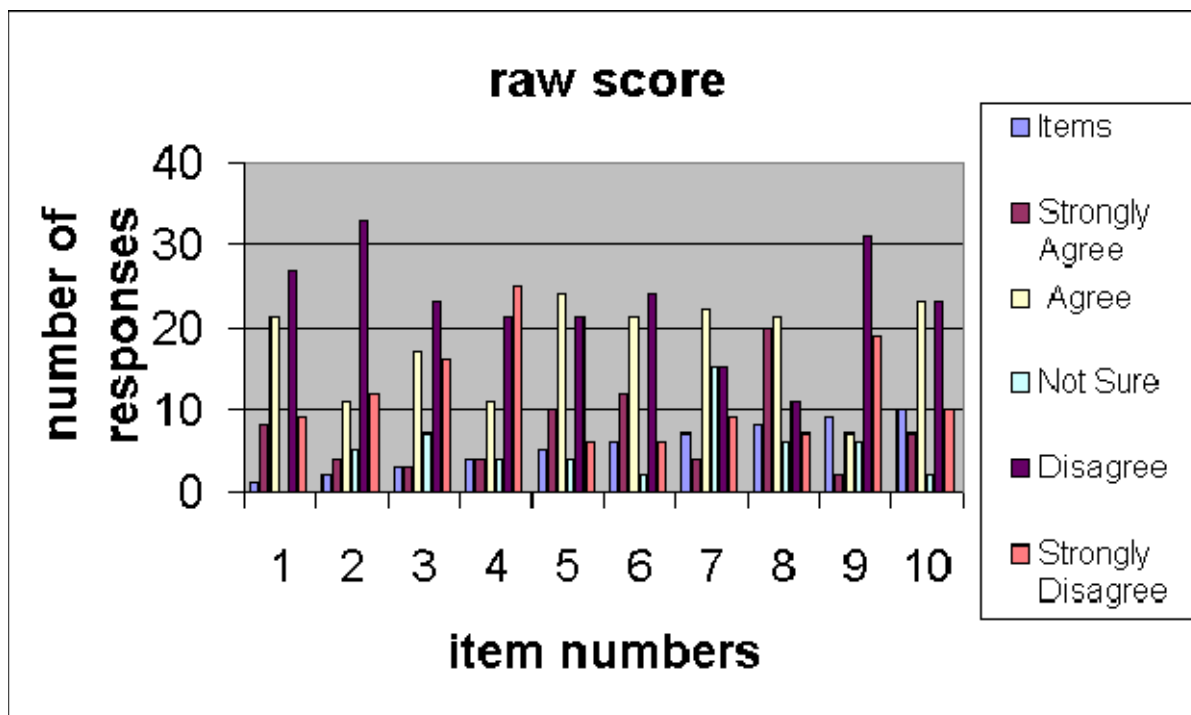
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Appendix 7.2 (Graph 1a.)

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Table 2: a Overall response by the entire population of 65 subjects

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	8	21	0	27	9
2	4	11	5	33	12
3	3	17	7	23	16
4	4	11	4	21	25
5	10	24	4	21	6
6	12	21	2	24	6
7	4	22	15	15	9
8	20	21	6	11	7
9	2	7	6	31	19
10	7	23	2	23	10



Appendix 7.2 (Graph 2b.)

Table 2b: Overall response by percentage of the entire population of 65 subjects

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	12.3	32.3	0	41.5	13.8
2	6.15	16.9	7.6	50.7	18.4
3	4.6	26.1	10.7	35.3	23
4	6.5	16.9	6.15	32.3	38.4
5	15.3	36.9	6.15	32.3	9.23
6	18.4	32.3	3.07	36.9	9.23
7	6.15	33.8	23	23	13.8
8	30.7	32.3	9.23	16.9	10.7
9	3.07	10.7	9.23	47.6	29.2
10	10.7	35.2	3.07	35.2	15.3

