

Changes in Mother Tongue Education Policy in PNG

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Four Periods of Policy Change

(since introduction of mother tongue (MT) education by North Solomons Provincial government in 1980)

1. 1980 - 1989 non-formal MT
2. 1989 - 1995 NDOE 'encouraging' MT
3. 1995 - 2012 The Reform (enacted),
(MT ed in the formal system)
4. 2013 - present Reverting to English as Lol,
(MT a subject)

Four Parameters for Each Period

Centralization. De-centralized vs
Centralized Policy

Materials. Materials Production

Experience. Trainers with experience in MT ed

Tertiary. Tertiary train in MT/multilingual ed

Period 1. 1980-1989

“De-centralised non-formal”

North Solomons (Bougainville) began move to MT education.

- good income from mine
- parents concerned about “cultural alienation” resulting from “Western education”
- to strengthen traditional language & culture
- local funding of staff salaries
- help from NGO (SIL)
- disrupted by “crisis”

Period 1. 1980-1989

“De-centralised non-formal”

EAST NEW BRITAIN began their MT program 1983.

- communities had to partially fund teacher pay before getting the program
- help from NGO (SIL) - technical assistance
- help from Canadian international aid -
materials production (partial funding)

Period 1. 1980-1989

“De-centralised non-formal”

ENGA Province began their MT program in 1985.

- teacher pay from Provincial Govt at first
- later it was a struggle
- help from NGO (SIL) - technical assistance

Period 1. 1980-1989

“De-centralised non-formal”

ORO Province began their MT program in 1985.

- coord. by Educational Research Unit (ERU) of University of Papua New Guinea
- mostly supported by ERU and NGOs
- provincial support was weak
(personnel & funding)

Period 1. 1980-1989

“De-centralised non-formal”

NEW IRELAND Province also.

- help from NGO (SIL)
with expert + material production

OTHER PROVINCES

- literacy programs for children
- help from offices of Non-Formal Education
- NGOs in specific language communities
or in Tok Pisin (larger communities)

Period 1. 1980-1989

“De-centralised non-formal”

OTHER PROVINCES

- literacy programs for children
- help from offices of Non-Formal Education
- NGOs in specific language communities
or in Tok Pisin (larger communities)
- * Angor (1981)
- * Gadsup (1983)
- * Amanab, Misima, Barai (1984)
- much help from outside (training & materials)
- some NGOs/provincial govts had training progs

Period 1. 1980-1989

“De-centralised non-formal”

Methods - several

- Multi-Strategy (Faraclas & Stringer)
(whole language + phonemic awareness)
used in Enga
- Gudschinsky-type eclectic primers
- Whole language (Evans)
- NGOs in specific language communities

All needed investment in materials production

Period 1. 1980-1989

“De-centralised non-formal”

Training

Supporting Tok Ples Education Program (STEP)
(by SIL) - many month-long modules.

- Centralised at Ukarumpa
- heavy investment of funds & personnel

Period 1. 1980-1989

Summary

Centralization. De-centralized
(except STEP training by an NGO)

Materials. Adequate, funded by various sources, NGOs, Prov Govts, NFE,...

Experience. NGO trainers, STEP trainers, experienced personnel

Tertiary. ERU for Oro Province

Period 2. 1989-1995

“Centralised NDoE”

National budget for a language & literacy section in the NDOE.

Curriculum Development Division (CDD) get 3 NGO (SIL) technical advisers.

National Literacy Committee

came up with a national literacy policy

Parliament approved a Literacy & Awareness program: “*children should learn in their MT*”

National Literacy and Awareness Secretariat

set up in NDOE.

Funds for communities, NGOs, provinces for materials and training for MT programs.

Period 2. 1989-1995

“Centralised NDoE”

CDD produced a manual for bridging to English in primary school, for those attending MT prep.

No teacher training in colleges to support the MT policy, except for short modules from CDD + NGO.

Materials - printed books + pictures, Shell Books, silk screen printing.

Period 2. 1989-1995

“Centralised NDoE”

Interactive Whole Language method (Yasuko Nagai) - did not need printed books.

= whole language + phonics method

hand-made large books (for whole language)
(by community)

- lots of preparation!

----> Shell Book library

Period 2. 1989-1995

“Summary

Centralization. Partial - large NDOE Involvement

Materials. Shell Book library
- lots of silk screening & printing
or hand-production

Experience. NGO contribution (e.g. IWL),
sufficient personnel

Tertiary. None, except modules from CDD
or NGOs

Period 3. 1995 - 2012

“Centralised MT in the Formal System”

1995. Education Act

- structural reforms

 - Elementary Schools: E-Prep, G1, G2)

- curriculum reforms

 - MT medium of instruction

 - in Elementary School

 - thru Primary School,

 - decreasing yearly as English increased

Period 3. 1995 - 2012

“Centralised MT in the Formal System”

1995. Education Act

- structural reforms

 - Elementary Schools: E-Prep, G1, G2)

- curriculum reforms

 - MT medium of instruction
in Elementary School

Period 3. 1995 - 2012

“Centralised MT in the Formal System”

MT was to be used (as medium of instruction) all through Primary School, but decreasing yearly as English increased.

CDD produced general curriculum guides for teaching MT in primary schools.

But ... I am not aware of any primary school that attempted to develop the CDD curriculum in MT or implement teaching in MT.

Period 3. 1995 - 2012

“Centralised MT in the Formal System”

PROBLEM: The lack of capacity to implement a MT program was the main problem hindering implementation of the policy.

Period 3. 1995 - 2012

“Centralised MT in the Formal System”

Four main reasons why not:

- 1. primary teachers teaching outside their language area*
- 2. some areas do not have people with sufficient education to become teachers*
- 3. the teachers had received no training in teaching in MT or in bridging to English*
- 4. there was too much work for teachers to develop the curriculum + materials for teaching it*

- Sonny Mai, principal of Amanab Primary School, Sept 2008 (at an in-service course)

Period 3. 1995 - 2012

“Centralised MT in the Formal System”

PROBLEM:

Insufficient Materials Production
Capacity

- there was **insufficient printing capacity** to print materials, even for provinces with only a few large language groups
 - let alone provinces with many languages

Period 3. 1995 - 2012

“Centralised MT in the Formal System”

PROBLEM:

Inadequacy of personnel
experienced in PNG languages,
culture, and literacy!

From international consultants to local teachers.

Period 3. 1995 - 2012

“Centralised MT in the Formal System”

International consultants: qualified in education

... but not in PNG languages, culture, and literacy

Trainers: local teachers trained as trainers, but most had NO experience teaching their MT or local languages!

(Training did not include the linguistics or literacy knowledge needed to establish programs.)

Period 3. 1995 - 2012

“Centralised MT in the Formal System”

Teacher trainees: many of those with secondary education had lived away from their language area too long - not fluent enough speakers.

With non-formal MT programs, teachers may have lacked secondary education, but they had adequate training and knowledge of the language, culture and literacy to teach in the MT.

But such teachers were disqualified to teach in the elementary system because of no secondary education!!!

Period 3. 1995 - 2012

Summary

Centralization. Centralized, formal, supporting MT

Materials. Insufficient capacity to produce!

Experience. Lack of experience in PNG
languages, culture, or literacy
OR lack of educational qualifications

Tertiary. Mainly PNG Educational Institute
preservice & inservice courses for
elementary teachers

Period 4. 2013 - present

“Centralized, English (instruction), MT (subject)”

After years of complaints from parents and teachers that children entering primary schools could not read, a new policy made English the main medium of instruction, beginning at Elementary level.

MT reduced to a subject.

Period 4. 2013 - present

“Centralized, English (instruction), MT (subject)”

Bilingual education at primary level has been eliminated by the policy, ... although it had never been implemented under the former policy!!

Period 4. 2013 - present

“Centralized, English (instruction), MT (subject)”

Volunteer Services Overseas (VSO) has developed a program for teaching English phonics that has been tested in many areas. Their personnel are also assisting many teacher training colleges in English instruction.

Period 4. 2013 - present

“Centralized, English (instruction), MT (subject)”

A Creative Phonics Workshop was conducted in late 2013 to train -
a select number of teachers college lecturers
and NDOE staff
in how to teach MT phonics.

Dec-Jan 2013-14 approx. 3000 elementary teachers were trained in Creative Phonics.

They were to begin teaching MT as a subject.
How well are they doing after minimal training??

Period 4. 2013 - present

“Centralized, English (instruction), MT (subject)”

I see Four Problems:

1. those to be trainers did not have experience in developing a complete basic phonics program for a language
2. Some had been long out of their language area, and were not comfortable developing lesson plans needing language knowledge
3. Elementary trainers did not get training in phonics.
4. Training at the SIL training course was only partial!!!

Period 4. 2013 - present

Summary

Centralization. Centralized, demoting MT

Materials. Creative (MT) Phonics needs minimal book production

Experience. Not enough in language, culture or literacy for trainers or teachers!

Tertiary. Becoming involved in Mother Tongue education training.

Conclusion

Although MT education has been judged as a failure after being introduced into the formal system, there is still an opportunity to demonstrate its value with the present policy of **the use of MT as a subject** instead of as a medium of instruction.

Participation of tertiary training institutions is positive.

Success will depend on **trainers** with adequate **experience** in developing programs - **trainers and mentors**, not just lecturers! At all levels!