

1. HIGHER EDUCATION AS AN INVESTMENT AREA IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA'S POLICY CONTEXT*

Introduction

This case highlights dilemmas faced by governments and higher education institutions particularly in new nations where both government and educational institutions are trying to locate their respective roles. The complexities of modern nations are highlighted. Governments and national planning bodies are concerned with increasing the nation's economic potential, particularly its income-producing capacity. Universities, as elsewhere, are recognised as providers of the trained manpower which produces that income, yet the link is hard to appreciate. Often they are seen as a large income drain on the economy; the work they do is not seen as immediately applicable to today's national priorities. There is a popular perception, shared by politicians, that universities do not conform to popular egalitarian concepts and that they should be made to do so. The issue, then, is how to co-ordinate and control universities without destroying the innovativeness and initiatives which the nation needs from these institutions.

The Case Study

Compared with other communities higher education in Papua New Guinea is a small concern having been conceived as an area of government policy and development attention in the early 1960s. The Currie Commission, under the chairmanship of (now Sir) George Currie, which submitted its report in 1964 is recognised as the "founding father" of this area of education in the country. The Commission concluded in its report that it sees higher education not only as a means to economic development, but as a key to it, and unan- imously recommended the establishment of a university institution which was accepted and which paved the way for the University of Papua New Guinea to be set up in 1965 and to commence teaching in early 1966 in Port Moresby. The aim of the University was conceded to be that of preparing higher level indigenous manpower to manage the country's affairs, particularly in government and public service. Particular areas considered to need immediate priority were agriculture, law, medicine and the generalist graduates in arts, education and science. Courses or programmes introduced at the University have reflected this view, with the exception of the degree programme in agriculture which was not introduced until 1973.

Circumstances at the time, with Australia being pressurised by the United Nations to immediately prepare Papua New Guinea for self-government

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and then independence, tended to cause the authorities, both in Canberra and Port Moresby to consider university education as the only desirable form of education to be stressed. Consequently, higher education tended to be seen as synonymous with university education. This view is still prevalent, even though post-secondary educational institutions have been set up, and in some cases even prior to the establishment of the university, in the fields of teacher education, agricultural and health extension activities and in-service training programmes for public servants. Likewise, due recognition of the important area of technical training did not become obvious until 1969 when the then Institute of Higher Technical Education, established in 1967, obtained university status, thus adding a significant area of studies to the university stream.

The Brown Committee

It is apparent that the authorities in Port Moresby have not had a co-ordinated view of higher education strong enough to move towards a policy direction aimed at organising the various forms of post-secondary education into a co-ordinated field of activity needing specialist attention for the purposes of policy formulation and resource allocation. An ill-fated attempt was made, however, in 1971, when the Brown Committee was appointed to consider and recommend the appropriate ways to co-ordinate all post-secondary forms of education. The terms of reference of that Committee were as follows. The Committee was asked to inquire into and make recommendations in respect of institutions that conducted post-secondary and tertiary courses, on:

1. the immediate changes considered desirable to rationalise and co-ordinate development of the institutions to achieve
 - (a) balanced growth of enrolments in keeping with the availability of school leavers and the projected demands within Papua New Guinea for trained manpower;
 - (b) maximum economies of scarce staff and physical resources;
2. the longer term changes considered desirable for these purposes, and the nature, composition and powers of permanent machinery required to achieve them and to advise the Government on these matters;
3. what it considers to be the most suitable arrangements for the management of institutions, other than the University and Institute of Technology, including any variations desirable in the conditions of service of their staffs;
4. the arrangements considered desirable to determine the status of the various academic awards, including the criteria that should be used to assess courses and ensure consistency of nomenclature.

Although the Committee fell short of recommending a fully integrated or

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single co-ordinated higher education sector, it did recommend a set of arrangements which were somewhat akin to the present higher education co-ordination in Australia. The main difference from the Australian arrangement was that the principal co-ordinating agency, the Tertiary Education Commission, was not to have a direct influence in financial matters. Additionally, the non-university, post-secondary institutions were permitted to remain within the umbrella of their parent departments for all day to day purposes. Appendix I shows the full range of the recommendations of the Brown Committee.

The Brown Committee recommendations were not adopted apart from the Government setting up the Office of Higher Education as a branch of the Department of Education which was intended to service the Tertiary Education Commission and its sub-units, the associations of tertiary colleges and an ad hoc Universities Finance Review Committee. The former still exists, but under a cloud of uncertainty as to its exact role in the co-ordination of higher education. The latter was disbanded in 1976 when the Government moved towards macro-level planning and financing of the public sector.

The non-implementation/adoption of the Brown Committee recommendations leads one to continually speculate whether there will, in the immediate future, be a central co-ordinating agency for the higher education sector and whether the Government feels strongly enough to develop a policy that would recognise the importance of higher education in the country. Additionally, one questions whether the macro-level, integrated approach to planning and development in the public sector is an appropriate mechanism for determining the needs of the higher education sector which is not geared towards generating income, but rather, the opposite, in that it consumes considerable resources. The consequences of the lack of a specific policy direction in the area of higher education means firstly, that it is treated in a divided manner with, perhaps, a less than desirable level of consultation between universities on the one hand and the parent departments of the institutions on the other. Secondly, as an implication of the first consequence, the value, the insight and the priority that may be set vis-a-vis the future progress of higher education activities tend to rest almost entirely on the whims or inclinations of those authorities under whom the various institutions come, although theoretically those authorities are supposed to determine the needs and future of institutions relative to the general government policy as it stands. Thirdly, there is the likelihood of undue waste of scarce resources caused by the duplication of efforts and pursuing a set of objectives that may not necessarily fall within the needs or demands of the community.

Problems with Government Policy towards Higher Education

The above exposition, which is largely historical, has been outlined in a lengthier manner than was perhaps necessary. However, it does assist the writer (and hopefully the reader) to gain an appreciation of the extent of the uncertainties (perhaps only in the writer's mind) that appear to exist over the future of higher education in Papua New Guinea given the nature of

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the policy pursued by the Government from the early years of the introduction of higher education to the present. The following commentaries trace the policy directions in higher education noting actual or speculative rationales or explanations that may have influenced those directions. It might be reiterated here that general government policy with respect to the whole of the public sector had been to centrally co-ordinate and plan all the activities of government departments and instrumentalities on an integrated basis being guided by the need for

- 1 equality of opportunities and development;
2. regular reviews of priorities, giving weight to areas of activities with the potential for income generation and geographical regions disadvantaged by lack of growth in development;
3. education in general to be geared towards permitting as many eligible people to receive it as possible and higher education to be geared towards fulfilling manpower requirements of the country, especially in the public service.

Perhaps the seed for pursuing the line being taken may have been sown at the time that introduction of higher education was being contemplated. The Currie Commission (1964) concluded in its report, a view that:

"Educational development must be directly integrated with other development, otherwise much of the money and effort devoted to education will be dissipated to no solid purpose. In other words, it must be investment, not simply welfare expenditure; and this is in the longer term interests of welfare itself."

General education policy has been geared towards providing general literacy and numerical skills to equip school leavers for life in the rural areas, thus the emphasis on universal primary education. Secondary, technical and higher education were thought to be specialised in nature and designed to meet the manpower needs of the developing government and monetary sectors. The manpower question was therefore implanted in the minds of government authorities in the early days of the introduction of education by the government. The general trend is perhaps exemplified better in this statement from the 1973/74 Papua New Guinea Improvement Plan:

"During the 1950s education policy was characterised by efforts to expand primary education. Changes in political and economic policy during the 1960s led to a slow-down in the expansion of primary education with greatest emphasis being placed on secondary, technical and higher education to meet future manpower needs..."

Expenditure figures in higher education are somewhat misleading in two respects.

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1. Until about the time of independence in 1975 the two universities were financed directly from Australian federal funds appropriated from Canberra and approximating A\$7-10 million per year when the Papua New Guinean Government took over financial responsibility.
2. The non-university forms of higher education have been, and continue to be, the responsibilities of various government departments which makes it difficult to separate the exact amounts being spent. Thus, only a guestimate can be made from looking at what the concerned departments set aside under the heading of training (or staff development), noting, too, that a good part of this amount is likely to be related to general staff development or in-service training.

The "Eight Aims"

The first ever attempt by a Papua New Guinean Government to consider and set down its thoughts and plans took place in 1973. The first national Government, under Mr Somare, propounded what is known as National Goals and Directive Principles, popularly referred to as the "Eight Aims", which are shown below.

1. A rapid increase in the proportion of the economy under the control of Papua New Guinean individuals and groups and in the proportion of personal and property income that goes to Papua New Guineans.
2. More equal distribution of economic benefits, including movement toward equalisation of incomes among people and toward equalisation of services among different areas of the country.
3. Decentralisation of economic activity, planning and government spending, with emphasis on agricultural development, village industry, better internal trade, and more spending channelled to local and area bodies.
4. An emphasis on small scale artisan, service and business activity, relying where possible on typically Papua New Guinean forms of business activity.
5. A more self-reliant economy, less dependent for its needs on imported goods and services and better able to meet the needs of its people through local production.
6. An increasing capacity for meeting government spending needs from locally raised revenue.
7. A rapid increase in the equal and active participation of women in all forms of economic and social activity.
8. Government control and involvement in those sectors of the economy where control is necessary to achieve the desired kind of development.

It was around these eight aims that the National Improvement Plan of 1973/74 was launched. Under this plan the Government moved away from triennial planning and financing of the public sector to an annual plan. The notable features included heavy emphasis on economic activities, particularly those areas which were to generate income internally so as to minimise reliance on overseas aid, notably from Australia, which was at that point around 60 per cent of the Government's total income. Another feature was to give nationals incentives to produce goods and services themselves so that they might become less reliant on government help. The Government also emphasised that there would be equal opportunities for nationals by concentrating on helping those areas and groups which had been disadvantaged up to that point for a variety of reasons. In the area of education, emphasis was laid on technical and vocational sectors, especially the latter which was considered to be most important to the needs of the rural population. Higher education, notably university education, was more or less untouched. Both universities were still in their development phase and their finances were still derived from Canberra. Teacher training, and training of agricultural and health extension officers, were largely a function of the parent/consumer departments and so the nature and demands in these areas of higher education were left to the departments concerned.

Independence, Localisation and Proposals for a Single University

The sort of plan introduced in the 1973/74 fiscal year continued to be the policy framework that the Government used in the development of the public sector until 1979. However, during the period 1972-1978 a number of important events took place which were to introduce new dimensions to public sector development. These included a policy initiative in 1972/73 whereby the Government decided that the whole of the public sector needed to pursue a programme of staff development with the view to localising the overseas staff, particularly at the senior policy-making levels, e.g. heads of government departments and statutory bodies. The second significant development was the achievement of self-government in 1973 and finally independence in 1975. These developments influenced the Government's attitude in the following areas.

1. A considerable level of effort was geared towards in-service and staff development programmes, at home and abroad, for potential national employees with a view to having them replace their overseas counterparts.
2. There was a greater tendency towards seeing universities as sources for producing manpower, especially for the public sector.
3. There was a determination to limit the growth and development of universities, the responsibility for which became that of the national Government as from about the time of independence. The transfer of this responsibility from Canberra to Port Moresby also signalled a greater degree of control, not only in terms of enrolments and expenditure but also in future directions.

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With reference to the last point it is significant to note that in 1974 a government appointed Committee of Inquiry into University Development made a set of recommendations which can be summarised as follows:

1. a single university concept which would have had the effect of greatly increasing the Government's authority over the institution since the present legislation which guarantees certain levels of autonomy for the two universities would have been superseded by different legislation giving the Government a greater say in university affairs;
2. the programmes offered by the single university could have been mounted and dismantled according to the needs and priorities set by the Government in line with the sort of policies being pursued.

A number of impracticalities were discovered in the process of discussing the implementation of these recommendations which caused the report to be shelved indefinitely. It now seems that the report and the recommendations may not be reconsidered. Aside from this, however, the Government did decide to limit the growth of the two universities. In the case of the University of Papua New Guinea the expenditure and the enrolment levels were to be held at the 1975/76 levels. The University of Technology was permitted to grow for a further few years until its already-in-progress capital works were completed so that its enrolment figures could be increased to an acceptable level.

National Public Expenditure Plan, 1979-82

In 1979 the Government launched a new format for planning and financing the public sector. The 'new development strategy', as it is known, is based on a rolling triennium but it is different from the earlier plan in that the capital works component of expenditure has been removed from the composite estimates of departments. Financial submissions are requested in two separate packages - the recurrent and the capital/expansion programmes - and are considered on separate bases. The 1976 level of expenditure for recurrent activities forms the basis of allocations for all government departments and statutory bodies. All new projects or expansion of existing activities form submissions under the National Public Expenditure Plan (NPEP) where a specific amount (approximately 3 per cent of the total expenditure) is set aside in a central pool and allocations are based on the merit of the project and not as a categorised item, according to the priorities set by the Cabinet. The policy direction still favours the investment activities and the income-generating economic projects.

In a general policy statement regarding education at all levels, the Government stated in the Plan that

"The Government places a higher priority on the development of appropriate skills for its development efforts and on measures to promote ownership and managerial involvement in private

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enterprise and involvement in public decision-making. A major goal of the Government is to promote equality of opportunities for all parts of the country and for women. Resources will be allocated to this category (i.e. Training and Increased Participation) according to manpower requirements with emphasis on greater opportunities for less advantaged people.'

It was pre-empted in 1979 when it was decided that a more specific policy on higher education generally would be evolved once an inter-departmental committee - consisting of representatives from the Department of Finance, Office of Higher Education, National Planning Office and the Public Services Commission - had considered ways and means of reducing costs of higher education. The eventual view on this depended on a set of manpower figures that the National Planning Office was working on (and which is yet to surface). However, at the time the National Planning Strategy was launched in 1979 it was observed that graduate output need not be stressed as

"the supply of skilled manpower from Universities will catch up with the demand for skilled manpower in most areas given projected growth rates of the public and private sectors."

Accordingly the Government has decided:

"that apart from a few small specialised programmes which need expansion to provide specialised skills in some high level manpower areas, the existing physical capacity of the Universities will not be altered during the Plan period."

The latest picture is therefore that the higher education sector is in a stagnant phase, if not in decline. The next Plan period (1982-84) may see some changes, but it is difficult to project any significant trend as long as the non-education sectors are emphasised and as long as manpower continues to be accepted as the major influence on higher education. While the trend may have been justifiable given that there was a need to get a number of areas to "take-off", a continuing trend of stifling development in higher education may not be in the best interest of that sector nor for the country as a whole. In at least one respect there needs to be a change of attitude. It is recognised that political developments which have now ensured the establishment of twenty-one separate governments in the country (one being the national Government) do call for increased levels of higher trained manpower. The present policy has not taken this development into account, even though the present plan was being worked out at about the same time as the development of provincial governments. In another respect, the country still recruits quite a number of overseas staff for the public service at considerable expense. One might wonder whether in the long term it might be worth increasing the pace of development in higher education, even for given periods of time.

Until a change is made, higher education appears to face an uncertain future.

APPENDIX I

The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (1971):
List of Recommendations

- 1.(a) That a Tertiary Education Commission should be established as an advisory body with the following functions:
 - (i) to advise the Government of Papua New Guinea on tertiary education and, in particular, on the needs of the community for sufficient people to be trained and educated to achieve a balanced development of resources;
 - (ii) to advise the tertiary institutions of Papua New Guinea with a view to promoting co-ordination and mutual assistance;
- (b) That the Tertiary Education Commission be constituted along the following lines:
 - a Chairman appointed by the Government;
 - the Director of Education;
 - the Director of the Office of Programming and Co-ordination;
 - the Chairman of the Public Service Board;
 - the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Papua New Guinea;
 - the Director of the Institute of Technology;
 - three of four members appointed by the Government. (paragraph 7.12)
- 2.(a) That a Tertiary Education Finance Board be appointed by the Government to advise on financial proposals made by the University and the Institute of Technology and on any other financial matters in the tertiary education field that are referred to it;
- (b) That this Board consist of three persons, that the Chairman be the Chairman of the Tertiary Education Commission and that the other two persons be not members of the governing body or staff of any institution whose finances are, or are likely to be, under investigation by the Board. (paragraph 7.17)
- 3.(a) That all tertiary institutions other than the University and the Institute of Technology be linked into loose federations according to areas of vocational interest;
- (b) That these federations be called associations of tertiary colleges and

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have the functions outlined in paragraph 8.20, viz:

to advise the Tertiary Education Commission on such matters as the Commission refers to them;

to make submissions to the Tertiary Education Commission on matters relating to their member institutions;

to act as forums for discussion of common problems;

to work towards the avoidance of duplication and overlap of courses;

to make recommendations to the Tertiary Education Commission and parent departments on such matters as standardisation of facilities, terms and conditions of staff and amenities for students. (paragraphs 8.17 and 8.20)

4. That the question of raising throughputs in professional courses be referred to the Tertiary Education Commission for urgent consideration. (paragraph 3.17)
- 5.(a) That a further 125 places for electricians and radio mechanics and 75 places for technicians in engineering be provided in technical colleges over and above current Department of Education plans;

(b) That further investigation be carried out to determine the nature of the specific courses required within these fields. (paragraph 3.24)
- 6.(a) That secondary teacher education facilities be established on, or adjacent to, the campus of the University of Papua New Guinea at an early date to provide some 200 further places for secondary teacher education;

(b) That these facilities be part of a joint-agency college. (paragraph 4.4)
7. That additional places be provided in primary teachers colleges so as to have at least 4,500 places by 1980.
8. That the Teacher Education Committee of the Tertiary Education Board, or its successor, pursue a policy of consolidating small teachers colleges into joint-agency colleges to provide for some portion of the necessary expansion in primary teacher education, and, in particular, that it consider the possibility of establishing such a college at Waigani. (paragraph 4.14)
9. That proposals currently being prepared for an expansion of accommodation, facilities and courses at the Administrative College so that the Public Service may proceed more rapidly towards localisation, be developed vigorously and implemented as soon as possible. (paragraph 5.9)

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10. That, in any proposed expansion of activities of the Administrative College, the College remain a Government instrumentality responsible to the Public Service Board, but that it operate within the framework of its own ordinance and under the guidance of its own council. (paragraph 5.13)
11. That there should be the fullest co-operation between the University and the Administrative College in developing courses and that, in due course, the University develop postgraduate courses in public administration. (paragraph 5.17)
12. (a) That, for any semi-professional technician training conducted outside the University or Institute of Technology, the possibility of using facilities (particularly laboratories) of the University and Institute of Technology be closely examined to avoid duplication of expensive equipment;

(b) That, as a general rule, courses for industrial technicians be conducted in technical colleges where facilities can be used for both trade and industrial technician training. (paragraph 6.4)
13. That the guidelines for technician courses be:
 - (a) courses for semi-professional technicians should be of three years duration (or the part-time equivalent) following the completion of form IV;
 - (b) courses for industrial technicians should be of three years duration (or part-time equivalent) following the completion of form III;
 - (c) students who have completed form IV should be able to complete an industrial technician course in two years full time study (or part-time equivalent); (paragraph 6.7)
14. (a) That the industrial technician qualifications should be a certificate;

(b) That the semi-professional technician qualification should be a diploma;

(c) That the first professional qualification should be a bachelor degree;

(d) That additional professional qualifications should be a postgraduate diploma or degree of master as appropriate. (paragraph 6.8)
15. That the Institute of Technology conduct a range of semi-professional technician courses. (paragraph 6.11)
16. That there be an immediate increase in the resources available to the Vocational Guidance Section of the Department of Education and to the

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associated careers advisers in the high schools. (paragraph 9.8)

17. That consideration be given to treating non-government teachers colleges and senior high schools (or junior colleges) as full tertiary institutions for the purpose of awarding scholarships. (paragraph 9.9)
18. That the Tertiary Education Commission give consideration to the provision of full opportunities for women to receive higher education and to the provision of suitable accommodation for married students. (paragraphs 9.12 to 9.15)

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