

The E Course: expatriate teachers for pre-independent Papua New Guinea

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A little known facet of Australia's colonial education delivery in Papua New Guinea (PNG) was the 'E Course'. Originally termed the Emergency Course, it was a teacher recruitment and training programme that took place prior to PNG's independence in 1975. The programme was specifically designed to implement a rapid training and placement of minimally educated, English speaking teachers, into PNG primary schools under the Australian Administration. The scheme took place during a period when post-Second World War conditions were continuing to impact upon teacher availability from Australia, and shortages in personnel were impeding Australia's attempts to create a literate population in PNG. There were evident benefits from the course, both for Papua New Guinean primary school students as well as Australia's short-term administrative and political requirements. However, analysis of the programme and its context also suggests that the Australian Administration at the time evinced a degree of pragmatism, both in the implementation of the course and the means by which teachers were installed in PNG's schools.

Much of the material used in this paper comes as a result of interviews and research undertaken during doctoral studies on the changing aspects of the expatriate teachers' place and identity in PNG's transitional society both before and after independence.

Introduction

PNG, formerly an Australian colony, has been an independent nation since 1975, and it is Australia's nearest northern neighbour. The countries' mainlands are separated by only 160 km across the Torres Strait. The mainland where PNG is situated is divided, sharing a western border with the Indonesian territory of Irian Jaya (formerly Dutch New Guinea until 1963). Prior to the First World War, the eastern mainland area that is now PNG, along with its offshore islands, was divided by colonial arrangements between Germany and Britain. In 1914, Australia occupied the German New Guinea area in the north, and by 1921 this territory had become an Australian mandate. The British Protectorate over Papua went to the Australian Commonwealth as the Territory of Papua in 1906. Both the territories of Papua and New Guinea were under military administration during the Second World War and, in 1946, a UN Trusteeship Agreement with Australia came into force. Both territories then came under the aegis of Australia's Department of External Territories.¹ This controlling body is generally referred to both in PNG and Australian literature

1 Although the colonial territories were still separated and referred to as Papua and New Guinea until independence, for expediency this paper will use Papua New Guinea in reference to both pre- and post-independence periods.

as the Australian Administration. Its control continued through until self-government was granted under the Whitlam Labour government in 1973, and the declaration of independence as the nation of PNG on 16 September 1975.²

The Department of External Territories' Australian Administration controlled a geographical area of mainland and islands within which were more than 720 separate and discrete tribal language groups, and their affiliated clans. Such kinship boundary separations were always ignored by the various colonial administrations and, even into nationhood, territorial and provincial boundaries have been drawn across many of the tribal lines. Among many other convoluted situations arising from the tribal differences, the diversity of languages has meant difficulties for the delivery of formalized education in PNG. While there had been a long history of traditional education among the various peoples who make up today's PNG population, there were no educational institutions along Western lines, or written languages extant in PNG prior to European contact. Partially due to this factor, but more because of Australia's self interest, the Administration ruled in 1955 that English was to be the language of instruction in schools across PNG. Despite this ruling, and because education in some areas has not been seen as necessary, or not available to all children everywhere, the two local 'pidgin' languages, Motu and Tok Pisin have continued to spread. These, along with English, are the main *lingua franca* common across most of PNG.³

Currently, the system in primary schools in PNG allows for the first two years of schooling to be taught in the local vernacular, although this was not the case under Administrative control. Most children in PNG have, therefore, come to English as their second or third language. Firstly they speak their own *tok ples* (local tribal language), then either Motu or Pisin, then sometimes the *tok ples* of the nearest other tribe. At school they learn English. Prior to Second World War, beyond the need to communicate orders and control their colonized subjects, the requirements of formal education and English acquisition were not seen as a priority by Australian administrative bodies in either Papua or New Guinea; education for 'the natives' was viewed as both wasteful and dangerous by most colonial residents of both territories.⁴ The advent of the Second World War in the Pacific War changed the situation dramatically.

The context of post-war education in PNG

The Second World War Japanese invasion of the territory was repelled by Australia, the United States, and the invaluable assistance of Papua New Guineans across the country. Australia then had to acknowledge in concrete terms the debt it owed to those Papua New Guinean people whose everyday village life had been brought so rudely into the twentieth century. Australia could not easily resume its pre-war colonial status, and her post-Second World War political agenda for PNG also brought radical changes in attitude towards formal education for the people.⁵

2 I. Downs, *The Australian Trusteeship Papua New Guinea 1945-75* (Canberra, 1980), provides an extensive coverage of the post-war political history of PNG up to independence.

3 P. Muhlhäuser, 'Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea', in R. W. Bailey and M. Gorchach (eds), *English as a World Language* (Michigan, 1982), 439-55.

4 D. G. Bettinson, 'Racial tensions in Papua-New Guinea', *Educating for Tomorrow* (Melbourne, 1963), 54-67.

5 For an overview of schooling in PNG that addresses the situation of indigenous teacher education, see T. A. O'Donogue and D. Austin, 'The evolution of a national system of teacher education in the developing world: the case of Papua New Guinea', *History of Education*, XXIII/3 (1994), 301-15.

At the end of the Pacific War, the Government committed Australia's taxpayers to what was, ostensibly, 'a policy of social, political and economic development in Papua and New Guinea so that the people would be able to govern themselves and choose their future status'.⁶ To implement this policy, the Australian Administration took over the control of the education system from the Christian missions, who, until then, had been the major providers of schools for Papua New Guineans. The Australian government, impelled by an impatient UN, reasoned that a formalized, secular, Western education was the major means by which the people of PNG could be coerced and stabilized into the fabric of a cohesive nation. Once educated, the Papua New Guinean people would be competent to take charge of their own political and technological advancement in a way that would agree with the agenda of those who had been their former colonial masters. Initially this agenda was to be implemented by slow and measured means. From taking up office in 1953, the Minister for Territories, Paul Hasluck had set the Commonwealth Education Department in the Territory the task of providing a universal primary education for PNG that was commensurate with what he believed were the country's requirements within a policy of considered gradualism. But in 1960 Hasluck was prevailed upon to change that assignment. He was instructed to build up a secondary school system as well as look to provision of indigenous tertiary education.

There is a divergence of opinion as to the main reasons for Australia instigating this change,⁷ but the consensus is that Prime Minister Robert Menzies was influenced almost completely by external pressures. A major pressure for change came from the United Nations and the recently decolonized African states within that organization. British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's 'Winds of Change' attitude regarding the decolonization of territories under Commonwealth rule was brought to bear on Menzies. Further pressure came from the UN Mission to PNG in 1962 with Australia being urged to step up plans to grant self-rule to both PNG in a not too far distant future.⁸ In addition to these pressures, the government perceived that, due to its relative geographic position to PNG, Australia was vulnerable to Indonesian expansion in the Pacific area.⁹ The view was that if any strategic difficulty emerged from that expansion in the north-west, it was necessary for Papua New Guineans to understand the importance of their ties with Australia, rather than with any other nation.¹⁰

The changes in educational delivery that Hasluck then instigated were not, as Colebatch has remarked, 'a neat switch from one clearly-defined policy to another',¹¹ rather they were changes in the Australian policy-making focus for the Territories. Where previously there had been the expectation of slowly building up a 'perfect society' through gradualized universal primary education, the utopian ideal pro-

6 Downs, *The Australian Trusteeship of Papua New Guinea*, xviii.

7 P. Smith, *Education and Colonial Control in Papua New Guinea* (Melbourne, 1987).

8 A United Nations Mission visited PNG in 1962, under the chairmanship of Sir Hugh Foot. The 'Foot Report' was pivotal to Australian policy on PNG due to its impetus in the areas of education and the disengagement of Australia's colonial role there. The report in turn led to the drawing up of two other reports important for their influence on PNG's future: The World Bank Report, 'The economic development of the territory of Papua & New Guinea' (1965) and 'Report of the Commission on Higher Education in Papua New Guinea' (1964).

9 J. D. Waiko, *A Short History of Papua New Guinea* (Melbourne, 1993), 153.

10 P. Smith, *Education and Colonial Control in Papua New Guinea, 1871-1975*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Papua New Guinea, 1987, 287.

11 H. K. Colebatch, 'Educational policy and political development in Australian New Guinea', in R. J. W. Selleck (ed.), *Melbourne Studies in Education 1967* (Carlton, 1968), 129.

pounded by former Education Minister Groves¹² had to be put aside. The different reality espoused by Menzies was that of an urgent necessity; to develop the country 'in the difficult circumstances of the present day, in a way which will serve not only the interests of the native people, but also the national interests of our own'.¹³ Australia would have only enough time to prepare an educated élite, one that could take over the administrative function of government when PNG achieved self-determination and independence from Australia.

Hasluck's 1950s policy of attempting universal primary education had resulted in a total enrolment in recognized primary schools of nearly 77 000 indigenous students by 1960,¹⁴ although the 112 000 attending unregulated mission schools put the number far higher. By that time the completion of 3 or 4 years primary schooling was providing the bare essentials of a Western education that allowed access by Papua New Guineans to lower level administrative work, basic employment in the expanding business and commercial sector, and low level primary teaching positions in the indigenous 'T' schools.¹⁵

It is important to explain at this point that Australian teachers recruited to PNG Administration primary schools were not all to be employed to teach PNG students. These non-mission primary schools fell into two separate categories of Primary 'A' and Primary 'T' that were, officially, separated on the basis of curriculum. 'A' schools were for children brought up in an English-speaking background and who possessed the conceptual knowledge and understanding that the language encompassed. 'T' schools were specifically for PNG students whose first language was not English and who had none of the prior knowledge that was the background to formalized education in the Western world. The 'T' school curriculum was targeted particularly to the needs and understandings of the emergent nation's group of students. Although qualified expatriate teachers went into Primary 'T' schools as principals to teach at the classroom level and to help train indigenous teachers, many were destined to teach in 'A' schools that were, in reality, for Australian children as entirely Australianized schools.¹⁶

From 1960 to 1975 expatriate numbers in PNG ranged from 23 870 in 1960, 54 546 in 1971 and down to 38 084 in 1975. The majority of these expatriates were Australian citizens.¹⁷ Some of the allowances offered to expatriate workers were specifically for education and allied travel costs in sending children to Australia. Families could, however, choose to keep their younger children with them, and as had been agreed to by the Administration, this necessitated running certain of the primary schools at levels and curriculum commensurate with schools in Australia. Towards independence, experiments with integrating schools, at Madang, for ex-

12 W. C. Groves, *Native Education and Culture-Contact in New Guinea: A Scientific Approach* (Melbourne, 1936), 67–78.

13 R. G. Menzies, letter to premiers of all states, 2 September 1960. CRS A452/1 60/4427 Australian Archives Canberra (AAC).

14 Secretary to MacArthy, DOT CRS A452/1 60/4427 (AAC). Of that figure, 20 258 only were in Administration-run schools. The term 'recognized' primary school includes mission schools that were accredited as having the staff and curriculum standards up to those designated by the Administration. Other mission schools were not considered effective enough to warrant receiving the extra funding from Administration sources.

15 K. R. Lamacraft, 'Education in New Guinea: some administrative problems', *Journal of Educational Administration*, IV/2 (1966), 81–102.

16 R. C. Ralph, 'Education in Papua-New Guinea: integration whither?', in Kalil L. Gezi (ed.), *Education in Comparative and International Perspectives* (New York, 1971), 415–32.

17 Downs, *Australian Trusteeship of Papua New Guinea*, 529.

ample, or with 'parallel streaming' were made but, in the main, the Education Department chose to keep the two types of schools separated. A 1963 budgetary extract below demonstrates Administration views regarding educational priorities for the differing students.

Per capita costings, 1965/66:

Territory children: 30 pound per capita per student
Expatriate children: 70 pound per capita per student

Books and equipment:

A schools: 10 pounds per annum. per student
T schools: 2 pounds per annum per student

Buildings and furniture:

A schools: 15 pounds per annum per student
T Schools: 2 pounds per annum per student.¹⁸

These figures were in light of the 1965–66 estimates of an increased indigenous enrolment of 7182 and expatriate student enrolment of 340. The differing allowances obviously placed heavy strictures on 'T' school teachers and their students.

In the early 1960s the Administration's change in focus to push PNG more rapidly into the twentieth century via education of an élite resulted in an exponential rise in the number of teachers needing to be recruited.¹⁹ Until this time, Australia had not seen fit to install an education system that would have provided local teaching personnel, either to fill the required number of positions in the expanding system, or who could acquire an ideological outlook tailored to an Australian political stance.²⁰ The non-availability of indigenous teachers for the widening system resulted in a number of recruitment programmes directed towards Australia and other English speaking Commonwealth countries throughout the decade.

The year 1960 was the middle of the post-war boom, a time when Australian state school enrolments for the entire 1945–73 expansion period rose 155.9% across the board,²¹ creating a shortage of qualified teachers in virtually all schools in this country. In this difficult period, apart from generally advertised positions, the Administration had two main avenues of teacher recruitment from Australia. First, and with the assistance of a brusque letter from Prime Minister Menzies,²² the Department of Education in PNG obtained 20–30 seconded teachers per year from across the various state education departments in Australia. Second, a 2-year cadet teacher training course, conducted by the Australian School of Pacific Administration (ASOPA) in Sydney, provided a longer term means of teacher supply. However, most of these two above categories of teachers were used up staffing the Primary 'A' schools. Additionally, with female teachers not encouraged to work alone in remote and rural communities, an increased minimalization of available personnel occurred.

18 L. W. Johnson's estimates for World Bank Report, 1965. CRS A452/1 65/5061 (AAC).

19 International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, *The Economic Development of the Territory of Papua and New Guinea* (Baltimore, 1965).

20 There were certainly indigenous teachers in the mission system schools, as well as some in 'T' schools, but the Administration did not consider that indigenous teachers could be in positions of control.

21 C. Thiele, *Grains of Mustard Seed* (Adelaide, 1975), 216.

22 Menzies to Australian State Premiers, 2 September 1960. Series CRS A452/1, file 60/4427 (AAC).

With the UN breathing down their necks, the Australian Administration had neither the time, the personnel, nor the funding to go through the established channels of teacher supply. Teachers were needed immediately for the indigenous populations in remote villages where schools would be set up to deliver a basic 5-year primary education course to transmit acceptable Australian cultural and social values to as many Papua New Guinean children as was possible.

The E Course

The E Course was the result of the problematic situation of primary teacher supply. Set up under the education directorship of G. T. Roscoe, the scheme was specifically designed to supply expatriate teachers to Primary 'T' Schools, teaching only students from local villages. The plan was to take a large group of suitably enthusiastic 'boys own annual' types into a 6-month basic-but-intensive teacher training course. On completion, they would then be sent out to remote or rural areas to newly established or proposed primary schools. The Administration sought 'young men who have something of a missionary spirit about helping people, they should be willing to be field officers living in native material houses'.²³

Because the emphasis was only on supplying teachers for local 'native' students, the Administration took a somewhat pragmatic approach to the recruitment and training processes. Advertising mostly in Australia, Canada and Britain, the request was for male applicants between 18 and 55 years of age who had achieved a minimum Australian Intermediate Certificate or equivalent qualification, i.e. 3 years of high school. Trainee salaries were between £760 and £1310 per annum, depending on age and marital status. On completion of the course, the rates of pay went up to the standard Education Officer, Grade One – at the time between £1210 and £2020 per annum.

Advertisements were enthusiastically received for, as one observer remarked, 'You'd have a fellow who'd been a bus driver or sometimes a worker in David Jones or Myers in Melbourne or somewhere on the counter for jumpers or anything. And they'd always wanted to be a teacher and they'd never had the opportunity – the depression, or their parents couldn't afford it'.²⁴

The first advertisements netted 1600 applicants by September 1960. It was planned that up to 120 of these would be ready for allocation to primary schools by the end of 1961 and subsequently a further 120 could be sent to Papua New Guinean schools each year following. As it was, the scheme gained final Cabinet approval in August, and the first trainees were at Malaguna College in Rabaul, PNG by November, then out to the schools by the end of the following April. 'All the "E" Course teachers [have] had a variety of experiences since leaving school and this had tended to give them a very mature approach to teaching. The average age at the commencement of training was 27'.²⁵

Trainees graduated with a qualification to teach only in PNG, and had a minimum 2-year contract and a £250 bond to work through. E Course teachers could, however, obtain further qualifications during their bond period if they wanted to move into Australian schools at a later date. Of the first 55 trainees who sat the 13 examinable subjects, only three failed their final examinations. Subsequent courses

23 Assistant Secretary to Minister, 13 November 1959. Series CRS A452/1, file 59/2253 (AAC).

24 H. Jackman, transcript, 7.

25 P. Lemon, *Papua & New Guinea Education Gazette*, III/9 (1969), 149.

were also conducted in Port Moresby and Madang, and at one stage there were three courses running concurrently at all three centres.²⁶ The recruits trained intensively, working all week. They lived in dormitories during training and, apart from general teacher training, learned rudimentary local language skills, anthropology, administrative form filling, and a lot of practical skills. ‘It was a NSW two year teaching course in 6 months where they cut out a lot of the philosophy and things and it was an extremely practical pragmatic sort of course. And I remember the person who was in charge of the course, he took us for English, but I never remember having any of the English lessons. It was always “now if you’re in the bush and this sort of thing happens, what would you do in that situation?”’,²⁷

Practicality was a major requirement of applicants, along with a strong emphasis on being able to cope in isolated conditions – which perhaps needs some brief explanation. Isolation, as such, had little to do with numbers, as teachers would be surrounded day in and day out by the local people; students, parents, assorted villagers and other local tribes’ people. But those people would not be white, Australian or British, or any other type of related expatriate. Some of the schools were up to 3 days walk through mountainous wet forest to the nearest Administration post. While all teachers were supposed to be in regular radio contact, keeping batteries dry in the tropics has never been easy, and many were therefore left to their own devices for long periods between visits from the District or Area Education Officer. Except for the Australian patrol officer, known as the *kiap*, and perhaps a missionary or health official, few of the teachers would have the company of their own kind. This was an important distinction that none of the teachers interviewed for this, or the wider research project, contemplated as anything but isolation.

On completion of training, teachers were either flown, rowed, walked or in some cases driven to their destination. The more fortunate ones found their housing and classrooms already built and a rudimentary school system in place with one or two local teachers in attendance. In many cases the E course teacher went out to start up the entire enterprise, arriving at the same time at their school buildings. ‘One of the things the E Course [co-ordinators] did was say “OK we put a person every so many kilometres, we’ll put down a house and an E Course person in it”. This was a little aluminium donga which was virtually two small rooms, they could bring it in a helicopter or plane and assemble it there and get out again, that’s what they did.’²⁸ The ‘dongas’ were two-roomed, open-ended, metal-framed steel buildings that the Administration had originally intended to be used by indigenous staff as both living quarters and ‘T’ classrooms until ‘native material’ classrooms could be built for schooling. During 1963 alone, 127 of these buildings were constructed and supplied, but invariably became E Course teacher housing because, ‘accommodation and classroom building was not keeping up with the graduation ceremonies’.²⁹

In some cases villagers needed to be persuaded to build classrooms of local materials – once the idea and description of what a school was, and why they needed to send children to it, had been explained and agreed to by them.

26 My thanks to Trevor Parr who provided me with a draft copy of his essay on the E Course written during his external studies with the University of Papua New Guinea (n.d.).

27 R. Kirkby, transcript, 3.

28 Ibid., 2.

29 Cleland to Minister, 29 April 1963. CRS A452/1 60/4427 (AAC).

I was posted to Kompiam, they'd had contact there for 3 or 4 years, they'd got an airstrip built, and a little prison, a 'kalaboos', a patrol officer station and they had started the school about 6 months before I got there. A local teacher was there from New Britain. They were mainly kids of clansmen close to the airstrip or students who belonged to government workers. The idea of me going there was that it was the only school for that patrol region, which was some 100s of square kilometres including the unexplored area. The idea was that we should get some kids from all around. That meant going out on patrol and bringing kids in to a boarding situation. We were introducing the idea of school in the first instance.³⁰

Whatever the situation, the expectation was that the 6-month trainee would take over the reins as principal, for only later, in the years leading into independence, would expatriates find themselves under the principalship of a local teacher.

One Area Education Officer from during that period recounted how he had tried to get his teachers into Port Moresby or Madang about once a year, ostensibly to give them in-service training, but in reality to check out whether they had gone 'troppo' or too 'native', for the Administration.³¹ The expectation was that coloniality would continue through into school life. As District Commissioner Cleland told the second course of education officers finishing in 1961: 'The results you achieve in teaching native children depend to a large degree on your attitudes and you will find that if an officer does not shave, if he becomes slovenly in his general appearance, and in his habits, the native will write him off promptly'.³² However, it was much more likely to be the Administration who would write off the teacher, since the stark reality for the teachers was more about coming to terms with their location than with constructed local expectations. Although they had survived past the initial culture shock of the new and totally alien surroundings, several interviewees recalled how they would always find some way or another to get out of the local school area to the nearest town at every opportunity or at least every 3 months or so. They could enjoy some serious drinking with a few other expatriates for a weekend, and then return to their school to cope with their cultural isolation for a while longer.

The culture shock existed on both sides, as many of the children who arrived at the schools had never seen a white person. Students were mostly boys, although with some persuasion a small number of girls were allowed by their families to attend school. As the students were taught in English, and were not allowed to speak their own language at all in school, life was doubly problematic for them. Vincent Eri, an early recipient of Australian education in PNG, wrote of his inability to say very much at all for the first couple of years until he had soaked up enough of the language to begin his formal education. He recalled a terrible feeling of isolation and longing for his home and familiar surroundings.³³ These were emotions not unfamiliar to the expatriate teachers, but rarely acknowledged by them.

Research has revealed that those E Course teachers who stayed on at their schools did so for longer periods than any of the other categories of teachers from Australia. They coped with worse conditions than other expatriate teachers, and generally had better relations with the local people. They were often able to make the most of their situation with greater equanimity and ingenuity and, given the previously noted tight budgetary circumstances in which they operated, this was a particular necessity.

30 A. Jones, transcript, 4.

31 K. Smith, transcript, 5.

32 *South Pacific Post* (Port Moresby, 14 November 1961).

33 Vincent Eri, *The Crocodile* (Milton, 1970).

Within their good management, the E Course teachers showed immense initiative. One interviewee recalled how he had obtained a blackboard by walking to another E Course taught school about a day's walk away and persuading the teacher there to cut *his* large blackboard in two and then walked home with a half. Later he had to work out how to make chalk as his supply ran out and new deliveries were weeks late. Another was sent peanuts as a supplement to the local vegetable diet, but with his students' assistance planted the peanuts. They then sold the crop and used the cash to buy books and pencils, and more food. Situations of isolation may have led to a lessening of accountability in regards to curriculum, but they allowed for high levels of ingenuity to be accommodated.

At the beginning of the E Course scheme teachers were supplied with only a very basic syllabus to work with at 'T' schools. Recollections are of approximately five pages and expectations were that staff would then develop their teaching along the lines of their experience. One teacher from England recounted giving many lessons of marching and drill work to his tiny charges; having done so in his own primary school years he considered at the time that this was what all children needed to do. By 1962, a new, highly specific syllabus had been developed that covered 6 years of primary schooling for indigenous students. Expectations were that it would be followed to the letter, even down to the songs about sheep, horses, tigers, cakes and roses, none of which had any meaning for children brought up in villages where such things did not exist. However, certain aspects of cultural transmission obviously took hold; new primary readers arrived resplendent with coloured pictures of mother and daughter in bright print dresses and father and son in sturdy khaki shorts.³⁴ What the missionaries may have failed to accomplish in some areas, the school could; bare breasts and grass genital coverings were no longer acceptable. Second-hand clothes of the Western variety are still big business in PNG.

The 'Syllabus for Primary 'T' Schools', revised 1962 edition, reflected the Australian government's purpose in its construction of PNG and an educated élite during this period. Distinct from classes in the NSW-based Primary 'A' schools for Australian children, the 'T' school lessons were necessarily patterned to 'develop the social background, civilised patterns of behaviour and hygienic habits which this syllabus describes'.³⁵ In all its facets the syllabus was keyed to the acquisition of English language, so that

Primary School children of the Territory of Papua and New Guinea should be able to use English as a means of communication both spoken and written. Specifically this aim means sufficient command of English to converse naturally with other Natives and with Europeans, and understand the language used in normal speech. It means the ability to use this type of English, with understanding, at speed, and the ability to communicate with others in writing at this level.³⁶

Acknowledging that in the Primary 'T' school all English had to be taught as a foreign language, the syllabus emphasized that in *all* aspects of the classroom, the instruction was using and teaching that foreign language.

Concomitant with the acquisition of English was to be the acquisition of new attitudes and behaviours through the Social Studies curriculum. Through this subject, the students were given a new, and different, emphasis on right and wrong, good

34 The Pacific Series, *In the Village, Reader One* (Melbourne, 1963).

35 Department of Education, *Syllabus for Primary T Schools* (Port Moresby, 1962), 1.

36 *Syllabus for Primary T Schools*, 3.

and bad, old and new ways, as prescribed by ‘Western civilised culture – living in a nation, instead of a village, using money, Western ways of behaving’.³⁷

In all, the syllabus covered seven standards, from Preparatory to Standard VI, encompassing as separate subjects: English, Arithmetic, Social Studies, Health, Natural Science, Music and Singing, Physical Education, Art and Craft, and Religious Instruction and Ethics and Morals. As the student progressed through primary school, the teacher was required to replace the basic non-denominational Religious Instruction as taught in Administration schools, with an ‘Ethics and Morals’ section that gave significance to Western cultural mores over village or tribal traditions. Whether the vilification or praiseworthiness of practices and behaviours that ran counter to traditional views was an issue for the curriculum writers is not clear.

However, with experience, and given the cultural backgrounds of their students, teachers certainly began to question whether the ideals they promulgated in their pedagogical practice were ethical, or even practical. E Course teachers, in their isolated areas and their ‘T’ school situations, were less in contact with other expatriates and, therefore, more reliant on, and involved with, their local PNG populations. Consequently, they came to question both themselves and the ways in which they promulgated some of the Administrative priorities as it set about the construction of a newly civilized and politically sensitive PNG.

I hadn’t been a teacher before, so I went up there and did the E Course. I went up there full of the European, particularly English, idealism that related to wanting to help some other people I think we were extremely racist when we first went there. Any group, any colonial power is racist, in that they assume that the way civilisation should be is the way that they interpreted civilisation. And so I went up with these ideals of things like democracy, freedom, being able to make your own way in life, all those sort of things. Of course, behind that too was the idea that I would be able to contribute to helping the people to deal with Western civilisation.³⁸

The UN requested that the Annual Reports issued by Australia in regards to the Territory supply facts and figures: how many children were in school, how many teachers were available and how much was being spent. ‘They [reports] were not very enlightening, but we had to compile them and were told to keep out anything individual. We had to make them purely and simply statistical’.³⁹ Apart from numbers who were admitted to the secondary schools that were eventually built, the UN reports did not require information on how well the children were being taught in primary schools. Nor were the reports particularly enlightened or enlightening as to what was happening to the teachers, or how they viewed their positions in PNG.

One estimate has been that during 1965 there were ‘probably about 300 E Course teachers in the field which meant they comprised almost a quarter of the entire “T” School teaching force’.⁴⁰ However, as a percentage of trainees for the courses were from mission schools or members of a religious order, the Administration records that indicate approximately 180 E Course graduates in schools during 1965 may be nearer the correct figure for Administration schools. This category of ‘E’ teachers numbered 344 over the 4 years, of which, despite the Administration being singularly unenthusiastic about employing women, there were 143 successful female graduates, of which 34 were in Administration employ. Unlike records for ASOPA and

37 Ibid., 11.

38 Kirkby, transcript, 1.

39 Smith, transcript, 8.

40 Parr, 9.

seconded teachers, I have not been able to locate 'wastage factors' accounting for any resignations among E Course teachers in the Administrations' archive files.

Despite the urgent necessity for teachers in PNG, the structures set up by the Administration in PNG and the Government in Canberra applied standards for their applicants that went beyond those of educational qualifications. In 1961, three applicants for the E Course warranted special examination by the Department of Territories after referral from the Public Service Commissioner. While all three had passed the selection requirements in regards to their education and ability, questions were raised as to their acceptability in PNG on racial grounds. Although two were permanent residents of Australia and the third an Australian citizen, the Department could not agree that they 'looked European enough' to warrant acceptability as expatriates, and therefore suitability as teachers in the programme. It was suggested that 'locally trained native and mixed race teachers, including any who received secondary education in Australia'⁴¹ might attempt to use these teachers' cases to argue for salaries equitable with those received by expatriate Australians.⁴²

This censure placed on applicants by reference to their appearance had, I suggest, less to do with teachers' salaries than it had to do with Australia's continuing White Australia Policy influencing views on what the Australian Government saw as the expatriate teachers' place in PNG. The nexus at which the teachers were placed was between their PNG students and the Administration. The space allotted the teachers and the concomitant expectation on the teachers to position themselves within and adjacent to the society in PNG, was based on race. Little else can be made of the situation regarding the censure, given that the Administration was hard pressed to accept as expatriates teachers those who they described variously as 'Malay-Chinese' looking, 'mixed-race appearance' and of 'Jewish-Indian origin appearance'.⁴³ The government accepted teachers who were white and therefore could be in positions of power and privilege, but was not prepared to accept those teachers who did not have the appearance of superiority to be in positions of power. These might not be able to separate themselves far enough from the local populations – despite what qualifications and attributes they may have had.

As well as being white, the Administration also preferred their remotely located teachers to be single, ostensibly because married quarters were costly to establish. That the teachers would have the time as well as the inclination to interact with the local people was not always on the Administration's terms. It was common knowledge among teachers that some of them would find certain of the 'standards' set by the Department problematic. During training, E course teachers were advised to stay away from drink and the local women. At graduation they were told that they should be 'working on the simple basis that the people you will teach are human beings, requiring human understanding'.⁴⁴ Human understanding was obviously not expected to extend to personal relationships, although such relationships could

41 Assistant Secretary, Administration to Minister, 10 April 1961. CRS A452/1 65/5061 (AAC).

42 This long-running and bitterly acrimonious situation of unequal rates of pay has existed since colonial days in PNG. Today expatriates are still paid many times more than their indigenous counterparts in just about every area of public and private enterprise. The result is a great deal of often-justifiable angst on the part of Papua New Guineans and some embarrassment for the more sympathetic and sensitive expatriates.

43 Assistant Secretary Administration to Minister, 10 April 1961. CRS A452/1 65/5061 (AAC).

44 D. M. Cleland, *South Pacific Post* (14 November 1961).

often have been a necessity for particularly vulnerable, young and single teachers who had little recourse to expatriate companionship.

Another was taken out, interfering with native women, a bloke about twenty years old, on the Fly River – a case which should never have come up. The Education Department normally won't talk about that – but he'd appealed for them to take him out, said he was going troppo, the girls were becoming whiter all the time. He was convicted of improperly assaulting an under-age girl. He went to gaol for about six months. Well, he didn't serve the six months, he was just taken back to Australia, no names, no pack drill.⁴⁵

The E Course teachers had been subjected to a selection criteria that placed an emphasis on their perceived abilities to cope with a survival lifestyle of remote bush settings where there would be little assistance from the Administration. As been mentioned, there were two main aspects of survival that the district administration officers generally discussed with the teachers. These were their ability to use what limited resources were available, both materials and personnel, and the aspect of being isolated. Surviving the isolation of PNG did not mean being on one's own, it meant knowing what your place was when there were no other white people around you. The E Course teachers who came forward for this study spoke of their time in PNG as interesting and pleasantly exciting. None mentioned shattering privations or suffering, but they did speak of others they had known, or heard of, who were shipped out, or who had committed suicide or had disappeared. How much of that is hearsay only further investigations into the Australian archival records can reveal.

When the E Course programme terminated in 1964, expectations were that growing local teacher numbers would keep pace with demand. These expectations were not met, and in 1967 Director of Education McKinnon wrote to Canberra calling for the scheme's reinstatement. At the same time, of the 344 administration employed teachers who had graduated from the scheme, there were still 229 working in the Territory schools. Administrator Hay also lobbied Canberra, stating that the

E Course provides a cadre of experienced teachers with longer service expectations than seconded teachers. This reduces staff turnover and increases stability. E Course teachers have taught successfully and made substantial contributions to primary education. E Course teachers trained directly for Territory situation [and] better understand local teachers' problems and are better able to assist than seconded teachers. Value of successful E Course teacher accumulates whereas value of seconded teacher with experience is lost to the Department on leaving the Territory.⁴⁶

The missions too, were asking for more E Course training for their personnel. The combined lobbying paid off and a second scheme ran from 1969 to 1971.

Although there were a large number of Australians and other Commonwealth personnel involved in the E Course, it remains a little known or documented area of colonial teacher education and recruitment to PNG. Yet the few authors who mention it agree on its undeniable impact upon PNG's primary education during the period of its operation. The innovation 'met with remarkable success in attracting recruits from Australia. They had a significant effect on the standard of English-language teaching in those [remote] areas and remained as teachers in Papua and New Guinea for longer periods of service than was common among expatriate officers'.⁴⁷ Taken at face value the E course, as a quick, intensive, and relatively cheap training exercise, was able to place English-speaking teachers where Australia

45 Smith, transcript, 8.

46 Hay to Minister 3 July 1969. CRS A452/1 69/1849 (AAC).

47 G. Smith, *Education in Papua New Guinea* (Melbourne, 1975), 34.

wanted them at short notice. It also answered both the UN's and Australia's requirements for PNG's newly constructed educational expectations. At the same time the E Course provides an example of an initiative that was perceived as extremely important, but only inasmuch as was economically practicable; given the students who were to be educated, and the apparent expendability of the teachers. The E course delivered primary education, but within a particularly Australian curriculum framework that took too little account of any local situation or cultural context. The standards at which the education was delivered are also questionable given the lack of oversight and inspection that were a part of the isolated situation of teachers and their schools.

For the 25 years since the programme's inception, educators in PNG and Australia have been arguing that a Western curriculum is both inadequate and irrational for PNG's non-Western culture and requirements.⁴⁸ Yet while it continues to be a relatively economic means of getting teachers into poorly staffed schools, Australian and other Western-trained teachers are still being sent to teach in PNG as an interim measure.⁴⁹ Educational initiatives, whether recent or otherwise, are too often based on a pragmatic perception of need from the educators' point of view, rather than that of the recipient. Indeed, as Crosbie-Walsh has similarly argued in particular relation to aid as education, separating aid from donor politics, is virtually an impossibility.⁵⁰ Thus, there is still a pragmatism involved in the delivery of 'education for development' that can result in some ethically questionable practices on the road to economic enhancement for all parties involved.

In the case of the E Course in pre-independent PNG, on the one hand superficial analysis of the scheme that attempted to get more teachers into more schools more quickly, and at less cost than the standard methods of recruitment and training, indicates a measure of success. On the other hand, what the long-term effects of this initiative may have been on those students involved is less easy to ascertain, and no research has taken place in regards to that question. But as O'Donoghue has suggested, ascertaining educational outcomes needs to be measured by other than economic parameters and the requirements of the practitioners.⁵¹ Despite these misgivings, however, the E Course was an undeniable success in regards to teacher numbers and their retention rates. Additionally, it is evident that from their situation and their close working relationship with students and local villagers, E Course teachers were able to develop positive and worthwhile cultural relations between Papua New Guineans and Australians.

48 Examples of the argument can be found in Michael A. Mel, 'Mbu, a culturally meaningful framework for education in Papua New Guinea', *Prospects*, XXV/4 (1995), 683-94; G. Vulliamy, 'Socio-cultural considerations in the reform of colonial schooling: a case study from Papua New Guinea', in Len Barton and Stephen Walker (eds), *Race, Class and Education* (London, 1983), 81-101; P. M. Pyers, 'A relevant technical education', in *Educational Perspectives in Papua New Guinea* (Canberra 1974), 119-29.

49 Since the early 1970s, expatriate teachers are rarely required for primary schools (except in the International School system). Expatriates are nowadays contracted to secondary and tertiary institutions.

50 A. Crosbie-Walsh, 'Ten reasons why what we're doing may not help: aid, poverty and development', *Development Bulletin*, XXXIII (October 1997), 30-3.

51 T. O'Donoghue, 'Transnational knowledge transfer and the need to take cognisance of contextual realities: a Papua New Guinea case study', *Educational Review*, XLVI/1 (1994), 73-88.