

STEP (Strengthening Tokples [vernacular] Education in Papua New Guinea): Assisting Papua New Guineans with Community-based, Vernacular Literacy Programs

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Introduction

Papua New Guinea: Land of the Unexpected. An appropriate motto, considering Papua New Guinea is the most culturally and linguistically diverse country in the world with 818 indigenous, living languages (Rueck 2005, pers. comm. 21 April)¹. This great diversity presents quite a challenge to those involved with vernacular education in Papua New Guinea (PNG).

The STEP Course (*Strengthening Tokples Education in Papua New Guinea*) has been one response to this challenge. This paper introduces the STEP Course and explains how it grew out of the needs of local communities intent on sustaining and expanding vernacular literacy programs. Discussion focuses on aspects of the STEP Course that encourage, practise and promote community-based vernacular literacy, community ownership and pride in one's cultural identity.

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¹ Mike Rueck was the SIL Language Survey Coordinator in PNG until December 2005. Though the exact figure changes, 818 is currently the most accurate for 2005. Number of speakers in each language range from 165,000 to fewer than 100.

Background

In 1975, when PNG became an independent nation, the government chose to continue with the “English only” policy in formal education – a carryover from Australian rule. Community schools, Grades 1-6, were to be taught in English. However, the non-formal system continued to use local vernaculars to teach literacy in village preparatory schools.

As the new government gained confidence, and members reflected on their own experiences as students under the “English-only” policy of education, it was time to address the issue of culturally relevant education for all. The need was crucial for a statement or philosophy of education that would be relevant to all the culturally diverse peoples of PNG. Recognising the importance of cultural identity, the Constitutional Planning Committee of the new government issued the statement, “The diversity of our country is one of its greatest strengths” (Matane 1986:5). Building on this, a ministerial committee, appointed in 1986, published the report, *A Philosophy of Education in Papua New Guinea*. This was the first official document recommending a bilingual system of schooling: using the vernacular languages in the early years of school and bridging to English after. It also recommended that the local schools and communities promote the value of every individual’s cultural identity through a locally created curriculum (Matane 1986).

It wasn’t until 1991 that the government adopted this statement and began to implement it through training teachers and beginning a pilot program. Today both the formal system of education (Elementary Reform) and the non-formal system (TPPS – Tok Ples² Prep Schools) are working to implement bilingual schooling for all by setting up vernacular classrooms in the preparatory years. In a country with over 800 languages there are many challenges to be overcome to make this a reality for all.

Sociolinguistic factors also play a part in this challenge. The fact that many people in PNG have had outside contact only in the last 40-70 years helps us begin to glimpse the incredible speed at which these people have been thrust into the 20th and 21st centuries from what was virtually a stone-age society. Culturally, the people of PNG are in a stage of transition. They are proud of their traditional heritage, based on relatively small vernacular social groups, yet they are eager to adapt to the changes necessary for benefits associated with a national identity (Scoble 2001, p 43)

² *Tok Ples* (or *tokples*) is Melanesian Pidgin for ‘vernacular’. Literally it means “talk of the place”.

Linguistically, PNG, unlike most developing countries, has no indigenous linguistic or ethnic group that dominates politics, business or education (Wroge 2000b). Tok Pisin (Melanesian Pidgin) is the most widespread lingua franca in PNG with Hiri Motu used in parts of the south. English is the official language of government, major businesses and education. With very few speaking English as a first language, the literacy rates in PNG remain low.

Due to the symbiotic nature of language, culture and identity, the challenges that occur during this transitional stage are shaping the literacy and education programs in PNG. What kind of a program will increase literacy rates and uphold cultural values while incorporating a national identity? One way to achieve this, in a country of over 800 languages, is to set up vernacular, community-based literacy/education programs.

Vernacular, community-based literacy/education programs are not new to PNG, rather, they have been rediscovered - in the formal system- and are being implemented on a much larger scale with the support of current national policy - for children and adults.

Defining Community-based Literacy in PNG

There are numerous examples of successful indigenous, community-based literacy/education programs worldwide: North Solomons Province, PNG (Litteral 1995); Maiwala, Alotau Province, PNG (Nagai 1997, 2002); Hualapai, North America (McCarty and Watahomigie 1998); Fiji (White 2002); Maori, New Zealand (Durie 1998); Australia (Corson 1998). Each situation is unique and to address the extreme cultural diversity in PNG a local definition of literacy was drawn up by the Directorate for the National Literacy Awareness Secretariat.

Literacy in PNG means being culturally able to pass on both orally and by the printed page, the oral traditions which enrich the diverse social practices of individuals in every local community. These orally transmitted social practices radiate life and give meaning to a community and an individual. They also tell the community and the individual what to do in order to survive and see PNG prosper with its abundant natural resources as active agents in all institutions. The active individual will then be able to participate socially, politically, economically and spiritually and achieve integral human development through the integration of cultural traditions and reading and writing skills. (Jonduo 1997, p.37)

The education and literacy policy of PNG supports vernacular, community-based literacy for two reasons:

1. Tokples literacy makes it easier for people to learn. Starting with what they know and moving to what is not yet known is the basic principle behind vernacular literacy.
2. Tokples literacy helps preserve PNG's languages and cultures. It can revitalise local language and culture. (Malone 2001)

The only viable way to accomplish this in PNG is with community-based education. It draws on the community's knowledge, expertise and cultural practices to shape the work that schools do and make it relevant to the life experiences of the students (Corson 1998, p.239). More than just using local vernacular for teaching, it incorporates all that is culturally relevant for that community and it preserves and revitalises local language and culture. Not only are the people involved with the school facility but also the content of the curriculum.

A Challenge from Within

The current education policy in PNG is clear in its support of vernacular literacy and community-based programs (See National Curriculum Statement of PNG 2002). People in government and education are convinced of the value of these programs. The chairman of the first pilot project of a vernacular school on Buka Island in North Solomons Province, who had received his education in English, firmly supports vernacular literacy:

We must train our children in the history, values and culture of our people. And we must use our language to teach them, for language is culture. If we truly understand our language, we can say that we truly understand our culture. Our language tells us our relationship to everything: to elders, to our parents, even to the sand, the rocks, the sea and the stars. If my children are divorced from my own language, then I cannot teach them and then my children will reject both my culture and me. (Waiko 1993, p.131)

But what about the local, village people who, because of past experiences or isolation, either do not value literacy or believe it is the responsibility of the government or an NGO to provide the literacy/education for their children? One major challenge to sustainability of literacy programs is the attitude of the village people. Unfortunately, many do not see themselves as stakeholders in the system and are reluctant to take ownership.

Schools were originally introduced by outsiders. They did not develop from needs within the culture. For the most part they have not been valued by communities as a necessary part of the culture. The “English-only” policy further alienated the school from the community. It had a destructive effect on the culture of those educated. Sir Paulias Matane, educated under the “English-only” policy, lamented:

Education has made me a foreigner to my own tradition, culture and beliefs . . . I wish that my proud fathers could come back to me now, take me and transform me into one of them so that I would be like them – a colourful, articulate, skilful, proud, confident and brilliant man. But I have lost all these values because I went to school. (Waiko 1993, p.130)

Many people who went to school in the 1970’s, 1980’s and 1990’s experienced the same alienation – school was separated from village life. These experiences were the impetus behind the new philosophy for relevant cultural education for all.

Changes need to be made on many levels and there are many challenges when attempting to incorporate a shift in attitudes and values concerning literacy/education. Ultimately, for literacy programs and education to be integrated into local culture as something valued, the local people must take ownership.

This occurred successfully in North Solomons Province from 1979-1987³ (Litteral 1995). Dissatisfied with the “English-only” school system, parents, along with local and provincial government, devised a two year preparatory school system to be taught in local vernacular. The schools were known as VTPS (village vernacular schools). This was a grassroots movement, locally controlled and community-based (Wroge 2000a).

A few other provinces followed suit but the majority of PNG communities still have not taken ownership of vernacular literacy programs. Today many PNG literacy workers seek training to help the people in their communities take ownership and start their own literacy programs.

³ Civil war broke out on Bougainville Island (North Solomons Province) in 1988 shutting down literacy and education programs for over 12 years.

The STEP Course

One of the successful training programs for non-formal education, is the STEP Course (Strengthening Tokples Education in Papua New Guinea). Through content and presentation of its curriculum, STEP addresses the issues of ownership and community attitude toward vernacular literacy. STEP also attempts to facilitate the shift in attitude necessary to motivate people to include vernacular, community-based literacy as something desired and valued in their culture.

The STEP Literacy Training Course, jointly run by SIL (Papua New Guinea Branch) and the National Bible Translation Association of Papua New Guinea (BTAPNG), trains experienced TPPS (Tok Ples Preparatory School) teachers to improve and expand their vernacular literacy programs through awareness campaigns, training other teachers and producing original vernacular materials for their classes and schools.

What is STEP?

Meeting a need

STEP evolved out of DTET (Diploma for Trainers of Elementary Teachers) a course originally established in 1994 to train trainers for teachers of preparatory classes in the new formal Elementary Reform System.

Soon after the course began the government changed its plan for training. The 2 ½ year course continued as STEP (Supervisors Tokples Education Program) under the non-formal system because TPPS teachers were still keen to expand the vernacular literacy programs in their language areas. Today the course is completed in 18-20 months.

In 2003, the name of STEP was changed to Strengthening Tokples Education in Papua New Guinea to more accurately reflect the vision statement of the course:

The STEP course is committed to the empowerment of Papua New Guineans as competent resource people with a vision to serve their own communities by developing, managing and expanding sustainable vernacular literacy and education programs throughout the country. (STEP document 1993 – See End Note)

Course organisation

The STEP literacy training course consists of five one-month instructional modules completed in 18-20 months. Each module is followed by village assignments, which provide practical opportunities to apply concepts and skills learned in the formal classroom setting.

Assessment is ongoing and village assignments are only one aspect of overall assessment throughout the course.

The first four modules of the course provide a solid foundation in literacy and leadership. The seven components of this basic course are as follows:

- A. Curriculum Development
- B. Literacy and Numeracy
- C. Materials Development
- D. Teaching/Learning: Principles and Practice
- E. Leadership/Management
- F. Other Course Components (Health, ESL, Computers, etc)
- G. Village Component

Module 5 offers participants the opportunity to choose subject areas in which they may have a special interest. All subject areas will be used as instruments for advancing literacy. At present these are the electives being offered:

1. Children's Vernacular Education (Prep School and Elementary Reform)
2. Adult Vernacular Literacy

Community-based Literacy Focus

There are many facets of STEP but for the purposes of this paper I focus on the elements of the course that emphasise community ownership and the development of community-based literacy programs.

In the course set-up

Community ownership is encouraged before the course begins in the application process. The applicants are to be chosen by the community. The community is expected to pay a nominal fee each module to demonstrate their interest and support for vernacular literacy. The mentor⁴ is usually someone involved in other community work, such as, translation, literacy, church leader, etc. Letters of recommendation are required from community leaders, village leaders, church pastors/elders, and spouse of the applicant.

⁴ STEP has a mentoring program which requires a mentor for participants in each language group. Mentors must attend all modules with participants and must have knowledge of how the language works. The mentor should be an encourager and have a grasp of the sociolinguistic dynamics in the local community. Besides checking orthography, spelling and grammar of materials produced by the participants they also guide participants in assignments during STEP modules and in the village.

Concerns have been voiced as to the fact that participants of STEP are trained away from their local communities. Isn't the separation of school and community being perpetuated? On the contrary, despite increasing travel difficulties within the country, there are definite advantages to holding the course at Ukarumpa in the Eastern Highlands of PNG. One advantage has been commented on frequently by participants. Coming away from the village allows them to concentrate on their work without the daily distractions and responsibilities in the village.

Currently the teaching staff is comprised of both national and expatriate men and women who do not normally visit participants' villages. By maintaining a separation the villagers will not have outsiders coming in to do the training. The advantage being that the villagers must depend on the STEP participants, chosen by the community, to help them improve and expand their literacy program. All decisions and materials are made by the local community. STEP participants return to the village and train others to assist in all aspects of sustaining a vernacular literacy program. (In some language areas, SIL translators are present and assist only when needed.) In the long run this is to their advantage and it facilitates community ownership at all levels. For years many people of PNG have depended on outsiders or the government to set up, run and maintain their literacy programs for them. In STEP we believe it is time for them to take ownership and maintain their own programs.

In the curriculum

Community-based literacy serves the basis for much of the STEP curriculum. Despite the constraints of working within a Western system of education, the strong belief in the value of community-based literacy is a priority in the course within each major component.

Curriculum Development

The curriculum developed by STEP participants is unique to each language group. We begin with a cultural calendar that each language group fills in with the events and customs common to their culture and environment, e.g. weather patterns, food cycles, customs, celebrations, tools, etc. This calendar is taken back to the village and shown to others who assist with any necessary changes or additions (See Appendix 1).

Instructional themes are then developed from the completed cultural calendar. For example, if March is the yam harvesting season, the teacher would develop materials and activities for a one or two week theme about

yams or gardening. Teachers are trained to incorporate community resources into their lessons, e.g. people who can teach the children traditional customs in a traditional way. One STEP graduate comments that they “ask the people in the community to come and teach traditional singsings to the children. Then they perform them at special community functions, like fundraising days” (T. 2005, pers. comm. 15 March).

For adults, the curriculum is based on identified community needs – social, physical, spiritual and economic. Focusing on functional literacy, themes and materials are then developed addressing these needs (Waters 1998, p 396-397).

Literacy/Numeracy

The introduction to literacy in Module 1 focuses on multiple literacies – not just paper and pencil (Herbert and Robinson 2001).

The participants discuss and explore the idea that in their culture they already “read” many things. They are literate and have traditional literacies. Some examples participants have listed are:

- patterns in bilums (string bags) – certain patterns are from specific regions
- knots in a rope – traditional way of counting
- patterns/ marks on post of house – identify a specific clan
- tracking animals in the bush – reading marks/ prints left by animals
- storyboards – carved figures on wood tell a story

The reaction to this novel idea has been very positive and, for many, increases the value of traditional culture in their own minds. The importance of oral traditions and alternative literacies are integrated with reading and writing as they learn about total language development of children.

The participants are also encouraged to develop curriculum which includes traditional systems of counting.

STEP is reinforcing the idea that literacy is a part of the local culture and that local culture and customs are to be integrated into the curriculum by the community (Corson 1998; Jonduo 1997).

Materials Production

All instructional materials produced at STEP by the participants and in the village by the community are in the local vernacular. The mentor plays a key role in this aspect of the course as s/he is usually the one qualified to check the orthography, spelling, and grammar of the materials.

During Module 1 the participants work through a Writers' Workshop. This workshop begins with storytelling sessions to stress the importance of their oral tradition but also as a springboard to bridge into writing and reading stories. One graduate has told us "We have many books that teach children about the culture now" (M. 2005, pers. comm. 18 March). The Writers' Workshops are key assignments that can include many people in the village. It is a great tool for increasing awareness and encouraging involvement in the literacy work at the village level because people with various skills and talents are needed. Some tell stories, others write stories, others illustrate the stories, and still others are needed to produce the books and other materials or teaching aids needed for the literacy classes⁵. Participants also experiment with ways to use natural and recycled materials from their local environment when making literacy materials.

Teaching/Learning Principles and Practice

In this component we deal with a change in habits and attitudes. When they first come to STEP the participants and mentors have a definite idea of how they should teach in the school setting based on their personal experiences - learning by rote. During the course, as we discuss how children learn life skills in daily village living - by observation and trial and error, we bridge over to the school setting and demonstrate how they can incorporate this style of learning and teaching in the classroom. They are encouraged to dialogue with their students by letting them comment and question during lessons. They also practise learning by discovery which is a new idea for many in the school context. The practice teaching sessions give them opportunities to practise and refine the principles they have learned before they try them in the village and train teachers.

Leadership/Management

Literacy awareness campaigns are an ongoing assignment for the STEP participants. Their plans for awareness include visiting neighbouring

⁵ Due to lack of infrastructure in the country and limited access to technology, most materials are still made by hand and duplicated with ink and silkscreens.

villages and regional government centres. They talk about their literacy program plans with the key stakeholders - the adults in the villages, village leaders, and local government education officers. Community ownership and opportunities for involvement are discussed as necessary factors for the sustainability of the program. The many facets of a literacy program require teamwork and delegation of work: creating a Board of Management or Literacy Committee; selecting teachers; training teachers; managing finances; community support of teachers and schools in practical ways, e.g. building of classrooms, pay school fees, supply food for teachers, etc.

Accountability is also a major topic as they must persuade the community that everyone is accountable to someone and if one person doesn't do his job it affects the entire literacy program.

Preparation for these campaigns occurs during the modules and participants work in groups to explore ways that people in the communities can become involved (See Appendix 2).

Village Component

After each module participants have the opportunity to consolidate, apply, practise and expand the knowledge, skills and attitudes they have acquired at STEP through their village assignments. This is a very important part of the course as participants are able to test new ideas and skills. Returning to the next module of STEP gives them the opportunity to evaluate and improve their techniques and materials. Many assignments require them to train others so that the literacy program can expand throughout the language area (See Appendix 3).

Assignments are designed to involve other members of the community thereby increasing their interest, motivation and commitment to vernacular literacy. Completion of the assignments is crucial as this is when the participants have the opportunity to lay the groundwork for a strong, sustainable, community-based literacy program.

Current Impact

From 1994 through 2004 there have been ten intakes⁶ of the STEP course. All except two intakes - conducted in Western Province and Sepik Province - were conducted in the Eastern Highlands at the main SIL centre, Ukarumpa. STEP has accepted 226 participants with 165 (73%) completing all five modules and graduating. Of these graduates 12 (7%) are women.

A total of 35 PNG men and women have been mentors to participants - many of them former STEP graduates. Seven PNG men, most with BTA, have been on the teaching staff or in administrative roles. Participants from 103 languages (114 including dialects) and 18 of the 19 provinces have been trained at STEP. The following figures give an idea of the impact STEP training has had at the village level. These are the number of people trained by STEP participants as part of their village assignments from 1994-2002.

- Prep School Teachers Trained 1,483
- Teachers In-serviced 881
- Children taught in these classes 21,262
- Adult literacy teachers trained 680
- Adult teachers in-serviced 269
- Adult participants attending classes 7,505

(STEP Video 2005)

The numbers continue to increase as STEP continues and as the graduates expand out into neighbouring areas. The following reports from STEP graduates indicate that STEP is affecting many more languages than originally thought.

B (Kunimaipa language, Central and Morobe Provinces) began as a TPPS teacher in 1986. In 1994 he attended the first intake of STEP. Since his graduation in 1996 he has mentored two other Kunimaipa men through STEP and has helped various villages set up TPPS classes. When the formal Elementary Reform System came into Central Province two of the Kunimaipa men were hired on as teachers. **B** continued to supervise and train both TPPS teachers and Elementary teachers in the language area. **B** has reached out to the neighbouring languages of Weri and Guhu-Samane. Under his guidance and with outside funding, a literacy training centre has been constructed. In order to serve the most people, it is situated on the border of the three language groups. **B** has a full calendar for the next two years running workshops and training or supervising teachers.

T (Mbore language, Madang Province) attended Intake A and graduated in 1996. Before STEP, he had been involved with Mbore translation work. During STEP he and another Mbore man established nine TPPS schools.

⁶ Each complete five module course is referred to as an intake. This paper includes Intakes A-K. Intake L is currently in session with 30 participants and 14 languages represented. These participants are not included in the figures given in this paper.

Over the years *T* has continued to be very active in vernacular literacy. In his language area community politics and lack of interest closed the schools so *T* sought out others who were keen to start literacy programs. He has helped communities from Aruamu, Kire, Ogea, Akighim and Onabasulu languages run Writers' Workshops, Teacher Training Workshops, Materials Production Workshops and Alphabet Design Workshops. He has assisted the Madang Province Elementary Trainers with materials production and he was STEP principal for Intake J in the Sepik Province in 2002-2003. Currently his community has renewed interest in vernacular literacy classes again and he is mentoring one Mbore man through the current L Intake of STEP.

Challenges Encountered by Graduates

There are two common challenges most STEP graduates face. The most difficult is lack of sustained community support. Initially the community is very motivated and supportive but over time their interest wanes and they stop offering practical support to the TPPS teachers. This is the most obvious indication of people not valuing literacy as a way of preserving their culture. As the graduates are discovering, it takes time to reshape attitudes.

The second challenge is the Elementary Reform System paying their prep teachers while TPPS teachers are primarily volunteers. This one difference between the formal and non-formal systems has caused problems for vernacular, community-based programs. Although both systems are recognised by the government, only those in the formal system are paid for teaching. Numerous TPPS teachers have quit when they see Elementary Reform teachers in neighbouring communities receiving pay from the government. As a result, many children end up with no vernacular literacy education.⁷ *B* told me, "Elementary pay is killing TPPS." (*B* 2004, pers. comm. 30 November). As mentioned earlier, tensions exist between the formal and non-formal systems. The pay issue and refusal of some provincial education officials to accept experienced TPPS teachers into the system are the two major tensions that we would like to see resolved.

As I interviewed *T*, *B* and five other graduates, I saw an encouraging pattern emerge. These men and women with a vision for vernacular literacy did not give up if their own communities stopped supporting the literacy

⁷ The formal Elementary Reform System has not been established in many parts of the country yet due to logistical challenges and financial constraints. The need for non-formal TPPS programs is still great and valid in PNG.

programs. Instead they reached out to other language groups who were interested. The STEP staff continues to receive similar reports from other graduates who have done the same.

Strengths and Weaknesses of STEP

Between the government, NGOs, churches and communities much is being accomplished for vernacular literacy programs. Much of the training conducted, however, is short-term, usually two to six weeks. This is great for awareness and initial motivation but this type of training is not conducive to sustainability of literacy programs. A long-term training course, like STEP, has definite advantages. Meeting for short times repeatedly over 18-20 months allows for more than just presentation of ideas, theories, activities and methods. The participants have the time to discuss, adapt and practise the things they are taught in each module – both during the module and in the village. The village time in between modules is a vital part of training as the participants can experience what works and what doesn't work in real life. Returning for another module gives the opportunity for follow-up. They share their successes and challenges and discuss ways to improve in their literacy work.

The community-based curriculum using cultural calendars and themes is another strength of STEP. We are making progress in breaking down the attitude that literacy/education has nothing to do with the community and the culture. Evaluations from the STEP participants indicate the importance of this aspect of STEP in their training. One STEP graduate comments, "This has strengthened the teaching of our culture and customs" (B 2004, pers. comm. 30 November).

Another strength of STEP is the mentor system. A culturally and linguistically knowledgeable liaison is necessary for each participant since the training is given in Tok Pisin (trade language) or English, out of the language area and primarily by an expatriate teaching staff. The mentor's role is crucial as s/he assists the participants on many levels during the modules and in the village.

The camaraderie and synergy among participants is a strength that has become an added bonus. Participants come from all over the country meeting as strangers with preconceived attitudes toward different cultural groups. Some have been traditional tribal enemies. Add in a variety of religious denominations and one would expect some confrontations. Instead we repeatedly witness a breaking down of stereotypes and fears as participants get to know one another over time. They gather often enough

to truly appreciate each other as individuals. Many deep and lasting friendships have come out of the STEP course. Learning to work together for the common good is a lesson learned by many.

As all human endeavours are flawed, so too, the STEP course has its weaknesses. The most common request we receive from graduates is further training through in-services. STEP was able to conduct a three week in-service in 2000 due to special funding from AusAid. However, no other in-service has been conducted by STEP in Ukarumpa due to lack of funding, lack of staff and difficulty of travel and communication in the country. Currently, regional in-services are being discussed and planned with funding available.

Being a long-term course makes STEP an extremely expensive course to run. The cost per person is approximately \$3,000 (US). This, in turn, keeps the course dependent on outside funding. Regional courses have proven to be more expensive and, logistically, extremely challenging.

Though national men have been and continue to be on staff, the course is primarily staffed and administered by SIL expatriates. One of the original goals of the course in 1994 was to turn it over to national administration and staffing within a few years. That has not happened due to a number of factors (e.g. new assignments, personal/family issues, illness). We still believe that the training in STEP would be more effective and more culturally relevant if there were more national involvement in teaching and administration.

Potential Impact

The potential impact of STEP could be phenomenal, not just in PNG, but in other countries.

STEP graduates from Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are preparing to launch literacy training in their countries based on STEP.

Neighbouring language groups are asking STEP graduates for assistance in setting up their own vernacular literacy programs. STEP graduates are even going into traditionally enemy tribal areas to respond to these requests. Some of our STEP graduates have returned to mentor participants from these neighbouring language groups as their vision of expansion begins to bear fruit.

The modular approach to training has expanded to other disciplines, such as, translation and teacher training, as others see the benefits.

Increasingly the formal Elementary Reform district education trainers ask STEP graduates for assistance in training teachers within their provinces due to the excellent training received in STEP.

STEP could have an impact on vernacular, community-based literacy in other countries as well. The basic principles behind the major components of the course are proven and can be adapted to most situations.

Conclusion

By recommending the use of vernacular language in the early years of schooling and community-based curriculum, the government adopted an education policy that would bring PNG into the modern world while preserving the diverse cultures within the country. Both formal and non-formal systems of education have diligently been working toward this goal. Under the non-formal sector, the STEP Literacy Training Course has made progress in assisting communities to establish and maintain vernacular, community-based literacy programs for children and adults in villages throughout the country. Vernacular, community-based literacy is a main focus of the course and is evident in the course presentation and curriculum. Reports and interviews from STEP graduates confirm their training in STEP has prepared them well for the work of starting and expanding community-based literacy programs in their communities.

One of the challenges literacy workers continue to face is that many people have yet to realise the value of vernacular literacy in their communities and cultures. Changing attitudes takes time and adopting new values takes even longer. However, the change is happening, perhaps slowly, but it is taking hold.

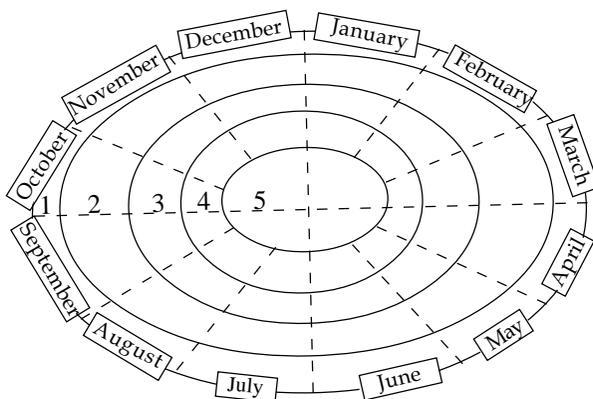
This was recognized recently by **B** as he told me the Kunimaipa in his area are now into the second generation of children going to prep school. There has been an attitude shift among the parents who attended TPPS in the 1980's and who are now sending their children to TPPS. Literacy is becoming an important value in their culture. They have seen the results with more children finishing primary school, entering high school and some getting tertiary training. The solid base of vernacular literacy has been proven as the TPPS children continually out-performed the other students in primary and secondary classes. (**B** 2004, pers. comm. 30 November)

The people of PNG are resilient, a necessary attribute for rough living in a rough land. Their resiliency comes through in other aspects of life as evidenced in our STEP graduates who won't give up their literacy work

despite incredible challenges. It is gratifying to know that, despite its weaknesses, STEP is contributing to an increasing literacy rate and is helping to keep the diverse cultures of PNG alive. Vernacular, community-based literacy programs are making a difference. It is the men and women of vision, properly equipped for the task, who will lead their communities into the future with their language, culture and identity still strong. ✍

End Note: Complete information regarding the STEP Literacy Training Course – including vision statement, core values, strategies, outcomes, complete curriculum and lesson plans – is available upon request by contacting the STEP principal by email at step-course@sil.org.pg or the SIL literacy office at lr-literacy@sil.org.pg

Appendix 1: Cultural Calendar



In each circle something different is recorded in the environment or culture.

1. Cultural, Religious and Sporting Events.
2. Agricultural, Fishing and Hunting Activities.
3. Natural Changes in the Environment.
4. Seasons.
5. Wind Direction.

Appendix 2

Ways the Community can Show Support (Sample list compiled by STEP participants)

1. give money (donations)
2. build classrooms
3. give food from garden
4. work in teacher's garden (start the garden)
5. go with literacy worker on awareness patrols, visit LLG, etc.
6. help by giving a free ride on a canoe, pmv, etc.
7. pray!!
8. provide prizes for Amamas De (*Celebration Day*), fairs, etc.
9. make announcements (help publicise) about the literacy program in lotu, market, etc.
10. sell items at the market and give percentage back to school
11. cut trees to sell lumber
12. cash crops
13. set a school work day (community help day)
14. help carry supplies from town or airstrip
15. help cook food at courses
16. parents can give supplies to the school (pencils, chalk, etc.)
17. get stories from community
18. parents come to school-visitors day
19. mark a day for bringing firewood to school that can later be used/
sold by students/literacy workers
20. parents must come to all meetings
21. water system
22. ask community for literacy ideas
23. people to help you make materials (artists, make and bind books,
etc.)
24. ask people to help with lessons or activities
25. ask people to help with students (read a story, math game) to
improve the students learning
26. parents can perform a drama
27. help edit stories

Ownership happens when you keep the people informed and involved!!

Appendix 3

Village Assignments Summary Page for Modules 1-4

Primary Goal:

In order to consolidate, apply, practice and extend what participants have learned in each module, they will work through and complete the village assignments designed for them.

Note: Assignments may be adapted to fit individual situations.

Module 1 Village Assignments

1. Conduct a two-week Writers' Workshop.
2. Read the stories written in Module 1 and at the workshop to people in the village. (fluency practice)
3. Complete the cultural calendar. Get community involvement, especially from village elders.
4. Conduct a literacy awareness presentation in your community and visit local government offices.
5. Find out the literacy needs of the area. (Literacy Needs Assessment)
6. Write a personal or family mission statement.
7. Draw a village area map for future village reports at STEP.
8. Translate health texts into vernacular: *Nutrition; Hygiene; Dangerous Things.*
9. Complete 5 inductive Scripture studies in the vernacular and write them in your exercise book.
10. Keep an accurate financial record of expenses for assignments on your financial record sheet.

Module 2 Village Assignments

1. Run a Writers' Workshop. Write predictable stories that go with themes and make into Big Books. (At least 5)
2. Read the predictable stories to others in the village. Practice letter formation at workshop. (Fluency practice)
3. Choose 5 new themes and develop theme webs with learning activities listed for each of the four elements of literacy.
4. Write lesson plans for the Four Elements of Literacy for one of the themes you have developed. Teach these lessons in the village.

5. Teach the literacy lessons used in practice teaching this module to children in the village.
6. Continue with literacy awareness sessions in the village and visit your local level government officer.
7. Translate 3 health texts into vernacular and make into Big Books. (*Diarrhoea; Immunisations; Child Health and Safety*)
8. Complete 5 inductive Scripture studies in the vernacular and write them in your exercise book.
9. Keep an accurate financial record of expenses for assignments on your financial record sheet.

Module 3 Village Assignments

1. Complete theme webs (5), term plans (1), weekly lesson guides (10), for all of Term 1. Write a complete set of lesson plans for one week.
2. Teach the lessons you used in practice teaching during Module 3 incorporating principles learned in classroom management and teaching/learning principles.
3. Run a Materials Production Workshop to produce more stories and teaching aids.
4. Read stories you have written to people in the village. (Fluency Practice)
5. Continue to do informal awareness sessions in your area and visit local government officer or provincial education officer.
6. Translate 3 health texts into vernacular and make into Big Books. (*Malaria; TB; Coughs and Colds*)
7. Complete 5 inductive Scripture studies in the vernacular and write them in your exercise book.
9. Keep an accurate financial record of expenses for assignments on your financial record sheet.

Module 4 Village Assignments

1. Conduct a two-week Teacher Training Workshop.
2. Continue working on completion of materials for one year prep-school curriculum (Four terms) (*term plans, theme webs, lesson plans, weekly lesson guides, books, stories, teaching aids, etc.*)
3. Assist community in setting up a literacy committee (if needed).
4. Write a personal profile in English for graduation booklet.
5. Read stories you have written to people in the village. (Fluency Practice)

6. Continue literacy awareness in local community and public relations with local level government officials.
7. Complete 5 inductive Scripture studies in vernacular and write them in exercise book.
8. Keep an accurate financial record of your expenses for assignments on the financial record sheet.

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