

Examining the Role of Educational Leaders in Higher Education System in Papua New Guinea: Issues and Challenges

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Abstract

Higher education system in Papua New Guinea (PNG) has undergone substantial changes during the past three decades as the country has transitioned to a resource-based economy. The education system in PNG relentlessly depends on external foreign institutions that foster strategies and development and transformed the system along a continuum of combinative and absorptive higher education trajectories. The aim of this article is to examine the state of affairs of education system in PNG and the role and contributions of educational leaders toward the educational development. To this end, it is found that there has been a plethora of issues inhibiting the system of education, despite unequivocal interventions by leaders. The article highlights the imminent issues in the higher education system in PNG and the challenges faced by the educational leaders to revamp the system. Furthermore, a model has been suggested to remedy and spruce up the higher education system in PNG that might go a long way toward providing new insights and avenues of development of higher educational system.

Keywords: Higher education, leadership, educational model, Papua New Guinea

1. Introduction

The current educational system in Papua New Guinea must be improved in order to address the demands of the changing times. This is true since even after more than three decades of independence, Papua New Guinea has continued to find means to properly address deteriorating quality of education.

As such, various studies have identified some of these as lack of classrooms, educators, and even facilities that had hampered the nation's goal in this aspect.

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In this regard, educational problems in PNG are not limited to the system, but also on socio-cultural influences, such that a large extent of students are forced and expected to help their families in agriculture, which is one of the main sources of livelihood for the nation in topic, since over 85 % of the people live in rural areas.

The advancement of education both for the individual and national level is important because it directly influences wellbeing, justice, and social empowerment. Recent events that stemmed during the turn of the last century have revealed a dilemma on a shortage in professional human resources which had restricted the national growth of PNG. This problem has been blamed wholly or in part on factors such as over-reliance on foreign educators, shortage in quality local teachers, and costly education rates, among others. However, reforms instituted in recent decades suggest a realization of these problems, as what the Prime Minister's delegation of education as second priority clearly show, next only to healthcare. Taken in its entirety, the solution to PNG's Higher Education can be based on their education leaders. A national system aimed at training of educators must be established to enhance the quality of educators and assure consistency in quality for all concerned, regardless of economic and geographic background of the individual.

2. Educational System in Developing Countries

It is evident that the desire to improve the educational system, specifically those of developing countries, has been given due importance in recent decades. Such has been the case in April 2000, when 164 countries, Papua New Guinea included, held a meeting to discuss several issues pertaining to education (Rena, 2011, p. 1). With Dakar, Senegal, playing the host country, the 164 nations arrived at a conclusion of advocating a principle known as EFA (Education for All). Specifically, Rena stresses two of the six goals advocated in the said meeting, namely:

(1) ensuring that by 2015, all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality and (2) eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to, and achievement in, basic education of good quality. (2011, p. 1)

Noteworthy of the two goals discussed above is their agreement with improving the existing educational paradigm of the less-privileged sectors of the society, including children and gender-related issues, which evidently comprise the major educational barrier of any developing nation. In this context, there had been evident effort on the part of various global organizations to uplift the status quo, as what can be evidenced in the Asian Development Bank's and other contributors' effort to fully support the Education for All initiative, especially in nations that trail behind in terms of education, such as PNG. This is significant since there exists a pervasive belief that improving a nation's educational proficiency will likewise result to improvement of quality of life, greater distribution of wealth, equality, increased skilled human resources, a drop in population, and general unity and stability. As such, this mindset has become the driving force of countless individuals and nations to improve their educational competence, of which PNG likewise advocates.

Advancing the educational competence of developing nations is important because it promotes solutions to a vast array of problems. Among the generally-accepted of these are the facts that "education is considered the route to economic prosperity, the key to scientific and technological advancement, the means to combat the unemployment, the foundation of social equality...political socialization and cultural diversity" (Rena, 2011, p. 1). In this respect, it is worth noting how developing nations such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Papua New Guinea, along with India, have endeavored to improve their respective nation's academic proficiencies in order to achieve the afore-mentioned benefits.

However, there is a difficult dilemma that has to be overcome before developing nations can truly aspire to properly educate their people. This specifically concerns foreign-based contributors such as the ADB and first-world nations regarding the need for developing nations to first assure sustainable state education. This is pertinent since "until South Asian countries sufficiently develop economically to absorb the cost of public education, it is not likely that tens of millions of students can be accommodated adequately" (Rena 2011 p. 1), and that the region of South Asia comprises only 2% of the global allocation for education despite of encompassing 23% of global student populace.

In this context, ADB finds that while Pakistan has over 140 million in population and academic enrolment of 80%, it has remained to exhibit high dropout rates in primary education level. This facts, plus Pakistan's history of allocating modest funding for education, makes it difficult to sustain quality education especially in non-urban areas. Similarly, the case with Bangladesh likewise makes it hard to sustain quality education among the populace, especially those in rural areas. This is true since it has also exhibited a tradition of allocating modest expenditures for education despite of a population of 125 million and 95% enrolment rate. Among the stated nations, India poses a unique predicament to external contributors such as ADB. Here, despite of its population of over 1.2 billion and having an enrolment rate of 90%, no assistance is give to India because its government trusts that is can provide for their education needs without any external help.

Given these situations, it can be observed that the main challenge of developing nations can be based on assuring that their citizens are able to enjoy quality education. This is understandably difficult to achieve, given that all first world nations have already systematized their respective higher educational systems for decades and even centuries. Hence, developing societies must duplicate these achievements in a much shorter span of time.

Ultimately, the aim of developing countries with regards to education is to match the competence of those of developed countries. However, this indeed is a daunting goal, given that "Higher education is extraordinarily expensive. The cost of providing buildings, libraries, support structures and staff is testing the finances of even the richest nations" (Maharey, 2011, p. 66). Stating this, it is then apparent that for a developing nation to truly improve on its educational system, this must coincide with sustained economic governmental strategies, similar to the one imposed by ADB on Papua New Guinea, whereby their agenda has been "formulated in accordance with the Government's development priorities, which focused on human resources development to achieve sustained economic growth" (Asian Development Bank, 2006, p. 1). Thus, any effort by a developing nation to uplift its educational system will face disappointments when it is not coupled with economic progress in order to ensure continuity of allocation of funds to the educational system.

3. Role of Educational Leaders in Higher Education System

While the significance of improving education in developing countries has been established in the previous section, the importance of the roles that leaders have to play still remains unexplained. In this context, the Papua New Guinea Vision 2050 (in print) clearly illustrates several aspects in PNG that need to be improved in aims of being one of the top 50 nations. Also, the said report stresses a point to embark on a bold venture of greatly improving the educational competence of the said nation, of which education is rightly classified under Human Capital Development.

It is indeed beneficial to the nation that its education leaders classify as important these agendas, namely to “Establish one multi-disciplinary technical college in each province...Establish an Industrial Technology and Development Institute...Establish a Papua New Guinea Open University to coordinate flexible learning programs to the four state universities” (National Strategic Plan Taskforce, 2009, p. 5). This further solidifies the claim that PNG is very intent on bettering their global standing not only in terms of economy, but also in academic competence.

In a related development, it is a fact that the recent program designed to enhance the academic standing of PNG is not new. Rather, it may be understood as a continuation of previous programs whose scope and magnitude of specialization have been increased. As such, a 1999 report illustrates the number of Institution of Higher Education (IHE) being 30, “the majority of which offer a single or limited range of programs and are responsible to their parent departments” (Commission for Higher Education, 1999, p. 2), which clearly imply PNG’s leadership’s long-standing inclination to advance measures for the betterment of existing education standards, thus empowering the populace with opportunities of further professional advancement.

With the principle of ‘empowering’ as the goal of Higher Education leaders, PNG aims to promote systematized processes that will enhance the said goal. One of these states: “Access to university education and graduate programmes should be enhanced. In the tertiary education sector, current university enrolment is approximately 10000, which is 55 percent of tertiary enrolment” (National Strategic Plan Taskforce, 2009, p. 34). Accordingly, the present yearly graduates cannot meet the demands being set by the ever-increasing business investments.

As such, it is of the highest importance that yearly graduates on a national level are increased by 50% by the year 2020. This target by the education leaders of PNG is best suited to maximize the nation's thrust towards national advancement, as mentioned in earlier sections.

Other than the quantitative approach in increasing the educational competence of PNG, education leaders likewise perceive "a need to increase, improve and support current research-based institutions and universities in order to produce top-quality research and development outcomes that will provide solutions to challenges" (National Strategic Plan Taskforce, 2009, p. 34). In this regard, education leaders believe that existing academes must forge an alliance among themselves in order to maximize research and development, and integrate these with learning. As such, there has been an effort to initiate an Industrial Technology and Development Institute, with the aim of promoting "research aggressively and cooperatively amongst institutions of higher education" (National Strategic Plan Taskforce, 2009, p. 34). As such, leaders in the educational field in PNG find it important to instill cooperation among universities and academic institutions in order to truly maximize the potential of education in the said nation.

Other than the more institutionalized approach of bettering the academic competence of PNG, leaders in education realizes the importance of adding value to the educators themselves. This can be achieved through the means of improving "the quality of teacher education with subject specializations...in order to deliver quality education" (National Strategic Plan Taskforce, 2009, p. 34). Accordingly, this includes increasing the salaries of educators and improvement of working conditions to further increase the number of teachers in PNG.

However, it is true that these reforms on governmental systems will be meaningless even if "the more the more organic components of teaching, research and service were also added. What is needed is a cultural transformation" (Commission for Higher Education, 1999, p. 2). Here, the leadership in NHEP proposes a five-point scheme that will help ensure success in reforming education in PNG. These are:

- Policy and operational expressions of inclusiveness in respect of institutional of development
- Positive articulation with other levels of education and training...in relation to other IHE's.
- Active strengthening of standards and expertise in relation to national and employment needs.
- Evident responsiveness and responsibility...in the use of resources allocated by the state.
- Increasing productivity in such areas as the numbers and quality of graduates, acquisition of scholarship and other funding from non-Government of PNG sources (Commission for Higher Education, 1999, p. 2).

Considering all the claims and arguments presented in this section, it is observable that PNG's education leaders' main agenda must be aimed at improving the system by instigating bold, dynamic, and courageous steps designed at maximizing the potentials of both governmental and individual skills of Papua New Guinea's education sector. This indeed is accurate with Beeby's Theory, whereby it states that "the quality in education depends largely on the quality of teacher...but quality teachers emerge from institutions where high quality teacher educators are to be found" (McLaughlin, 1996, p. 105).

4. Higher Education System in PNG: Issues to Consider

The unique socio-cultural factors pertaining to Higher Education that permeates in PNG are likewise responsible for the distinct issues and challenges that prevail in the said nation. Understandably, these issues reflect the very culture present in the peoples of PNG, and that these suggestions may only be applicable to them. In this aspect, it is of supreme interest to focus most of this paper's attention on the study done by Asian Development Bank in 2006, whereby utmost considerations were focused primarily on the betterment of PNG's Higher Education system.

Accordingly, ADB advises a five-point agenda which pertains to relevant issues with regards to PNG's Higher Education. First of these is the "Need to Rationalize the entire education system" (Asian Development Bank, 2006, p. 14). This is important since studies have revealed that PNG's educational system could not directly gain from various programs because of its inherent structural weaknesses.

Hence, ADB proposes instigating frameworks that will address the entire educational system, in concurrence with the private sector in aims of promoting education.

The next agenda being advanced by ADB is “to make TESAS (Tertiary Education Study Assistance Scheme) more pro-poor to increase access to Higher Education by poor students” (Asian Development Bank, 2006, p. 14). This issue is significantly important since TESAS is based on a student’s GPA, thereby negating the aspect of economic background on the part of the student. In the same manner, this scheme is exclusive of tuition fees and other expenses related to academics.

The next issue to be considered based on the study of ADB on PNG is the “Need to address project-related governance issues” (Asian Development Bank, 2006, p. 15). In this context, it is worth noting that TESAS lacks transparency due to the absence of a standardized GPA system among all universities and colleges in PNG.

Lastly, ADB names the “Need to increase efficiency in the use of expatriate lecturers” (Asian Development Bank, 2006, p. 15) as another issue that needs to be addressed. This is an especially sensitive issue concerning universities and academes since the quantity of expatriates in PNG may not lessen as previously anticipated, thereby increasing competition in the process. Also, in case of success of lessening the number of expatriates, the quality of Higher Education is at risk of deteriorating consequently as the number of these expatriates likewise diminish. Hence, careful planning must be made to ensure that the quality of Higher Education is not compromised with the intent to lessen the number of expatriates.

It is interesting to note that PNG’s Department of National Planning and Monitoring, in a research study released in 2010, likewise concludes with similar results as that of the ADB. As such, under Higher Education with the goal: “To develop the higher skills needed for PNG’s prosperity with a world-class tertiary education sector” (Department of National Planning and Monitoring, 2010, p. 38), DNPM cites these issues as of primary importance:

...difficulties relating to insufficient financing of higher education institution, quality and access to tertiary education, staff development, skills-based training, enhancement and preservation of quality of teaching, research and services, relevance of programs, employability of graduates...and equitable access to the benefits of international co-operation. (38)

In the context of advancing Higher Education, the Department of Education of PNG published in 2004 a national plan entitled *Achieving a Better Future*. Here, much effort has been focused on the issue of improving the quality of teacher education and training, as this would understandably increase the educational competence of the entire nation as well. Specifically, this entails “The provision of well-trained and qualified staff and support personnel” (*Achieving a Better Future*, 2004, p. 72), whereby this issue will be addressed by increasing the hiring of staff, and likewise increasing the incentives in order to attract qualified individuals. Indeed these changes will necessitate added training for educators, including new technologies and materials for the tasks-at-hand. This is indeed accurate with the plan of National Capital District Division of Education, whereby it states the need for a guideline that “Teachers who will be recruited will have...teaching qualifications with teaching experience” (2007, p. 88).

In line with the issue of increasing the competence of educators, PNG's Department of Education is likewise endeavoring to address the said issue by ensuring their competence in education management. This will be achieved by a five-point program. These are: “Training of Headteachers on administration, finances and general management; technical and planning support; support to inspectors to allow them to visit schools; support for the work of provincial and national education authorities; and a series of research” (*Achieving Universal Education*, 2009, p. 40).

Point-for-point, each of the position above-mentioned needs the full support of the PNG government to truly be effective in their delegated task. As such, for Headteachers, their success solely depend whether they can respond to the tasks called-for by their position. Specifically, they have to be fully capable in the fields of financial management, such as acquiring school materials and infrastructure. Inclusive of the training process is basic school management such as planning and personnel management, “including how to provide an enabling environment for the teachers and how to address teacher attitude and absenteeism” (*Achieving Universal Education*, 2009, p. 40).

In the same manner, District Education Administrators will need governmental support on two main aspects.

First of the two is the support they will need in technical and planning, such that “further support in ensuring that their education plans are fully consistent with the District Development Plans as provided to the Office of Rural Development” (Achieving Universal Education, 2009, p. 41). Likewise, School Inspectors have to be assisted by the government of PNG in order to properly address issues concerning his area of responsibility. In this context, given the uniqueness of PNG’s situation, assistance on funding must be ensured in order for School Inspectors to visit schools consistently. This may be done through innovative means, such as acquiring of motorcycles to achieve the said aim. This is also true in the case of Provincial and National Education Authorities, whereby their professional responsibilities necessitate “coordination, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting roles” (Achieving Universal Education, 2009, p. 42), in order for them to properly address issues within their scope of influence.

5. Challenges for Higher Education Leaders in Papua New Guinea

It has been earlier established that the educational climate in PNG, particularly in higher education, faces unique constraints. This does not only include physical or geographic problems, but more so on cultural and systematic in nature. In this context, it is an opportune event that the Prime Ministers of Australia and PNG, Rudd and Somare respectively, have met in January of 2009 to discuss and explore means to find solutions to the ever-persistent problems in tertiary education prevailing in PNG.

Despite of the evident advances made by PNG in Higher Education in recent decades, the meeting in 2009 has revealed several points that have remained unsolved. The Review of the Papua New Guinea University System identifies these as:

constraints to public funding; poor physical facilities; inadequate information technology, libraries, equipment and teaching resources; outdated curriculum—poor student services and amenities; problem with recruitment and retention of teaching staff; problem with preparation of students for entry to university; safety issues and other barriers for female students; administrative and management weaknesses; and limited research capacity. (p. 2)

Other than the challenges stated in the said review, Prime Ministers Rudd and Somare likewise agree that university education is an integral part of good governance.

This is especially true since historically, PNG has remained “constrained by a shortage of skilled qualified people across key sectors of the workforce” (Review of the Papua New Guinea University System, 2009, p. 1). Hence, improving the quality of higher education in PNG will result to an overall improvement of the nation as well, since this will result to a dissemination of truly qualified individuals across governmental positions.

Consequently, the findings of Prime Ministers Rudd and Somare are consistent with the problems in PNG’s higher education that are forwarded by Cecilia Nembou. In this respect, her arguments state that despite of PNG’s formal institutionalization of its tertiary education by way of the Commission for Higher Education in the early 1980’s, the nation has continued to be beleaguered with numerous challenges. This includes “legislation, quality assurance, governance, leadership and management, culture, and resources” (Nembou, 2013, p. 70). In this regard, Nembou further offers a suggestion to better the prevailing educational system in PNG, in that “All stakeholders need to understand their roles...set differences aside and make a genuine commitment...to correctly implement amalgamation...partnership policies for the benefit of the students” (Nembou, 2013, p. 70). Thus, what is readily observable in this line of argument is the reality that the challenges being faced by PNG’s education leaders are not limited to structural or organizational deficiencies, but also on a socio-cultural aspect, given the need to coordinate and amalgamate efforts for the good of the academe with the private sector, both locally and internationally.

These challenges are indeed very alarming given the level of difficulty in properly addressing the above-mentioned problems. Moreover, this becomes even more daunting when taking into account the observations made by the Oxford Business Group in 2012, wherein they enumerate these challenges being: 1) problem in upgrading the educational system; 2) A considerable drop in the quality of education in universities during the last three decades owing to the reduced funding and scarcity of competent educators; 3) Enrolment and completion rates have remained low by international standards; 4) A drop in literacy rates from 52% in the 1990’s to 15-25% in 2011; and 5) A drop in governmental expenditures on public universities of about 7% compared to the nation’s independence in 1975 (The Report, 2012, p. 188).

Another challenge that education leaders have to face is the cultural tendency of Papuan New Guineans to concentrate in urban areas. While this is indeed a noble cause for certain cases, it contributes to the detriment of the higher education sector. In fact, this precept is presented by Postiglione and Mak in "The Changing Functions and Patterns of Higher Education", whereby a correlation is postulated between the unemployment rate of 25% in urban areas and education, stressing that "higher education must avoid reinforcing the viewpoint that national development and individual fulfillment are inevitably linked with urban residence" (1997, p. 253). Challenging situations such as this are not only common in PNG, but in almost all of developing nations. Such has been the case with Solomon Islands, wherein "this concentration of educational privileges in the capital is noticeable in almost all island nations" (Postiglione&Mak, 1997, p. 253). Hence, this socio-cultural problem is one of the challenges that PNG education leaders have to overcome in order to reach their goals.

6. A Constructive Model for New Education System in PNG

Based on the prevailing intricacies in PNG's education system, especially with the problems concerning cultural and below-quality and absenteeism among teachers, PNG will greatly benefit from fostering a system similar to the one implemented by Australia. This system ensures increased chances of success under PNG conditions since it will eradicate the central government of tremendous amounts of problems from the organizational standpoint. Hence, the central government will cease to be the sole provider of funds, supplies, human resources, and other education-related materials since these will be sourced and provided by each province. The Australian Government explains this as such: "Each state government manages the school system within their state...they provide funds and regulation for their schools...The curriculum taught in each state or school may vary but the learning areas are the same in all" (What is the Australian, 2013, p. 1). Given the limited resources of PNG, this type of organizational system will indeed be advantageous since geographic locales will only need to focus their attention to their own needs, including hiring of educators and Administrators who are familiar with the people and culture, school curriculum specifically designed according to their unique cultural background, and others.

In the same manner, just as there is an ACT (Australian Capital Territory) Education Directorate in Australia, who is in “accountable for the provision of strategic advice and overall management of vocational and higher education” (ACT Government, 2013, p. 1), a directorate of the same character in PNG will be beneficial in assessing several researches and forecast educational trends that will benefit the distinct qualities of the Papuan New Guinean people.

Adopting the Australian system of education in Papua New Guinea will change the existing system; one which has been proven to be ineffectual in meeting the challenges of the changing times. This will likewise allow the PNG educational system to cease from being a top-down model, which has also been proven to benefit only those in major urban areas. Hence, this model decentralizes the PNG system, and in the process empowers each and every province however small to choose their own educational team, according to the uniqueness of their locality.

7. Recommendations and Conclusion

Based on the topics presented in this research, it is observable that PNG exhibits several characteristics that prevent various governmental educational programs to fully achieve their goals. Apart from the more evident aspect of financial limitations, with PNG being a developing nation, several socio-cultural factors affect the very nature that Higher Education has to be systematized in PNG.

In this regard, one of more prominent of these factors include the Papuan New Guineans predilection to reside in urban areas instead of their respective provinces, in pursuit of an illogical belief that financial and professional success can only be attained in the cities, thus extending beyond available resources, the educational supplies and funding meant only for a specific number of recipients.

Hence, to assuage this seeming imbalance in delegation resources, additional revenues have to be sought in aims of increasing what can be sourced internally. This can be achieved through external contributors such as the ADB and other first world nations. In this pursuit, the National Higher Education Plan proposes that “Above any input requirement for additional funding is the need for renewed commitment and increased productivity” (1999, p. 8).

This further shows the importance of having appropriate funding for Higher Education before PNG can truly instigate changes in its education system.

Given that there is already sufficient funding sourced from local and international financial institutions, the next recommendation would be to further strengthen the spirit of Affiliation amongst leading academes. By definition, Affiliation is "a partnership in which two or more Institute for Higher Education (IHE) agree to collaborate for a number of reasons including awarding degrees or gaining other forms of academic recognition (Nembou, 2013, p. 72). Understandably, this will allow for the educational system in PNG to increase, through the sharing of various researches and studies in the field of education among various colleges and universities, both private and state-owned.

Another recommendation that needs immediate action is based on the study made in 2009 wherein it was revealed that PNG's society is growing at a rate of 2.3% and 2.7%, yet about 55% of the populace cannot read and write. In this respect, I am in agreement with the recommendation by the education department of PNG stating that "Immediate strategies to arrest further decline in all social indicators must be adopted" (National Strategic Plan Taskforce, 2009, p. 33). Here, active and progressive action must be instigated to ensure that the 55% will not deteriorate much further and those belonging to the said group will be educated properly, regardless of their age. By so doing, the population growth of 2.3% to 2.7% will be added to the 'educated class', thereby resulting in further reducing the illiteracy arte of PNG.

PNG's National Strategic Plan Taskforce (NSPT) has likewise released a study stating an alarming fact that out of the 10,000 tertiary university enrollees in 2009, only 2,000 from these actually finish their degrees. These numbers of graduates are indeed "inadequate to match the demand that is being created by new investments and an ageing workforce" (National Strategic Plan Taskforce, 2009, p. 34). Consequently, it is the program's target to raise this figure to 50% by the year 2020. Stating these figures, it is indeed pertinent for PNG'd Department of Education to find solutions to enhance tertiary education and post graduate programmes, as this will ultimately result to enhancing the quality of workforce across governmental and industrial positions.

In accordance with enhancing the quality of students by way of increased accessibility to higher education, the quality of educators must also be increased.

This is for the reason that ultimately, the students' proficiency will have to largely depend on the competence of their professors, and that compromising the latter would inherently result to students who lag behind their counterparts in other nations. NSPT explains this in such manner: "The quality of teachers with subject specializations needs to be improved in order to deliver quality education" (National Strategic Plan Taskforce, 2009, p. 34).

Another recommendation that will benefit PNG'd education standards is to establish an independent national curriculum authority that will ensure that education standards are at par with those of leading nations. Hence, this national curriculum authority must focus solely in ensuring that "the quality should equate to international standards and be commensurate with the demands of the economy" (National Strategic Plan Taskforce, 2009, p. 34). In relation to maintaining high standards of Higher Education, an Education Endowment Fund must be formed in order for PNG to have consistent funding for overseas scholarship grants for deserving students.

Likewise, with regards to maintaining the general literacy rates of the entire population, inspiration must be sourced from the United States in forming community colleges in all cities and towns across the country. This will ensure that the entire school-age population will have access to tertiary education, in accordance with their family's financial capacities. Notably, the courses in these community colleges do not have to be limited to academic expertise, but also the more practical vocational and technical-based specializations.

My next recommendation involves the youth. The magnitude of this sector's potential to PNG is easy to comprehend, given that in 2009 "Current demographics indicate that 40 percent of the population are youths. Hence, much effort must be concentrated upon ensuring that most if not all youths are able to pursue their education, and that education-based programs and benefits must encourage the youth to pursue their education up to the tertiary level.

Perhaps what is more prominent between PNG and the societies of first world nations is the manner that they treat gender equality. This is true since in PNG, women are still not accorded with the same preferential treatment as those of men.

This is especially significant given that women in PNG comprise about 50% of the population, and that they make up for 30% of the total workforce. However, despite of these figures, men still comprise the majority of the workforce especially in managerial, leadership, and other sensitive positions in corporations. This is verifiable in studies that show PNG's "Gender-Related Development Index ranks PNG 124 out of 177 countries" (National Strategic Plan Taskforce, 2009, p. 35). Thus, in order to maximize PNG's inherent potentials in manpower, women must be supported into participating in academic endeavors, for the advancement of them individually, as well as for the entire nation.

8. Conclusion

Based on the claims and arguments presented in this paper, it is a certainty that Papua New Guinea faces tremendous tasks in bettering the wellbeing of their education system. This is true since the problems that beset the said nation include a wide array of areas, from organizational, financial, human resource, and even socio-cultural factors that impede the progress of education. Specifically, PNG needs to greatly improve the accessibility on Higher Education degrees, given that it is through this endeavor that a society achieves expertise at par with those from other nations in the global stage.

However, despite of the gloomy forecasts and the steady decline that have troubled PNG for the last centuries, it is fortunate that several steps are already in place to jumpstart national progress. This includes to name a few, partnerships with external financial institutions such as the ADB and the Australia, along with banking institutions within PNG whose aims are unified in seeing the educational system exploit the many resources inherent to the said nation.

In this context, the primary role of education leaders in PNG is to make certain that the systematized measures being set are observed in the highest standards, so that the future population of PNG will improve consistently until the goals of us in the present have been attained by a future generation of a highly-educated race.

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