

MONITORING AND EVALUATION REPORT

MASTERS OF LEARNING INNOVATION

**CURRICULUM REFORM IMPLEMENTATION
PROJECT**

**TERTIARY STUDY PROGRAM
STEERING COMMITTEE**

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PATTAF Report to final Steering Committee Meeting CRIP MLI

1. Introduction

The Masters of Learning Innovation (MLI) funded by AusAID has been delivered by Queensland University of Technology (QUT) in conjunction with Divine Word University (DWU) and managed by the Curriculum Reform Implementation Project (CRIP). The program began with a cohort of 15 participants in February 2005 and will be completed by the end of 2006. All participants are officers in the Curriculum Development Division (CDD) of the NDoE. The program has been delivered by utilising a mixed mode teaching strategy which included distance education materials and intensive workshops provided each semester by staff from QUT and DWU.

This program has been one of three mixed mode programs delivered with AusAID support. The other two, a Bachelor of Nursing Conversion degree and the Virtual Colombo Plan Masters of Education (VCP M.Ed), have demonstrated very low attrition rates and a very high level of graduation. Both of these programs have provided a most successful in-country opportunity for nurses and educators to upgrade their skills and qualifications without the need to either leave their workplace or travel outside the country.

For the CRIP MLI, PATTAF has had responsibility, in collaboration with QUT for providing oversight and feedback of the monitoring and evaluation process on three levels:

- Indicators related to student participation and activity;
- Indicators related to the Learning model;
- Wider applications for work-based learning and competency development in the context of workforce development in PNG.

The PATTAF representative has interviewed students, staff from CDD and teaching staff within the program on a number of occasions and has presented three previous reports on July 2005, February 2006, and June 2006.

2. Monitoring and Evaluation Approach

This report to the final Steering Committee meeting focuses on the following three areas:

- 2.1 Students and the Program Model as it was implemented
- 2.2 The Model as modified in light of CDD experience for applicability to other areas of DOE
- 2.3 The Model's wider applicability for the Public Service

The report then draws conclusions on the suitability of the Mixed Mode Model in supporting Workforce Development and makes recommendations for application of the model for the Public Service.

2.1 Focus on Students and the Program Model as it was implemented.

PATTAF has previously reported on the ‘dispositions’ that the Masters course seeks to achieve. This section includes comments made by students in reference to each of these together with a summary comment.

A. Assist students in developing understandings, values and capacities that will assist them in their chosen role as curriculum officers to address national priorities

Students’ responses

Course materials are relevant and reflect national priorities. The reading materials are comprehensive and have assisted in understanding how to address national priorities. This has also given us a better understanding of the educational reform process and the rationale behind this. The content of the program has a good theoretical base but there is little or no chance to put it into practice. This is because staff within the CDD are at the frontline of educational reform. The educational reform process is very time consuming and many of us are running workshops and attending meetings around the country which affects our ability to incorporate these new ideas into our current work practices. The understandings, values and capacities that we are developing will no doubt assist us later on to address national priorities as far as our roles as curriculum officers, but it is difficult and frustrating to incorporate this into daily work practices at the moment.

B. Develop dispositions that are appropriate for both study and workplace environments that foster critical and analytical capacities, continual redevelopment of self and ideas, an ability to work independently and ethically and display leadership capacities

Students’ responses

The content of the course is very good and appropriate. The assignment work has enabled us to develop research skills and to develop confidence in our roles as curriculum officers. The assignment work has in some instances enabled us to look in a critical way at what is happening in the workplace. Our critical and analytical skills have been improved as has our ability to work independently. Once again it is difficult to put this into practice in the short term and work commitments and time constraints are affecting our ability to demonstrate leadership capacities in these areas as yet.

C. Integrate work and study to enhance both the work context to which students belong and their own personal development agendas

There was some variation between groups of students about the success of this. This seemed to vary according to the sections where students were working.

Students’ responses

“This is not happening in my area of work”

“The concepts are useful but not directly related to my area of work”

“There is just not enough time to make this happen”

“There needs to be a better integration between work and study”

“The model is very good and has widened my perspectives but the implementation of this model is not practical because of the time constraints”

“I am benefiting both personally and professionally but this is because I have had many years of experience in working in the curriculum area”

“I am totally committed to making this work, and because of this I have needed to reorganise my life and activities.”

“Together with the time required to complete assignments, carry out reading and research and other commitments related to our studies, plus our day to day work commitments – all this has affected our ability to incorporate this into current work practices.”

Commentary on Implementation of the Model

There was a consistent view from students that the timing of MLI was inappropriate. Given that the CDD is currently going through a major curriculum reform process for education reform within the country, workloads on CDD staff are extremely high. Many of the participants found great difficulty in balancing workload and study commitments. A counter argument to this is that because of the educational reforms taking place, this is the very time that a program such as this is required. One could also argue that students’ time management skills could have been a factor in the frustrations being expressed. Students were given one day a week for study commitments but some supervisors suggested that students were spending more time than this on their studies. A counter view was expressed by some students who claimed it was sometimes difficult to get their allocated time off because of work commitments.

2.2 The Model as modified in light of CDD experience for applicability to other areas of DOE

The Model for delivery attempts to provide a mechanism for integrating work and study *"to enhance both the work context to which you belong and your own personal development agendas."* The model spells out in some detail what this means in terms of the interrelationship between work and study. It provides guidelines for the students on what they need to do and think about in relation to both their work practices and their study. Previous PATTAF reports have identified that what seemed to be missing from the model was some form of commitment by the employers, including an understanding by employers of what the program is attempting to achieve. This occurred to some extent through the information sessions provided to CDD officers however the model should attempt to outline the responsibilities of the employers to ensure that a ‘corporate learning culture in which all benefit’ can be realised. It was suggested that better lines of communication between CDD personnel, enrolled students and the project itself would assist in alleviating this situation. The Steering Committee addressed this issue on a number of occasions but it is not clear whether or not CDD as a whole had changed its culture or attitude toward the program. This report does not attempt to make any judgement on this situation and CRIP management and CDD officers are much better placed to make an assessment of this. However if the model is to be applied within other areas of the DOE this is a crucial issue. For any program that integrates work and study to be successful, line

managers, other administrators and work colleagues need to be not only well informed about the aims and objectives of the project, but an attempt needs to be made to give them some 'ownership'. Previous reports have outlined mechanisms for achieving this.

In a number of meetings students expressed the opinion that in addition to the visits by academics from QUT and DWU a tutor should be available on site, to assist as required. The Nurses conversion degree mixed mode program used 'on site' facilitators who were available on a weekly or as required basis to assist with problems and were paid an honorarium for their services. The VCP M.Ed program used a mentoring system with academic staff from University of Goroka providing personal visits and support in addition to the regular residential sessions. It was suggested by PATTAF that consideration may be given to utilising the services of one of the CDD officers to act in a similar mentoring role. This would have also had some advantage in involving CDD more closely with the program.

This issue was addressed by the Steering Committee. The minutes of the July 2005 meeting made mention of a "*study skills coordinator ... within CDD to support officers on the study program.*" However it is not clear whether or not such a suggestion was taken up.

2.3 The Models wider applicability for the Public Service

A study by Schofield and others ¹ pointed out that:

*in the PNG context which aims for fundamental **public sector reform**, training can only make a real difference when it is linked to the wider reform agenda and is seen as part of a system-wide change strategy based on capacity-building. Providing traditional training programs for individual public servants, including capacity-building support for training providers, will not in itself strengthen performance of PNG's public sector workforce. And even where training produces individuals who are highly skilled, if their workplaces do not use these skills effectively or provide a work environment conducive to high performance, the training investment is wasted. The Schofield ² report points out the limitations of traditional, structured, off-the-job training programs and suggests a strategy based on "workforce development rather than training provides a more useful way of capturing what is needed to underpin the GoPNG's strategy to lift the quantity and quality of skills in the Public Service to achieve better service delivery to PNG citizens" (p.3). They also recommend that "future AusAID support should work with and build on systems already in place in PNG" (p.5), and that "AusAID should consider providing strategic support to a range of areas to help improve overall public sector performance in PNG" (p.7). The areas which they identify include PNGIPA - "to plan and deliver flexible, job-relevant public sector training" (p.7), and other training providers - "to establish and foster niche areas of expertise where PNGIPA is not the most appropriate vehicle, and linkages between PNGIPA and other training providers" (p. 7).*

¹ Schofield, K. & Pieper, L. (2004). 'PNG public sector training and development scoping study: April-May 2004.' Unpublished report, Port Moresby, p. 3.

² Ibid, various pages

The advantage of such a strategy is the opportunity created for work-based programs which can be more relevant to work situations and lead to "workforce development". This can be particularly so if it is possible to identify a number of participants who work together or work in similar government or non-government positions. Because the program could be offered within country on a part-time basis using a mixed mode approach, participants are not "lost" to the workforce. They are not alienated from colleagues on their return from a long absence out of country. This also creates the possibility of being involved in a study program which incorporates work-based activities, delivered on a full- or part-time basis.

The three mixed mode programs, supported by AusAID, which include the MLI, have been successfully delivered within PNG using a modified, highly supported form of distance education by three separate Australian institutions. They all used modified Australian curriculum and distance education materials and featured visits by Australian academic staff for intensive workshops, support from local PNG institutional partners, capacity building for these partners and support from local tutors. It is also important to point out that they were all delivered without withdrawing participants from the workplace. Of equal importance is that the programs were integrated into current work practices so that the skills were transferable within the workplace to both the institution and other employees.

In launching the Australian Aid White Paper (April 2006), Alexander Downer, Minister for Foreign Affairs, announced that scholarships for study in Australia to assist the process of building capacity in the Asia Pacific region, will double over the next five years. This is expected to enhance Australia's contribution to educating future leadership and "target future leaders from a wide cross section of society and focus on areas such as infectious diseases, health, governance, education, transnational crime, trade and clean energy; and, strengthen regional networks on key issues with strong links to Australia."³

It is to be hoped that in determining the mode of delivery for these scholarships, particularly within PNG, some attention is given to the considerable evidence that arises from the research conducted by Evans and Tregenza (Deakin University) and by Guy (National Institute for Research, PNG). In the opinion of these researchers:

*people re-thinking educational aid in the Pacific need to recognise and frame new policy and practice. They may have to assess educational aid projects to minimise risk and harm. Such processes will doubtless encumber the planning and development of new projects, and may well change the nature and conduct of projects. Indeed the like of some past projects may not be considered in future*⁴

Concerns about linguistic, cultural and economic invasion together with more contemporary concerns about building educational partnerships in an era of globalisation need to be considered.

A constructive way forward for such partnerships might be to blend 'localised' forms of 'exported' distance education-perhaps using the new educational technologies-with in-country tuition and support. This may help to address

³ Downer, A. 2006. Launch of the Australian Aid White paper: 26 April 2006. Speech, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer.

⁴ Evans, T. D. 2004. 'Educational partnerships between Australia and Papua new Guinea p. 5.

*issues of cost and risk (by capitalising on existing courses and reducing the costs and risks of extended visits), yet enable stronger local involvement and ownership*⁵

3. Mixed Mode Model - a strategy for Workforce Development

The MLI is an example of capacity development through tertiary study which has not required students to be extracted from their workplace, but has also sought to establish communities of practice and networks. The PNG Public Sector Workforce Development Initiative (PSWDI), Framework 2005-2007 states that:

*the Government's ambitious goals for economic and social development cannot be achieved without a well-led, well-trained, motivated, and high performing public sector... Sound training and development of public servants is essential for good public administration. But developing the public sector workforce involves much more than sending staff away from the workplace for traditional training and development programs; and it involves much more than developing the skills of individual public servants. It also involves creating productive work environments and strong public sector organisations in which public servants can actually use their skill effectively and are motivated to do so.*⁶

The mixed mode model used within the MLI offers a potential strategy that could be used for workforce development. As the PSWDI points out:

Ways of developing the public sector workforce in Papua New Guinea must be able to change in response to changing needs and a fast-changing world. Over the past decade there has been a world wide revolution in the way training and development for both new and existing public servants is conceived and implemented and how meaningful and relevant learning can be supported.

While traditional, structured, off-the-job training programs certainly have their place in any workforce development strategy; their impact is limited unless there are simultaneous efforts to improve the organisational environment so that newly acquired capabilities can be used effectively.

*Workforce development rather than training provides a more contemporary way of capturing what is needed to underpin Papua New Guinea's strategy to re-invigorate the public sector.*⁷

⁵ Ibid, p. 5.

⁶ Papua New Guinea Public Sector Workforce Development Initiative (PSWDI): Framework 2005-2007, p.3.

⁷ Ibid, p.3.

4. Recommendations for Wider Application of the Mixed Mode Model

It is recommended that:

- 4.1 Similar mixed mode programs are offered to workforce cohorts beyond the health and education sector.
- 4.2 Mixed mode, work-based programs are designed to contribute to workforce development and that workload factors of program participants, non participating colleagues and supervisors are considered to ensure that both study and work commitments can be met and contribute to supporting the overall operation of the workplace unit or section.
- 4.3 Work teams, including administrators, line managers and staff are involved at the planning and inception stage and are informed about the aims and objectives of mixed mode projects to ensure 'ownership' and commitment.
- 4.4 Access to the internet and email is available for research and for communication with academic staff and other course participants. IT access is an essential feature of mixed mode programs. Students need to have the prerequisite IT skills and have access to IT services.
- 4.5 Results of tracer and impact studies currently being undertaken by PATTAF which focus on the Bachelor of Nursing and the M.Ed mixed mode programs be made available to GoPNG and donor agencies.