

WORK-RELATED SKILLING IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

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ABSTRACT

Vocational education has long been oriented toward the formal employment sector of the economy in Papua New Guinea. That sector is in decline but the informal sector is growing rapidly. There is little evidence of vocational education responding to this significant change in the work place despite extensive efforts to reform all sectors of education over the past five years.

Few school students in Papua New Guinea are able to, or want to, enrol in vocational education institutions. Rather most will withdraw from any form of schooling by grade eight. At present their school experiences hardly equip them for work and life in rural village settings to which most will return.

Primary and secondary schools, in a reform environment, are faced with the task of developing strategies and programs to provide work-related skills for the majority of youth in the country.

One strategy readily adopted by educators is to vocationalise secondary education but finance, necessary facilities and required expertise are known to be in short supply. An alternative strategy seeks to connect primary and secondary schools with local work environments and communities. There are difficulties with this approach but it offers a long-term solution that is socially and culturally consistent with emerging education and work contexts in Papua New Guinea.