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SELECTION FOR TEACHING IN TONGA AND

PALMERSTON NORTH, NEW ZEALAND

A paper presented in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education at Massey University.

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1986

ABSTRACT

Teacher education in the Kingdom of Tonga has undergone many changes within the last two years. New directions in teacher development have included the introduction of a three-year diploma course for training primary and secondary teachers. This paper examines teacher selection processes used in Tonga in comparison with those used in Palmerston North.

Section One introduces the paper by stating the concerns and the need for the study. A brief profile of Tonga Teachers' College and Palmerston North Teachers' College is presented. The research questions and the limitations of the study are stated.

Section Two discusses the researcher's preparations for the research and describes her use of selected relevant literature on teacher selection and the techniques of questionnaire and interview. A brief note on the use of qualitative research methods is followed by a discussion of data gathering activities.

In Section Three, the writer examines teacher selection processes used in Tonga by presenting responses to questionnaire and personal interviews as answers to the research questions. The same is done for Palmerston North Teachers' College in Section Four.

Section Five presents the writer's discussion of each area investigated by means of the research questions. Following is a brief summary of the writer's conclusions to the study. The writer concluded that teacher selection processes in Tonga were not highly organised or structured, not extensive and not systematically conducted in comparison to selection processes used by Palmerston North Teachers' College. Tongan selection panelists were not well prepared and their functions not clearly identified or defined. Secondary students lacked adequate preparations before the selection

interview and all sectors involved with teacher selection lacked co-ordination and clearly examined and stated criteria. Selection of teacher trainees in Tonga could benefit by co-operation between the various church education services and government to conduct a national selection programme whereby use of recruitment officers, vocational guidance counsellors and careers advisors would ensure that the best possible potential trainees are selected for teacher education; and, that this process should be highly organised, structured, extensive and systematically conducted. The section ends with a summary of the researcher's recommendations and final comments.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to all who have given time, patience and resources towards the completion of this paper.

To my family and friends in Palmerston North and in Tonga for their continued support and encouragement throughout this study.

To Education Officials, Teachers' College Principal, staff members and first year students in Tonga, who so willingly submitted to personal interviews and questionnaires.

To the Principal, Vice Principal, staff members and first year students at Palmerston North Teachers' College for willingly submitting to personal interviews and questionnaires.

To the Executive Officer of Teacher Services at Wanganui Education Board for submitting to interviews and providing resources on teacher selection.

To my supervisor, Mr Wayne Edwards, for his continued advice, suggestions for improvements and encouragement throughout this study.

To Valancy Hansen who typed the paper and to Julia Taiapa for proof reading.

'Oku ou oatu heni a e fakamalo loto hounga ki he tokotaha kotoa pe na'e tokoni mai ki he feinga ako ko'eni. Tua 'ofa atu.

Lesieli Pelesikoti Tongatió.

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

The Concerns of the Study

In this paper, the writer reports on her study of selection for Teachers' College in the Kingdom of Tonga and Palmerston North, New Zealand. The study was intended to investigate such facets of teacher selection as recruitment procedures, the organisation of selection, the part played by the selection panel, the criteria for selection, the perceptions of the selection process held by the interviewees and panelists, and, possible improvements. The writer wished to compare teacher selection in Tonga with that in Palmerston North, New Zealand, as a means of determining whether anything relevant to Tonga could be learned from the New Zealand situation.

The Researcher

From her background as a Tongan teacher and Teachers' College lecturer, the writer had developed over the years an interest in the selection of students for entry to Teachers' College. In 1984, she undertook research into the "Beginning Teaching" of trainee teachers in Tonga. (Tongatio, 1985) At the conclusion of the 1984 research, the writer was left with some unanswered questions. The current research was an attempt to provide answers to these questions.

The Need for the Study

There is no background of literature on teacher selection in Tonga - or in comparison to teacher selection in New Zealand. Some

literature exists on Tongan education in general. (e.g. Kemp, 1959; Sutton, 1963; Taylor, 1963; Kavaliku, 1969; Gregory, 1973; Fiefia, 1982) A smaller body of literature is available on teacher education in Tonga. (e.g. Kennedy, 1969; Cocker, 1982) The writer has found no literature related to the area of teacher selection in Tonga while only a small amount of resource material was identified in New Zealand.

Tonga Teachers' College: A Profile

Tonga Teachers' College opened in Nuku'alofa in 1944, with thirty students and three staff members. A two-year course prepared students for primary school teaching although some of these trainees found themselves teaching at secondary level. The academic qualifications of trainees ranged from the Tonga Lower Leaving Certificate to the Tonga Higher Leaving Certificate levels (Forms Two to Four levels of secondary education). Some trainees had been teaching in schools prior to entering Teachers' College. The College, today, is sited at the old Vaiola Hospital buildings adjacent to the University of the South Pacific Extension Centre, Queen Salote College, Tonga High School, Tonga Side School (a primary school for expatriate children and English speaking Tongans) and Nuku'alofa Government Primary School.

Today, the College has a roll of some ninety students with nine Tongan lecturers. A new programme of teacher education started in 1985 in which a student who completes a three-year course is awarded a Diploma of Education. This programme has resulted in a substantial upgrading of the academic requirements for applicants to a minimum of the completion of Form Six courses at secondary schools and/or passes towards diploma or degree courses from the University of the South Pacific Extension Centre. An integrated programme of teacher education is followed during a two-semester year. Primary and secondary training areas are shared with common coursework including "Perspectives in Education," "Tongan Studies" and "English Communications." Students

have the opportunity to choose electives for specialization (e.g. Science, Mathematics or Social Studies). After the first year, students choose between the "Secondary Teaching Major" and the "Primary Teaching Major." Teaching practice is also an important aspect of the training programme. This new programme emphasises a significant contemporary shift in the philosophy of teacher preparation in Tonga, "away from emphasis on the how to do it approach to teaching towards much greater emphasis on why to do it." (Ministry of Education, 1984:7)

Palmerston North Teachers' College: A Profile

Palmerston North Teachers' College opened in 1956 as New Zealand's sixth teachers' college. The College is administered by the Palmerston North Teachers' College Council. The College establishment includes the Central Normal School, the Intermediate Normal School and the College Street Normal School. Since 1983, the College has shared its buildings with the Manawatu Polytechnic Institute.

The College offers programmes for several branches of the teaching service. All pre-service programmes lead to the award of the Diploma of Teaching. These programmes include primary teacher training, (Division A) a three year course; secondary teacher training, (Division C) a one year course for university graduates; Early Childhood Care and Education, (Division E) a two year course for kindergarten teachers. The College also contributes to the continuing education of teachers through in-service courses at regional and national levels. The Advanced Studies for Teachers Unit offers a wide range of distance courses for teachers in many professional subjects. The College has a roll of three hundred and sixty-four with one hundred and eighty-one first year students. Full time lecturing staff numbers forty-three.

The main elements of the course of primary teacher training include General Studies - Multicultural Studies, English Studies; Practical Training based on experiences in schools; Professional Studies - courses in Education, Curriculum Studies; and Subject studies in which students select two subjects to study in depth. One subject is selected from List 1 (English, Maori Studies, Mathematics, Social Studies) and one subject is selected from List 2 (Art, Music, Physical Education, Science). In the third year, one of these subjects is selected for study at an advanced level. (Palmerston North Teachers' College, 1986)

Palmerston North Teachers' College was described by the College Principal, in 1983, as a "professional school": the school's work is to provide preliminary education and training for teachers. The College emphasises scholarship, practical training and opportunity for students to develop the personal qualities they bring to teaching. Scholarship, the Principal noted, leads to understanding of the content of education, as well as the process of education. Similarly, practical training leads to the competence and confidence with the arts and teaching techniques through which teachers help children to learn. (Palmerston North Teachers College Handbook: 1983:3)

The Research Questions

In order to address the concerns of the study, the researcher constructed a series of questions which provided a focus for the study.

The questions were:

- * How were interviewees recruited?
- * How were interviewees informed about the selection process?
- * How did the college organise the selection process?
- * How was the selection panel formed and prepared?
How did the panel function?
- * What criteria did the panel use for making selections?
- * How did interviewees prepare themselves, approach the interview and feel about the interview?
- * How could the selection process be improved?

The researcher considered these questions could be used in the two colleges in an investigation of the various facets of teacher selection.

The Limitations of the Study

The study is limited in two major ways. Firstly, the data covers only two teachers' colleges and secondly, the researcher was only able to spend short periods of time in Tonga due to family commitments in New Zealand. This is, therefore, a comparative study of teacher selection in two teachers' colleges but, because of the limiting factors referred to above, the findings in this study cannot be applied in general to all teachers' colleges in New Zealand.

Organisation of the Report

The report is organised into five sections. Following this introductory section, Section Two contains the survey of selected relevant literature on teacher selection and the techniques of questionnaire and interview. In Section Three, the writer examines teacher selection in Tonga and the same is done for Palmerston North Teachers' College in Section Four. A series of comparisons between teacher selection in the two locations are contained in Section Five, with the writer's conclusions, recommendations and final comments to the study.