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POST-WWII TEACHER TRAINING EFFORTS IN MICRONESIA

Sweeter Sachuo and Dirk Anthony Ballendorf
Micronesian Area Research Center, University of Guam

During the Japanese Mandate period in Micronesia, 1914 to 1944, schooling was compulsory for up to three years for all native people, and Japanese contract teachers staffed the public schools assisted by local helpers. At the end of the war all Japanese nationals were repatriated and the local assistants were let go. The American Trusteeship Administration was faced with the problem of supplying local teachers who had not previously worked for the Japanese. In each district, military volunteers and their dependents provided initial staff, and locals were engaged and trained for the elementary schools. During the summer recess from school the local teachers were kept on salary to continue training, and then also special teacher-training schools were established, first at Guam and then at Chuuk to meet the demands for each district. Religious mission schools also participated in these programs. These early teacher-training efforts produced not only a cadre of teachers for the schools, but also educated people, many of whom went on to become leaders in many sectors of the island societies.

Following the cessation of hostilities of WWII in Micronesia, the U.S. Navy established an administration in the islands that was a military administration with naval officers in complete charge of all sectors of social and economic life in the islands. Essentially, this administration lasted from 1944 when the islands were secured after a series of bloody battles, until 1947 when President Truman signed the Trusteeship Agreement with the United Nations.¹

With respect to education, primary schools were opened as soon as teachers could be identified and placed. Most of these people were native islanders, and they often were supplemented by military personnel who volunteered their services.² At the initial stage of the teacher recruitment efforts, at least in the case of Chuuk, military personnel visited different islands and asked village chiefs to identify young men to be trained as teachers. Those picked were never from the chief families since

the chiefs themselves did not want to see the members of their groups going away from the islands for training. The attitude of many of the indigenes was that they would rather stay together—even if it meant to be poor—than for a member of the group to go far away to seek better opportunities and yet be separated. Moreover, young men were picked over girls because it was more acceptable for boys to leave home than girls. It was only later that girls were recruited for training when the training centers moved to Chuuk, and later to Pohnpei, but even then there were few girls chosen compared to their male counterparts. The young men picked by the chiefs were sent to Guam by military transport to have their teacher training. Upon completion of the training on Guam they returned to Chuuk to serve as island school teachers.

The Japanese had established and employed a trained cadre of native islander assistant

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teachers, however these were deemed inappropriate in most cases since they did not speak English, and were oriented toward Japanese educational goals and purposes. In practice, these Japanese-trained assistant teachers served primarily as interpreters, and there was at least one assigned per school. Still, the opening of primary schools was a priority since basic instruction especially in English, served a custodial purpose as well as an educational one. In a very few cases the Japanese-trained native teachers were recruited to become junior high and high school vocational education teachers. This was because of the severe lack of vocational educators. Because these native vocational teachers could not speak English, they provided instruction in the vernacular, but there were very few of these people.

The naval government sought islanders who knew some English, or who were otherwise best prepared. The Japanese school system in Micronesia had nearly all age cohorts participating in primary schools. The primary schools for islanders called for essentially three years of schooling. This was called *kogakko*.³ For promising students, another two years was provided, and for especially good students, more education was available. In some cases, students were allowed attend mission schools under the Japanese; still others could be trained overseas as well. Many of these islanders were recruited to be trained as teachers by the navy.

The Marshall Islands, where there had traditionally been American missionaries and their sponsored schools for nearly a hundred years, English was widely know, and many of these islanders were also recruited.

The problem of insufficient numbers of teachers was critical, and demanded immediate attention. In 1945 planning was undertaken to begin an initial training program for elementary school teachers for Micronesia on Guam. A directive of December 1945, included the following statement on education:

Current and Prospective shortages of military government teaching personnel demand that maximum employment be given to native teachers now available and that programs for the training of addi-

*tional native teachers be instituted as soon as possible.*⁴

In April and November 1946 there were further directives promulgated. Islanders interested in becoming teachers were brought to Guam where a Micronesia-wide program was started in 1946. It was called the Marianas Area Teacher Training School (MATTS). Sometimes it was referred to as the Marianas Islands Teacher Training School (MITTS). All participants received subsistence, housing, medical care, and \$5 per month of attendance, from the military government.⁵ The Chuukese students, upon completing their training, returned immediately to Chuuk and were placed in teaching positions.

It hardly got off the ground, however, when someone pointed out, that the school served more than only people from the Mariana Islands, and therefore by 1948 the name was changed to the Pacific Islands Teacher Training School (PITTS). To this school came a number of future island leaders: Amata Kabua, first president of the Marshall Islands Republic; David Ramarui, senator in the Congress of Micronesia and later director of education for the entire Trust Territory; Chitomu Nimwes, director of education in Chuuk, and many others.⁶ The training school produced leaders who were distinguishable largely because they had a good command of English which was especially useful in the emerging American administration of the islands.

In 1950 the Pacific Islands Central School was moved to Chuuk. There were several reasons for this relocation. First, Chuuk geographically was more central, and students coming from the Eastern Carolines and the Marshalls, would not have as far to travel. Chuuk was also the largest district in the Trust Territory. Second, Chuuk was in the Trust Territory, and the students at PITTS were all Micronesians being trained for Micronesian schools. Guam is a territory of the United States, and had a cadre of trained teachers prior to the Japanese occupation during WWII from 1941-44. It was never a part of the Trust Territory.

Third, and of special importance, was the fact that the Chamorros of Guam did not get along very well with the other Micronesians from the Trust Territory. The reasons for this had to do with the history and geopolitics of the region. Guam, although a part of Micronesia culturally and geographically, was politically separated from the rest of the islands in 1898 when the American captured and kept the island during the Spanish-American War. The U.S. Navy had set up an administration there in 1899. The Spanish sold the Northern Marianas, and the Carolines to Germany in 1899 (the Germans already held the Marshall Islands under a protectorate, which had been established in 1885).⁷ The Germans' rule was brief and it never took a very firm hold of governance. Their main interest was in economic exploitation of the islands.

The Japanese seized all of Micronesia, except Guam, from the Germans at the start of WWI in 1914, and held them until the American wrested the islands from Japan in 1944. This meant that Micronesia had been politically fragmented since 1898, and under complete control of Japan for thirty years prior to the start of WWII. Japanese was the second language of all Micronesians except the Chamorros of Guam, and after the war when PITTS was established at Guam, the Micronesian students could communicate with one another only in Japanese. The English-speaking Chamorros of Guam resented hearing the teacher trainees speaking Japanese when they had only recently been liberated from their Japanese occupiers and oppressors during WWII. Moreover, the PITTS program had established a "laboratory school" in Guam where Chamorro youngsters were being taught by the Japanese-speaking Micronesians, who needed the young ones to practice with. The Chamorro parents of these children resented the other Micronesian being on their island and learning to teach with their children.

The PITTS physical facilities were located in the village of Mangilao, and the laboratory school was located in Agana. Frequently there were clashes between the Chamorros and the other Micronesians, especially in the evenings when the Micronesians were at their housing

facilities in Mangilao, and the Chamorros came by to harass them frequently.⁸ These difficulties, however, were minor when taken in the context of the overall scheme to train teachers.

The educational authorities in the Trust Territory believed that "under the best of circumstances [it would take] twelve years or more to train teachers fully."⁹ But, in the intervening time, each district "would handle the problem of the lack of teachers as best it could in its own way."¹⁰ The in-service programs was described by the educational administrators as "lifting by the bootstraps."¹¹ In Palau, local teachers were trained during the summer vacations, combined with teacher rotation. On Yap, teachers were trained on alternative weeks during the regular school year, and on Saipan school was held for half a day and the other half was for training local teachers. At the end of twelve years of schooling, the students graduated with a high school diploma and were immediately placed in classrooms as elementary teachers. Later, some went on to colleges on district-provided scholarships. Each district was given scholarship money to send their best students off to college in Hawaii, on the U.S. mainland, and in some case, to the Philippines. This scholarship funding was very important because the Micronesians had no other way to seek higher education.

The Pacific Islands Teacher Training School on Guam continually brought in teachers from the Trust Territory, and established three levels of instruction:¹²

- Course A (lower) six months duration*
- Course B (intermediate) two months duration*
- Course C (advanced) nine months duration*

Course A students attended school for three hours a day, and did agricultural work and camp maintenance work half time. Course C students attended school for six hours a day. Every administrative district in the TTPI had quotas of teacher training students that they would send to Guam for these training programs. These two, six, and nine month training periods may appear as insignificant today since it now takes four to five years to obtain teaching credentials. But, in those early days, the

people who graduated from these early programs were looked up to by their people as the new intellectuals, and commanded much respect for the training they received.

Each student received an allowance of \$20 per month, an initial issue of clothing, and transportation. The first students in this program were enrolled in March and attended until September 1947. Most of the time was given to studying English conversation, and the rest to reading, writing, and other elementary school subjects. Progress in Course A proved to be sufficient to warrant omitting the intermediate Course B, so that after a vacation period the class continued in Course C.¹³

After 1947, Courses A, and B were dropped, and only Course C was offered. A and B levels were handled completely by the in-district programs in the elementary and intermediate schools. From 1947 on the program of studies in the advanced course C at Guam included English, social studies, science, mathematics, education and teaching methods, handicraft and industrial arts, and physical education.

Graduates of these teacher training courses in nearly every case, went on to become leaders in their communities. Moreover, when PITTS was moved to Truk (Chuuk) in 1948, increasing numbers of students were enrolled from all over Micronesia, and PITTS, in the late 1950s became the first Trust Territory-wide high school as graduates from the intermediate schools all arrived at Truk to be enrolled. Eventually, PITTS was moved to Pohnpei where it was renamed the Pacific Islands Central School (PICS). When in 1965 the Congress of Micronesia was established almost all of the elected members were either graduates, or had spent some time attending PITTS and PICS.¹⁴ In fact, all island leaders in all districts in Micronesia, were those who had been recruited and trained by U.S. military personnel; local people looked up to them as superior since they had what most islands did not have: a U.S. education.

During the naval administration (1944-1951) a Trust Territory-wide education conference was held at Guam. Education officials from all districts attended these meetings

which were held for a week to ten days. In May 1947, a great deal of attention was given at this conference to the problems of teacher training. The importance of English instruction was recognized and emphasized, but also the other subjects were given lots of attention. The subject matter was correlated with conversational English in accordance with the following time allotment: /16/ English was essential for students' progress in all subject areas since all textbooks and written materials were written in English. Both teachers and students needed to be competent in English to be successful in their various roles.

<i>SUBJECT</i>	<i>Hours/Week</i>
<i>English</i>	6
<i>Geography</i>	3
<i>History</i>	1
<i>Arithmetic</i>	3
<i>Vocational Arts and Crafts</i>	2
<i>Hygiene</i>	2
<i>Elementary Science</i>	2
<i>Music</i>	1.5
<i>Teaching Procedures</i>	3
<i>School Administration</i>	1.5

This schedule aided in developing uniformity in teacher training, and provided a common basis for fundamental curriculum building. This schedule continued until model schools could be established in each district to give more specific teacher training.

The various mission schools also played a role in the early teacher training efforts. The Naval administration, of course, encouraged this. In 1947 the Protestant Mission Schools began to open again. The training of leaders for the mission was certainly a purpose of getting the schools open as soon as possible, but the training of teachers by the mission for these schools was also a stated purpose. Micronesia was divided into four missionary districts: (1) Palau, Yap, and the Western Carolines; (2) Truk (Chuuk); (3) Ponape (Pohnpei); and, (4) the Marshall Islands and Kusaie (Kosrae).¹⁵

In each of these districts there was a school, a church, and a missionary, and some of these schools would conduct special training, such as the one at Kosrae for pastors. Others would

offer “a curriculum more advanced than the government schools [had].”¹⁶ The primary mission of the church-run schools was to prepare natives for their roles in the local churches. In Chuuk, both the Catholics and Protestants built schools for this purpose.¹⁷ In 1948, the Navy reported:

1. On Saipan the Catholic Church school taught mainly religious subjects, while the government school provided secular education.
2. In Palau, both Catholic and Protestant schools were doing informal teaching, and a Protestant pastors’ school was being built.
3. There were no mission schools on Yap.
4. In Pohnpei there were three Protestant schools, at Kolonia and Oa on Pohnpei proper, and on Ngatik Island with a total of 149 pupils. Two Catholic Schools at Kolonia and Awak on Pohnpei, had 374 pupils. The mission schools accounted for about 27 *per cent* of the school population. The rest were in government public schools.
5. In the Truk (Chuuk) district, there were three Catholic schools located on Moen, Dublon, and Fefan islands in the Chuuk lagoon. They had 301 pupils, approximately 10 per cent of the school population. The rest of the pupils were in public schools.
6. In the Majuro district (Marshall Islands) there was one Protestant mission school for adults, conducted by an island pastor, at Jaluit.¹⁸

The Liebenzell Mission, a German missionary-operated organization, constructed schools for preparing young natives for church-related work. In Chuuk, the first school was established in Wisapan, Udot, for girls during the Japanese administration, but after WWII it was relocated to Patanien in Tol, and became a school for men only. Later, the school was again relocated to another Tol village, Chukienu, and there two schools were run on the same campus; one for girls, the other for boys.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The early teacher training efforts on the part of the Americans in Micronesia can be characterized eclectic; there were many differences according to district in the very beginning when the U.S. Navy was in charge. But, very soon the administration organized programs both within the districts, and also at Guam. The personnel were dedicated and hard-working. Their efforts resulted not only in a cadre of trained teachers, but also in producing educated people who went on to become leaders in many facets of island life. Most of the American educators who worked in these programs are now deceased, but their work continues today, and they will never be forgotten.

ENDNOTES

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY AND CONTACT

Sweeter Sachuo is from Chuuk State in the FSM, and holds a doctorate from Oregon State University. He is an associate professor of education, and the first Chuukese national to become a tenured member of the University of Guam faculty.

Dirk Anthony Ballendorf is professor of history and Micronesian studies at the University of Guam's Micronesian Area Research Center. He has lived and worked in the Pacific for more than thirty years, and has written and lectured widely on Micronesian history, culture, and politics

Contact: Dirk Anthony Ballendorf, Professor of History and Micronesian Studies, Micronesian Area Research Center, University of Guam, Mangilao, Guam 96923 USA
email: ballendo@uog9.uog.edu