TRANSFORMING THE EDUCATION SYSTEMS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITY IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA AND TIMOR-LESTE

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This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Joe and Jane Gracey, who resolved all life’s challenges with a dose of Irish humour washed down with cups of tea and kindness.
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Candidate's Statement

The thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

Frances I. Gentle
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABA    Australian Braille Authority
ADL    Activities of daily living
BoG    Board of Governors
BSC    Balanced Scorecard Management System
CBR    Community-based education
CNU    Callan National Unit
CRPD   Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DPO    Organisation of people with disabilities
DWG    UN Disability Working Group in Timor-Leste
ECCE   Early childhood care and education
EFA    Education for all
EI     Early intervention
FODE   Flexible open distance education
GER    Gross enrolment ratio
GNI    Gross national income
HDI    Human Development Index
HPI    Human Poverty Index
ICEVI  International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment
IERC   Inclusive education resource centre
IEU    Inclusive education unit
ILO    International Labor Organisation
IRO    Internal resource officer
LRE    Least restrictive environment
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium development goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCD</td>
<td>National Capital District</td>
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<tr>
<td>NDoE</td>
<td>National Department of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEB</td>
<td>National Education Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIEC</td>
<td>National inclusive education coordinator</td>
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<tr>
<td>NOIE</td>
<td>National Office of Inclusive Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSEC</td>
<td>National Special Education Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>PNG</td>
<td>Papua New Guinea</td>
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<tr>
<td>RIDBC</td>
<td>Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SERC</td>
<td>Special education resource centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>TSC</td>
<td>Teaching Service Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>UNESCAP</td>
<td>United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Economic and Social Commission</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s’ Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>UPNG</td>
<td>University of Papua New Guinea</td>
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<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
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ABSTRACT

A great deal of research indicates that over 100 million children worldwide are marginalised from education, including about 40 million with some form of disability living in the Asia Pacific region. In countries with high levels of human poverty and low national human development, education is an important vehicle to employment, independence, and social and political empowerment. For children with disability, education holds the potential to transform experiences of deprivation into opportunities for greater personal freedom and family and community respect and belonging.

East Asia and Pacific studies have linked low school attendance rates for children with disability in such island nations as Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste with traditional beliefs about the causes of disability and family shame. This study sought to reveal and understand the complexities of education provision in Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste, with a view to offering recommendations for growth in Timor-Leste’s system of education for children with disability. In both countries, approximately 99% of children with disability are excluded from the education system. Prior studies have shed light on the impact of such diseases as malaria, chronic malnutrition, and an inadequate health system on survival rates for young children. Many of these studies also highlight the challenges of providing quality education in overcrowded classrooms with limited educational resources and professional training in disability-inclusive teaching methods.

Papua New Guinea’s education system was chosen for intensive study as, despite the complex human development challenges facing the country, the government had transformed its segregated education system for children with disability into an inclusive system for all children. The researcher sought to gain historical and current perspectives on the
transformation process, and identify features of the inclusive education system that may have relevance and application for children with disability in Timor-Leste. The research approach employed in this study included collection and analysis of the professional and personal perspectives of 32 education and rehabilitation leaders and practitioners working in Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste, and has been supported by analysis of documentary data in related fields of study. Research methods included case study interviews in Papua New Guinea, establishment of a Timor-Leste reference group of educational leaders, and development of an analysis model to guide data coding, analysis, interpretation, and display.

One of the most important discoveries made during the course of this study was the limited impact of the 20 years of educational reform in Papua New Guinea on enrolment rates for children with disability. This discovery resulted in an emphasis on transformative human rights and empowerment perspectives in the study’s conclusions and recommendations. The recommendations offered promote transformation of educational marginalisation and disadvantage for Timor-Leste’s children with disability through government and civil society partnerships that promote and support equitable participation of people with disability in educational leadership, governance, and infrastructure development at all levels of the education system.