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**The educational experiences of five former students
with vision impairment (VI) participating in education
in Papua New Guinea (PNG): A qualitative study**



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Acknowledgements



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Background

- Large majority of students with VI in PNG do not receive support.
 - Only 366 students with VI received specialist support (PNG NDoE, 2009; Aiwa & Pagliano, 2011a).
 - Literature review found a complex array of reasons (Aiwa & Pagliano, 2011a).
 - PNG: geographically isolated, culturally/linguistically diverse, predominately agricultural population living in rural areas, limited infrastructure and significant economic challenges (AusAID, 2010; BEAPA, 2010; CIA World Fact Book, 2010; Human Development Indices, 2008).
 - Universal Basic Education (UBE) yet to be achieved (State of Education Report, 2008).
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Background cont...



- Special educational services are provided in partnership between PNG NDoE and charities through 21SERCs (Aiwa & Pagliano, 2011b).
 - The role of SERCs to support the appropriate education of students with special needs including VI.
 - NDoE does not operate any SERCs (support: salary, resource materials, funding, staff development).
 - Pragmatic, logistical, sociocultural and economic factors dictate those having extreme needs and who are able to access services receive special education support (Aiwa & Pagliano, 2011a).
 - Students with low vision do not tend to receive specialist support (Pagliano, 2012; Aiwa & Pagliano, 2011a, b).
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Ethics approval



1. Ethics approval was obtained from JCU Human Research Committee (H3846, 24.8.2010)
 2. Permission to conduct interviews at SERCs was obtained from PNG NDoE (FRI-1-2, 12.7.2010)
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Method

Sample	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Five participants (3 females and 2 males: 1 with low vision, 4 functionally blind) were purposively chosen to provide the widest possible information (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).➤ Participants selected employing important stratification criteria (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).
Instrumentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Semi structured questionnaire method. Face-to-face 60 minutes interview (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).➤ Questionnaire developed without fixed wording to allow respondents to express freely (Burns, 2000).➤ Interview conducted in natural environment where events occurred (Creswell, 2003).➤ Interview conducted in language suitable to each participant (e.g. English and <i>Tok Pisin</i>).

Methods cont ...

Data Analysis

Each interview was audio-taped and transcribed verbatim

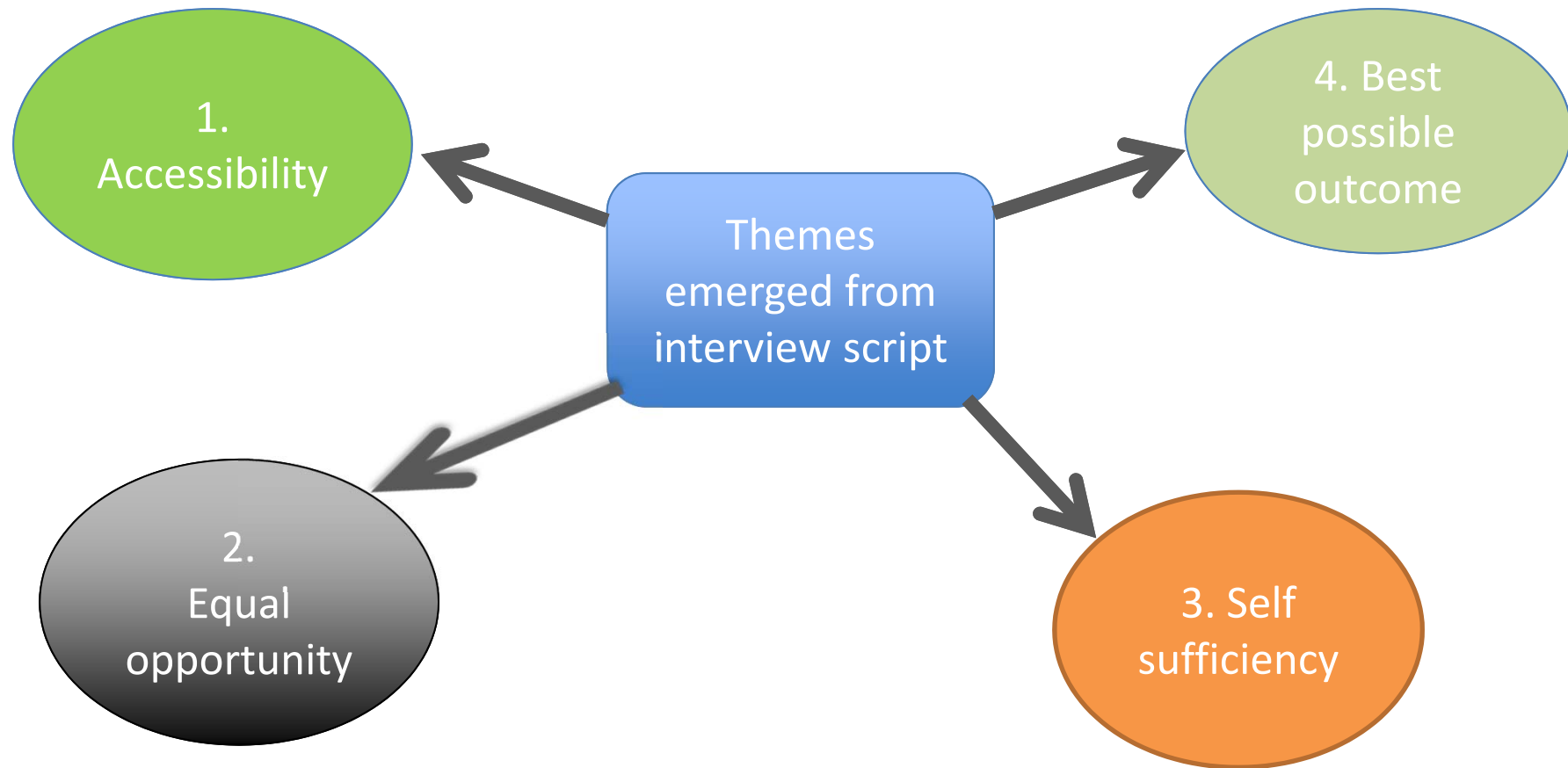
- Important to prepare and organise the data (Creswell, 2009)
- Translate *Tok Pisin* into English
- Repeated line by line reading to obtain general sense of information (Petals, al et., 2009)
- Overall view of the participants ... detail analysis and coding process begin
- Specific themes emerged as coding progress
- Narrative passages were employed to draw attention
- Quotes were added to the sense of reality
- Final stage data analysis concentrated on highlighting the fundamental nature of the experiences

Interview sites



 SERC interview sites

Results



Results - what students say



Themes	Examples of what students say
Accessibility	“Well, I was lucky to be brought into residential special school in town where I got my support. Yeah, I was lucky. If I was in the village I would not go to school” (Moses, 2010).
Equal opportunities	“One time we went into the Science lab and the teacher tried to demonstrate to us an activity. He explained to other students in the class and showed them how to use the instruments. He did not explain and describe the instrument to me. I was lost and it was difficult to understand and follow” (Julie, 2010).
Self sufficiency	“Yes, my parents supported me going to school but are always concern for safety. They don’t allow me to go to school by myself. They will always ensure I go with someone” (Luke, 2010).
Best possible outcome	“It’s quite hard and emotional to express ... very proud of myself, sponsors and lecturers” (Moses, 2010).

Findings

Common Issues	Examples
<p>Geographical locations of schools inhibit children with VI participation in schools.</p> <p><i>Accessibility</i></p>	<p>“Well, I was lucky to be brought into residential special school in town where I got my support. Yeah, I was lucky. If I was in the village I would not go to school” (Moses, 2010).</p>
<p>Brailing of text book was the main form of modification for functionally blind students.</p> <p><i>Self sufficiency</i></p>	<p>“The teachers were trained to use Braille so I would easily cope with other students” (Mary, 2010).</p>
<p>Functionally blind students were identified as having most extreme needs therefore access to specialist services. <i>Equal opportunities</i></p>	<p>“At high school, I always have teachers come around to assist me or dictate what was written. I braille them or just wrote the answers” (Joanne, 2012).</p>
<p>Student with low vision inhibit lots of challenges to access learning materials.</p> <p><i>Equal opportunities</i></p>	<p>“I did the exam not in large print but it was written in normal print size like all the exam papers. For those little tiny letters it was printed so small like other exam papers. I cannot see” (Luke, 2010).</p>

Limitations

- Limitation of sample size.
 - Limited time and fund caused on going difficulties.
 - Many SERC lack effective email and phone connections.
 - Transport difficulties encountered during travel by both air and road.
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Broader Implications



- First published study on students with VI in PNG.
 - Will contribute to appropriate policies for children with VI.
 - Will add research literature on education of children with VI.
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Recommendations



1. That appropriate training for teachers to identify and differentiate between low vision and functionally blind. This would require pre-service and in-service teacher training which includes skills in modifying and adapting lessons for students who are functionally blind or having low vision.
 2. That stakeholders make a firm commitment to achieve equity and access for **ALL children** including those with VI. This would require extensive work on reducing negative attitudes and increase participation of children and young people with VI in PNG.
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The End



“... a long way to go”

Thank you for coming.
