Clashes and Education in Timor Leste

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative thesis is to describe and analyse the implementation of an education system in the newly independent state, Timor Leste. One question to be discussed is whether an emergency phase is still going on in the development of a functioning school system, or if Timor Leste already reached a capacity building phase? Via the participant’s answers in field observations and interviews, the study analyses the clashes between generations, social classes and different levels in relation to the choice of Portuguese as an official language and the international environment in the country. The thesis concludes that a lot of work remains in creating a fully functioning education system.

We enjoyed the writing- and hope you will enjoy the reading!

Key words: Timor Leste, education system, language, clash, Portuguese.
Contents

Abbreviations ..................................................................................................................... 5

Important definitions ........................................................................................................... 6

1. Introduction .................................................................................................................. 8
   1.1 From Malmö to Dili - a one year project ................................................................. 8
   1.2. Purpose of the study ............................................................................................... 9
   1.3. Questions to be answered ....................................................................................... 9
   1.4. Literature ................................................................................................................ 9
   1.5. Disposition of the thesis .......................................................................................... 10

2. Basic knowledge of Timor Leste .................................................................................. 12
   2.1 The education system in Timor Leste .................................................................... 14

3. Methodology and material ........................................................................................... 17
   3.1. Methodology literature ............................................................................................ 17
   3.2. Qualitative method .................................................................................................. 18
   3.3. Limitations ............................................................................................................. 18
   3.4. Criticism of our sources ........................................................................................ 19
   3.5. Types of interviews ................................................................................................ 19
   3.6. Interview participants ............................................................................................. 21
   3.7. The field observations and field participants ....................................................... 24
   3.8. Reliability and validity ........................................................................................... 25

4. Analysis and concluding discussion ............................................................................. 28
   4.1. Institutional and individual answers ....................................................................... 28
   4.2. Is the emergency phase really over? ....................................................................... 29
   4.3. The implementation of Portuguese and other foreign languages – for better or worse? .......................................................... 34

5. Finally ............................................................................................................................ 40
   5.1 Thoughts about the future in Timor Leste ............................................................... 40

Bibliography and references ............................................................................................. 44

   Literature ..................................................................................................................... 44
   Reports ......................................................................................................................... 44
Pre-test participant ................................................................. 45
Interview participants .............................................................. 45
Field participants and observations ........................................... 45
Internet ................................................................................... 46

Appendices

Interview with Amy 1
Interview with Jeko 2
Interview with Troy 3
Interview with Jony 4
Interview with Freddie 5
Interview with Hanne 6
Interview with Silas 7
Interview guide 8
Presentation of the field observations 9
## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>CFET</td>
<td>Consolidated Fund for Timor Leste</td>
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<td>MFS</td>
<td>Minor field Study, Sida</td>
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<td>MoECYS</td>
<td>Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sports</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non Government Organisations</td>
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<td>Oxfam</td>
<td>Oxford Committee for Famine Relief[^1]</td>
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<td>PTA</td>
<td>Parents Teacher Association</td>
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<td>Sida</td>
<td>Swedish International Development Agency</td>
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<td>TFET</td>
<td>Trust Fund East Timor</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Program</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations International Children Fund</td>
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<td>UNMISET</td>
<td>United Nations Mission Timor Leste</td>
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<td>UNTAET</td>
<td>United Nations Transitional Administration for Timor Leste</td>
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<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
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<td>usd</td>
<td>United States Dollar</td>
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[^1]: Oxfam started in England during World War II to provide relief to war victims in Europe. Now an NGO established in 12 countries. [www.oxfam.org.uk](http://www.oxfam.org.uk), 2004-10-04.
Important definitions

*Emergency phase* = The definition in this thesis is used to describe the phase, right after the independence declaration in Timor Leste, 2002. It also refers to the acute situation with a destroyed social- and physical infrastructure of Timor Leste, for instance the education system, which was burnt down.

The UN mission of the emergency phase is to secure the political stability and the human needs and rights and to rebuild houses, roads and sanitary systems.

The emergency phase also refers to the supply of working material, such as books, and pencils, but also teachers, to get schools functional.

*Capacity building phase* = The definition in this thesis is used to describe the phase taking place after the emergency phase in Timor Leste. It implies the technical level of the rebuilding process of Timor Leste.

The UN mission of the capacity building phase is to develop local functioning authorities and institutions connected to the education system. Then the technical implementation of laws and regulations are created, for instance a curriculum. In this phase know how is focused, for example the competence development among teachers.

*Clash* = In this thesis the definition refers to the conflicts appearing between and within generations, social classes and international organisations as among other things a result of the controversial choice of Portuguese as an official language.

*Institutional level* = In this thesis the definition refers to the participant’s opinions regarding the questions asked by us. When we talked to persons representing different organisations or national ministries, their answers mostly correlated to the policy of the employer. In other words, we believe we were given an official version of the answers. This means that sometimes it was hard to find out the participant’s private opinion.
Individual level = In this thesis the definition refers to the participant’s opinions regarding the questions asked by us. In several situations we got to know the participant’s own, private point of views, representing nothing but themselves.
1. Introduction

1.1 From Malmö to Dili - a one year project

In May 2003, we sat down in a café in Malmö to discuss what to do as a thesis in social civics. After summer the work started to check out possibilities to get an MFS scholarship. Soon we started to discuss Timor Leste as an interesting state to visit for civic teachers, both cause of the violated political history and it’s newly accomplished independence and the ongoing democratisation process. We got the scholarship and in June the plane took off for the big adventure. Now it was up to us to try and get an idea about a whole new world, like differences in climate, food, security and regulations, but most of all to get a grip of how the education system works in the at present poorest country in Asia - Timor Leste.²

*We sit in a taxi cruising through a green, but dry landscape. The road is bumpy and almost completely damaged. Outside of the open window, the noon heat quivers and the air is sticky from dust, smoke and exhaust fumes. Beside the road rows of students in uniforms stroll by. Are they on their way home already, or is it siesta? We continue passing by banana plantations and burnt down houses and say a prayer that the tiny, worn down cottage at the next corner is not the place were we have made reservations...*

With a backpack full of new experiences we got back to Malmö. The writing transformation process from MFS-report to examination thesis slowly began. This process was more complicated than we had imagined, but finally we had the thesis ready for presentation.

² *Indonesien Östtimor Länder i fickformat, pp. 41,*  
http://www.easttimorsun.com/english/hope_di_east_timor/19-11-04/, 2004-05/10,  
1.2. Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to describe and analyse the implementation of an education system in the newly independent state, Timor Leste.

1.3. Questions to be answered

- Focusing on the period after independence till today, do the participant’s experiences regarding the education system differ? If so, in what way and why?
- What do the participants think of the ongoing phase of the development of the education system? Do their answers reflect either emergency- or capacity building status? If so, does it show on either institutional or individual level?
- Asking the participants, does the implementation of Portuguese and other foreign languages, in their opinion, have consequences on the development of education system? If so, how does it show in their answers on the institutional-and individual level?

1.4. Literature

In the sector of education we have looked into materials produced after the establishment of UN in Timor Leste in October 1999. Reports about the education system and the aims, needs and processes have been produced solely by UN but also in co-operation with the Timor Leste Government, such as *Timor Leste Human development Report, 2002*, – *Timor Leste, the way ahead*, that presents both general information about the condition of the state of Timor Leste and gives some background on the situation faced in the education system, such as the obstacles and challenges in the rebuilding process.

*Women in East Timor, a report on women’s health, education, economic empowerment and decision-making*. Office of adviser, promotion of quality, East Timor Public administration, UNTAET, April 2002, is a report funded by Ireland Aid and UN
and it gathers analyses and evaluates existing information on, among other topics, the conditions of the education situation in Timor Leste, from a gender perspective.

The report *Timor Leste 2020- Our Nation, Our Future, Timor-Leste Education and Training Sector*, gives a view of the visions presented regarding education goals. It is developed in co-operation between several aid organisations, NGO’s, religious organisations, academics, members of political parties, international expert, advisers and the UN staff. From an inside perspective, it tries to present the vision of the State Timor Leste, partly created by interviews of common people.

*Timor-Leste, the way we are now*, is a report, written in English, Portuguese and Tetum, trying to provide and spread information about how to prioritise needs of the Timor Leste Republic. One of the messages from this research is that the government should invest in basic education and health care.

The report, *Timor-Leste, Education and Training Sector Investment Program* is although being a provisional draft, a detailed presentation of the different parts of the education system and provides an historical understanding, an overview of the organisation, key policy issues, goals and challenges for the system.

*Timor-Leste Millennium Development Goals Report* describes Timor Leste’s commitment to the Millennium Development Goals. It is a revalidated version of *Timor Leste 2020, Our Nation, Our Future*, (see above) referring to UN’s world wide Millennium Goals.

Finally the *Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, combined sources, budget 2004-2005*, demonstrates the budget proposition taken by the National Parliament in May 2004.

**1.5. Disposition of the thesis**

The disposition of this thesis is to initially present the purpose of the study and to give the reader basic knowledge of the themes that will be focused. Part two gives basic knowledge of the history of Timor Leste in order to provide a view of what the social context looks like for this study. A presentation follows of the education system, from colonial history to the situation today. In the third part the methodology and some of the empirical material is presented, and here the reader gets an orientation of the qualitative
method, chosen for this study and considerations taken by choosing this method. In the forth part, the empirical material is analysed, followed by a final concluding discussion in order to meet the purpose of the thesis. Finally we present some reflections for the future of Timor Leste, based on our new knowledge and point of views, and the thesis finishes with some suggestions to future studies.

The empirical material, field observations and interview material are presented as appendices.
2. Basic knowledge of Timor Leste

As a background for the reader relevant facts of Timor Leste is presented as follow. All dates and numbers are collected from two sources, Indonesien Östtimor Länder i fickformat and http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/History-of-East-Timor.

The country of Timor Leste is slightly smaller than the Swedish landscapes Skane and Blekinge together. The population, around 900 000 persons consists of almost 80% ethnic Timorese and 20% Indonesian immigrants. One third of the population was estimated killed during the Indonesian occupation 1975-1999. In Timor Leste about 30 different languages are spoken, where Tetum is the largest. Christianity and the Catholic Church have had a strong impact during the Indonesian occupation and are still very important in the national identity. A symbol of the Christianity is situated outside of the capital Dili, showing Jesus with his arms spread, overlooking the world. This statue is a copy of the original placed in Rio de Janeiro.

A heritage from the years of Indonesian occupation is that almost everyone in the young generation speaks Bahasa Indonesia, the national language of Indonesia. In 1975 the Portuguese regime decided to withdraw the colonial forces from Timor Leste. Indonesia saw with fear that the socialistic party Fretilin had a great success in Timor Leste and saw an opportunity for military action towards the small state. Indonesia had started the occupation of the country, attached as the 27th province of the Indonesian Empire. The international community protested only partly to the occupation. This was during the cold war and the USA assisted the Indonesians with arms and guns in the invasion. The following years UN wrote several resolutions demanding Indonesia to withdraw their forces. The situation got even worse, when Australia in 1979 confessed Indonesia as the legal government state of Timor Leste. In 1991 the situation changed. An unprovoked massacre of peaceful Timorese demonstrates took place and international critics towards Indonesia raised. The question of Timor Leste finally was on the international agenda. In 1996 the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded Bishop Carlos
Filipe Ximenes Belo and the socialist José Ramos-Horta, for their struggle for peace and independence in Timor Leste.

In the time of the economic depression in Asia in 1998, the 32-year dictatorship of the Indonesian ruler Suharto collapsed. The future of Timor Leste again was in focus and struggling negotiations between the UN, Indonesia and Portugal took place. In 1999 a decision was made admitting a referendum for Timor Leste independence. The decision led to a serious wave of violence in all Timor Leste, led by the Indonesian military. Despite of these obstacles, the referendums proceeded and 98,5% of the population voted, where 78,5% voted for independence. More violence followed and the Indonesian military destroyed almost all buildings including schools. 500 000 people had to flee their homes whereas many went to West Timor. In October 1999, the last Indonesian troops left Timor Leste and right after, UN took over the governance. UNTAET is at today’s date slowly withdrawing its forces and leaving more and more responsibility to the national government.

The Timor Leste governance of today is lead by the Fretilin party. Prime Minister is Mari Alkatiri. President is the among people very popular former independence general leader, José Alexandre Xanana Gusmão. Until the election he was a faithful to the Fretilin party but he chose to candidate for a row of smaller parties. Today a lot of political forces are focused to re-develop the diplomatic relations with Indonesia. There are still refugees left in West Timor, waiting to come home, but they are afraid of what faith to expect in a country as poor and underdeveloped as Timor Leste. Timor Leste is the poorest country in Asia and its economy is based on aid, farming and oil. The literacy level among the people is only around 60%.

The largest export source is coffee and other important stable trades, such as coconut, cocoa, cotton and clove. Still, the fishing industry is undeveloped, but it has some good opportunities. The trade balance of Timor Leste is undermined and for at least the coming two years Timor Leste has to rely on aid as the primary economic income. The infrastructure is poor but the road between Dili and the second largest city Baucau is functioning most of the time.4

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3 We have chosen Tetum, although it also can be spelled Tetun.
2.1 The education system in Timor Leste

The education system, as well as the whole destiny of Timor Leste has evolved through three distinct periods: The Portuguese colonial rule between the years 1511 and 1975, the occupation years by Indonesia between 1975 and September 1999, and the UNTAET, leading to the election for a constituent assembly to prepare for independence from October 1999 to present.5

During the colonial era the Portuguese introduced a western curriculum in the schools, Portuguese as the school language, and the Catholic Church as the official religion. The Portuguese did not promote a mass production of education, but focused on educating the Timorese elite, mostly men carrying out the catholic belief and helping the Portuguese in the administration affairs of the country.

In 1975 Indonesian troops invaded Timor Leste and proclaimed the territory Indonesian. Under Indonesian rule, much resources where put into the public education system, for instance introducing Bahasa Indonesia as an official language. This was an efficient way to assimilate Timor Leste as the 27th province in the Indonesian state. The majority of the teachers were Indonesian, and they stayed in Timor Leste, as long as the regime was under Indonesian flag, and then they all went back to Indonesia, creating a big hole in terms of knowledge, in the education system.6

In May 1999 UNTAET was established as an integrated multidimensional peace keeping operation, responsible for the administration of Timor Leste, during its transition to independence. A network between UNICEF, The World Bank, the government and several NGOs were set up to help the republic in the creating process of the education system, which had to be built up from scratch.

At today’s date the UN assignment is changing. Today the UN mission is about advising and consulting and in the process of withdrawing its forces more and more missions and governance obligations is taken over by the Timorese people.

The CEDAW convention in Beijing in June 2000 stated, “Education is a human right and an essential tool for achieving the goals of the quality, development and peace”.7 With this quote as a background, the MoECYS tries to develop the fundaments of the education system.

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5 Timor-Leste Millennium Development Goals Report, Timor-Leste Education and Training Sector, Investment Program.
6 Women in East Timor, p. 53.
7 Ibid. p. 43.
Timorese children and young adult education was severely disrupted by the September 1999 crisis, when the Indonesian militia made its last big attack on Timor Leste, before the withdrawal. Approximately 95% of the schools and other education institutions were destroyed. School furniture was looted and teaching material burned. The UN so called emergency phase, right after independence, was devoted to refurbishing and rebuilding destroyed schools and institutions.\(^8\)

The sector of education now includes 870 schools and a quarter of a million students\(^9\). Most of the schools are in governmental regime, but with a few remaining private catholic schools, wherein the fee in average is higher. The structure of the education system is built after Indonesian model. Basic school is a nine-year compulsory education with primary and secondary level and after that there is higher education such as adult and non-formal education level.\(^10\) Pre-schools are not compulsory and therefore not fully developed, but the children are supposed to start the first grade at the age of six years. Statistics from 2003 showed that only 67% of the children would reach grade four and 47% would eventually complete sixth grade.\(^11\)

Even though the children are allowed to start school at six years of age, there are many parents that think it is too early and postpone the start. The children’s ages therefore are very varied in the classes. A result of this is that the teachers have a very difficult task in the teaching performance, though the children in the classes have totally different needs and knowledge levels.\(^12\) Within primary school it is unfortunately common with drop outs\(^13\), which presents the situation among the poorest. The families cannot afford to have their children going to school; they need to keep them at home for work or to make a living outside of home. There are children who make it to secondary school, but they are often from wealthier families in Timor Leste. In some cases these families have the opportunity to support their children through the education system so they do not have to work. Significant for the education system as a whole in Timor Leste, is that students in different ages are not compatible with one another in the sense that the knowledge level is very varied and spread. Resources are therefore not to be

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8 *Women in East Timor*, p. 44.
9 Definition used in UN documents, referring to all school ages from primary school to higher education. See Bibliography and references.
10 *Women in East Timor*, p. 43.
11 *Timor-Leste Education and Training Sector, Investment Program*, s. ii.
12 *Women in East Timor*, p. 45.
used in a proper and legitimated way – which creates unnecessary costs for the state finances, the international funds and aid programs.

Other huge issues are both the shortage and the quality level of teacher competence, where the recruitment process has not been as fast and efficient as needed. Thousands of students returning to school after the independence struggle have experienced this. The average teacher ratio 2001-2002 was approximately fifty students per teacher in primary school and many teachers have still not, so far got a proper training.14

Since independence, Timor Leste in co-operation with the government, UN and present NGOs have developed a school network. The number of students in the age 5-15 has had a grand increase. A large effort has been put into stabilisation of the age differences in primary school with some good results, especially in the cities. A strong attempt also has been to make students reach graduation, in all levels, and more specific in senior and tertiary school. The number of students has increased by 17% in 2002-2003.15

Traditional, religious and social norms have had an impact on who is allowed to go to school, keeping some women out of the school system.16 The attempt to get more women into education also seems to have some progress, although literacy still is more spread among the male. Besides the gender programs, different projects trying to decrease class differences regarding knowledge, are running.

Primary goals for the near future are to create a strategic direction for the sector, where a pragmatic, technical strategy is one of the prioritised issues. The largest challenge of this strategy is to develop a sustainable education quality and accessibility all over the republic. Improvement of the budget is also prioritised. The education system of today is very dependent on external, international assistance that will not be present forever.17

14 Timor-Leste Education and Training Sector, Investment Program, p. iii.
15 Ibid. p.iv.
16 Women in East Timor, p. 45.
17 Timor-Leste Millennium Development Goals Report, Timor-Leste Education and Training Sector, Investment Program.
3. Methodology and material

This section includes a description of the field setting, and a thorough description of the qualitative method as such, reflections on our own role as researchers in a foreign environment and culture, limitations, criticism of our sources, types of interviews and field observations, interviewed participants, comments regarding the interview situations, reliability and validity.

3.1. Methodology literature

We have chosen to work with both English and Swedish sources. Kristin Esterberg, an American researcher in the field of gender and bisexuality, is the writer of the main methodology book. This book we came across during the fieldwork and we found that this was just what we needed. Its pragmatic focus on interview situations and performances made the fieldwork manageable.\(^{18}\) The book *Forskningsmetodikens grunder*, by the textbook authors Patel & Davidsson occupied at the University of Linköping has been a good basic book in the forming and structuring of the methodology part. We also found sources like Professor Tim Mays\(^{19}\) *Samhällsvetenskaplig forskning* and *Källkritik* written by Torsten Thurén docent in journalism, useful in the comparison of documented real cases to the fieldwork situation. To cover the complexity of cultural heritage we used the classic Lövgren’s and Ehn’s *Kulturanalys*.

\(^{18}\) Esterberg, K., *Qualitative Methods in Social Research*.

\(^{19}\) Professor at the University of Salford. May’s interests centre upon the relationship between knowledge, action, organizational strategy and working context. The book used in this study is an introduction to a methodological approach in social science.
3.2. Qualitative method

The theoretical fundament for qualitative research is based on a perspective in which way you best will be studying the social reality. The most well known sign with this method is the will and the goal to see the world through the eyes of the participant. Qualitative methods, such as verbal analyse method, is used during projects, which involves learning the art of interpretation, understanding and finding hidden patterns. Studying humans is different from studying other aspects of the natural world because human behaviour is not mechanical. People have the capacity to reflect on their actions. We are aware of that when people are being studied there are chances that their behaviour is changing just because they are being focused on. Furthermore in social research like this one, humans are the researchers as well as the objects of study, which means that pure objectivity is impossible to accomplish.

3.3. Limitations

A complete scientific study on the education system in Timor Leste would probably need a few years of thorough research. Since this is a small project written as an MFS-report and a graduate thesis at Teachers’ Training School at Malmö University, it can only give a brief look and an instant picture of the whole process and meanings of the education system in Timor Leste. In the background of the limitations, we have chosen to look into as many documents as we have been able to find on the field, concerning the institutional and constitutional perspective of the education system in Timor Leste. Furthermore we tried to get in contact with schools and teachers on all academic levels, mostly in Dili. The ability to communicate became an obstacle. Still, the time we spent in different school environments was valuable in the sense that we got to know about the physical conditions for teachers and students.

Although we visited schools and tried to communicate with teachers and students in the school environment as field setting, we did not find as much information as we

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20 Patel, R., Davidsson, B., a.a., p. 100
21 Ibid. pp. 64, Esterberg, K., Qualitative Methods in Social Research, p. 3.
22 Esterberg, K., a.a., pp. 10.
23 See appendix 9:7, field observation.
wished for the study. On the other hand we got more input from the international environment and the ministry level, which we are aware of, affects the result.

Another limitation is that we, cause of the conditions of the infrastructure - damaged roads and insecure communications in the countryside, not have been able to do as much fieldwork as we wished outside Dili. Therefore, this thesis will not give any specific comparing perspective, country side versus city, except from statistics shown.

3.4. Criticism of our sources

When doing social studies it is important to use contemporary sources, especially when detail knowledge is wanted. Therefore we have chosen to use updated sources based on the field circumstances, like for instance the newly launched reports from the UN. The written material that has been used for this study is produced for different purposes. The reports have also been sponsored by different organisations. This may have affected the results in certain directions and all this we have taken under consideration when writing the thesis.

Similar reflections have come forward regarding the seven interviewed participants as their opinions reflect their specific organisations view and/or life situations. This in particular we decided to analyse separately on both institutional and individual level.

3.5. Types of interviews

When using interviews as research tool, it happens that some interview questions do not work. They seem to work perfectly well in theory but then they turn out not to do so in practice. The language could be too formal or informal, and the questions might be difficult to understand especially for the participants who do not speak English as first language. We experienced the difficulties handling another language ourselves when interviewing. In order to get a structure of the questions we produced an interview

25 Thurén, T., Källkritik p. 7.
26 Esterberg, K., a.a., p. 100.
guide. And in order to check the structure and validity of our interview guide we decided to pre-test it before performing the first real interview. One key informant was handed the questions and we had an interview to check the reasonability of the questions.27 After some evaluation of the questions we started the real interview process.

This study consists of semi structured interviews, unstructured interviews and field observations as mentioned above. The semi structured had as a goal to discuss and explore a topic quite openly and to allow the participants to express their opinions and ideas in their own words. We tried this method because we would like the personal point of views to come forward.28 The unstructured interviews were conducted in the field setting in conjunction with an observational study. In these interviews the questions arose more naturally, not following an interview guide and therefore they were more like real conversations.29 These kinds of interviews we almost stumbled over in the field setting and we asked the participants afterwards if we could use the material as interviews. When it comes to both types of interviews they were transcribed as soon as possible after the conversations.30

The advantage of choosing this method, that we can put our signature to, is that it can open up for flexibility in the conversation. Though, if the interviewer is unaccustomed to participate in interviews, it is easy to fall out of focus, which may lead to the loss of important information. The interview guide here made it easier to keep on track in the conversations. Even if we did not use it directly in the field in these interviews, we had a structure in our minds of how to address the questions.31 One obstacle with this method can be that it sometimes is hard to book interviews, because of the busy schedules of people. And in a developing country with a lot of processes going on, like in Timor Leste, plans and conditions can change quickly. An interview therefore can be cancelled within a couple of minutes. This was fortunately not the case for us more than at one occasion.32

Before starting the interview process a lot of preparation and precautions were taken regarding exactly how to address the questions, in order to avoid effects of the “keep-

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27 See part 3.6. Interviewed participants, Ming, the pre-tester, and appendix 9:3, field observation.
28 Esterberg, K., a.a., p. 87.
29 Ibid., p. 89.
30 Ibid., pp. 107, May, T., a.a., pp. 148.
31 See appendix 1.
32 See appendix 9:8, field observation.
face-culture”\textsuperscript{33}. The cultural custom in the region implies that people in common not wish to make anyone disappointed, and therefore they rather say something, than admitting they do not know the answer or understand. When interviews took place with Timorese people it was therefore a great relief to see that the participants dared to ask for a deeper explanation when they did not understand the question.

### 3.6. Interview participants

In order to find answers to the purpose of the study, we decided to try and get in contact with people on an institutional level, and individuals from both Timorese and international society. As often, it was not very easy to find people with the time and ability to talk. Either the language was the problem, or the full time schedule, especially when it came to the international persons that we wanted to get in contact with. Since the research situation made it difficult to book some interviews on the institutional level, help came from our contact person Rommi at the UNDP in Dili. The rest of the interviews have been arranged through telephone and e-mail, trying to get as wide perspective as possible, which means that less consideration has been taken on the personality, more on the perspective qualifications of the participants.

We finally interviewed seven persons and in addition one pre-test person, all with different backgrounds and experience. They also come from different countries. The names of the participants are fictional.\textsuperscript{34} During most of the interviews one of us was in charge and the other one added questions along the way.

**Ming – the pre-tester**

Ming is an international adviser at MoECYS. He has been in Timor Leste for two years working with policy documents. He is in charge of a large group of people. When pre-testing the interview guide, Ming had some suggestions both regarding the structure of the interview guide and the contents of our study, whereas we modified the interview guide before doing the first real interview. Since we changed quite a lot after the pre-test, we decided not to use the interview with Ming in the actual study.

\textsuperscript{33} Lee Khoon Choy, Indonesia- Between Myth and Reality.

\textsuperscript{34} See ethical considerations in part 3.8. Reliability and validity.
Amy - Business perspective from an international employer’s point of view
Amy is a European migrant, who has been in Timor Leste for four years. She and her husband are running a business within tourism.

Amy preferred the interview to be very informal and therefore it was not a recorded conversation, but transcribed directly afterwards and therefore we interpret it as an unstructured interview. We were both participating in the conversation, asking questions about her opinion of the education system in Timor Leste. It was like pushing a button when talking to Amy. She talked very much and gave a lot of information.

Jeko - Student perspective
Jeko is 22 years old and Timorese. He is a student at Dili University, and is studying political science and international relations. The extra job as a dive assistance instructor at a dive company is financing his studies, which cost 250 usd per semester. The semi structured interview was recorded. It was an open and friendly atmosphere and when the participant did not understand what we asked, he kindly asked us to rephrase the questions.

Troy - UNICEF perspective from an international adviser’s point of view
Troy works for the UNICEF, and is the program manager for education. Troy started to work as a mathematics teacher and he has also been working with research and methodology in Australia before coming to Timor Leste one year ago.

The interview was recorded and the participant was very comfortable in the semi structured interview situation. The participant spoke very quickly so therefore we had some difficulties to understand him in the beginning, but after a while we got into his tone of the language.

Jony - Teacher perspective
Jony is a Timorese ex-teacher now working as a program officer within the education program at the UNICEF. Jony worked as a teacher for ten years during the Indonesian occupation. For the last three years he has been working for the UNICEF every day using his experience as a local teacher, in different projects in the districts. This semi structured interview was recorded. It was clear that the participant was familiar with the interview situation. He was comfortable and did not take any notice of the recorder on the table.
**Freddie - International Adviser perspective from a MoECYS and World Bank point of view**

Freddie is an international adviser at MoECYS and he started his work in Timor Leste as an adviser in the office of civil affairs in 1999. Today he works for the government and the World Bank, which in co-operation run a program within the education area. He believes that he is going to stay in Dili for another year or so.

Before the interview the participant had got the interview guide sent to him, so that he would know a little about the study. The semi structured interview was recorded.

It was obvious that the interviewed person wanted to lead the conversation and as we discussed the certain issues during the conversation, the atmosphere got tense and we felt uneasy, why the interview did not last as long as some others.

**Hanne - International NGO perspective**

Hanne is a British NGO worker, and one of the country managers for Oxfam in Timor Leste. She has been in Timor Leste since March 2004 and she will stay for another two years. The NGO she represents addresses itself to adults, helping them to raise their literacy level.

We came to Oxfam to make an appointment later, so therefore the tape recorder was not brought to this unstructured interview, as the conversation turned out to be. Instead, notes were taken during the whole conversation. The atmosphere was nice and open and it was clear that Hanne loves her job. She talked a lot and gave useful information without being asked direct questions.

**Silas - MoECYS perspective from a civil servant/director point of view**

Silas is a Timorese working on a high level within MoECYS. His obligation for now is to plan the actions for the school system in the districts on a theoretical level and to propose to the government what is needed in the coming three months. This includes both all activities, supposed to take place in the districts, and the budget for its causes. Finally, he is also the co-ordinator of the donor’s bilateral projects.

The unstructured interview with Silas took place in MoECYS; it was not recorded since the Silas felt uneasy about getting recorded. We took notes instead during the conversation. It was a little bit hard to get started though he seemed to be very shy and also a little bit suspicious about how the interview material would be used.
3.7. The field observations and field participants

Researchers use different ideas to describe the method, field observation, such as ethnography and field research. The meaning is a technique to, in a social environment, observe and study different situations by participation in the field. The researcher is in that meaning physically present within the research process.\(^{35}\) The field observations can differ, for example observations can be made on an ongoing lesson, where different social happenings and patterns are observed, or by living among the objects to be observed, meaning directly in the field. Significant for field observations is that there is no real limit between observing and attaining. The disadvantage, which we also reflected, is the risk that the researcher can disturb the natural behaviour by his or her presence, but the risk minimises if the role of the observer is clearly defined. It is of great importance as a researcher to try and keep the distance to the field in order to keep the neutrality and objectivity intact as much as possible.\(^{36}\)

During the ten weeks that we spent in Timor Leste we dealt with a lot of impressions and impacts that we have analysed both together and individually. We also met a lot of people, very interested to give us their story of the republic of Timor Leste. The impressions and observations have been collected and transcribed in a field diary. In the study it is referred to as field observations. This is used as a source and presented by number as appendix.\(^{37}\)

The field observations are a mixture of our own impressions and an interaction with others, who below are presented as field participants;

- **Noozy**, Timorese veterinary working for Canadian CARE. He was our guide when we made a day trip in the country side.
- **Rommi**, Timorese programme officer at the UNDP. He was our contact person and helping hand during our stay in Timor Leste.
- **Sara**, Timorese student and waitress in a restaurant. She was waiting in an international restaurant, at the hotel where we stayed.
- **Solo**, Timorese program officer, working for USAID. We got to know him during a mountain climbing weekend and together we discussed everyday life in Timor Leste.

\(^{36}\) Ibid. p.82.  
\(^{37}\) See appendix 9, field observation.
3.8. Reliability and validity

Coming to Timor Leste, trying to find out the so called real truth about how the education is established and progresses at present would be a mission impossible. Although ten weeks is quite a long time we soon realized that we would only be able to find a few patterns and sum up some ideas about the education system. Fortunately though, is the fact that we were not alone, but two students doing the study. This made it possible for us to discuss and analyse all the impressions as a team, which has been positive for the study in the meaning that different perspectives in the every day life and in the fieldwork have been focused and lively discussed all along in the process. In the co-operation between the two of us our ideas and impacts have been interacted, which has had a big influence on the final report and the final thesis. It also has made the working process more effective and we have been able to do a broader field research than if only one person would do the job.

The fact that we come from and are raised in a different kind of society, culture and environment, has (for better and worse) affected and reflected the way we have been analysing the results from our everyday fieldwork and the interviews. Although we have been aware of this and tried to think about it actively, we are still carrying our own cultural baggage that we either fully could interpret or stay distant to. We have considered the fact that we come from Sweden and the impact it may have had on the people we met. We are convinced that coming from for instance USA, would have given a different meaning and therefore other results and answers in the research process. Being two women doing the study, could have had a different impact in the way we have been treated, both in the proceeding every day fieldwork and in the specific interview situations.\(^\text{38}\)

Outside of the actual interview situations we have been exploring and observing the field and listened to different people’s experiences and stories. The fact that we have met and talked to many people has had a great impact of the result of the study, see appendix 9.

Ethical statements are the fruit of what researchers consider to be ethical defensible work conditions and it affects the reliability of the result.\(^\text{39}\) We have discussed and

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\(^{39}\) May, T., a.a., pp. 82.
focused on two ethical issues, first of all maintaining confidentiality and second to obtain consensus during the interview situations. To secure the reliability of the study, we also needed to ensure that participants freely agreed to participate. In this study we have a consequent ethical perspective and in practise it means that since some of the results are of delicate character, we use fictional names of the participants. We discussed weather it would be right to reveal the participant’s occupations or not. Since the occupation of the participants is of great importance for the focus of the study, we decided it should be printed out but modified. In that way the identity still can remain concealed. For instance, Amy is presented as occupied in the field of tourism, but we do not mention the name of the company.

When field working we transcribed the interviews directly instead of waiting. This was a way to prevent atmospheres, feelings and important details getting lost or forgotten. The age of all the participants are between 22 and 70, and the choice of participants has been chosen out of certain criteria such as English skills, accessibility, place and space, competence and the connection to the purpose of this rapport. The interviews were held without any annoying or disturbing elements, in quiet places. To secure the reliability of the interviews we have discussed all interviews and tried to see different perspectives in all of them. Generally, both of us as interviewers may have affected the answers of the participants by putting the question in a certain way. In some cases we have also happened to interrupt in the middle of an answer, which probably has affected the context and contents of the interview.

In the attempt to secure the validity of the research material, questions about the real truth and knowledge were raised. Could for instance the reports and the answers from the participants in the material be considered as trustworthy? This also includes the quality of the interviews, the different perspectives from the field and the specific environmental issues surrounding the participants. We also reflected on validity as a conception as our contact person Rommi demanded us to separate the different perspectives coming up in the interviews and conversations. When we for the first time came to visit him in the UN head quarter in Dili, he was very busy but he took time to explain the social climate, and pointed out the importance to separate the Timorese

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40 Esterberg, K., a.a., pp. 44.
41 Ibid., pp. 78.
42 See appendix 1, interview with Amy.
44 Ibid., pp. 98.
school-, the governmental-, the UN- and the advisers’ perspectives, and to always think about who is saying what and why, out of the specific situation.\textsuperscript{46}

The issue about the introduction of Portuguese as an official language has been difficult and delicate to talk about, especially on an institutional level, and we have discussed why, both with each other and with people we met along the way. Although we have not found a clear answer we think it has to do with the fact that Portugal has a colonial past in Timor Leste and that the ruling government are pro Portuguese. We got the impression that people on the individual level thought they could lose their jobs by criticising the government’s attitude and decision.\textsuperscript{47}

During the fieldwork some organisations said they had excellent relationships with the MoECYS. To decode if it really was the truth or the political tongue speaking, was a difficult task. We discussed it back and forth without getting anywhere.\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{45} Kvale, S., Den kvalitative forskningsintervjun, pp. 214.
\textsuperscript{46} See appendix 9:4, field observations.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{48} See appendix 9:10, field observations.
4. Analysis and concluding discussion

With the purpose of this thesis as a starting point, the empirical material in the following part will be analysed in terms of clashes connected to the education system. This means how the needs in the education system of Timor Leste of today are experienced by the participants, and how they look upon the effects of the introduction of Portuguese as an official language and other foreign languages in the development process. Our concluding thoughts are italicised.

4.1. Institutional and individual answers

When penetrating the empirical material two different levels, one institutional-, and one individual level have been presented.49 Interviews and observations on the institutional level have differed from the individual level in several ways, both regarding the discussion of needs within the education system and the introduction of Portuguese as an official language for Timor Leste.

Depending on if we were addressing the questions on an institutional- or individual level, the answers differed both regarding how people approached in answering, meaning if they were talking as representatives of an organisation policy or with a political tongue. Also the answers differed in the view of how to prioritise to create good and efficient results in the raising of the capacity and the physical structure of the education system. On the institutional level, focus was put on the technical level and the roles of the advisers are highly ranked in the priority list. Especially the international advisers thought that their work is important, because the lines drawn up in the curriculum, the school law and the syllabus documents, will reflect in rising of the quality. Freddie explains:

49 See Important definitions.
The role of the project is the technical level, like on institutional, consultant level. We have my colleague, who is a legislative specialist, and he is writing the education law and the organic law of the ministry. This we will expect will reflect in quality. We have another adviser working out a curriculum for the education system for secondary level and she came last week and will be here for three months. We expect to create quality with that.  

On the individual level, syllabus and curriculum were not even mentioned in the seven interviews. Instead the interviewed participants seemed to believe that the lack of material and the fact that it costs to go to school and university is a larger problem to be solved. Jeko explains:

I go to a private university and it cost much more that the government run university. I pay 250 and it is including fee, books and computer but it is not enough and the books are not updated like they should.

We believe that what is shown above is a clash, between the institutional and individual levels. A problem, according to our point of view is how the priorities have been put to create a functioning system. Lots of monetary resources have been put to create data systems; syllabus and curriculum, which are all important things in the process to create high quality of education in a long-term perspective. On the other hand the education system needs to deal with a lot of pragmatic problems such as lack of material, accessibility and sanitary matters. This leads us to next topic to be analysed; the emergency phase.

4.2. Is the emergency phase really over?

When we have analysed collected data, reports and written material regarding the development of the education system, the expression emergency phase often has been in focus. In the material the emergency phase refers to the period in the history of Timor Leste when approximately 95% of the schools and other education institutions were destroyed in September 2000. School furniture was looted and teaching material burned. The phase, right after independence, was devoted to refurbishing and rebuilding destroyed schools and institutions. Within eight months the World Bank and the UNICEF had succeeded with the physical reconstruction of as good as all the schools.

50 See appendix 5, interview with Freddie.

51 See appendix 2, interview with Jeko.
By that the international community and the UN meant that the emergency phase was over, and that the capacity building phase was starting;

That was the physical part taken place in 2000-2002. 3000 classrooms were refurbished. UNICEF and the World Bank did this together in a joint project. UNICEF did the roofs and the World Bank/government did the rest. We had to purchase textbooks and UNICEF distributed pencils, paper and that sort of things. 52

Some of the answers of the participants follow this statement. 53 Out of Jekos’ student perspective, he notices a certain improvement;

The development is that it has changed a lot. Development is very good because the teachers prepare themselves better nowadays than before. They want to give more to the students’.../...Before under the Indonesian occupation they did not care about their students. They stayed maybe one month, got their salary and went away again. They didn’t care if the students came to school or not, they just cared about money. 54

The quote above is confirmed by Hanne at Oxfam, who says that their programs are well functioning and that adjustments according to specific needs in the different districts are actively managed, for instance to create linkages between the parents and the schools;

The main focus of the literacy programme is to give adults from 20 years and up a chance to write and read, not only to empower them but also so that they can help their children with their home work. 55

Both Jekos’ and Hannes’ statements suggests that Timor Leste is no longer in the emergency phase, since investment is put to need adjustments for the higher- and the adult education. Jeko refers to teachers coming well prepared and devoted to the lessons and Hanne talks about an organisation with focus to strengthen and empower the adult role of the parents in relation to their children’s learning processes in school. The attempt will lead to the raise of the literacy level in Timor Leste.

Talking to other participants we get the impression that the emergency phase still exists. Although the schools are open and functioning, there are still lots of problems to be solved, especially when it comes to knowledge and capacity among the teachers, who today do not have the skills that they need to carry out education with good quality.

52 See appendix 5, interview with Freddie.
53 See 2.1. The education system in Timor Leste, p. 11, and appendix 1-7.
54 See appendix 2, interview with Jeko.
55 See appendix 6, interview with Hanne.
Besides this, lack of material even causes problems to solve the tasks given as homework;

At the moment in our school it is very difficult and bad standards and sometimes the teachers do not prepare for the lessons. We are missing reading material and computers. Sometimes we get homework that we cannot do, because we do not have any exercise books or literature. We only have the notes from the lectures and sometimes it is not enough.56

Making one of her famous cappuccinos, Sara, another Timorese student serving in our hotel, confirms the problem, she means that translation into different languages troubles her situation. No matter in what language the book she is using at the moment is written, she cannot get it translated into Tetum. This means she cannot fully interpret and apply the knowledge, since she does not fully understand the texts.57

Talking to Solo, our friendly Timorese trekking companion during an exiting mountain climb, he agrees with Troy regarding the lack of resources and know how faced by the government. They note that only a hand full of people without sufficient skills and guidance has got on their shoulders to manage the whole education system.58

Other participants refer more to capacity and content of the education. As for instance Amy tells us, it is mostly about repeating in the schools in Timor Leste;

The education is about repeating, repeating and repeating and not using your brain.59

Another huge problem, drop outs, is noted by Freddie;

I believe that the main problem in the education sector is repetition and drop out.60

If there is not sufficient material and if the accessible material is old and passé, we ask ourselves how it is possible to achieve necessary knowledge, needed in the process of getting a qualified job after studies. If you do not have the right skills it is not easy to contribute to a positive development of the society. Further Troy, Jony and Silas mean that the great challenge for the education system is to build capacity, meaning securing of the quality and rising of competence of the teachers - Jony puts it as following;

56 See appendix 2, interview with Jeko.
57 See appendix 9:12, field observations.
58 See appendix 3, interview with Troy, and appendix 9:16, field observations.
59 See appendix 1, interview with Amy.
60 See appendix 5, interview with Freddie.
I think that the skills of the teachers are that it is very traditional education, in terms of using methods. The mixture of language and all the dialects is another problem. Also the salary system is wrong. The teachers with no experience often earn as much as a very experienced and skilled teacher, with a university diploma.61

The empirical material suggests that one consequence of the low standard of teacher competence is that many students do not learn properly. Further, all the participants in this study believe that the teaching style in Timor Leste is very traditional. The teachers lecture and the students take notes. In the lower levels of school, repetition and learning by heart is commonly practised, which our field observations also confirm.62

Spending 10 weeks in Timor Leste, we found another problem connected to the definition emergency- respective capacity building phase. Talking to the participants it seems like the UN and NGOs sometimes faces difficulties to walk in the same direction, regarding aims, wishes and personal points of views.63 Participant Freddie thinks the key to success and good achievement goes through the Timorese people to like and approve to the international ideas and projects;

There is no patent solution. You cannot import a system totally/.../ the special about it is that it is a bunch of people with different cultures and different background. In 2000-2001 there was a kind of romantic view that it would be very easy to restore the country but it is not because we are dealing with people and people have different attitudes and backgrounds which affects the process/.../If there is one specific thing about the Timorese is that they are very used to resist, they learnt that very well. First they resisted under the Portuguese rule, then under Indonesia and now under the UN transmission. So if you cannot make the Timorese believe in the idea that you are trying to implement it is not going to work.64

Hanne at Oxfam confirms that the co-ordination process is hard and that it is difficult to get a picture of how the different aid organisations collaborate for the progress of Timor Leste, since every sector needs to be built up from scratch;

There is no system for anything so they have to try and find different solutions that work with the local condition. Sometimes she says, it is hard to see clearly what has been achieved so far in the process of helping the country on its feet...65

Except from the group of teachers who have no teacher’s diploma, teaching competence is imported from Portugal and other Portuguese speaking countries. This group has come to Timor Leste to implement the usage of Portuguese in the schools.66

61 See appendix 4, interview with Jony
63 See appendix 9:18, field observations.
64 See appendix 5, interview with Freddie.
65 See appendix 6, interview with Hanne.
66 See appendix 9:5, field observations.
According to the UN terminology implemented in Timor Leste, all collected data, oral as well as written, admit that the emergency phase is over. We have been questioning who has the right to interpret what signifies an emergency phase and who may have the right to define it? The term comes from the internal language used within the UN and it refers to how the working procedure is supposed to be in a certain phase that a state is going through. We have, without any success, tried to find a formal definition and explanation of the word emergency phase, why the term seems unclear. Although, we interpret the UN usage of the definition as a way to prioritize in a mission, concerning for instance security and human recourses.

Being in an emergency phase can, according to us, mean to put up functioning hard ware meaning for instance physical reconstruction of the destroyed school system. It can also refer to the soft ware, meaning the reconstruction of a functioning teacher’s chore; quality secured working material and didactics. Concerning the current development in Timor Leste, we have interpreted it as both the hard- respective the software that is referred to, so far as several of the participants talk about both a reconstruction of the hard- and the software.

Today in Timor Leste, the UN establishment means that the emergency phase is over. When discussing the status of the education system in Timor Leste, we soon found out that the answers differed from the institutional and the individual level. Talking to participants as representatives of different organisations, (and therefore answering on an institutional level), a main theme came forward; suggesting that the emergency phase is over. On the other hand the answers relating to the individual level implies that the emergency phase is still ongoing, but it’s overlapping with the capacity building phase.

Timor Leste faces a great challenge where it is necessary to link the different sectors and its fragments on a local, regional, national and international level. This challenge is ever so intricate, especially concerning the international involvement in the country, both by different NGOs, by the UN and the World Bank. We are not sure if the co-operation between different actors in the education development will suffer by the fact that it seems like everybody we meet wants piece of Timor Leste and have his or her own personal agenda in the country. People see what everybody else is doing to and in the country but they do not realise that they themselves are contributing in the creation of the situation, for both good and bad.
4.3. The implementation of Portuguese and other foreign languages – for better or worse?

Right after independence the Timorese government decided to implement Portuguese as the official bureaucratic language for Timor Leste, overlapping the everyday language Tetum, which also is of official status. As mentioned above, small elite of 20 % of the population speaks Portuguese.\textsuperscript{67}

On an institutional level, Freddie, connected to the Timorese government and the World Bank, means that Portuguese and Tetum shall function as completing and overlapping but at the same time he points the importance of learning and developing the mother tongue before starting the implementation of another language. When the curriculum is developed in comparison to the issue of language, the model has been Mozambique, where Portuguese has overlapped the local languages for a long time.\textsuperscript{68}

Jony also working on an institutional level means that the language to be used is the one that supports the training process of the students. The UNICEF works for implementation of bilingualism, meaning Tetum and Portuguese to be used parallel. He concludes that the mixture between the languages is the solution;

\begin{quotation}
The key is the mix of languages, some Tetum, and then when the Tetum, which is a very primitive language, is not sufficient, then put in some Portuguese, to fill in the gaps.\textsuperscript{69}
\end{quotation}

Furthermore Jony thinks that it is impossible to cope with only one language in Timor Leste. He thinks that it is possible to use both Portuguese and Tetum.

When we attended to the launch conference of the annual Human Development Report 2004 in Dili, the Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri used Portuguese. When he, after his opening speech left (during which most of the participants, both Timorese and internationals where using head phones for interpretation), the conference surprisingly continued in English and Tetum, depending on if it was internationals, Timorese public opinion representatives or national politicians speaking.\textsuperscript{70}

Silas, at the MoECYS points out the complexity regarding the 150 to 200 Portuguese teachers, brought to the country to teach Portuguese. He explains that when they cannot

\textsuperscript{68} See appendix 5, interview with Freddie.
\textsuperscript{69} See appendix 4, interview with Jony.
\textsuperscript{70} See appendix 9:16, field observations.
be understood they use Tetum to overlap. Silas thinks that Portuguese will remain as long as the present government is ruling, but he thinks it can change the same minute a new government is formed. He though adds that it will be extremely costly to change since so much economical resources already has been put into the implementation of Portuguese;

…so much money is put into the implementation process of Portuguese, so it will be hard to let go of it.

As a Timorese civil servant Silas gives us the official version, but after a while he penetrates some individual problems connected with Portuguese: He prefers to speak English when he meets people from the international society but in his closest environment he mostly meets Portuguese or Brazilian colleagues, which makes meetings and communication hard to handle.

Silas does not feel comfortable in the use of Portuguese. In other words he cannot be counted to the elite fully commanding the official language. This can be related to the interview with Troy, where he, not at least on the institutional level has faced the lack of know how and human resources in the development of the education system. When people cannot communicate in one language under the same basic conditions, the work gets inefficient.

Another participant, Hanne explains on the institutional level that the education projects at Oxfam entirely are based on Tetum or other local languages, and this she means, gives a quick and trustworthy support in the local society. By the grass root adjustment and the choice of Tetum, the knowledge level can be raised within the Timorese population. She believes that this would not be possible if the education programs were designed and carried out in the language Portuguese that is hardly spoken by anyone in the countryside.

Talking about the choice of Portuguese, the UNICEF-employed Troy officially remarks;

I can understand why the government of East Timor chooses Portuguese/…/as a statement of independence./…/Because East Timor would like to keep their distance to Australia and

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71 See appendix 7, interview with Silas.
72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
74 See appendix 4, interview with Troy.
75 See appendix 6, interview with Hanne.
Indonesia, and that we can understand if we look upon the history. Australia didn’t recognize East Timor as a sovereign state and therefore didn’t they choose English as an official language. In the case of not choosing Bahasa Indonesia, the East Timorese would like to be separated from the country that occupied them for several years.\textsuperscript{76}

Even if Troy in relation to his official position respects the introduction of Portuguese, he criticizes it on an individual level. He thinks that English should be the most logical choice since;

The UN language is English; the main trade language is English.\textsuperscript{77}

Solo clearly declares his aversion to the Portuguese society. He himself as a Timorese citizen with experience from the Portuguese rule describes the former colony as cruel and he means that they did not even provide any education\textsuperscript{78} for the mass population;

I really do hate the Portuguese people, they did not do anything good for Timor Leste, and they only emptied it on resources and made us powerless and weak.\textsuperscript{79}

Just like Solo, Amy personally is against the choice of Portuguese as official language. She means that English is the future main language for Timor Leste. She also means that the UN and the government should support education programs for tourism, where students can learn tourism English so that they can work in that sector. The clash Amy sees regarding the Timorese society and the issue of language, where she means that too few of the Timorese are able to function in the service of tourism, we ourselves also noticed. Relatively early during our stay in Timor Leste, we noticed the at the same time invisible, but also legible wall between the international and the Timorese society in Dili. For example, the city is full of restaurants where the different international enclaves eat. In these places foreign guest workers from other Southeast Asian restaurants are often employed, for an in comparison higher salary than the few Timorese employed in the same places. This small group of Timorese, often students is considered having better foreign language skills than the rest of the population.\textsuperscript{80}

\textsuperscript{76} See appendix 3, interview with Troy.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{78} See 2.1. \textit{The education system in Timor Leste} pp. 11.
\textsuperscript{79} See appendix 9:11.
\textsuperscript{80} See appendix 9:1, field observations.
Jeko sees the student’s generation, as the big losers since they neither can speak Portuguese, or proper English. He compares himself to his younger siblings and the parents, who at least can speak some Portuguese. Sitting in a UN-car, (borrowed by a friend), on a drive in the countryside, we get to know Noozy, the guide of the trip. He explains that in his family the father speaks Tetum and Portuguese, the mother Tetum, he himself Tetum, Bahasa Indonesia and some English and his younger siblings in primary school learn Portuguese and Tetum. Within his family different opinions are discussed regarding what is the right choice of official language for Timor Leste. Solo shares their opinion; he believes that the minister of education is not as good and competent as he should be and that he has forgotten the generation of students;

...the only sector that is not moving in the right direction is the education system...Focus is not put on them who are going to get the economy spinning in the country, but on the younger generation, which will not be able to contribute to the economical growth for another ten years.

At Jekos’ University, Bahasa Indonesia (in which he is fluent), is the praxis language. Thanks to this, regardless of history, he believes that Bahasa Indonesia will be the official language of Timor Leste in the future;

The government they have decided Portuguese to be the official language and that it is a very difficult language to learn, therefore we do not use it. There are not many people that can speak it.../...Yes Bahasa Indonesia it should be instead, because it is an easy language, so it will come back, I believe.

Jeko is not at all referring to the bloody history connected to the Indonesians, which he believes has no relevance for his personal succeeding in the future.

The introduction of Portuguese as an official language in Timor Leste has been criticised by many people in this study. Already though, as one of our participants pointed, Portuguese and Tetum are the official languages and it is even written in the constitution. Still, we believe there are many possibilities to be flexible in different situations and on different levels of the society.
The question remains what alternatives are the most recourse and time demanding? Is it to develop Tetum towards a technical, grammatical and bureaucratic level, demanded for a fully developed democracy, or to implement an already developed language with colonial signature? This also includes how the different alternatives affect the identity construction in Timor Leste in either positive or negative direction?

It is interesting that the government does not think of Portuguese is an impossible choice, although Portugal has been a colony that has repressed the country for such a long time. Troy means that Portuguese is an expression for the independence of Timor Leste but we are critical to that statement since Portugal was an occupational power for 500 years without then building up any functioning infrastructure or education. Why is not Tetum the obvious choice of language if it is the autonomy that is it to be expressed?

Further, visiting the launch of the Human Development Report, we noted Portuguese to be spoken just initially. This, connected to the answers from Silas, him not being comfortable in Portuguese, made us reflect on how substantiated the decision to introduce Portuguese really is?

As we saw at the Human Development Report conference, English is an important language on the institutional level in the country. Since the UN mission language in Timor Leste is English it affects the everyday life in the country. In the empirical material it was clear that English is important for a positive development for Timor Leste. Therefore it might be a good strategy to teach English already in the early years in school.

Since we found it interesting that Jeko despite the history prefers Bahasa Indonesia, we have considered the possibilities to reintroduce Bahasa Indonesia as a language parallel with Tetum. Reviewing newspapers and reports we understood that a lot of effort is put into diplomatic efforts to get closer to Indonesia. Timor Leste is in great need of development of strong trading relations with the big neighbour. Though parts of our empirical material visualises the problem with unhealed wounds from the long and bloody war is still remaining.

Bahasa Indonesia is a large language in the Asian continent and therefore important in the Timor Leste environment. As we learnt, both by research and on the field, Bahasa Indonesia is already known, implemented and integrated among the grown up population and the teenagers. We understand Jekos’ statement out of his position and
see that Bahasa Indonesia possibly could be a building brick for forgiveness and the development of new good diplomatic relations.

Clearly visible in the empirical material, are the many clashes related to implementation of foreign language in Timor Leste. We have analysed them through generation, class and international aspects. The clashes discussed might create conflicts and integration problems between different groups and generations. In a long-term perspective it could even cause problems for a good development process in the country. At this date it is too early to say what the outcome will be. More research and a longer stay in Timor Leste is necessary for a deeper analyse of the role of the languages.
...this thesis has reached its end and we hope that you as a reader enjoyed taking part of the different perspectives and pictures shown by the participants in the study on the education system in Timor Leste. During the working process we have found that there are no easy answers and recommendations connected to the problems Timor Leste faces. Although there are huge problems to be solved, we have to keep in mind that the state is newborn. Still, in this short time, a lot of improvements already have been achieved and we are most hopeful about the future of this fantastic country that we came to love during our stay there.

During the 10 weeks in Timor Leste, we, as already mentioned, eagerly discussed all impressions from the field, not at least from a civic teacher perspective. Although we are well aware of the lack of academic theory, we would like to add some of our personal opinions on what Timor Leste should do, to create a healthy and positive society. You might agree or not - we are in either case interested to discuss it with you over a cup of coffee.

5.1 Thoughts about the future in Timor Leste

Training programmes for the Timorese teachers
The facts that the Timorese teachers lack the needed skills and that human resources in terms of teachers knowledge is imported from abroad instead of being developed within the country, we believe can cause negative effects of the raising of the quality of the education system. The unqualified teachers also directly correlate with not only a high drop out rate and poor attendance for girls, but also women’s educational lack of achievements.

Even if there are ongoing different training programmes for Timorese teachers, we think there should be more and on all academic levels. Otherwise, when the
international teachers and the UN withdraw from the country, the Timorese teachers will not be able to manage keeping up a high quality of the education.

**Status of teachers and the didactics**

During the Indonesian occupation the teachers were mostly Indonesian and referring to our participants, they just cared about money. Now most of the teachers are Timorese and according to the answers from the interviews they seem to care more about the students and the didactics. Although we believe that there is a long way to go, both in raising the status of the teaching profession and in creation of good methodology and internal education for the teacher’s faculty. The salaries for teachers are low and the salary system unfair. The trend regarding the teachers’ situation has great impact and negative “spin offs” in the Timor Leste society. We therefore think it is important to invest in human and monetary resources such as methodology training, both internally but also externally. For instance it would be valuable to let teachers visit other countries and explore different school systems and techniques concerning didactics.

**Schools free of charge or unnecessary drop outs?**

On the field we noted that many children/teenagers in school age do not seem to go to school but instead work in the informal sector. The reports and the interview answers support the statistic numbers of high drop out level. Families lack resources to pay the school fees and they prioritise to activate their children at home with work or taking care of their siblings.

Poverty is a significant predictor of educational drop out. Therefore the government of Timor Leste should invest in an education free of charge; otherwise the country will be more dependent on the international community than they already are. By doing the school economically available for all groups it will in the long term lead to an educated population with know-how skills. Both women and men could then, on equal terms, be productive in the development and rebuilding of Timor Leste.

**The point of good education**

We have experienced that the Timorese inhabitants do not seem to have any long-term perspective in life. It seems that everybody only look one day ahead, focusing on right now and not on the future. This is what we believe a clear recognition of poverty. People do not see the point of planning for the future. We also think this affects that
many stay out of school or drop out too early. The young generation cannot see the meaning in getting a proper education. But Timor Leste needs a higher educated population for a healthy, sustainable development. By campaigning for education both in the cities and in the countryside, and by making it flexible in different versions depending on location, the government, the UN and other NGOs can help the Timorese population understanding the point of good education.

The important link between vocational training and university studies
We agree with Amys’ suggestions: Linkage between education and employment both in the public and private sector should be prioritized. It would be a great benefit if the student generation at university level, out of a development perspective, has good knowledge about what the society expect of them after graduation. Therefore we believe that more focus in this phase should be put into investment and empowerment of the Timorese teachers and trainers, who have the responsibility to carry out the education in the higher levels today. The student generation and the ones in senior high school will soon and hopefully contribute to the Timor Leste society and they need to get the right skills before that.

Portuguese and Tetum as tools for improvement
With the current condition the best Timor Leste can do is to be as flexible as possible when it comes to language implementation and development. Already as one of our participants pointed, Portuguese is the official and it is even written in the constitution. Still though, there are many possibilities to be flexible in different situations and on different levels of the society. If the people do not have a unifying language that everybody understands it might cause conflicts and communication problems. Therefore we think that as long as Tetum works functionally it is a good point to use and develop it, both for Timorese and for international help workers. In that sense there will be an understanding between the different levels of society both within Timor Leste and externally.

Continuing Studies
When we came to Timor Leste there were no research fully covering the questions focused in this thesis. Because of the bad infrastructure and the time limitations we didn’t manage to make a comparative analyse of both countryside and city conditions.
Therefore it would be of great value to deepen the knowledge of the situation in the countryside in a comparative study.

Other interesting issues that we would like to learn more about are the working conditions and status of the teachers, such as training, salary and ranking system. Research on the formation of a teachers union therefore would be a natural part of such a study.

Finally as already mentioned, it would be interesting to follow up how the bilingual education system, Portuguese and Tetum develops and how Bahasa and English are integrated along the way. An inspiring comparison is the controversial bilingual implementation of Arabic and other mother tongue languages in the Swedish school system in the past few years.
Bibliography and references

Literature


Reports

*Timor Leste MICS*. 2002. Dili: UNICEF.


*Women in East Timor, a report on women’s health, education, economic empowerment and decision-making*. April 2002. Dili: Office of advisor, promotion of quality, East Timor Public administration, UNTAET.
**Pre-test participant**

Ming, International Adviser at MoECYS (mother tongue Philippine), June 23, Dili. We pre-tested the interview guide on Ming.

**Interview participants**

Amy, International employer, owner of a business company in Dili, (mother tongue English), June 29, Dili.
Freddie, International Adviser in MoECYS, (mother tongue Portuguese), July 23, Dili.
Hanne, Manager at Oxfam, (mother tongue English), July 30, Dili.
Jeko, Student at Dili University, (mother tongue Tetum), July 7, Dili.
Jony, Teacher in Timor Leste, (mother tongue Tetum), July 15, Dili.
Silas, General Director of MoECYS (mother tongue Tetum), August 7, Dili.
Troy, Program Manager at UNICEF (mother tongue English), July 14, Dili.

**Field participants and observations**

_Noozy_, Timorese veterinary working for Canadian CARE, (mother tongue Tetum), July 26, Aileu.
_Rommi_, Timorese programme officer at the UNDP (mother tongue Tetum), between June and August, Dili.
_Sara_, Timorese student and waitress in a restaurant (mother tongue Tetum), July 18, Dili.
_Solo_, Timorese Programme Officer in USAID (mother tongue Tetum), July 17, the mountain Matebian outside Baucau.
Internet

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bahasa_Indonesia, 2004-12-16
http://www.ui.se/, 2004-12-16, keyword: Landguiden, Östtimor
The interview with Amy took place at the location of her business. She preferred the conversation to be informal and that is why the interview was not recorded. The interview is an unstructured interview and it was transcribed directly afterwards the session. Both of the researchers were participating in the conversation, asking questions about her opinion of the education system of Timor Leste.

**Working background**

Amy has been in Timor Leste for 4 years, running a tourism business with her husband. They are European migrants, formerly working in media business. Amy likes the life in Timor Leste very much and is very positive about the states possibilities, especially in tourism. In her firm she has employed two Timorese university students and she feels that by doing this she makes it possible for the students to pay for their education. Amy sees herself like a sponsor, in that sentence that if it was not for her, the students would not be able to go to university. And without university they cannot learn English, which makes it hard to get a good occupation after graduation.

**Needs and challenges**

She believes that the government should take the vocational training more seriously and sponsor the employers, which give the students practise in different professions. Her opinion is that progress of the country cannot be achieved, if the government does not give the students any chance to go to university.

She is saying that for several students, for instance the ones working in her firm, the situation is that they need to support their family with the income they get from the extra job, and at the same time they need to get a good education, with all the costs that includes full time studies.

Although she thinks that it is a tremendously heavy responsibility laid upon the shoulders of the student generation, she thinks that the only way progress can be made is by combining vocational training and theoretical studies. She also believes that it cannot be the responsibility of the single employers to pay for this. It should be financed by the government, for instance by tax relieving of the employers or salary contributions to the employees.
Language issue
Amy is also very pragmatic in her opinion of education. It is of a great need to develop the practical skills, using English as a service language. For instance courses in tourism English should be held. She also thinks it is bad that the students have to pay for their education, though this only will make it harder for the Timorese to create a good society on both institutional and human level.

International participation
She is very concerned about brain drain, which she herself already has experienced in her business. One of her former employees now has moved to Europe. She means that the incitement structure needs to be developed, in the direction so that the local people want to stay in the country. This can be achieved by creating good opportunities of employment and decent salaries. She also think that the UN has a big responsibility in creating a connection between theoretical studies and employment, but she means that nothing has been done in this direction. She does not know of any project focusing to link theory and practise.

Amy ends her analysis by saying that today it is not a very good thing to be smart and talented in Timor Leste, though most of the education is about repeating, repeating and repeating and not using your brain.
The interview took place at Jeko's work, it was an arrangement made with the owner of the business. Jeko works part time in the tourism branch, and the money he earns is financing his studies, which cost 250 USD per semester. The interview was recorded and it was a semi-structured interview.

**Working background**

*Can you tell us about your situation as a student and little bit about your education?*

I am a student at Dili University, studying political science and international relations, on my second semester. And before entering university you have to go to school for twelve years. And my university education will last for four years, but it depends, which subject. Six years in primary, three in secondary, three in junior secondary. At Dili University we have 5000-6000 students. And we are about 30 students in each class. Though my university is a private one I have to pay a fee each semester ant it is including fee, books and computer but it is not enough and the books are not updated like they should. I pay 250 USD each semester and it is more expense than a university run by the government.

*How old are you when you start school here in Timor Leste? And is it true that there can be different levels of knowledge in the one class? Have you experienced that in your class?*

Around six, but it depends on the economic situation of the parents. You can also start primary school at eleven years of age, and how long they stay in school is also dependent on the situation of the family economic. An ordinary school day starts at 8 o’clock and it ends at 13, and we go to school from Monday till Saturday. The lecture are very traditional, the teacher is speaking most of the time. It is not really different knowledge levels in classes since everybody in university needs 12 years preparation.
Needs and challenges

Have you seen any development within the education system since independence?

How was it before?

The development is that it has changed a lot. Development is very good because the teachers prepare themselves better nowadays than before. They want to give more to the students.

During the Indonesian occupation they did not care about their students. They stayed maybe one month, got their salary and went away again. They did not care if the students came to school or not, they just cared about money.

What do you think is the largest need for your school situation, is there anything you are missing in everyday learning?

At the moment in our school it is very difficult and bad standards and sometimes the teachers do not prepare for the lessons. We are missing reading material and computers. Sometimes we get home work that we cannot do, because we do not have any exercise books or literature. We only have the notes from the lectures and sometimes it is not enough. We actually do not have a school law or a school policy yet. But they are working on it. I also think that most of the time the teachers want the best for their students, to give proper knowledge. Furthermore think it is difficult to be a teacher when they do not get a proper education.

Another thing what we really need according to my opinion is a library, because today we have a library but there are not enough books and information there either. And it is very limited in the Xanana reading room as well. I believe that we need books with basic knowledge depending on what subject you have. We also would like news, such as in international issues and politics.

Do you think that the Timorese people have a different opinion on how to build the education system, than foreigner advisers and international teachers? And what do you think about that?
The education system is leaning towards international aid and is formed out of Indonesian standard. I think it is good because Timor Leste for the moment do not have any curriculum regarding education system so we need to adapt to the Indonesian way.

**Do you have any international teachers at your university? What language is spoken during these lectures? And also do you believe that your teachers have enough skills to keep up the quality of your education?**

Some are from the Philippines and some from Indonesia and the language is English and sometimes Bahasa Indonesia. Some of them have very good qualifications, they have their degree from Great Britain or Jakarta and when they have finished their studies they come back to Timor Leste. Some have a very good level but the ones that graduate here, have a far too low level on knowledge. I think that if you study abroad it is easy to get good knowledge but here it is difficult.

**Walking around in Dili you cannot help noticing that a lot of children not seem to go to school. How can that be?**

The parents cannot look after the children’s education because the lack of money. They cannot afford having their children in school.

**Language issue**

**What language in school do you prefer? What do you feel about that the Portuguese language? And as an official language? Should it be another one?**

I prefer Bahasa that I have learnt in younger years. The Portuguese is difficult but I think that for the young children it is easier because they are going to learn it in school, but for people in my age it is hard. We cannot practise in university, though we have Bahasa or English at school, and talk Tetum among the families and friends.

The government they have decided the Portuguese to be the official language and that it is a very difficult language to learn, therefore we do not use it. There are not many people that can speak it. Yes I thing it should be Bahasa Indonesia instead, because it is an easy language, so it will come back, I believe. But I also think that English is very important. We must study it very hard.
International participation

Do you think that the international teachers and advisers on education can appreciate the specific needs for the Timorese people and your education? What do you think will happened when UN and the international organisations withdraws?

The international society here, like the NGO’s, they have libraries, computers, books and material that we need so they are definitely useful. It is going to be very hard because we need the help.

Other comments

From where I am today, I have a plan for my future. I can see myself working with diplomacy or something like that after graduation, so I have my own goal. I really believe in the future.
The interview took place in the UN-house, in the UNICEF department. Both of the researchers were addressing the questions. It is a good atmosphere in the interview situation and everybody felt quite comfortable in the situation. This was a semi-structured interview and it was taped.

**Working background**

**What is your profession?**

I was mathematics teacher back in Australia, and I been working with research and methodology. And now I am retired and I work in UNICEF. I have been here in Timor Leste permanently for one year. Before that I was here as a consultant, and Joao told me about this job and I applied.

**What does an ordinary day look like?**

Basically we try to rebuild and restore the school system. The easiest part was to refurbish the schools and make them functional again after the battle. Over 90% of the schools where destroyed and we managed within eight months to get them functional again. The big challenge now is to raise the knowledge level of the Timorese teachers and trainers, so that the quality of education can be secured. A problem also is that the government has a huge lack of resources, regarding experience of education issues only a hand full people without sufficient skills and guidance has got on their shoulders to manage the whole education system.

**Tell us about the organisation? How many employees and so forth.**

Where about 35 in whole UNICEF and four persons are working full time with education and we have co-operated with like 20 consultants on different topics. It works like that that any donor or any country that puts a lot of money in the country, also put a person to see to that the money is placed, as it should, and the country pays the person. Like Japan has one employee.
Needs and challenges

If you would have to pick one issue to be primary prioritised regarding the education system, what would that be? What do you believe is the biggest issue within the education system?

Currently we have three main issues on the agenda: First of all we have the capacity development within the MoECYS. Secondly it is the school finance. The policy of the government according is that no child shall be excluded from primary school, although this is not the reality because today there are several children that never end up in school of different reasons. The policy regarding school fee in primary and secondary school is that there should not be any, but that is not the case in all schools. Of all children in Timor Leste that are supposed to go to primary school there is 35% that doesn’t go of different reasons, such as financial. And furthermore the law is written in a certain way that the schools could interpret it as if they can charge if they have to. Thirdly, we have the 100 schools project. In the latest project UNICEF is unique, because we are building up a country, not just filling up the pockets with strategies and documents. In the 100 schools project, we have about 750 primary schools working in clusters. Each core school has their own seven satellite schools and they encourage each other in working together. We try to do this though out the whole country. The schools has developed a PTA system and this has been approved by the government, which otherwise is very top-down oriented. (PTA – Parent Teachers Association)

Does UNICEF co-operate with any NGO’s or grass root movements?

They interact a lot but on different levels. There is a consulting collaborating process going on with the government, for instance, last year there was this big national congress with 600 delegates, from different levels and organisations, both governmental and non governmental.

Also the church and several teachers attained.

How do you think that the interpretation of the needs is differing, between foreigners and local aid workers? Do you have a lot of discussions?
I believe since we are from the UNICEF the whole team share the same core values. In terms on what the country needs we agree, but in the process on how to reach the goal our opinions differs a little bit.

We operate through the government and it is like a contract between them and us. We do not do anything without their authorisation. We have a very good co-operation on a government level but we do not know if that is reflecting what people in the villages really want. Cause if you went out and asked people can we build the database system here, they would like to get fresh water instead. So priorities are different on different levels. I believe that this is a conflict within the country rather than between UNICEF and the MoECYS.

**Do you believe that the teachers here have the skills that they need to keep up the quality of the education?**

This training that the teachers took in 2000 was about four days. The teachers’ situation is also that there is no material in the schools, such as paper, exercise books and so on and if there was any material, the goats would most likely eat it up during night. Another example of the poor situation is that the children are taught how to write by doing it in the sand, because of the lack of paper and pencils.

**Out of your own profession and point of view how would you say that the Timorese people are adjusting to the new education system?**

I agree, but there is one other group that could be equivalent and that is USAID and it is the World Bank that is managing that fund. UNICEF is supported from Swedish Sida that is the biggest donor, giving 5.2 million dollar.

**Language issue**

**Have the choice of Portuguese as an official language had any impacts on the education situation according to your point of view?**

I can understand why the government of Timor Leste chooses the Portuguese language. Because Timor Leste would like to keep their distance from Australia and Indonesia,
and that we can understand if we look upon the history. Australia did not recognise Timor Leste as a sovereign state and therefore did not they choose English as an official language. In the case of not choosing Bahasa Indonesia, the Timorese would like to be separated from the country that occupied them for several years.

That is a significant achievement for UNICEF actually. When I first came here in 2001 it was just Portuguese in the construction of the education, starting with Portuguese from day one. We, meaning UNICEF, have had some huge discussions and argues with the MoECYS, but the UNICEF has always argued that they can choose any language they like but what they need to do is to put up a policy that describes how we take the people from were they are to where the MoECYS wants them to be. And you know the constitution wants them to be Portuguese. So the question was how the transition was supposed to be. Now it is constructed in that way that in the earlier years, the students learn five hours Tetum and three hours of Portuguese and then it’s more and more Portuguese.

**How would you say that this effects the willing to learn among students?**

I still do think that there will be some significant changes, especially among the students at university level of today. When I have talked to students they do not understand why English is not the official language. One of the UN language is English, the main trade language is English. But although I did not respect it initially, I now respect the decision to choose the Portuguese, as a statement of the independence.

Tetum is not as sophisticated so that it can be used on all levels, it does not have all the words and all the terminology that a fully functioning language would need.

**What do you think about the Portuguese in a long-term perspective? It is chances to integrate in the local society.**

I think that in ten years time, if you go over the hills, out to the isolated places, there will be only Tetum spoken. English also is compulsory from secondary school and up.
International participation

What impact do you think that the international organisations have had in forming the education system in Timor Leste?

I think we have got serious shortcomings. Some things we do here very well. When I first started here the World Bank said “we need to get the kids back to school and to normalise society. UNICEF we have a saying here that World Bank know everything and does nothing. UNICEF knows anything and does everything. And till now we have put up 365 schools throughout the country. That is what UNICEF is very good at. One thing I have learnt here is that we need to think try and think differently when working in Timor Leste. We try to do everything right but we cant do everything right.

Other comments

Since the occupation was so difficult for the Timorese they are now after independence very focus on having everything in a Timorese way. Even if they have to rebuilt the country where 95% been destroyed they will do it in the Timorese way, no matter how long it is going to take and how much it will cost them. Therefore they will never implement a copy of an Indonesian education system.

I think that we will stay here for a very long time, if UN do not stop the activity here and move to Afghanistan or Iraq. UNMISET is withdrawing but UNICEF is staying.
The interview took place in UNICEF department. Both of the researchers were addressing the questions. It is a good atmosphere in the interview situation and everybody felt quite comfortable in the situation. This was a semi-structured interview and it was taped.

**Working background**

**What is your profession more specifically? What does an ordinary day look like?**

I am an educator and after independence I started to work for the government. Before that I was a teacher for ten years. Now I have been working for UNICEF for three years using my experience as a teacher and educator. It is very challenging to work in a country where everything needs to get restarted. We lack curriculum, human resources, financial resources, policy and so forth. The main UNICEF force now is to get money to the sector.

**Needs and challenges**

**If you would have to pick one issue to be primary prioritised regarding the education system, what would that be? What do you believe is the biggest issue within the education system?**

The focus is about that the children are not learning properly. When I go out in the schools I see that the teachers training needs to be better. Since independence not much has changed, in terms of resources, skills and teaching style. Still all the lessons are very traditional.

We are now addressing the problem on how to train the teachers and how we can create the management of the schools and a good environment for learning, like a nationwide data system (coming from UNESCO). We also try to develop a central examination system including national tests in grade 6, 9, and 12.

**Does UNICEF co-operate with any NGO’s or grass root movements?**
The needs can differ very much and they are all depending on where the school is located. In some schools that I have visited they have had a brand new toilet, but now water supply. Some schools need a fence to keep out the pigs and the goats for instance. If I have to pick only one big need for education then it would be water and sanitation, which is much undeveloped especially in the countryside.

**How do you think that the interpretation of the needs is differing, between foreigners and local aid workers? Do you have a lot of discussions?**

I do not think we have different opinions because in the UN we have developed a system based on the level on the country where we work. We consider the specific needs of the country before acting and designing programmes addressed to the local society. For me with my background as a teacher, I believe that the focus is correct, and that it is good that local people like me also are included in the process to work the new education system out.

**When studying the documents about goals and visions of the education system, a lot of the words are about securing the quality. Do you believe that the teachers here have the skills that they need to keep up the quality of the education?**

As I said, I think that the skills of the teachers are that it is very traditional education, in terms of using methods. One of the factors for that is that the recruitment that the government has done is not good enough. In 2000 the first recruitment of teachers was made and it opened up for everyone who had a secondary graduation to apply for teacher training. This training was very poor. Now a big number of people have a teacher's job, without having the sufficient skills. Most of the teachers in primary school were also teachers during the Indonesian occupation, but the teachers in secondary school are “new” teachers and they do not have any diploma as teachers. The mixture of language and all the dialects is another problem. Also the salary system is wrong. The teachers with no experience often earn as much as a very experienced and skilled teacher, with a university diploma.

**Out of your own profession and point of view how would you say that the people are adjusting to the new education system? Do you believe that, in the creation of**
the new education system and policy, enough cultural consideration has been taken
towards what people would believe is important?

I believe that the co-operation between the UNICEF and the MoECYS is working very
well, very strong. We can probably say that the UNICEF is the major donor in the
education in this country, nowadays.

Language issue
Have the choice of Portuguese as an official language had any impacts on the education
situation according to your point of view?

From a UNICEF perspective we want a language that does not create difficulties for the
students to learn. Of course that is what we are fighting for and we also think that for
the lower grades the school should be bilingual, Tetum and Portuguese. Now also it is
approved by the government that this to languages is official in the construction of
education. The plans are that there will be more Tetum in the lower grades and that the
Portuguese will be integrated and have a bigger importance, if you continue to higher
levels of education.

How would you say that this effects the willing to learn among students?

The key is the mix of the languages, some Tetum and then when the Tetum, which is a
very primitive language, is not sufficient, then put in some Portuguese, to fill in the
gaps.

In high level meetings or formal meetings you will find people speaking Tetum but
the terminology is Portuguese. So we Timorese people will use Tetum but apply
Portuguese when needed. I do not think there will be a single official language. Two
languages will be used in the same portion. English and Bahasa Indonesia are also
approved by the government to be working languages. So there is some flexibility there,
yes. We are not strict about that.
Interview with Freddie, 23 July, Dili

Appendix 5

The semi-structured interview took place in the MoECYS. The researchers felt a little bit disturbed by the fact that another acquaintance and another person were in the room at the same time as the interview took place. Before the interview the respondent had the interview guide sent to him, so that he would know a little about the study. It was obvious that the interviewed person wants to lead the conversation.

Working background

What is your profession more specifically? What does an ordinary day look like?

I graduated in international relations and I started my work here as a civil affairs officer in 1999. I came here with the UN basically because I had worked in other countries in this kind of process, like post conflict in Africa and in some of the Caribbean countries. For some time I have worked with other issues and I moved to education when the UN mission started here in Timor Leste. Now I work with the Timor Leste government and the World Bank. I think I am going to stay for another year.

The World Bank has a specific role in Timor Leste and actually that is incorrect, we do not say Timor Leste, we say Timor Leste. That is the official name of the country. Objective of the World Bank of Timor Leste is to present one of the branches of the World Bank, which is the international government association, which is non-profit. What they do is that they manage a fund that has donor money so that is to say that the World Bank is not putting any money into the country because the country does not borrow. So they only manage the donors’ money.

That takes us back to the early days. After the battle, when the UN came in as transmission administrator there was an agreement that the UN would deal directly with the governance issues so that UN would support the Timor Leste to establish a government system and that would be solved through one fund where donors could put their money, called CFET, Consolidated Fund for Timor Leste. And for investment another fund Trust fund for Timor Leste, was established, and given to the World Bank to manage.
Needs and challenges

In education a program was established as a revitalisation fund and this had three phases; first came the emergency phase, because of the destruction of the infrastructure. The physical part took place in 2000-2002. 3000 classrooms were refurbished. UNICEF and the World Bank did this together in a joint project. UNICEF did the roofs and the World Bank/government did the rest. We had to purchase textbooks and UNICEF distributed pencils, paper and that sort of things. Second, it was after the initial phase time to change the educational system to a fundamental quality project. So now what we do is that we continue building the infrastructure, to a standard quality level. We are now setting the standard for quality. The most important is the access matter, so that every child get the chance to go to school and also quality. The role of the project is the technical level, like on institutional, consultant level. We have an adviser who is a legislative specialist, and he is writing the education law and the organic law for the MoECYS. This we will expect will reflect in quality. We have another adviser working out a curriculum for the education system for secondary level and she came last week and will be here for three months. We expect to create quality with that.

If you would have to pick one issue to be primary prioritised regarding the education system, what would that be? What do you believe is the biggest issue within the education system?

I believe that the main problem in the education sector is repetition and drop out.

Out of your own profession and point of view how would you say that the people are adjusting to the new education system? Do you believe that, in the creation of the new education system and policy, enough cultural consideration has been taken towards what people would believe is important?

I think that in this situation when the state of the system is that it is the right prioritisation to start to develop the primary and secondary school, before taking care of the university level. You have to invest in the basic, because if you do not do have a solid education in the first years, you cannot achieve any quality in the higher levels.
Language issue

Have the choice of Portuguese as an official language had any impacts on the education situation according to your point of view. The World Bank perspective?

I do not speak for the World Bank, I’m employed by the MoECYS. The World Bank is the manager of the trust fund. For some time there was a lot of controversy of the issue when the government decided that they would have Portuguese as an official language. We believe that it was a sovereign decision. For some time not only the World Bank as an institution but some donors as well misunderstood this decision and thought they could change it. The introduction of a new language is a huge step and challenge, when the vast majority does not speak it, and it has enormous implications but it is sovereign decision so we are here to help the Timor Leste out.

To do some overlapping with Tetum and Portuguese is the right way to go, I believe, and that is what experiences from other countries show. The curriculum is under development and it looks like that both the Portuguese and Tetum is official. One of the things that have been implemented is a policy on how kids are supposed to learn. What is decided in this policy is that children are supposed to learn in their mother tongue first, before they can try and learn the Portuguese, otherwise they will not learn any language properly. We have looked at Mozambique where they also have many different languages, when implementing this overlapping system.

We have done one survey with to different student groups where the first group of students started with mother tongue 80% and 20% Portuguese and gradually they increased the Portuguese. In the fifth grade there was 100% Portuguese. In the other group they had only Portuguese since day one and in the fifth grade just the same. So they took the two groups of pupils and tested their Portuguese skills and the results were that the group that had had Portuguese introduced gradually was much better in comparison with the other group. For many of this children starting with Portuguese, the language was a barrier for them in the classroom. The parents did not speak the language so they could not help them. And it is between the ages of six until ten you develop your language. So the question is what you can do in a place where noone understands you and where you do not understand anyone.

How would you say that this effects the willing to learn among students, younger/older?
The MoECYS is working on the regulation of the university, establishing the basic law of university. We are again providing technical assistance. One concrete example is that we have just provided a consultant to work on the curriculum development for organisation and accreditation at university level.

**What do you think about the Portuguese in a long-term perspective?**

I do not make this kind of judgement, it is not to any “Malay”, any foreign person to say. We are here to help implement the decision and we have to advise and to help them in the best way.

**International participation**

**What impact do you think that the international organisations have had in forming the education system? Do you think that the use of local language among the international help workers has any evidence in creating a sustainable education system?**

Hopefully the withdrawal will be gradual and by then some capacity has been created. There will always be a certain number of international advisers here, and in countries like Timor Leste. Here will be aid workers and donor countries and if they will get a fair deal regarding the oil issue with Australia, Timor Leste will be a rich country in terms of money. So the will have the possibility to by the technical is human resource development and what many of the things that we take for granted.

**Other comments**

What we can do with the experience that we have from other countries, for instance Brazil, is that we can compare the systems and try and implement something that we believe is going to work out under Timor Leste conditions, but we can never say to them what they should do and so on, that’s up to them to decide. There is no patent solution. You cannot import a system totally. Timor Leste is not more complicated than any other place and the special about it is that it is a bunch of people with different cultures and different background. In 2000-2001 there was a kind of romantic view that
it would be very easy to restore the country but it is not because we are dealing with people and people have different attitudes and backgrounds, which affects the process.

They have to make their decisions and none can come and simply foreign solution. If there is one specific thing about the Timorese is that they are very used to resist, they learnt that very well. First they resisted under Portuguese rule, then under Indonesia and now under the UN transmission. So if you cannot make the Timorese believe in the idea that you are trying to implement it is not going to work. I was very fortunate to figure this out in my early days here so since then I try to think about that when I work.
This interview took place under informal circumstances. We went to the location of the Oxfam office to hopefully book an interview with somebody working with education. Although they were all out in the districts, but instead the country programme manager, Hanne, was able to talk about the education system and the language issue. The conversation was not recorded and it was an unstructured interview.

**Working background**

Hanne tells us about how Oxfam is organised and explains that it was built up under the World War 2 in Great Britain. It is now operating all over the developing world, and has a wide variety of aid projects concerning health, education, violence of women and local democracy community, called livelihood projects. She has been in Timor Leste since March.

In Timor Leste there are three sections of Oxfam: Great Britain, Australia and Hong Kong and they all are suited in different districts throughout the state. A part from the main organisation they co-operate with some different partner NGO’s, but she does not go into which ones.

**Needs and challenges**

She explains that the education projects are part of the livelihood projects, as a part of survival of the people in a long term. The programme is a pilot, so it will be evaluated after one year. The programme is not brand new though; it has been developed as a method of increasing literacy and started in Brazil. It is called the Paulo Freire model.

The teachers of the project, are always local, and are not actually teachers, but leaders chosen by the local society – community, which involves about 20 households. The ones that are chosen, as Hanne puts it, see the mission as a way to help the community and to strengthen the empowerment of the Timorese people. The leaders do not get any payment so they do this as a volunteer work, but many sees the task as a way to get some education for themselves and it is also seen as an honourable mission.

The training project for the local leaders, how are going to teach their community to read and write, is built up in a four module way and right now they have reached the second module. The module system works in that way that the leaders try and build their knowledge on what they already have experienced in the role as leaders. The
training project also focus on what the special district needs and wants, so different districts learn different things, and it is all related to were the districts are located in Timor Leste and how fare the development haws gone in the specific district.

**Language issue**
The leaders teach in Tetum and only Tetum, since it is what is spoken in most places. Although Hanne claims, that in some districts there are two-three different languages except for Tetum that is understood and spoken by the people, and then the leader teach in the local language instead. The whole idea of the project is bottom up and grass root based, and that is how Oxfam tries to work in all projects, Hanne tells us.

The main focus of the literacy programme is to give adults from the age 20 and up a chance to write and read, not only to empower them but also so that they can help their children with their home work.

Hanne believes that it is a huge range of skills among the local leaders, and that is a big problem, that will be solved by the training programme that has just started. She also tells us her opinion on Portuguese as official language, where she means that it is no point choosing that for the curriculum of the education system and legislation since almost no teachers speak the Portuguese.

**International participation**
We are also asking Hanne about how all the international organisations and the UN can develop a functioning co-operation and she believes it is a hard task, though the country needs to build up everything from the ground. There is no system for anything so they have to try and find different solutions that work with the local condition. Sometimes she says it is hard to see clearly what has been achieved so far in the process of helping the country on its feet but since 2000 when Oxfam first got here, there has been a lot of progress.
Interview with Silas, 7 August, Dili

Silas is working on a high level within MoECYS, where the interview took place. The researchers were early to the meeting but the respondent joins anyway. Silas seems a little bit nervous and uneasy so we decide that this semi-structured interview should be an unstructured interview instead. Silas did not want the interview to be taped and he kept on asking to whom the study will be reported to.

Working background

Silas tells us that in MoECYS 250 people are employed. But the government does not employ all of them; some are consultants and advisers from abroad. He has been working in the MoECYS since 2001 and he is now the director of education planning and he’s mission is to plan the actions for the districts on a theoretical level and to propose to the government what is needed in the coming three months. This includes both all activities, supposed to take place in the districts and the budget for its causes. He hopes that the government soon will approve the budget for the next period. Before he started at the MoECYS he was working in the districts on the operational level.

In his occupation it enquire planning of the infrastructure of the school system and now they have an ongoing project with the UNICEF, regarding a database system, to be set up on a primary school level. When this is accomplished they will move on to secondary school. He is also occupied with co-ordination of the donors’ projects – bilateral projects, and at the moment there is a big Japanese fund working with the build up process of schools. He also on a daily basis deals with policy questions.

Needs and challenges

Silas claims that the greatest need in the school system right now is to build the capacity of the teachers, which he means, will improve the capacity of the education system as well. During the occupation 80% of the primary school teachers were Timorese, and 20% were Indonesian. On secondary level and university was it the opposite, 80% Indonesian teachers, whereas all left after independence. Therefore the higher education missed a lot of competence and knowledge, needed in the rebuilding process. Timor Leste faced a huge brain drain.

Some of this capacity building takes places at MoECYS, in a language institute where they have teachers training. This is created in co-operation with the Innotech, a South
East Asian education organisation. This programme is now still on-going but in the coming autumn, the teachers attaining in the programme will go out in the districts and teach other teachers. The course is about learning skills that you need as a teacher.

Next year Silas hopes that there will be a diploma system for teachers who graduate, which also can make the salary system more just than it is at the moment. Now he explains many teachers who have little skills can have the same salary as a teacher with a master’s degree.

Language issue
When starting to ask about the language issue Silas does not wish to say his personal opinion, even if he is not a politician. He claims that it is already written in the school law to choose Portuguese as an official language and therefore it is just for him as a servant of MoECYS to carry out the mission of this. He tells us that there are 150-200 Portuguese teachers here at the moment, out in the districts to teach the Portuguese. When they cannot use Portuguese they switch into Tetum, but it is supposed to be Portuguese as much as possible in school.

Silas believes that the lasting of Portuguese as an official language depends on which government is to rule the country. If there will be a shift in the regime, then the Portuguese might be abundant. But he thinks that so much money is put into the implementation process of Portuguese, so it will be hard to let go of it.

He says that it is a problem with the Portuguese and that is that he as a Timorese civil servant cannot speak Portuguese completely. Therefore the meetings with international advisers, needs to be in English, which is unnecessary, he believes.

International participation
Silas thinks that if it were not for the participation from other countries, nothing would have been achieved in the process of developing the country. He thinks that a lot has been achieved so far they are not in the emergency phase anymore, but in the capacity phase of building the country.
Interview guide

Working background
What is your profession more specifically?
What does an ordinary day look like?
For how long have you been working here? Been in Timor Leste?
Tell us about the organisation? How many employees and so forth.

Needs and challenges
If you would have to pick one issue to be primary prioritised regarding the education system, what would that be?
What do you believe is the largest issue within the education system?
How do you think that the interpretation of the needs is differing, between foreigners and Timorese aid workers?
Looking at the current situation, do you think that in comparison to the aid force put into the education system here, that progress has been as good as they could?
Have they been even better?
Good or not so good? What is your view of why it’s not working as good as it could?
When studying the documents about goals and visions of the education system, a lot of the words are about securing the quality;
Do you believe that the teachers here have the skills that they need to keep up the quality of the education?
What do you mean is quality in education?
Do you believe that the government has the same view as you /others do?
Out of your own profession and point of view how would you say that the people are adjusting to the new education system?
Is the interest low or high among the people?
Do you believe that, in the creation of the new education system and policy, enough cultural consideration has been taken towards what people would believe is important?

Language issue
Have the choice of Portuguese as an official language had any impacts on the education situation according to your point of view?
How would you say that this effects the willing to learn among students, younger/older?
What do you think about the Portuguese in a long-term perspective?
Its chances to integrate in the local society?
What’s your opinion about not choosing English instead? From a local – national
development perspective?

**International participation**
What impact do you think that the international organisations have had in forming the
education system?
Did they have too little, enough or too much interference?
Do you think that the use of local language among the international help workers has
any evidence in creating a sustainable education system?
Presentation of the field observations

Below the field observations regarding the education system in Timor Leste will be presented by date, in chronological order.

1. Dili, 2004-06-11
The international society seems to build walls between themselves and the Timorese people. It is clear that people don’t mix, because there are certain restaurants for the Timorese and certain restaurants for the foreign people. The people that work in the “international restaurants“ often are guest workers and only few Timorese works in those restaurants. They speak a developed English, much better than the average Timorese person.

2. Dili, 2004-06-14
Rommi explains that there are 17 different universities in Timor Leste, which makes the co-ordination hard and the quality level suffers. Both teachers and students have deficient knowledge.

3. Dili, 2004-06-15
Met Ming, adviser at the MoECYS, who we used as a pre-test informant for our coming interviews. He was very interested in giving his point of view of our interview guide and to tell us what he believed would be the right thing for us to study. Unfortunately he was not very interested in hearing what we want to achieve. We might meet him later for a real interview.

Rommi has demanded us to separate the different perspectives coming up in the interviews and discussion situations, such as the local perspective, the government perspective, the UN perspective, the adviser perspective and so forth;

You have to be aware and analyse the answers you will get, depending on who is talking. Is it a Timorese person, a UN staff person or somebody in the street? You will get very different stories depending on if the person feels free to talk openly and it will for sure affect the results of your study.
We do not understand why the language issue is so very difficult and sensitive to talk about. Is it because it is Portuguese or is it because one might lose the job if criticising the government’s decision? Is it possible that one can keep face if one is of a different opinion than the government?

5. Dili, 2004-06-20
Many thoughts regarding the UN staff, who are making a good career on behalf of the poor people in Timor Leste. What will happen with the building process of the country when there are new people coming all the time? It does not seem to be any continuity when people are here for six months or one year. Is it possible to achieve any entity?

We discuss how to structure the report and the essay and after checking out the infrastructure and security standard of the country, by talking to people who have been here for long, we abandon the idea to go out in the districts to do a comparing study on the education conditions in the country. We decide to mark of the study to a pure focus on the education on an institutional level.

We visit one of Timor Leste’s 17 universities, Dili University. The class-rooms are spartanly furbished, with chairs (Lut-Västerbotten-style), given by the UN and the student groups are large, with approximately 40 students per teacher. While we stay we do not understand much, this is a natural science school. In one of the class rooms the teacher gets really nervous of our presence. We notice that the students take notes from the teacher’s board prints.

Throughout in the Dili schools, universities and institutions announcements are put on the walls, giving information on things like scholarships, public announcements and so forth. Remarkable is though, that we have not seen many text written in Tetum (the language used by the Timorese citizens). Most of texts are written in Bahasa Indonesia, Portuguese or in English.
In a discussion with Jefa at UNICEF we get to know the difference between what the World Bank is doing in comparison with UNICEF. She explains that the World Bank is creating the hard ware, like building schools and so forth and UNICEF the soft ware in the education system like giving training, writing materials, pens and such.

It was obvious that Jefa, both professionally and personally had her perspective and focus on the younger children. As we told her that we believe that the secondary school- and student generation is the lost one since they do not know Portuguese, and are very old to get started, she disagree. She says;

The most important when building up an entire new school system is to start with the youngest. If you do not have any quality on this level, it will be an ongoing problem up to the higher levels. Therefore we have to focus on the youngest generation in pre- and primary school.

She is of the meaning that it is in the primary school all the resources should be, because there is where the need is the biggest.

9. Dili, 2004-07-03
During wet season the infrastructure is really bad here in Timor Leste, because the heavy rain flushes the roads away. In other words, it means that a trip that takes one hour during dry season can take up to a whole day during wet season. People keep telling us that we are lucky to visit Timor Leste at this season but they warn us about roads that are in extremely bad conditions, after the last floods.

In our interviews with Troy and Jony both of them said that UNICEF has an excellent relationship with the MoECYS and we could not decode if it really was the truth or the political tongue speaking again. We have discussed it back and forth but still we are not sure. It was especially in the way they said it and how quick the answers came that made us suspicious.

11. The mountain Matebian outside Baucau, 2004-07-17
On a mountain climb, talking to a Timorese man, Solo, working in the USAID, he tells us that the only sector that, in his opinion, is not moving in the right direction is the education system. He means that;
the minister of education is not as good and competent as he should be and that he has forgotten the generation of the students. Focus is not on them who is going to get the wheels rolling in the country, but on the younger generation.

He also thinks that many of the people in the government have got too little education to deal with national development.

He also talks about how much he honestly hates the Portuguese people;

I really do hate the Portuguese people, they did not do anything good for Timor Leste, and they only emptied it on resources and made us powerless and weak.

He compares with Great Britain that;

At least they left their colonies with some infrastructure, some school system and some health system.

Portugal he claims did not do anything but educating a small elite of people, less than 100 persons. And it is this small elite group (who escaped the country during the independence struggle) who are at leading positions today. This group knows Portuguese but hardly anyone else. Therefore he means, it is not going to last as an official language.


In our hotel there is a girl, Sara, working every now and then. We had not seen her for a while and we asked her what she had been up to. She explained that she had been studying for an exam and that she is studying to become an engineer. She complains about that there is not enough material to solve the homework or to deepen the knowledge. Everything is so general she claims, and she cannot get any deeper understanding. Therefore the test she had was really easy. She thinks she needs more books and more information translated either into Tetum or into Bahasa Indonesia, since now she cannot fully understand everything in the few English books. She tries to go to the Xanana reading room, one of the few libraries in Dili, to find information and books but often the books are already taken or lend out to someone else.
We are among the Timorese people called Malay, which means foreigner and white. We do not get the grip of if it is said in a nice way to recognise us or if it is rude to say Malay.

The school activity looks different depending on if you are in a city or in the countryside. Different problems and needs occur depending on how the school is located, close to or far from a well for example. Also, the architecture differs and the schools in the countryside often are more primitive, lacking clean water and electricity, with only a hole as the toilet. If they have any sanitary system, it is built from UN aid or some other help organisation, like Canadian Aid, who has built up a pipe operating on the countryside outside of Dili.

15. Alieu, 2004-07-26
On a trip to Alieu we talk to a person, Noozy, just graduated from university. He is very critical about Portuguese as an official language. He means that the teachers do not know the language, and some books are only in Portuguese, which leads to that they cannot solve the tasks given. He adds that;

My sisters and brothers who are in primary school now, they know how to speak Portuguese perfectly well, and so do my parents who learnt it before the Indonesian occupation. For me, it is very difficult since I started too late.

We concluded that after the opening speech in Portuguese, held by the Prime Minister, Mari Alkatiri, the congress continued in English and Tetum (after Alkatiri had left the hall). The foreign minister Jose Ramos-Horta, spoke fluently in English, and the other politicians in Tetum.

17. Dili, 2004-08-01
We experience that the Timorese inhabitants do not have any long term perspective in life. That means they do not seem to realise that if I do good it might result in chances to get a better life in the long run. If you as an example are a cleaning lady you might
get the chance to be the leader of the cleaning team and then later maybe get a better job in the same firm. Everybody only seems to plan one day ahead, focusing on how to get dinner for tonight. This is what we believe the biggest recognition of poverty. You do not see the point of planning for the future.

We also think this correlates with the fact that many stay out of school or drop out too early in Timor Leste. The young generation cannot see the meaning in getting a proper education.

18. Dili, 2004-08-04
Everybody we met in Dili seems to have an agenda of their own. Everybody is also very into sharing his or her thoughts about the destiny of Timor Leste. Many opinions are spilled over us but not so many seems to have the ability to realise the whole situation of Timor Leste. Not that we can do it either, since everything is created from scratch right now in this country. People see what everybody else is doing to the country but they do not realise that they themselves are contributing in creating the situation of the country, for both good and bad.

19. Dili, 2004-08-10
In the different interview situations we understand how delicate the language issue really is. The atmosphere changes totally, which we find very interesting. The civil servants do not know how to respond and they try to escape or answer in a politically correct way. No one dare to have an opinion of his or her own.