



# Micronesian Education:

**E** DUCATION in Micronesia follows closely the American pattern. The policy of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands,<sup>1</sup> as Micronesia is more commonly known, has been to foster a free, universal, coeducational public school system from elementary through high school, with advanced opportunities in the trades and professions for those who will benefit.<sup>2</sup> During the past decade this policy has come several steps closer to reality as new ideas and programs have been adopted that have altered the educational scene in the islands.

Micronesia encompasses a vast expanse of some 3 million square miles in the Western Pacific and consists of three major archipelagos, the Marshall, Caroline, and Mariana Islands (excluding Guam, which is an unincorporated territory of the United States). Approximately the size of the Continental United States, the Trust Territory, formerly a Japanese mandate, is now administered by the United States under a 1947 Trusteeship Agreement with the United Nations.

Educational changes came swiftly in the 1960's when a new High Commissioner, after a complete reassessment of needs, decided that a much more rapid pace of development was needed in all phases of the educational

program. This led to the launching of the "accelerated elementary school program," which brought in many more fully qualified stateside teachers to upgrade education in Micronesia.<sup>3</sup>

A teacher training institute, the Micronesian Teacher Education Center (MTEC), was established in Ponape in 1963 to provide additional training for those Micronesian educators who did not qualify for admission to higher institutes of learning and who were long on experience but short on formal training. This institute is operated by the University of Hawaii under a contract with the Trust Territory government. The University is responsible for staffing and for the overall administration of teacher education at MTEC.<sup>4</sup>

Until 1962 the only public school in the territory was the Pacific Islands Central School. At that time the High Commissioner decided that each district should have its own school, and by 1966 Palau, Yap, Truk, Ponape, the Marshalls, and the Marianas each had a full four-year public high school, with additional high schools operating in Ulithi and Kusaie, in the outlying islands of Yap and Ponape respectively.

<sup>3</sup> "America's Neglected Colonial Paradise." *Saturday Evening Post* 237: 24-34; February 29, 1964.

<sup>4</sup> *18th Annual Report to the United Nations on the Administration of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands*. Washington, D.C.: Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966. p. 131.

<sup>1</sup> Only America and Australia, which administers New Guinea, remain trusteeship powers.

<sup>2</sup> Article Six, *Trusteeship Agreement for the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands*. New York: United Nations, 1957. p. 3.

# A Decade of Change



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These initial high schools placed a strong emphasis on college preparatory curricula, which many educators and island leaders felt was a mistake. This oversight has now been remedied with the recent opening of the territory's first vocational education facility, the Micronesian Occupational Center in Koror, Palau. This center is planned as an area vocational school equipped and staffed to serve 500 students from throughout Micronesia on a 12-month basis. It will provide secondary, post-secondary, and in-service training programs and will be coeducational, with a wide range of occupational offerings from cooking to auto mechanics.<sup>5</sup>

## A New Image

The acceleration which started in 1962 continued into the late 1960's. The Trust Territory has received educational funds resulting from inclusion in the Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Public Law 89-10. In 1966, at the request of the Congress of Micronesia, President Johnson sent the first Peace Corps Volunteers to assist in meeting the needs of Micronesia. Their arrival closed the teacher gap by providing a sorely needed supply of teachers in the islands. In the first phase, the volunteers were concentrated in the elementary field,

with volunteers at the secondary level anticipated for the second phase.<sup>6</sup> While it is too early to evaluate their contribution, their presence has injected a new vitality badly needed in the territory.

In 1967, the territory contracted with the Stanford Research Institute to assist in master planning for education and training in Micronesia. Numerous recommendations were made regarding educational structure, private schools, content and organization of elementary, secondary, adult, occupational, and higher education, as well as teacher supply and training. Implementation of its recommendations, the Stanford people felt, would result in substantial savings and efficiency for the educational system. One of the immediate by-products of this report has been the establishment of a second teacher training institute in Palau, with the ultimate goal being several such institutes located in various parts of the territory.<sup>7</sup>

The end of the decade saw a movement toward Micronesianization of the educational system through the replacement of numerous

<sup>6</sup> *The Peace Corps Goes to Micronesia*. Pamphlet prepared by the Peace Corps, Washington, D.C., n.d.

<sup>7</sup> *Planning for Education and Manpower in Micronesia*. Menlo Park, California: Stanford Research Institute, 1967. pp. 1-23.

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<sup>5</sup> Information obtained from a bulletin issued by the Micronesian Occupational Center, June 1969.

American administrators and teachers, with the ideal and ultimate goal being a teaching force of all Micronesians. Pressure by the people, through the Congress of Micronesia and the new High Commissioner,<sup>8</sup> has led to a new image of Micronesia with the rapid and decisive move to place Micronesians in positions of leadership.<sup>9</sup>

Another significant step taken by the Trust Territory government in recent months is the movement toward financial equality of Micronesians having equivalent educational training as their American counterparts. Micronesian salaries have been upgraded with the concept of parity: "Equal pay for equal qualifications and equal work." The new salary schedule starts a Micronesian teacher with a bachelor's degree at \$3,955 per annum, which is estimated to be equal to the take-home pay of an American contract

teacher paid \$5,650. Since Micronesians pay no income tax or social security, this tax factor is taken into account in determining salaries, and accounts for the difference between Micronesian and American salaries as noted in the preceding example.<sup>10</sup>

To implement all of these new programs, vastly increased appropriations have been needed. Since 1962, when reassessment of needs and priorities was first made, legislation has been enacted by the United States Congress which has led to substantial increases in appropriations for Micronesia. In 1962, the increase went from 7½ million dollars to 17½ million. In 1967, this amount rose 25 million dollars and in 1970 reached approximately 50 million dollars.

It is assumed that the decade of the 1960's will be remembered in the territory as the takeoff era in the development of education. □

<sup>8</sup> Edward E. Johnston is the present High Commissioner.

<sup>9</sup> "New Image of Micronesia Taking Shape." *Highlights*, December 15, 1969. p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, Education Department Salary Schedule, November 24, 1969. (Mimeographed.)

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