

# Advantages and disadvantages the wontok system towards the development of papua n...



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Traditionally, the Wantok system was supposed to be used to build strong relationships in a family, tribe or clan. Therefore, the Wantok system can be referred to as a group of people who speak the same language and originate from the same area. It is characterized by a common language, kinship, place of origin, religious or social associations as well as belief in mutual reciprocity. The purpose of this essay is to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the Wantok system and how it helped PNG to develop. I will also discuss how the Wantok system was associated with corruption in Papua New Guinea. This paper will also give an in-depth evaluation of the transformation of Papua New Guinea as an indication of the presence of the Wantok system given the complex economic and political conditions under which the Wantok system was created (De Renzio 2000).

Papua New Guinea has quite a number of languages of about eight hundred and it holds one third of all the languages used in the world. The official language is Tok Pisin, which is derived from English, German and other local languages and it has assisted in giving the Wantok their strong identity. People who belonged to a certain language group recognized one another as the Wantok, which literally means one talk and people living in the same area who speak a common language it later developed for the Wantok system. Informally Wantok means neighbor, a good friend who has a strong social bond and any other person living among them the foreigners who have become friends of the nation. Recently Wantok has included people who come from the same place and it means someone who has lived in Papua New Guinea for some time (Gibson 1998). People who live in Western Australia are also considered as Wantok because they originate from the

same country and they have unique cultures. The use of the word Wantok is respected in Papua New Guinea because it shows the sense of identity and belonging and it is used by Papua New Guineans who live in other states of Australia at personnel, family level and in associations and gatherings.

PNGWA is an example of an association that has adopted the name Wantok and it represents a unique ethnicity, long lasting friendship, unique people that help one another in times of need.

Papua New Guinea has a population of over four million who speak different languages and about 5, 000 people speak the average language. The Wantok system is a larger manifestation of cultural practice and these people share similar background. The Wantok people who speak the same language have a feeling of obligation and they help one another materially and with other needs. Their culture puts emphasis on rites like birth, manhood marriage and even death and they hold celebrations and feast. Wood plays a crucial role in farming and in art, but they have acquired metal tools, but they still produce decorative wood pieces to use in homes and as utensils in the kitchen. In Religion missionaries played a role in converting most of them to Christianity, although some small percentages still hold to their indigenous beliefs. A church is central to the culture of Wantok. The Wantok assist in accumulating the bride price for marriage to take place and also assist with burial expenses, housing and other form of expenditure. The idea of having a family is strong to the Wantok and they give a child to a couple that is unable to have children (IMF 2007).

Working in teams comes with many problems and this has created divisions among the Wantok people particularly in businesses. The division in business <https://assignbuster.com/advantages-and-disadvantages-the-wontok-system-towards-the-development-of-papua-new-guinea-essay-sample/>

is attributed by the fact that there is a large division between the rich and the poor. Politically the Wantok people also experience divisions since they hold different views. The Wantok people are a representative of the unique development of history in Papua New Guinea they played a very important role in introduction of Tok Pisin dictionary which became the standard book that assisted people to read and write (Ketan 2000). Through the dictionary, the people were able to express their national concerns and gave them a voice in political ideas that helped shape their country.

### *Advantages and disadvantages of the Wantok system*

#### *Advantages*

The Wantok system has been able to provide a great deal of benefits to the people. Since it came into existence, hunger has become a thing of the past. It enabled people to share what they have when hunting, fishing or harvesting. This is owed to the fact that each and every member of the community thinks about the needs and wants of another. Sharing and caring are all important benefits to this system as needs are met but everyone in the clan, tribe and family. For example, those people who lack retirement benefits are taken care of by members of the extended and immediate family. The Wantok system also strengthens and solidifies the relationships within the culture. The life experienced through community, exchange and relationships promote high values because the people are able to do almost all the activities together. It promotes a people to people relationship never experienced before and gives a new meaning to the word community (Narakobi 1980). For example when a member of the Wantok system marries

into another tribe, they extend their good virtues and values into that tribe and by so doing they create an honest and solid relationship in the culture. This helps the members of the community to strengthen each other as relationships are the core of the Wantok system. In case a member of the family dies, they come together to show their sympathy by contributing valuable items like food among others. The essence of this system is to provide a strong foundation of every element in their relationships like gardening, hunting and gathering and most importantly to help them in critical issues like tribal fights. Thus a one on one relationship between people is the main component that helps understand this system.

### *Disadvantages*

The negative aspect of the Wantok system has been equated to how cancer destroys a society. Bribery has become a major concern for the Wantok system especially in the modern society because qualifications and merits are not as important as before. As long as people have money, they can get anything and everything that they want. People don't even need qualifications or merits in order to find jobs because as long as they know the right people and grease a few palms, they can get their desired jobs. In the olden days, people had to toil and sweat in order to get what they wanted but nowadays money talks (Rynkiewich 2000). Another matter of great concern is how the Wantok system has been misused as a political shield. This is because a lot of politics get in the way of the progression of a country. Once it is incorporated with the system, it makes the politicians to become corrupt and mismanage public funds. It is through this misused

system that political parties appoint unqualified and undeserving individuals  
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to executive job positions. If political parties worked in alignment with the real Wantok system, then the major goal of serving the country would be achieved affectively.

The system enables different political parties to increased nepotism as one may appoint a person for a position that they do not know anything about. Politics are governed by tribal, ethical or clan loyalties. All these reasons were quite significant to the development of PNG because it was able to bring a lot of change to the country, either positive change or negative change (Chin, 2000). All in all, change is always good because it helped to facilitate modernization and still keep its unity ties even after the departure of the colonialists. Since the independence of PNG, corruption has had a major impact on the development process of the country (de Renzio 2000). This is because energy and funding were diverted away from PNGs developmental plans and national goals leading the country to face very harsh economic times. Corruption is quickly choking the country and bringing it to its knees as the government pretends to put up inquiries to deal with the numerous corruption scandals. This corruption has reduced the growth rate of the country as most of the aid money goes to politicians foreign bank accounts. Corruption has also led to favoritism and tribalism in the court system causing innocent souls to suffer the consequences.

### *Conclusion*

The Wantok system has had a great significance to the development of PNG because it shows how the existing social capital that is based on cooperation and trust in a group has both negative and positive effects on the functioning

of the group. The nature of the Wantok system as based on the colonial history of the country and the institutional framework influences a great group behavior that promotes the vertical linkages of patronage. Give its unique culture, the Wantok is quite instrumental in understanding and strengthening of the working relationships between individuals.

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