



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

FORUM EDUCATION MINISTERS' MEETING

Nuku'alofa, Tonga
24-26 March 2009

OUTCOMES DOCUMENT

Ministers of Education of the Pacific Islands Forum met at the Fa'onelua Convention Centre, Nuku'alofa, Tonga from 24 to 26 March 2009 to consider issues related to the review of the implementation and enhancement of the Forum Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP) and to deliberate on the meeting theme of Partnerships in Education.

Official Opening

2. Her Royal Highness Princess Salote Mafile'o Pilolevu Tuita was the guest of honour at the official opening of the 7th Forum Education Ministers' Meeting at the Fa'onelua Convention Centre, Nuku'alofa, Tonga, on 24 March 2009.
3. In her opening address she emphasised that good education in all island countries and in the entire Pacific region, is a matter of high personal interest and concern for her; that access to good education should be a national priority in all Forum members countries and she looked forward to the delivery of a better educational system in all Pacific island countries.
4. Her Royal Highness highlighted the problem of violence in and among schools as an emerging issue that needed to be immediately addressed.

Opening Session

5. The meeting was chaired by the Honourable Reverend Dr Tevita Hala Palefau, Minister of Education, Women's Affairs and Culture in Tonga. In attendance were the Prime Minister and Minister of Education from Cook Islands and Ministers from Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu and a senior official from Australia. Observers comprised representatives of Tokelau, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment (SPBEA), University of the South Pacific (USP), PRIDE Project (Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of Basic Education), European Union (EU), UNESCO Office for the Pacific States, UNICEF, the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank and the Council of Pacific Education (COPE).
6. The Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Tuiloma Neroni Slade, thanked the Government of the Kingdom of Tonga for hosting the meeting. He also thanked the Government for their generous hosting of the official opening of the meeting the previous evening. He noted that the cultural performances were

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expressions of the traditions of the region and what makes the Pacific unique; they also set the context for education. He thanked Her Royal Highness Princess Salote Mafile'o Pilolevu Tuita for her guidance and support expressed during the official opening.

7. In his opening address, the Secretary General noted that the global economic crisis poses challenges in all sectors of development and education in the region would inevitably be affected. In this context, there must be planning for more efficient use of scarce resources.

8. He told the meeting that the 2008 Review of the Forum Basic Education Action Plan, which covered 15 countries in the region, identified many challenges that Pacific Island Countries (PICs) face in the delivery of education. Despite these differences in the countries reviewed, they are experiencing many of the same challenges, and the Review identified many similar priorities for further development of the education sector in the region. The Secretary General further stated that the Ministers would decide on a new strategic direction for regional education in the form of a revised framework. He said this new framework called the 'Pacific Education Development Framework' articulates these challenges and priorities and provides a platform for partners to coordinate and assist countries.

9. The Secretary General confirmed that the Forum Secretariat was happy to be able to play its part in creating an environment where many stakeholders are able to report on their work in education in the region and was pleased with the depth of partnership and collaboration amongst key education stakeholders in the region in the planning and implementation of key regional education initiatives.

Review of the Forum Basic Education Action Plan

10. Ministers heard a presentation on the key findings of the review of the Forum Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP) and associated regional processes, which was mandated by the Forum Education Ministers Meeting (FEEdMM) in 2007.

11. The Review found that despite differences in social, historical, geographical, demographic and economic contexts across the region, there is significant commonality in the broad challenges facing education and priorities for education sector development. Examples of common issues were securing sustainable resources in light of the world economic crisis, ensuring the quality and expansion of the education sector and the need to ensure a supply of trained teachers to deliver quality education and reaching remote and isolated areas.

12. The Review further found that countries and regional partners were supportive of the need for a regional education framework and supported a revision of the Forum Basic Education Action Plan that would retain its key components and include emerging issues and priorities.

13. The Review found that there was limited knowledge of FBEAP, its purpose, its context, its specific scope and coverage across the region. It was further noted that despite current limited knowledge and usage, countries and regional partners indicated their support and need for a regional education plan or framework. In terms of a revised document the Review supported the need for a revised Vision statement that had strong ownership amongst member countries.

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14. In assessing the impact of PRIDE, the Review found that first, the focus and energy of PRIDE has been greater at the national and sub-project level than at regional level; and second, the impact at national level has varied significantly between countries. While the Review found that while the need for a strong regional approach to education is not uniform across the region, there is consensus that there should be a regional initiative to follow on from PRIDE.

15. The Review confirmed the need for further regional efforts to follow on from the PRIDE project and proposed three different models for the consideration of Ministers.

16. In the analysis of the value of the Forum Education Ministerial Meeting process the Review found a widespread view that FEdMM is a worthwhile process, and should be continued and that there was consensus around aspects of the process that could be improved. The review further noted that aspects of the process most valued by Ministers and country officials were the opportunity to be a part of a regional benchmarking process and the opportunity provided through the FEdMM to broaden knowledge of regional and global education issues and developments.

17. The Review also found that a well structured FEdMM process can contribute significantly to capacity building and strengthening of educational leadership within the region. The dialogue with other countries and development partners and exposure to issues in a regional/international context afforded through the FEdMM contributes significantly to improved knowledge and strategy at country level.

18. The Review further found that national governments of Pacific Island Countries depend on support and expertise from regional organisations and providers of technical assistance and support in education. The Review also found that countries were seeking improved coordination and harmonisation of such technical assistance. While significant harmonisation efforts are already underway among a number of development partners and regional agencies, such as the CROP agencies, more is desired.

19. In their discussions at the Retreat of the Review of the Forum Basic Education Action Plan, Forum Education Ministers noted the recommendations of the Review and came to the following conclusions:-

- (a) Agreed on a refreshed Vision statement: **‘Quality Education for All in Pacific Island countries’** noting that it provides clarity, simplicity and a clear link to the Education For All and Millennium Development Goals;
- (b) Endorsed the revised regional education plan to be known as the Pacific Education Development Framework (PEDF), recognising it as a living framework document which can be enhanced as required; (attached as Annex A)
- (c) Agreed that Forum Education Ministers should continue to meet every 12 to 18 months and, as may be appropriate, to arrange meetings back-to-back with other regional meetings, in particular with meetings of the University of the South Pacific Council;

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- (d) Agreed on Pacific Heads of Education systems providing the principal role of screening items for the Forum Education Ministers Meeting (FEEdMM) agenda;
- (e) Requested the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat to continue the development of the Action Register for more effective follow-up and monitoring of FEEdMM decisions and for the FEEdMM to be kept informed of progress;
- (f) Reconfirmed the special value of the Ministerial retreat as a key part of the FEEdMM agenda;
- (g) Agreed that the host country should, as far as practicable, provide the Chair for FEEdMM meetings; and
- (h) Considered the recommended three models for a future regional initiative to follow on and succeed PRIDE and agreed that the third model C incorporating the strengths of each of the other two models A and B would be the most appropriate to be adopted.

PRIDE Project Report December 2007 to February 2009

20. Ministers noted that the PRIDE project is the major vehicle for implementing the Forum Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP)¹ and that the Forum Ministers of Education have a special role at the apex of the governance structure of PRIDE.

21. Ministers heard the presentation from PRIDE on its key achievements and challenges in the key result areas to date including the plan of priorities for the next ten months. PRIDE reported that all countries now have education strategic plans with the Federated States of Micronesia having developed four separate state plans and that several countries have engaged in developing their second strategic plan since the inception of the Project.

22. Ministers were informed that PRIDE is managing 140 subprojects in 15 countries. Ministers expressed their appreciation of PRIDE and offered their assistance where possible to make the implementation of subprojects a success. .

23. Ministers also heard the challenges PRIDE was facing in the implementation of some projects at the national level and reasons for these challenges.

24. Regarding PRIDE, Ministers:

- (a) noted the progress of PRIDE; and
- (b) agreed to continue to provide support for the PRIDE Project; and
- (c) noted with appreciation the improved effectiveness and efficiency of the project since the 2007 Forum Education Ministers Meeting.

¹ The FBEAP will remain the background document to PRIDE until the closure of the PRIDE Project, and for the transition period will co-exist with the revised regional education framework (PEDF).

Regional Education Initiatives Implemented by Development Partners

25. Ministers were reminded that while PRIDE is the main vehicle for implementing the FBEAP, many development partners also implement important parts of it in a range of areas. Development partners presented reports on various activities implemented under the FBEAP.

Education for Sustainable Development

26. The meeting received an update from the University of the South Pacific (USP) on the implementation of the Action Plan on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) that was endorsed by Education Ministers in 2007. There has been considerable activity on this subject by a range of partners including the University of the South Pacific, UNESCO, SPREP and some non-governmental organisations.

27. Ministers noted that the main focus of the Action Plan is to support capacity development through formal education as well as non-formal education, targeting individual, institutional and systemic capacity, thus it is aimed at developing appropriate governance policies and structures; the capacity of individuals; government agencies at all levels; non-governmental organisations; and local communities in order to empower them to assume responsibilities and acquire values, behaviours, technical knowledge, skills and decision-making abilities to create sustainable future.

28. The Action Plan is intended to serve as a guide for the development of national Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) action plans or for incorporating ESD within existing sustainable development and/or education plans. Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) will be able to use the Action Plan to identify their ESD priorities and develop national responses aligned to the regional document. Regional and national level indicators will have to be developed for monitoring and evaluating ESD implementation.

29. Ministers noted that an important aspect of the Action Plan is to the acknowledgement that ESD (and sustainability/sustainable development) will be conceptualised differently, depending on the socio-cultural, economic, ecological and political contexts, as well as individual aspirations.

30. Ministers:

- a) noted the progress made by USP in trying to facilitate ESD activities with partner stakeholders since 2007;
- b) reaffirmed the role of USP in coordinating Education for Sustainable Development/Decade Education for Sustainable Development (ESD/DESD) activities in the region;
- c) reaffirmed support and commitment of partner stakeholders with regard to the coordination and implementation of ESD/DESD activities in the region; and
- d) considered and endorsed the immediate actions to be undertaken by the coordinating body to progress ESD in the region.

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Monitoring and Evaluation

31. Ministers heard a presentation from SPBEA and UNESCO on the two following initiatives under Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E): Education Sector-wide Monitoring and Evaluation Initiative and Monitoring Literacy and Numeracy.
32. Ministers noted the importance of Monitoring and Evaluation to education systems and the need to strengthen education information and evaluation activities and the need to find new ways of working together in a more collaborative and efficient manner between governments and development partners.
33. Ministers heard presentations from SPBEA and UNESCO on the background and current status of work being done in the area of monitoring national literacy, numeracy and life-skills. This work comprises one aspect of the wider monitoring and evaluation initiative being delivered by partners including UNESCO, UNICEF and SPBEA as endorsed by the Forum Education Ministers in 2006 on the regional benchmarks for literacy, numeracy and life skills.
34. Ministers further heard that regional development partners are willing to find new ways of working together to assist countries' effort in making further progress towards Education For All (EFA) through initiatives such as developing and strengthening national Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems in education.
35. Ministers acknowledged that with other development partners, SPBEA, UNESCO and UNICEF are developing the regional monitoring instruments and that these will be trialled before the end of the year.
36. Ministers confirmed the strategic importance of monitoring and evaluation for countries and they congratulated SPBEA and UNESCO on their work on literacy and numeracy.
37. The possibility of developing a regional index on literacy and numeracy was raised. UNESCO responded that while a regional index is technically possible, at the present time work is being conducted at the national level.
38. Ministers
 - a) noted progress on and agreed to continue to support regional work in monitoring and evaluation by development partners and countries; and
 - b) noted progress on and continue to support regional work on monitoring of literacy, numeracy and life-skills.

Pacific Regional Qualifications Register (PRQR)

39. SPBEA provided an overview of progress on the development of the Pacific Regional Qualifications Register. It noted that the PRQR will take international standards into account and will work with national qualifications mechanisms. The PRQR will cover all areas from primary, secondary, technical and vocational education and training and university qualifications. The PRQR will provide a mechanism for comparability and portability of qualifications.
40. Ministers noted with appreciation the support of AusAID for the development of

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the Pacific Regional Qualifications Register.

Regional Initiatives in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

41. Ministers received a presentation from Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) on a move towards structured regional support for the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) sector as has been comparatively weak compared to the assistance available for basic education and other sub-sectors of education.

42. Ministers were further informed that the establishment of a TVET sub-committee was agreed upon by Heads of SPC, SPBEA, USP and PIFS to progress the coordination of TVET at the regional level.

43. Ministers noted the update from SPC on regional initiatives that look at a regional coordinating framework for TVET especially to create enabling conditions for sustainable economic growth and to meet challenges of a rapidly growing young and inadequately skilled population.

44. Ministers stressed that SPC should be looking at strategic ways of supporting TVET in order to add value to national efforts.

45. Ministers

- a) noted the progress made on TVET at the regional level and SPC's contribution especially in support of PATVET and a coordinated approach to TVET;
- b) supported the regional TVET strategies that contribute to the implementation of the Pacific Plan; and
- c) endorsed the ADB/PIFS Skilling the Pacific findings as a key reference document to mobilising funds for the immediate term.

Entrepreneurship Education and Financial Education Curriculum in Samoa

46. Ministers heard a presentation from the Samoan Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (MESC), on the experience of the UNDP Pacific Centre's pilot project "Introducing Entrepreneurship and Financial Education to Curriculum (EFEC) in Pacific Island Countries".

47. Ministers noted that the purpose of the project is to: (a) develop and integrate EFEC into the school curriculum and (b) create frameworks of EFEC for integrated learning within the national governments' education ministries and teachers' training colleges.

48. Ministers further noted that the overall objective of the EFEC project is to provide programmes and learning opportunities that can cultivate a growing understanding of the value of entrepreneurial activity and of the contribution that people can make both personally and collectively to businesses, to the economy and to society.

49. The Samoa representative stated that this was a successful and exciting programme that had garnered considerable interest and that UNDP was ready to extend it to other Pacific island countries.

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50. Ministers:

- a) noted the considerable progress made by the Samoan MESC, with the technical support of the Young Enterprise Trust (NZ) and UNDP Pacific Centre, and acknowledged the lessons learned; and
- (b) endorsed the following actions to be undertaken in order to support the replication and adaptation of the EFEC to other Forum Island Countries:
 - (i) The results of the evaluation of the Samoa EFEC, that is to be carried out in May 2009, be shared with Ministries of Education in FICs and to other regional stakeholders and development partners;
 - (ii) That UNDP Pacific Centre, working in partnership with PIFS, SPBEA, Young Enterprise Trust (NZ) and other regional and development partners, assist FICs that are committed to implementing EFEC to assess their readiness and to assist in preparing a full implementation plan and budget to enable individual FICs to allocate and/or mobilize resources for national implementation; and
 - (iii) That a regional approach to the implementation and funding of EFEC be explored to achieve economies through pooling of project management expertise, technical assistance and financial resources.

Regional Standards for Teachers and Principals

51. Ministers heard a presentation from SPBEA and UNESCO on proposed regional standards for teachers and principals. This was discussed at the regional consultation of Pacific heads of education in October 2008 where it was agreed that given the crucial importance of teachers in improving the quality of education, such regional standards should be developed.

52. Ministers also heard that teachers in Early Childhood, Primary and Secondary sectors of formal education are relied upon to successfully inspire pupils to maximise their potential and strive for quality outcomes.

53. Ministers requested that the University of the South Pacific should be included in this process as it is a major provider of teacher training.

54. Ministers endorsed and agreed:

- (a) that the list of professional teacher standards developed by the Pacific Heads of education systems in consultation with development partners be adopted as the Pacific Regional Standards for Teachers;
- (b) that these standards be considered by countries as the minimum set of standards for teachers, allowing for each country to add additional standards as they see fit to reflect national situations;
- (c) that development partners; in particular SPBEA and UNESCO, work closely with countries to develop a strategy for collecting information that each country could use to monitor the performance of teachers against each standard and develop a plan for improving on such performance; and

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- d) that an approach similar to that adopted for teacher standards is used for developing standards for school principals and head-teachers.

Report by UNESCO on ‘Our Pacific Heritage.’

55. Ministers received a presentation from the UNESCO Office for the Pacific States on the features of the Pacific heritage and proposed a way forward in trying to preserve and at the same time promote and transmit these aspects to future Pacific generations.

56. Ministers heard that the heritage of any society includes cultural aspects, both tangible and intangible, natural, including biodiversity, as well as social values, traditions, customs, practices, artistic expressions, languages and other aspects of human activity that a society considers important to be preserved and that needs to be passed on, so that future generations can learn about their past, make sense of their present and ensure that future generations can also enjoy the same privilege.

57. Ministers noted that in the past, the transmission of these aspects from one generation to another have mainly been carried out verbally. With the impact of globalisation and the rapidly changing structure in the fabric and values of our societies, other methods of cultural preservation need to be considered to avoid the loss of heritage.

58. Ministers noted the UNESCO Our Pacific Heritage Resource kit bringing together important aspects of the various sectors and targeting the aspirations of the Pacific ESD framework of empowering Pacific peoples through all forms of locally relevant and culturally appropriate education and learning to make decisions and take actions to meet current and future social, cultural, environmental and economic needs and aspirations.

59. Ministers:-

- (a) noted the paper on “Our Pacific Heritage”;
- (b) endorsed the initiative “Our Pacific Heritage” as a strategy for implementing the Pacific ESD Framework in member countries willing to be involved; and
- (c) requested UNESCO to work together with any other agency, development partners or CSOs interested in working together on implementing the initiative.

Proposal to Establish a Consultation Protocol in Relation to the Forum Education Ministers’ Meeting

60. Ministers heard a presentation from a representative of the Pacific Heads of Education on a proposal for a possible Forum Education Ministers Meeting (FEEdMM) Protocol to recognise the forum known as Consultation of the Pacific Heads of Education Systems and to establish a protocol for setting the agenda for the FEEdMM.

61. Ministers acknowledged the ongoing and important role of and the work of the

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Pacific Heads of Education Systems in the context of the FEdMM process.

62. Ministers recalled their decision already arrived at during their retreat that the meeting of the Pacific Heads of Education Systems be given the role of screening items for the FEdMM and considered that this was sufficient on the matter.

Closure

63. Ministers agreed to the proposed release of papers.

64. Ministers agreed that their next meeting would take place in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea in late 2010 under the new Forum Secretariat meeting policy guidelines.

65. Ministers acknowledged with appreciation the excellent chairmanship of the meeting by the Honourable Reverend Dr Tevita Hala Palefau, Minister of Education, Women's Affairs and Culture of Tonga. The Ministers also thanked the Government of the Kingdom of Tonga for its excellent hosting arrangements.