



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

FORUM BASIC EDUCATION ACTION PLAN – 2005 REVIEW

Apia, Samoa
23-24 May 2005

Preamble

Ministers of Education of the Pacific Islands Forum met at the University of the South Pacific's Alafua Campus, Apia, Samoa, on 23 and 24 May 2005, to consider issues related to implementation and enhancement of the Forum Basic Education Action Plan 2001.

2. The meeting was chaired by the Honourable Teima Onorio, Minister of Education, Youth and Sports and Vice President of Kiribati, with the Honourable Michael Laimo, Minister of Education for Papua New Guinea serving as Vice-Chair. Also in attendance was the Prime Minister from the Cook Islands, and Ministers from Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, together with representatives of Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and Tonga. Observers comprised representatives of New Caledonia, Tokelau, the Commonwealth of Learning, the South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment, the University of the South Pacific, the National University of Samoa, the Pacific Association of Technical and Vocational Education and Training, UNESCO, UNICEF, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, the European Union and JICA.

Opening

3. The Deputy Secretary General of the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat, Mr Iosefa Maiava, welcomed participants to the meeting, noting that it was the fourth meeting of Forum education ministers and that there was good progress to report on regarding implementation of the Forum Basic Education Action Plan.

4. The Minister of Education for Samoa, Honourable Fiamē Naomi Mata'afa, welcomed participants to the meeting on behalf of the Government of Samoa. She noted that progress has been made since the first Ministerial meeting and requested that all countries take ownership of PRIDE.

Keynote address

5. Sir John Daniel, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), presented the keynote address. Sir John acknowledged the positive input of Pacific membership of the board of COL, in particular the Honourable Fiamē Mata'afa. He noted that development equated with people expanding the freedoms that people enjoy and that technology can potentially contribute greatly to this process. He advanced the notion of 'TVET for All', which

could particularly benefit those who have not had the advantage of completing an education. Sir John outlined the work of COL in the Pacific as well as new initiatives such as the Virtual University for Small States and work in health and literacy and livelihoods. He further noted that PATVET is a powerful network to encourage networking and sharing of resources,

Review of the Implementation of the Forum Basic Education Action Plan

6. Ministers reviewed the Forum Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP) and noted the steps taken for its implementation at both national and regional levels. It was noted that most elements of the FBEAP are contained in national education systems although there is substantial variation in access to information communication technology throughout the region. Areas where member governments could increase their involvement include early childhood education and education for children with special needs.

7. At the regional level, it was noted that while the main vehicle for implementing the FBEAP is the PRIDE project, initiatives have been taken in several other areas including disability and special education; TVET, language policy and the regional qualifications register.

8. Ministers agreed to:

- a. Note the progress on the implementation of the FBEAP nationally and regionally, especially the PRIDE Project;
- b. Note the results of stocktake report on the implementation of the FBEAP at a national level;
- c. Note the capacity of the FBEAP to act as a powerful vehicle for inspiring collaborative efforts to identify, document and apply innovative Pacific responses to the challenge of ensuring that basic education serves as a critical element in building equity in education for development;
- d. Agree that the FBEAP be highlighted in all relevant discussions on social issues undertaken around the region;
- e. Further endorse the current initiatives underway to develop teacher education courses in Special Needs Education at the University of the South Pacific

Review of the Implementation of the Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of Basic Education (PRIDE) Project

9. Ministers reviewed the progress on PRIDE, noting its substantial achievements since the last Education Ministers' meeting.

10. Ministers reiterated that the FBEAP was the principal policy in education for the region and that PRIDE was the major vehicle for implementing this policy.

11. Ministers noted with concern the slow progress in the development and submission of sub-projects and especially of the release of national sub-project funds and acknowledged that countries will need to be more proactive in the submission of national sub-projects for funding assistance.

12. Ministers agreed to:

- (a) Note the progress of PRIDE.
- (b) Endorse the benchmarks for education strategic plans.
- (c) Note that support for TVET could be provided through PRIDE

The Pacific Plan

13. Ministers heard a presentation on the draft Pacific Plan that is currently under development, noting in particular how education relates to the overall economic and social development of the individual country and the region.

14. Ministers noted that the education sector is ahead of the Pacific Plan with regards to sectoral policy and planning as is highlighted by the Forum Basic Education Action Plan.

15. Ministers expressed the view that education should be given greater prominence in the Pacific Plan and should not just be seen as a prerequisite to achieving other areas of the Plan. It was recommended that the FBEAP become an integral part of the Pacific Plan. It was noted that education is increasingly seen as a tradable commodity, which is regretted.

Implementing TVET

16. Ministers noted the TVET activities currently underway in Fiji and the Solomon Islands, in particular the development of TVET policy in the Solomon Islands.

The Pacific Association of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (PATVET)

17. In 2002, the Ministers welcomed the formation of PATVET and agreed to recognise PATVET as having a key contribution to make in reducing poverty in our countries.

18. PATVET reported to Ministers in 2004 and again in 2005, proposing recommendations that emanated from a regional workshop in TVET.

19. Ministers agreed to:

- (a) Note the progress achieved in moving the TVET agenda forward at both the national and regional level in the Pacific to date,
- (b) Acknowledge the lead role by PATVET in moving the TVET agenda forward,
- (c) Acknowledge the commitment by a large number of national, regional and international partners to work with PATVET to achieve the goals set by the Education Ministers in the FBEAP in relation to TVET.
- (d) Note that while there has been some progress in TVET in some countries since the launch of the FBEAP 2001, it is recognised that additional financial resources for TVET are still needed.

- (e) Champion the role, status and development of TVET at the national level in Pacific Island countries and help mobilise resources to enhance the wider understanding and acceptance of TVET in the region,
- (f) Endorse the planned development of a regional Inventory of TVET institutions in the Pacific in 2005,
- (g) Endorse the planned development of the regional Qualifications Register after the completion of the Inventory of TVET institutions, and subsequently the regional Qualifications Framework,
- (h) Strongly urging the SPC to accommodate the request to host the PATVET Secretariat,
- (i) Confirm the importance of TVET in the context of the FBEAP and agreed to encourage greater support for TVET through regional programmes including PRIDE, SPC, and the Forum Secretariat among others.

Entrepreneurship Education

20. The Forum Basic Education Action Plan refers to the need to enhance employment opportunities and entrepreneurial education is seen as a part of this process. Ministers heard that entrepreneurial education has the potential to enhance job creation, thus alleviating the region-wide problem of youth unemployment.

21. Ministers noted the need for integration of entrepreneurship education into the overall education curriculum.

22. Ministers

- (a) Agreed that at the regional level:
 - Further research be undertaken in order to progress the introduction of EE into schools in FICs;
 - The Forum Secretariat seek and develop a regional resource base for EE that can provide technical assistance to Members particularly through ILO, PRIDE and COL, among others. This could include information sharing mechanisms such as a website as well as training for teachers.
- (b) Noted that at the national level, countries could:
 - Develop policy, curriculum and related teaching materials on the basis of locally conducted research, with regional assistance where required;
 - Develop meaningful partnerships between Ministries of Education and the private sector.
 - Seek assistance from other regional and international agencies in developing and strengthening EE.
 - Conduct further research by local researchers in order to progress the introduction of EE into schools.

UNESCO Skills Development Project

23. Ministers heard a presentation on the regional project that encourages unemployed young people to develop indigenous skills to earn livelihoods.

Pre-University Courses

24. Ministers expressed concern that the USP had not accepted several students who had passed the South Pacific Form Seven Examination, whereas those who had sat the USP's Foundation course appeared to gain easier access to the university. There is frustration over this issue as it has been ongoing for some time and has not been resolved.

25. Ministers recommended that the Forum Secretariat commission an independent body to conduct an independent benchmarking exercise to resolve the issue of the relative standard of both examinations and their grading systems.

Pacific Protocol for Teacher Recruitment

26. The issue of a possible protocol for teacher recruitment was raised as smaller FICs will continue to need to recruit teachers from within the region. It was noted that the Commonwealth has recently developed such a protocol. A Pacific protocol could be based on this, but should be more relevant to the needs of the region. Such a protocol would provide some measure of protection for teachers who are recruited within the region. While many teachers are recruited under bilateral arrangements, such a protocol could provide a check-list of areas to be covered.

27. Ministers requested the Forum Secretariat to prepare a draft protocol for the next Forum Education Ministers meeting.

Other Issues

28. UNESCO briefed Ministers on the International Decade on Education for Sustainable Development.

29. UNICEF briefed Ministers on its Life Skills Programme for Primary and Secondary Schools.

30. The Forum Secretariat, on behalf of the Asian Development Bank, briefed Ministers on the ADB's regional education strategy and its proposed regional study on skills development. Ministers:

- Endorsed the proposed ADB regional study on skills development.
- Agreed that any projects arising out of the study be supported in the form of grants from the ADB and other development partners.

Next Meeting

31. Ministers agreed that Education Ministers convene their fifth meeting in October 2006.

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
Apia, Samoa
24 May 2005