



12TH FORUM EDUCATION MINISTERS MEETING

ICT Video Conference Room 1, University of the South Pacific, Laucala Campus, Fiji

13-14 April 2021

SESSION TWO: THE STATUS OF PACIFIC EDUCATION REPORT 2020

(PacREF(21) FEdMM.04)

(Theme: Building Resilience in Pacific Education Systems)

(The paper written by SPC-EQAP in collaboration with UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) provides the status of Pacific education through various indicators.)

Title/Topic	The Status of Pacific Education Report 2020
Presenting Agency/Unit	SPC/EQAP
Purpose of the Brief	The purpose of the paper is to highlight the status of Pacific education through various indicators under each of the PacREF Four Policy Areas.

Summary:

The Status of Pacific Education 2020 is the second regional report on the education sector in the Pacific Region. This follows the initial report in 2018 which was presented to the Ministers at the 2018 FEdMM. The report presents a sector analysis based on internationally comparable statistics, including SDG 4 indicators, for each of the PacREF priority areas. Below is a summary of the key education indicators presented:

- **Children out of school**

Across the Pacific, relatively few primary school-aged children are not enrolled in a school. The rates of out-of-school children has been falling over the last three years. This is largely due to the free and compulsory nature of schooling and to the widely shared value placed on schooling. However, some Pacific countries face serious equity issues in terms of delivering educational services to children in remote and isolated areas and islands.

- **ECE participation**

The majority of Pacific children benefit from participation in some form of ECE. The percentage of children that enrol in the year prior to primary education is increasing annually. The mode of ECE provision varies across the region, from early childhood development and care services to pre-schools and kindergartens. Governments provide policy and regulatory frameworks to support ECE services. Some governments fund ECE teachers' salaries and provide ECE facilities and materials.

- **Student completion**

The majority of Pacific children attend and complete the last year of primary education. The trend has been slightly increasing over the last five years. Policies of automatic promotion are contributing factors to the high completion rates. Automatic promotion retains students in the system and lessens the occurrence of children dropping out between grades. Secondary completion rates are universally lower than primary completion. Reasons include: insufficient secondary places in some countries due to geographic factors; alternative pathways for TVET; and examination-based barriers to secondary enrolment.

- **Literacy and numeracy**

There have been significant improvements in numeracy and literacy for primary students over the last three PILNA assessments. Most Year 6 students who were assessed are proficient in literacy (63%) and numeracy (83%). Two-thirds of assessed students met the regional literacy proficiency levels. Eight out of 10 assessed students met the expected regional numeracy standard. Still, too many Pacific children are still not learning to read or comprehend what they read and are unable to write at expected levels. The fact that some children do not achieve the expected curriculum outcomes for literacy is a critical system shortfall.

- **Teacher supply**

The regional supply of teachers in primary and secondary education continues to be sufficient to meet the regional benchmarks for student-teacher ratios. At primary level, there is a continuing decline in the number of students per teacher and the overall ratio is currently 24 students per teacher. There has been an increase in the overall student-teacher ratio in secondary education with an average ratio of 15 students per teacher. There is a high percentage of trained teachers in primary education, but lower percentages in secondary education. Disaggregation of the student-teacher ratio by location is important to show the extent of overcrowding that is common in urban schools and in rural schools with multi-grade teaching.

- **School attendance**

Household surveys allow for disaggregation of school attendance, by gender, urban/rural location, and wealth quintiles. In the Pacific region more than one in four children are not regularly attending school. Similar proportion of boys and girls are not attending school especially children living in rural areas. Children from poorer households are much less likely to be attending school. The regular participation in schooling by vulnerable populations, especially for children with disabilities, is an important policy issue that needs regular monitoring.

The Ministers are invited to note:

- the findings of the Status of Pacific Education 2020 report and the implications for education policy.
- the need for up-to-date and accurate data on Pacific education for regional and international monitoring, including PacREF and SDG 4.
- the report will be published and data released on the Pacific Data Hub to inform regional development partners and international stakeholders.

Decision requested

Ministers are invited to:

- (i) **consider** sharing their annual national education reports for the purpose of reporting at regional and global forums; and
- (ii) **agree** to a mechanism to collecting annual data for the purpose of publishing regular Status of Pacific Education Reports

Minister's Position	
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