



**PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT**

PIFS(09) FEDMN.09

**FORUM EDUCATION MINISTERS' MEETING**

Nuku'alofa, Tonga

24-26 March 2009

**SESSION FIVE**

**REGIONAL SUPPORT TO TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL  
EDUCATION & TRAINING (TVET) – A PROGRESS REPORT**

This paper was prepared by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) for the information of Ministers.



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### **REGIONAL SUPPORT TO TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION & TRAINING (TVET) – A PROGRESS REPORT<sup>1</sup>**

#### **Purpose**

Structured regional support for the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) sector has been comparatively weak compared to the assistance available for basic education and other sub sectors of education. This paper is to update Forum Education Ministers on regional initiatives that look at a regional coordinative 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.

#### **Background**

2. The 2001 Forum Ministers of Education declaration and the adoption of the Forum Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP) included a need for the status of TVET to be raised and reflected in national education policies and plans.

3. Likewise, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) 2001 Conference which identified human resources development (HRD) as SPC's core business requested the Secretariat (SPC) to develop a mechanism for better coordination of TVET in the region thereby articulating the dual role SPC plays as a direct provider of TVET across all the technical programmes under its jurisdiction and in helping to develop a mechanism for better coordination of TVET in the region.

4. The Pacific Plan 2004 (identified under activity 7.1 and 7.2) called on harmonising approaches on the education sector and investigating the potential for expanding regional technical and vocational education training programmes in order to support the FBEAP, labour market demands and economic security. In the same year, Forum Ministers of Education endorsed the development of the Regional Qualifications Register (RQR).

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was prepared by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC).

8. In 2005, Forum Ministers of Education requested SPC to host the Pacific Association of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (PATVET) secretariat, in order to kick-start the development of a mechanism for better coordination of TVET in the Pacific via the establishment of a comprehensive inventory of all TVET institutions in all Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICT) that would provide details including courses offered, course descriptors and qualifications awarded; as part of work towards the establishment of a regional qualifications register; and eventually the establishment of a regional qualifications framework.

9. SPC has hosted and funded the PATVET secretariat (established in 2002) since April 2006.

7. In 2007, the SPC's governing council approved the formation of a new TVET programme under SPC and directed the Secretariat to seek strategic discussions with PATVET, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and the University of the South Pacific (USP) regarding the organisation of an effective regional support framework for TVET in the Pacific.

10. The findings of the Asian Development Bank/PIFS (2008) *Skilling the Pacific* Study with priorities for regional interventions highlighted the need for strategic investments in TVET.

11. Priority on skills development was also mandated from the Forum Economic Ministers Meeting (FEMM) and Forum Trade Ministers Meeting (FTMM) to support Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA) efforts in trade in services agreement covering Temporary Movement of Natural Persons (TMNP) commitments to expand labour markets for Forum Members; and affirmed at the Forum Labour Mobility Roundtable in June 2008.

12. The Forum Ministers of Education endorsed the Pacific Teacher Recruitment Protocol in 2006. This contributes to the development of a regulatory/policy framework to facilitate labour mobility (e.g. teachers) across the region. A call for the establishment of a regional professional registration network of Pacific teachers was also made in a meeting of Teaching and Public Service Commissions in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea in March 2007.

13. Recently, to highlight the economic imperative of TVET training, Forum Leaders through the Forum Communiqué (2008) on Education and Human Resource Development called on PIFS, SPBEA, USP and SPC to supplement national capacity and support regional action with a particular focus on (amongst others): *'supporting the training of people and their possible pursuit of economic opportunity across the region including through improved quality and access to technical and vocational education and training, promoting greater attention to building lifeskills and other forms of formal and non-formal education to assist Pacific Island children prepare for their futures.'*

## **Progress and Updates**

14. The regional inventory of TVET providers is now accessible in downloadable TVET datasets per country from the PATVET website, [www.spc.int/patvet](http://www.spc.int/patvet). SPC continues to support PATVET.

15. The Australian Pacific Technical College (APTC), an AusAID funded Australian Government initiative, was established in 2007 and continues to expand its delivery across

the Pacific. Recently, the College held its 3<sup>rd</sup> graduation ceremony in Fiji with students from the School of Tourism and Hospitality graduating with Australian vocational qualifications at Level III or higher in commercial cookery, hospitality operations and hospitality supervision. Nearly 200 students have now graduated from the APTC with additional graduation ceremonies held in Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Nauru and Kiribati. There are currently 1100 students enrolled and studying at campuses and training centres in Fiji, Samoa, PNG and Vanuatu. These students represent eight Forum Island Countries. Currently, applications are also being processed from Tuvalu and Niue.

16. At the Pacific Islands Conference of Leaders meeting in Washington DC, May 2007, the former US Secretary for State advised of potential economic benefits for Pacific Islands Countries (PICs) through the military build-up in Guam which is scheduled to be effective from (at the earliest) 2014. Subsequently, Leaders of Pacific nations sought and received support from Governor Camacho of Guam, to ensure PICTs benefit from the economic opportunities availed through this build up. The CEOs of SPC, PIFS, and the Guam Department of Labour signed a *Letter of Understanding* in May 2008, to, *inter alia*, facilitate ‘twinning arrangements between regional and Guam TVET providers, such as the Guam Trades Academy and to ‘ensure that skills development meet regional certification standards’. SPC and PIFS have had discussions as well as informal consultations with a few national TVET stakeholders over this and this has now been brought to the CROP TVET subcommittee (see next paragraph) to look at.

17. A meeting agreed between the heads of SPC/PATVET, PIFS and SPBEA was held in August 2008 to explore mechanisms to better coordinate and consolidate TVET development at the regional level and to clarify existing functions and activities of CROP agencies in the TVET area. It was agreed that a multi-agency working group be formed to oversee harmonisation efforts in the TVET sector. The members of the group would include but are not limited to: SPC, PATVET, PIFS, the South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment (SPBEA) and the USP. SPC has taken the role of lead agency and provides the Secretariat to the Working Group<sup>2</sup>. Subsequent meetings were held in 2008. The TVET objectives of the Pacific Plan are the overarching mandate for the coordinating mechanism for TVET with the TVET subcommittee reporting to the CROP<sup>3</sup> Human Resource Development Working Group, which then feeds this to Ministerial agendas and to the Pacific Plan Action Committee (PPAC) comprising Heads of CROP agencies. Support or endorsement of Governing councils of respective agencies in this committee for any regional initiative will be sought where required.

18. Another outcome from these meetings is clear delineation of roles re TVET and mobilising resources through a regional TVET proposal for the 10<sup>th</sup> European Development Fund. SPC was tasked to develop the concept note and has been successful in the initial bid. The proposal links training to employment and focuses on priorities from the ADB *Skilling the Pacific* Study (institutional development of TVET, strengthening of labour market information systems, quality assurance systems and processes, and strengthening of the regional coordinative framework) and addresses crosscutting concerns of the Education for Sustainable Development framework that Ministers of Education endorsed in 2007. The ID fiche has now been finalised and involved consultations with key national TVET stakeholders. If the ID fiche proposal is approved, this will strengthen regional coordination of TVET and current reforms underway at national levels.

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<sup>2</sup> See Annex 1

<sup>3</sup> CROP: Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific

19. Forum leaders have decided that SPBEA should be merged with SPC under the Regional Integration Framework. The proposed implementation in January 2010 will provide a useful and timely opportunity for better coordination of TVET at regional level.

### **Anticipated Benefits**

20. TVET can be a positive influence on social and economic change especially in addressing increasing youth unemployment and providing options for those who are not academically inclined. We already have a high rate of school leavers who do not have marketable skills to contribute productively to their livelihoods. These developments will enhance national HRD development priorities especially in the TVET sector as well as contribute to current national poverty alleviation strategies.

### **Recommendations**

21. Ministers are invited to:

- (a) **note** the progress made on TVET at regional level and SPC's contribution especially in support of PATVET and coordinated approach to TVET; and
- (b) **support** regional TVET strategies that contribute to the implementation of the Pacific Plan.

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Suva

3 March 2009

## **Annex 1:**

The Working Group (subcommittee) on TVET has the following Terms of Reference:

- i) *Identify agencies' core responsibilities and specific mandates in implementing TVET regional priorities, and areas for collaboration in implementation and mobilising resources, especially under the Pacific Plan.*
- ii) *Identify cost effective measures to better coordinate activities in the TVET sector amongst CROP agencies including joint design, implementation and resourcing of programmes.*
- iii) *Identify priority areas for resource mobilisation and undertake joint preparations where required including conceptualising and design of new regional initiatives e.g. through the European Development Fund (EDF) process.*
- iv) *Provide advice or strategic inputs to the HRD working group and to the Forum Ministers of Education Ministers' meeting processes where required.*
- v) *Contribute to monitoring and reporting on progress in regional TVET initiatives where required.*