



TONGA

Focal Point: Lady Siatukimoana Vaea

Report presented by Mrs. 'Ana Lupe Voi

Background

The Tonga Strategic Development Framework defines the National Development Vision for Tonga: “To develop and promote a just, equitable and progressive society in which people of Tonga enjoy good health, peace, harmony and prosperity, in meeting their aspirations in life”. This is to be achieved by delivering (9) outcome objectives. The two that are directly related to the Ministry of Education and Training (MET) are:

- Outcome Objective 4: Sound Education standards, by emphasizing quality universal basic education
- Outcome Objective 5: Appropriately skilled workforce to meet the available opportunities in Tonga and overseas, by delivering improved Technical and Vocation Education and Training.
- Vision for Education: “The people of Tonga will achieve excellence in education that is unique to Tonga”.
- Mission: “To provide equitable, accessible, relevant and sustainable quality education for all Tongans that will enable Tonga to develop and become a learning and knowledge society”.

Use of ODL in Tonga

1. ODL can be used more in Tonga to overcome our most significant challenges, yet ICT development is slow not only in Tonga but in the Pacific region as well, and this usually hinders providers from using the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) modes to offer required training. Urgent action is required to prevent Tonga from being left too far behind.
2. Training untrained teachers and upgrading their qualifications need to be implemented through the use of ODL so that they do not have to leave their work stations. This would solve the problem of teacher shortage and would not put fear into those allocated to schools in the outer islands of thinking that they would never be included in the upskilling/upgrading/professional development programmes offered by the Ministry and donor funded groups.
3. Technical and Vocational training is also recognised given the importance of skills in the country’s economic development. Agricultural training programmes were provided by a New Zealand group but could be offered via ODL.

4. Health programmes could also be offered through ODL mode including qualifications for nursing and as well trainings recognized by foreign countries.
5. ODL materials for teaching and learning are currently being used for some training programmes, but it is becoming difficult due to high costs in internet connection and equipment. There is a shortage of technical IT personnel here in the Kingdom and this affects the quality of ODL trainings received by the trainees. Many of our qualified IT staff members have moved to other higher paid jobs in other government Ministries and to other countries as well.
6. The branch of the University of the South Pacific (USP) in Tonga seems to have a successful ICT system that is being further improved as USP has long been a pioneer in the use of ICTs for education since 1972. Currently, usage is limited to USP students and programmes only.

Top Priorities

1. Teacher Training and Professional Development.
2. Provide skilled labour trainings that would help grow the economy, boost productivity, improve standards of living in families and communities and meet the niche labour markets overseas.
3. Quality Assurance and Assessment.
4. Research and Leadership.
5. Restructuring Higher Education.

How COL Can Further Support the National Agenda of Tonga

1. Provide ODL programmes to train TVET trainers.
2. Provide trainings for writers of ODL materials.
3. Write up ODL programmes for the required trainings on the areas of: Professional Development, Teacher Training, Research and Leadership programmes and Basic Agricultural Skills.
4. Provide ODL materials for TVET teachers with limited vocational and specialist teaching capabilities.
5. ODL materials to train providers on how to prepare their own curriculum, materials and assessment items.