

# Briefing report

## Education Review Office (ERO): ERO Work Programme in the Pacific Region

Date	5 February 2021
Security Level	N/A
ERO Priority	Medium
ERO Reference	M21-02
Date requested	ERO initiated
Date due	ERO initiated
Proactive release	Recommended

Addressee	Action sought	Deadline
<b>Associate Minister of Education</b>	It is recommended that you:	

- a) **note** that ERO has been formally engaging with the Realm Countries and Samoa since 2013
- b) **note** that ERO has revised their proposed programme of work in the Pacific region to reflect ongoing restrictions due to COVID-19
- c) **note** that depending on Pacific region education agencies' willingness to engage via digital platforms, ERO will begin working with individual countries to develop and implement action plans
- d) **note** that ERO will recommence discussions with MFAT about resourcing for ERO's ongoing engagement in the Pacific region

*Collaborative approach*  
*UoT, MAF, MTA*

 Attachments:

**Education Review Office (ERO):  
ERO Work Programme in the  
Pacific Region**

 Comments:

**Minister's Office to complete**

Noted	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seen	<input type="checkbox"/>
Approved	<input type="checkbox"/>
Referred to:	
Date signed by Associate Minister:	



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Our Ref: M21-2

5 February 2021

**Hon Aupito William Sio**  
Associate Minister of Education

**Cc: Hon Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education**

**ERO Work Programme in the Pacific Region**

**Purpose**

1. This briefing updates you on ERO's work to date in the Pacific region and proposed future work programme.

**Context**

2. When we met at the end of last year we promised to provide you with an overview of ERO's work programme in the Pacific region.
3. ERO's Pacific Strategy *Driving Success for Pacific Learners 2019-2022* [M20-52 refers] sets out five goals to deliver success for Pacific learners. The fourth goal in the Strategy is that:
  - ERO is a key partner in Pacific-focussed education and social sector evaluations across Aotearoa and the Pacific region.
4. To achieve this goal, ERO will:
  - actively strive to be a partner of choice for educational and social sector evaluations in Aotearoa and the Pacific region
  - expand Pacific regional partnerships
  - ensure we have the capability and the capacity to deliver.

**Education in the Pacific region**

5. The New Zealand Government has a strong interest in the success of Pacific peoples in Aotearoa and in the region. Strengthening the quality of education in the Pacific region is mutually beneficial to Pacific Island countries and New Zealand.
6. In addition, New Zealand has a specific constitutional relationship with the Realm Countries, Tokelau, Niue and the Cook Islands. The Realm Countries are entitled to access ERO's knowledge and expertise in a similar way as remote or rural communities do in New Zealand to improve their early learning and schooling delivery and outcomes for all learners.

**ERO's formal engagement in the Pacific region began in 2013 and focussed on supporting capability building and improvements in education delivery**

7. Since 2013, ERO has been working with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), the Realm Countries, and Samoa in various ways to support capability building and system change in their respective education systems. Each country had different interests but, in general, all worked with ERO to improve education delivery in the schooling sectors, and quality assurance of that delivery. Discussions had begun about support for better delivery in the early years too.
8. Appendix 1 sets out a breakdown of ERO's activities in Tokelau, Niue, Cook Islands and Samoa between 2013 and 2019.

**A three-year strategy for ERO's work in the Pacific region was developed for implementation in 2020 but, due to COVID-19, has been severely disrupted**

9. In 2019 ERO engaged in discussions with MFAT to establish an agreed partnership that would formalise a strategic approach for ERO's work within the Pacific region.
10. At the time, MFAT was working to design projects that gave effect to the Government's Pacific Reset programme with a focus on sustainability and capability building in Pacific countries generally, and the Realm Countries more specifically. The aspiration for education delivery in the Pacific Reset programme was that learners should have an education to a standard comparable to that provided in similar communities (remote or rural) in New Zealand.
11. In March 2020, ERO submitted a proposal to MFAT for a programme of work with the Realm countries. This proposal set out the activities and process for a three-year work programme, to be undertaken in partnership with MFA, the governments of the Realm Countries and Samoa. The proposal focussed on building meaningful partnerships and strengthening capability and systems to deliver better learning outcomes in early learning education and schools.
12. The proposed approach was based on the principles of talanoa and va (engaging in meaningful conversations and relationship building) and co-design, and included the following activities:

Strategic and regional engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building meaningful mutually enriching partnership with existing partners as well as new regional connections.</li> <li>• Use existing regional architecture (e.g. forums) to build engagements.</li> </ul>
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support Pacific Island education agencies to build their assessment capability using co-design methodologies.</li> </ul>
Inspectorate capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue existing engagements in the region to support the growth of a pool of expert reviewers.</li> <li>• Support Pacific Island education agencies to build their review and inspection capabilities.</li> <li>• Factor evaluation elements into review and inspection capabilities.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a school support and advisory function to deliver on moving the focus away from auditing methodologies.</li> </ul>
Evaluating the quality of education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draw on ERO's Pacific Strategy and use its cross-cutting evaluative capability and capacity to support evaluations in the Pacific region.</li> <li>• Build the capability of Pacific education officials, Principals and teachers to undertake reviews and evaluations in their schools.</li> <li>• Work with Pacific education officials to strengthen their understanding of their roles and responsibilities in evaluation and review.</li> </ul>
Early childhood education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In keeping with ERO supporting the growth of quality early childhood provision in Aotearoa, support a similar focus with the Pacific Island governments to strengthen their early childhood education (ECE) provision and professional development of teachers.</li> <li>• Codesign with Pacific education officials, Principals and teachers, pathways from early childhood education to senior secondary school to support quality learning outcomes.</li> </ul>

13. MFAT acknowledged receipt of ERO's proposal on 6 April 2020. However, due to COVID-19, no further progress/feedback has occurred.

**Due to the impact of COVID-19, ERO proposes a revised programme of work that recognises the necessity to engage through digital platforms**

14. Due to the ongoing impact of COVID-19, ERO has reviewed their proposed programme of work in the Pacific region based on the following assumptions:
- Apart from the Cook Islands, borders will remain closed in 2021 and restrictions are likely for the foreseeable future. Any engagement will, therefore, necessarily be through digital platforms.
  - There are limitations to what activities can be conducted via digital platforms and some Pacific region agencies may not wish to engage in this manner at all.
  - The Realm Countries are ERO's priority. In addition, ERO has also engaged in with Samoa's education officials about ways ERO can support ongoing improvement and evaluation across the education system.
  - The focus of ERO's work in the Pacific region will continue to be on strengthening capability and systems to deliver better learning outcomes in ECE and schools.
  - Both ECE and schools will be within ERO's scope of work.
  - Approach to engagement will be based on the principles of partnership, talanoa and va, and co-design.
  - ERO will review, and potentially expand, this programme of work as restrictions on borders ease.
15. The proposed work programme has 5 key strands of activity that can be tailored to each country's situation:

1. Re-engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-engage with officials in the Realm Countries and Samoa (commenced January 2021).</li> <li>• Share ERO's publications <i>Learning in a Covid-19 World: The Impact of Covid-19 on Schools and Early Childhood Education</i>.</li> <li>• Through talanoa and va, reflect on progress and challenges moving ahead.</li> <li>• Determine desire to continue working with ERO and willingness/ability to engage via digital platforms and at what level(s) (eg, government officials, education leaders, teachers, students, communities).</li> </ul>
2. Analysis and planning	<p>Where there is interest:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyse each countries' situation and requirements to lift the quality of education and improve learner outcomes.</li> <li>• Produce plans that provide guidance for the number and type of change processes needed.</li> </ul>
3. Co-design of capability framework	<p>Where there is interest:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-design a capability framework specific to each country's needs. Areas covered may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ assessment</li> <li>○ inspectorate capability</li> <li>○ leadership development</li> <li>○ monitoring and evaluation (internal and external)</li> <li>○ decision making processes and allocation of resources to support improvement.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
4. Professional Learning Development	<p>Where there is interest:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake professional learning development in the areas identified as important in strands 2 and 3 (above).</li> </ul>
5. Strategic and regional engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build meaningful and mutually enriching relationships with Pacific region education agencies/collectives and attend appropriate forums, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Forum Education Ministers Meeting</li> <li>○ Pacific Heads of Education Systems</li> <li>○ South Pacific Community EQAP (Education Quality Assurance Programme).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

16. ERO are progressing early re-engagement with the Realm Countries and Samoa.

**Resourcing has previously been through the home country and/or through MFAT**

17. Funding for ERO's services in the Pacific region have previously been directly through the home country, MFAT, or a combination of both. Depending on the outcome of discussions with the Realm Countries and Samoa, ERO will recommence discussions with MFAT on resourcing for ERO's ongoing engagement in the Pacific region.

**Next steps**

18. We will continue with re-engagement and provide you with a progress update in April 2021.

**Recommendations**

It is recommended that you:

- a) **note** that ERO has been formally engaging with the Realm Countries and Samoa since 2013 Yes / No
- b) **note** that ERO has revised their proposed programme of work in the Pacific region to reflect ongoing restrictions due to COVID-19 Yes / No
- c) **note** that depending on Pacific region education agencies' willingness to engage via digital platforms, ERO will begin working with individual countries to develop and implement action plans Yes / No
- d) **note** that ERO will recommence discussions with MFAT about resourcing for ERO's ongoing engagement in the Pacific region Yes / No



Ruth Shinoda  
Acting Chief Executive

NOTED/APPROVED



Hon Aupito William Sio  
Associate Minister of Education

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## Appendix 1: Summary of ERO's engagement in the Pacific region 2013-2019

<p><b>Tokelau</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2013 and 2018, education evaluations were completed.</li> <li>• The evaluation undertaken in 2013 found that urgent action was needed to address vulnerabilities in both the quality and delivery of education in schools in Tokelau.</li> <li>• The report from the 2018 evaluation concluded that progress had been made to address the issues identified in the 2013 evaluation, but there needed to continue to be an ongoing emphasis on building Principal leadership and effectiveness, and more of a focus on building the quality of secondary education delivery.</li> <li>• In 2019, an Education Summit was held in Tokelau. ERO supported this and the development of the new Tokelau Education Strategy.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Niue</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2015, ERO evaluated the quality of education across the three schools in Niue, including early learning years, primary and secondary provision.</li> <li>• A progress review was scheduled for May 2020 but was put on hold due to the COVID-19 lockdown and border closures.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cook Islands</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since 2013, ERO has supported professional development in New Zealand for the Cook Island Ministry of Education Review Services. Inspectorate teams have undertaken on site professional learning development (PLD) with ERO teams in ECE, Primary and Secondary, and in 2019 PLD in ECE settings.</li> <li>• In 2020, ERO was to provide PLD in New Zealand schools and ECE's. ERO was also to support inspectorate in Cook Islands mid-June but was put on hold due to the COVID-19 lockdown and border closures.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Samoa</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The most recent visit to Samoa occurred in October 2019. Included in the discussions was:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ a joint venture between Victoria University and the National University of Samoa delivering a Master's degree that would have a focus on effective leadership and especially Principals' professional development.</li> <li>○ ERO provided independent evaluation support for the Samoa Qualifications Authority, and the Ministry of Education, Science &amp; Commerce (MESC).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The outcome of the visit was a request from MESC Samoa for a proposal from ERO to undertake scoping and co-design support in 2020 exploring these two issues as above.</li> </ul>