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Communities, Partnerships and Communication

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REVISION RECORD

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Communities, Partnership and Communication

Central to the education policy framework is the contention that a high-quality education sector cannot be built by government alone. Creative and dynamic partnerships between families, communities, the public and private sectors, and regional and international partners are required.

The formation of partnerships is therefore a central concept in planning and managing education. The government retains responsibility for setting national objectives, mobilising resources and maintaining educational standards, while non-government organisations (NGOs), community groups and commercial enterprises can all contribute, making education a part of the life of the whole community.

An important aspect in establishing such partnerships is communication. Effective dialogue and consultation leads to trust. It is essential that the Ministry of Education (MoE) has access to information which conveys Cook Islanders' expectations and satisfaction particularly with regard to the quality of the objectives of education and on education's capacity to serve the personal growth of individuals. In turn, it is essential that Cook Islanders are aware of the national objectives, methods of distributing resources and educational standards set by the Ministry.

The Ministry of Education places a high value on the contribution of parents, School Committees, and the good working relationships between schools, parents and people in local communities. The input of advisory and industry groups is important to the success of the tertiary and continuing education programmes. Everyone has a shared responsibility to educate, not only teachers and tutors. It is recognised that parents and families are children's first and most important educators. When parents enrol their children in school, from Early Childhood Education through to secondary school and beyond, the responsibility of education and care is shared with the school and the community.

Education providers must cooperate efficiently with each other, organisations, companies, firms, and service enterprises. They have to create networks directly linked to where people work, live and learn. Such partnerships can be used to advocate for education and integrate community-based approaches into national policy or strategy. This needs to be done with careful consultation to ensure that communities maintain ownership at the local community level.

1. STATEMENT OF POLICY

Quality education requires the establishment of effective partnerships and communication with a wide range of community, national, regional and international stakeholders in order to engage, guide and motivate learners at all levels of education to be successful and productive citizens.

2. PURPOSE

Education is, and must be, a societal responsibility, encompassing governments, families, communities and non-governmental organizations alike; it requires the commitment and participation of all in determining quality educational outcomes.

The formation of partnerships is a central concept in the planning and managing of education as is the need for effective communication between all involved.

The MoE is committed to:

- i.) Meeting the objectives of *Learning for Life - Cook Islands Education Master Plan (2008-2023)*. The plan acknowledges that, “education is not the sole responsibility of any one group. Through collaboration we can make the most of opportunities to develop new ideas and initiatives.” (Ministry of Education, 2008)

It includes the following relevant focus and goals:

Learning and the Community

Focus: A high level of community involvement in determining quality educational outcomes

Goals:

- *Increased participation by parents in education policy and decision making*
- *Wide community support and understanding of inclusive education*

As a result of this plan Parents in the Cook Islands will be able to:

- *Actively participate in their child’s learning from birth*
- *Participate in all decision making processes for their child’s schooling*
- *Enjoy confidence in the quality of their child’s education*

ii). Meeting the aims of “Te Kaveinga Nui” - the National Sustainable Development Plan, which includes the priority area:

“ A Cook Islands where all people who reside in our islands can enjoy opportunities to fulfil their potential, prosper and participate in the social, economics, political and cultural life of our communities and nation” (pg 15).

It also includes the strategies of:

Ensuring the education sector is responsive to the training needs of the wider community through collaboration and partnerships with other agencies

Enabling every young person to have access to the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills to gain qualifications that they need to contribute to the development of the Cook Islands.

Ensuring parents and communities have confidence in our education system.

iii) Following the guiding principles and values of the Pacific Education Development Framework (PEDF) which include:

“Harmonisation: A shared commitment between countries and development partners to align development activities with partner countries’ national priorities; and giving importance to the national leadership role in coordinating development assistance with a focus on managing for results.

Partnerships: Education and training involves governments, parents, teachers, students, community organisations and development partners. This PEDF is based on recognition that Pacific learners will not reach their potential if governments and key stakeholders work in isolation from each other. Encouraging and sustaining meaningful partnerships in education is central to realisation of the Framework’s vision”.

- ii.) Meeting the goals of the UNESCO 'Education For All' policy, which includes in its strategies:

Ensure the engagement and participation of civil society in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of strategies for educational development.

Learners, teachers, parents, communities, non-governmental organizations and other bodies representing civil society must be granted new and expanded political and social scope, at all

levels of society, in order to engage governments in dialogue, decision-making and innovation around the goals for basic education. Such participation, especially at the local level through partnerships between schools and communities, should not only be limited to endorsing decisions of, or financing programmes designed by, the state. Rather, at all levels of decision-making, governments must put in place regular mechanisms for dialogue enabling citizens and civil society organizations to contribute to the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of basic education. This is essential in order to foster the development of accountable, comprehensive and flexible educational management frameworks.

3.SCOPE

This policy applies to all parties who are bound by the requirements of the Education Act.

4. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES and OUTCOMES

Outcome

The acceptance that everyone has a shared responsibility to education is practiced through creative and dynamic partnerships with learners, family, educators, the wider community and other partners sharing knowledge and expertise with each other to produce higher educational achievement and individual success.

Strategic Objectives

- Increased participation by parents in education policy and decision-making.
- Wide community support and understanding of inclusive education.
- Increased participation of the wider community in continuing education.
- Maximise the role of Cook Islanders as regional and as global citizens through high level participation in international programmes.
- High level of national/community understanding and support for education initiatives.
- Enhanced regional and international reputation for Cook Islands education sector.
- The availability of valid and reliable information is available to all stakeholders with which to make informed decisions is assured.
- Regular community consultation occurs to ensure understanding, acceptance and support for education approaches and systems.

5. Policy Detail

5.1 Community

Community participation refers to the processes and activities that facilitate access to direct involvement in educational issues. Development of education in the Cook Islands will identify and address community specific educational issues. Community participation serves as a strategy to identify and mobilise local resources within a community, as well as build support for education programmes. For this to be achieved, community participation must include real and sustained community empowerment and capacity building.

There is a strong connection between parent and family involvement in schools and children's academic achievement, attendance, attitude, and continued education. Families must feel that the school climate (the

social and educational atmosphere of a school) is one that makes them feel welcomed, respected, trusted, heard and valued. Schools must create a positive school climate and provide structures for families to become involved and build effective school-family partnerships.

Such partnerships connect families and schools to help children succeed in school and in their future. Also, where there is a positive school climate that encourages family involvement, the parents' perceptions of the school improve.

5.1.1 Priority Policy Instruments and Actions - Community

- Promote community involvement that improves education and encourages self-sufficiency.
- Mechanisms are developed which engage with and work through the community to ensure continuity in educational delivery and the formulation and implementation of community specific educational initiatives.
- Establish and resource Community Education centres and programmes.
- Provide training for School Committees, especially new members.
- Engage parents and extended families in the education of children, especially in the early years.
- Offer ongoing and systematic professional development for administrators, teachers and student support staff of the usefulness of building strong partnerships with families; the importance multiple communication approaches; and implementing and coordinating family involvement programmes.
- Develop policies aimed at increasing participation and input from parents and families.

5.2 Partnerships

Education and training involves government, parents, teachers, students, community organisations and donor/development partners. For learners to reach their potential the MoE and key stakeholders must work with each other. Encouraging and sustaining meaningful partnerships at all levels of education is central to the realisation of the vision of the EMP.

A strong and effective partnership between Government and non-government education systems is desirable. The MoE recognises the contribution made to education by non-government providers.

It is recognised that appropriate partnerships with donors, development partners and the private sector can result in schools gaining in-kind resources, sponsorship of specific projects, capacity, environment and resource improvement. There is also considerable potential within the tertiary sector for private providers to offer training that is relevant to employment.

Education by definition is about learning from others through reciprocal cooperation. The promotion of regional and international educational development is about real partnerships, exchange of ideas and collaborative work on educational change, where both sides benefit and bring something different to the collaboration.

The Cook Islands, as a signatory to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, will uphold and promote its principles in partnerships with donors and development partners.

5.2.1 Priority Policy Instruments and Actions - Partnerships

- Develop a cooperative approach with other ministries, providers, agencies and non-government organisations.
- Strengthen the reputation of Cook Islands' education and enhance quality through developing regional and international education partnerships
- Work in partnership with public and private sector employers and employer bodies to develop and contribute to education and training provision which enables learners to develop further confidence and competence in employment-related and other skills.
- Develop strategies outlining participation of all sectors, stakeholders and the community in education policy development, implementation and evaluation.
- Meet the principles of the Paris Declaration.
- Strengthen partnerships with Cook Islands communities abroad.

5.3 Communication

The Ministry of Education recognises that communication is crucial to building relationships and partnerships within and outside the organisation. Quality information should be accessible to all stakeholders to enable assessment of situations and informed decision making on policies and procedures. Consultation with communities is especially important to ensure that they are supportive of education approaches and that education systems are perceived to be fair.

Communication is a reciprocal process through which people can be informed of relevant information thus create interest and willingness to become involved in education. Effective and relevant communication encourages engagement, loyalty and commitment because all stakeholders acquire an understanding of the issues at hand. The Ministry will endeavour at all times to be accountable, transparent and provide reliable information that is clear and open to public scrutiny.

5.3.1 Priority Policy Instruments and Actions - Communication

- Ensure currency and implementation of a communication strategy for all stakeholder cohorts on strategies, approaches and progress in relation to the goals of the Education Master Plan.
- Mobilise community commitment for the priorities identified in the EMP through promoting public awareness of education goals, policies and rationales.
- Communicate regularly with relevant parties on educational participation and progress.
- Increase communication with the community through a range of appropriate strategies

6. Risk and Mitigation

The table below lists examples of possible consequences, along with mitigating actions, that relate to this policy not being adhered to:

<i>Issue/Risk - examples</i>	<i>Mitigation - examples</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision-making restricted to a narrow group. • Limited family participation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased participation by parents in education policy and decision making.

<i>Issue/Risk - examples</i>	<i>Mitigation - examples</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little support for schools from the community, especially at secondary level.. • Low acceptance of need for on-going learning. • Isolation and restricted learning opportunities. • Parents not valued as first educators. • Low participation. • No involvement of stakeholders. • Widespread criticism of processes. • Perception that standards are poor. • Low learner achievement. • Fewer resources. • Low teacher morale as education not valued. • Learners access education overseas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level participation in regional and international programmes • Practices and processes to effectively involve parents and family in school activities. • Active collaboration with community and industry groups. • Partnerships with donor countries. • Effective and regular communication at all levels. • Provision of transition and community education programmes. • Promotion of advantages of life-long learning. • Parents as first teachers programmes. • Use of expertise within communities.

7. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

Monitoring is keeping track of the workings of a policy -noting whether the policy is referred and adhered to during the development of education processes and programmes.

Evaluation involves making careful judgements about the worth, quality and benefit of a policy. It provides feedback on the efficiency, effectiveness and performance of policy and is critical to policy improvement and innovation.

Review refers to implementing any required changes that have become apparent during the monitoring and evaluation processes.

- The Planning and Development Division will monitor and evaluate the implementation and impact of this policy and report as required.
- The policy will be reviewed as per the policy register on an ongoing basis by the Director, Planning and Development Division.
- Feedback will be presented to key stakeholders in a range of modalities.

This policy will be reviewed 24 months after implementation and thereafter every 36 months.

S Paio
Secretary of Education

Date
