



COOK ISLANDS
Ministry of Education
Maraurau o te Pae Api'i

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Quality and Relevance of Learning and Teaching

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Quality and Relevance of Learning and Teaching

Quality can be measured, to some extent, by the level at which learners achieve the knowledge, skills, and behaviours specified in the national curriculum. Society and parents expect more than good test scores; they also have expectations regarding students' attitudes and behaviour that are not easily measured but do affect public perceptions of the quality of education delivery.

Parents tend to see academic achievement as closely related to the opportunity for social promotion and employment. These anticipated outcomes are highly valued by families: future employment possibilities that result from education are a primary factor in the demand for education. Parents tend to attach more importance to educational outcomes as a measure of school quality than students, teachers or principals. Just as parents seek favorable outcomes, such as academic achievement and eventual employment, they seek to avoid outcomes they view as negative. Some have the false perception that education offered in the Cook Islands cannot possibly match that offered elsewhere - only through establishing effective measures to improve quality in all learning institutions will such perceptions be countered.

An important dimension of the quality of education is relevance. What is taught in our schools, and how it is taught must be relevant, i.e. learning activities and environments must give learners the best possible opportunities for success and provide an appropriate curriculum and flexible delivery arrangements to meet their diverse needs.

Education providers must offer appropriate and open options for education which meet the immediate and future needs of both the learner and of the country for ongoing positive development and economic growth through a workforce that is technically and academically proficient. High levels of knowledge, competencies and skills are considered to be the very basic conditions for active citizenship, employment and social cohesion.

Improving the quality and relevance of education relates to improving educational management, facilities and equipment, teacher competencies and professional development, curricular and resource development, and strengthening capacity in learner-centered and adult learning methodologies.

1. STATEMENT OF POLICY

The attainment of quality achievement in all learning programmes and activities offered within the Cook Islands is an integral part of the Ministry of Education's commitment to excellence and opportunity at all levels of education.

2. PURPOSE

High levels of knowledge, competencies and skills are considered to be the very basic conditions for active citizenship, employment and social cohesion. The primary goal of quality education is to ensure that all learners are successful and that they all become fully participating members of their groups, societies and the global community.

Quality education promotes the possibilities of an entire age group to acquire basic education of such a quality that everyone has equal citizen's skills, and positive opportunities for personal development. To ensure this the Ministry is committed to:

i.) Meeting the purpose of Learning for Life -Cook Islands Education Master Plan (2008-2023) which is:

“All people in the Cook Islands will have equal access to quality learning opportunities across the full spectrum of human endeavour from birth.”

It includes the following relevant foci and goals:

Learning and Teaching

Focus: Equitable access to quality learning and the experience of success through a range of programmes that meet individual needs and celebrate individual talents.

Goals:

- *Equitable access for all learners to quality learning programmes.*

Learning and the Community

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

Infrastructure and Support

Focus: The provision of appropriate legislation, research, guidelines and standards which support and enhance opportunities for learning.

Goals:

- *Adequate budget resource for education*
- *High quality buildings, grounds and facilities*
- *Well qualified and resourced teachers, administrators and support staff*
- *High quality management systems*

ii.) Meeting the aims of “Te Kaveinga Nui” - the National Sustainable Development Plan 2016-2020, which includes the 2020 national vision:

“To enjoy the highest quality of life consistent with the aspirations of our people, and in harmony with our culture and environment” (pg 8).

It includes the relevant goals and indicators of:

Goal 8 - Inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities;

Goal 13 – Strengthen resilience to combat the impacts of climate change and natural disasters;

Goal 14 - Preserve our heritage and history, protect our traditional knowledge, and develop our language, creative and cultural endeavours; and

Goal 15 - Ensure a sustainable population, engaged in development for Cook Islanders by Cook Islanders.

ii.) Meeting the goals of the UNESCO “Education 2030” mandate ,which includes in its strategies:

- *By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and Goal 4 effective learning outcomes.*
- *By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.*
- *By 2030, ensure equal access for women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.*
- *By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, men and*

- *women, achieve literacy and numeracy;*
- *By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development*

iii.) Meeting the goals of the Sustainable Development Goals which, relevant to this policy includes:

- *Goal 4 - Quality Education*
Ensuring inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning
- *Goal 3 - Good Health and Well-being*
Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- *Goal 17 – Partnerships for the Goals*
Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all administration and educational providers, for whom the Cook Islands Ministry of Education is responsible.

4. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES and OUTCOMES

Outcome

All levels and dimensions of education in the Cook Islands will consistently demonstrate standards of excellence. There will be a high quality of learning achieved through provision of an appropriate number of qualified teachers and other staff in the education sector. Relevant national school curriculum and local curricula will be supported by an adequate number of modern, relevant teaching and learning materials and facilities, and sound standards of student literacy and numeracy. A culture of evaluation and quality assurance will promote ongoing development.

Strategic Objectives

To improve quality of all levels of education by:

- Provision of an appropriate number of qualified teachers and other staff, in the education sector.
- Development and maintenance of a high quality process of learning and teaching.
- Development, distribution and use of a relevant, high quality and modern national and local school learning programmes.
- Provision of an adequate number of modern, relevant teaching and learning materials, facilities, equipment and materials.
- Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for all education staff.
- Participatory, evidence based Performance Management for all education staff.

- Monitoring and assessment of standards of student literacy and numeracy and students' progress in other subjects.
- Developing, and resourcing an efficient and effective tertiary sector within the Cook Islands.
- Effective overall monitoring and evaluation systems.

5. POLICY DETAIL

5.1 Quality Teaching

Quality education is not possible without quality teaching. Teachers are at the heart of every education system, and plans and strategies for the initial preparation and ongoing professional development of teachers are central elements of the process and dynamic of achieving goals and targets relating to quality, access and equity in education.

Numerous social, cultural, economic and technological changes in society place new demands on the teaching profession. The ability of teachers to meet the challenges of increasing social and cultural diversity in the classroom is crucial for the development of more equitable education systems and for progress towards providing equal opportunities for all.

The education and training of teachers is a crucial element and future increases in the overall level of educational attainment and the pace of progress towards common objectives in education will be facilitated by the existence of effective systems of teacher education. Sustained teacher development, both pre-service and in-service, is essential for improving the quality of education. Recurrent school-based, in-service teacher training will encompass practical methods of teaching major subjects, ways to adapt the curriculum to the social and physical environment of the students, understanding how children develop and learn, methods of evaluating teaching and learning, management of classrooms, and parent-teacher and community relations.

Teachers' working conditions affect their ability to provide quality education. Many aspects of school life and educational policy go into teachers' perceptions of their employment. The condition of infrastructure, availability of delivery resources and learning materials and class sizes all influence the teacher's experience as an educator. Teachers' remuneration also matters. Low and late remuneration may lead teachers to take on another job, which impacts on student learning. Effective teachers are highly committed and care about their students; they need supportive working conditions to maintain these positive attitudes.

Providing teachers with quality resources and facilities with which to provide learning opportunities increases the range of approaches and activities that teachers can utilize to engage students in learning and promote success.

Effective teachers are highly committed and care about their students; they need supportive working conditions to maintain these positive attitudes. Enhancing the professional status of teaching in the Cook Islands is a critical challenge. Teachers' professional accountability to one another is also paramount to achieving the goals of this policy.

Investing in teacher quality needs to be of the highest priority to improve the education system through sustaining and improving the quality of teacher education within a career-long perspective.

5.1.2 Priority Policy Instruments and Actions – Quality Teaching

The Ministry of Education (MoE) will ensure:

- There is development of a number of strategies on training, recruitment, evaluation, remuneration and retention of teachers.
- Teaching and support staff are sufficient and are deployed according to need of learner groups.
- The provision of coherent, high quality and relevant teacher education programmes which respond effectively to the evolving needs of schools, teachers and Cook Islands society at large.
- Initial education, early career support and further professional development is coordinated, coherent, adequately resourced and quality assured.
- Teachers are encouraged and supported throughout their careers to review their learning needs and to acquire new knowledge, skills and competence through formal, informal and non-formal learning, including exchanges and placements abroad.
- Resourcing policies which ensure teachers are supported with quality resources and facilities.
- Maintain a core of trained specialists at the MoE, and ensure that they are accessible to all schools for assistance with in-service delivery, curriculum review and development, and pedagogical development.
- Ensuring 100% of all educational professionals meet the professional standards of their teaching level e.g. ECE, secondary with support mechanisms for advice, guidance and supervision where required.
- Ensure the inclusion and monitoring of professional development plans as part of performance appraisal for teachers.

5.2 Quality Leadership

Leadership is a strategic function. It is about setting a vision and a direction for any organization or institution. Leadership must be responsive to the actual and anticipated needs of stakeholders. Leadership is an active function. It is the ability to enlist others in working to meet a common goal. The Ministry of Education must promote quality leadership through promoting best practice.

The leadership and management competence of a principal and their ability to create a positive working culture and atmosphere in a school is crucial to achieving quality education. Principals need to be both curriculum and pedagogical leaders in their schools. They must also provide leadership to their staff.

5.2.1 Priority Policy Instruments and Actions – Quality Leadership

- Induction training for principals.
- Provide capacity building programmes to improve the leadership and management skills of Principals, including personnel and staff management, school policy development, school development planning, financial management, budgeting, financial accountability,

management of resources, inventory of school assets and reporting on use of education grants.

- Ensure leadership at all levels of the Ministry is current in terms of best practice models, specific position requirements and delivery of services both internally and externally

5.3 Quality Learning Environments

Positive learning outcomes happen in quality learning environments. The learning environment can be broadly defined as the “social, physical, psychological and pedagogical context in which learning occurs and which affect student achievement and attitudes (Fraser (1998) in Nix, Fraser and Leadbetter, 2005). It is not only about the physical environment of the classroom but the social environment and interactions which effect the learning and teaching processes. The classroom environment impacts not only on the direct learning outcomes for students but also on the “hidden curriculum”; those traits and behaviours that we hope young people also learn at schools such as communication and dealing with peer pressure.

An important part of providing quality education involves providers ensuring there are effective guidance and support processes available to all learners. The learning environment of the school must model that of a family where the students feel secure, confident and are motivated to learn.

5.3.1 Priority Policy Instruments and Actions – Quality Learning Environments

- Establishing fully resourced schools to meet the teaching and learning needs of all students
- There is access for all learners
- The teaching accommodation is sufficient to meet the needs of all learners in relation to size, layout, heating, lighting, ventilation and display.
- The teaching areas are flexible and accommodate a variety of formal and informal teaching approaches.
- Support schools in developing school cultures which respect individuals, values positive relationships and welcome and supports learners according to their need.
- Healthy School strategies which support the holistic development and wellbeing of students.

5.4 Relevant Quality Programmes

In modern society, where changes in knowledge are rapid and the mobility of the population is increasing, education is expected to provide more than the basic skills and competencies. The social relevance of curricula is essential for ensuring that comprehensive education and the education of youth support young people to become active citizens and workers.

What is taught in schools must be of cultural, social and practical relevance. To attain the objectives of the EMP teaching must be meaningful and prepare the students for internationality and rapid changes in Cook Islands society, including its relationship regionally and internationally, and build a positive future.

Quality content refers to the intended and taught curriculum of schools. National goals for education, and outcome statements that translate those goals into measurable objectives, provide the starting point for the development and implementation of curriculum. School

curricula therefore need to focus on developing the critical capacities of students, enabling them to know themselves and to think for themselves, thus becoming active and confident learners. The curriculum must take advantage of Cook Island values such as cooperation, reciprocity, sharing and respect and at the same time promote self-esteem of all students.

5.4.1 Priority Policy Instruments and Actions – Relevant Quality Programmes

- Ensure a Cook Islands Curriculum Framework that provides for the implementation of a wide range of dynamic programmes that are responsive to the needs of and opportunities provided by the Cook Islands context.
- Develop locally relevant programmes and resources in accord with the national curriculum.
- Provide support for schools in the development and use of community-based support materials.
- Developing technical and vocational programmes in secondary schools to scaffold learners to tertiary programmes

5.5 Quality Systems

The term quality systems refers to all the policies, processes and actions through which the quality of education is maintained and developed. The main objective of quality systems is to provide information and understanding about how education is functioning, what the results are and how it can be improved, and to take responsibility for creating favourable conditions for quality.

Quality systems need to be in place at all levels of education and governance. In responding to central government, the Ministry must assure quality at a national level. Systems must also be in place to assure quality in our schools.

Another equally important objective is to provide an opportunity for education providers to account to their communities for the work delivered and the use of the public resources provided.

Evaluating the attainment of the objectives of education is central for quality assurance. It is important to have accountability of providers of education. It is also important to produce information revealing the effectiveness of education and the attainment of common objectives.

Improvement in teaching and learning relies on the appropriate data being collected and reported, effective analysis of that data, problem identification to inform the type of intervention required, appropriate activities carried out and evaluation of those activities.

5.5.1 Priority Policy Instruments and Actions - Quality Systems

- Utilise review processes to ensure quality, compliance and strategies for improvement.
- Ensure providers conduct evaluation of their own activities.
- MoE will evaluate the activity of providers and analyse statistical data to inform decision making
- An external evaluation, conducted by a party independent of administration will be carried out to review of structure, systems and process to ensure that MoE is providing the best possible support for school improvement.

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"> • Lack of teachers. • Use of untrained and unqualified teachers. • Poor teaching processes. • Lack of resources. • Unsuitable learning environments. • Out-of-date, inappropriate curricula. • Inconsistency of standards between schools. • Lack of acceptable achievement by learners. • Learners not gaining work-force related skills. • Low skill levels in literacy and numeracy. • Poor school leadership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide scholarships for Cook Island teachers to access higher learning and training overseas. • Provide professional in-service training. • Put in place community, business and international partnerships to assist with resourcing of schools. • Ensure all learning environments functional, safe and appropriate through regulation, inspection and policy. • Community-wide consultation on curricula requirements. • Regular monitoring of assessment results by schools and MoE. • Special programmes and projects to address key concerns. • Targeted training of Principals to establish quality school cultures.

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 Directorate 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 Policy.
- Feedback will be presented to key stakeholders in a range of modalities.



G Townsend
Secretary of Education

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