

Improving literacy and numeracy in the Pacific

ACER is collaborating with member nations of the Pacific Community to address the common education challenges they face.

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The Pacific Community (SPC), through its Educational Quality and Assessment Program (EQAP), is working to address common education challenges, particularly in literacy and numeracy, in the Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

Established in 1980 to assist Pacific Islands countries to develop assessment procedures, EQAP is now a program of SPC, the region's principal scientific and technical organisation supporting sustainable development.

In March 2018 the ACER-EQAP (Education Quality Assessment Programme) Partnership was

launched. The launch acknowledged the Australian and New Zealand governments, together with ACER as the technical partner, in formalising a long-term commitment to support the Pacific Community in meeting education needs and goals in the region. The present commitment extends to 2023, with potential for an additional five years of support to 2028.

ACER's technical support will contribute to the following education outcome areas:

- raising student achievement in literacy and numeracy
- improving teachers' and principals' accountabilities
- benchmarking factors contributing to educational quality
- increasing the education system's capacity to use high quality data

- strengthening national accreditation and assessment systems
- providing high quality programmatic technical services and policy advice.

This partnership recognises ACER's commitment to education in the region.

One of the significant aspects of the partnership is that ACER and EQAP are working to collect evidence of education quality for governments, schools, communities and students in the region. A key part of that effort is the implementation of the Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (PILNA). The collaborative approach is enabling not only ongoing educational monitoring, but also capacity building in the Pacific region.



PILNA encourages a coordinated regional effort to achieve the long-term goal of improving outcomes in literacy and numeracy in the Pacific by establishing an evidence base to support decision-making and policy development in systems, schools and classrooms. PILNA provides a measurement of regional standards based on a common scale, which gives the region valid and reliable results to inform the improvement of student learning outcomes over time.

ACER is providing expertise and technical assistance in data analysis and reporting, and advice and guidance on project implementation in terms of the development, administration, analysis and reporting of PILNA. ACER is also supporting the development of

capabilities and capacity within EQAP through the ongoing delivery of capacity support in the region. EQAP staff have also worked at ACER in Melbourne to finalise a design for a long-term implementation of PILNA.

Each cycle (to date 2012 and 2015) enables EQAP and education stakeholders to collect comparative and benchmarking data, monitor regional and national trends, evaluate the effectiveness of policies over time and identify appropriate intervention strategies. ACER is currently working with EQAP on PILNA 2018.

In the coming years, the partnership will support EQAP in a range of educational activities beyond learning assessment and PILNA. The overall EQAP-ACER

partnership provides the opportunity to explore new ideas through an innovation funding program sponsored by DFAT. The partnership builds on ACER's focus on supporting learners and learning professionals, leaders and managers of education systems, and supporting the Pacific's learning society. ■

LINKS

Read more about ACER's education and development work at www.acer.org/research/areas-of-research/education-and-development

To read the *Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (PILNA) Regional Report*, visit www.eqap.org.fj