Chapter 1: Governance of Primary Education in Pacific Island Countries

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I. Introduction

Under the Global Development Network's Project (GDN) *Varieties of Governance: Effective Public Service Delivery*, and the then University of the South Pacific's (USP) *Governance and Public Sector Management* cluster's project, a USP research team was given the opportunity to do the research in the Pacific. The study of primary education governance and delivery in Pacific Island Countries (PICs) was carried out through a case study approach with insights from disciplines like education administration, politics, sociology, and development studies. At the outset, a number of central research questions were formulated. These were, first, what were the primary education policies in PICs? Were there broad policy frameworks for PICs? More importantly, what did statistics show in the actual implementation of these education policies? Second, who were the primary education stakeholders? What were the experiences of teachers teaching in the respective PICs? Third, how were education budgets and funds accounted for? Empirical evidence from fieldwork and statistics from official reports were gathered to answer these questions. Each of the countries studied had its own governance story to tell although an attempt is made in this report to pull similar experiences and threads together. This is an attempt to reveal a general story of primary education delivery and governance in PICs, based on the evidence from the four case study countries. More specific and detailed examination of the respective education experiences are undertaken in particular country chapters.

This research project carried out detailed assessment of accountability relationships and the lived experiences of teachers and other stakeholders dealing with primary education on the ground in the respective sample countries – Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa and the Solomon Islands. This book provides an overview of the contexts of the case studies. It offers background information on the location, population and economies of the four countries and describes the different education structures that currently exist and under which primary education services are delivered. The similarities and differences in the education structures and practices are teased out to shed light on the contexts that we are dealing with. In addition, comparative primary education statistics across the four countries relating to gender, access and retention are highlighted. The book also touches on the governance structures of primary education delivery, especially on budgetary provisions, various players in primary education and their specific roles and accountability links. It concludes by highlighting key findings of the research, and general recommendations based on the findings in the four countries. It should be pointed out that specific and detailed findings and recommendations are outlined in individual country chapters that follow this comparative chapter.

II. Background literature

In 1990, the Jomtien Conference and the World Summit for children set the target for universal basic education[1] by 2000. A decade later, it became obvious that the progress had been too slow in many countries and that the target was not achievable. The net primary enrolment ratio only increased by 5% from 78% in 1990 to 83% in 2000 (Delamonica, et al, 2001: 3). Many more children were not attending primary school in developing countries in 2000 compared to 1990. As such, the Millennium Summit in 2000 set a new target for universal basic education by 2015 (ibid). The Pacific Island Countries (PICs) were among those developing countries that were lagging behind.

Since the late 1990s and early 2000s, in response to the global efforts to provide basic education for all, PICs have also shifted attention to basic education. In the Pacific, the regional organisation, the *Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat* (PIFS) and donor agencies worked together to encourage member countries to focus on basic education. The four countries studied are members of PIFS, a regional body of 16 member countries facilitating regional cooperation in: (i) Economic Governance; (ii) Political Governance and Security; and, (iii) Strategic Partnership and Cooperation (PIFS, 2011). Education falls under strategic partnership and cooperation. The *Pacific Islands Forum* began focusing and coordinating issues of education since 1999 at the request of Education Ministers of the 16 member countries (PIFS, 2011).

The Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of basic Education (PRIDE) project was a project coordinated under the auspices of PIFS (USP, 2011). The PRIDE Project sought to enhance student learning in 15 PICs by strengthening the capacity of each Ministry of Education (or equivalent) to plan and deliver quality basic education[2]. This push for basic education at the regional level supported by donor agencies encouraged respective PIC governments to concentrate on basic and primary education since the late 1990s.

In the four selected PICs, delivery of education services is the prerogative of their respective Ministry of Education or similar bodies. Regional and international donors plus policy makers channel their inputs through these national education bodies. These ministries then delegate the task of delivering education to their agents such as district and provincial education authorities. Note that national government education ministries also provide national and tertiary education services apart from coordinating and monitoring policies. Education authorities (religious school authorities, provincial governments and private education authorities) are then given the authority to deliver education services at all levels. Policies and budgetary support comes from the national government but individual schools and education

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[1] ... education provided for children between the ages of 6 and 14,usually equivalent to primary and lower secondary, or nine years of schooling (ADB 2005: 3).

[2] The PRIDE Project defined basic education as all education provisions for children and youth except higher education. It included early childhood, elementary, primary and secondary education, together with Technical & Vocational Education & Training (TVET), and covered both the formal and non-formal sectors (USP, 2011).

authorities can also raise their own funds and solicit direct support from aid donors and private sources, especially with infrastructure funding.

External assistance continues to be a critical source of funding for basic and primary education in the Pacific. The notable donors in the four case study countries were AusAID, NZAid, the European Union, Japanese Government (JICA), World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB) and UNESCO. The ADB for instance provided a total of $82.26 million dollars to PICs between 1981 and 2005. However, only 26% of that was used for basic education (ADB 2005: 37). Around that same period, AusAID also provided funds for education in PICs. For instance in 2002 to 2003, AusAID allocated A$91.0 million to PICs, of which Kiribati got 6%, Fiji 5%, Samoa 4%, and Solomon Islands 0% because the Australian focus in that country then was on law and order (ADB 2005: 38). It should be noted that around that period, AusAID shifted its attention to supporting basic education as exemplified by A$31.4 million spent on primary education versus A$4.6 million on higher education (ADB 2005: 38).

New Zealand focused was on basic education and post-primary education with the aim of assisting PICs achieve Education for All (EFA) by 2015. Out of the $15.6 million support to education in 2002 to 2003 period, 1.4% went to Fiji, 8.5% to Kiribati, 19.1% to Samoa and 4.0% to Solomon Islands (ADB 2005: 80). JICA also supported education in PICs especially focusing on infrastructure development and improvement in selected subject areas. Since 1976, the World Bank had been giving support to PICs, especially Papua New Guinea (PNG), Solomon Islands and Samoa. For the period 2003-2008, EU spent $48.7 million on PICs education sector. Their focus was on country programmes in 6 PICs ($34.2 million) and $9 million on regional initiatives such as the PRIDE project (ADB 2005: 39). External aid has always played a critical part in the provision of basic education in PICs.

Apart from external funding, respective national governments themselves have also focused their budgetary support in the education sector. Since the early 2000s, the focus in PICs also shifted to basic and primary education. This was in response to international and regional focus on ensuring that basic education is made available to as many people as possible as part of a development and poverty reduction strategy. As the Pacific regional *Education Action Plan 2001* recognised,

> Basic education as the fundamental building block for society should engender the broader life skills that lead to social cohesion and provide the foundations for vocational callings, higher education and lifelong learning. These when combined with enhanced employment opportunities create a higher level of personal and societal security and development (PIFS 2001: 1).

In Kiribati for instance, the percentage of expenditure on primary education increased from 6.62% of GDP per capita in 2005 to 6.91% in 2007 (Republic of Kiribati 2008: 33). In Samoa, 20% of total government budget was allocated for the education sector (UNESCO 2005). Similarly, in the Solomon Islands, it was suggested that in the years 2005, 2006 and 2007 the education sector was allocated 25% of the national budget estimates (UNICEF 2005: 61). Education financing by both donors and governments of PICs increased in the late 1990s to the present. More importantly, they target funding on basic and primary education. More recent

statistics on how much governments in the 4 countries studied spent on primary education are discussed later in the report.

The important stakeholder in primary education at the national level are the government ministries of education, non-government organisations, local government bodies, religious institutions, parents and teachers. The focus on basic and primary education is attributed to international and regional decisions of the 1990s that in turn influenced decisions at the national level. There have been some reforms in this sector. Examples of reforms in the selected countries include: (i) fee free education and decentralisation of education (community schools) in the Solomon Islands; (ii) support to disadvantaged children through subsidized transport costs (bus fare) in Fiji; (iii) coordinated education planning promoted by the PRIDE project in most PICs; (iv) non-formal education as basic education in Kiribati; (v) affirmative action in education in Fiji; and (vi) non-formal and second chance learning in Samoa.

The expectation of all these reforms is to make basic primary education available to young children and groups who may not have the opportunity to access basic education in the past. The Education for All (EFA) focus explains the need for such reforms. The importance of basic education for human resource development in the Pacific can hardly be overemphasized. It has been highly stressed by UNICEF, UNESCO, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The Pacific Islands Forum has also taken initiatives in the form of *Basic Education Forum Action Plan* and the PRIDE project.

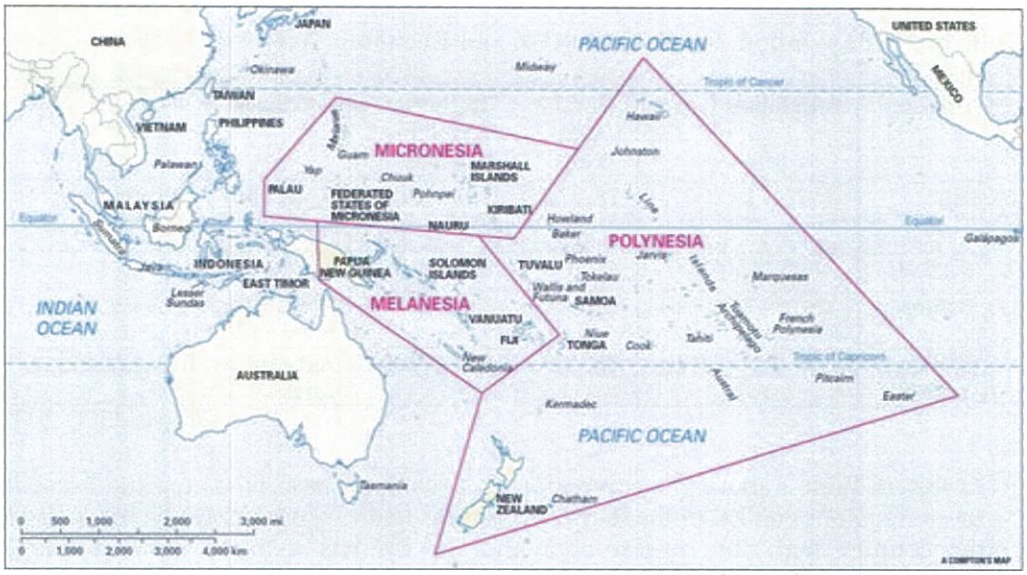
Before moving into discussions on specific aspects of primary education in the 4 PICs, a brief overview of the case study countries is provided to contextualise the study.

III. Overview of case study countries

The Pacific covers a vast ocean area with islands that were grouped into Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia by early European visitors (Tcherkezoff, 2003; Clark, 2003). Despite the negative and racialised origins of these sub regional divisions, they are now acceptable political labels, sub-regions and identities in the Pacific. As indicated in Figure 3, three countries in the study come from each of the sub regions while the fourth has features from all three sub regions. Fiji is geographically and ethnically a Melanesian country but many of its cultural practices and social structures are Polynesian. It is more multicultural than the other three countries in the research and has a large population of people of Indian decent. Samoa is an independent state in Polynesia while Kiribati is a Micronesian state. Solomon Islands is in Melanesia but also with sizeable Polynesian and Micronesia populations. The countries are peculiar and distinct in their own ways but commonalities also exist. Each case study illustrates particular experiences but together the country studies tell a common Pacific story of service delivery in the primary sector.

Figure 1 shows the Pacific islands with the sub-regional divisions that originated with European contacts and also indicates the location of the specific countries studied.

Figure 1: Map of Oceania showing the 3 sub regions and case study countries



Source: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc

As seen from the map, there are thousands of islands in a wide expanse of ocean that are generally isolated from the main markets of the world. The knowledge systems of Pacific people were neglected and belittled by early western missionaries, traders and colonial government officials (see Narokobi, 1983; Huffer and Qalo, 2004; Gegeo, 2002; Subramani, 2006; Thaman, 2003). Pacific islanders, however, felt that 'western' representations of them as isolated and helpless are outlandish. A prominent scholar of the Pacific, the late Epeli Hau'ofa argued that seeing the islands as islands in an isolated ocean is different from seeing the Pacific as a sea of islands (Hau'ofa, 1993, 2008). More pointedly, Narokobi argued that "it is important for us to give proper dignity and place to our history" (1983: 3). Nevertheless, colonialism and contact with the outside world gave rise to the adoption of current education systems in the four case study countries. In addition, political independence has ensured that PICs are members of the international community, and of regional and global organisations which have a bearing on obligations and practices that have impact on the governance and delivery of primary education.

These four countries are members of international bodies and regional organisations such as the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) and others. They are also members of sub-regional groupings like the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), Polynesian Leaders' Group (PLG) and Micronesian Executive Group (MEG). These regional and sub-regional memberships and interactions come with certain commitments to education in terms of policies and technical support. For instance, the *Pacific Islands Forum's Issues Paper on Basic Education in the Pacific* pointed out that "The vision Pacific nations have for their peoples is partly defined by their membership in the international community, but a large measure also comes from their own unique histories and cultural heritages as well as from the development challenges they are facing" (PIFS, 2001: 5). It is within these contexts and structures that primary education governance and delivery in PICs operate. Table 1 indicates the population

size of the countries studied (latest census figures), the land mass, Exclusive Economic Zones[3] (EEZ) and areas of economic activities.

Table 1: Population, Land Area, EEZ and Economic Activities

Country	Population (year)	Land area (km2)	Exclusive Economic Zones	Economy
Fiji	837,271 (2007)	18,272	1,260,000	Agriculture, clothing, fisheries, forestry, tourism and sugar
Kiribati	92,533 (2005)	726	3,600,000	Copra, fisheries and seaweed
Samoa	180,741 (2006)	2,934	120,000	Agriculture, fisheries, manufacturing and tourism
Solomon Islands	515,870 (2009)	28,000	1,600,000	Agriculture, fisheries and forestry

Source: SPC 2012

As seen in Table 1 above, the population size, economic base, land area and Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) of the four countries studied vary considerably. For instance, the country with the biggest population is Fiji has a much more developed manufacturing base. Kiribati has the smallest land area but the largest EEZ. Solomon Islands has the biggest land area but with little or negligible manufacturing like Kiribati while Fiji and Samoa feature manufacturing and tourism as notable economic activities. The general feature of all economies though is that they rely heavily on raw materials (extractive industries) and agriculture based products. Solomon Islands and Fiji have bigger populations, land areas and therefore have potential for land based industries. Table 2 summarizes the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the four countries.

Table 2: GDP and Growth in Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa and Solomon Islands

Country	GDP (US$)	Year	GDP Per Capita ($US)	Real GDP Growth 2012 (%)
Fiji	$3,882 billion	2012	$4,438 (2012)	2.0
Kiribati	$175.7 million	2012	$1,743 (2012)	3.5
Samoa	$677.0 million	2012	$3,582 (2012)	0.9
Solomon Islands	$1.008 billion	2012	$1,834 (2012)	4.0

Source: World Bank, 2013, ADB, 2013

Fiji is the most developed of the four countries as demonstrated by the relatively high GDP per capita level. There was a decline in real GDP growth over the last few years

[3] The Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) is the sea area ('zone') that a state has as prescribed by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The state has jurisdiction over fishing, mineral and other rights within this 200 miles zone.

because of internal political instabilities and slowdown of economic activities. GDP growth has turned in a positive direction more recently. Fiji's manufacturing sector is export oriented with successive governments since independence encouraging various tax concessions to investors.. Fiji's export sector includes garments, footwear, biscuits, concrete, cement and other building materials. Sugar remains a significant export commodity. The local market sector includes manufacturing furniture, foodstuff, alcoholic drinks and other household goods (Economy Watch, 2013).

Samoa also has a growing economy with a much higher per capita GDP compared to Solomon Islands and Kiribati. It nevertheless slowed down in real GDP growth from an average rate of 1.9% between the years 2000-2011 (ADB, 2012) to 0.9% in 2012. A feature of the Samoan economy is remittances flowing into the country from its diaspora in New Zealand, Australia and the USA. As indicated in the country report, there are many more Samoans living abroad than those residing in Samoa. The initial trigger for out-migration in Samoa was the independence arrangement with New Zealand where a specified number of Samoans could migrate to and reside in New Zealand annually. Remittance is a key contributor to the Samoan economy and which also relies on tourism, agriculture, food manufacturing and fisheries.

Solomon Islands has been very slow in terms of economic development but over recent years after the 'inter-*wantok*' conflict of 1998-2003 (Nanau, 2011), it recorded in 2012 an annual growth rate that surpassed all other Pacific island countries. This was made possible by the improved law and order situation in the country that resulted in the resumption of palm oil and gold production. The potential for growth is great because of abundant natural resources in the second largest island nation of the region in terms of land mass. This has not been realised as yet partly due to the difficulty of accessing customary land for development and also as a result of low levels of foreign investment to encourage a diversified economic base.

Kiribati, as indicated in Tables 1 and 2 has a smaller land area than the other three countries. However, it has the largest EEZ or a sea area of 3.6 million square kilometres with enormous potential in the fisheries sector (ADB, 2008: 1). It is in fact a large ocean state. The vulnerability to extreme arid conditions, and natural disasters in the past resulted in many I-Kiribati people being resettled in the western provinces of Solomon Islands in the 1960s. The rapacious exploitation of Banaba (Ocean Island) by the British Phosphate Commissioners (Britain, Australia and New Zealand) also led to the relocation of its inhabitants to Rabi Island in Fiji.

It should be noted that Kiribati had built up over the years a reserve fund (overseas) called the *Revenue Equalization Reserve Fund (RERF)* from its previous phosphate mining revenues. Interest from this investment can be accessed by government to provide revenue. An additional feature of the economy similar to Samoa and Fiji is that of remittances from relatives working and residing abroad. In 2006 for instance, it was reported that remittances contributed 15 to 20 per cent of Kiribati's national income. That was around AUD$13-15 million dollars (Borovnik, 2009: 146). The Asian Development Bank summarised Kiribati's economy by stating that "the balance of payments current account is sustained by factor income from abroad (fishing vessel licenses, seafarers' remittances, and investment earnings) and grants received by governments, churches and other NGOs (ADB, 2008:16)".

IV. Methodology

The principal-agent methodological approach taken by this project was guided by the overall one used for the entire GDN project on service delivery. In this cross country study, the principal-agent relationship focused on the primary education sector. Significantly, the study acknowledges the existence of multiple principals and agents within the contexts, situations and structures of country specific education systems. It also accepts the position that socio-cultural contexts are critical to our understanding of the governance and delivery of primary education services in PICs. Moreover, the study acknowledges the socio-economic structures of the countries studied, especially in the economic and geographic locations of the schools that influence agency.

In this research project, we have taken a social constructivist and critical realist epistemological stance. The position argues that knowledge claims are always socially situated and not universalistic. As Proctor puts it, "...knowledge to critical realists is neither wholly objective nor subjective but is in fact the result of interaction between subject and object. ... the truth contents of ideas can be compared on a relative basis: some (social) explanations are more adequate representations of reality than others, though all are, by virtue of the dialectic (subject-subject) nature of knowledge, always 'partial truths'" (Proctor, 1998: 361). This introduction and the four country specific chapters appreciate the significance of the social context on the delivery of primary education.

Sampling method and case study primary schools

Since the research tried to ascertain what official government policies have been envisaging and what was actually happening on the ground, the team agreed to adopt a case study approach. In each country case a sample of 2 rural primary schools and 2 urban primary schools were identified for the study. The broad aim was to include a large and small school in both a rural and an urban area. A big primary school in this research is one that has more than 150 students enrolled while a 'small' school has less than 150 students. Table 1 provides a summary of the case study schools in the four PICs, their total enrolments, gender breakdown, total number of teachers and gender composition of teaching staff (with the exception of Samoa). Also note that Figures 1 and 2 provide visual examples of urban and rural primary schools visited and studied.

Table 3: Features of Rural and Urban Schools studied (including student enrolment and teachers)

Country	School	Total student enrolment	Total number of teachers	Gender	
				Males	Females
Fiji	1. Rural School A	112	5	4	1
	2. Rural School B	194	8	3	5
	3. Urban School C	360	10	5	5
	4. Urban School D	770	25	8	17
Kiribati	1. Rural School E	412	14	3	11
	2. Rural School F	97	4	1	3

	3. Urban School G	1025	32	4	28
	4. Urban School H	240	9	2	7
Samoa	1. Rural School I	417	11		
	2. Rural School J	171	7		
	3. Urban School K	899	27		
	4. Urban School L	173	9		
Solomon Islands	1. Rural School M	111	5	2	3
	2. Rural School N	197	6	2	4
	3. Urban School O	558	16	5	11
	4. Urban School P	538	15	4	11

Source: case country reports, 2014

Research methods and access

For the field research component of the research project, scoping visits with some fact finding, and identification of potential schools for the interview survey were undertaken by lead country researchers in Kiribati, Samoa and Solomon Islands in February 2012. In July 2013, the longer and more in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were carried out in the 12 rural and urban schools in the three countries. By July, 2013 the Fiji lead researcher was appointed and he proceeded with his research in the four Fiji schools.

All the case studies used face-to-face interviews guided by a structured list of questions; focus group discussions; and informal *talanoa* or *tok stori* with individuals and groups. Appointments were made for individual *face-to-face interviews* with three different groups of respondents involved in the primary education sector. These were education administrative and professional officers from the Ministries of Education; head teachers and teachers of the case study primary schools; and school committee members and parents from the sample schools. In most instances, interviews began with education officers and other relevant officials in urban areas followed by visits to each primary school. The first days were usually taken up by interviews with principals and teachers followed by interviews with parents and school committee members where they were available. Access to information and people were through both formal processes, for instance research permits were required, and also through informal connections in the respective countries of the researchers themselves.

In a number of situations, individual interviews were not possible so *focus group discussions* were held to gauge group views. Focus group discussions were conducted with stakeholders of urban and rural schools, especially where it was difficult to get a one-to-one interview. In some cases, the teachers and parents in primary schools preferred to respond to the research questions as a group and the researchers respected their wishes and conducted focus group discussions with separate stakeholder groups (teachers; parents; school committee members). The focus group discussion sessions provided rich data as they allowed for more probing and the airing of multiple voices during the actual discussions.

Apart from interviews and focus group discussions, *observations* and *talanoa* or *tok stori* were important in the research strategy. *Talanoa* (*tok stori* in Melanesian

pidgin) according to Vaioleti "... can be referred to as a conversation, a talk, an exchange of ideas or thinking, whether formal or informal. It is almost always carried out face-to- face" (2006: 23). *Talanoa* or *tok stori* does not have to be formally organised into small groups as in focus group discussions. It can be a one-to-one informal discussion or a group discussion and can take place in very informal settings. These conversations produced a rich source of information for triangulation with data provided by other informants. Some members of the team who had cameras also observed and captured the physical conditions of facilities (classrooms, water supply, teachers' houses.

It is also important to point out that the researchers who carried out the fieldwork in the four countries are from the respective countries. Because of that, language was not an issue. Although English is the official language in all countries, there are local languages that the researchers used when undertaking field research. Apart from the use of English when discussing with some education officers and external advisors, all the researchers used their local or national languages. There is a common national language in each of these countries apart from English and the researchers used these languages in the field. For instance in Fiji, apart from English the researcher used the Bauan *iTaukei* lingua franca, *Ikiribati* in Kiribati, *Samoan* in Samoa and pidgin in the Solomon Islands. The good thing was that the respective researchers were well versed with both their national languages and English so translation of data for comparative purposes was not a big issue.

Limitations

Despite the best intentions and efforts of researchers to collect reliable and verifiable data, certain limitations must be acknowledged in this research. Access to informants and data was very difficult despite two fieldwork visits to the countries of study in July 2012 and again in mid-2013. The research was fraught by the difficulties of getting people to interview, the difficulty of accessing up-to-date data, the sample size (i.e. small number of schools visited), and other administrative complications related to obtaining research permits and authorisation. Time constraints exacerbated these problems especially in accessing respondents in urban schools and offices. Access to rural school was also limiting. In Kiribati, for example, the rural schools were accessible only by boat allowing only a single visit and thereby limiting the possibility of a follow up research visit.

Secondly, the study is limited because of the lack of or non-availability of up to date data on economic indicators, budget information on primary education programmes, and lack of school level data and information. It was evident that parents, school committee members and to some extent, teachers were not well informed on educational issues and policies, which implied that information was not readily available at the school level. These are elaborated on in specific country studies.

Third, the sample size of rural and urban schools may be regarded as a limitation. The impact of isolation and remoteness on accountability and the delivery of primary educational service could be more significant in rural schools located on islands far away from the capital cities. Unfortunately, time and logistics did not allow researchers to visit more schools, especially those that are furthest away from urban centres.

Finally, there were some complications in getting authorisation in certain countries to undertake the study. In the countries studied, researchers even from regional universities are required to have research permits from their respective education ministries and authorisation from local government authorities or church authorities to carry out research in primary schools they administer. In some instances, the normal government bureaucracy delayed the process of securing the relevant authorisation. In other instances, like that experienced in the Solomon Islands, individuals and circumstances in the education sector inhibited the process of obtaining government research permits. Such challenges ultimately slowed down the progress with the fieldwork. Attempts were made by individual researchers to ensure that the limitations were minimised. Moreover, published materials from respective education ministries, statistics departments, regional and international organisations on the education sector provided additional information that helped researchers to verify, compare and confirm certain data and information from interviewees. It is important to note that each case study country has certain peculiar limitations and these are outlined in the respective country chapters.

V. Education Policies and Statistics

Education systems in all four countries studied have one thing in common – they have their roots in the British education system! Fiji, Kiribati and Solomon Islands were former British colonies while Samoa was administered by New Zealand following Germany's departure after WWI. The Education systems in these four countries directly stemmed from their colonial heritage, although inputs by local people were included some years after independence. The structure, decision-making, and appointments within the systems such as leadership positions in educational administration, governing bodies, registration and deregistration of schools, curriculum development, teacher registration, student enrolments, fee level, grants and other aspects of education are prescribed by specific national Education Acts, financial regulations and other policies. What follows is a brief review of the respective education legislations in these four countries to provide insights into how primary education is governed and delivered in each of these PICs.

Education legislations

In the four countries studied, the head of educational administration was the Permanent Secretary or Chief Executive Officer (Samoa) with the Minister as the political head. In each country there was also a governing body that had oversight function in education. In Fiji, it was the *Fiji Education Forum* (Fiji Education Act, 1978: Part III); in the Solomon Islands it was the *National Education Board* (SI Education Act, 1996: Part II); in Kiribati, it was known as the *Educational Advisory Committee* (Education Ordinance, 1977: Part III) and in Samoa the overall authority was with the state under the supervision of the Chief Executive Officer in the Ministry of Education (Education Act, 2009: Parts II & VII). Members of these oversight bodies were usually appointed by the Minister of Education, and they were individuals with experience and expertise in the field of education or who represented various stakeholders in the education sector. For instance, the *Fiji Education Forum* consisted of the Permanent Secretary, the Deputy Permanent Secretaries, one representative from each of the Fiji Teachers' Union and Fijian Teachers' Association, the President of Fiji Principals' Association and ten representatives of the controlling authorities of registered or recognized schools.

These structures and their composition are included in the legal prescriptions within the respective education Acts.

Fiji, with its multicultural population of 837,271 (2007 Census) has the most developed education system of the four countries. The educational institutions in Fiji are relatively well developed with significant variations in early childhood, primary, secondary and post-secondary or tertiary education. The country's formal education system has evolved over 160 years (Education Commission, 2000). For a considerable time, education has been a partnership between government and communities. A special feature of education in Fiji is the extent of community - based organisations or non-government organisations involved in the ownership and operation of schools and institutions at all levels of the system. It was the 1978 Education Act that identified the key features of the education system, the responsibilities of the Ministry of Education and those of school authorities and other important education stakeholders. Significant policy and legislative changes have taken place in Fiji's education over the last decade, and especially by the post-2006 military backed government.

Kiribati has a population of around 110,000 people (AusAID 2010). Like Samoa, Kiribati adopted its mother tongue as the language of instruction in primary schools. The development of education in Kiribati began during the colonial period initially dominated by Christian religious missions, and much later in 1965, it became more integrated and coordinated with the intervention of the colonial government. This was through the formulation of the first comprehensive education policy adopted in 1970 (Mackenzie, 2004). In 1977, when Kiribati was moving towards political independence, the government took control of almost all primary schools in the country and instituted centralized government control. The churches remain important partners in the provision of education, especially in the secondary school sector, and to a lesser extent in running pre-schools. This has created a certain imbalance in educational provision across the country. Kiribati has a body similar to the *Fiji Education Forum*. This body is similarly comprised of education stakeholders such as education officials, representatives of teachers' and principals' associations, representatives of 'controlling authorities' of schools and nominees of the Minister. Their purpose is to provide a forum in which "...to express grievances and the Ministry of Education to defend itself" (Education Commission 2000: 31).

Samoa, with a population of about 180,741 people is said to be faring well and universal primary education is encouraged. Its schooling system has been derived largely from the New Zealand system. Since the early 1990s, the nomenclature for primary levels changed from 'primer', 'standard' and 'form' to 'year'. Hence, primary schooling now consists of Years 1 to 8. The starting age is 5 years. Younger children aged 3 to 4 years are allowed to attend pre-schools which are run mainly by private organizations and church groups. Almost all villages have a primary school. The status and governance of primary education in Samoa has not been closely scrutinized in the recent past. The political system in Samoa may also have implications for primary education delivery and governance as only those with *matai* (chiefly) titles get elected to parliament. In Samoa, the daily management of the schools are left to the individual school committees which normally consist of the school principal or his/her nominee and village representatives who are usually *matai* (chiefs) and men.

Solomon Islands had a population of 515,817 people (SIG 2011: 1) and more than 50% these were youths and women. The focus of the education sector since the 1990s has been on basic and primary education. In 2009, the number of schools in the Solomon Islands were as follows: 512 early childhood centres (ECE); 533 primary schools; 167 community high schools (CHCs); 16 Provincial Secondary Schools (PSS); 10 National Secondary Schools (NSS); and 27 Rural Training Centres (RTC) (MEHRD 2010: 33). Fee free education has recently been introduced and its sustainability in the post-conflict context, the weak economic environment and heavy dependency on aid will be discussed later.

Table 4 below summaries the structure of primary education and number of schools in the four countries.

Table 4: Summary of Education Models, Primary Age Groups and Numbers

Country	Education Model	Primary Age Group	Number of primary schools
Fiji	6-4-3 & 8-3-1	6 – 12 (years 1 to 6)	724
Kiribati	6-3-3	6 – 12 (years 1 to 6)	91
Samoa	8-3-1	5 – 14 (years 1 to 8)	165
Solomon Islands	6-3-3	6 – 12 (years 1 to 6)	533

Source: Respective government statistics offices and ICDE, 2013

The enrolment age of children in primary school ranges from 5 years old in Samoa, to 6 years in Fiji, and 6-7 and 6-9 in Kiribati and Solomon Islands respectively. In Fiji, the primary school age of children must be between 6 and 15 - anyone beyond that age group must not remain in primary school. The primary school age is clearly indicated in Fiji while it is not as clear in other countries. In Samoa, Fiji and Kiribati schooling is compulsory and all have laws to this effect with penalties for parents and guardians who fail to send their children to school. The enforcement of the law is however a challenge for these three countries. In the Solomon Islands, schooling is not compulsory and neither is attendance legislated for. The *Education Act* of Samoa stipulates that "any person being the carer of a compulsory school-aged child who fails to ensure that the child attends school in accordance with this Act commits an offence and shall be liable to a fine not exceeding 10 penalty units and one penalty unit for each day that the offence continues. In any legal proceeding the carer bears the onus of proving that the child is attending school in accordance with this Act" (Part II; section 6). Similarly, in Kiribati, the Act states that "the parent of every child or any specified age or ages shall secure the regular education of her/his child at any non-government or government schools. Parents neglecting this without sufficient cause to cease to do so shall be liable to a fine of $5 and a fine of $1 for each day which the offense continues" (Part VII; Section 29).

In Fiji during the pre-2006 coup era, there was a provision that the Minister (with the approval of Parliament) may by order "specify any area or areas of Fiji in which all children of such age or ages as may be specified in such order shall be required to attend a school (Education Act of Fiji, Part XI)". In 1997 the government passed the Compulsory Education Act which made schooling compulsory for the first 8 years or for all 6 to 15 year olds. It was envisaged that education would be made

compulsory for a further 4 years. The government has not enforced this legislation, both truancy and dropouts remain significant issues. A number of education related laws, policies and regulations were reviewed and changed by the post-coup military backed government (MOE, 2009). In summary, Fiji, Kiribati and Samoa stipulate compulsory education in their regulations while this is not clearly indicated for Solomon Islands.

Comparative Primary Education Statistics

The international emphasis on human rights for all, the EFA and MDG targets and a regional focus on the need for equal representation in all sectors of society have highlighted the need for gender equality in schools and the education system. Generally, most Pacific island societies are patriarchal in nature and although respect for women exists, discrepancies are notable in access to education, employment and leadership in formal settings. As Liki (2010: 3) pointed out in the case of Solomon Islands, "[b]iased patterns against girls' education persisted over the years and characterized much of the post-independence period". In recent years, efforts by the global community through the work of the United Nations (UN) and various organisations pushed the need for equal treatment of girls and women to the forefront. Indeed the various Conferences on Women and Human Rights have been successful in this regard. Although the agreements and communiqués and action plans are not legally binding under international law, they have morally obliged governments that are signatories to them. The Fourth Conference on women's rights held in Beijing in 1995 resulted in 189 governments signing to support the agenda for gender equality under *the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* (Robert 2010: 3-4). These consolidated past commitments like the *Universal Declaration on Human Rights* (1948) and *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW), 1995). Table 5 below presents a comparative summary of educational statistics in the four countries disaggregated by gender.

Table 5: Statistics showing number of schools, gender and rural/urban locations

	Fiji (year)	Kiribati (year)	Samoa (year)	Solomon Islands (year)
National population	837,271 (2007)	92,533 (2005)	187,820 (2011)	515,870 (2009)
Male population	427,176	45,612	96,990	264,455
Female population	410,095	46,921)	90,830	251,415
Total primary school enrolment	133,835	15,379 (2010)	39,073 (2012)	100,356
Males	69,579 (52.0%)	7,615 (49.5%)	20,097 (51.4%)	53,146 (53.0%)

Females	64,256 (48.0%)	7,764 (50.5%)	18,976 (48.6%)	47,210 (47.0%)
Retention rate			84 % (2012)	
Total # of teachers in the country	9,719	1,319 (2010)	2,454 (2012)	5,288 (2008)
Total # of primary school teachers	5,131	627 (2010)	1,464 (year?)	4,986 (2012)
Males	2,344 (45.7%)	118 (18.8%)	579 (39.5%)	2,314 (46.4%)
Females	2,787 (54.3%)	509 (81.2%)	885 (60.5%)	2,672 (53.6%)
Qualified	4364	488 (2010)	N/A	N/A
Registered	-	482 (2010)	N/A	2,714 (2008)
Untrained	144	27 (2010)	N/A	
Total # of schools	1,805		208 (2012)	
No. of primary schools	720	91	165	533
Urban	-		31	
Rural	-		134	
School authorities (primary schools)	Government-2 Committee And Private-718 Total – 720	Central government	Village school committees, Parents-Teachers Association, Church & government authorities	Provincial government, churches, education authorities & private organisations

Sources: respective government reports

With the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in September 2000, the achievement of Goal 2, universal primary education became a priority for Global South countries. MDG 2 also sought to reduce the gender gap in primary school. In 2008-2009 period, it was reported that in the Pacific, there was a positive trend in this regard although questions of quality and attendance by those enrolled was a concern (Naidu 2009: 11).

In line with MDGs Goal 2, access to universal primary education was encouraged by the introduction of a policy on 'fee free education' in all the four PICs studied. There had been a big gap between enrolment of girls and boys in basic education but this has been reduced. School enrolment of boys and girls is between 47 to 50% of the total enrolment in all case study countries. In Fiji in 2007, 52% of primary school enrolments were boys while 48% were girls. For Kiribati in 2005, the figures were 49.5% boys and 50.5% girls. For Samoa in 2011, 51.4% of primary school enrolments were boys while 48.6% girls. This is increasingly the case as well in Solomon Islands where in 2009, out of the total number of 100,356 enrolments in primary schools, 47,210 (47.0%) were females and 53,146 (53.0%) were males.

The emphasis on primary education and the push by donors for universal access since the 1990s is slowly bearing fruit in terms of gender equality in basic education. While additional resources for 'fee free' education increased school enrolments, the ideal situation would be that under this framework, government school grants covered all expenses of running a school. This would mean that children attending primary schools do not pay school fees and/or school related charges at all. Unfortunately, in all four countries, there has been a general difficulty of funding this policy.

VI. Human Resources: Teachers and Education Stakeholders

The governance, administration and delivery of primary education services in the Pacific involve a number of different actors. Most of the stakeholders are identified and described in their respective national education legislation, policy documents and manuals. The success or otherwise of governance and administration in this sense depend on three factors. First, as the different actors are accountable to each other and to the people they serve, creating and maintaining cordial relationships among stakeholders is important for the delivery of primary education. These stakeholders comprise an extensive network including the central government ministry of education, provincial governments, education authorities (EAs), teachers, school committees and local communities (including landowners). Second, there is the requirement of each country to successfully satisfy and support international conventions related to primary education, gender equality and human rights. These refer to the need for equal and universal access to primary education by children as well as government and donor support to the primary education sector. Third, the capacity of the primary education sector to govern and deliver is vital to quality provision of educational rights to all children. Delivery is dependent on budgetary assistance and resources to support and sustain primary education as will be seen in the section on budgets and accountability.

Note that an overview of the systems of governance for the respective countries is described in the policy section above. In addition, table 5 highlights the various authorities that play critical roles in the primary education sectors of the 4 PICs. Despite the obvious lack of direct participation of the central government in primary

education except in Fiji and in only 2 schools in Fiji (see Table 5), central governments play a pivotal role in the provision of primary education in the PICs. This is because across all four cases, central governments afford regular financial support to schools, pay teachers' salaries, offer scholarships for teacher training, and determine what curriculum to use. In other words, the ministry responsible for education in the respective countries provides annual recurrent expenditure budgets that cover salaries of all primary school teachers, curriculum materials, teaching resources, teacher training and costs that support the operation of the education system more generally. Central governments usually have the following roles to perform and satisfy in the governance and delivery of education (see respective countries' education legislations):

- Overall administration of and policy-making for the education system
- Policy formation, legislation and implementation
- Registering and monitoring schools and providing advisory services (with the help of local and provincial governments in some countries)
- Paying for tuition for the first 9-10 years of schooling under fee-free education policies
- Defining and designing curriculum and producing related teaching/learning materials
- Setting and overseeing external examinations
- Training teachers
- Licensing and employing of teachers
- Providing grants for buildings and other purposes
- Teacher discipline and deployment of teachers but this is carried out by agents like the education authorities
- Benchmarking standards with regards to curriculum, assessments and examinations and teacher training and professionalism

Apart from the oversight by the central government (the main 'principal'), a critical stakeholder in the primary education sector are school teachers as 'agents'. Teachers are part of governance and delivery of primary education but at the same time they are a subject of governance. The section below looks at teachers as an important stakeholder and their conditions of service.

Teachers

Teachers play a fundamental role in primary education and they are accountable to communities, students and education authorities. They are categorized as either trained/certified or untrained. In Kiribati, a teacher is qualified if he/she meets the minimum of Form 5 education for primary school teaching, and Form 7 education for Junior Secondary School teaching. The number of certified teachers teaching at the primary level ranged between 87% in 2008 being the lowest and 95.7% in 2010 being the highest for the period 2007-2010. The teacher pupil ratio for the 2007-2010 period showed that for primary schools it was 1:25 in 2007 and 2008, and 1:24 in 2009 and 2010. It is important to note that some schools have very small rolls while others are overcrowded especially in the urban schools as was also the case in Apia (Samoa). Table 6 below provides a summary of schools, teachers, and gender/trained/untrained teacher distribution in the four case countries.

Table 6: Total number of primary schools and teachers by gender and training

Country	Total number of primary schools	Total number of teachers	Gender		Trained/Untrained			
					Trained		Untrained	
			Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
FIJI (2012)	724	5,062	2,291 (45.3%)	2,771 (54.7%)	2,281 (45.6%)	2,736 (54.4%)	10 (22%)	35 (77.8%)
Kiribati (2010)	91	627	118 (18.8%)	509 (81.2%)	112 (17.7%)	488 (82.3%)	27 (4.3%)	N/A
Samoa (2007)	166	1,273	293 (23%)	980 (77%)		1,260* (2005)	-	132* (2005)
Solomon Islands	533	4,986	2,314 (46.4%)	2,672 (53.6%)	1,288 (45.7%)	1,531 (54.3%)	1,026 (47%)	1,141 (52.7%)

Source: Case country study reports, 2014

In Fiji, more than 54% of the primary school teachers were females and 45% males. The percentage of female teachers in Samoa was higher. The available figures for Samoan teachers in 2007 showed that 77% of primary school teachers were females and only 23% were males. In Kiribati more than 80% of primary school teachers were females in 2010 and less than 20% were male teachers.

In the Solomon Islands, 53.6% of teachers in primary schools were females and almost 46.4% were males in 2012. Kiribati data show that more than 95% of teachers were qualified compared to only about 56% of qualified teachers in Solomon Islands. It should be pointed out, however, that in Kiribati the required qualification is completion of Form 5 or Year 11 whereas in the Solomon Islands, it is obtaining of teaching certificates and diplomas from the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (now National University of Solomon Islands) or the University of the South Pacific.

At the time of the research, there were no disaggregated statistics for gender or trained and untrained teachers in Samoa. In the Solomon Islands almost 53% of the untrained teachers were females while 47% were males. Looking at all the statistics, it is evident that these PICs employ more women in primary school teaching than men.

Conditions of service

A common current concern in all the four PICs was the welfare of primary school teachers. Teachers faced a lot of difficulties in the process of educating children. This included the low regard for primary teaching as a profession, and low levels of pay compared to other professions. Despite the scholarships for teacher trainees being an on-going challenge for Education Ministries in all four PICs, the academic quality of recipients continued to be a concern. In Samoa, primary school teachers constituted the low-achievers of the Year 13 cohort. Thus, primary school and junior high school teaching have been stigmatised as reserved for failing students.

This marginalizes the teaching profession as second-rate, and this has impacted negatively on the number and quality of new recruits. It seems however that the respective education ministries have not done much to address the valuing of teachers in education. All countries studied have experienced difficulty in securing qualified and enthusiastic new recruits for the teaching profession. A substantial number of newly recruited teachers considered teaching as only a stepping stone to secure more attractive jobs. Closer collaboration with and even scrutiny of national teacher training programmes is one way to ensure there is positive regard for the quality of education graduates – most of whom will be primary school teachers. This is a governance and accountability issue as the recruitment and training of quality teachers is a prerogative of national governments and they are accountable to their teachers and vice versa.

Closely related and of significance have been teacher salary levels - an on-going problem in all four PICs. Teachers were concerned that the image of their profession as second-rate was not helped by low salaries. A common point raised during interviews was that the cost of living has increased, yet a raise in emoluments has not been forthcoming. This, and similar problems have implications for education budget allocations, visions of quality education for all, and transparency in delivering education services. In all the countries studied, parents and school officials have little say in which teachers and what kinds of teachers are assigned to them. Most primary school teachers were public servants, although in the Solomon Islands, teachers come under the separate Teaching Service Commission. They had secure life-long employment (and job security) but most of them considered that their salaries, conditions of employment, and career paths to be relatively limited when compared to other professions in the civil service. Salaries of primary school teachers have been low and fixed. Performance based incentives have been rare. Absenteeism, lateness to classes and lack of enthusiasm in teaching by primary school teachers were obvious concerns that directly related to incentives and level of pay.

The fact that school operation involved central government, private providers, religious groups and other actors such as local villagers (or PTAs for urban schools) did pose challenges for all concerned as their interests differed on matters of mutual concern. There was a tendency for teachers in the four countries to avoid rural and outer island schools that were far from the urban centres. A significant consequence of this was the acute shortage of teachers in rural schools. The perception that rural schools were not as well-resourced as urban-based ones had adversely affected the enrolment numbers in village schools in these countries. On the other hand, there was the problem of high pupil-teacher ratios in urban schools. Teachers in all four countries complained about employment conditions, promotions, lack of training opportunities and poor school facilities, especially in rural schools that will be discussed below.

Teaching resources and infrastructure

Directly related to the above points are the key issues of teaching materials and the development and/or maintenance of primary school infrastructure and facilities. The maintenance of infrastructure has been a major concern during the period 2000 to 2013. Conditions of school infrastructure have generally declined despite efforts made by governments. In all study countries, the need to maintain and develop primary school infrastructure was an obvious concern. In Fiji for instance,

apart from the support some schools received from donors and other sources, schools needed to raise funds for maintenance of facilities, and the purchase of teaching resources. Elsewhere, for some parents, the increasing number of school fundraising activities continued to be a burden especially when the use of these funds were not properly accounted for. Kiribati also reported the dire need to have adequate teaching resources in primary schools.

One issue teachers in all countries talked about was the impact of 'fee-free' education policies on the ability of the schools to maintain, upgrade and build new school facilities. With the introduction of 'fee-free' education, primary schools were expected to charge low or no fees at all. However, fee free education policy was regarded by most principals and head teachers interviewed in the four countries to be stifling school upkeep and school infrastructure development. As such, school boards and education authorities imposed 'school fees' under different names. Since 2010 in Fiji, the tuition fee free grants were given to schools as well as the free bus fare initiative and food voucher assistance to encourage all children to attend primary school. The study showed that while teachers and parents were happy with these initiatives, they wished to see a review of the formula that pays F$90 per head of student, as it was more beneficial to urban schools than rural schools. Moreover, schools continued to fundraise to meet other development needs. Similarly, in Kiribati, teachers felt that there was inadequate support by central government because it was assuming too much responsibility over the running and financing of schools with rather limited resources. In Samoa, the School Fee Grant Scheme (SSFG) was a standardized approach to financing schools that would replace school fees in primary schools. However, due to the inadequacy of grants to meet essential work such as building maintenance and renovation, grounds cleaning and security, the schools had to find their own sources of funds. Thus, school committees continue to operate as they did prior to the introduction of 'fee-free' education policy to make sure levies for such expenses were collected. Likewise, in the Solomon Islands, schools felt that their requirements for teaching aids and resources were inadequately met by central government, and as a result most schools complained that they often ran out of resources thus negatively affecting children learning outcomes.

In all the four countries, the central governments provided subsidies to registered church and private schools in the form of the teachers' salaries, and support for their educational projects for donor funding quarterly grants. Most teachers interviewed in the first phase of the research in the four countries felt that government support to them falls way short of the level of funding and support required to effectively run primary schools. The issue of teaching resources and infrastructure continues to be challenges. Although attempts were being made to address these in the four case study countries, more concerted effort is required, especially in rural areas and outer islands.

Figures 2 and 3 below are photos of classrooms in a rural and an urban school.

Figure 2: A rural primary classroom
Photo by Gordon Nanau, 2012

Figure 3: An urban primary classroom
Photo by Gordon Nanau, 2012

Other Education Stakeholders

Besides the central government and teachers, there are other important stakeholders in the four study countries. They are parents and communities that are served by the schools, and school committees that manage them. The school committee functions include but are not limited to the following: formulating and establishing school policy; overall governance of the school they look after; responsibility for monitoring process of teaching and learning, co-assessment of teachers and teacher absenteeism and reporting to EAs; ensuring that the wishes of and concerns of the local community in respect of the teaching staff, students, fees and other matters are communicated to responsible education authorities; provision of sets of guidelines/rules for students; promotion of a sense of ownership of the school; and, to initiate community support to raise funds to support the school.

Table 7 summarises the different stakeholders in the primary education sector in the 4 PICs and their functions.

Table 7: Primary School Stakeholders and Functions

Country	Education Stakeholder	Function(s) of the stakeholder in primary education
1.Fiji	*Government*	Policy Financial & Operation Management (including data collection and analysis, annual report writing) training and appointment of teachers, curriculum development, and external exam
	Non-Government Organisation	Financial & operation Management Teacher recruitment and discipline
	Private bodies/organisations	Financial & operation Management Teacher recruitment and discipline
2. Kiribati	*National Government*	Policy and administrative oversight, administration of schools from the capital
	School committees	Management of schools, especially to liaise with the central government when there are issues of concern to parents and communities. They recommend but have no power to change government's decision.
3. Samoa	*National Government*	Provide teachers, curriculum, teacher training; oversee quality and supervision of major examinations and assessments; cover school tuition,
	Churches – Methodist Church, Catholic and LDS	Oversee implementation of curriculum, provide religious curriculum, provide teachers and pay teachers' salaries
	Private providers	Oversee teaching of curriculum; pay teachers' salaries, consult with education ministry on relevant issues
4. Solomon Islands	*National Government*	Research, policy formulation, planning, coordination and implementation Regulatory functions
	Provincial Governments	Production, coordination and monitoring of provincial education development plans Offer budget for education services in the province Provision of accommodation and office facilities for education officers and inspectors coordination and monitoring of central government grants
	Education Authorities (Provinces, churches, private bodies)	Planning, establishment, management and supervision of school(s) in close consultation with the national government Recommending of recruitment, promotion, demotion, retirement, suspension, termination and discipline of teachers, and reporting to ministry of education Coordinating and facilitating in-service training; Oversight of disciplinary policy for teachers

Source: Country case study reports, 2014

VII. Education Budgets and Financial Accountability

Besides various stakeholders identified above and their relationships in promoting basic education, the delivery of primary education in PICs is strongly linked to education budgets and financial support. In all four countries, the central government allocates grants to all registered schools. Most of the teachers are paid by government, and materials used in schools are mostly provided through government grants. The respective education oversight bodies, such as the Education Forum in Fiji or the National Education Board in the Solomon Islands determine the level of these grants from time to time. They have specific dates of payments, notification of the level of grants, and conditions of payment, accounting, and submission of audited accounts associated with these disbursements. For example, one of the conditions for accessing primary school grants in the Solomon Islands is proper acquittal of financial records, and regular return of a questionnaire on school records. Through this mechanisms, up to date and detailed data on primary and secondary schools are collected and made available for planning and budgeting purposes. More importantly, they seek to ensure that funds are accounted for and acquitted in appropriate ways before further tranches are released.

Education Budgets

In the late 1990s Fiji imposed a school fee range from F$36 to $78 per annum for resident, and four times that amount for non-resident students. It should be noted however, like the other PICs studied, since the early 2000's there has been a movement towards 'fee free education'. The Fiji government acknowledged the EFA as a priority area as reflected in a 5% increase in 2005 government funding (MoE, 2005). The MoE 2006 annual report highlighted the aspirations of the Fiji government in adopting the EFA policy. These included the need for: (i) quality education and training that is responsive to changing needs; (ii) productive, transparent and accountable institutions; and, (iii) equitable participation of all in socio economic development - equal opportunities for all (MoE, 2006: 4). Consequently, the education department monitored progress in the quest for universal primary education. The Fiji MoE has been the largest recipient of the government's annual budget allocation.

In Kiribati, recurrent grants to primary schools paid teacher salaries and covered payments for equipment. The education sector received the largest share of the government budget for the period 2000-2010. Its share of the total budget fluctuated between 18% and 25%; averaging at about 20%. The share of basic education in the MoE total budget had increased over the years with just over 40% in 2003 and 50% in 2008. However, from this allocation about 90% or more was assigned to teachers' costs and personal emoluments, and less than 10% went to meet actual operation costs of delivering primary education services. As the country report highlighted, in the 2010 budget, a total of AU$150,000 was allocated for the purchase of goods and materials needed by the 91 primary schools.

Since 2010 the Samoan government through the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (MESC) started giving grants to primary schools. Calculated at ST$100.00 for every student per year, the grant funded supplies of stationeries, specific school projects such as field trips, sports groups, office equipment, and covered expenses such as electricity and water bills. Although it was a welcome move, it raised a few concerns. One effect of this system observed by school principals was that it had led

to certain schools having higher student numbers and some getting low enrolments. Some villages insisted that all children must attend the school in their villages so that grants are retained in their village school. Unfortunately, this worked against parental choice in enrolling their children in any school. As villages vied for higher grants, their respective councils placed certain restrictions on choice of schools and movement between schools. This has become an issue to be addressed in Samoa.

In recent years, the Solomon Islands government recorded very high provisions for education in its annual budgets. For instance, in 2006 education took 20% of recurrent budget, 31% in 2007, 22% in 2008 and 26% in 2009 (MEHRD 2009: 74). The share of basic education has remained above 60% in the total allocation to education over the years such that basic education received 67.6% of the education budget in 2006, 69.4% in 2007, 63.8% in 2008 and 69.1% in 2009 (ibid). Note that these figures do not include the cost of training primary school teachers which was also shouldered mostly by the government.

Up till very recently, Solomon Islands charged fees to its students. Provincial schools' fees ranged from SI$100 to SI$400, privately owned primary schools, SI$150 – SI$500, and others like the Honiara International Primary School charged between SI$1,520 – SI$2,120. The adoption of Education for All (EFA) approach in the education system saw the nominal removal of fees from primary and secondary schools in all PICs studied. However, despite increases in budgetary support from the central government, schools still charged fees under certain pretexts such as 'development' and 'building' fees.

Table 8 below indicates the budgetary support given by government and other sources to primary schools

Table 8: Education Budgets, 2012

Country	Total National Budget (YEAR)	Education Budget (% of National budget)	Primary Education budget (% of Education
Fiji (2012)	F$ 2,077,929,300	F$324,931,100 (15.6%)	F$113,366,000 (34.9%)
Kiribati (2012)	AU $88,301,664	AU $18,638,444 (21.1%)	AU$ 7,026,559 (37.7%)
Samoa (2012)	ST 545,052,401	ST 84,916,987 (15.6%)	NA
Solomon Islands (2011)	SI$ 2,200,000,000	SI$ 534,910,152 (24.3%)	SI$ 219,238,434 (41.0%)

Source: Case study country reports, 2014

Approximate Exchange Rates: (US$1= AU$1.06; FJ$1.83; WST2.31; SB$7.27)

Financial Accountability

Several governance and accountability issues were scrutinized in this study. These were particularly related to how different stakeholder and players within the education sector interacted and related to each other. Financial accountability is usually between the central government which provided school and other grants, education authorities (churches, provinces and private bodies), communities, school committees/boards and teachers. The success and effectiveness of primary education delivery depends very much on the coordination of relationships between these stakeholders and the accountability mechanisms in place. The accountability mechanisms and relationships that exist between these stakeholders that are outlined here are specifically dealt with in the country case studies.

In Fiji primary schools have their own annual budgets based on the annual government grants. There was a general feeling that urban schools because of their student numbers enjoyed much larger government grants, and parental financial support compared to rural primary schools. The latter do not enjoy the same level of funding because of lower enrolments, and parents being semi-substance farmers and fishers have limited sources of cash income. Despite the implementation of 'fee free education', primary schools still required parents to meet certain expenses and costs towards school development and maintenance. The research found that funds collected in rural schools are sometimes not well accounted for compared to urban schools because of limited financial management competence of personnel. Moreover, parents in the urban schools are more vocal than rural parents who do not generally express their concerns. They do nevertheless show in their actions their disinterest in fundraising when government grants and school funds are not well accounted for or audited. The procedures for financial accountability in in Fiji are clearly outlined in the various regulations such as the *Financial Management Act, 2004* and *Education (Grants and Assistance to Schools) Regulations, 1998.*

Similar to Solomon Islands and Samoa, a certain formula is used to calculate the level of grants given to schools for specified activities. When expending schools funds, records and evidence of transactions are kept by the school. Education officers may request to examine these records during their scheduled visits/tours. Financial reports are endorsed in the Annual General Meeting that must include parents of the school and should be submitted to the Ministry of Education by the end of February of the following year. When schools do not prepare timely audited annual financial report, the school's grants may not be issued. In instances where discrepancies are identified by the Auditor, the Permanent Secretary of Education may "institute disciplinary action or legal proceedings against the school or individuals implicated" (Fiji Government, 2009: 10). When that happens, the school is penalised, and disadvantaged. In 2014, it was reported that four schools failed to submit financial reports, and minutes of their annual general meetings by the due date, and that delayed the release of their grants (Fiji times, 16 August, 2014). This indicated that most of the schools accounted for the funds they received.

A general observation regarding the annual budget process in Kiribati, was that the allocation to MoE and by MoE towards recurrent expenditure to primary schools collectively, and to individual schools was not very transparent. The budget for primary education is aggregated so it is difficult to determine what funds are budgeted for each school, or what share each school received from the total primary education budget. The centralised management and decision-making that

characterized the public service and its highly charged bureaucratic processes meant that government funds for primary education were also centrally managed and controlled. While there were internal processes and procedures established by law and regulations on expending government or public funds, such as the *Financial Regulations of 1974*, their actual application to the funding of schools raised issues of accountability and transparency. Past experiences showed that funds allocated to local authorities for primary education on outer islands were not properly managed, thus justifying the need for a more centralised financial control.

The centralised system of primary education management also applied to financial management and control. Schools and communities are excluded from decision-making processes including the budget processes. Apart from the public document of the government annual recurrent budget and report, it was not possible to know how funds were allocated among schools. There were no explicitly stated policies on a formula for the allocation of funds. The primary education output budget is not disaggregated and the allocation formula was also not known. It is important for stakeholders to know the budget allocation between urban and rural primary schools especially schools in remote and isolated communities. The social and economic circumstances of communities need to be taken into account in the allocation of financial support to schools. A funding allocation formula would be useful in assessing its impact on the delivery of education services in different sectors of the community.

The schools in the Kiribati case study, like all other primary schools were not consulted or had any kind of input in the budget process and therefore were not aware of the level of funding that their schools received from the MoE budget. This, understandably caused uncertainty and frustration when the ministry was unable to meet the growing demand for new activities undertaken by schools to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Given the inability of the ministry to respond promptly and adequately to requests from schools for the supply of certain equipment and the replenishment of educational materials and resources, it raised questions of whether the funds have been equitably apportioned to schools. Because of inadequate funding by government, most schools, particularly in the urban areas embarked on fund-raising activities which again raised a host of other issues, including the risk of excluding the economically disadvantaged children. Suffice it to say that financial accountability in Kiribati is centralised and may not be very transparent.

In May, 2010, in Samoa, the government with assistance from AusAID and NZAid introduced the Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme (SSFGS) for all government primary schools as well as church schools and special schools. The private schools were not included in the scheme as a condition for eligibility was service to "disadvantaged populations" (MESC, 2010, 8). SSFGS supported the enforcement of legislations on compulsory primary education. It was also a government strategy to address the needs of a growing number of Samoa's population that were economically vulnerable and were facing hardships. It focused on 'equity' that encouraged parents from economically disadvantaged families to enrol children in school. The grant was distributed to schools in May every year and was intended to substitute school fees and to provide adequate resources to help schools meet teaching and learning goals. The SSFGS employed a 'standardized' approach to 'replacing' fees at the school level, and the amount received by a school was determined using a formula which was a combination of a base grant component for specific status plus

a per capita component of the grant each of which was determined from time to time by the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture. The Program started off with a per capita allocation of T$100 per student (based on enrolment on March 31) for all government primary schools and mission primary school and T$200 per student for special schools. Government primary schools also received a base grant component depending on their size: less than 50 students, T$1,900; 51-150 students, T$1,600; 151-300 students, T$ 1,300; and more than 300 students T$1,000. Mission schools received a base component of T$2,000 regardless of schools size and special schools received a base component of T$3,000 regardless of school size. Put simply the grant amount depended on the enrolment number of a school.

SSFGS funds were deposited by the Ministry of Finance directly into schools' bank accounts which have to be cheque accounts. Funds can only be used by the principal and approved by the school committee. Payments by the school for goods or services can only be made by cheque. The main signatory to the cheque account was the school principal but each cheque must be countersigned by a designated member of the school committee. The school principal and school committee were expected to use the funds to finance activities that eventually influence students' learning outcomes. Each school developed a School Improvement Plan (SIP) over a three year cycle. These in turn were translated into Annual Management Plans (AMPs). The focus of the SSFGS was the AMP, and the SSFGS grants funds can finance or assist in the financing of the activities in the Plan.

A condition of the SSFGS required the Principal of each primary school to submit a brief SSFGS Financial Report on a quarterly basis in 2010 and on a six monthly basis in subsequent years. The brief financial reports were then sent to the Core executive within the Ministry that looked after this programme. MESC officials saw the reports as not only a good governance mechanism but a way to allow schools to make suggestions for improvements in the SSFGS. Another condition of the Grant was that schools were mandated to submit their School Improvement Plans (SIPs) and Annual Management Plans which included their annual budgets to MESC. Then MESC and donors were to review the SSFGS annually and submit a report on the Scheme to the Education Advisory Committee that oversaw the project.

In the Solomon Islands, the initial allocation for the universal primary education activities were through a special fund. Since 2010 subsequent funding arrangements were through activity based planning, costing and financing based on statistical data collected through the annual school surveys. Since the introduction of the fee free education policy, the education budget comprised 25% to 40% of the total national government recurrent expenditure budget, and the primary sector received at least 60% of the total education budget allocation annually. Grants to primary schools fell under three different components: (i) students grant; (ii) administration grant; and (iii) remote area grant. The new grant system was based on the following principles and mechanisms: basic education for all; transparency, accountability, sustainability, cohesion; teaching and learning oriented; equity; monitoring; training/capacity building; community/partnership and sharing (MEHRD 2012a: 8-9).

The bulk of the funds received by primary schools was from the student grant while the administration grant was the same amount paid to all primary schools. The student grant was calculated at $320 (rural primary) and $520 (urban primary) per

student per year and paid out in 2 tranches per year. The administration grant was calculated at $2,500 per primary school per year and was paid once at the beginning of the year. The remote areas grant was paid only to remote schools (zone 2 schools) and was calculated at $2,000 paid once at the beginning of the year (MEHRD, 2012: 24). This research found that different schools had different ways of raising funds apart from the student and administration grants given by government ranging between $25 and $100 per term. Others charged parents between $175 per term or $700 per annum.

There were certain limitations on the use of the total amount of grants received by schools. Forty per cent (40%) of the grants must be spent on teaching materials and sixty per cent (60%) on other recurrent expenses, such as utilities and training (in house), and small capital expenses, such as small repairs and maintenance of office buildings and classrooms, and the purchase of classroom equipment (MEHRD, 2012b: 12). Teaching materials included curriculum, instructional materials, and examination expenses; books and stationeries; teaching equipment (as in science subjects); and the establishment and development of a school library. Utilities for primary schools included water, electricity and gas for urban schools; rentals (land, building, vehicles, and teaching equipment), water tanks fuel, oil, transportation and other related expenses (see MEHRD, 2012a: 23). The only capital uses of government grant were for small repairs and maintenance on office building and classrooms or the purchase of office and classroom furniture.

The amount of grant given to schools was based on the recent Solomon Islands Education Management Information System (SIEMIS) data collected from the annual school survey. From that SIEMIS record, the MEHRD paid school grants directly into the account of the school. The disbursement records were then sent by MEHRD to Education Authorities (EAs) to cross check with the retirement record in June and December every year. Such retirements were made by school heads and administrators to EAs with cash books, payment vouchers, invoices and receipts, and copies of bank statements. From these retirement accounts, a consolidated report was sent by EAs to MEHRD for their assessment. A correct retirement together with the school's development plan and a completed SIEMIS survey form must be submitted to MEHRD for the next tranche to be paid out to individual schools. Schools that failed to meet these requirements have their grant payments delayed. Where a head teacher (as the accounting officer) failed to submit the required documents, especially failing to submit the retirement, s/he is demoted to become a class teacher and is transferred to another school. The MEHRD payroll will then commence deductions from the concerned head teacher's salary for unaccounted funds. The research found that criminal charges were rarely laid against such head teachers partly because of the limited number of teachers available.

From the above discussions on budgets and financial accountability procedures, there were accountability issues regarding grants and fees in the context of EFA and MDGs. Generally, resource allocations to primary schools were relatively transparent. With the exception of Kiribati, grants were determined by certain formulas of allocation, and all case study countries commit relatively large resources in primary education. All countries, allocated between 15% - 25% of the national budget on education delivery and the primary education received between 35% - 41% share of the funds allocated to the respective ministries of education. Community (including parents of pupils) support for primary schools was gradually eroding in all countries, not only in urban areas but also in rural areas.

Donors were significant players in education policy making, funding, supplying and maintaining educational facilities as well as the actual delivery of primary education in Kiribati, Samoa and Kiribati. It is also obvious from the country reports that primary education administration and accountability is centralised in Kiribati and Samoa. Some form of decentralisation through the various divisions is seen in Fiji while in the Solomon Islands, education authorities and provinces are in charge of primary education administration and delivery in all the provinces.

VIII. Key Findings and Conclusions

This study sought to compare and contrast the governance and delivery of primary education services in Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa and Solomon Islands between the years 2000 to 2013. A case study approach with insights from disciplines like education administration, politics, sociology, and development studies was used. The core research questions included but were not limited to the following: (i) Are there primary education policies in the case study PICs? (ii) Are there broad educational policy frameworks in these four countries? (iii) What do statistics show in the actual implementation of these education policies? (iv) What are the experiences of teachers teaching in primary schools in terms of support, resources and infrastructure? (v) How are education budgets and funds accounted for? The responses to these questions are covered in the following sections under the general themes of governance structures, policies and statistics; human resources/teachers; and, budgets and financial accountability.

Governance structures, policies and statistics

In all the countries studied, primary education originated from Christian missionaries and the significant roles of churches and other religious groups in the delivery of primary education continued even after the establishment of colonial rule. For Fiji, Kiribati and Solomon Islands, at independence, they largely inherited the systems established by the British colonial administration. Samoa inherited the New Zealand Education system which also had its roots in the British system. In addition, primary education has been affected by a relatively homogenous culture and tradition in Kiribati and Samoa, and relatively diverse cultures and traditions in Fiji and the Solomon Islands. These differences are further compounded by the relatively stable political landscapes in Kiribati and Samoa, and political instabilities in Fiji and Solomon Islands. These have affected policy making in the education sector.

In terms of organisational structures Fiji, Kiribati and Samoa have centralised control of primary education. It should be noted however that Fiji has four regional divisions looked after by its education department, and a peak body called the Fiji Education Forum (FEF) providing nation-wide oversight. For Samoa and Kiribati, respective central government ministries of education control all education matters. By contrast Solomon Islands apart from having a central government ministry and an oversight body, the National Education Board (NEB), the education system is decentralised. Provincial governments and other bodies like churches and private organisations are also education authorities (EAs). They are affiliated to, and accountable to the Ministry of Education financially but they are also autonomous. EAs are also responsible for contracting (recruiting), posting, provision of teacher's accommodation, inspection, maintenance, and in-service training of teachers.

Following on from the above discussion on organisational structure, it must be pointed out that in Fiji, a special feature of the education system is the extent of community, and non-government organisations' involvement in the ownership and operation of schools and institutions at all levels. Nevertheless, provisions in the 1978 Education Act emphasise that education is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and school authorities, and other important education stakeholders. In Kiribati, a complete takeover of primary education by the central government from churches was instituted in 1976. In Samoa, the New Zealand education model continued to shape primary education after independence in 1962. It is centrally controlled. In the Solomon Islands, the government determined the new structure of primary education but the ownership of primary schools have largely been in the hands of churches, local communities and EAs. The difference therefore is that in Fiji, Kiribati and Samoa, school buildings, facilities, and maintenance are supported by governments whereas EAs are in charge in the Solomon Islands.

A common policy adopted by all four PICs in the late 1990s and early 2000 period was **fee free education policy** and related reforms. The adoption of this policy impacted and changed the way people view primary education, and how primary education is funded. The commitment to MDG 2, on achieving universal primary education became the priority in all these countries. People had mixed reactions when the 'fee free' aspect of this universal commitment was implemented. The reasons for this were:

First, the implementation of fee free education policies led to confusion and some frustration, especially in rural villages and remote islands. Although 'fee free education' was welcomed by parents, the details of what it meant, and what expenses it covered were not clearly communicated to them. Free education referred to tuition and book fees only being paid by the government. Other expenses such as school uniforms and lunches for pupils were not covered. Nor were expenses pertaining to buildings, facilities and their upkeep covered.

Second, with the EFA policies, reforms to national curricula were also instituted. Curriculum reforms were supported by aid donors. In Fiji, the new curriculum also introduced classroom based assessments (CBA) with the intention of involving parents in their children's school work. Unfortunately, in some instances where assigned projects were difficult for children, parents tended to do the assignment. In Kiribati, since 2012, there has been an emphasis on the achievement of EFA but more effective advocacy is needed to generate greater awareness about the programme.

In Samoa in 2012-2013 MESC was in the midst of implementing the new primary school curriculum. The gist of it was the 'focus on the student' approach which covered such areas as inclusive education, emphasis on learning outcomes, and student as well as teacher evaluations. While training of teachers in various schools was being conducted, school principals were concerned that the current teacher trainees in the national university's education program were not introduced to the new curriculum. Hence, there was concern that there would be a significant gap in new teachers' knowledge which could impact negatively on their class room performance. In the Solomon Islands, the reform of the curriculum centred on 'outcomes approach' or outcomes based education (OBE). According to Solomon Islands' *National Curriculum Statement*, the emphasis "...is not on the content of particular subjects but on those elements of the subjects which will be useful and

valuable to learners. The curriculum is *learner- centred* rather than subject-centred" (SIG 2011: 19). At the same time, learners were to be assessed not just by traditional written tests and examinations but for competency (ibid: 21).

Third and closely related to the preceding point, the move to universal basic education also resulted in the removal of traditional standardized examinations. In Fiji, this resulted in the removal of two traditional public examinations, the *Fiji Intermediate Examination* (FIE) in class 6 and the *Fiji Eighth Year Examination* (FEYE) in class 8. This has consequently amplified the retention rate of students in the education system and stopped the past trend of a steep decline in student numbers in the transition to secondary schools. In Kiribati, Samoa and Solomon Islands, there have also been moves to retain students in schools longer with the removal of standardized examinations at both primary and high school levels. The reform is much in line with the MDG 2. It should be noted though, that there is a general feeling among parents and teachers that students under this new system were not very well trained because of the removal of standardized tests in primary and secondary schools. In the process of giving universal access to basic education, quality considerations must also be maintained. It should also be pointed out that for Fiji, Kiribati and Samoa, primary education is compulsory while this is not the case in Solomon Islands.

In terms of primary education statistics, in 2013 there were a total of 774 primary schools in Fiji, 91 in Kiribati, 165 in Samoa and 533 in the Solomon Islands. In the last decade, there has been a general improvement in primary school enrolment, especially in terms of gender. Recent statistics from the four countries showed that since the adoption of EFA policies, the gap between boys and girls attending primary schools has been reduced. In Fiji, 52% of primary school enrolments were boys while 48% were girls. In Kiribati the figures were 49.5% boys and 50.5% girls. Similarly, in Samoa 51.4% were boys while 48.6% were girls. In the Solomon Islands 53% of primary school enrolments were boys and 47% girls. Generally retention rates improved as shown by Samoa in 2012 where the retention rate was recorded at 84%. It should be pointed out that all PICs studied now have systems in place to collect various types of data on staffing, students, finance and other aspects of schools that are useful for planning purposes.

Human Resources: Teachers

Apart from the obvious overall difficulties such as the geographic spread of Pacific island countries over vast ocean spaces, and the heavy dependence of their economies on donor funding to deliver education services, there are other specific issues identified in the country studies. These include gender representation in the teaching work force, primary school teacher training and qualifications, recruitment and retention of teachers, teaching resources and infrastructure, and conditions of service.

The composition of primary school teachers and the proportion of trained and untrained teachers based on gender are interesting and pertinent for quality education delivery. There are many more female than male teachers in primary schools. For instance in Fiji, 54.7% of primary school teachers were females while 45.3% were males. In Kiribati, a staggering 81.2% were females while 18.8% were males. For Samoa, 77% of primary teachers were females while 23% males. In the Solomon Islands, 54.6% of teachers were females and 46.4% males. Untrained

teachers have declined but are to be found in larger numbers in Kiribati and Solomon Islands. There were also a higher number of female teachers that were untrained compared to males. It should be pointed out that a trained teacher in Kiribati is a teacher that has completed schooling up to form 5 and not necessarily one that has professional teaching qualifications. A point worth noting here is that primary school teaching is a very lowly paid profession in all countries. This means that a majority of females employed in this sector are low salary earners which has implications for their livelihoods and commitment.

With regards to teaching resources and infrastructure, there was a general consensus that it was challenging to build and maintain primary school infrastructure. Teachers pointed out that most primary schools do not have adequate resources to maintain school facilities properly. However, fundraising and the charging of fees in all four countries were officially discouraged because of the political commitment to 'fee free education'. In these countries, remote schools suffered the most from inadequate education facilities, the supply of teaching materials, as well as have serious infrastructural difficulties including transportation. The country studies show that despite the official position of government on fee free education, many primary schools continue to engage in fundraising activities. In all four countries the management of money raised through fundraising activities were perceived by parents and education officials to have accountability issues.

There was also a general concern that it was difficult to recruit good students to be trained as primary school teachers. Primary school teaching suffered from the stigma that it was a lowly paid profession reserved for low achievers and failing students. The recruitment and retention of better students as teachers was a major challenge. Moreover, when it came to scholarship and training opportunities, primary school teaching usually had low priority. This was another challenge to be addressed. Perhaps most importantly, the salary of primary school teachers has been low compared to most comparable professions including teaching in secondary schools and nursing. This coupled with the high cost of living in PICs is a concern to teachers in the study countries. There is also the reality that teachers prefer to teach closer to urban centres to access services. Consequently, there are shortages of qualified teachers in remote rural schools.

Education Budgets and Financial Accountability

As noted earlier, since the early 2000s with the introduction of EFA and the prioritisation of MDG 2, the education sector has been allocated between 15% to 25% of the annual budgets of Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa and Solomon. From its total education budget, Fiji allocated 34.9%, Kiribati 37.7% and Solomon Islands 41% to primary education. There was no disaggregated date for Samoa but it would be in the 30% range like the other three PICs. It is also obvious from the case studies that aid plays a critical role in the provision of primary education in Pacific island countries.

With the exception of Fiji, during the study period Kiribati, Samoa and Solomon Islands depended heavily on Australian, New Zealand and European Union aid to support the fee free education policy that they all had adopted. For Fiji, there was a 5% increase in government budget in 2005 to reflect its emphasis on EFA. In Kiribati about 90% of funds in the primary sector go to teachers' salaries and only 10% for

actual operations. In Samoa, school grants based on the number of pupils have led to some schools recording very high numbers, and other schools with declining enrolments. In response some villages made it mandatory that all children from their villages will have to attend the village school. This jeopardised the freedom of parents to enrol their children in schools of their choice. As villages vied for higher grants, their councils placed certain restrictions on the choice of schools, and movement between schools. In the Solomon Islands, the introduction of the fee free education policy resulted in the nominal removal of school fees from schools. However in reality, schools and education authorities raised funds creatively through certain other charges.

Finally, the country case studies found that there was a strong emphasis on financial accountability by parents, communities and donors. With the exception of Kiribati, the other three PICs have adopted formulas to calculate annual grants for schools depending on the number of enrolled students and school location. Such formulas ensured that grants are standardized, transparent and therefore facilitate reporting procedures. For Fiji and Samoa, the centralised nature of education systems meant that schools acquit funds directly to the ministries of education. For the Solomon Islands, fund acquittals were made to the Education Authorities who checked, verified and endorsed records before passing them on to the Ministry of Education. In all cases, schools and at times teachers who failed to comply with accountability processes were penalised. The introduction of EFA policies and support from donors ensured that accountability mechanisms were in place and the capacity of education ministries and other stakeholders responsible for school budgets enhanced.

IX. General Policy Recommendations

Specific policy recommendations have been highlighted in each of the country studies for respective governments and other stake holders to consider. What follows are certain general recommendations common to the four PICs:

(1) There is a general need in all PICs to re-examine education governance structures to ensure, and encourage accountability and transparency in the delivery of basic education. In countries where education services are highly centralised, there is a need to improve and strengthen accountability and ownership through the devolution of decision-making, responsibilities and functions to the local and school levels. Where education structures are decentralised, efforts must be made by governments to foster built-in mechanisms that allow for two way communication between the centre and the schools and vice-versa. In addition, steps are needed to strengthen the enforcement of the legal provisions of compulsory education.

(2) Policy interventions are needed to further encourage the active involvement of host communities in the running of schools. This would create a sense of ownership and improve community support. This recommendation requires a thorough review of regulations relating to different stakeholders' accountabilities and relationship with each other. It will entail scrutinising, and enhancing the bases of partnership with host communities, private organisations, churches and local level government institutions to share the responsibility of governing and delivering education services, and strengthen accountability in primary schools.

(3) All 4 PICs should work towards developing policy interventions that promote primary school teaching as a respectable and worthwhile profession. This would counteract the currently low regard for primary school teaching as a profession, and encourage good students to take up primary school teaching as a career. The importance of quality basic education for life-long learning cannot be over-emphasised.

(4) Related to (3) another priority policy intervention has to be in the working conditions of primary school teachers, and their access to facilities, teaching materials and equipment. Their salaries, the criteria of locating them in rural and urban schools, the criteria used for transferring them from one school to another, incentives, promotions and performance based rewards all require urgent review. More efforts are needed to recognize, promote and appreciate the work of committed teachers in PICs.

(5) Financial accountability needs stepping up in all four PICs. There is a general need to improve transparency by improving systems and mechanisms to monitor funds allocated to schools, budget processes and to facilitate and encourage other sources of revenue. The ultimate objective is to improve monitoring of funds that would discourage the abuse of school funds, a major current concern.

(6) More research, analysis, monitoring and communication of primary education data are needed in the 4 PICs. It is apparent from the fieldwork in the 4 PICs that information and data critical for decision making, and understanding education governance and delivery are not being usefully communicated. The need is to have data and information on education available not only for ministry of education personnel but also to other government departments, school committees and teachers. A centralised data base for all government departments could be a way forward.