



SPC/CRGA 45 (15)

Paper 5
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

**FORTY-FIFTH MEETING OF THE
COMMITTEE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF GOVERNMENTS AND ADMINISTRATIONS**
(Alofi, Niue, 31 October–2 November 2015)

**AGENDA ITEM 5: GOVERNANCE AND FOCUS OF THE EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND ASSESSMENT
PROGRAMME**

(Paper presented by the secretariat)

Summary

1. On 5 February 2015 the Director-General of the Pacific Community convened a special meeting of the Pacific Board for Educational Quality (PBEQ). The following issues were discussed:
 - the name of the board and the programme;
 - the board's role within CRGA;
 - the name of the board's secretariat;
 - the accreditation authority; and
 - the purpose of the board and the core functions of the secretariat.
2. It was agreed that the name PBEQ be retained and that the new name for the programme be the Educational Quality and Assessment Programme (EQAP).
3. It was agreed that PBEQ become a specially mandated subcommittee of CRGA, retaining its advisory roles and all other functions. The principal functions of the subcommittee would include providing advice to the Pacific Community (SPC) on national, regional and international developments in the areas of educational assessment, educational quality, and related issues. It would also advise SPC on priority areas for its work, based on member states' needs and SPC's strategic plan.
4. It was also agreed that the governing body for EQAP would be CRGA and, ultimately, the Conference of the Pacific Community, and that the programme would be accountable directly to the Director-General of SPC. It was also agreed that the board's secretariat would be the Pacific Community's secretariat.
5. As CRGA has the ability and authority to mandate specialist subcommittees to carry out specific activities requiring specific skill sets and expertise, it was recommended that PBEQ would have a mandate to: (a) act as CRGA's proxy for governance of the EQAP programme; and (b) report back to CRGA on any EQAP issues requiring its attention. Moreover, it was suggested that, under this arrangement, PBEQ should act in an advisory capacity and provide its recommendations to the Director-General on awarding and accrediting the South Pacific Form Seven Certificate (SPFSC) and the Pacific Register of Qualifications and Standards (PRQS) on behalf of the SPC secretariat, which is now the awarding and accrediting authority.

6. The meeting recognised that, as a subcommittee of CRGA, the powers of the former board would likely change to align with the CRGA structure. New terms of reference and mandate, reflective of the revised structure within CRGA, would be required to define the role of the subcommittee, its advisory function to the awarding authority, and its purpose, functions, accountability and membership. It was agreed that the board retain its role in providing technical advice.

Recommendations

7. CRGA is invited to:
 - i. approve the role and function of the Pacific Board for Educational Quality as a subcommittee of CRGA;
 - ii. acknowledge and approve the new name for the programme: the Educational Quality and Assessment Programme;
 - iii. approve the awarding and accrediting authority of the Pacific Community's secretariat;
 - iv. authorise the development and adoption of a revised mandate and terms of reference for the Pacific Board for Educational Quality as a subcommittee of CRGA.
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GOVERNANCE AND FOCUS OF THE EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND ASSESSMENT PROGRAMME

Purpose

8. On 5 February 2015 The SPC Director-General of the Pacific Community convened a special meeting with the Pacific Board for Educational Quality (PBEQ). The meeting focused on some of the governance issues that stemmed from the former stand-alone organisation, SPBEA, becoming a part of SPC in 2010. The meeting discussed the board's role within CRGA, the board's secretariat, which organisation would hold accreditation authority with respect to both the South Pacific Form Seven Certificate and the Pacific Register of Qualifications and Standards, and the role and purpose of the board. The results of those discussions are presented in this paper.

Background

The name of the board

9. During the work leading up to the compiling of the South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment SPBEA Review Report in 2013, attention was drawn to the fact that a change in name of the board might be made to better reflect the current and envisaged mandate. With a clear emphasis appearing on quality in education, it was proposed that a new board with new terms of reference could be given a new name. That name is the Pacific Board for Educational Quality (PBEQ) and, that name became official in January 2014.

The board's role within CRGA

10. In light of the fact that its programme is now fully part of SPC, it was suggested that PBEQ become a subcommittee of CRGA, in order to ensure a specialist governance role in this area. It was also agreed that the board's secretariat would be the Pacific Community's (SPC's) secretariat. Within the SPC structure, the programme will be accountable directly to the Director-General of SPC or to the Director-General through a Deputy Director-General. It was agreed that the new name for the programme would be the Educational Quality and Assessment Programme (EQAP).
11. Although the proposed subcommittee will report directly to CRGA through its secretariat, only significant governance-related issues will be submitted for CRGA's information and decision. Details of EQAP work will remain at the subcommittee level, as is currently the case. In terms of an accountability structure, the members envisaged the subcommittee being governed by and reporting to CRGA, and the various subcommittees of the existing board reporting to PBEQ through the EQAP Director and the Director-General. These subcommittees include the South Pacific Form Seven Certificate (SPFSC) awarding authority, the Pacific Register of Qualifications and Standards (PRQS) Advisory Board, the steering committees for the Pacific Benchmarking of Educational Results (PaBER) and the Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (PILNA), and any others that may form. Diagram 1 illustrates the suggested PBEQ accountability and subcommittees.

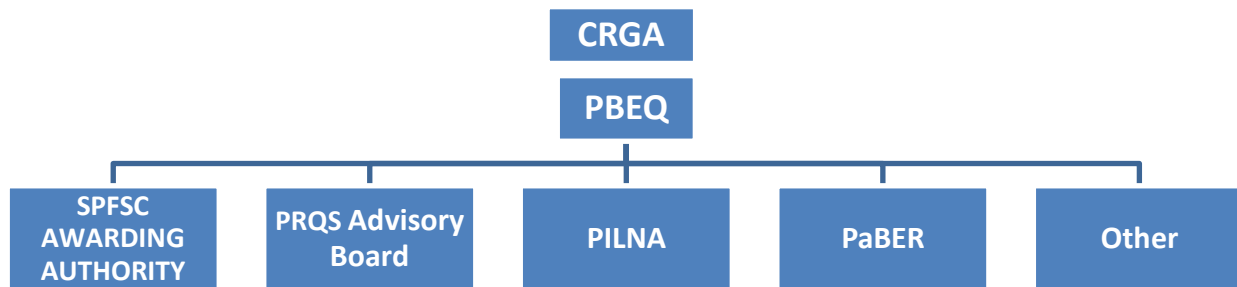


Diagram 1: PBEQ accountability and subcommittees

Accreditation authority

12. Bodies that award qualifications have the specific tasks of making and awarding qualifications and ensuring that the standard and quality of the qualifications are maintained. They have the specific responsibility of ensuring that the needs of employers, learners and other stakeholders and users of the qualifications are met.
13. PBEQ, through EQAP, currently confers the South Pacific Form Seven Certificate (SPFSC) regional qualification, and is also the qualifying body for the Pacific Register of Qualifications and Standards (PRQS). The assessment and accreditation officers at EQAP, with their technical expertise, provide the research base and data for quality assurance of the qualifications that are conferred by PBEQ.
14. With regard to the authority to award qualifications, PBEQ no longer exists as an independent entity and so is no longer recognised as having that authority. However, SPC has the mandate, by virtue of the Canberra Agreement, to delegate that authority to any group or body that has the expertise to carry out this function; in this case to the proposed subcommittee. The special board meeting noted this as one of the advantages of becoming a subcommittee of SPC's governing body (CRGA): it would regain that authority, thereby avoiding setting up a separate body for that purpose. It should be noted, however, that under the proposed governance mechanism, the administrative function of accreditation and awarding of diplomas will be carried out by the Director-General of SPC on the advice and recommendation of PBEQ.

Current issues

15. Until 2014 all of EQAP's core functions were centred on educational assessment. However, over time, emphasis has turned towards improving the quality of education, and this has resulted in a dramatic change in EQAP's operations. There has been a shift from the need for assessment as a tool that provides credentials, to assessment as a supporting and promoting agent for the improvement of the quality of education.
16. The 2013 SPBEA review examined the links between the core focus on assessment and its impact on teaching, curriculum, technology and leadership. The point was made that emphasis on assessment alone does not lead to sustainable change or improvement in education quality. Assessment can no longer be regarded as an isolated activity. It has an integral role in curriculum development, teaching and school leadership, and a central role in defining and delivering quality education.

17. The 2013 SPBEA review report therefore recommended a focus on research, development, dissemination and training, with a mandate that includes assessment, curriculum, teaching quality, school leadership and technology. As EQAP's mandate has shifted to improving educational quality, a high level of expertise is demanded by the central role it will play in this area, and the advice it may have to provide.
18. The 2013 SPBEA Review Report stated that: 'to support the expanded core functions of SPBEA, a minimum of FJD 7.8 million annually is required to finance human and physical resources for efficient and effective operations and management'. Funding sources to finance the management and operations of EQAP include: i) core funding, comprising a tagged portion of member contributions and programme funds; ii) regional and multilateral project funding; iii) national/bilateral/multilateral funding for implementation of specific projects; and iv) funding from consultancies. Given the aid cuts, as well as the economic situation in the countries, the secretariat has decided to work within the resources that are currently available to the programme.
19. EQAP's reporting and communication links to SPC members benefitting from EQAP services and participating in the work of PBEQ will be maintained through existing mechanisms, such as country programming, and multiple meetings where countries' views and directions are sought and reports are discussed. The countries' endorsements are important in every decision EQAP makes.

Recommendations

20. CRGA is invited to:
 - i. approve the role and function of the Pacific Board for Educational Quality as a subcommittee of CRGA;
 - ii. acknowledge and approve the new name for the programme: the Educational Quality and Assessment Programme;
 - iii. approve the awarding and accrediting authority of the Pacific Community's secretariat;
 - iv. authorise the development and adoption of a revised mandate and terms of reference for the Pacific Board for Educational Quality as a subcommittee of CRGA.
