



COUNTRY PRESENTATION – NAURU

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OVERVIEW OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN NAURU

Introduction

With a population of fewer than 10,000 and a land area of 21 square kilometers, the Republic of Nauru easily fits the category of a Small Island State, if not the smallest of Small Island States. It is a coral island, on the Equator, in the middle of the Pacific. It is best known for its main export of phosphate. In the 1980s and early 90s, Nauruans had the second highest per capita income in the world.

However an economic tsunami swept over the island in the period from 1995 to 2005 reducing the Republic and its people to bankruptcy. For the period 2000 to 2005, schools did not function, there were no exams, teachers were paid only on sporadic occasions and in 2003 were paid one fortnight salary in six months. Maintenance of school buildings, purchase of text books or school supplies, school transport, power to schools, school inspections, scholarships, and orderly teaching all effectively broke down.

In October 2004 a reformist government was elected and began a three-year program of development of the instruments of government, including Education. The new government elected in 2007 is continuing the reform agenda.

The Nauru National Sustainable Development Strategy, 2005 to 2025, is now in its third year. It sees Nauru's reliance on phosphate as the main source of income gradually declining as the reserves are depleted by about 2030. The most logical resource of Nauru to supplement and gradually replace the phosphate is its human resources. This is the important and clear task for Education. The Education and Training Strategic Plan aims to produce three pathways for our students – an academic, a trade and a social pathway. The academic pathway focuses on the sciences as these are seen as important in providing the human resources to support the continuing need for medical and general health graduates, while the trade pathway focus on trades associated with construction as there is a strong regional demand in this sector.

Nauru is supported in its efforts to re-invent itself by Commonwealth countries of Australia, New Zealand and India, and lately, in the area of Education, by Papua New Guinea. For example, AusAID is providing a new Secondary School for \$8.5 million AUD, New Zealand is providing \$6 Million NZD over three years for curriculum development, teacher training, and policy development, while India and

Papua New Guinea are providing support in the areas of specialist teaching staff and administrators. Taiwan also provides significant assistance.

Profile of Education and Training

In 2008 there are 2,750 students in school and at the Nauru campus of University of South Pacific. Schooling is divided into Infants, Primary, and Secondary School. There are eight government schools, one Catholic school, one Able/Disable Centre, and one University of South Pacific Campus. The Trade school was destroyed in a fire in 2003 and is yet to be replaced. Table 1 shows the distribution of the student population.

School Level	Grades	Student Number
Infants	Play, Pre-School, Prep School	658
Primary	Years 1-6	1253
Secondary	Years 7-12	818
USP Campus		21
TOTAL		2750

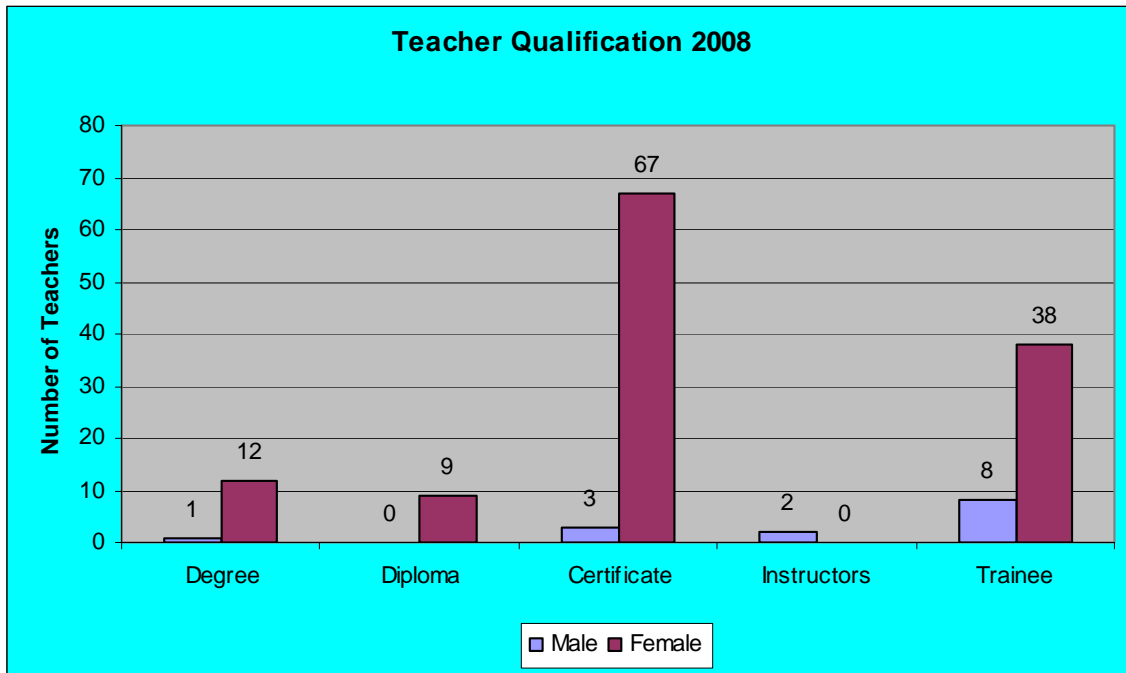
Table 1: Student Numbers

Secondary education has been characterised by an academic emphasis, but a new curriculum for 2009 will see trade training and TVET courses offered. In this respect, we are forming a partnership with the Australia Pacific Technical College to provide most of our TVET and Trade training

There are 140 teachers in our Schools. But, as Table 2 shows, less than 9% of our teachers have a degree with 50% having only a basic certificate and over 30% with no qualifications, being classified as trainees. Only 10% of teachers are males.

Qualification	Sex		Number of Teachers
	Male	Female	
Degree	1	12	13
Diploma	0	9	9
Certificate	3	67	70
Instructors	2	0	2
Trainee	8	38	46
TOTAL	14	126	140

Table 2: Number of Teachers



We have commenced a program of teacher skills upgrading with the aim of having 80% of our teachers with a degree in teaching or education by 2013. The program recognises that a qualification is only one of the components of being an effective teacher and the training is delivered in the context of our curriculum, schools and classrooms. Our curriculum is developed for our context and uses the "Rich Task" concept. A description of this is beyond the scope of this presentation, but it has been described as a "just in time" curriculum, rather than the traditional "just in case". It values process more than content.

Although the economic tsunami has passed, its effects on Education continue to be felt. For example, students in Year 12 in 2008 missed out on about five years of Education when they were in Years 4 to Year 8 (2000 – 2004) before school routines were established again. They are now struggling in Year 12 because they do not have the prior knowledge they would have gained if they were at school in those crucial years.

The other effect of the tsunami is the depletion of our qualified teaching workforce as shown in Table 2. We have now a largely unqualified, but highly committed teaching community. The problem is how to up skill those by taking them out of the classroom for two to three years for training, but, at the same time, keeping the schools open. We have addressed that dilemma by providing up skilling courses during all the school holidays and providing after school hours courses.

Strategy to address Small Island State Status

As mentioned in the introduction, Nauru is the smallest of Small Island States. We realise that in some countries, there are as many students in one school as we have in the whole country.

However, our Education system, like all Education systems still needs a Curriculum unit, Human Resources Unit, Physical resources unit, Monitoring and Evaluation unit, Examinations unit etc,. The capacity of our teaching profession is not dense enough to manage all these services and, at the same time, staff our schools with quality Principals and leaders.

Our approach has been to form partnership and strategic alliances with other systems and providers. This is where we see the value of Commonwealth of Learning. It provides opportunities for Small Island States, such as this gathering, to network and form these strategic alliances with other like minded countries.

Commonwealth of Learning (COL)

Nauru acknowledges the leadership that COL is providing in the area of eLearning. As a Small Island State, Nauru sees ICT technology as an area of tremendous opportunity for students to improve their learning. At this stage of our development cycle, the opportunities that e learning can provide are still being developed and I look forward in this conference to gaining some more insight into how we can harness the tremendous learning power of ICT.

COL has already provided Nauru with a successful course on Wiki Educator for over 20 of our teachers. We thank Dr. Wayne Mackintosh and David Leeming for providing this opening into a new world. We are trialling the use of the One Laptop per Child program with all our Year 1 students being provided with a laptop.

The expectation is that internet and on line resources will help Small Island States. In our Country Action Plan 2006 -2009 we aim to be involved in the Virtual University for the Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) but have been constrained by a number of issues. Our problems are in securing reliable technology support (such as a basic telephone system let alone internet connection at reliable and reasonable speeds), human resources and an appropriate pedagogy. We are working on all three because we see a profit at the end, but what I see as the biggest problem is a lack of local, sustained leadership in this area. COL has an excellent resource in David Leeming in the Pacific region in leadership of ICT, but Small Island States need a David Leeming in every country.

Maybe, it might be an outcome of this conference that COL is able to mobilise a number of donors to provide a number of ICT leaders in the Pacific education system.

Nauru's Country Action Plan identifies Quality Assurance in the area of teacher professional development as a priority. We welcome the publication of the "Indicators of Quality in Teacher Education" in assisting us to evaluate teacher training programs.

As a Small Island State we do not have the capacity to establish our own Teachers Training College or University Faculty and issue our own regionally or internationally recognised qualifications. We rely on other countries to provide quality training, but we see accreditation as a problem. In this respect we endorse COL's initiative in the development of a Transnational Qualifications Framework and COL's campaign to neutralise the degree mills that can arise with increasing ease of access via the Internet

Nauru acknowledges the support of COL in our TVET program by its support for PATVET and the supply of teaching kits in Timber, Concrete and Small engines to our Secondary School

Our Priority

Increasing the effectiveness of our teachers through training and support in the classroom is our highest priority. In addressing this priority we have tried to go a bit deeper than just providing "off the shelf" teacher training courses. We see our teachers as "change agents" in the development of Nauru. After all, they are the only group who are constantly in contact with the community. In this respect, we are provided leadership training as a significant component of our teacher training program.

The other factor that will increase teacher effectiveness is a culture of support and respect for the work of classroom teachers by others in the Education system, especially those of us in "Head Office" As we often remark, there are no students in head office, they are all in schools – and this is where we need to concentrate our support and work.

Our priority is to develop a profession of teacher – leaders. With competent people in this area, the Education and Training system will be sustained.

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