



PACIFIC BENCHMARKING FOR EDUCATION RESULTS (PaBER)

SAMOA REPORT



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SPORTS AND CULTURE
MATAGALUEGA O A'OGA TA'ALOGA MA AGANU'U



Pacific
Community
Communauté
du Pacifique

SAMOA REPORT

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Compiled by EQAP

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For more information about PaBER contact

The Director

Educational Quality Assessment Program (EQAP)

PO Box 2083, Government Buildings, Suva, Fiji Islands

Level 5, Vanua House, Suva, Fiji Islands

Email: eqap@spc.int

Website: www.eqap.org.fj

www.spc.int

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ABBREVIATIONS

AED	Assessment and Examination Division
EMIS	Education Management and Information System
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
MESC	Ministry of Education Sports and Culture
MSS	Minimum Service Standards
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
PaBER	Pacific Benchmarking for Education Results
PILNA	Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment
PSC	Public Service Commission
SABER	Systems Approach for Better Education Results
SPELL	Samoa Primary Education Literacy Level
SSFGS	Samoa School Fees Grant Scheme

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

PaBER pilot project is a journey of three countries in their quest to bring to every education system in Papua New Guinea, Samoa and the Solomon Islands and the Pacific at large a process, an approach that brings value and clarity to what we may have already been doing or that we should do in our own ministries of education. It was all made possible by the Government of Australia.

We extend our most sincere gratitude to the Government of Australia for funding the pilot project and its commitment to supporting the Pacific Forum Education Ministers decision 2010 on the concept of 'benchmarking the quality of education for results' to improve the quality of education in the region. Special thanks goes to the DFAT regional office in Suva, Fiji and DFAT office in Samoa.

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Members of the Steering Committee and Technical Working Group, those who left and those who joined the journey at different stages, we are indebted to you, for your patience and endurance through the long hours of numerous meetings and the way in which you always value the changes the project is beginning to make in your own systems.

We also express our appreciation to World Bank in providing the technical assistance in regards to the SABER tools and most particularly with the training as well as data analysis and report writing. We are also grateful to all other organisations who have supported and contributed to the successes of the PaBER project in one way or another.

The pilot project may have ended at the regional level, however there is still work to do at the country level before the benefits of PaBER are fully realized.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Pacific Benchmarking for Education Results (PaBER) programme was introduced in 2012 to improve the quality of education and student performance across the Pacific, and in particular to respond to low levels of literacy and numeracy. PaBER provides education ministries with systematic and reliable evidence and analysis of their own systems, benchmarked against high performing systems globally. This gives policy-makers and other stakeholders the opportunity to judge the strengths and weaknesses of current policy and systems, and how these may influence learning, and to formulate appropriate reforms and action. PaBER was set up to test this approach in three pilot countries (Samoa, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea (PNG)).

To achieve these ambitions, PaBER was designed around three components: (i) Learning Assessment of Year 6 students' performance in literacy and numeracy, based on the use of the Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (PILNA) in 2012; (ii) Policy and System Assessment, with benchmarking of national education systems in each of the five policy domains: Teacher Quality, Assessment Systems, School Governance and Management, Curriculum and Materials, and Education Management Information System (EMIS); and (iii) Policy in Practice, consisting of research on policy implementation at school level. Along with institutional capacity assessments, this body of work is enabling a dynamic view of education systems, with a particular focus on student learning.

This report pulls together the evidence from the three components, and sets out strategic recommendations that will impact on learning outcomes. The report draws on a body of evidence set out in over 40 reports covering country and cross-country analysis. It is not possible in this report to do justice to the

breadth and depth of this broader evidence base. The report highlights some key emerging findings where there is strongest evidence, and the ways these intersect across policy domains. Recommendations are based on this, set out as both policy reforms and actions to improve delivery, and premised on joined up responses to key barriers to improving student learning. Over the four years PaBER has achieved a significant amount, in the collaboration of pilot countries, the generation of evidence, and the establishment of an approach that can be built on in the coming years both within these three countries and potentially others in the region.

CONTEXT

Section 2 of the report provides some important contextual background. This is important to the PaBER analysis in a number of ways. The results of the research need to be applied in the specific context of Samoa, and align to and inform national priorities. The education sector's¹ policy framework is embodied in the Education Sector Plan (July 2013 – June 2018), which sets out the broad roadmap for education in Samoa with specific targets and strategies for achieving them.

Samoa has shown a strong commitment to providing opportunities for all children to access primary education, with an adjusted net enrolment rate (ANER) of 104 per cent in 2015. The primary cohort completion rate was 80 per cent denoting a high retention rate and low drop-out rate. High retention rates are largely due to government initiatives such as the Samoa School Fees Grant Scheme (SSFGS), enforcement of the compulsory education provision as stipulated in the Education Act 2009, the minimum service standards (MSS) and the whole school approach.

¹ The education sector comprises all providers of education and training, both formal and non-formal, as well as all government agencies that have responsibility for education policy, planning, funding and quality assurance. The sector covers four levels of education, namely early childhood education, primary, secondary, and post-school education and training (PSET), which includes higher education.

In terms of learning outcomes, the PILNA conducted in 2012 as part of the PaBER pilot indicated some worrying results. The majority of students assessed were at the critical level in literacy (over 50 per cent) and numeracy (36 per cent), with girls marginally outperforming boys in both literacy and numeracy. In terms of school locality and school authority, students in urban schools performed better than those in rural schools, and students attending non-government schools outperformed students attending government schools. Trends seen in the 2012 PILNA are also seen in the Samoa Primary Education Literacy Level (SPELL) results in subsequent years.

KEY FINDINGS

The analysis set out in Section 3 of the report aims to identify areas where the evidence was strongest, where weaknesses identified through research may represent critical bottlenecks, and where there were clear implications for improving learning outcomes. A team from the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (MESC) ensured findings could also respond to stated country policy priorities. The more in-depth analysis provided in the source reports represents an important resource for more detailed work in each of these areas.

The key findings are set out against each of the policy domains, as summarised in Table 1 below. These findings and associated analysis go some way to capturing the extent to which policy is in place, the difference between policy intent and the reality of delivery at school level, and where we have it, an understanding of how institutional and staff capacity influences this dynamic. In some cases, specific action has already been taken to respond to some of these findings in the period since the research was undertaken.

TABLE 1. Summary of key findings by PaBER domain.

TEACHER QUALITY	ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS	CURRICULUM & MATERIALS	SCHOOL GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT	EMIS
The absence of clear guidelines for the implementation and monitoring of school-based professional development programmes limits the effectiveness of support to teachers to improve instruction	The effectiveness of delivering classroom- based assessment and using the results to inform reporting, operational, pedagogical and management decisions is limited by the capacity of teachers	Most teachers lack the skills, knowledge and confidence to deliver a bilingual student-centred, outcomes-based curriculum in literacy and numeracy	The design and implementation of a school-based professional development programme to improve teaching and learning is hampered by a lack of management skills at the school level	There are no policies that support the running and effective utilisation of an EMIS system in Samoa and ensure its longer term sustainable funding
Teachers have limited capacity and skills to effectively teach literacy and numeracy	Monitoring of both the quality of the assessment and the use of results to inform teaching and learning is inconsistent at all levels	In spite of a bilingual policy embedded across the curriculum, teachers' preference to work in Samoan with Samoan materials is having an effect on student literacy in English	Student assessment results are not being used for management and pedagogical improvement, or for accountability to the community	The lack of integration of education data limits the communication of information and the utilisation of EMIS data for better informed decision at different levels
Teachers are not able to effectively implement classroom assessment due to a lack of capacity to plan and develop the assessment and to use the results to improve teaching and learning	The capacity of MESCC staff in planning and administering assessments, as well as in analysis, reporting and use of results to inform policy decisions, is limited	Teachers' capacity to effectively assess student learning through the development and application of classroom-based assessment is hindered by an insufficient supply of quality resource materials	The involvement of school committees is limited to finances and school environment with almost no involvement in teaching, learning and assessment related matters	Limited systems and capacity to analyse data limit the utilisation of EMIS for decision-making at system and school levels

EMERGING THEMES AND PRIORITIES

The findings are the basis for a broader analysis of emerging themes and priorities set out in Section 4 of the report. This looks at ways in which the evidence points to key linkages across the sector, and priorities in terms of improving classroom teaching and learning.

One emerging theme is the delivery of the bilingual policy and its impact on literacy and numeracy outcomes. Low teaching competency of teachers to deliver the bilingual policy has affected student literacy and numeracy, particularly in English. Because of difficulty in teaching the English version of the curriculum resources, coupled with English being a

second language, teaching and learning takes place mostly in Samoan. Monitoring of the bilingual policy is not consistent and no data have been collected on the use of language in the classroom.

There is inconsistent provision of professional development and it is poorly aligned to the needs of teachers. This is undermining the quality of teaching and learning. There are no clear guidelines for schools to follow, and school principals lack skills when it comes to planning, implementing and monitoring this kind of support.

The use of good quality classroom-based assessment, and the use of results to improve student learning, remains a challenge in schools. The absence of appropriate school-based professional training, and the limited availability and use of resources and monitoring mechanisms of classroom-based assessment, limits efforts to better equip teachers and provide leadership support for principals to serve and improve student learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of recommendations have been highlighted in Section 5, which draw on the country reports and look at the potential for joined-up responses to target improvements in classroom teaching and learning processes. These are strategic recommendations, drawing on the key findings. They represent a first step for implementation and planning. More in-depth recommendations are provided in the background reports. Table 2 summarises the recommendations and identified actions.

TABLE 2. Recommendations and key actions based on PaBER findings.

RECOMMENDATION	KEY ACTIONS
Ensure more integration of, and coherence and linkages between, policies focusing on improved teaching and learning	Develop the Samoa National Teaching and Learning Framework
Develop and implement a strategy for professional development of teachers, school principals and education authorities	Review the National Teacher Development Framework and provide additional guidelines Develop a strategy for a broader professional development for education professionals Develop a practical guide to classroom teaching and learning
Develop and implement a strategy to strengthen the use of assessment at all levels	Develop a practical guide on school-based assessment Targeted professional development for teachers and principals on classroom assessment Provide professional development for MESC staff on classroom-based assessment and broader national assessment
Review systems and strengthen capacity for school-based management	Develop professional development standards and frameworks for principals Principals need to be empowered to provide school-based professional development Review the funding formula for school grants Review school governance arrangements, clarifying roles and responsibilities and ensuring fair representation of community
Ensure sufficient curriculum materials are provided to schools	Develop guidelines for materials development in both languages in response to the bilingual policy Organisational structure and staff capacity in materials development and procurement need to be addressed
Consolidate and ensure future development of the EMIS	Establish an EMIS policy and develop a strategy for sustainable EMIS development Integration of MESC databases into EMIS



INTRODUCTION

PaBER was first conceptualised as an approach to address a regional concern that too many children leave primary school without the necessary literacy and numeracy skills.² In response to this concern the Pacific Forum Education Ministers Meeting 2010 endorsed the concept of ‘benchmarking the quality of education for results’ to improve the quality of education and student performance across the Pacific, building on benchmarking already underway in selected countries. A pilot project was proposed and three countries – Papua New Guinea (PNG), the Solomon Islands and Samoa – were selected to take part in the pilot.

THE PaBER PILOT

The aim of the PaBER programme is to improve literacy and numeracy levels of children in the region through a process that will equip policy-makers in Pacific countries with the information and knowledge to drive interventions that will have a real effect on learning results. The outcome from PaBER is that, at the end of the project, pilot countries are better positioned to plan and implement interventions and reforms that will improve learning.

To achieve this outcome, PaBER was designed around three components. The first component, Learning Assessment, is targeted at diagnoses of Year 6 students’ performance which are then used to inform policy development. The Learning Assessment component

included the use of the Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (PILNA) in 2012 as a regional assessment for measuring literacy and numeracy outcomes at the primary (Year 6) level. Results of the PILNA 2012 (Annex 3) and subsequent preliminary results of the PILNA 2015 have been shared with and among the three pilot countries, and capacity measured and developed within the relevant ministries for using assessment data to develop policy for improving learning.

The second component, Policy and System Assessment, undertook the benchmarking of the national education systems in each of five policy domains: Teacher Quality, Assessment Systems, School Governance and Management, Curriculum and Materials, and the Education Management Information System (EMIS). The EMIS was added as a domain partway through the pilot project. The World Bank Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) tools were adopted for use in four of the domains. A parallel tool, modelled on the SABER tools, to measure Curriculum and Materials, was developed specifically for the PaBER project.

Through component two, the national systems in the five policy domains have been benchmarked against international good practice. This gives policy-makers and other stakeholders the opportunity to judge the strengths and weaknesses of current policy and systems, and how these may influence learning, and to formulate appropriate reforms and action. The SABER reports for each of the countries have been adopted and

² Learning for all: Investing in people’s knowledge and skills to promote development, World Bank Education Strategy 2020 as referenced in programme design document: Pacific benchmarking for education results (2012).

publicised on the World Bank website, contributing to the global body of knowledge in these areas. A system of cross-country analysis was adopted within PaBER to build capacity in relevant ministries in the use of benchmarking for improvement in target areas.

To deepen the analysis provided around these policy domains, PaBER also undertook a number of institutional and capacity assessments, the aim of which was to provide analysis of current capacity and key bottlenecks in delivering in these five domains. Particular focus was given to capacity around the implementation and use of student assessment. Although the policy tools provided a ‘snapshot in time’ of systems in the three countries, through cross-country analysis, practices have been shared and policies and systems have been and continue to be adjusted with reference to international standards. This demonstrates the dynamic dimension of PaBER, and how strong country ownership of this evidence base has already led to policy and system reforms and strengthening.

The third component of PaBER, Policy in Practice, called for valid and reliable data to be collected on the implementation of education policy in schools and classrooms. A research framework, data analysis and reporting framework and associated data collection instruments were developed with input from all three countries and collaboratively adapted and subsequently adopted for use. The field evidence is now being used to facilitate policy review and development in the related domains as well as to inform ministries as they build capacity in comparative analyses of country practice. While component two focuses mainly on policy intent, this field research is an important step in understanding what that looks like on the ground. It is well recognised that having a policy in place does not guarantee its effective and consistent implementation. There are complex dynamics involved in this. Taken together, these two components aim to help government and others to understand which policies may help improve learning outcomes, what needs to be done in order to deliver these in practice, but also to ensure that the realities of practice can inform policy.

THE PaBER APPROACH

Benchmarking is at the heart of both the PaBER pilot project and what has now been dubbed ‘the PaBER approach’. Originally developed for the business world, benchmarking provides a systematic process for measuring and comparing the performance and work processes of one organisation to those of another. The goal of benchmarking is to provide an objective standard for measuring the quality, cost and efficiency of internal activities, and to help identify where opportunities for improvement may be found. The adoption of a benchmarking approach in education represents a significant shift in education system development and reform, since it involves making available performance information that permits comparisons within and between systems. Benchmarking in education attempts to answer three questions:

- How well is a system, or parts of a system, doing compared to an external reference standard, defined in relation to the performance of others?
- What are the better performers doing that the poorer performers are not?
- What interventions can be developed to bring about improved learning outcomes?

Benchmarking provides a baseline against which the performance of education systems can be monitored, and it also facilitates diagnosis – understanding areas of lower performance and the underlying factors to act upon to bring improvement. It also helps to provide a measure of transparency so that stakeholders are able to hold education providers accountable for the quality of education based on evidence rather than anecdotes or political rhetoric.³ One of the key outcomes of the PaBER pilot project is a strong body of evidence on which to base decisions regarding education systems and education policy. Not only have the findings identified or confirmed areas in which to focus priorities, the evidence gathered from multiple sources during the pilot quantifies those findings and suggests what should be monitored for sustained improvement over time.

The PaBER team developed an approach to examine and apply the findings from the analytical work carried out throughout the three components of the project. This consisted of applying the same instruments/tools

³ Program design document: Pacific benchmarking for education results (2012).

in all countries, which included an internal validation process where the countries signed off on the findings. Every analytical work then went through a cross-country analysis at the regional level.

Regional workshops were then held with participants from the countries. The reports were presented and a cross-country analysis was carried out to explore commonalities as well as contextual findings unique to each country. The workshops allowed for a robust exchange of ideas and knowledge. The findings and recommendations from these workshops were captured in cross-country regional reports. The cross-cutting analysis among the three countries was at the heart of the PaBER approach.

As noted above, existing instruments were utilised for some of the activities, including the PILNA tool and the SABER instruments of the World Bank. The SABER methodology includes identification of indicators of policy and institutional development, as well as the data source for each indicator. A rubric has been developed for combining the indicators to come up with ratings of the countries' progress within each domain.

SABER instruments have been standardised so that progress along each dimension is defined on a four-point scale, ranging from 'latent' (the lowest level) through 'emerging' and 'established' to 'advanced' (the highest level), based on international benchmarks.⁴ The SABER programme had not developed an instrument for curriculum and materials, and PaBER contracted an international consultant to design an instrument using the SABER methodology and rubrics for easy comparability. This approach of ranking from latent to advanced was also used in some of the other instruments used in PaBER. Ranking is not explicitly used/referred to in this report, but it sits behind the analysis.

A more extensive description of the governance structures, the methodologies and the tools used can be found in Annex 1.

FINAL RESULTS

⁴ The what, why and how of the Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER), April 2013.

Through this approach, PaBER has provided a breadth and depth of evidence for each domain on policy and policy delivery, including how institutional and staff capacity influences the implementation of policy. The purpose of this report, and final reports for the other pilot countries, is to pull together the evidence from the three components, what we are learning across the five domains and how they intersect, and from this to set out strategic recommendations that will impact on learning outcomes. This report looks at the specifics of the PaBER pilot within Samoa. An associated regional report takes a broader look at trends across the three countries and draws conclusions around how this approach could be used more broadly in the region.

This final analysis and report has been accomplished through a triangulation process whereby the multitudes of findings drawn from each of the reports (there were over 40 individual documents) that have been tabled throughout the project were cross-tabulated. From that evidence, country-specific key findings were identified and articulated for each domain in an iterative process carried out in a workshop format, involving country representatives working with a regional PaBER team. The workshop was an opportunity to identify and analyse key cross-cutting themes for each country that encapsulated the evidence from the PaBER project. Working from these themes, recommendations were developed. The recommendations connect directly back to the evidence gathered and provide the beginning of a way forward for the countries in addressing the findings of the PaBER pilot project.

It is important to recognise that the various research tools, structured around the five domains (or areas of an education system), are not linked by an overarching framework. There is no theory of change which links the analysis, but rather the tools were developed to look at each domain as a contributing factor towards learning outcomes. However, a starting premise for the broader analysis set out in this report was that effective education systems are oriented towards supporting and improving what happens in the classroom. The teacher is the point at which the student comes into contact with the education system. So, while recognising the complexity of the broader system, and the need for strong institutions and processes at each level, the

analysis in this report has aimed to draw out as a priority an understanding of how country systems support and ensure the quality of classroom teaching and learning. While drawing together this analysis, it became clear that there are critical ways in which different parts of the system (or domains) need to interact and align to impact on learning. The recommendations included in this report aim to speak to these issues and help decision-makers to formulate action that will work systemically.

In addition to these final reports, there is a body of work that has arisen from PaBER consisting of individual country reports and cross-country analysis reports on the specific components and policy domains (see Annex 2 for full list). These include detailed findings and recommendations in each domain, some of which have already been integrated into education planning in the pilot countries, and represent an important resource for on-going and future work in these areas.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND LIMITATIONS

The PaBER pilot project has achieved several outcomes, both intended and unintended, over the four years of its implementation. In addition to diagnoses of Year 6 students' performance in literacy and numeracy, establishment of national benchmarks in key policy domains, and the generation of a substantive body of evidence to inform and facilitate whole-of-systems educational change, the project has produced a methodology and a set of contextualised tools to support benchmarking work in the Pacific. The principle of transparency that was key to the project has ensured that frank and open discussion has occurred at each workshop and meeting throughout the project. This spirit of sharing and collaboration has opened the door to learning from one another and has gone a long way to break down the barriers that have prevented ministries of education from sharing results and practices in the past.

The PaBER pilot project, like any other project, has limitations that should be kept in mind when looking at the results. The project was designed to look at evidence to inform policy and planning with a view

to improving student learning. The evidence is being presented now, at the end of the project. While findings and recommendations in the individual domains have already begun to have impact on national planning and practice, the intent was not to have implemented everything by the end of PaBER but rather to have the evidence in place for the next steps in national education planning. In addition, although the aim of PaBER holds improvement of student literacy and numeracy at its core, the pilot project did not expect to impact on student learning levels during the data collection and analysis phase that was the pilot. The impacts on student learning levels will be apparent over time as the recommendations are acted upon to produce lasting system improvements.

PaBER has developed from an idea into a significant body of evidence that has the potential to make a real difference in education systems and student learning outcomes across the PaBER pilot countries. The tools and methodologies that have come out of PaBER can be utilised by others to undertake similar work, and the findings of the pilot project can inform ministries, development partners and the broader education community at work in the Pacific as we collectively work to achieve high quality education for all students.



BACKGROUND CONTEXT



The education sector of Samoa serves a population of 187,820 on a land area of 2,820 km² (43 per cent arable) comprising the two main islands of Upolu and Savai'i and eight small islands.⁵ Some 76 per cent of the population lives on Upolu, with 20 per cent in the urban area of the capital city, Apia. Samoa is a middle-income country with a per capita gross domestic product (GDP) of WST8,299⁶ in 2011, and a population annual growth rate of 0.8 per cent. Education is one of the most critical issues. Only around 12 per cent of Samoa's total population is engaged in formal paid employment. Two-thirds of the potential labour force is absorbed by subsistence village agriculture, a dominant sector in the Samoan economy. Samoa is reliant on foreign imports and has a large trade deficit. The economy is largely driven by tourism (20–25 per cent of GDP), remittances (25 per cent of GDP), and foreign aid. Private sector growth is constrained by a narrow resource base, including a scarcity of skilled labour.

The Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (MESC) is the key arm of government responsible for ensuring the efficient and effective implementation of the Education Sector Plan amongst others, and is mandated to carry out its duties and functions as stipulated in the Ministerial and Departmental Act 2003 and the Public Service Act 2004. The MESC has 12 divisions responsible for various areas of education.

The Government of Samoa has adopted the concept of sector-wide planning for government ministries including education with the assurance that there will be improved planning, integration and linkages of services. The education sector's policy framework is embodied in the Education Sector Plan July 2013–June 2018. This framework guides its operations and also underpins donor support for the sector.

The government school system has 143 primary schools and 23 secondary schools. The church and private systems have 24 primary schools, 6 primary/secondary schools and 13 secondary schools. The total school population in 2015 stood at 57,992 with 41,250 in primary education. For the 2015 school year, there were 21,412 enrolled male students compared to 19,835 female students. For both males and females, there has been a steady increase in enrolment compared to the 2006 school year and this is attributed to many initiatives by the government to ensure access to primary education.

Primary education from Years 1 to 8 is compulsory for children between the ages of 5 and 14 as stipulated under the Education Act 2009. In 2015, there were 19,835 girls and 21,415 boys enrolled in primary education in a total of 171 schools (including joint primary/secondary schools), with a total of 33,678 students (82 per cent) in government schools.

⁵Most of the data in this section is from the Samoa Bureau of Statistics 2011 Population and Housing Census.

⁶Extract from Population and Housing Census in the Samoa Education Sector Plan 2013–2018.

TABLE 3. Progress in selected education indicators for Samoa.

INDICATOR	2012	2015
Adjusted net enrolment rate, primary/basic	99%	104%
Completion rate, primary/basic	84%	88%
Pupil:teacher ratio, primary/basic	24:1	27:1
Qualified teachers, primary/basic	84.2% (diploma)	84.3% ^a
	2.5% (bachelor)	3.6% ^b
Gender parity index, primary/basic	0.95	0.93
Public expenditure on education as per cent of total government expenditure	18%	na
Public expenditure on education as per cent of GDP	2%	na

^a2014 data on % of primary teachers with Diploma in Education. ^b2014 data on % of primary teachers with Bachelor in Education.

Table 3 shows progress in selected education indicators between 2012 and 2015. The adjusted net enrolment rate (ANER) increased from 99 per cent to 104 per cent. The ANER includes children who are 11 and 12 years old at secondary schools, whose age falls within the national official age of 5–12 years old for primary education. Samoa has since achieved and met NER of 100 per cent in 2008. The primary cohort completion rate has remained above 80 per cent reaching a peak of 88 per cent in 2015. This indicates a high level of success in completing primary education as a result of high retention and low drop-out rates.

The MESC has a national pupil:teacher ratio target for primary schools of 1:30. The ratio has been achieved since 2007, with a ratio of 27:1 recorded for 2015. The percentage of primary teachers with certificate qualifications has gradually decreased over the years, and diploma and degree holders are slowly increasing, from 80.1 per cent in 2007 to 84.3 per cent in 2014 for diploma holders and 1.4 per cent in 2007 to 3.6 per cent in 2014 for bachelor degree holders. This supports the ministry's stance on teachers to up-skill, and increasing professional development opportunities for teachers.

The gender parity index decreased between 2012 (0.95) and 2015 (0.93) denoting increasing gender disparity in primary education as more boys than girls attended and boys remained longer in primary education during this period.

The Government of Samoa allocated 18 per cent of public expenditure to education in 2012. This represents 2 per cent of GDP.

Education is a high priority of the Government of Samoa and this has resulted in some remarkable achievements including a very high adult literacy rate of close to 99 per cent. Virtually all children have access to primary education and around 90 per cent of Grade 8 completers have access to secondary education. Despite these achievements the quality of education, as measured by functional literacy in national test results, has been unsatisfactory and consistently declining.

Based on the Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (PILNA) 2012 results, only 8 per cent of Year 6 students are performing at the satisfactory and expected level, with 50 per cent not yet working towards the expected level for literacy. For Year 6 numeracy, 34 per cent of students performed at the satisfactory and

expected level with 36 per cent not yet working towards the expected level, and with girls doing better than boys. Similarly in literacy, there are more girls than boys performing at satisfactory and expected levels. The 2012 results also show that students attending non-government schools are performing better than students attending government schools in both literacy and numeracy. Similar trends are seen in Samoa Primary Education Literacy Level (SPELL) results.

Samoa has successfully integrated PILNA into SPELL, and administered the integrated PILNA/SPELL in 2015. Data collected were used to write the 2015 SPELL report for Samoa, while the relevant data were also used to prepare the Samoa 2015 PILNA report. The successful integration of PILNA into SPELL not only guarantees the sustainability of PILNA for Samoa but also ensures that any parallel version of SPELL administered in the future will be aligned with PILNA. This will enable Samoa to continuously monitor the literacy and numeracy situation in Samoa against the regional baseline.

Samoa has undertaken a number of significant reforms in education. The Samoa School Fees Grant Scheme (SSFGS) was launched in 2010 with financial and technical assistance from the governments of Australia and New Zealand to provide grants to primary schools in lieu of school fees. Originally supporting the establishment and implementation of minimum service standards (MSS), its targets⁷ include: (i) the reduction of the financial burden of schooling for parents, and (ii) transferring part of the responsibility of school performance to schools through reliable funding of school improvement plans to meet the MESC's MSS. In the long term, it is envisaged that the investment will contribute to the improvement of learning outcomes in the classrooms.

The MSS are the basic expectations of those conditions in a school that will achieve for the learners a quality education. Four areas are specified in the MSS: (i) school environment; (ii) school management and learning; (iii) teacher professional knowledge, practice and values; and (iv) student achievement.

These areas taken together, the MSS indicate the status of the performance of a school in delivering quality education. The implementation of the MSS has allowed schools to improve their school environments both in terms of physical surroundings and classroom teaching and learning. It has also encouraged teachers to reassess their professional pedagogical needs.

The MESC has adopted a whole school approach to school improvement. This involves three new initiatives applied at school level: (a) a cyclical annual school improvement model; (b) improvement in the management and organisation of the school; and (c) a performance management system linked to school improvement, professional development and MESC priorities.

The new career and salary framework for Samoa's teachers came into effect on 1 January 2015 and reflects the new entry points at different levels, using qualifications, years of experience and performance to determine the correct salary level for each teacher. The Teachers Act 2015 further recognises the Government of Samoa's commitment to ensuring a competent and highly skilled workforce thereby giving public reassurance on the quality of its teaching workforce. The establishment of the Monitoring, Evaluation and Review Division and the Teacher Professional Development and Career Advisory Division in 2013 and 2014 ensures the efficient and effective implementation of reforms in teacher quality and management.

⁷ Samoa Education Sector Plan July 2013–June 2018, p. 16.



FINDINGS BY DOMAIN



This section sets out some of the key findings coming out of the PaBER project. As stated earlier in this report, PaBER has generated a significant amount of evidence structured around five domains: Teacher Quality, Curriculum and Materials, Student Assessment, School Governance and Management, and the Education Management Information System (EMIS). The analysis below draws on the evidence from each of the domains. This analysis identified areas where the evidence was strongest, where weaknesses identified through research may represent critical bottlenecks, and where there were clear implications for improving learning outcomes. Teams from each of the pilot countries ensured findings could also respond to stated country policy priorities. The more in-depth analysis provided in the source reports is an important resource for more detailed work in each of these areas which could not be fully captured in this higher level summary analysis.

The analysis below aims where possible to capture the extent to which policy is in place, the difference between policy intent and the reality of delivery at school level, and where we have it, an understanding of how institutional and staff capacity influences this dynamic. Where appropriate the analysis also provides updates where specific action has been taken to respond to some of these findings in the period since the research was undertaken. It should also be noted that key findings discussed here include some overlap across the five domains. This is a representation of the separate analyses undertaken, but also serves to highlight the interaction between these domains. This is drawn out more fully in the analysis of cross-cutting themes.

TEACHER QUALITY

DOMAIN CONTEXT

The Public Service Commission (PSC) in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (MESC) has the responsibility for appointing and deploying teaching staff, non-teaching staff, and principals. The MESC however has the sole responsibility of deploying teachers based on the approved student:teacher ratio. The salary scale for teachers is determined by the PSC in parity with other professions and is based on years of experience, qualifications and performance.

In addition, the MESC is responsible for setting national education goals and controlling the review and development of the national curriculum. The Teacher Development and Advisory Division within the MESC is responsible for teachers' professional development. In 2014, MESC announced that all new teachers are required to have a bachelor's degree. Prior to this reform, teachers were required to have the minimum of a Diploma in Education to become a teacher.

KEY FINDINGS

Global research indicates the central importance of teacher quality in ensuring improved student learning. PaBER research aimed to assess how the Samoan education system recruits and deploys good quality teachers, equips them with the skills and knowledge they need, and keeps them motivated, performing and

improving over time. Here we pull out three key findings and explore the underpinning evidence.

KEY FINDING 1: The absence of clear guidelines for the implementation and monitoring of school-based professional development programmes limits the effectiveness of support to teachers to improve instruction.

The National Teacher Development Framework stipulates that all teachers in Samoa must receive professional development and that “improvement of teaching–learning outcomes in the classroom will be at the core of education, training, and staff development programs”. However, the framework does not specify the kinds of activities that would be most effective to improve teaching practice at school level, how to carry them out, how much professional development teachers should take part in, and how often.

Teachers are required to participate in professional development, but PaBER research findings revealed that the majority of teachers do not receive this on an ongoing basis. For those teachers who participated in such training, there is little evidence to suggest that skills learnt have translated to improved teaching. It is also likely that the lack of structured training and mentoring programmes for school principals is limiting their ability to provide instructional leadership and support to teachers.

KEY FINDING 2: Teachers have limited capacity and skills to effectively teach literacy and numeracy.

There are no specific requirements set out in policy or teacher education frameworks for the teaching of literacy and numeracy. Teachers have limited training on the delivery of sound pedagogy for literacy and numeracy acquisition. While teachers receive in-service training, most of the training does not specifically address the targeted areas required for literacy and numeracy, and there is little or no evidence that these trainings are planned in advance. Furthermore, most teachers are not able to fully utilise literacy and numeracy resources, claiming the language used in the curriculum is too difficult.

KEY FINDING 3: Teachers are not able to effectively implement classroom assessment due to a lack of capacity to plan and develop the assessment and to use the results to improve teaching and learning.

In Samoa, teachers are now required to have at least a degree to enter into the teaching profession, and practical classroom experience is part of the pre-service training. As part of this, it is expected that teachers will have the necessary skills to carry out classroom assessment. Teachers in Samoa are also provided with a variety of training opportunities to develop competencies with classroom assessment. However, findings from PaBER research indicate that teachers lack these competencies. The majority of teachers, based on the research findings, use summative not formative assessment and are unable to develop and use assessment tools to guide teaching strategies.

Reports generally include aggregate test scores only, and very little commentary is provided about the learning that has taken place. Such reporting does not provide meaningful information to the student, parent or the teacher.

SUMMARY

Looking at the Samoa system for managing and supporting teachers, there are clear strengths to build on. For instance, Samoa has put in place strong policies to guide the recruitment and deployment of teachers. However, the key challenges lie in ensuring that pre- and in-service training addresses the needs of teachers in terms of knowledge and skills to deliver the curriculum, assess and monitor student progress, and adjust teaching pedagogy to meet student needs. There is also a need to have clear policy to guide and most importantly to monitor professional development at national and school level.

ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS

DOMAIN CONTEXT

The overall policy situation governing assessment and its role in education in Samoa is well established in the Samoa National School Assessment Policy Framework and the National Curriculum Policy Framework, with the Making Assessment Work: Classroom Assessment Manual (2011) providing clear guidance on how assessments are to be carried out and uses to be made of the results. The Samoan Primary Education Literacy Level (SPELL) national assessment has been in place since 1993 testing Samoan, English and numeracy. However, there are no overarching policies in place to guide the national large-scale (SPELL) as well as international large-scale assessments.

Under the current assessment regime MESC, especially the Assessment and Examination Division (AED), is tasked with the implementation of high stakes examination at the end of Years 12 and 13. In addition, MESC is also responsible for the implementation of SPELL, administered annually at the end of Years 4 and 6. Samoa also takes part in a regional large-scale assessment (PILNA) at the end of Years 4 and 6.

KEY FINDINGS

PaBER research into student assessment in Samoa has looked at the effectiveness of systems at the school/classroom, national and regional/international levels, and how these are used to improve learning outcomes. At the national level, the analysis looked at classroom examinations and large-scale system assessments. These types of assessment all play different but important roles. A significant focus of PaBER work in this area was the capacity at different levels to implement assessments and use the results. Analysis of the emerging evidence has identified three key findings directly relating to the role of assessment in Samoa.

KEY FINDING 1: The effectiveness of delivering classroom-based assessment and using the results to inform reporting, operational, pedagogical and management decisions is limited by the capacity of teachers.

The effectiveness of classroom assessment, especially in improving student learning, is influenced by teachers' knowledge, and level of competency in identifying and using the most appropriate assessment methodology as part and parcel of pedagogical practice, as well as the availability of necessary resources. This leads to teachers using only the methods they are comfortable and competent with, such as paper and pen tests, despite issues relating to the validity of the assessment, and at the expense of other more appropriate assessments such as portfolios.

Evidence from the PaBER research, as well as other sources, points to the importance of classroom assessment in influencing teaching and informing student learning. While assessment policy documents provide information relating to classroom assessment, they fail to provide clear guidelines on implementation at the classroom level, and how the results should be used to improve teaching and learning. With the limited assessment capacity of teachers, how they conduct classroom assessment varies significantly between schools/classrooms, which leads to inconsistencies in how the results are used by stakeholders within the school (students, teachers, school leaders) and outside the school (parents, school boards/committees and community) to improve learning. This all indicates a need for more formal/structured training of teachers, both pre-service and in-service, to strengthen their use of assessments and adapt their teaching strategies based on the needs of their students.

KEY FINDING 2: Monitoring of both the quality of the assessment and the use of results to inform teaching and learning is inconsistent at all levels.

The quality of the assessment is crucial in ensuring not only the validity and reliability of the results but also the overall credibility of the assessment. This requires stringent quality assurance and control mechanisms to be in place. Evidence from PaBER research indicates a lack of such mechanisms to monitor the quality of assessments, their implementation and the use of results. This results in inconsistencies in how the assessment is conducted and how the results are being used.

KEY FINDING 3: The capacity of MESC staff in planning and administering assessments, as well as in analysis, reporting and use of results to inform policy decisions, is limited.

The AED⁸ plays a critical role in student assessment in Samoa. Evidence from PaBER has however highlighted that the professional staff of the AED do not possess the technical assessment skills at the level expected, particularly in the areas of instruments development, data analysis and reporting. While the policy is clear on what it expects from the assessments and how the results are to be used, this can only be fulfilled if the staff of the AED have the relevant skills and expertise to be able to carry out what is expected of them.

SUMMARY

Samoa has in place the policies for and key elements of an assessment system for classroom, national and international levels. The national large-scale assessment SPELL has been running since 1993 and although a new outcomes-based curriculum was introduced in 2010, it was only recently (2015) that the SPELL tool was revised to align to the new curriculum. However, to enhance the role of assessment in improving student learning, a number of weaknesses have been identified that should be addressed. The research indicates that there are limitations in how policy guides the specific delivery and use of large-scale national assessments, and staff capacity at school as well as at national level is limiting the use of assessments to improve learning.

CURRICULUM AND MATERIALS

DOMAIN CONTEXT

The MESC determines what is taught and what materials and resources are used and how they are procured. There is an established set of policy documents that guides ministry operations as well as underpinning donor support to MESC. The Education Act 2009 articulates the government expectations for education and the bilingual language policy. The National Curriculum Policy Framework (2006) provides

the principles and the scope and sequence framework for the curriculum and comprehensive guidelines for teaching in English and Samoan across the curriculum. Literacy and numeracy are given priority as articulated in the National Curriculum Policy Framework and the Education Sector Plan (2013–2018), and are addressed in the guidance for policy implementation.

KEY FINDINGS

PaBER research set out to identify how well policies provide guidance on what should be taught, how it should be delivered and assessed, and how these processes should be evaluated, monitored and reviewed. Field research gathered evidence on how curriculum and materials policies have been implemented at the school level to support the school learning environment. Here we pull out three key findings and explore the underpinning evidence.

KEY FINDING 1: Most teachers lack the skills, knowledge and confidence to deliver a bilingual student-centred, outcomes-based curriculum in literacy and numeracy.

The findings across the curriculum and materials domain highlighted teacher competency to deliver the curriculum as a critical weakness. This is the point of disconnection between the bilingual policy and outcomes-based curriculum and the practices that are occurring in schools. New curriculum documents, available in both English and Samoan, have sections of advice for teachers to help assess and address learning outcomes. The research shows that in spite of finding the advice components of the curriculum documents helpful, teachers still find it difficult to understand the terminologies in the curriculum. Curriculum documents are in place in schools, but access to adequate support materials is the main problem faced by teachers. Materials purchased under the school grant are not fully incorporated into their teaching, learning and assessment activities.

Professional development for teachers is defined in policy at the national level, but it does not require professional development programmes to focus on enhancing delivery of the curriculum, nor does it describe activities known to improve teaching practice. Although

⁸ Organisational re-structuring of the Curriculum and Materials and Assessment Division in 2015 resulted in two new divisions, the Assessment and Examination Division (AED) and Curriculum and Materials Division (CMD).

teacher competencies are defined, the current policy does not address specific requirements for English or literacy and numeracy skill levels held by teachers. Teachers are required to participate in professional development but in-service training is generally not planned in advance to address the literacy and numeracy needs of the schools. Additionally, the majority of teachers do not receive in-service training on an ongoing basis, nor have they received adequate training on the delivery of sound pedagogy for literacy and numeracy acquisition.

KEY FINDING 2: In spite of a bilingual policy embedded across the curriculum, teachers' preference to work in Samoan with Samoan materials is having an effect on student literacy in English.

A bilingual approach is embedded throughout the new curriculum and curriculum documents are now in place for all subjects in English and Samoan. Samoan is the dominant language of instruction in the early years of primary school, with English being incorporated progressively using an additive approach as students move towards the secondary level. Most teachers prefer to work with the Samoan version of curriculum documents – not a surprising finding but one that may indicate teachers' confidence and comfort with their own levels of English language literacy.

The assessment data from the 2012 and 2015 PILNA give cause for concern with respect to bilingual instruction. In 2012, 30 per cent of Year 6 students across the region were achieving expected levels in literacy (assessed in English). In contrast, only 8 per cent of Year 6 students in Samoa were achieving expected levels in literacy, and similar trends have been revealed in the 2015 PILNA results that are to be released in June 2016. Breaking the 2012 results down further, 27 per cent of students were performing at the expected level for reading compared to only 3 per cent for writing. These figures are indicative of a student population struggling both with the reading and writing content as well as with English as the language of instruction.

KEY FINDING 3: Teachers' capacity to effectively assess student learning through the development and application of classroom-based assessment is hindered by an insufficient supply of quality resource materials.

The new primary curriculum was introduced in schools in 2012 however the research shows that national, district and school-led development of curriculum support materials remains a challenge. Most schools purchase literacy, numeracy and other supplementary resources and materials using their school grant under the Samoa School Fees Grant Scheme, but not all schools fully utilise these resources in their classrooms and/or incorporate them in their planning for teaching and learning. Many teachers claim the language used in such supplemental resources is too difficult despite having had some workshops on it.

Assessment plans are not implemented consistently across schools, and teachers' understanding of the role of assessment in teaching and learning is limited. While some resources purchased from the school grant are currently available, how to effectively use these in planning for assessment is still a challenge. Resource packages of activities for formative as well as summative assessment purposes for all year levels are needed to illustrate to teachers the types of activities that will support and monitor the development of students' understanding, knowledge and skills and to facilitate their progress towards the achievement of literacy and numeracy outcomes.

SUMMARY

The research leading to all three key findings shows a common thread linking the bilingual nature of the Samoan curriculum to the teachers' ability to deliver a bilingual curriculum and the availability of appropriate resources to allow that delivery. PILNA results indicate that students do not do well when assessed in English as evidenced by the 2012 PILNA results showing Samoan students performing below their counterparts in the other two PaBER countries. The evidence shows that teachers are more comfortable in Samoan and struggle with the language of the resources that are available in English – both the curriculum documents and the supplementary materials. It stands to reason that if the teachers struggle with English, so too will their students. The capacity of teachers to teach competently in English, as well as their ability to address the needs of students through the requirements of the outcomes-based curriculum, would indicate gaps in teachers' personal English literacy as well as their knowledge of how

to teach and effectively assess literacy in English. The evidence serves to underline the challenges inherent in implementing a bilingual policy; the complexity of the challenges being uncovered through the PaBER process will require thoughtful consideration to ultimately achieve the benefits a bilingual education policy can bring to students.

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

DOMAIN CONTEXT

The education system in Samoa has two levels of governance: the central authority MESC, and the school level. The MESC is largely responsible for allocating resources to schools. The school level has the authority to raise additional financial resources. The primary source of operational funding is the Samoa School Fees Grant Scheme (SSFSGS) which started in 2010. The objectives of the SSFSGS are to: (i) reduce financial barriers; (ii) assist schools to improve their teaching and learning processes; and (iii) improve school-level resource management. The school grant constitutes the largest share of school funding and is based on formula financing. Principals are responsible for executing the operational budget while salaries for teaching and non-teaching staff are managed by the MESC.

KEY FINDINGS

KEY FINDING 1: The design and implementation of a school-based professional development programme to improve teaching and learning is hampered by a lack of management skills at the school level.

School governance and management are highly centralised in Samoa, with the MESC leading or directing many activities carried out at the school level. This is particularly true for professional development activities which are centrally organised. There is not much evidence of school-based professional development activities. Principals do not have the skills to carry out these activities and there is a lack of system-wide guidelines to develop and implement effective professional development at the school level.

There is some evidence of principal and/or senior staff monitoring at the school level but this is not consistent. School leadership and mentoring workshops have been offered for a number of school principals in Samoa, but the majority have not received any formal training in school leadership and management. In addition, the high turnover of principals (retiring or exiting) means that there are many who have not had this opportunity.

KEY FINDING 2: Student assessment results are not being used for management and pedagogical improvement, or for accountability to the community.

Not all principals and teachers are fully aware of the national assessment policy framework, and even fewer refer to it for guidance in designing whole school strategies and/or classroom assessment. The Assessment Policy states that a student assessment plan shall be developed and detail the activities, schedules, recording, storing and reporting system, and means of interpreting and utilising results.

There is little evidence to indicate the existence of student assessment plans except for tests, term and yearly exams. There is however evidence that many teachers are aware of SPELL tests and the need to tailor their teaching and assessment to address school results. The SPELL tests are analysed at the MESC. All schools receive copies of their school results which should be used to design intervention strategies. Guidance is provided through ministry workshops at district and national levels for awareness and targeted development of school-based professional development.

All schools have a report card for mid-year and end-of-year results. Most schools reported a final grading which was a combination of course work and an examination, and the student's position in class was indicated. Some schools reported only the examination grade. While there is no evidence of comprehensive classroom assessment, teachers provided assessment results and lesson plans to the principal. In addition, all principals were required to sign end-of-semester and end-of-year reports, which they note are a record of individual student progress but are not used for any other purpose.

KEY FINDING 3: The involvement of school committees is limited to finances and school environment with almost no involvement in teaching, learning and assessment-related matters.

School committees are actively involved in school operations, which include preparing and executing operational expenditures, holding responsibility for some input on learning and teaching materials, and engaging and coordinating with the community. School accountability is hampered by parents' inability, due to lack of power, to demand accountability on school performance.

The role of school board/committees and parent-teacher associations in government schools is mainly confined to financial and school environment matters with little to no engagement in teaching, learning and assessment matters. In contrast, some mission and all private schools have boards that are more engaged in assessment, intervention strategies and decision-making.

SUMMARY

The policy framework for school governance and management in Samoa is based on a more centralised role at the national level. The provision of professional development is largely organised by the MESC with little role for the principals. The use of student assessment at the school level is constrained by weak capacity of the principals and teachers and lack of specific knowledge on classroom assessment. The learning results are not adequately communicated to the parents or being used to improve teaching and learning. Finally, the role of the school boards and community in government schools is mostly limited to operational issues with little scope to be involved in the teaching and learning processes.

EDUCATION MANAGEMENT AND INFORMATION SYSTEM

DOMAIN CONTEXT

The value of EMIS as the key source of information for management and decision-making for education

in Samoa is articulated in the Education Sector Plan (2013–2018). This stipulates the need for a comprehensive and integrated EMIS system within the MESC.

The EMIS is built on a basic Microsoft Access system which is easy to manage and maintain. Response rates have a 100 per cent record which makes it possible to analyse, report and publish data on a timely basis. The EMIS is housed under the Policy, Planning and Research division, with the ICT division offering ongoing technical support to EMIS staff.

KEY FINDINGS

PaBER research has assessed the institutional arrangements that support the effective functioning, the soundness of data systems (e.g. collection, analysis, reporting and quality assurance), and the use of EMIS for decision-making. This work provides a basis for identifying the successes and challenges affecting EMIS in Samoa, and for proposing actionable and strategic directions to support future improvements in EMIS. From this evidence base, the following three key findings are highlighted.

KEY FINDING 1: There are no policies that support the running and effective utilisation of an EMIS system in Samoa and ensure its longer term sustainable funding.

An EMIS policy has yet to be developed to provide guidelines on processes, procedures and resource allocations. Data collection processes are mostly paper-based and monitored manually at central level. Schools identified with data anomalies are visited by EMIS staff and data validation is conducted on-site. These processes are time consuming and although there is increasing recognition of the need for a more automated system at school level, there is absence of policy direction to formalise it.

The absence of an operational manual to define key terminologies of EMIS, data fields and indicators raises issues with regards to data quality and data integrity and whether processes have been properly followed. Effective utilisation of quality data by all stakeholders in making informed decisions has not been strongly supported by policy.

The absence of EMIS policy guidelines on resource allocation and the lack of a dedicated budget line for EMIS operations has made planning difficult for the EMIS Unit. EMIS is largely donor-funded, and with this external support for hardware and software, the government has made little commitment to support system maintenance, raising the issue of sustainability.

KEY FINDING 2: The lack of integration of education data limits the communication of information and the utilisation of EMIS data for better informed decision at different levels.

EMIS exists as a standalone system and is not linked with other education modules within the MESC. The modules are: school census data (EMIS); payroll; staffing; training; and finances. The fact that all these modules are on the same platform but are not linked confines the scope of EMIS to what is collected in the school census forms only, such as demographic and school information data, and not data on assessment outcomes, teacher payroll and finance data.

Learning assessment outcomes exist as external data and are not reported in EMIS. The introduction of the student education number as a tracking identifier is not linked to EMIS and any intentions to track longitudinal data on student performance over time will not be forthcoming until these systems are integrated.

KEY FINDING 3: Limited systems and capacity to analyse data limit the utilisation of EMIS for decision-making at system and school levels.

EMIS staff have few opportunities for specialised technical training on the EMIS system, limiting staff ability to fully utilise EMIS. Trainings are usually conducted by donors but are limited to basic skills. EMIS officers need the knowledge, skills, confidence and capability to take the system to another level.

Capacity building of all education stakeholders on the use EMIS data to inform decisions is an important aspect highlighted in the findings. Schools and key stakeholders such as students, parents and the community do not use data to inform decisions partly because the data may have not been presented in a form that is fully understood by them. Furthermore, school

principals need to be trained to use data effectively to make school development plans and to support improved student performances in classrooms.

SUMMARY

There are no policies for EMIS in Samoa despite it being mentioned in the national strategic plan as an important tool for improving strategic planning and decision-making. Policy directions on key processes, procedures and resource allocation are absent and the EMIS Unit is challenged to execute its mandate effectively under these conditions. EMIS is far from centralised, and many databases exist independently from each other, raising the imminent need for a more comprehensive and integrated EMIS system that is able to provide the data needs of all stakeholders. An EMIS is effective if stakeholders are able to fully utilise data for making decisions, a situation that is not true for Samoa where EMIS data remained underutilised among key stakeholders of education.



CROSS-CUTTING ANALYSIS



PaBER adopted an ambitious scope of analysis across the education system. The five domains were selected in recognition of their important role as enabling inputs to improving the quality of education. In planning reform each of these areas can be seen, to some extent, as closed, self-reinforcing systems. So, in addressing teacher quality, we cannot only look at in-service professional development, or the preparation teachers receive on recruitment. Teacher quality is also influenced by the quality of candidates entering the profession, the conditions under which they work, and how they are motivated and supported to perform. A teacher also needs to work in a well-managed school, the operational parameters of which vary from country to country. We know that to contribute to learning, a good school needs a degree of managerial autonomy, to use assessment to inform teaching practice and inform the training of teachers, and to use results to ensure accountability to stakeholders locally and higher up the system.

For each of the domains under PaBER, the research and analytical tools were designed with this in mind. A significant body of work has been established which can be used by policy-makers and technical staff at different levels of the system to inform planning and delivery, and track progress over time. It is not possible in a summary report to capture the breadth of this work, or do justice to some important issues. However, it is possible to draw out some clear emerging priorities. It is also possible to see that there are important ways in which these domains, or parts of the education system,

interact. It is unlikely that in trying to address a shortcoming in one area without taking account of these interactions, optimal results will be achieved.

As stated in the introduction to this report, the purpose of PaBER was to focus on those areas that would impact on learning, particularly literacy and numeracy results. It has also been a guiding premise to focus on how the education system enables the process of teaching and learning in the classroom. With this in mind, this section sets out some of the cross-cutting themes, which are emerging as priorities and which in some way speak to the priorities already set out in Education Sector Plan (2013–2018).

EMERGING THEMES AND PRIORITIES

The delivery of the bilingual policy and its impact on literacy and numeracy outcomes.

Poor implementation of the bilingual policy has affected student literacy and numeracy in English. The current bilingual policy that prioritises Samoan as the language of instruction in primary levels also calls for the integration of English instruction as students progress through school. PaBER has indicated a number of challenges and ways in which this may hinder literacy and numeracy outcomes.

Firstly, the teaching standards and competencies expected of teachers are clearly articulated with respect to pedagogy but do not address the language competencies of teachers. Teachers have in fact indicated that they

prefer to work with the Samoa version of materials, and also indicated that language and terminology in the English curriculum resources make it too challenging to teach. As a result it is highly likely that while a bilingual policy is in place, the majority of teaching and learning goes on in Samoan. This is evident in the relatively weak performance of Year 6 in the PILNA literacy assessment, which is undertaken in English.

Secondly, school leaders are not consistently monitoring the implementation of the bilingual policy in classroom teaching, and there are no systematic data collected on the use of language in the classroom. Finally, professional development programmes do not address the English competency of teachers.

Given that student assessment at national and regional levels is administered in English, this situation is almost certainly having an impact on measured literacy and numeracy outcomes. At the classroom level, where teachers are using assessment, it is likely to be a combination of Samoan and English. If the language of the resource is too challenging for teachers to engage with in constructing assessment, those assessments are likely to be less effective or will be done in Samoan preventing students from demonstrating their knowledge in English.

Provision of professional development is inconsistent and poorly aligned to the needs of teachers.

While Samoa has a relatively well-established enabling environment for the recruitment and preparation of teachers, there is inconsistent and unplanned provision of professional development and school-level support which undermines the quality of teaching and learning.

Professional development is currently at two levels: system-based where the MESC organises and facilitates targeted professional development for teachers and principals nationwide; and a school-based professional development programme in which the principal takes more autonomy in determining the content and frequency of sessions. Schools conduct ongoing professional development sessions, however research showed that these sessions are usually unplanned, not well organised and ad hoc. There are no clear guidelines for schools to follow when it comes to planning, developing and

implementing a more inclusive school-wide professional development programme that promotes high-quality teaching and leadership in supporting students' achievements, well-being and engagement.

PaBER research on school governance indicated that principals lack the skills to plan, develop, implement, monitor and evaluate school-based professional development. The content of professional development sessions is designed and organised around the principal's subject area of expertise and competence, and sessions are usually not properly monitored and attendance is not compulsory.

The limitations identified here illustrate how teacher professional development could be acting as a key bottleneck to improving learning outcomes. This is impacting on teachers' understanding of and ability to deliver the curriculum, and the use of assessment results to improve teaching, and is linked to school management capacity. Any solutions will need to address these links, and ensure overall coherence and guidance nationally, with associated resources, strong school-based capacity to deliver, and appropriate monitoring systems.

The use of classroom-based assessment to drive improvements in learning

Assessment is a systematic process of gathering information about what students know, are able to do, and are learning to do, and is an integral part of instruction that improves, empowers and celebrates student learning. PaBER benchmarking and associated analysis of assessment in Samoa has looked at four different types of assessment, each with different purposes. Each of these assessment types has a role to play in improving learning, whether to inform better teaching practice in the classroom, ensure a level of accountability to parents and other stakeholders, or inform policy decisions.

In particular, classroom-based assessment information provides the foundation for school and classroom decision-making, planning for teaching and learning, and management direction. One of the major findings across all of the PaBER domains was the challenges of implementing a variety of good quality classroom-based assessments and using the results to improve

student learning. It is clear from this research that teachers lack the ability to effectively assess student performance through the use of assessments and are not in a position to use the results from these to inform practice.

PaBER work across different domains shows that this limited competency among teachers is in part due to the limited availability and use of resources, a lack of appropriate training, and limited support systems at all levels. As part of this, neither school principals nor MESC are effectively diagnosing and responding to the professional development needs of teachers in this area. In addition, the quality of classroom-based assessment is not monitored by the principal. School principals themselves have limited access to leadership and management training on whole school assessment. This in turn affects their ability to monitor student and school performance to ensure that the intended learning outcomes of the curriculum for each level are achieved.

CONCLUSIONS

This section has highlighted three areas emerging as priorities – areas of underperformance, which may be acting as bottlenecks to learning improvement. Within this, and across other PaBER analyses, it is possible to see that a broader issue is the inconsistent delivery against policy, or inconsistent provision as a result of unclear policy and guidelines. For instance, this research has indicated variations across schools and among teachers in delivering the bilingual student-centred and outcome-based curriculum. Inconsistencies were also noted in the implementation of the Samoa National Assessment Policy Framework, in which schools vary in how they deliver school-based assessment, analyse and report on assessment results, and how they use this to inform teaching practice and school development planning.

Looking back to the PILNA results from 2012, set out earlier in this report and reported separately in more detail, we can see this kind of inconsistency born out in results. It is not possible to draw any lines of correlation or causality to the policy areas described and analysed by PaBER. However, it is possible that such inconsistency is linked to the variation in performance,

for instance of private and public, and urban and rural schools. It would seem to warrant further research and analysis into the practice and capacity in these different contexts, and to look more closely at what high performing schools in Samoa are doing.

It is likely that in some cases clearer articulation of policy and associated guidance, alongside more effective monitoring and targeted support where most needed, may improve the consistency of implementation in each of these areas.



RECOMMENDATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

RECOMMENDATIONS

This report has pulled together some of the key findings across the five PaBER domains (Teacher Quality, Student Assessment, Curriculum and Materials, School Governance and Management, and Education Management Information Systems). From this, we have looked at how some of the issues interact and how this may have an impact on student learning. It needs to be reiterated that it is not possible to do full justice in this approach to the full range of analysis across the many PaBER country and regional reports. It is, however, important to draw conclusions from all of this that can help inform action. This section therefore sets out a number of recommendations, which draw on the country reports, seeking joined-up responses which target improvements in classroom teaching and learning processes.

Where possible, the recommendations are cognisant of the need for clear policy to be in place, but that this in itself is often insufficient to drive change. The recommendations therefore aim to promote practical efforts and action that can bring about change at different levels, also recognising from the PaBER analysis that we need to target a number of actors at the same time, and target capacity building and institutional support where most needed. It is not suggested that these recommendations represent all that is needed to address what are often complex and inter-connected areas of system reform. They are a first step, a good place to start based on the evidence we have. It is suggested that for more de-

tailed reform and implementation planning, the source documents are referred to for more comprehensive and nuanced recommendations. Indeed, it is understood that in some cases those recommendations have already been acted on.

The MESC has used the findings from PaBER to analyse and identify policy and school level reforms that will address some of the barriers to improving learning outcomes, as illustrated in Figure 1 shown.

As part of this, the MESC identified three specific initiatives that would provide a more complete approach to supporting teachers and schools to deliver the curriculum: the Samoa National Teaching and Learning Framework; a practical guide to classroom teaching and learning; and a practical guide to school-based assessment. These form the basis for the recommendations set out below, which target both system and school levels to drive improvements in teaching practice and student learning.

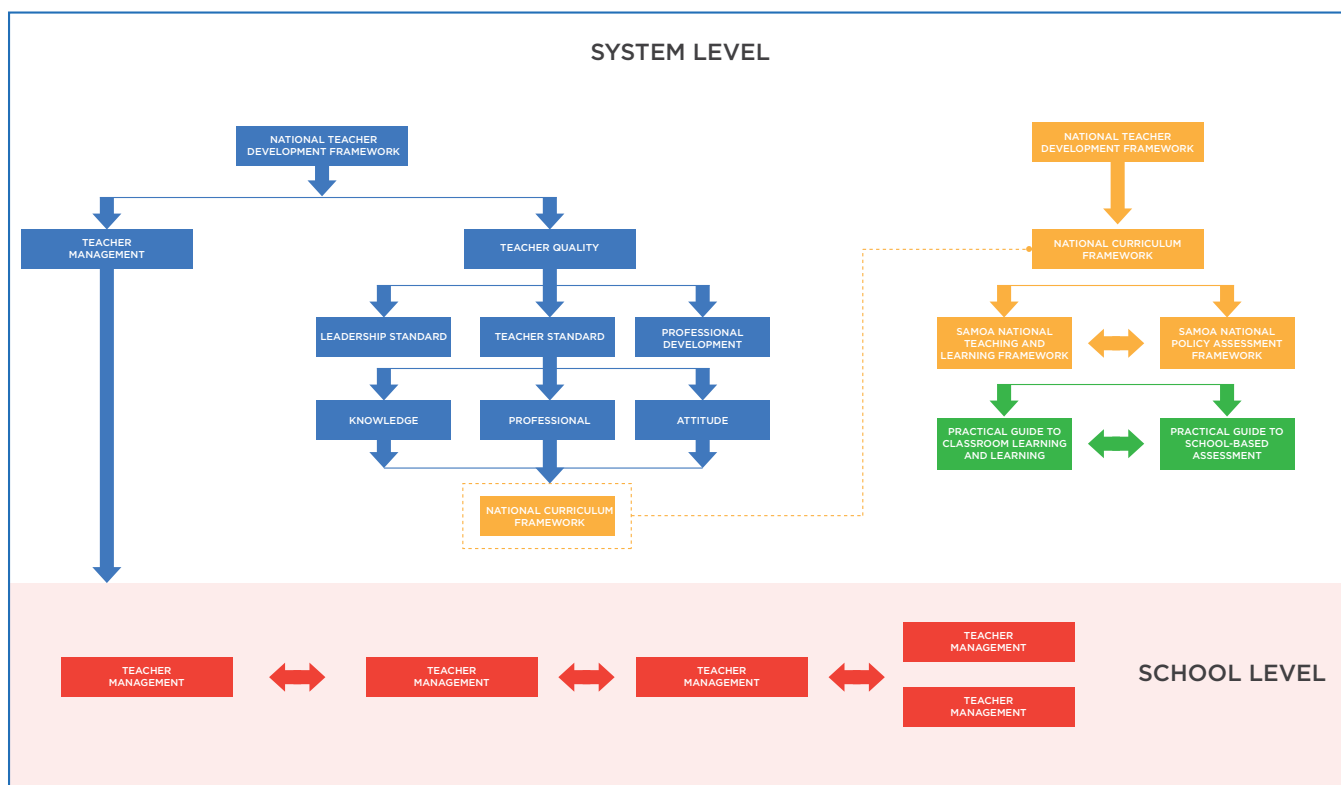


Figure 1. Addressing system challenges to improve learning outcomes.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Ensure more integration of, and coherence and linkages between, policies focusing on improved teaching and learning.

PaBER research and analysis shows that good progress has been made in the development of educational policies and guidelines which provide a broadly enabling context for curriculum development, quality of teaching, student assessment, and school governance. However, there is a risk that these policies and guidelines, and their use by different implementing divisions, lack the necessary integration to deliver improvements in learning. It is therefore recommended to develop a National Teaching and Learning Framework and a strategy for its implementation, to better enable sectoral efforts in realising the MESC vision. This will consolidate policies pertaining to teaching and learning, and set goals that articulate and complement national education priorities.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Develop and implement a strategy for professional development of teachers, school principals and education authorities.

PaBER has shown that while the context for recruiting and providing initial training to teachers is fairly well established, a key weakness is in the ongoing training and professional development, and monitoring and support, they receive to deliver the curriculum. The National Teacher Development Framework provides the basis for this, but does not provide sufficient detailed guidance to ensure effective and consistent implementation.

The **National Teacher Development Framework should be reviewed and additional guidance provided**, including subject-specific skills/competencies, a range of professional development methods, sufficient quality and quantity (annual minimum requirements), and sufficient attention to matching provision to needs. This should include a priority focus on literacy and numeracy, including skills to teach in English as the medium of instruction. The MESC should also determine how this can be provided without cost to the teachers. An associated recommendation is to undertake this work as part of a broader **Professional Development Strategy for education professionals**, including teachers, school principals and MESC/local authority staff.

PILNA and other PaBER analysis suggests that a key driver of the low performance in student assessments is the low competence level of teachers to implement the bilingual policy. This calls for more specialised training for teachers to increase their confidence in teaching the curriculum in both Samoan and English. It is recommended, however, to review the bilingual policy to better understand any other challenges to its implementation.

The Samoa National Assessment Policy Framework contains a comprehensive section on classroom-based teaching and learning. However, the framework lacks practical guidelines and supplementary materials to implement classroom-based teaching and learning effectively. A **practical guide to classroom teaching and learning** should be developed. The guide will serve to provide teachers with teaching strategies that are student centred, and the accompanying materials will allow teachers more teaching time with less need to prepare resources. This guide will be used as part of/ to complement the in-service professional development needs of teachers.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Develop and implement a strategy to strengthen use of assessment at all levels

PaBER indicates that while policy and guidance is in place for school-based assessment, it is not being effectively used in classrooms to promote student learning. More support is needed to increase teacher knowledge, time and motivation. To support teachers to make school-based assessment an integral part of their teaching, a **practical guide to school-based assessment** should be developed to provide a range of resources and activities for use in class, to move away from summative to formative assessment, and to enable the utilisation of assessment outcomes to improve teaching approaches and student learning. Alongside this, **professional development for teachers and school principals** should include a focus on the classroom assessment and the use of student assessment results.

There is a broader need to strengthen the capacity of the MESC on classroom-based assessment and broader national assessments. MESC staff should be given on-the-job training and other professional development opportunities on planning, administration, analysis and

use of assessment results to inform policy decisions. Staff should also be trained on monitoring and provision of sound assessment advice on the quality of assessment and effective use of assessment results to inform teaching practice and planning targeted student learning.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Review systems and strengthen capacity for school-based management.

PaBER has identified a number of ways in which schools need to be better empowered to deliver improved learning. There is a lack of awareness about national policy among principals, teachers, parents and other key stakeholders. **Professional development and training for school principals is a priority** to ensure they are aware of key policies, and can involve teachers and other stakeholders in the implementation and monitoring of these. As part of this, principals need to be empowered to better evaluate teachers and provide associated professional development.

Schools have a good degree of autonomy in planning and managing school budgets, though it is recommended to **review the funding formula for school grants** to ensure it does not disadvantage poorer rural schools. The school committee selection process and capacity could be strengthened by **reviewing/ revising TORs to be clearer on the roles of school committee members**, and by developing a **training and development programme for committee members**. Committees should also be mandated to **meet more regularly**, as currently they meet only once at the end of the school year. Schools could also be given a **stronger role in staff recruitment and management**. There should also be a voice for school principals in the recruitment and deployment of teachers. The MESC should consider decentralising responsibility for recruitment and management of non-teaching staff to school level, as a responsibility of the principal and school committee.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Ensure sufficient curriculum materials are provided to schools.

The national Education Sector Plan recognises literacy and numeracy as priority, but the limited availability of materials in class continues to be a bottleneck to learning. The Samoa country reports under PaBER

highlight a number of actions that could be taken at national and school levels to address this. More specific **guidance is needed for the materials development process**, including specifications for materials in both languages as part of the bilingual policy, and in particular the **development and procurement of materials in English**. Materials for literacy and numeracy should be a priority. The **organisational structure for materials development/procurement and evaluation** should be clarified and formalised. A national-level policy is also needed to set out mobile learning modes, in particular for remote/rural schools, and innovation should be sought to test, and fast track where appropriate, cost-effective approaches.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Consolidate and ensure the future development of EMIS.

The PaBER country reports highlight the progress made in establishing a functioning EMIS, but that its use is currently limited to providing information for national-level allocation of school grants. The reports outline a number of ways in which the EMIS now needs to be consolidated and its future guaranteed, and planned for. These include **establishing an EMIS policy** to set out provisions for the budget; data collection, management and utilisation; integration with external databases; and professional development.

There are a number of ways EMIS can be taken forward in coming years, and this will need to be reflected in MESC plans. It is suggested the PaBER reports can form a starting point for planning and capacity building in this area. Some of the key areas will need to be the **integration of learning assessment data**, collection of individual student-level data, enhanced **utilisation of data by key stakeholders** including effective feedback loops to school-level stakeholders, data integrity checks, and **professional training and on-the-job capacity building** for staff.

LESSONS LEARNED

PaBER had an ambitious agenda and a multifaceted methodology. The project attempted to go down the road from formulation of policy at the national level to

implementation of policy and practices in the classroom. To a large extent PaBER succeeded in producing a robust evidence base of the challenges the countries are facing in improving learning. Some key lessons emerged from the analytical work that was done along the journey. The research also opened new pathways that could be explored. The following are some of the key lessons learned for Samoa.

The research told us some things, but not everything.

The field research has made a valuable contribution as it gave a clearer picture of what is taking place at the school level. But it could be improved to answer key questions in more depth, and possibly look at how policy implementation takes place at levels between the central ministry and school (local authorities/districts etc.). There would be some value in reflecting on the tools used for capacity analysis, and looking at aspects of teacher skills other than for assessment. All of this could be considered if/when planning further roll out and adoption.

Some schools perform better than others, but we do not know why. The PILNA results clearly showed that some schools are achieving good learning outcomes. Follow-up analysis could look at high performing schools and understand what they are doing that could be applied more broadly. According to the PILNA results, there are significant differences between public and private, and urban and rural schools.

Publication and open discussion of learning outcomes can act as a wake-up call for countries – governments are acknowledging that learning is not taking place.

When PaBER started there was little public sharing of what was considered ‘sensitive’ information. Most staff from ministries had a strong sense that there was a learning crisis but few actually knew how serious the situation was. The process of benchmarking with other countries can lead to more transparency, better implementation of solutions, and strong ownership. It is difficult to know if the three countries would have addressed the findings and evidence if they had not put their own weaknesses in the spotlight.

Good policies alone do not translate into good education results. The policy reports from PNG and Solomon Islands showed many areas where the three

countries have established policies benchmarked against international standards. However, the learning outcomes are very poor. Policy intent provides the framework for strong education systems but the implementation of policies must be carried out through proven practices that lead to better learning.

Countries want to implement reforms but the resources and capacity are not always available.

Ministries and departments of education are keen to improve their education systems and are increasingly open to seriously reviewing their weaknesses and using evidence to find solutions. There is now an abundance of findings and recommendations and the countries are embracing them, but implementation is still very weak.

The SABER instruments and approach can give a country a solid start to assessing its education systems.

The original SABER tools assessed only policy intent, and there is now a recognised need to assess both policy intent and policy implementation. Otherwise there is a serious risk that the findings from the reports could give a skewed picture of a country's education system. In addition, the tools become more reliable when a series of SABER tools are used in one country. This provides a deeper analysis of the system and a wider array of policy recommendations. The EMIS instrument underpins the data needs in a country and should be included where other tools have been implemented. New SABER tools include both policy intent and implementation.

Regional collaboration, and open exchange of best practices based on a solid evidence base, can help countries better focus their resources.

PaBER provided a good start at benchmarking education systems across the Pacific. The evidence provided in this report and the recommendations should help the countries improve learning over time. This experience should not be lost, and future work could include: periodic tracking of the domains in the pilot countries; review and revision of PaBER instruments and tools for other countries; and expansion of the approach to other countries in the region.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1. PABER METHODOLOGY

PABER GOVERNING STRUCTURE

PaBER governing structure comprised of three layers; i) governments of the three countries (ministries of education) and SPC have overall, oversight and responsibility for PaBER; ii) a steering committee (SC) which consisted of CEOs from the respective government education ministries including the presence of the Director of EQAP and representatives from DFAT; a technical working group (TWG) comprises of country technical experts and jointly chaired by EQAP and DFAT. PaBER governing structure is shown in Figure 1 below.

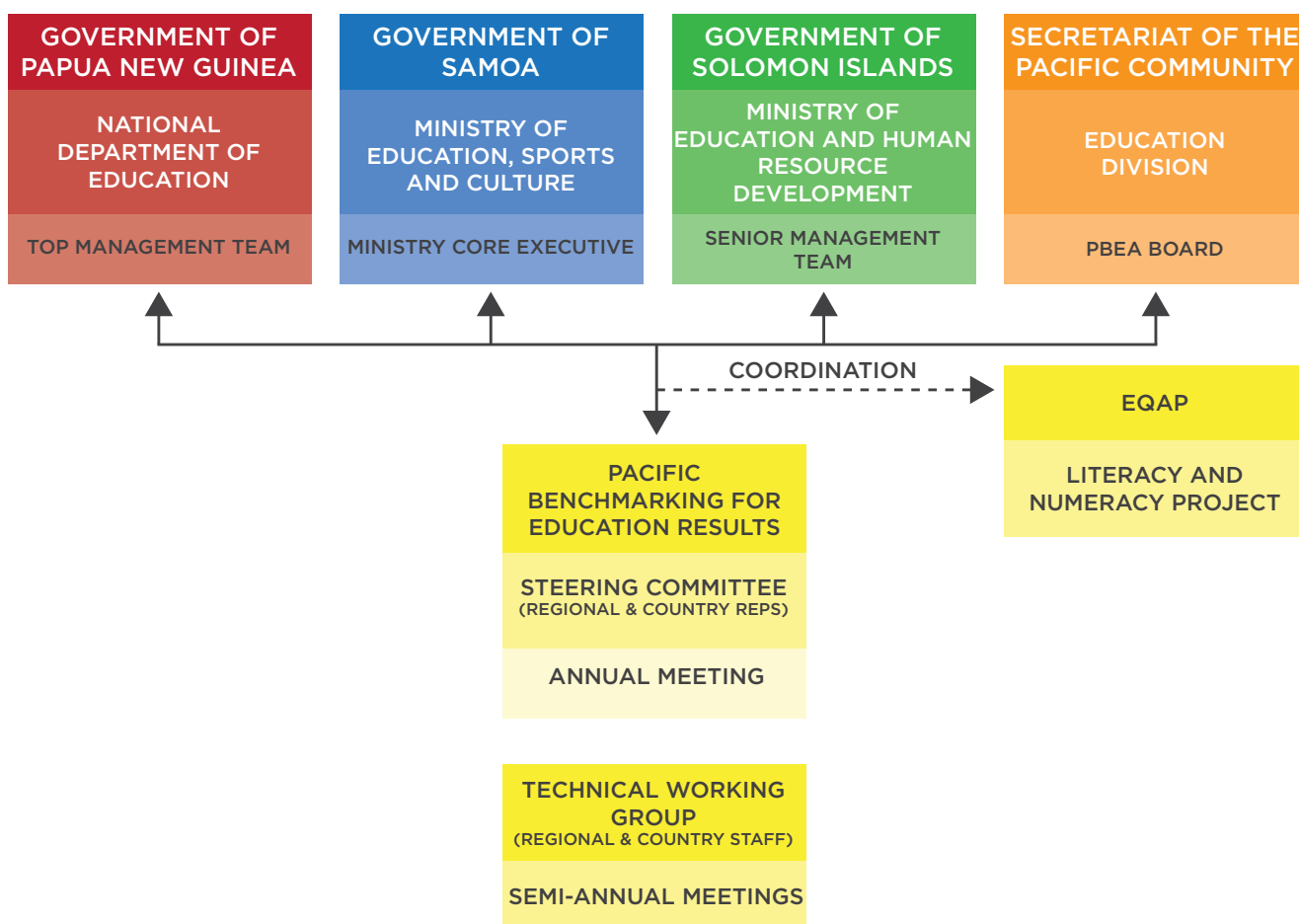


Figure 1: PaBER governing structure

The TWG has co-chairs [EQAP Director and DFAT] and meet bi-annually produce reports on annual implementation plans, monitor progress achieved on a six-monthly basis and provided budgetary updates and financial reports that are discussed and endorsed by TWG. These reports are presented to the SC for approval.

EQAP took on the role of Project Manager and played a leading role in overseeing the overall management of the program. EQAP PaBER officers provided the secretariat support and technical assistance to the countries. At the country level, each country appointed a PaBER Country Coordinator to oversee the proper implementation of the program at the country level. This governance structure is unique to PaBER and is successfully implemented throughout its life.

PROCESSES FOR POLICY ASSESSMENT

Five policy assessments were carried out in 2013 – 2015 in Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Solomon Islands. Each policy assessment was carried out using the same process with the exception of the EMIS assessment. The SABER EMIS instrument was developed later by SABER and not included in the original design of PaBER. It should be noted that the Teachers, School Autonomy and Accountability, Student Assessment and Curriculum and Materials instruments were primarily looking at policy intent and not policy implementation. The EMIS instrument provides an assessment of policy intent and implementation. The process for carrying out the policy assessments is shown in Figure 2 given below.

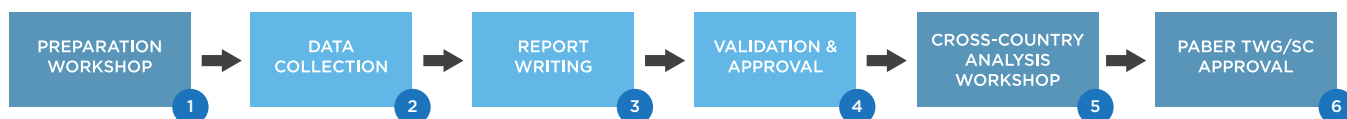


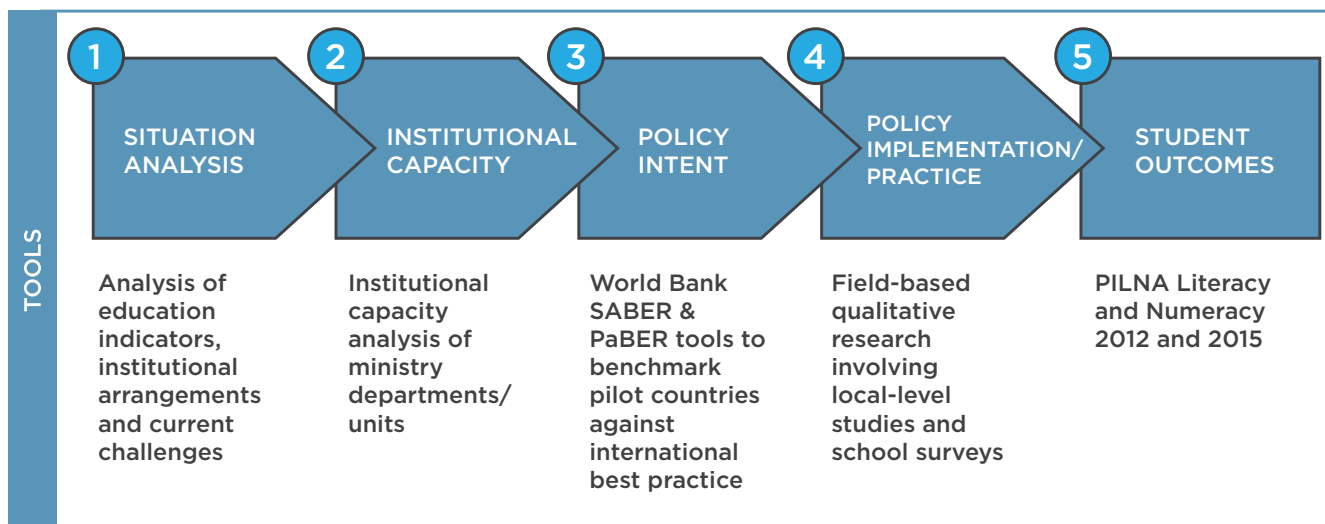
Figure 2: Policy assessment process

For each domain, a 2-3 day preparation/training workshop (Step 1) is required with key Ministry of Education staff from the relevant policy areas. The objective of the training workshops are to ensure better ownership and facilitation of the data collection, report writing and validation procedures. Consultants are usually engaged to carry out the review using the SABER framework and methodology. Additional items/questions can be included in the data collection instrument relevant to the countries' context.

The consultant along with the PaBER Assessment Officers and assistance from the local PaBER coordinators usually carry out the data collection in each country for each domain (Steps 2-4). The first part of the exercise is to collect data in-country using the agreed instruments. The draft reports are written by the consultant and / or by the SABER team in Washington, D.C., depending on the domain. The draft reports are always presented to the Ministries for validation.

Following the validation and country approval of reports, a 2-3 days workshop (Step 5) is usually held with all three countries. The objectives of the workshop are to benchmark the findings and agree on recommendations from the report. The participants are usually senior staff (3-4) from the relevant policy sections within the ministries of education. The reports are reviewed and agreements are made by each Ministry of Education on the issues to adopt.

It should be noted that countries sometimes bring other issues to the table and shared their views, practices and probable solutions with each other as part of benchmarking or learning from each other. A regional report is then developed and submitted to the Technical Working Group for further deliberation and endorsement before it goes to the Steering Committee for final approval (Step 6).



OUTCOMES OF PaBER
 Capacity developed within relevant ministries for using diagnostics data to develop and implement policy and interventions that will improve learning outcomes.
 Integration of PaBER into country level Education Strategy and National Action Plans.

Figure 3: The PaBER approach through using of various tools.

To facilitate the process, PaBER through its approach has developed/adapted and used tools to inform and identify policy and interventions that could improve learning outcomes as shown in Figure 3.

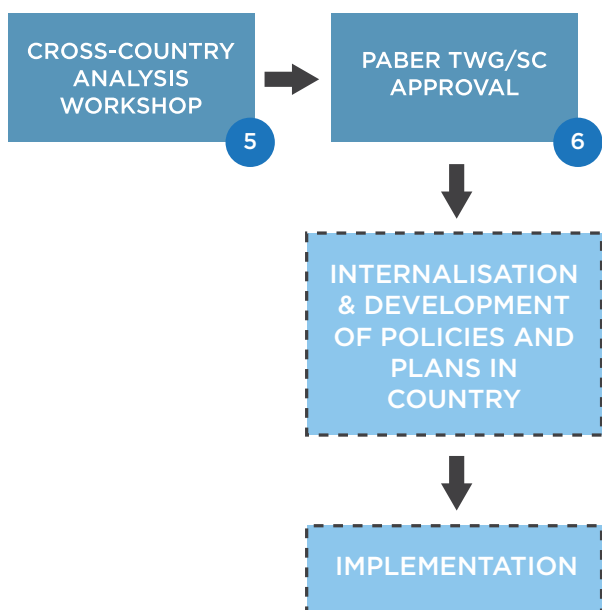


Figure 4: Implementation of Steering Committee recommendations in-country

The Ministries of Education in each country are not expected to begin actively consider and implement all the recommendations from the 5 policy assessments immediately following the workshops. The original intention of PaBER is that the reports would be considered in line with the institutional assessments and the research carried out under component 3. This would form part of the evidence base at the end of the program that would be submitted to all three countries to show what worked and what didn't work. Figure 4 indicate the process at the country level after Steering Committee has approved the recommendations.

To make use of the breadth of evidences collected through PaBER, a triangulation exercise is planned and instituted to consolidate the huge amount of data and evidences collected under each of the domain. Throughout the exercise the countries identified key findings that are important evidences to informing policy interventions to improve quality of education.

ANNEX 2. PaBER reports used in the Samoa analysis

The table below sets out the source documents used to derive the key findings for Samoa for each of the policy domains, as detailed in Section 3 of this report.

REPORTS	DOMAINS				
	TEACHER QUALITY	CURRICULUM AND MATERIALS	STUDENT ASSESSMENT	SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT	EMIS
Samoa Teacher Quality SABER Country Report (2014)	X				
Samoa Student Assessment SABER Country Report (2014)			X		
Samoa School Autonomy SABER Country Report (2013)				X	
Cross Country Analysis School Governance and Management report (2013)				X	
Cross Country Analysis System Assessments report (2014)			X		
Samoa Curriculum and Materials Country Report (2014)		X			
Samoa Institutional Capacity Analysis of National Education System (2013)			X		
Audit of the Assessment Skills of Teachers in Samoa (2016)	X		X		
Samoa Institutional Policy Capacity Analysis Report (2016)	X	X	X	X	
Pacific Benchmarking for Education Results Samoa Research Report (2016)	X	X	X	X	
Mapping of the Implementation of the Policy Domains in Samoa (2016)	X	X	X	X	
Samoa Education Management Information System SABER Country Report (2015)					X

ANNEX 3. Detailed PILNA 2012 results for Samoa

There is low percentage of Year 6 students reaching satisfactory level and above in literacy (Figure 1):

about 1 in 10 students (8 per cent) are performing at a satisfactory and expected level;

about 4 in 10 students (41 per cent) are working towards the expected level; and

about 5 in 10 students (51 per cent) are not yet working towards the expected level.

LITERACY ACHIEVEMENTS 2012

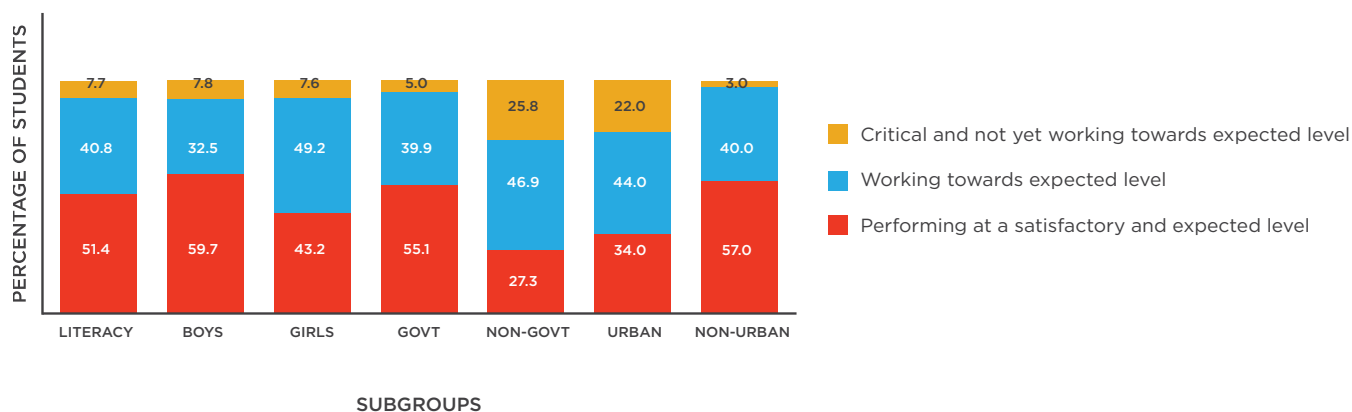


Figure 1: Distribution of student proficiency in literacy and subgroups.

A reasonable percentage of Year 6 students are reaching satisfactory level and above in numeracy (Figure 2):

about 3 in 10 students (34 per cent) are performing at a satisfactory and expected level;

about 3 in 10 students (30 per cent) are working towards the expected level; and

about 4 in 10 students (36 per cent) are not yet working towards the expected level.

NUMERACY ACHIEVEMENTS 2012

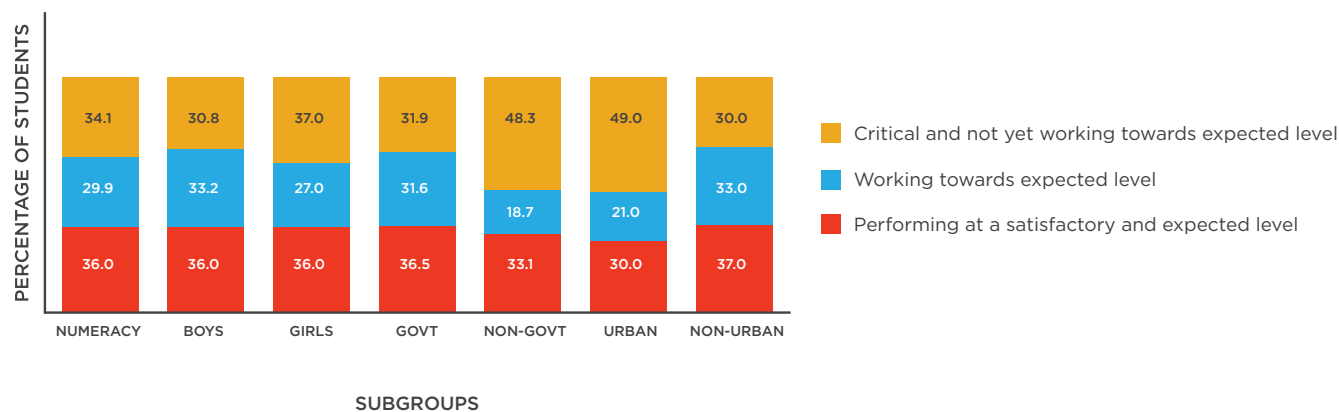


Figure 2: Distribution of student proficiency in numeracy and subgroups

Subgroup and substrand performance (Tables A and B)

There is no difference in performance between girls and boys at upper achievement/proficiency levels in literacy. The difference is more pronounced in the middle and lower proficiency levels, in favour of girls.

Girls are doing better than boys in numeracy, with more girls reaching the satisfactory and expected levels.

Students attending non-government schools outperform those attending government schools in both literacy and numeracy.

Students in urban schools outperform those in non-urban schools in both literacy and numeracy.

Writing is the weakest strand in literacy; only a few students are able to demonstrate satisfactory and expected skills in writing. The same goes for the strand Operations in numeracy.

TABLE A. PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENT PROFICIENCY IN LITERACY AND SUBGROUPS (PILNA 2012).							
ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS	LITERACY	BOYS	GIRLS	GOV'T	NON-GOV'T	URBAN	NON-URBAN
Performing at a satisfactory and expected level	7.7	7.8	7.6	5.0	25.8	22.0	3.0
Working towards expected level	40.8	32.5	49.2	39.9	46.9	44.0	40.0
Critical and not yet working towards expected level	51.4	59.7	43.2	55.1	27.3	34.0	57.0

TABLE B. PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENT PROFICIENCY IN NUMERACY AND SUBGROUPS (PILNA 2012)							
ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS	NUMERACY	BOYS	GIRLS	GOV'T	NON-GOV'T	URBAN	NON-URBAN
Performing at a satisfactory and expected level	34.1	30.8	37.0	31.9	48.3	49.0	30.0
Working towards expected level	29.9	33.2	27.0	31.6	18.7	21.0	33.0
Critical and not yet working towards expected level	36.0	36.0	36.0	36.5	33.1	30.0	37.0

