

Regional Qualifications Register: Phase 1 – First Cluster Meeting
11th – 13th April, 2007; Suva, Fiji

National Qualifications: Tuvalu

Area and population

Tuvalu has a population of 9,561 living on a land area of only 25.63 square kilometers, according to the 2002 Census. This land area is for the nine small islands spanning about 600 kilometers from north to south.

Education and human resource development

The Department of Education's [DOE] overall objective is to ensure the provision of a "system of quality education which endows ... people with the knowledge skills and attributes necessary to achieve a higher degree of self reliance in a rapidly changing world, and one that is consistent with (Tuvalu's) spiritual values". This is a very challenging objective for a nation that is probably the smallest developing country however in spite of this and other constraints such as paucity of natural resources; extremely in fertile soils; in adequately skilled workforce; high levels of under employment as well as its isolation from the rest of the world, even by South Pacific standards, the DOE strives to achieve its objective.

Education is compulsory in Tuvalu from ages 5+ to 15+. Preschool education looks after children from when they are plus 3 to plus 5. Primary school education is from Year 1 to Year 8 and secondary school education is from Year 9 to Year 13.

Tuvalu Maritime Training Institute [TMTI] is the only formal vocational post-secondary education provider and it takes in only males. There are other private providers offering vocational training on short-term basis. The University of the South Pacific 's Extension Centre in Tuvalu also offers post secondary education ranging from foundation studies to bachelor degree qualifications.

Other government ministries/departments also assist in the training of their own personnel through organized training sessions. Others offer training or facilitate other ministries/departments training needs. Often these are made possible with assistance from outside Tuvalu.

National qualifications: the current situation

Senior Secondary:

Year 10: Fiji Junior Certificate. Tuvalu students' at this level take the same examination that Fiji students at the same level take. For Tuvalu students, this marks the end of compulsory education.

Year 11: Tuvalu School Certificate

Year 12: Pacific Senior Secondary School Certificate

Year 13: USP Foundation Certificate

Post Secondary:

TMTI: Certificate in Maritime Training

USP: Certificate to Bachelor Degrees [Academic]
Certificate of Completion/Participation [Continuing Education programmes]

Other registered private providers: Certificates of completion /participation

Other Government Ministries:

Public Works Department: Certificate of Participation [carpentry, joinery, motor repairs...]

Ministry of Finance: Certificate in Small Business Training [Start Your Business – ADB]

Personnel and Training: Certificate of Participation [Tafe Global: In Country Training programmes]

Ministry of Health: Certificate of participation/attention [WHO; UNFPA; ... and other agencies delivering in-country short-term training on various health related issues]

Conclusion

Tuvalu does not have a national qualifications framework or register of qualifications as yet however the Department of Education has facilitated the teaching and learning processes leading to qualifications especially at the senior secondary level. At the completion of secondary school education, students then proceed for further studies leading to the award of formal qualifications outside Tuvalu.

As Tuvalu does not have any formal post secondary institution except the Tuvalu Maritime Training Institute – where only males can enroll for the maritime courses/training - and the University of the South Pacific [USP] – where only a few can afford to pay for their course fees - most students who were pushed out of the formal education system or those who were not able to get scholarships to study abroad often have or get limited chances to further develop their learning skills and skills in general.

A large number of this population often do courses on an ad hoc basis as offered by different providers as indicated earlier, and in return they my get certificates. In most

cases though they do not get a certificate but just got fed or given a small allowance as a token of appreciation for their attendance – and yet what they may have learned from these trainings may and can be of value if they were to live in another country, perhaps!

There are others who get to attend short-term trainings organized by their employers [or ministries]. These trainings often provide hands on training as well and at the end of which participants are given certificates of attendance/participation.

While the Department of Education is not directly responsible for what the other ministries are doing, it is imperative that it takes a lead in trying to get a more proactive role in recording the short of training courses done in the country that may warrant the award of some sort of “qualification” and therefore keep a register of all these at the national level. This is a challenge that maybe the DOE may need to initiate – a step closer to establishing a NQR and with collaborative assistance from within and beyond Tuvalu – a step closer to “hanging clothes” on the PRQR.