



The Commonwealth

**20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers
Integrated Partners' Forum Outcome Statement
Nadi, Fiji
19-22 February 2018**

Preamble

The Integrated Partners' Forum (IPF) met at the 20th CCEM in Nadi Fiji, 19-22 February, in parallel with the Ministers Conference. Given that partnership was an essential focus of this CCEM, teachers, higher education, civil society and students formed an Integrated Partners' Forum attended by 350 participants from 35 countries.

In the Commonwealth, we are united by our common values and strengthened by the diversity of language and culture. This is a richness which the Commonwealth should both jealously guard and work to achieve social justice and human rights.

Meeting in Fiji, participants were alive to the impacts of climate change which is threatening many island and coastal regions. It behoves all Commonwealth countries to prioritise climate action.

Deliberations focused on *Sustainability and Resilience: Can Education Deliver?* Areas addressed included inclusion, financing, culture, employability, accountability and quality.

Key Issues

Inclusive and quality education requires leadership capacity, quality teachers and environments, enabling tools and frameworks. Quality education should be fit for purpose and transformative. The curriculum should reflect the Commonwealth's priorities: peace, prosperity, people and planet through the development of critical thinking, problem solving and working collaboratively. We recognise the shared responsibility of the state, school leaders, teachers, parents, students and civil society actors for accountability in education.

Too often educational reforms are imposed on teachers with little consultation, including changes to education systems and the school curriculum. This approach does not capitalise on their expertise and experiences. Teachers' current conditions and remuneration seldom enhance their professional status. In addition, across the Commonwealth, nearly 19 million more teachers are needed by 2030. Teachers are key to the achievement of SDG 4 and their shortage will make that impossible.

We remain deeply concerned about the national and international funding gaps in education including for Early Childhood Education, for the most marginalised and for education in emergencies. Lack of adequate funding undermines the right to education for millions across the Commonwealth.

State funded free, quality, public early childhood and compulsory education is the way to guarantee education for all, particularly those at risk, marginalised and left behind, and



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the achievement of SDG 4. Equitable access to appropriate post-secondary pathways, including TVET, Higher Education and life-long learning should be available to all.

Education viewed from the perspective of resilience and sustainability is important to enhance employability, entrepreneurship and to fulfill everyone's potential. Education and life-long learning are important to the inter-generational transmission of culture, language and traditional knowledge as well as for the development of skills and knowledge required for the fast changing world of work.

We acknowledge the synergies of non-formal and informal education in contributing to the resilience of people through skills development for children and youth. However, this is not adequately resourced and recognised. We therefore urge Governments to support and resource the role of youth and community workers in the delivery of non-formal and informal education.

There is a need to mainstream and operationalise student engagement in all decision making processes in education, as committed in the Nassau Declaration. This would not only be by association and representation, but also by developing mechanisms which ensure student views are actively considered by policy makers, from grassroots to national levels.

Recommendations

The IPF recommends that:

1. In recognition of the central importance of education to the future wellbeing of the Commonwealth community, the Secretariat should develop a forward strategy based on partnership between the Commonwealth multilateral organisations, Commonwealth Associations and other civil society bodies.

The Commonwealth Secretariat facilitates meaningful partnership for mutual benefits and governments in the Commonwealth develop a consultative policy framework, in consultation with CSOs, to ensure participation at all levels of decision making in education. The Secretariat should increase opportunities to share skills and best practice through south to south, north to south and south to north cooperation, whether virtually or face to face learning. For example through the establishment of university networks to build resilience and a Climate Change Resilience Scholarship Fund.

2. Education Ministers should develop and strengthen genuine partnership arrangements with teacher unions and other stakeholders. Teachers should be engaged in education policy development and be supported and trusted to develop curricula which enhance their capacity to educate all, beginning with early childhood education.

Ministers must address the teacher shortage, increase investment in teacher training, use best practice for teacher recruitment and retention, including terms and conditions of employment and strategies for increased mobility. Mindful of



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the Paris 2012 Open Educational Resources Declaration, we encourage Ministers to enable the sharing of education resources as open content.

Commonwealth governments must aspire to achieve the international benchmark contained in the 1966 ILO/UNESCO Recommendation on the Status of Teachers and the 1997 UNESCO Recommendations on Higher Education teaching personnel.

3. Commonwealth governments meet or exceed internationally agreed benchmarks of 4-6% of GDP or 20% of national budgets for education. Particular funding priority should be given to Early Childhood Education, the most marginalised and to education in emergencies. Governments should also increase domestic revenue collection through fair progressive taxation and measures for tax justice where companies are required to pay taxes in the countries in which they generate revenue. At the national level, governments should establish multi-sectoral consultative fora which address the financing of education. At the Commonwealth level, the Commonwealth Secretariat should convene a meeting of Education and Finance Ministers to realise this funding commitment. This process should be completed by the next CCEM.
4. The Commonwealth Education Ministers Action Group should explore the issues around higher education skills and employment, with students themselves, representatives from higher education institutions and the private sector. This must consider the critical skills required by students to both create and respond to new economic opportunities and the expansion of TVET and life-long learning to ensure equitable access for all in adapting to the future requirements of work. This should also include exploring mutual recognition of qualifications within the Commonwealth countries and entrepreneurship education at an early age, including STEM fields for girls.
5. Ministers acknowledge the synergies and benefits of non-formal education and commit to supporting and resourcing the role of youth and community workers in the delivery of non-formal and informal education. Ministers should ensure recognition and certification of prior learning and knowledge, gained through non formal and informal education.
6. Recognising the cultural diversity within the Commonwealth, Ministers should ensure the proper recognition in the curriculum of local culture and traditional knowledge and the need to work with non-formal providers which is central to building resilience and sustainability and provision of scholarships to indigenous populations.
7. Commonwealth Governments fulfill their commitments under the Nassau Declaration and confirm their recognition of students as partners in education through funding and technical support, so as to enable them effectively to participate in the monitoring and evaluation of SDG 4. Governments should



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facilitate the establishment of independent National Student Organisations by the next CCEM.

Governments should provide greater allocation of resources and funding in the implementation of strategic plans for the Commonwealth Student Association to enable capacity building for National Student Organisations.

We collectively recognise the significance of education and call on the Education Ministers to ensure the sustainability of an adequately resourced Education Section within the Commonwealth Secretariat and give consideration to a distributed model of responsibilities that are shared regionally to maintain and grow local expertise.

Adopted by the Integrated Partners Forum on 22nd February, 2018, Nadi, Fiji.