



COMMONWEALTH
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Partnership for Open Distance and Flexible Learning in the Pacific

COUNTRY BRIEFING: TONGA 2023-2024

The Partnership for Open Distance and Flexible Learning in the Pacific is a five-year project (2020–25) funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade (MFAT), New Zealand, to support enhancing capacity and efficiency of education sectors in the Pacific through greater use of innovative delivery mechanisms and technology. COL, together with the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development (PACFOLD), is implementing the project in the nine Commonwealth countries in the Pacific (Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu). PACFOLD is the regional centre of COL hosted by the University of the South Pacific (USP) on the main campus in Suva, Fiji.

Completing its fourth year, the Pacific Partnership project has made significant progress in several key areas: developing capacities of teachers, providing skills training for youth, building the capacities of ministry officials in Open and Distance Flexible Learning, and improving data resilience in ministries of education. Additionally, the project has been involved in reviewing policy documents on educational data management and enhancing disaster recovery plans. This broad scope aligns with the project's holistic approach to meet the diverse educational and training needs of the region, emphasising resilience.

Building capacity of teachers and officials in ODFL

As of December 2024, eight courses have been offered to teachers that covered practical skills for successful Open Distance and Flexible Learning (ODFL) delivery. In total, 159 teachers from Tonga were trained to offer effective learner support in ODFL contexts. AI-based learner support was deployed to a recent course that enhanced mentoring support, as evidenced by the positive feedback from over half of the learners.

An online webinar for Ministry officials on supporting engagement with open education resources (OER) was organised in November 2023. The workshop covered the benefits of OER, understanding of the process of resource customisation and the support that can be provided by COL - see the [video](#).



HIGHLIGHTS

- 159 teachers from Tonga trained in online and distance learning
- Building the capacity of TVET practitioners through national coordinators
- 322 youths trained in entrepreneurship, digital literacy, and database management
- New edition of the Pacific TVET toolkit is available at: <https://pacifictoolkit.col.org/>

Moreover, in March 2024, the Micro-credentials Regional Workshop was hosted in USP (Suva, Fiji). This regional workshop focused on the intricate and evolving world of micro-credentials, gathering various stakeholders from nine countries to deepen their understanding and strategise on effective implementation across different educational and institutional levels.



On 14 March 2024, COL facilitated a pivotal meeting with Focal Points from the Ministries of Education across the Pacific. The meeting saw participation from eight of the nine countries involved, including attendance by the Director of PACFOLD and Ms Vena-Liz Upton, overseeing the project on behalf of the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade



(MFAT). This assembly brought together representatives from Fiji, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, highlighting MFAT’s dedication to nurturing Pacific educational frameworks and amplifying regional voices.

In October 2024, a regional workshop in Fiji brought together 40 STEM educators from seven Pacific countries—Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Tonga, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu. This workshop introduced participants to an innovative GPT-powered online service designed to assist educators in generating and refining OER lesson plans.



The tool provided a platform for educators to create structured, contextualised teaching materials, while an integrated online community space enabled collaborative review and feedback.



During the workshop, educators produced over 460 lesson plans, with 100 of these being refined and approved for immediate use in classrooms. The deployment of this AI-driven tool complemented traditional training methods, demonstrating its potential to streamline

resource development processes while fostering peer collaboration and quality assurance.

These efforts reflect a careful integration of advanced technology and regional cooperation to address the critical challenge of improving the quality of teaching in STEM. By leveraging AI tools within a supportive, community-driven framework, the project has showcased a scalable approach to strengthening STEM education in the Pacific.

A three-day regional workshop on Women, Skills, and Resilient Livelihoods in the Small States of the Pacific was held in Nadi, Fiji, from 5-7 November 2024. This workshop gathered 21 NGO representatives from nine Pacific countries, including two from Tonga, to strengthen the capacities of both government and NGOs concerning the conceptualisation and execution of training using open and distance learning related to various aspects such as human rights, financial literacy, e-commerce and leadership. The workshop also introduced the participants to certain design and creative thinking concepts.



Building the capacity of TVET practitioners through national coordinators

The successful Regional Workshop on TVET Online Toolkit took place in Lautoka, Fiji, from 31 October to 2 November 2023. This gathering brought together 14 key stakeholders in TVET from the region, including two representatives from Tonga.

Over the course of the three-day workshop, participants engaged in discussions focused on formulating strategies for the professional development of TVET practitioners within the region, utilising the TVET Online Toolkit.

As the workshop concluded, participants expressed their enthusiasm for establishing a community of practice to convene and discuss the development of TVET practitioners in the context of implementing the Toolkit across the region. They also affirmed their commitment to serving as coordinators and champions of the Toolkit in their respective countries. To read more, click [here](#).



The in-country coordinator in Tonga was appointed in February 2024 to promote and facilitate the practical use of the TVET Online Toolkit while enhancing its reach and impact across the region.

From 2-5 September 2024, COL and PACFOLD/USP organised a regional workshop in Laucala, Fiji. The workshop aimed to bring together TVET stakeholders to develop a framework for credentialing micro-learning for the continuous professional development (CPD) of TVET practitioners. The credentialing would be based on resources from the TVET Online Toolkit, with the goal of enhancing the quality of training practices. Participants included representatives from ministries responsible for TVET, the Educational Quality and Assessment Programme (EQAP), National Qualification Framework Authorities, TVET educators, and industry trainers. A total of 22 stakeholders from across the region attended the workshop, including two from Tonga.

Educators and schools access regional STEM resources



In September 2024, a total of 44 educators participated in the three-day workshop in Tonga under the OER-based STEM education project. Aided by mentors, participants accessed pre-workshop materials and learned to navigate repositories to source and adapt OER for classroom use.

The workshops demonstrated steady and credible progress in advancing STEM education through OER and technology-enabled learning (TEL). Educators gained practical skills to source, adapt, and create teaching materials supported by innovative tools like

the OER Generator. The focus on hands-on learning and collaboration fostered a sense of community among participants, encouraging the exchange of ideas and strategies.

The workshops' impact extended beyond the immediate training sessions. The participating educators developed over 50 teaching resources during the workshop, and 15 completed the "Understanding OER" course shortly after.

Skills and leadership training for youth



The Tonga Women in ICT initiative, in partnership with COL, aims to empower women and youth in Tonga through digital literacy and ICT training. The primary objectives are to bridge the gender gap in technology, enhance employability, foster entrepreneurship, and build digital leadership within the community.

Participants gained hands-on skills in using digital tools like Canva and Facebook for social media

marketing and learned how to leverage AI tools for business purposes. The programme also provided opportunities for participants to network with industry professionals.

“TWICT (Tonga Women in ICT) provided programs for young women, among them was our daughter joining their sessions for young girls who aspire to break barriers and excel in many areas. With each lesson learnt and skill acquired our confidence soared and our dreams have expanded. With each program TWICT always managed to provide refreshments and drink making sure everyone had enough energy to endure and focus.” - Salise Faiva’ilo and Courtney Faiva’ilo.



Publications



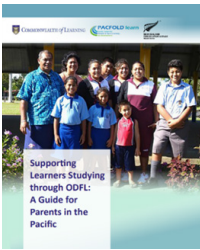
Mid-term Evaluation: Partnership for ODFL in the Pacific

The mid-term evaluation of the project was carried out in 2023 to examine the initial two years of the five-year activity. The evaluation provided a summative and formative assessment of the efficiency, effectiveness, coherence and alignment, relevance, sustainable development outcomes, gender equality and resilience development outcomes. The evaluation involved an extensive review of secondary data and small group or individual interviews with key partners – <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/5410>

Evaluation of Training Outcomes in Vanuatu and Fiji

Over the past two years, the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) has dedicated significant resources to enhance the practical skills of youth in the Pacific small island countries. This initiative, aimed at fostering economic opportunities and reducing unemployment, particularly among young women and youth with disabilities, has engaged over 2,600 participants, providing training in diverse areas such as business management, organic farming, and food processing - <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/5623>





Supporting Learners Studying through ODFL: A Guide for Parents in the Pacific

This guide is designed for parents and guardians of children living in the Pacific who wish to support their children in ODFL. It addresses the adaptive and supplemental support parents should offer their children

who are engaging in forms of ODFL, either as part of their in-class learning or in a fully online medium of instruction, whether by choice or in response to school closures or emergency circumstances –

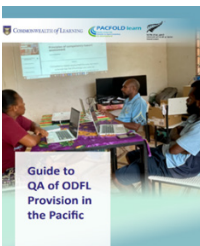
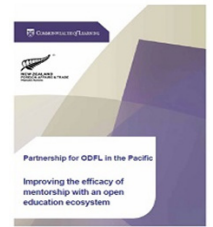
<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/5507>

Improving the Efficacy of Mentorship with an Open Education Ecosystem

This report provides an improved mentorship model for the capacity development courses of the Partnership for Open Distance and Flexible Learning Project.

This report highlights the need to nurture a Pacific regional ecosystem to realise sustainable solutions for the future and proposes the establishment of a ‘Collaborative OER Technology Community’ drawing on the success of ‘platform cooperativism’ –

<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/4065>



Guide to Quality Assurance for ODFL Provision in the Pacific

A guide for teachers and Ministry of Education officials on delivering high-quality distance education in their own contexts. While the expansion of ODFL has significantly increased participation

in education, upholding the quality of provision cannot be overemphasised –

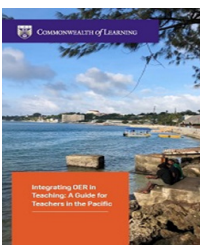
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Report of the Special Parallel Session: Strategies and Solutions for ODFL in the Pacific Region

This is a summary of presentations and discussions at a special session on ‘Strategies and Solutions for Open Distance and Flexible Learning in

the Pacific’ organised by COL during the Tenth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF10) in Calgary, Canada, on 15 September 2022 –

<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/4534>



Integrating OER in Teaching: A Guide for Teachers in the Pacific

This guide is intended to assist teachers in the Pacific to integrate OER into their teaching. It shows ways in which teachers can use OER in their classroom, as well as supporting remote learners –

<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/4014>

Global Education Monitoring Report: PACIFIC – Technology in Education

This report is developed in partnership with the Commonwealth of Learning and explores the challenges and opportunities of integrating technology in education across the Pacific,

highlighting issues such as limited infrastructure and internet connectivity. Covering 17 countries, the report examines key policy areas of the Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF) and offers recommendations tailored to the region’s unique context, focusing on quality, learning pathways, student outcomes, and the teaching profession – <https://www.unesco.org/gem-report/en/2024pacific>



ICT Use and Access in the Pacific: Emerging Perspectives

This report studies the use, accessibility, risks and opportunities for ODFL in nine Pacific Island countries (Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu) –

<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/5252>

Online learning resources for teachers



The **Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Course Catalogue** offers a wide range of training courses for teachers in the Pacific on various aspects of ODL. The Catalogue was designed in a way that the Ministries and the educational institutions can have admin access and share any relevant courses for their own country.

Tonga OER Collection Site provides open educational resources for teachers in Fiji,

which can be used or adapted for their teaching. This site was contextualised in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Training, Fiji, to reflect the national curriculum.

The **TVET Professional Development Toolkit for the Pacific** aims to enhance the capabilities of Technical and Vocational Education and

Training (TVET) practitioners in Pacific countries. It offers a comprehensive collection of resources, including micro-learning modules, videos, case studies, research articles, and templates, all curated to support the professional development of TVET teachers, trainers, leaders and employers.

These materials are accessible online and can be downloaded and customised to meet specific needs. Developed through extensive consultations with key TVET stakeholders in the Pacific, the Toolkit ensures its content aligns with the unique challenges and opportunities

in the region. Users can engage with the resources in various ways, such as by selecting materials tailored to specific roles, focusing on particular learning areas like training, assessment, or foundational skills, or leveraging tools like the TVET Glossary and Mapping Tool to assess and enhance their competencies.

OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE COLLECTION FOR TEACHERS TONGA

