



COMMONWEALTH TERTIARY EDUCATION FACILITY

BRIEF FINAL REPORT

FINANCING HIGHER EDUCATION: POLICY OPTIONS FOR THE COMMONWEALTH PACIFIC NATIONS – TOWARDS AN ISSUES PAPER

A FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION BETWEEN CTEF AND STAKEHOLDERS

2ND FEBRUARY 2016

HELD AT
FIJI, SOUTH PACIFIC

IN COLLABORATION WITH
FIJI HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION (FHEC)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The focus group discussion (FGD) on Financing Higher Education: Policy Options for the Commonwealth Pacific Nations – Towards an Issues Paper was a platform for various stakeholders to develop the policy brief formulated in April 2015 with additional insights and formulate an issues paper. A research team representing CTEF gathered together with various stakeholders from Commonwealth Pacific Nations (CPN) to discuss the way forward for an issues paper with regard to financing higher education in CPN. The FGD was organised with the collaboration of Fiji Higher Education Commission (FHEC).

The result from this focus group discussion was a mutual agreement between the research team from CTEF, the collaborator (FHEC) and other stakeholders to work together and produce an issues paper which will be presented in the 20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM) in Fiji.

RATIONALE OF THE PROJECT

The Commonwealth Tertiary Education Facility (CTEF) is tasked to collect, organise and disseminate information on the higher education sector among the Commonwealth member states. The main objective of CTEF's activities is to assist in policy development, implementation and to encourage good practices among Commonwealth member states. CTEF will act as the centre for the exchange of information on higher education between governments, institutions and regional organisations. This FGD is one of the several initiatives of CTEF to contribute towards the development of Higher Education in the Commonwealth.

CTEF which is currently at the National Higher Education Research Institute (IPPTN), Universiti Sains Malaysia together with Fiji Higher Education Commission in Fiji hosted a focus group discussion among stakeholders and partners to present, discuss and produce standardised country reports focusing on current financial status of the higher education in Commonwealth Pacific. CTEF envisages that these country reports will ease the formulation of a policy paper later in an upcoming focus group discussion. The policy paper will be tabled in the 20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM) in Fiji.

CTEF organised this FGD as a continuation from the inaugural focus group discussion on Higher Education Funding and Access Issues in Selected Commonwealth Countries held in Penang, Universiti Sains Malaysia on November 26 – 27, 2014 where various organisation such as National Higher Education Research Institute (IPPTN), Universiti Sains Malaysia, Center for Testing, Measurement and Appraisal (CeTMA), Universiti Utara Malaysia, Commonwealth Secretariat (COMSEC), The Commonwealth of Learning (CoL), University of the West Indies, Ministry of Higher Education South Africa, Ministry of Education Malaysia (MoE), High Commissions (Australia, Namibia, Mozambique and Swaziland) and academics from the Commonwealth nations participated. Subsequently in April 2015, a policy brief was discussed and produced in which it was then presented at the 19th CCEM in The Bahamas and received the endorsement of education ministers from Commonwealth member states.

OBJECTIVES

The focus group discussion aimed to produce standardised country reports focusing on current financial status of the higher education in Commonwealth Pacific Nations as an initiative in formulating an issues paper on financing the higher education in Commonwealth Pacific Nations drawing upon the collective experience and expertise of stakeholders and partners from various organisation including ministries in Commonwealth Pacific Nations.

The focus group discussion specifically:

- i. Provide diverse input to improve the funding and financing systems in Commonwealth Pacific Nations;
- ii. Discuss and reflect on the current financial status of higher education in Commonwealth Pacific Nations;
- iii. Garner perspective from partners and agencies from Commonwealth Pacific and those interested in Commonwealth Pacific;
- iv. Prepare country reports on financing higher education for Commonwealth Pacific Nations.

OUTCOME / DELIVERABLE

The result from this focus group discussion was a mutual agreement between the research team from CTEF, the collaborator (FHEC) and other stakeholders to work together and produce an issues paper which will be presented at the 20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM) in Fiji. In order to work towards the issues paper, stakeholders from different Commonwealth Pacific Nations and affiliations will provide country reports focusing on current financial status of the higher education in CPN which underlines the current financial model structure and its challenges. It will also cover the planning, development and funding model for higher education institutions across Commonwealth Pacific Nations. The issues paper will highlight some recommendations and policies to be considered by the CPN education ministers upon the presentation at the 20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM) in 2018, Fiji.

CONCLUSION

This focus group discussion was indeed a success and has brought a green light to work further on the research study on financing higher education in Commonwealth Pacific Nations. Post to this discussion, respective stakeholders from various CPN and affiliations will submit their country reports focusing on current financial status of the higher education in Commonwealth Pacific Nations which underline the current financial model structure and its challenges. Upon completion of the country reports, the research team together with few resource persons will gather substantive inputs and develop the issues paper content which will highlight the recommendations and policies that are practicable. CTEF envisaged that the issues paper can be adopted by the Commonwealth Pacific Nation education ministers upon its presentation at the next Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (20th CCEM).

APPENDIX



The Acting Vice-Chancellor of University of South Pacific (center) and the Chairman of Fiji Higher Education Commission (right) during the Focus Group Discussion (FGD).



Tertiary education stakeholders from various Commonwealth Pacific countries were having serious discussion with the researchers from Malaysia.



Director of Fulton College explained the financial model used in private institution in Fiji.



Assoc. Prof. Dr. Abdul Razak representing the Malaysian team explained the research study to attended stakeholders.



Group photo: Malaysian team and CPN stakeholders.

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