Rationale of the policy
The Education Policy Framework for Tonga is closely related to and derived from the Strategic Development Plan 7 and the National Poverty Reduction Strategy. The policy incorporates a broad strategic plan to undertake comprehensive reform and improvement of education in Tonga. The aims are to set guidelines and provide a framework and a context for the future development of Tonga’s education sector; to strengthen the Ministry of Education’s management of the education sector; to help the Ministry of Education assess whether the key strategic policy directions are appropriate and comprehensive; to help the Ministry of Education identify the critical information required to validate these strategic directions; and to ensure that appropriate criteria are applied when determining priorities for education development and investment.

Concept of lifelong learning
The policy framework does not provide a definition of the concept of lifelong learning. The mission of the Ministry of Education is ‘to provide and sustain lifelong relevant and quality education for the development of Tonga and her people’. Education is considered to be the most valuable asset a person can possess. The essence of education is developing individuals so that they can realize their potential as human beings, living fulfilling lives as valuable members of Tongan society and the wider world. Education should seek to strengthen and develop the moral and cultural values that underpin Tongan society. Education is the cornerstone of all aspects of national development and must be accessible to all members of Tongan society.

Main challenges
The challenges in the education system include the following questions and issues:

- How to provide universal basic education for all up to the end of year 8 given the limited resources
- How to improve partnerships between the government and non-governmental education authorities
- How to achieve formal recognition of the important role of early childhood for child development
- How to develop an appropriate and integrated qualifications framework that ensures national standards and regional and international recognition
- How to plan and implement the principle of self-management in schools
- How to increase efficiency through reduced repetition, improved pupil-teacher ratios and the use of multi-grade teaching and technology
- Whether and under what conditions external support for recurrent expenses should be sought
- Finding the balance between the extent to which the school curriculum prepares students for life in Tonga and the extent to which the curriculum develops the skills required in a globalized world
- Reviewing the policy on teacher recruitment and retention, teacher remuneration, and teacher preparation in and beyond Tonga

Main targets and measures
The policy encompasses all education sectors. It goes beyond the formal education system to include all aspects of human resource development in Tonga, including strengthening the links between the outcomes of the formal education sector and the training needs of the labour force.

The following policy areas have been identified for further policy development and action:

- Policy development, planning and monitoring
- Universal basic education before and after year 8
- Early childhood education
- Special education
- Language policy
- Sport
- Curriculum and assessment
- Teacher supply and teacher quality
- Skills development and lifelong learning
- Reorganization of tertiary education
- Management and control of education
- Efficiency
- Information and communications technology
- Financing options and financial sustainability

**Particular feature of the policy**

One of the areas for further policy development is **language policy**, which focuses on the objective that all Tongans will be literate in both Tongan and English. Education policy issues include determining appropriate bilingual teaching methodologies, the appropriate point at which the language of instruction in schools should switch from Tongan to English, and appropriate diagnosis and support of language learning difficulties. The main language of instruction in government primary schools will be Tongan up to the end of grade 3, while a bilingual approach will be used to support instruction in grades 4 to 6. English will be the main language of instruction from grade 7. Diagnostic instruments will be developed and used at an early stage of primary school to identify students with literacy problems. High priority will be given to developing, producing and distributing quality learning resources such as graded readers and books to support the development of literacy and numeracy. These will be in Tongan for the early primary school years and then in both Tongan and English.

**Relevant documents that the policy refers to:**


**Stakeholders involved in the development of the policy:**

- [Ministry of Education and Training](#)

**Further readings and web links:**

- [Tonga National Qualifications and Accreditation Board](#)
- [Tonga Qualifications Framework](#)