

# **WORLD CONFERENCE ON HIGHER EDUCATION**

## **Higher Education in the Twenty-first Century**

### **Vision and Action**

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#### **Samoa**

Note1: To meet UNESCO publishing standards, some editing of papers has been required.

Note2: Authors are responsible for the choice and the presentation of the facts contained in signed articles and for the opinions expressed therein, which are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organization.

Samoa

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**Speech of Mr Magele Mauiliu Magele  
Vice Chancellor of the National University of Samoa  
Head of the Delegation of Samoa**

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I bring to you warm greetings from my Minister and the people of Samoa.

The Samoan government since the mid eighties has identified the need to accelerate the development of higher education as a means of developing the much needed human resource. This led to the establishment of a National University in 1984 and the upgrading of the Trades Training Institute to Polytechnic level. It became apparent however that the two institutions needed to work closer together to avoid duplication of educational programmes and to improve their overall efficiency and quality.

The Education Policies and Strategies 1995–2005 provide corrective measure and guidance for the development of higher education beyond the new millennium.

There are three critical issues confronting higher education in Samoa. The first concerns the quality of training programmes, the second, synergy; optimum use of scarce resources and third, financing.

Quality encompasses relevant curriculum that not only encourages critical thinking and research but must also be related to employment, quality is a direct function of having good qualified and experienced staff and managers, and increasingly important for Samoa, quality means gaining acceptance and employment overseas.

Quality improvement at the two national institutions of higher learning – the National University of Samoa and Samoa Polytechnic is the subject of mutual cooperation between the Government of Samoa and donor countries.

The Samoa Polytechnic's curricula for trades and technician level of programmes are being upgraded with the introduction of Competency Based Training (CBT) based on the Australian and New Zealand model. This project is supported by the Australian Development Assistance Programme. In tandem with curricula upgrading, the Polytechnic Staff Development Plan enables staff to go overseas for further training. There is also an institutional based teacher-training programme supported by a New Zealand Project. The Samoa Polytechnic is developing training arrangements with Australian TAFE's, and New Zealand Polytechnics which will lead to recognition of qualification.

The National University of Samoa is also experiencing similar strengthening programmes both in management and academic programmes. The foundation or pre-degree courses are being strengthened, targeting staff who deliver these courses to upgrade their teaching skills as well as assessment and evaluation, knowledge and skills. By virtue of having senior academics from overseas universities on the University's Council, our university now enjoys external recognition and cross-crediting through Memorandum of Agreement with the University of the South Pacific, University of Hawaii, Brigham Young University, University of Auckland, University of Queensland, University of Technology Sydney, Australian National University. We are currently engaged in discussion for similar arrangements with two universities in Japan, and the French University in Tahiti.

The University is embarking on a new initiative to establish a research centre initially in Samoan Studies, but will be expanded to cover other disciplines. The position of Director, Institute of Samoan Studies will be advertised soon. The Research Centre is charged with coordinating research activities. Samoan students living and studying overseas will be encouraged to come to Samoa to do their research. Non-Samoans will also be welcomed.

Pressure from Government and the Public for accountability and better coordination to maximise usage of scarce resources has led to a number of mergers. In 1993, the School of Nursing became a Faculty of Nursing of the University. In 1997, the Teachers College merged into a Faculty of Education at the

University. In June this year, the Marine Training School became the School for Maritime Training of the Polytechnic.

Of the total education budget, 32% goes to the University and the Polytechnic. This is a large amount going to two institutions. Of this amount, 60% goes to salaries alone.

A call for further rationalization this year resulted in the University and Polytechnic agreeing to work closely together to share resources and avoid competition and duplication. The University and Polytechnic share the same boundary and therefore lie side by side making cooperation that much easier. A committee comprising senior staff from the two institutions is currently working on recommendations for cooperation.

The Polytechnic generates 20% of its funding. The balance coming from Treasury. The University receives 95% of its funding from Treasury. The University has been told to do more to reduce dependency on Government. The University is currently developing a corporate plan with a view to increase its share to 20% by the year 2002. Paramount in the management's thinking is the development and strengthening of the research arm of the University as well as increasing consulting opportunities for staff. Increasing school fees is not an immediate option.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the initiative and involvement of UNESCO as a partner in educational development in Samoa. This international conference on higher education underpins UNESCO's commitment to developing all levels of education.

Thank you.