
20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (20CCEM)

Programme background

Monday 19 February

- **Professionalization of the Resilience sector:** Experience from the Pacific & opportunities for other Commonwealth countries

This half-day meeting on the Professionalization of the Resilience sector is an official side event for 20CCEM. It will be a high-level meeting for key government officials across the Commonwealth to deliberate on the prospect of developing Resilience qualifications in the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector. Experiences from the Pacific region in developing and accrediting Resilience qualifications will be shared with other countries in the Commonwealth, in particular small and climate vulnerable nations who are facing similar threats from climate change and natural hazards who may be interested in offering and accrediting these qualifications. The meeting will be co-hosted by the European Union's Pacific Technical and Vocational Education and Training initiative (EU PacTVET) and the Commonwealth Secretariat and will comprise of presentations and group discussions.

A set of recommendations will be developed to take forward discussions during both the Small States Forum and the Ministerial Meeting. Key outcomes anticipated for this meeting are:

- Recommendation for the professionalization of the Resilience sector (including the strategy for regional accreditation and appropriate strategies to reliably and efficiently recognize and assess prior learning) in the Pacific region and wider Commonwealth.
- Development of a plan that identifies opportunities, challenges and solutions to offer TVET qualifications in Resilience in Commonwealth countries.

Tuesday 20 February

▪ **Senior Officials Meeting (SOM)**

The Senior Officials Meeting (SOM), chaired by the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts, Fiji, will provide an opportunity for senior officials of Ministries of Education to preview and discuss the agenda items ahead of the main ministerial meeting. These include:

- The Nassau Declaration Action Plan
- 20CCEM Ministerial Programme
- 20CCEM Thematic Issues Paper
- SDG4 Status Update Report
- Progress reports
- Communiqué drafting process for 20CCEM Declaration

A report from SOM proceedings will be presented to the Commonwealth Education Ministers in the opening session of the Ministerial meeting on 21 February 2018.

▪ **Small States Forum**

The Small States Forum was first held at the 19CCEM in The Bahamas and will once again be convened at the 20CCEM due to its uniqueness in that it serves as an avenue to prioritize the challenges faced by small states in the Commonwealth, which comprise approximately 60% of its membership. The half-day meeting will cover high-level regional challenges and opportunities in education faced by the Commonwealth's small states. These presentations will cover topics such as data availability and quality, addressing the skills gap, teacher supply and retention, school leadership and provision for continuing professional development and financing constraints. The forum will also allow for the successes of Commonwealth small states to be highlighted such as the significant advances made with regards to universal primary education and the prominent global role taken by countries such as Fiji to address the threat of climate change.

The forum will also review how Commonwealth Higher Education Institutions, particularly The University of the South Pacific and The University of the West Indies, which together cover 28 territories, as well as Fiji National University, can lead their own research to support Small States to make informed investments in resilience and enable innovative practices to address sustainable development and resilience in Commonwealth Small States. The forum will end with an opportunity for ministers to discuss recommendations for inclusion in the 20CCEM Declaration. The key outcomes of the meetings will be presented to the Commonwealth Education Ministers in the first session of the Ministerial meeting on 21 February 2018.

▪ **Education Ministers Action Group (EMAG)**

The Commonwealth Education Ministers Action Group (EMAG) was established to take forward the actions agreed at the 19CCEM (Nassau Declaration), maintain momentum and provide oversight between the CCEMs, whilst ensuring commitment to the delivery of SDG4 across the Commonwealth. The EMAG has ministerial representation from 10 member countries (representative of all Commonwealth regions: The Bahamas, Fiji, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Mauritius, Namibia, Solomon Islands, St Lucia and the United Kingdom) and is currently chaired by the Minister of Education, The Bahamas (19CCEM host).

A brief meeting of the EMAG will be convened to enable members to receive an update on the Nassau Declaration Action Plan as well as address the following agenda items:

- 20CCEM Outcomes and Priorities
- Strengthening the role of EMAG

This will be the final EMAG meeting under the chairmanship of the Minister of Education, The Bahamas, before handing over to the incoming chair, the Minister of Education, Heritage and Arts, Fiji.

Wednesday 21 February

Session 1:

- **Keynote on Education for sustainable development**

This session will explore in detail one of the three 20CCEM Sub-Themes. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) enables learners to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to shape a sustainable future. The advancement of ESD in addition to being directly associated with the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) also supports Strategic Outcome 3 of the Secretariat's Strategic Plan, that is, 'People of the Commonwealth fulfil their potential with dignity and equality in a healthy environment'.

During this session, education ministers will have the opportunity to engage in a focused, evidence-based debate on how best education systems across the Commonwealth can enable sustainable development, recognising that ESD is essential for the sustainability of our future and the Commonwealth. Education that seeks to encourage positive and sustainable behaviour fosters increased tolerance and resilience; more environmentally sustainable choices; improved hygiene and health; and greater civic participation.

The session will be 90 minutes, consisting of a 20-minute keynote address followed by questions and discussion.

Session 2:

- **Update on Nassau Declaration Action Plan**

At 19CCEM, ministers agreed on actions for the strengthening of education in the Commonwealth as articulated in the Nassau Declaration. Delivery on the actions documented in this Declaration were supported by the Nassau Declaration Action Plan. The Plan was approved by the Education Ministers Action Group (EMAG) at their 1st meeting held in January 2016.

During this session ministers will receive a status update on key actions highlighted in the Nassau Declaration Action Plan. These include:

- Establishment of the Education Ministers Action Group
- Establishment of the Commonwealth Accelerated Development Mechanism for Education (CADME) Technical Working Group
- Development of policy frameworks - the Commonwealth Education Policy Framework (CEPF) and the Commonwealth Curriculum Framework for the SDGs
- India's offer to set up a Malaviya Commonwealth Chair for teacher education
- Support for the expansion of Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships

- **Thematic Issues Paper**

The 20CCEM Thematic Issues Paper, developed by the University of South Pacific, outlines the substantive issues that the conference will address. In line with the conference theme and sub-

themes and within the context of the Commonwealth, the paper will explore the critical role of education in achieving sustainable development and building resilience as well as the capacity of education systems to deal with the challenges and targets agreed in the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. The paper will conclude with recommendations and a roadmap to guide the commonwealth community and national governments in their efforts to achieve SDG 4.

The full paper, along with an executive summary, will be given to ministers at the conference for their consideration. A brief summary of the paper will be presented in this session, highlighting the main issues and raising key questions for discussion. The presentation of the paper will be 15 minutes, followed by questions and discussion.

The key outcomes anticipated for this part of session 2 are:

- Education Ministers are made aware of the intended focus and scope of substantive issues that the conference will address.
- Ministers are provided with a framework for their deliberations over the course of the conference.
- Ministers have the opportunity to discuss critical issues that relate to the conference theme and sub-themes.

Session 3:

- **Keynote on global advancements and challenges to achieving the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4)**

In September 2015, the international community adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which represent a universal, comprehensive and ambitious agenda that commits to the promotion of development in a balanced way - economically, socially and environmentally. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) played an instrumental role in the framing of this agenda and serves as the lead agency for delivery on Sustainable Development Goal 4 '*Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning*'. SDG4 effectively replaces the MDGs and EFA goals and for the first time covers the full spectrum of education.

Achieving SDG4 will require increasing efforts, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia and for vulnerable populations, including persons with disabilities, indigenous people, refugee children and poor children in rural areas¹. It is evident that economic uncertainties, changing global demographic trends and challenges such as climate change will have an impact on making SDG4 a reality. Notwithstanding this, two years after the adoption of the SDGs, many countries continue to capitalise on gains made in the MDG and EFA era which will provide the necessary impetus to attain the SDG4 targets by 2030. The Commonwealth has clearly articulated its commitment to helping all member states advance on SDG4.

This part of session 3 consists a 20-minute keynote address followed by questions and discussion. The keynote address, referencing the valuable and relevant guidelines contained in the Incheon Declaration and the Education 2030 Framework for Action, will provide Commonwealth education ministers with a global perspective on how countries are progressing on the various SDG4 targets and the challenges faced, particularly with respect to implementation and assessment/measurement. It is envisioned that this session will also provide substantial opportunity for education ministers to offer lessons learnt and highlight challenges faced from a national and regional perspective.

The key outcomes anticipated are:

¹ Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform. Retrieved from: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg4>

- Understanding of the global landscape and associated recent developments in relation to SDG4.
- Data and information shared in the session supports the ministers' policy dialogues and informs actions and interventions they may want to adopt in order to accelerate and/or sustain progress and achievements on SDG4 and its targets for 2030.
- Ministers unanimously pass a declaration for high-level support from Commonwealth heads of government 2018 Summit for the provision of adequate domestic financing of education in line with international benchmarks (at least 15-20 percent of total public expenditure) to help member states progress towards SDG4 targets.

- **Status update report on SDG4 in the Commonwealth Countries**

This session will present key findings of the SDG4 Status Update Report, commissioned by the Commonwealth Secretariat for 20CCEM. The report will provide a snapshot of education in all 52 member countries. It will present valuable data and analysis to member countries on their progress on SDG4 since the implementation of the new global education agenda in September 2015. Common challenges confronting the Commonwealth as a whole as well as those associated to specific countries, group of countries or regions will also be identified.

This Commonwealth report represents the first ever initiative in the post-2015 era to map progress against SDG4 targets - at a time when agreement on various indicators between policy makers and development partners is yet to be fully concluded. The report will give education policy makers in the Commonwealth a head start in establishing priorities and agreeing plans to address data gaps to measure SDG4 targets.

Alongside the Thematic Issues Paper, the evidence and analysis pulled together in the SDG4 Status Update Report will feed into the global debates of the conference. The full report will be given to ministers at the conference for their consideration. The presentation of the report's key findings will be 10 minutes, followed by questions and discussion.

The key outcomes anticipated for this part of session 2 are:

- Ministers are made aware of the status of progress made by the Commonwealth countries towards the realisation of SDG4.
- Ministers have a credible baseline to support policy and planning in member countries.
- Data and information shared in the session supports the ministers' policy dialogues and informs actions and interventions they may want to adopt in order to accelerate and/or sustain progress and achievements on SDG4 and its targets for 2030.
- A Commonwealth wide agreement on provision of quality data for continuous mapping of progress against SDG4 targets.

Session 4:

- **Progress Reports**

Since the conclusion of 19CCEM in June 2015, the Commonwealth Secretariat and other Commonwealth organisations have implemented a number of programmes and initiatives to advance quality and inclusive education across the Commonwealth. This session will provide an opportunity for the undermentioned organisations to provide an update on their programmes implemented over the period 2015-2018.

- Commonwealth Secretariat's Education Team (COMSEC)
- Commonwealth of Learning (COL)
- Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP)
- Commonwealth Tertiary Education Facility (CTEF)

Thursday 22 February

Session 5:

- **Keynote: Building resilience through education**

Given the climate vulnerability of Commonwealth countries and the increasing recognition that education has a critical role to play in addressing climate issues, this session will look at strategies to build the resilience and capacity of education systems to respond to this global concern. A key area that will be explored in this session is the role of education in weaving resilience using traditional knowledge, local culture and society. These issues will be discussed particularly in relation to the unique challenges of displacement and migration due to climate change.

Additionally, this session will consider how appropriate skills, knowledge and values can be imparted to Commonwealth citizens so that they effectively contribute to climate change mitigation, support the green economy and contribute to the sustainable development of their respective countries, and by extension the Commonwealth.

This session will be 90 minutes, consisting of a 20-minute keynote address followed by questions and discussion. The key outcomes anticipated for session 5 are:

- Engaging ministerial discussion on building resilience through education and traditional knowledge to inform policy and planning.

Session 6:

- **Integrated Partners Forum statement**

Concurrent to the ministerial meeting, teacher groups, civil society members, higher education leaders and students' associations will meet for the Integrated Partners Forum (IPF). In this session, representatives from the Integrated Partners' Forum will present a joint statement to the ministers detailing their shared recommendations for education across the Commonwealth. The presentation of the statement will be 15 minutes followed by questions and discussion.

The outcomes anticipated for the session are:

- Greater awareness of key stakeholders' concerns and priorities for education across the Commonwealth.
- Fruitful engagement between ministers and stakeholders', encouraging a shared vision for strengthening education across the Commonwealth.
- Agreement over high-level stakeholders' priorities for addressing education challenges within the context of 20CCEM theme and associated sub-themes.

Session 7:

- **Roundtable 1: Education for climate change mitigation**

Education is an essential element of the global response to climate change. It helps young people understand and address the impact of global warming, encourages changes in their attitudes and behaviour and helps them adapt to climate change-related trends². This roundtable will deliberate on the role of education in addressing issues of climate change. It will provide ministers with an opportunity to consider how appropriate skills, knowledge and values can be imparted onto

² United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). Climate Change Education. Retrieved from: <http://en.unesco.org/themes/education-sustainable-development/cce>

Commonwealth citizens so that they effectively contribute to climate change mitigation and support the green economy. A key focus of discussions will be on the reviewing of national curricula to ensure that it facilitates the development of the necessary knowledge, skills and values to address climate change and globalisation.

The roundtable will be chaired by a Minister of Education and will include two 10 minute presentations followed by questions and discussion. The presentations will provoke questions and discussion rather than be purely information-giving. Selected representatives from the Integrated Partners Forum will be invited to attend and contribute to discussions. The outcomes anticipated for this roundtable are:

- Commonwealth education ministers reiterate the threat posed by climate change and increase their commitment to address this through education systems strengthening.
- Commonwealth education ministers commit to undertaking a reorientation and renewal of their national curricula so that it takes into consideration major global challenges such as climate change.

▪ **Roundtable 2: Skills for development**

By 2030, the Commonwealth's population is projected to reach 2.5 billion of which half will be under the age of 25. This will increase the labour force in member states and it will take careful planning to equip people with the skills appropriate to the opportunities that will become available. In their broadest sense, these include mastery of foundation skills such as basic literacy, numeracy and ICT; transferable or employability skills; and the more specialised technical and vocational skills. Programmes of learning must also produce soft skills of creative thinking, teamwork and problem-solving - both technical and non-technical - all of which are essential to building capacity. In a world of constant and rapid change, a functional educational system must have efficient delivery mechanisms and flexible pathways to effect socio-economic transformation.

This roundtable will consider the implications of changing demographics, global economic and employment trends, and the ability of education systems in the Commonwealth to respond to these challenges. It will recommend implementable skills development strategies that will prepare young people for employment and ultimately lead to economic growth that is equitable and sustainable.

The roundtable will be chaired by a Minister of Education and will include two 10 minute presentations followed by questions and discussion. Selected representatives from the Integrated Partners Forum will be invited to attend and contribute to discussions. The presentations will provoke questions and discussion rather than be purely information-giving. The outcomes anticipated for this roundtable are:

- Ministers recommendation for imparting foundation, soft and more flexible skills as a part of the formal and informal learning processes.
- Ministers agree on the planning and resource allocations to be prioritised to transform educational systems so that they better support skills for development initiatives.

▪ **Roundtable 3: Education governance & management**

Governance is a critical factor in enabling conditions for quality learning and overcoming inequalities in education³. The Commonwealth Education Policy Framework (CEPF) highlights governance as one of the four enablers that must be in place to support the development and subsequent implementation of policy prescriptions designed to meet the SDG4 targets. The achievement of SDG4 targets is directly linked to the overall capacity of an education system that is effective, economic and efficient. This roundtable will assess what mechanisms are in place across Commonwealth

³ UNESCO. Analytical tool: Governance. Retrieved from: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/strengthening-education-systems/quality-framework/supporting-mechanisms/governance/>

education systems to enable transparency, accountability and improved learning outcomes; specific focus will also include school leadership and education governance standards. It will draw on the latest findings of the 2017/18 Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report ‘Accountability and education: Meeting our commitments’ to inform discussion.

The roundtable will be chaired by a Minister of Education and will include two 10 minute presentations followed by questions and discussion. The presentations will provoke questions and discussion rather than be purely information-giving. Selected representatives from the Integrated Partners Forum will be invited to attend and contribute to discussions. The outcomes anticipated for this roundtable are:

- Commonwealth education ministers will commit to making additional steps to strengthen partnerships with key education stakeholders based on Commonwealth best practices shared at CCEM, to support SDG4 delivery; and
- Commonwealth education ministers will advance a position on administering the efficient governance of education.

Session 8:

- **Reports from ministerial round tables - Plenary**

The three chairs from the roundtables will report back on the key discussion points that arose from their respective sessions. These reports will offer ministers an overview of what was covered in the other roundtables and will give them the opportunity to contribute to deliberations across all three topics covered. This 90-minute session will consist of reports from each of the roundtable chairs, with time for questions and discussion after each reports. Selected representatives from the Integrated Partners Forum will be invited to attend this session as observers.

Friday 23 February

Session 9:

- **Keynote: Taking an integrated approach**

Education as a fundamental human right is a catalyst for human development and a key enabler for the realisation of social outcomes. Quality and equitable education has positive effects on health, youth employment and gender equality. An analysis of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) unearths that education is central to the attainment of all 17 SDGs. As such, early investment and adequate financing devoted to education is strongly encouraged given the important linkages to key economic, environmental and social development targets.

The Commonwealth Secretariat recognises the importance of education in addressing many of world’s global problems and thus calls on member states to commit to meeting internationally agreed funding targets for education. The Education Commission argues that decision-makers should prioritize the poor and early years where social returns are the highest⁴.

This session emphasising the need for early investment will examine the importance of a holistic and integrated approach to education which can support the delivery of complementary health, gender and youth outcomes. The session will last for 45 minutes, consisting of a 20-minute keynote address followed by questions and discussion.

⁴ The International Commission of Financing Global Education Opportunity. 2017. The Learning Generation: Investment in education for a changing world. Retrieved from: http://report.educationcommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Learning_Generation_Full_Report.pdf

- **SDG4 elements: The role of Education Ministries in the coordination and communication of Early childhood development (ECD) services**

The inclusion of early childhood development (ECD) for the first time on the global development agenda represents a unique opportunity to galvanize efforts around this goal. In September 2017, Ministers of Education, Health, Social Services and Finance sectors and senior government representatives from 15 Pacific Island countries, gathered in Nadi Fiji for the first Conference on “Moving Forward with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for Early Childhood”. A key challenge discussed was the need for adequate coordination and communication within and across ministries. This challenge is not unique to the Pacific. In many Commonwealth countries implementing and overseeing coordinated and convergent services for ECD services is a concern. ECD has lived in Ministry of Social Protection/Welfare, yet as ECD matures, Ministries of Education have volunteered to spearhead the holistic programmes and policies. However, this is new to Health and other Ministries, who have not traditionally reported to Ministries of Education. While there is no one-size-fits-all coordination framework, this session will provide an opportunity for ministers to share experiences and offer coordination options.

The session will be co-hosted by UNICEF and will address the role Ministries of Education play in the coordination and communication of (holistic) inter-sector ECD (IECD) policies and programmes for young children and their families. It will be 45 minutes, consisting of a 10-minute presentation and two respondent Ministers followed by questions and discussion.

Key outcomes anticipated for this meeting are:

- Identification of emerging management and coordinating systems.
- Actions agreed for development and Develop and strengthening of national IECD systems and programmes for young children and families in the Commonwealth.
- Prioritizing incorporation of Incorporate ECD into national development plans using with cost effective, innovative and scalable interventions.

Session 10:

- **SDG4 elements: Universalising access to quality primary and secondary education**

Low primary and secondary school enrolment rates is one of the major challenges that requires urgent attention. Approximately 17 million primary aged children and 16 million lower secondary aged youth remain out of school in the Commonwealth. A quality primary and secondary education embeds the foundation required to support sustainable thinking and practices.

In light of the above, this session will enable ministers to debate and subsequently outline strategies required to improve upon the successes achieved in the MDG era with regards to universalism. Within the Commonwealth, greater priority must be given to vulnerable groups who are most of risk at being excluded from learning. The Education Commission posits that this can only be accomplished through progressive universalism - expanding the provision of quality education for everyone while prioritizing the needs of the poor and disadvantaged.

The session will be 45 minutes, consisting of two 10-minute presentations followed by questions and discussion.

- **SDG4 elements: Skills**

The Commonwealth challenge is unique due to its membership, geographic spread and the population demographics of member states. The traditional MDG led initiatives have led to a demonstrable increase in enrolment rates in many countries. However, there are high drop-out rates

at secondary and higher secondary levels resulting in a broad gap in transition to any form of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) or to the world of work. Conversely, there has been increasing recognition to prioritise skills development for economic growth and productivity, not just for local economies but in the broader context of globalizing economies where skills standards are increasingly transnational, global and unpredictable in many sectors. Several of the SDG4 targets focus on technical and vocational skills, however, important issues requiring the attention of policy makers include: Pathways for decent employment (productive, dignified and fairly paid); Reskilling and upskilling of adults; Re-engagement with students including second chance; and Industrial partnerships, technology, governance & enabling environments.

It is anticipated that the session outcomes will inform planning for the future skill needs, aligning supply and demand, sector base approaches and greening of TVET.

Session 11:

- **SDG4 elements: Higher Education to meet the changing needs of Employment**

Higher Education will be critical to meeting the changing needs of employment on today's global knowledge economy. More than ever, strong and adaptable Higher Education systems will be required to develop the curious, flexible, adaptable, innovative, entrepreneurial, value driven and ethical individuals and leaders that are able to cope with the rapidly changing world of employment. The pace of change will also demand flexible higher education systems for nurturing the ability to learn throughout life and promoting access to lifelong learning. Universities will also have a role to play in developing appropriate social and political responses to technological change.

This session will address how universities and governments can better understand and address the challenges of the rapidly changing world of work, while maintaining the wider developmental contributions of universities. Six critical issues will be discussed: ensuring access to quality higher education, developing adaptive "future-proof" universities, developing of entrepreneurial skills, improving education-industry engagement, improving data regarding graduate outcomes to better inform policy, and ensuring student mobility across different types of higher education institutions and over the life-course. This session will be informed by a dialogue conducted by The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) in association with Wilton Park, the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the University of Pretoria and the National Research Foundation South Africa, as part of the Wilton Park Youth Dialogues series.

The session will be 45 minutes, consisting of two 10-minute presentations followed by questions and discussion.

- **SDG4 elements: Adult learning**

There are approximately 400 million illiterate adults in the Commonwealth. Adults with poor literacy and numeracy skills face multiple sources of disadvantage. They find it more difficult to make use of opportunities in society and to exercise their rights. They are also more likely to be in poor health (UNESCO 2015). Adult learning is an important element of lifelong learning. Whilst the target focuses on improvements in literacy and numeracy, there are benefits to be gained for individuals and society from broader adult learning as part of a quality and inclusive lifelong learning system.

During this session, education ministers will have the opportunity to engage in a focused discussion on the key priority areas for adult learning in the Commonwealth, including delivering flexible programmes that minimize barriers to access.; educator development and certification; reintegration programmes; learning cultures and recognition of prior learning.

The session will be 45 minutes, consisting of two 10-minute presentations followed by questions and discussion.

Session 12:

- **Closing of Ministerial Meeting and 20CCEM Declaration issued**

The final session of the 20CCEM will provide an opportunity for ministers to reflect on discussions held over the course of the meeting and issue a Ministerial Declaration. The Declaration will outline the priorities and agenda for education across the Commonwealth for the next three years (2018 - 2021).