All educational systems are shaped by their national histories and socio-cultural, political and economic contexts. Thus, the education systems in the Pacific region are manifestations of their colonial histories.

For the 15 participating countries of the PRIDE Project, many of the educational legacies inherited from their colonial past are still apparent despite their political independence. Fiji, for instance, has educational structures modelled on the British system; the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), Palau and the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) continue to maintain strong links with the United States of America; the Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau have close ties with New Zealand; while Vanuatu, because of its unique colonial history, faces the challenge of dual anglophone and francophone systems. The curricula, teaching and learning methods, languages of instruction, assessment and evaluation methods, administration and management models, and organisational cultures of schooling in the Pacific continue in hegemonic forms, usually closely resembling those of their former colonial ‘masters’.

This chapter provides an analysis of the educational principles and processes articulated by the 31 key educational planners and data managers who attended the first PRIDE regional workshop. Strongly embedded in the PRIDE Project is the notion of ownership, with the conviction that Ministers for Education and the people of their countries ought to decide for themselves what their priorities and key educational activities should be. The ‘workshop’ concept demonstrated the confidence PRIDE has in the deep insights and vast experience that the participants brought to the workshop. In fact, the workshop privileged their voices by hearing and recording their ‘inside’ expertise, knowledge and values, so that a Pacific body of knowledge and wisdom could be developed on educational strategic planning.

The senior management and education officers at the workshop were given the opportunity to reflect on and interrogate the best ways of merging local and global planning practices to ensure that they developed a clear epistemological
foundation for their work. Indirectly, this chapter is in many ways a ‘writing back’ to the colonial histories of Pacific people as they chart their way through their past and present to get the best outcomes for the future development of education in the region. Within the confines of globalisation and the culture of donor assistance, they can ‘rewrite’ their own educational histories and reconstruct their own educational identities and systems.

First PRIDE regional workshop

Coombs (1970: 14) defines educational planning as ‘the application of rational, systematic analysis to the process of educational development with the aim of making education more effective and efficient in responding to the needs and goals of its students and society’. Strategic planning, a concept borrowed from the business world, enables an organisation or educational institution to determine its goals and objectives and to develop strategies for achieving them.

The focus of the first PRIDE regional workshop was strategic planning methodologies for basic education. The 31 participants comprised the National Project Coordinators (NPCs) and data managers from the 15 countries served by the Project. Early in the workshop they were divided into groups and asked to respond in detail to the following questions:

1) Please discuss the kinds of planning processes that have been used in your society/culture, or are still being used. What are the underlying values, beliefs, wisdoms and epistemologies that have guided the way your people reflect on the future? How have people planned ahead?

2) Please consider how to develop a set of planning principles and processes that blends the best of the global with local Pacific ways of planning for the future.

Towards the end of the workshop they regrouped, and were asked to revisit and review their earlier discussions in light of subsequent presentations and debate. The challenge for the participants was to develop a set of principles and processes that was firmly grounded in Pacific values and epistemologies, yet was fully syncretised with useful global approaches. In other words, the participants had to provide what they perceived as a good balance of the local Pacific ways of planning with the global.
Another key dimension of the workshop was for participants to review a draft set of 10 benchmarks to see if there was a need to add new ones or remove any, and to prioritise the list. Additionally, and more importantly, the participants were requested to develop specific performance indicators that would be used when applying these benchmarks to a strategic education plan.

What follows is mainly sourced from the records and summaries of the discussions by the participants at the workshop. After discussion of local planning processes, the substantive part of the article focuses on principles of strategic planning. This is followed by an articulation of the benchmarks further developed at the workshop, which will be used by the PRIDE project to review education strategic plans of each participating Ministry of Education (MoE), looking specifically at their performance indicators.

Local planning processes

Strategic planning is not new in the Pacific. From the dawn of human culture until today, in all spheres of life, whether to mark a key milestone in village or individual lives such as a wedding or a funeral, or for survival purposes such as fishing, war or sea travel, plans had to be laid and strategies developed to ensure that the purpose and goals of the activity were fulfilled.

The example used by one of the groups at the workshop helps to demonstrate the intricate details that go into planning an activity, in this case a national feast to celebrate the installation of a chief. First, a meeting is called where the people of the village attend and the leaders or elders begin discussions by explaining the event to be celebrated, its importance and the need for everyone’s cooperation to ensure that all goes well on the day itself. The planning discussions then focus on the delegation of responsibilities such as food preparation, quantity of food needed, division of labour, entertainment and traditional and other obligations. In the lead up to the actual feast, sub-group meetings are held to discuss the finer details such as hunting, fishing, cleaning, decoration, programme and other necessary activities. On the day of the actual feast, all the months of preparation become evident in the great pomp and ceremony with which traditional protocols are strictly observed as the celebrations unfold.

This example demonstrates the communal approach to the planning process. Wide consultations and consensual decision-making take place within a democratic
framework, allowing individuals to feel that they are adequately represented at discussion level by either their chief, family leader or representative. Planning is contextual, taking into account the social, economic, political, cultural and spiritual settings in which actions are to be taken. Resources are managed for the benefit of the whole community. Land is the main resource and this is used to meet the needs of the whole group, not for economic gain. There are specific roles for different groups in planning and implementing activities, and good leadership, when demonstrated at all levels, leads to the relative success of the activity. The economic well-being of the community or group is the priority and cultural values are maintained throughout the process of planning and implementation.

The underlying values and beliefs that guide local planning processes include: cooperation; unity; reciprocity; respect for authority, each other and for the environment; maintenance of culture and traditions; maintenance of family and community relationships; sharing and caring; religious or spiritual nurturing; moral and character development; and capacity building. An important focus is on building a productive and constructive society and maintaining the economic wellbeing of the community, which are the main goals of many planning activities.

In planning for the future, Pacific communities start with a vision. They set goals, brainstorm and contemplate as well as consult and participate in decision making. Planning may be assigned to appropriate social groups and revolves around available resources. There is a communal understanding of what needs to be done and by whom.

In Pacific societies, acquired knowledge from past experience and previous generations is the knowledge base used when drawing up plans for action. While there is communal consensus of the goal of particular activities, accountability is at an individual level, because of the deep personal commitment to communal tasks. However, because chiefs or traditional leaders are ultimately responsible for the safety and survival of groups, autocratic decision-making does occur at times.

Planning is therefore an essential tool for decision making. Consultation and cooperation are important for the achievement of set goals. Plans are laid according to the scope of resource availability, whether human, financial or material. Goals
and objectives are realistic, relevant and achievable. Authority is delegated, and roles and activities are monitored to ensure that societal norms are adhered to. The monitoring of activities is a control mechanism to ensure that there is accountability for both individual and collective contributions. Sustainability of resources and the environment is also an important consideration in traditional planning processes. Moreover, the transfer of skills and knowledge from one generation to the next is inbuilt into the system: taking part in the activities, under the guidance of their elders, is the way the young people learn.

Principles and processes of planning: blending the local and global

There was consensus amongst workshop participants on the need for the development and establishment of a Pacific body of knowledge, not only on educational planning, but on every aspect of education. To achieve this, a collective interrogation and analytic process needs to take place of strengths and weaknesses of each educational system, to build on strengths without compromising or neglecting culture and tradition, and to ‘borrow’ best practices that work in other places. The participants acknowledged the need to meld local and global practices that work.

Processes of strategic planning

There is no such thing as a perfect plan and therefore no right way or wrong way of writing a plan. However, planning should be localised and contextualised so that it reflects the needs, values and cultures of each country. ‘Our way’ of planning may be the best way of proceeding and each country must develop its own strategic plan according to its unique characteristics and priorities. The global perspective therefore should not overwhelm the local Pacific perspective.

Generally, the planning process begins with aspirations of the people and the Minister or Ministry of Education, which are translated into a vision and mission. Goals, objectives and outcomes are then articulated. Strategies for achieving these are formulated and performance indicators for their achievement are identified. Timelines, resources and people responsible for various activities and programmes are identified before the plan is formalised. The plan is then communicated to the various stakeholders for awareness. It is then implemented, monitored, reviewed and evaluated against performance indicators and achievement of anticipated
outcomes. Consultations should take place at every stage of the planning process, with monitoring, evaluation and review taking place at regular intervals. Research and analysis of issues are constantly undertaken at every stage. It is also important to draw up contingency plans as part of the planning process.

**Principles of planning**

To recapitulate, workshop participants identified the following cultural values as underpinning local or traditional planning processes: respect for authority (elders and chiefs), one another and the environment; reciprocity; cooperation; sharing and caring; spirituality; moral or character development; maintenance of relationships; exemplary leadership; capacity building; and sustainability of the environment. The challenge for Pacific people is how to ensure that these values are transferred or worked into current planning processes and structures to ensure that local or traditional values that have stood the test of time actually underpin modern Pacific organisations and institutions.

After considerable discussion by participants at the workshop, the following 12 principles were identified as important considerations that should underpin educational planning in the Pacific.

1. **Strong, objective and visionary leadership**

   There is a clear understanding that strong and visionary leadership is necessary in every sphere: families, villages, schools, Ministries of Education, church organisations, and teacher training institutions (whether government or the private sector). Part of good leadership is the shaping of a vision for the organisation, with its concomitant mission and strategies for the achievement of its goals and objectives. Strong leadership and good governance (economic, social and political) are essential for the development and implementation of ‘good’ strategic plans.

   The vision and mission must be clear and achievable. In the case of the MoE, it is crucial that the vision and mission statements are clearly articulated and communicated to education stakeholders, including MoE staff and schools. For educational institutions such as schools and teacher training institutions, their own vision and mission need to be communicated within the organisation to facilitate a more effective implementation of the plan.
2. Participatory and consultative approaches
In developing a strategic plan, wide consultations need to take place with stakeholders to ensure that there is a more holistic participation in the planning process. The participation of civil society organisations is particularly important, to ensure that the consultation process is inclusive, as are the views of stakeholders in the school system, such as principals, teachers, parents and students. Community leaders also need to be consulted. Other stakeholders who have an interest in education, such as employers, politicians, MoE personnel and other government ministries, should also be consulted.

Information should be given in a language and manner that makes people feel valued and respected. The process of consultation should involve planners going back time and again to check and re-check for accurate representation of ideas, as well as giving feedback on how ideas have or have not been included in the plan and the reasons why. There should also be the awareness that people might feel ‘over-consulted’ and may give responses that they think the planners want to hear, and not necessarily what they believe or think should be in place.

A communication strategy should be developed by the MoE for different levels: national, provincial, village and school. The objective is to build stakeholder awareness about the provision of education in different formal and non-formal sectors; to provide a forum for discussion and debate about vocational and academic education; and to inform parents, the business sector and civil society about future educational requirements to keep pace with national and international employment needs. When communication channels are kept open between the MoE and its stakeholders, democratic participation in educational processes, including the development of a strategic plan, will be considerably easier and more manageable.

There are several issues of concern regarding the consultation process. First, donor-driven consultations are counterproductive to the notion of local ownership. ‘External’ or foreign ideologies, values and epistemologies become the driving force behind the consultations, and the processes and outcomes could exclude local aspirations, values and priorities. There is therefore the danger that no ‘real’ consultation takes place and there is little or no sense of local ownership. Secondly, the MoE needs to take great care in the selection of stakeholders, to ensure that there is wide representation of a cross-section of the community. There is
otherwise a risk when MoE officials select the stakeholders that some key civil society organisations might be excluded.

Moreover, horizontal and vertical consultation needs to take place among the ranks of MoE staff, particularly those of middle-level management, to strengthen their sense of ownership, since in many cases it is they who will implement many of the activities on the plan. Teachers and school heads should also be consulted, as well as staff of teacher training institutions, since they are the implementers of many educational reforms that take place at classroom or school level. A serious limitation of many planning processes at the MoE level is the exclusion of stakeholders from the preliminary stages. In all too many cases, stakeholders are only ‘consulted’ after the fact, when a lot of work has already gone into the planning stage and they are presented with the result. They are, in this case, expected to give ‘rubber stamp’ approval of the end product after having been neglected in participating meaningfully in matters of national importance.

3. Localising ownership

The ownership principle is important in the development of strategic plans. Ownership must be at all levels: within the MoE, in the schools and in the community. It is at the point of the MoE in particular that it should be capitalised on. Professional and administrative staff need to have a clear sense of owning the plan. Otherwise their commitment and zeal for its implementation may not be strong. Participation in and ownership of the planning process are important for the success of strategic plan implementation. Currently, in many MoEs there is too little involvement of lower and middle managers in strategic plan formulation.

When outside donor funding is available, there is a tendency for the strategic plan to be developed by outside consultants. This can lead to implementation being problematic—understandably, given that local ownership of the plan is not encouraged during the whole process leading up to the finalisation of the plan. Local professionals utilised by the foreign consultancy firm have their brains picked but they are not necessarily—indeed, often almost certainly not—involved in any meaningful way in the process of strategic plan development. Capacity building for local counterparts is usually not part of the mandate of the consultant. Instead, the main aim is to get the consultant’s report and annual plan prepared in written form for handing over by a particular deadline already decided upon prior to the commencement of the planning consultancy. The MoE is then left to pick up the pieces after the consultant has left.
Often there is a beautiful plan in place without appropriate resources available for its implementation. If there are resources available, there might not be commitment or dedication on the part of the implementers, because they were not meaningfully involved in the drawing up of the strategic plan in the first place.

4. Realistic, achievable and affordable plans

It is important that strategic plans are realistic and achievable in terms of goals, objectives, the performance indicators used to measure results, the time frame and the outcomes. The activities also need to be costed and prioritised, to ensure that they are planned for in the budgetary cycle. No matter how ‘perfect’ the plan might be, if government is not committed to funding the priorities, then implementation of the plan can be problematic.

Sustainability of activities in the plan needs careful consideration. If a new long-term programme is planned for in a particular planning cycle, its recurrent and associated costs in the next planning cycle need also to be borne in mind, particularly if it is an expensive initiative. At all times, the MoE must work within its means and must also make optimal use of external donor assistance. MoEs must be cost effective in their operations.

Since donor assistance to educational systems is available in virtually all 15 participating countries, a question that needs to be considered honestly is whether countries are complying with donor agencies to meet education goals and priorities, or whether they are only interested in getting financial assistance for the sake of getting financial assistance.

Undue influence from educational aid donors should be particularly resisted because the principle of local ownership is crucial in strategic planning. Since priorities are articulated in these plans, they should be the result of reflection and consultations by the local community, and by both civil society and educational professionals. Chief Executive Officers and Ministers of Education should be cautious about who actually drives the formulation of priorities and strategies of national educational plans. While any external assistance from donor countries is appreciated, the chief executives and senior staff of each MoE should remember that ultimately, the plan must be implemented, and if it is localised and contextualised from the start, the greater will be the chances of successful implementation.
5. Valid, reliable data
The production, utilisation and dissemination of information relevant to policy makers and decision-makers play a key role in planning (Caillods, 1991). The focus for data managers who attended the first regional workshop in Lautoka was the crucial place in the planning process of valid and reliable data, and chapters 6 and 7 of this volume address that question. In recognition of the importance of good data in educational planning, there is a real necessity to increase or improve data management capability in the education sector.

In the small to medium sized countries of the Pacific, limited staff numbers mean that there may not be a planning unit or a computerised data management system in place; and if there is one, it may be under-resourced and face severe constraints on its ability to produce, analyse and disseminate data when needed. Similarly, the planner for the MoE may not be a specific person, but an individual who has planning added to the myriad responsibilities he/she already has to undertake. As a consequence, planning may not be carried out effectively.

In the Pacific, because of the influence and impact of donor assistance to the education sector, strategic planning has become fashionable. For example, with assistance from AusAID, Fiji was able to develop its first strategic plan, for 2000–2002. Similarly, the ADB assisted the MoE in the Marshall Islands to develop a strategic plan in 2000, for an indeterminate period of time. Ministries of Education in other Pacific countries have had to wake up to the fact that if they did not develop a strategic plan, they were likely to lose out on donor educational aid. This is particularly so in the operation of the PRIDE Project, which strongly emphasises the development of education strategic plans as a prerequisite for the provision of any assistance for the implementation of some of the priorities of the education sector.

Given the key focus on strategic planning, there is no escaping the fact that if good decision making and policy formulation are to take place, educational planners and data managers need up-skilling and specific training in order to provide optimum service. Far too often, because of the constraints mentioned, planners and data managers are thrown into the job and have to sink or swim. More often than not, they have many other responsibilities to carry out and are therefore not in a position to do justice to their work.
If MoEs are to function more effectively and efficiently, then they will have to give serious consideration to strengthening their planning units and information management systems. These two go hand in hand. However, the danger that planners trained in western universities may perpetuate global systems, to the detriment of local ways of knowing and doing things, must be recognised. This ‘squeezing out’ or ignoring may happen unintentionally: planners must be particularly sensitive to different viewpoints, including respect for local traditions and cultures.

6. National, regional and international alignment of plan

It is important for the education strategic plan to be aligned to national priorities and the needs of the nation. To a lesser extent, but just as importantly, the MoE strategic plan should be aligned to regional and international conventions such as the Forum Basic Educational Action Plan (FBEAP) and UNESCO’s Education for All (EFA).

Aligning the education strategic plan to the overall national strategic plan is of particular importance, since implementation of many projects and programmes will depend on the release of available funds from the national treasury. Government will fund those activities that have been identified as priorities in its overall strategic development plan. Of relevance here is the need for effective consultation and coordination between the MoE of each country and the Ministry of National Planning as well as the Ministry of Finance. The reality is that strategic plans will be more successfully implemented if appropriate funding is available.

7. Training and capacity building

There is ample evidence to show that training does improve the ability of individuals to plan more effectively. In particular, those personnel who have training in planning or have worked with donor funded projects have gained relevant skills and knowledge that can be transferred to the local context. For instance, they have developed such skills in planning, monitoring and evaluation as problem-solving, data collection, and writing statistical reports and other formal planning documents. There is, however, an urgent need to provide further capacity building in policy development, data management and strategic planning. The same emphasis that is given to teacher training should be given to training in these areas.
This is an important area that is often neglected by MoEs. In many cases, planners and data managers are thrown into their positions without having had, or subsequently had opportunity to undertake, the appropriate training for optimum performance. In these cases, the MoE may not have the expertise needed for the best decision or policy option to be taken, inevitably resulting in poor planning and implementation: planners and data managers must be appropriately trained and skilled in the ins and outs of their profession.

8. **Flexibility**

It was recognised that plans should never be set in concrete. They need to be flexible in order to adapt to changing circumstances. If a plan is borrowed from another system, it must be adapted or modified to suit the needs of the borrowing country. Since plans are living documents, they can be modified to address changing economic, technological or political circumstances.

One of the 12 planning principles articulated in the Education Policy Paper developed as part of the Tonga Education Strategy Planning Project (Catherwood, Levine & Moeaki, 2003: 12) is summed up in this way: ‘The Strategic Plan for Education should be dynamic, developed on a rolling basis, capable of modification in the light of unanticipated events, and monitored on a regular basis’. This best expresses what flexibility meant to the participants of the workshop.

9. **Monitoring and evaluation**

Once a strategic plan is developed, it is important to have a monitoring system in place to measure the achievement or otherwise of key performance indicators, to see if strategies have been implemented and whether outcomes have been achieved.

The plan needs to be monitored regularly during the implementation phase and refined according to the economic, social and political realities of the day. To ensure that accountability measures are not neglected, it is desirable to have built into the plan a mechanism for regular review of the progress of implementation.

10. **Cultural considerations**

There was strong consensus at the workshop that local cultures and traditions should not be neglected or ignored in the process of strategic planning. While global ways of knowing are important, they should not subsume or overwhelm
local cultural values, epistemologies and wisdom. Pride in cultural and national identity was identified and prioritised as a key benchmark for the review of education strategic plans (PRIDE, 2004). In particular, this benchmark emphasises the point that the strategic plan should be built on a ‘strong foundation of local cultures and languages, thus enabling students to develop a deep pride in their own values, traditions and wisdoms, and a clear sense of their own local cultural identity, as well as their identity as citizens of the nation’.

This vision is strongly articulated in an important publication called *Tree of Opportunity: Re-thinking Pacific Education* (Pene, Taufe‘ulungaki & Benson, 2002) which recommends that education be firmly rooted in the cultures of Pacific societies—processes and skills, knowledge, arts and crafts, institutions, languages, values, beliefs, histories and worldviews. Drawing on its cultural roots, Pacific education should grow strong and healthy while permitting the grafting of foreign or external elements without changing its identity. The main purpose for education then should be:

> the survival, transformation and sustainability of Pacific peoples and societies, with its outcomes measured in terms of performance and appropriate behaviour in the multiple contexts in which they have to live. The primary goal of education, therefore, is to ensure that all Pacific students are successful and that they all become fully participating members of their groups, societies and the global community. (Pene, Taufe‘ulungaki & Benson, 2002: 3)

**11. Balance in curriculum and levels**

The primary focus of any education strategic plan is to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in schools, particularly the learning outcomes of students. This important fact may be overlooked when it comes down to the nitty gritty development of national educational strategic and annual plans. Related to this is the need to ensure that students are given a balanced education that will prepare them with skills for life and work in a global world, this being another benchmark that will be used to review education strategic plans of participating countries in the PRIDE Project.

This benchmark clearly stipulates that the strategic plan should address the challenges of articulation between each level of education (preschool, early childhood, primary, secondary, technical and vocational education and training).
As well, the plan should address the challenges of articulation between education and the world of work, not only in the context of paid employment but also of self sufficiency, self reliance and self employment. Further, the plan should demonstrate effective articulation between formal and non-formal education.

Catherwood, Levine and Moeaki (2003: 12) have included the principle of balance as critical in the strategic plan for education in Tonga. They describe it this way: The strategic plan for education should be balanced, in terms of appropriate:

- weight for each education sector (pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary)
- emphasis on maintaining its core business and making any necessary changes to improve performance
- regard for traditional values of Tongan society and the new values of the modern world needed by Tonga for future success
- emphasis on achieving academic excellence, while also recognising the necessity to develop the skills that the economy needs.

Another dimension to the issue of balance in the curriculum is to ensure that students are prepared with skills for life and work in a global world. This is yet another important benchmark for effective strategic planning. The principle of this benchmark states that the plan should contain strategies for the systematic teaching of literacy, numeracy, ICT and English skills, together with life and work preparation skills, thereby equipping all students to take their place in a global world with ease and confidence.

12. Access and equity

Again, the document produced for the Tongan strategic plan is useful here as an example of the use of this principle in strategic planning. This is defined (Catherwood, Levine & Moeaki, 2003: 12) as the design of key priorities to meet fairness and equity objectives through:

- ensuring that the disadvantaged are given fair opportunities to gain access to a quality education
- targeting support if necessary to those in most need
- distributing resources for education in an equitable way
- providing every Tongan with an equal opportunity for a good education.
Similarly, a benchmark for reviewing national strategic plans requires that the plan contain strategies for the teaching of vulnerable students, including those from low socio-economic urban groups, those in remote and isolated areas, those with disabilities, female students, school drop-outs and push-outs, and students from cultural and religious minority groups.

**Benchmarks for review of strategic plans**

Finalising the benchmarks that will be used by the PRIDE Project to review national strategic plans was another important outcome of the first regional workshop. These ten benchmarks were subsequently ratified at the Project Steering Committee meeting held in October 2004. They resonate with the principles of planning discussed in the previous section and include:

- pride in cultural and national identity
- skills for life and work in a global world
- alignment with national development plans and regional and international conventions
- access and equity for students with special needs
- partnerships with communities and stakeholders
- a holistic approach to basic education
- realistic financial costing
- use of data in educational planning
- effective capacity building for all education personnel
- a framework for monitoring and evaluation.

These principles and benchmarks therefore are recommended as a guide for the development of national strategic plans of the 15 participating countries of the PRIDE Project.

The first benchmark, relating to pride in cultural and national identity, was prioritised by the participants as the most important. The main principle behind this benchmark is that each strategic plan should build on a strong foundation of local cultures and languages, thus enabling students to develop a deep pride in their own values, traditions and wisdoms, and a clear sense of their own local cultural identity, as well as their identity as citizens of the nation. Specific indicators for this benchmark include: a statement demonstrating the development
of a national language policy, including the vernacular language(s); a statement showing development of policies or regulations on citizen-building activities such as students learning the National Anthem; and a specific objective or strategy referring to the teaching of local languages and cultures in schools.

Prioritised in second place is the benchmark on skills for life and work in a global world. This is based on the principle that national strategic plans should contain strategies for the systemic teaching of literacy, numeracy, ICT and English language, together with life and work preparation skills, thereby equipping all students to take their place in a global world with ease and confidence. Two performance indicators include clear statements of curriculum outcomes in the teaching of literary, numeracy, ICT and English language across all levels, and a clear statement on strategies for the development of life and work preparation skills, including technical and vocational education and training (TVET).

The third important benchmark identified by the workshop participants concerns aligning education strategic plans with national development plans and regional or international conventions. It is particularly important for indicators to show evidence of dovetailing objectives and strategies with the most current National Development Plan. Additionally, the education strategic plan ought to contain a statement of commitment to regional conventions such as the Forum Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP) as well as to international conventions such as the UNESCO Education for All (EFA) initiative.

The fourth benchmark of access and equity for students with special needs rests on the principle that the education strategic plan should contain strategies that address the needs of vulnerable students, including those from low socioeconomic urban groups, those in remote and isolated areas, those with disabilities, female students and school drop-outs and push-outs. This ought to be manifested by way of a specific objective in the plan referring to meeting the needs of these categories of students in order to provide them with equality of access and opportunity. Another performance indicator would be the inclusion of a clear statement of strategies to improve educational opportunities for vulnerable students through more effective teacher training, and through improvement of infrastructure, resourcing and programmes. Equally importantly, there should be an indicator regarding the existence or development of appropriate policies or legislation in the area of special education.
The fifth benchmark is in the area of partnerships with communities and stakeholders. The education strategic plan should show clear evidence that it was developed using consultative and participatory processes in the broader context of civil society, including parents, students, private providers of education, NGOs, employers and other community and private sector groups. Indicators need to be inclusive of strategies outlining consultative meetings with key stakeholder groups and community leaders, and strategies outlining participation of stakeholders and the community in education policy development.

A holistic approach to basic education is the sixth benchmark that will be used to review education strategic plans. There are three components to this benchmark. First, the education plan should address the challenges of effective articulation between each level of education; from pre-school or early childhood to elementary or primary, from primary to secondary, and from secondary to TVET. Secondly, the plan should address the challenges of articulation between education and the world of work, not only in the context of paid employment but also of self-sufficiency, self-reliance and self-employment. Thirdly, the plan should demonstrate effective articulation between formal and non-formal education. Performance indicators for this benchmark include the following:

- a written curriculum framework stating the linkages between early childhood and primary sectors, between the primary and secondary sectors, and between the secondary and post-secondary sectors
- TVET oriented programmes included as part of the school curriculum
- an adequate supply of appropriately qualified and trained teachers available for different school levels
- pathways between school and post-school clearly articulated through programmes and a quality communication strategy
- provision in the national curriculum for education from early childhood to secondary that can be used in the formal and non-formal sectors.

The seventh benchmark concerns realistic financial costing. The education strategic plan needs to be carefully costed, and realistic in terms of current and projected levels of national budgets and donor funding for the education sector. Indicators should include evidence of robust budget preparation and evidence of an efficient financial management system in place.
The use of data in educational planning is the eighth benchmark identified as important to assess national education strategic plans. The principle for this benchmark is that the education plan should be based on recent educational data that have been systematically collected, analysed, managed and reported. Performance indicators include evidence of a trained data management officer or unit and the existence of an Education Management Information System (EMIS).

Effective capacity building for all education personnel is the ninth benchmark. It deals with whether the implications of the education plan for the training of education personnel are addressed and the development of effective training strategies, particularly in the following four areas: the pre- and in-service education of teachers; educational leadership, with a focus on ensuring that staff are conversant with and committed to the strategic plan; educational planning; and data management. Three specific performance indicators to demonstrate evidence of adherence to this benchmark include: indication of levels and numbers of education personnel to be trained, clear strategies on both pre- and in-service teacher training, and evidence of capacity building programmes in place.

The final benchmark is the inclusion of a framework in the education strategic plan that will be used for monitoring and evaluating. In particular, the plan should contain a framework that allows outcomes-based judgements to be made about the effectiveness of education provisions at all levels, and in all areas of the curriculum. Performance indicators ought to include evidence of the following: a national framework to assess student achievement; a performance management system for staff; and a reporting mechanism on the success of otherwise of strategies in the plan.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have articulated the voices of planners and data managers from the participating countries of the PRIDE Project at its first regional workshop on principles of strategic planning. Additionally, I have discussed the 10 benchmarks developed at this workshop, which will guide the review of MoE strategic plans.

The set of 12 principles of strategic planning developed in the chapter strongly suggests that success in blending local Pacific ways of knowing with global approaches is possible. The significance of this is the establishment of a distinct
Pacific body of knowledge on educational strategic planning, developed by Pacific Islanders for Pacific Islanders.

The convergence of what can sometimes be regarded as two antithetical positions such as the local and global has resulted in the syncretisation of what is best from both ways of knowing. A critical thread emerging from the issues discussed in this chapter is that global ways of thinking and doing should not overwhelm the local and that cultural considerations should not be neglected but foregrounded in all educational discussions, not just in strategic planning. Local cultural values and ways of knowing and doing should form an integral part of strategic planning processes. As the participants pointed out, strategic planning is not new in the Pacific—our forefathers practised and lived it, as also does the current generation, in traditional and modern settings. It is when we can analytically interrogate the structures and processes inherited as a legacy of our colonial pasts and the current impact of globalisation that we can develop the best of local and global practices.

It is therefore imperative that this collective process of critically analysing the strengths and weaknesses of our educational systems should continue to build on strengths without compromising local culture and ways of doing, and where appropriate and likely to be beneficial, to ‘borrow’ best practices that work in other places.

References