

Kia Orana

on behalf of USP please find a third proposal for your consideration. Government funding of education is extremely important and investment in education programmes influences the choices students of education make. This proposal seeks to identify a solution to a number of issues made apparent to USP by Principals and teachers. Alongside their concerns, in November 2020 analysis by USP of teacher qualifications across the country indicated that there were 104 teachers currently teaching with no Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) despite a Degree being mandated as a minimum qualification expected of teachers in Ministry of Educations policy. Increasing the number of teachers with a B.Ed. qualification would significantly strengthen Cook Islands education sector capacity and capability and have a flow on effect of upskilling the human resources of the Cook Islands to facilitate country economic aspirations. Without qualified teachers in schools offering a rigorous programme, many of Cook Islands Government future plans are placed in jeopardy.

Facilitating a B.Ed. full time and in-country would save the Government hundreds of thousands of dollars when compared to the current teacher training programme offered. When the costs associated with annual recruitment costs spent endeavoring to recruit teachers from overseas are added, the savings expand even further. This proposal will also help solve the teacher shortages and lack of retention of overseas teachers often experienced.

Finally, this proposal could potentially encourage Cook Islanders living overseas to return to the Cook Islands to become qualified teachers, and to then teach. for example, in 2019 USP had 38 people register interest in doing a *full time B.Ed degree* but as there was no financing available they did not enroll. They could not afford the tuition costs and to give up their paid employment. Ultimately, fully qualified teachers will give our children a full educational experience which every child, at the very least, is entitled to.

Meitaki maata e kia manuia,

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