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PRC4ECCE  
Invest in Early Childhood

# Pursuing Quality in Early Learning Vol. 2

## Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Teacher Competency Framework for Pacific Small Island Developing States (Pacific SIDS)



**Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)  
Teacher Competency Framework**

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**for Pacific Small Island Developing  
States (Pacific SIDS)**

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# I. Introduction

With the United Nation's (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a platform for achieving quality early childhood care and education outcomes in 2030, ECCE policy-makers, practitioners, and academicians from Asia-Pacific countries gathered at the second Asia-Pacific Regional Policy Forum on Early Childhood Care and Education in Putrajaya, Malaysia in 2016 to share experiences, innovations, and lessons learned in developing and implementing ECCE policies and initiatives.

At the end of the forum, participants expressed their common commitment to ECCE through the Putrajaya Declaration. It highlighted a nine-point action agenda to support the achievement of SDG 4.2; *"By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education."* In addition to SDG 4.2, the SDGs also recognize the need to *"substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing states"*; (UN, 2015).

Recognizing the critical roles that teachers have in child development, this competency framework for ECCE teachers in the Pacific SIDS was developed as part of a wider UNESCO project that aims to contribute to the professionalization and capacity development of ECCE teachers. The framework was developed in a consultative and participatory manner, taking into consideration views and insights from ECCE teachers, researchers, and practitioners from across the Pacific SIDS.

This document first provides a brief background, and discusses the purposes and intended audience for which the framework was developed (Section I). A succeeding section reflects on the regional ECCE landscape (Section II), before proceeding to a discussion of the ECCE teacher competency framework for the Pacific SIDS (Section III). Section IV suggests possible uses of the ECCE teacher competency framework; a final section concludes with areas for future action.

## Purpose

Building on existing regional initiatives on ECCE and teacher professional development, the ECCE teacher competency framework aims to enhance the professionalization and capacity development of ECCE teachers in the Pacific SIDS by:

- Providing comprehensive descriptions of knowledge, skills, and dispositions that ECCE teachers in the Pacific SIDS need to support holistic development of a child,
- Providing systematic and consistent structure and content to support the professional development of the Pacific SIDS's early childhood workforce,
- Supplementing existing Pacific SIDS frameworks, or functioning as a catalyst from which other countries can develop their own frameworks that consider unique country conditions and ECCE landscapes,
- Strengthening collaboration among different ECCE stakeholders at the local, national, and regional levels.

The framework does not intend to replace existing teacher competency frameworks in the Pacific SIDS, nor in individual countries that have developed their own teacher standards. Rather, it is an attempt to bridge the various efforts on early childhood education to improve and enhance this particular sector's overall quality in the region. The framework likewise addresses calls to contextualize quality assurance mechanisms to be more responsive to the Pacific SIDS contexts and needs.

## Intended audience

The framework covers competencies of teachers of children aged 3 to 5 in pre-primary education settings. This document is thus developed for ECCE teachers and those responsible for ECCE professional development, such as teacher education institutions, higher education faculties, and human resource departments of governments and other agencies that provide ECCE services. Section IV of the document presents suggested uses and applications of the framework.

## II. The context for developing an ECCE teacher competency framework for the Pacific SIDS

Cross the Pacific SIDS, various initiatives exist in support of ECCE. In its “2017 Status Report on Early Childhood Care and Education in Pacific Island Countries”, UNICEF recognized that while considerable progress had been made in ECCE, a lot more needs to be done to achieve targets set forth in achieving SDGs in 2030 (UNICEF, 2017). While most Pacific SIDS countries have embedded ECCE policies and programmes in national education plans and policies, there is currently no specific policy or framework that focuses separately on competencies of early childhood care and education teachers. This teacher competency framework thus primarily aims to support initiatives to professionalize and enhance capacities of ECCE teachers in the Pacific SIDS, so that they can better support child learning and development outcomes.

Early childhood is recognized internationally to be the critical age range from zero to eight (0–8) while this competency framework focuses on teachers of early learners aged from three to five (3–5). This is consistent with the *“Pacific Guidelines for the Development of National Quality Frameworks for ECCE: Programming for Ages Three to Five”*, developed by the PRC4ECCE. Recognizing that programmes for children aged zero to three (0–3) focus more on health, nutrition, safety and holistic development, and less on school readiness, the Pacific Guidelines focus on programmes for children aged 3–5, in line with regional priorities and initiatives such as the Pacific Education Development Forum (PEDF).

In the Pacific SIDS, there is a diverse range of organized early learning that takes place in different settings such as pre-schools, kindergartens (Kindys), daycare centres, and faith-based centres. The focus and scope of this framework is on pre-primary education teachers under the purview of ministries of education or related government agencies with a mandate to address early childhood education concerns in the Pacific SIDS. While the framework is designed for pre-primary education levels, the competencies identified in the document are not exclusive to ECCE teachers for children between 3–5 years; instead these may also be common to those required for caregivers or early childhood care and development practitioners of infants and children aged 0–3 years.

In most of the Pacific SIDS, data show that children typically enter pre-primary education programmes between ages three and four, and begin primary school at age six (UIS, 2017). Results of a situational mapping exercise conducted by UNICEF in 2015 revealed that among



the Pacific SIDS, Cook Islands, Fiji, Republic of Marshall Islands, and Nauru mandate the provision of free pre-primary education for at least one year (UNICEF, 2017). If children stay in pre-primary school for at least one year, this crucial window provides ECCE teachers with opportunities to positively influence child learning and development outcomes, and adequately prepare children for a smooth transition to primary education. However, available data show that access to pre-primary education remains far below the targets set for 2030, with only Cook Islands having net enrolment rates of at least 80 per cent (UIS, 2017). Elsewhere in the Pacific SIDS, pre-primary net enrolment rates vary widely, and in some cases, available data may either be outdated, or not publicly available.<sup>1</sup> Difficulties remain in collecting complete and disaggregated data to make informed, evidence-based decisions in support of ECCE (UNICEF, 2017). Table 1 presents selected early childhood education indicators for the Pacific SIDS.

**Table 1.** Selected indicators for early childhood education in the Pacific SIDS

Country/ Indicator	Age of entry at pre-primary school (2015)	Official age of entry at primary school (2015)	Theoretical duration of pre-primary years (2015)	Enrolment in pre-primary education (2015)	Net enrolment rate in pre-primary education (2015)
Cook Islands	4	5	2	514	88
Fiji	3	6	3	14,791 <sup>2</sup>	76
Kiribati	3	6	3	4,874	N/a
Marshall Islands	4	6	2	1,205	33
Micronesia (Federated States of)	3	6	3	2,264	29
Nauru <sup>3</sup>	3	6	3	919	69
Niue	4	5	1	27	N/a
Palau	3	6	3	518	74
Papua New Guinea <sup>4</sup>	4	6	3	177,660	N/a
Samoa	3	5	2	4,131	28

- 1 For consistency in reporting, unless otherwise specified, indicators used in this report are based on data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) website, accessed between July–November 2017.
- 2 Information received from the Fiji Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts in March 2018.
- 3 Information received from the Nauru Ministry of Education in November 2017, clarified that age of entry in ECCE varies: age 4 for community play centres, 5 for compulsory pre-school education, and 6 for entry in preparatory schools. Estimated enrolment in community play centres is at 281, while estimates for kindergarten (aged 5-6) is at 676.
- 4 Information received from the Papua New Guinea Department of Education in March 2018.

Country/ Indicator	Age of entry at pre-primary school (2015)	Official age of entry at primary school (2015)	Theoretical duration of pre-primary years (2015)	Enrolment in pre-primary education (2015)	Net enrolment rate in pre-primary education (2015)
Solomon Islands	3	6	3	48,509	43
Tokelau	3	5	2	52	N/a
Tonga <sup>5</sup>	3	6	2	2,066	21
Tuvalu	3	6	3	758	66
Vanuatu	4	6	2	14,301	56

**Notes:** For enrolment in PPE, for Kiribati, refer to 2003; for Papua New Guinea, refer to 2008; for Nauru, Palau, and Tonga, refer to 2014; For Tokelau, refer to 2016. For NER data, for Tonga, refer to 2002; for Fiji, refer to 2006; for Nauru, and Palau, refer to 2014.

**Sources:** UIS, accessed October 2017; Nauru Ministry of Education, November 2017; Tonga Ministry of Education and Training, November 2017.

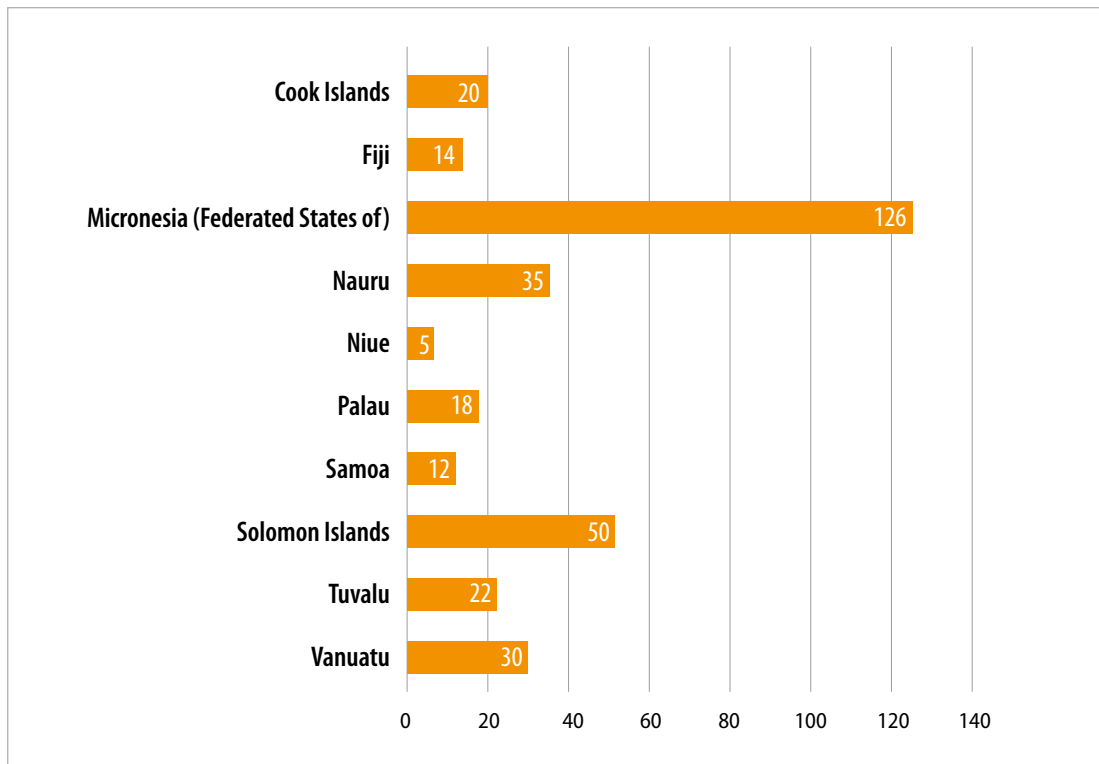
Some data show disparities in terms of pupil/qualified teacher ratios in pre-primary education in the Pacific SIDS. The Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), for example, have a very high ratio (126), while the ratio of teachers in Niue (5), Samoa (12), Palau (18), and Cook Islands (20) remain low. (Please see Figure 1). Lower ratios suggest that teachers can devote more time and focus for individual students; yet it may also be the case that while teachers are available, they may not always be qualified providers of ECCE.



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5 Information received from the Tonga Ministry of Education and Training in November 2017 clarified that the official age of entry to pre-school is 4, while the official age of entry to primary school is 5.

**Figure 1.** Pupil/qualified teacher ratio in pre-primary education (headcount basis, 2015)



**Sources:** UIS, accessed October 2017; For Fiji, Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts.

**Note:** For Solomon Islands, refer to 2013; for Palau and Nauru, refer to 2014.

The Pacific Guidelines recognize the importance of having suitably trained personnel to provide quality ECCE services, but Pacific SIDS countries face the continuing challenge of recruiting and maintaining adequately trained ECCE personnel (UNICEF, 2017). Based on available data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2017), the percentages of pre-primary education teachers who had received training seem encouraging in some Pacific SIDS countries (100% for Niue and Samoa in 2015, and for Palau in 2014; 93% for Nauru in 2014, and 84% for Cook Islands in 2015). However, other countries reported lower percentages of trained teachers (48% for Tuvalu and 68% for Solomon Islands in 2015, and 51% for Vanuatu in 2013).

These figures support the imperative to further promote efforts to increase the number of qualified teachers who can better provide quality ECCE to help prepare children for a smoother transition to primary education. Even in Pacific SIDS countries where the ECCE subsector is more advanced, *“too few opportunities for regular professional development are available to the cadre of ECCE teachers to keep them up-to-date on knowledge and best practices in ECCE teaching”*, (UNICEF, 2017: 14).

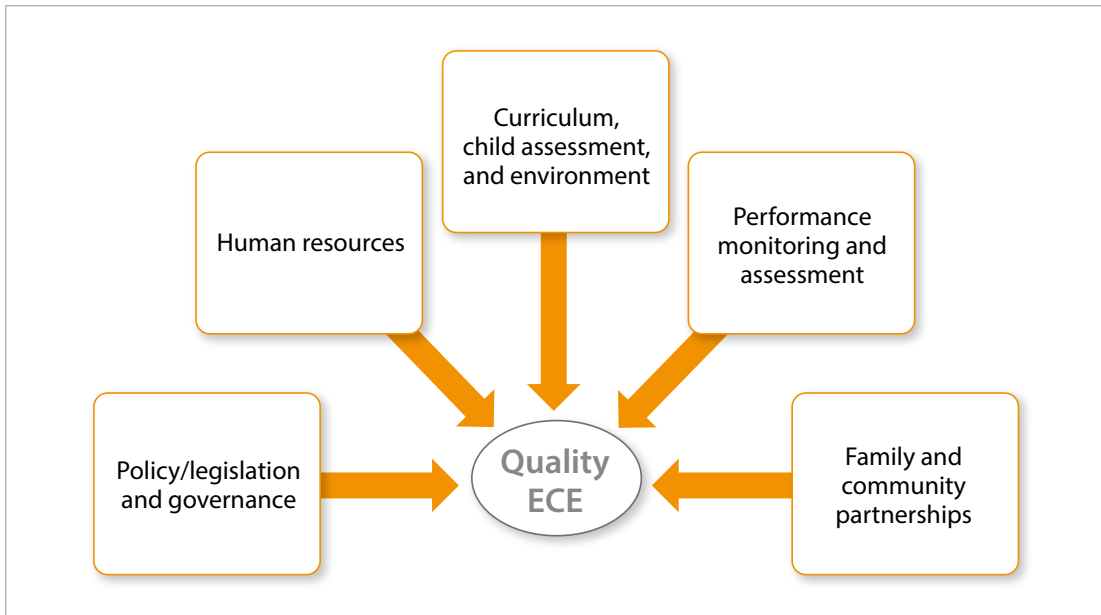
## Linking the competency framework with existing standards

It is emphasized in the Pacific Guidelines, “existing policies and structures should be reviewed and incorporated, as appropriate, into a national quality ECCE framework, for both alignment and strengthening purposes”. Thus, the Pacific Guidelines align with the Pacific Education Development Framework (PEDF) developed by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) (PRC4ECCE, n.d.). Moreover, as earlier mentioned, this framework does not intend to replace existing standards, or teacher competency frameworks in the Pacific SIDS. It instead builds on existing documents, such as the Pacific Guidelines developed by PRC4ECCE, which identify five system components for the development of quality ECCE frameworks in the Pacific:

1. **Policy, legislation, and governance**, which pertain to the overall strategy and regulations supporting ECCE;
2. **Human resources**, which identifies those who work with young children, the qualifications they should possess, compensation, and professional development, among others;
3. **Curriculum, child assessment, and environment**, which describes what children should learn, appropriate learning pedagogies, and where learning takes place, among others;
4. **Performance monitoring and assessment**, which refers to definitions of quality and quality assurance, monitoring, evaluation, and feedback mechanisms for the improvement of teachers, directors, and ECCE classrooms/centres;
5. **Family and community partnerships**, which includes interactions between families, communities, and government stakeholders working on ECCE.

While teacher competency framework development falls under the human resource component of the PRC4ECCE guidelines, each of the other components is recognized in the ECCE teacher competency framework. For example, policies, legislation, and governance strategies form part of what Bronfenbrenner (1994) refers to as *macro-systems*, or the broader context that influences ECCE interventions and initiatives. Some of the components identified in the Pacific Guidelines have likewise been identified as core competency areas for Pacific ECCE teachers. For example, competencies related to curriculum and child assessment are subsumed under identified domains in the ECCE teacher competency framework; competencies related to the learning environment are discussed in another domain; family and community partnerships are subsumed in specific competency domains. Figure 2 illustrates the five-system components for quality ECCE in the Pacific.

**Figure 2.** Five-system components for quality ECE in the Pacific



**Source:** Pacific Guidelines for the Development of National Quality Frameworks for ECCE: Programming for Ages Three to Five (PRC4ECCE, n.d.)



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### III. The ECCE teacher competency framework for the Pacific SIDS

In developing the ECCE teacher competency framework, Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological framework for human development was used as a key reference. Bronfenbrenner's framework recognizes that a confluence of factors contribute to the child's holistic development and that child development does not occur in a vacuum and becomes more effective when interactions occur on a regular and extended basis. The quality of interactions in the child's immediate environment, which includes the home and the school environment, has the most direct influence on the child's development. Thus, quality interactions between children and their early childhood teachers in preschools and other learning environments are extremely important.

During the framework validation workshop in the Pacific SIDS in June 2017, participants echoed the adage, *"It takes a village to raise a child."* Camaitoga likewise recognized that *"children are the responsibility of the vanua (family, tribe and community), the church (through the priest, talatala, pastor, church elders and congregation), and the government at the political level (laws, policies)..."* (2008:145-146). Thus, having an environment supportive of early childhood care and education, and having teacher competency areas related to working with different stakeholders, are considered key elements of the Pacific SIDS competency framework.

A collaborative study in selected Pacific SIDS carried out by academics at the University of the South Pacific (USP), Whippy (et. al 2017), highlighted the importance of providing high-quality ECCE programmes during the first few years of a child's life for the achievement of high educational outcomes. Whippy's study (et. al) supported findings of earlier research on ECCE, that access to high-quality ECCE programmes translated to sustainable economic returns for families and communities.

Research demonstrating teachers' crucial role in child development outcomes (see for example, Barnett, 2003) provides further impetus for improving early childhood teachers' competencies. In the Pacific SIDS, research done by Rich-Orloff and Camaitoga (2017), sought to address literature gaps on professional development among ECCE teachers in the Pacific. A survey conducted among education ministry officers established that human resources were seen as the second-most important quality component in the Pacific Guidelines, next to the component on legislation, policy, and governance. They recognize teachers as "parents away from home", assigned with the responsibility of addressing health, safety, happiness, and the foundational learning of children.



Early childhood educators are expected to be creative, active, engaging problem-solvers who are knowledgeable in child development across different domains, so as to provide individualized approaches to dealing with young children and develop resources for use in the classroom. Beyond the classroom, they are expected to relate well to parents. These competencies were taken into consideration while developing the ECCE teacher competency framework for the Pacific SIDS.

The ECCE teacher competency framework defines competencies as a combination of observable and measurable knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviours, and personal attributes that contribute to enhanced success in specific performance areas. In the context of ECCE, competencies are seen as crucial to achieving the desired outcomes of holistic child development and learning.

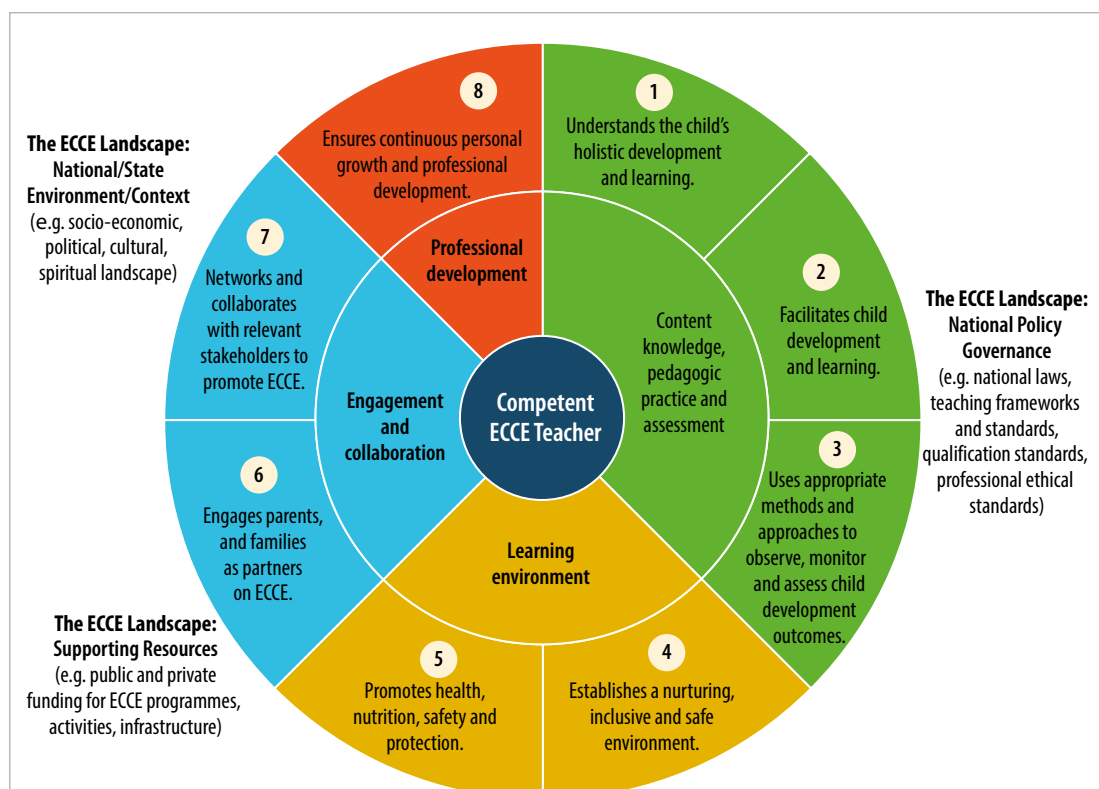
Building on Bronfenbrenner’s framework, the five-system components identified in the Pacific Guidelines, and insights from ECCE practitioners and experts during the validation workshop held in Nadi, Fiji, in June 2017, this framework places the competent ECCE teacher at the centre and suggests that competent ECCE teachers are expected to demonstrate competencies across four domains: (1) content knowledge, pedagogic practice, and assessment; (2) the learning environment; (3) engagement and collaboration; and (4) professional development. The four domains encompass eight **core or general competencies** related to ECCE teachers’ general areas of responsibility and **supporting or enabling competencies**, which are the specific skills/knowledge that ECCE teachers should be able to perform or demonstrate to support each general competency.

Figure 3 illustrates the ECCE teacher competency framework for the Pacific SIDS. The corresponding list of supporting or enabling competencies, which are likewise central elements of the framework, will be discussed in subsequent sections.



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**Figure 3.** The ECCE teacher competency framework for the Pacific SIDS



## The contextual landscape for the ECCE teacher competency framework

The ECCE teacher competency framework recognizes that the child's earliest learning and development interactions occur within different learning spaces. Moreover, emphasizing the influence exerted by both culture and context in the child's development, Palmer (2008) championed the need to develop country or context-specific early learning and development standards (ELDS). The Pacific Guidelines recognize that Pacific SIDS countries have unique cultural needs, and provide varying amount of resources and support for ECCE according to the prioritization of the five-system components of ECCE (PRC4ECCE, n.d.). During the Pacific Heads of Education (PHES) meeting held in October 2017, participants emphasized the "need for education to be rooted in the environment, family, community, traditional context and practices of Pacific Island nations"; (UNESCO and Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2017: 18).

The ECCE teacher competency framework acknowledges that competencies are not stand-alone elements. It recognizes that ECCE landscapes vary across different countries in the Pacific SIDS, which in turn may influence the support given to the development of teacher competencies. Thus, the framework considers the presence, quality, and/or absence of (1) the



national environment, including the socio-economic and political environment and cultural norms and values; (2) national policies related to early childhood care and education, including professional and ethical standards for ECCE teachers; and (3) supporting resources for ECCE, including from public, private, and other sources.

### 1. National Environment

Many governmental policies have significant impact on education, and socio-economic policies have the most direct impact. These include allocation of the annual national budget to education and the share for ECCE within the education budget. In the Pacific SIDS, despite government commitment to expand ECCE, insufficient funding remains a major impediment to the provision of and access to ECCE programmes. For example, UNICEF (2017) reported, for example, that with the exception of Cook Islands, which allocates 12 per cent of its education budget to ECE, Pacific SIDS countries generally set aside less than five per cent of total education expenditures for ECCE. Despite ECCE being made compulsory in Tonga and Samoa, less than 50 per cent of children are enrolled in ECCE programmes, mostly due to inadequate government financing (UNICEF, 2017). Economic policies that target job creation, management of labour laws and unemployment directly and indirectly impact on ECCE human resources trends and practices. Other macro-system factors such as cultural norms and prevalent belief systems also greatly influence ECCE practices.

### 2. National Policies (Education)

The national policy on education does more than cascade policy implementation and develop systemic mechanisms that drive and regulate institutional and individual practices. The policy is a formal signaling that directs public attention to ECCE in the education sector. Policy on national teacher professional and ethical standards, and guidelines on requisite qualifications for recruitment, preparation, tenure and promotion, articulate the government's stance on teacher professional status and expectations of the standard of teacher practices.

### 3. Supporting Resources

Apart from the annual budget for education, other resources for ECCE can come from the wider public as well as the private sector. Funding from other sources, such as international donors, faith-based organizations, and local community sources are likewise accessible for some ECCE programmes. An example is such as seen in Palau, where most ECE programmes are financed by United States (US) federal grants (e.g. Head Start programmes) or by faith-based organizations (UNICEF, 2017). Governmental guidelines on land use, transport and infrastructure have a direct impact on the resources available to ECCE centres. Other mechanisms, such as private sector involvement, have been made available to support pre-primary education in some countries such as Cook Islands (UNESCO, 2015). The private sector is potentially a rich source of resources, such as support from corporate social responsibility initiatives or from other forms of community outreach.

The framework posits that these elements in the macro-system interact to influence early childhood care and education outcomes. For instance, the presence of quality ECCE standards in a country requiring teachers to possess minimum teaching credentials or requirements may translate to improved teaching pedagogies and ECCE service delivery. The existing socio-economic environment, also identified as part of the macro-system, influences different elements such as the formulation of national laws and standards, and allocation of resources for ECCE. Prevailing cultural norms and values may influence the content and pedagogy of ECCE programmes. These elements of the ECCE landscape then influence the micro-system – the school or the learning environment in which the learning occurs. Of the countries included in UNICEF's 2017 *Status Report on ECCE in Pacific Island Countries*, each of the thirteen Pacific SIDS countries reported the presence of credentials for ECCE teachers. However, these vary across countries, and the training required may not always be adequate or appropriate for ECCE teachers. The UNICEF report, for example, articulated that, *“the suite of pedagogies appropriate for ECCE is qualitatively and considerably different from those used in primary school settings where teaching is more formal and subject-specific”* (2017:14). Where the training is made available, these are not always accessible, especially to the teachers in remote areas in the Pacific SIDS. In the absence of adequately-trained teachers, community members thus take the initiative to teach, even if they lack proper ECCE credentials.

With the role of child educators underscored in different research, the framework places the ECCE teacher at the centre. The teacher, found in different learning environments for early childhood learners such as day care centres, kindergartens, pre-school centres, and faith-based ECCE organizations, is deemed part of the child's micro-system. Interactions between the child and the teacher are seen as proximal processes, which are very important to child development (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Thus, the framework suggests that teacher characteristics, qualifications, and work experience are important elements contributing to the outcome of a holistically-developed child.

This framework recognizes that ECCE teachers are professionals who require specialized training and continuing professional development throughout their careers. Teachers are lifelong learners who need to constantly update their knowledge and skills. They require opportunities and time to reflect individually and collectively on improving and transforming their practice of the teaching profession.

## Understanding the elements of the framework

In using this framework, it is important to recognize that the framework flows sequentially in a logical and progressive manner. This section discusses each of the four broad competency domains: (1) content knowledge, pedagogic practice, and assessment; (2) the learning environment; (3) engagement and collaboration; and (4) professional development. The eight core competencies are then discussed under the corresponding competency domain, and the

enabling competencies are presented to further illustrate how these support the achievement of the core competencies.

### **Content knowledge, pedagogic practice, and assessment competencies**

The first set of competencies, **content knowledge, pedagogic practice, and assessment competencies**, are seen as the most fundamental and universal competencies expected among ECCE teachers. This domain covers the first of three core competencies: *understanding the child's holistic development and learning, facilitating child development and learning, and using appropriate methods and approaches to observe, monitor, and assess child development outcomes*. These are supported by a set of twenty-seven supporting competencies that enable the ECCE teachers to demonstrate competence in the domain of **content knowledge, pedagogic practice, and assessment**.

In the first core competency, teachers are able to understand, among others, basic theories related to the child's holistic development and learning, and are able to translate this understanding through effective teaching pedagogies. The attention that teacher education institutions give to these areas in pre-service training validates the relevance of this specific competency area.

The ECCE teachers are able to recognize the different paces by which children develop, and the context in which development occurs. Aside from being knowledgeable about the theories on holistic child development, teachers are expected to know about relevant laws, policies, and standards, at least in their own country contexts. Knowledge of the stages of the child development also helps teachers to observe the child's development in the learning setting, and to identify children who may be at-risk or have special needs.

An understanding of the child's holistic development and learning needs to be translated to effective facilitation of child development and learning. For example, equipped with knowledge on child development and learning, using approved national ECCE curricula or guidelines, teachers are able to design and implement appropriate ECCE programmes. Recognizing the importance of play in the context of the child's holistic development and learning, teachers are able to provide opportunities for play-based learning and development.

With understanding of the context of holistic child development and learning, competent teachers are able to build on these competencies and know how to utilize the range of available and developmentally-appropriate tools and strategies to facilitate child development and learning. With the focus given to mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) (see for example, UNESCO, 2013), communicating using the child's mother-tongue or the child's home language is also a competency expected of the ECCE teacher for ethnolinguistic children. With the predominance of modern-day information and communication technologies, the use of Information Communications Technology (ICT), to enhance teachers' own learning and, when appropriate, in the classroom, is a specific competence that ECCE teachers are expected to possess, and has thus been included in this framework.

During the framework validation workshop in Fiji held in June 2017, ECCE practitioners in the Pacific SIDS underscored assessment as an important competency expected of ECCE teachers. Thus, a key feature of the Pacific SIDS framework is the focus on the assessment of child learning outcomes in terms of existing standards or established learning domains. This aligns with the Pacific Guidelines, which identify child assessment as a component of the five-system component (PRC4ECCE, n.d.). Camaitoga (2008) emphasized the need for training and guidance in order to improve ECCE practitioners' assessment of healthcare and nutrition among young children, and reiterated the focus given to monitoring and evaluation for outcomes-based assessments.

Box 1 presents the core and enabling competencies included in the content knowledge, pedagogic practice, and assessment domain.

**Box 1.** ECCE teacher competencies in the content knowledge, pedagogic practice, and assessment domain

Core/General Competencies	Enabling/Supporting Competencies
<p><b>1. Understands the child's holistic development and learning.</b> <i>These are competencies related to ECCE teachers' theoretical and practice-based knowledge and understanding of child development and learning.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Equips oneself with knowledge on holistic child development and learning, including theories on early childhood development.</li> <li>2. Explains culturally-relevant knowledge on child development and learning to others.</li> <li>3. Recognizes that child development occurs within a continuum, and that children develop at different paces.</li> <li>4. Is able to observe and describe the range of developmental (e.g. cognitive, linguistic, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual) characteristics of a child.</li> <li>5. Places the child at the centre of teaching and learning activities, and recognizes the diversity of the needs, interests, and potentials of children.</li> <li>6. Shows respect for individual learners.</li> <li>7. Perceives a child in the context of his/her family and community.</li> <li>8. Identifies children who are at-risk and/or have special needs.</li> <li>9. Demonstrates understanding of the rights of the child.</li> <li>10. Equips oneself with knowledge of relevant laws, policies, and standards on early childhood care and education.</li> </ol>

Core/General Competencies	Enabling/Supporting Competencies
<p><b>2. Facilitates child development and learning.</b> <i>These are competencies related to ECCE teachers' strategies to facilitate child development and learning.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Plans and implements the curriculum based on approved national guidelines or frameworks.</li> <li>2. Uses knowledge of child development and learning to plan and implement culturally and contextually-relevant ECCE programmes.</li> <li>3. Designs and implements developmentally-, age-, linguistically- and culturally-appropriate activities, and classroom management strategies that consider individual learners.</li> <li>4. Where appropriate and feasible, communicates using the child's mother tongue/home language in teaching-learning instructions.</li> <li>5. Utilizes differentiated indoor and outdoor play-based activities, and teaching and learning strategies that encourage creative and critical thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, and that encourage children to be active learners.</li> <li>6. Uses appropriate tools, technologies, and strategies to facilitate and document early learners' different developmental needs.</li> <li>7. Uses culturally- and gender-sensitive pedagogical approaches in interactions with children.</li> <li>8. Establishes developmentally-appropriate (e.g. age and culturally-appropriate) routines for learning and development.</li> <li>9. Supports the development of self-care skills (e.g. self-feeding, dressing, toilet-training, grooming, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) practices) of the child.</li> <li>10. Provides learning materials and resources that encourage children to discover and create.</li> <li>11. Prepares, incorporates, and uses available learning materials and resources, including natural and indigenous materials and resources, in the design of lessons and activities to enhance indoor and outdoor learning experiences.</li> </ol>

Core/General Competencies	Enabling/Supporting Competencies
<p><b>3. Uses appropriate methods and approaches to observe, monitor, and assess child development outcomes.</b> <i>This covers competencies related to the use of appropriate approaches to assess child development and learning.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Monitors, records and reflects on each child's progress and development according to available early learning and development standards, or similar contextually-relevant standards.</li> <li>2. Uses developmentally-, linguistically-, and culturally-appropriate tools, technologies, and strategies to assess the child's development.</li> <li>3. Uses appropriate assessment tools that are available in the child's mother-tongue/home language.</li> <li>4. Uses assessment results to inform the design of future ECCE programmes/activities.</li> <li>5. Uses assessment results to evaluate and determine interventions for child transition and readiness for primary education.</li> <li>6. Uses assessment results for referrals of children at risk and children manifesting significant delays or other special needs for further diagnosis, support and intervention.</li> </ol>

### **The learning environment**

In the Pacific SIDS, the importance of establishing a **learning environment** that addresses the developmental needs of early learners is emphasized. Whether the learning environment is a community-managed facility, a faith-based learning space, a government-funded day care service or a private pre-school, it is important that ECCE teachers ensure that both indoor and outdoor learning facilities are safe, clean, age-appropriate, and conducive for child learning and development. Beyond physical structures, the competent ECCE teachers are also able to ensure that children's health, safety, protection, and overall well-being are safeguarded.

Thus, this framework recognizes two core competencies under the domain of the learning environment: *establishes a nurturing, inclusive, and safe environment; and promotes health, nutrition, safety, and protection of children.* These competencies are supported by a set of twenty sub-competencies that in turn enable ECCE teachers to demonstrate competence in the domain of the child's **learning environment**.

Among the foremost enabling competencies that ECCE teachers are expected to possess, are those that pertain to designing a child-friendly, conducive environment that considers the socio-emotional and physical needs of children, allowing children to feel nurtured, safe, and protected. Moreover, in line with various development agenda to ensure inclusion of all learners,

teachers are able to provide an environment and demonstrate use of inclusive practices that encourage the inclusion of all children, especially those with special needs, in different learning and development activities.

Again, consistent with the Pacific Guidelines, competencies related to language and cultural competencies, dealing with information and communication technologies, and the ability to deal with emergencies are included among the enabling competencies for the **learning environment** domain.

**Box 2.** ECCE teacher competencies in the learning environment domain

Core/General Competencies	Enabling/Supporting Competencies
<p><b>4. Establishes a nurturing, inclusive, and safe environment.</b>  <i>This concerns competencies related to how teachers create and maintain environments conducive for early learners, and that take into account children's different cultures and contexts.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Designs a child-friendly, safe, and conducive environment that addresses the socio-emotional and physical needs of all children.</li> <li>2. Provides a safe and conducive learning environment that allows the child to feel nurtured, safe, and protected.</li> <li>3. Creates a gender-sensitive and culturally/linguistically-sensitive environment that encourages the inclusion of all children, especially those with special needs.</li> <li>4. Uses inclusive practices that work for children of all backgrounds, characteristics, and abilities.</li> <li>5. Communicates using the child's mother tongue or home language, in classroom and family interactions.</li> <li>6. Ensures that the environment supports the integration of health (including WASH practices), nutrition, early learning, and protection.</li> <li>7. Fosters positive interactions, including teacher-child, child-child, child-adult, and adult-adult relationships.</li> <li>8. Ensures that classroom resources, technologies, and learning materials are safe, clean, complete, and used appropriately.</li> <li>9. Shows consistently positive attitudes to demonstrate behaviours expected of children.</li> <li>10. Interacts with all children in a loving and caring manner.</li> <li>11. Adopts positive discipline and non-violent methods of managing children's behaviour.</li> </ol>

Core/General Competencies	Enabling/Supporting Competencies
<p><b>5. Promotes health, nutrition, safety, and protection.</b> <i>Competencies related to strategies and practices to ensure that the child's health, nutrition, safety, and protection needs are addressed.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identifies and links children with health, safety, nutrition, and other social services (including WASH support services) available in the community.</li> <li>2. Implements culturally-appropriate policies, regulations, and practices that ensure the child's health, nutrition, safety, and protection.</li> <li>3. Ensures that practices promoting the child's health, nutrition, safety, and protection are inclusive.</li> <li>4. Monitors and documents the immediate health, nutrition, safety, and protection needs of the child.</li> <li>5. Detects, reports, and refers possible cases of child abuse or neglect to appropriate authorities.</li> <li>6. Can recognize risk factors/adverse conditions in the child's family (e.g. substance abuse, domestic violence, parents' health conditions) that may affect the child's health, safety, and protection.</li> <li>7. Administers basic first aid as an initial response to injuries, illnesses, and disasters.</li> <li>8. Responds promptly and effectively to emergencies, such as accidents, fires, disasters, and calamities.</li> <li>9. Prepares children to respond appropriately in case of emergencies, including natural disasters and human conflict.</li> </ol>

### Engagement and collaboration

Going back to Bronfenbrenner's framework, which recognizes the importance of interactions among different systems and the relationships of different actors in each system, **engagement and collaboration** is likewise seen as a competency domain in the ECCE framework. The competent ECCE teachers are able to engage stakeholders in the child's development for varying reasons. For example, they are able to maintain regular relations with the child's family members, legal guardians or immediate caregivers to provide feedback on matters concerning the child's development, as well as to help extend learning experiences at home. Tiko's (2016) *veitalanoa-yaga* and Whippy's (2017) *veiwasei* highlight that holding dialogic conversations within culturally-acceptable sharing spaces could be adopted by the various ECCE contexts in the Pacific SIDS to effectively engage in meaningful interactions as a way to encourage families and communities to take up proactive roles in the children's educational journey. The ECCE



teachers are also able to collaborate with peers, including other ECCE teachers and primary school teachers, to exchange relevant knowledge about the child’s development, and to ensure continuity in learning outcomes when the child moves on to primary school.

The Pacific Guidelines underscore the importance of maintaining and building strategic partnerships between different stakeholders for providing ECCE services. While governments are essentially responsible for setting up mechanisms and systems for ECCE, other entities such as faith-based organizations, non-government organizations, private entities, and individuals play a part in implementing ECCE programmes and providing relevant services (PRC4ECCE, n.d.). In some instances, teachers are also expected to extend their roles beyond the classroom. Aside from being stewards of children’s learning and development in the classroom, they are also expected to be advocates of ECCE, sometimes mobilizing support for resources from different stakeholders.

During the framework validation workshop held in Fiji in June 2017, ECCE practitioners shared that ECCE teachers in the Pacific SIDS are also involved in managing finances of the ECCE centres, including daily operations and fund-raising requirements. This is especially in instances where teachers work alone or in isolation. However, there was some debate on whether teachers should be required to possess competencies related to financial management, given the already challenging responsibilities of dealing with children. As such, competencies such as financial management and fund-raising may be delegated to administrators of ECCE facilities, but at the minimum, teachers should be able to communicate such needs to their supervisors, or other relevant stakeholders in the ECCE community. In their review of ECCE policies in the Pacific, Rich-Orloff and Camaitoga (2017) described how in school parent-teacher associations (PTAs), among the roles that teachers perform jointly with parents are fundraising and identifying children’s material needs.

Box 3 presents the core and corresponding eighteen enabling competencies included in the engagement and collaboration domain.

**Box 3.** ECCE teacher competencies in the engagement and collaboration domain

Core/General Competencies	Enabling/Supporting Competencies
<p><b>6. Engages parents and families as partners in ECCE.</b>  <i>Competencies related to working with early learners' families and caregivers as partners in ECCE.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establishes open communication with parents and families, using appropriate strategies and technologies.</li> <li>2. Builds and sustains mutual trust, respect, and harmonious relationships with parents and families to support the child's growth, development, and learning.</li> <li>3. Plans and implements activities or programmes for parents, families and caregivers to support ECCE. Explains ECCE programmes and activities to parents and families using local language.</li> <li>4. Encourages parents' and families' participation in the activities of the school/centre.</li> <li>5. Encourages shared parenting responsibilities, including participation of fathers and positive male role models in ECCE.</li> <li>6. Collaborates with families to extend and reinforce positive learning experiences at home.</li> <li>7. Engages parents/families in assessing child's learning and development.</li> </ol>



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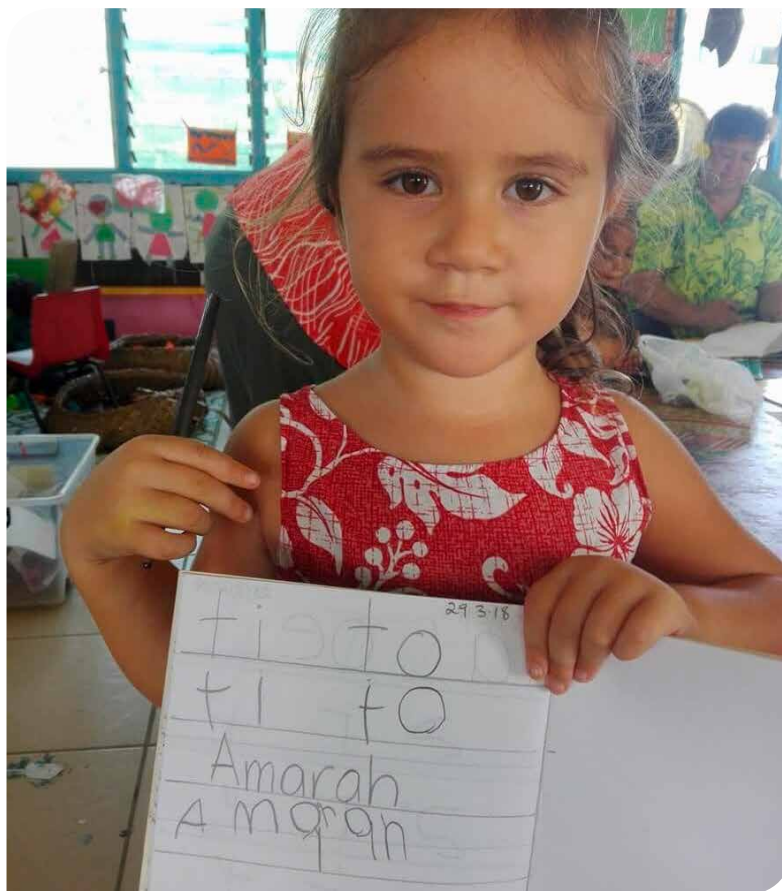
Core/General Competencies	Enabling/Supporting Competencies
<p><b>7. Networks and collaborates with relevant stakeholders to promote ECCE.</b> <i>Competencies related to working with a range of stakeholders, including ECCE-centre management or administrators, supervisors, local or community leaders, partner aid agencies, and others concerned with the general well-being of early learners.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Collaborates with other ECCE teachers for knowledge sharing, peer learning, and support.</li> <li>2. Works collaboratively with ECCE centre managers/supervisors, to support the administrative and financial management operations of ECCE centre facilities.</li> <li>3. Collaborates with peers, day care providers, and primary school educators to ensure that children are provided a smooth transition of developmentally-appropriate support across different levels.</li> <li>4. Works collaboratively with primary, especially early-grade school teachers, to understand early childhood and early-grade curricula and relevant background information to ensure a smooth transition from ECCE to primary levels.</li> <li>5. Works collaboratively with relevant specialists and authorities for appropriate actions to improve inclusion of children with special needs.</li> <li>6. Demonstrates teamwork with peers and other stakeholders to support early childhood care and education.</li> <li>7. Identifies and engages with relevant local, national, regional and international agencies/organizations, as needed, for benchmarking, programme development, and enrichment.</li> <li>8. Seeks and maintains collaborative relationships with relevant stakeholders/service providers (e.g. community, government, private sector, and non-government partners) for appropriate actions to ensure the delivery of health, nutrition, safety, protection, and social services for children.</li> <li>9. Serves as an advocate to encourage community leaders, local government executives, and other ECCE stakeholders to promote and support ECCE goals.</li> <li>10. Mobilizes support from different ECCE stakeholders.</li> </ol>

## Professional development

With the seemingly vast scope of ECCE teachers' responsibilities, a final component of the teacher competency framework is the recognition that teachers need to demonstrate concern for their own **professional development**. This refers not merely to participation in in-service training or academic upgrading or certification. At the core of professional development activities lies a commitment to proactive and continuous lifelong learning and personal mastery. Teachers are expected to consistently abide by professional and ethical standards and policies established at the national level. They are likewise expected to seek continuous improvement by participating in professional development programmes and activities that will allow them to continue to hone their skills as childhood educators better.

In an increasingly dynamic environment, teachers are expected to network and engage in communities of practice that will allow them to share their experiences and continuously learn from one another. This will also provide them with opportunities to share how they have been using the teacher competency framework, and how the framework can be improved in the future, depending on the evolving practice of the ECCE profession.

Box 4 presents the competencies related to the professional development domain.



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**Box 4.** ECCE teacher competencies in the professional development domain

Core/General Competencies	Enabling/Supporting Competencies
<p><b>8. Ensures continuous personal growth and professional development.</b> <i>Competencies that demonstrate ECCE teachers' commitment to improve themselves and the practice of their profession as ECCE practitioners.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrates pride in and commitment to one's roles as an early childhood teacher.</li> <li>2. Abides by professional and ethical standards related to early childhood, as identified in national laws, policies, and other relevant standards.</li> <li>3. Behaves in a professional and ethical manner, including respecting diverse views and cultures, upholding ethics and values, and collaborating with colleagues.</li> <li>4. Identifies and plans for his/her own professional development needs</li> <li>5. Is able to communicate professional development plans and needs to supervisor or mentor.</li> <li>6. Participates in professional development programmes/ activities that promote continuous improvement as an early childhood teacher.</li> <li>7. Develops his/her interpersonal and intrapersonal skills.</li> <li>8. Develops his/her technological skills and knowledge to support implementation of ECCE programmes.</li> <li>9. Shares and disseminates new knowledge and skills gained from professional development activities with peers and other relevant ECCE stakeholders through appropriate venues (e.g. meetings, fora, seminars, etc.).</li> <li>10. Continuously reflects on ways to improve the practice of ECCE by applying new knowledge, learning, and insights from professional development activities/programmes in the practice of ECCE.</li> <li>11. Demonstrates leadership in the practice of early childhood education.</li> <li>12. Engages in research activities to improve and strengthen ECCE in the Pacific SIDS.</li> </ol>



## Summary

These four domains—**content knowledge, pedagogic practice, and assessment; the learning environment; networking and collaboration; and professional development**—are key elements of the competency framework for ECCE teachers in the Pacific SIDS. These elements are not independent from each other; instead, there are synergies and interrelations within each set of competencies.

For instance, a teacher's understanding of the child's holistic development and learning, identified as the first core competency, should translate into how he or she designs and conducts lessons in the learning setting, and how he or she engages with other ECCE stakeholders, to better engage children in the learning process. Familiarity with the needs and gaps in providing a conducive learning environment, meanwhile, may propel the teacher to maximize his or her networking and collaboration competencies, so that he or she can more effectively communicate these needs to key ECCE stakeholders.

These domains interact with the elements of the broader ECCE landscape, and should not be treated independently. For example, understanding holistic development and learning, as well as knowledge on relevant laws and policies related to ECCE, may be included as prerequisites in terms of national curricula or standards for early learning teachers. These competencies may then be more easily addressed if the macro-systems provide support mechanisms for such.



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## IV. Possible uses and applications

The ECCE teacher competency framework for the Pacific SIDS is not meant to be prescriptive; it is neither meant to be used to impose sanctions on teachers who do not demonstrate the competencies identified, nor to reward teachers who demonstrate the competencies. The knowledge and skills in the featured competencies may be progressively acquired. Thus, the framework can be used as a reference for developing, updating and revising training and professional development structures and programmes to build competencies and strengthen capacities of pre- and in-service teachers. Existing ECCE teachers can also use the framework as a reference to map and plan their own professional growth and identify competencies that need strengthening, to help them advance their career goals.

Relevant ministries, teacher training institutions, and the donor community can use the framework to streamline or prioritize the training areas on which they wish to focus. For example, in geographic areas that are more prone to natural disasters, relevant authorities may decide to prioritize teacher training activities focused on competencies relevant to providing a safe and conducive environment for ECCE. In instances where families and other household members are not as involved in ECCE, authorities may also decide to provide training activities that aim to strengthen teachers' competencies in engaging families as partners in ECCE.

The simplicity of the framework provides different ECCE stakeholders with the flexibility to leverage the framework and customize planning approaches and strategies according to their ECCE context and resource and development needs. Users are encouraged to be creative in their use of the framework, with the caveat that the framework is meant to advance ECCE goals. Table 2 presents a sample of how different users can apply the framework, depending on specific purposes.

**Table 2.** Sample uses and applications of the framework

Intended User	Possible Applications	Purpose
<b>Education ministries</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Education ministries can refer to the framework as a benchmark for developing new competency standards, or reviewing their own national teacher competency frameworks or certification accreditation systems.</li> <li>2. Education ministries working on ECCE can plan to develop or enhance capacity-building programmes for state teacher training institutions.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning for state-funded capacity-building programmes on ECCE</li> <li>• Benchmarking standard for developing new, or reviewing existing competency frameworks</li> <li>• Reviewing teacher policies to improve the status and working conditions of ECCE teachers.</li> </ul>
<b>Other government ministries (e.g. Social Welfare Ministry, Ministry of Women, Youth, and Children, etc.)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Other government agencies working on ECCE can refer to the framework to plan for relevant activities related to providing support services for ECCE.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning support initiatives on ECCE</li> <li>• Strengthening inter-government collaboration on ECCE.</li> </ul>
<b>Teacher training institutions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Curriculum developers at teacher training institutions can refer to the framework to develop new programmes or courses on ECCE, or to upgrade ECCE teacher training programmes from diploma/certificate to degree levels.</li> <li>2. Curriculum developers can refer to the framework to enhance existing curricula on ECCE programme offerings.</li> <li>3. Teacher-trainers can refer to the framework to assess the performance of pre-service teachers in teaching practice.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing new/ enhancing existing curricula</li> <li>• Upgrading ECCE teacher programmes</li> <li>• Assessing the performance of pre-service teachers.</li> </ul>



Intended User	Possible Applications	Purpose
<b>Faculty at higher education institutions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Faculty teaching programmes or courses on ECCE can use the framework as a guide for developing new courses/improving existing courses on ECCE.</li> <li>2. Faculty can refer to the framework to combine relevant courses with other non-ECCE courses and provide career options to become ECCE teachers, in order to increase the number of qualified ECCE teachers.</li> <li>3. Faculty at higher education institutions can conduct research around the framework and related ECCE themes.</li> <li>4. Faculty can use the framework as a benchmark from which to assess their own competencies related to ECCE.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing new/ enhancing existing ECCE courses</li> <li>• Jump-off for research on competency development, professional development, and other related themes.</li> </ul>
<b>ECCE centre directors/ administrators</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ECCE centre directors/administrators can refer to the framework to develop or enhance existing recruitment standards and working conditions of ECCE teachers.</li> <li>2. ECCE centre directors/administrators can use the framework to plan for the professional development of ECCE teachers.</li> <li>3. ECCE centre directors/administrators can use the framework as a tool to advocate for ECCE support/resources from state, community, or other partners.</li> <li>4. ECCE centre directors/administrators can use the framework as an input to mentoring, coaching, and instructional supervision of ECCE teachers.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving or developing recruitment standards</li> <li>• Continuing professional development</li> <li>• Mobilizing resources</li> <li>• Mentoring/ coaching/ instructional supervision.</li> </ul>

Intended User	Possible Applications	Purpose
<b>Lead teachers/ supervisors/ pedagogical advisors of ECCE teachers</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teacher supervisors/lead teachers can refer to the framework for recruitment of qualified ECCE teachers.</li> <li>2. Teacher supervisors/lead teachers can use the framework to plan professional development programmes for ECCE teachers</li> <li>3. ECCE teachers' supervisors/pedagogical advisors can use the framework as a tool to plan, review, and assess ECCE teachers' performance in the classroom.</li> <li>4. Supervisors/pedagogical advisors can use the framework to design coaching activities to improve capacities of ECCE teachers.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving or developing recruitment standards</li> <li>• Planning for teachers' professional development</li> <li>• Planning and reviewing teachers' performance</li> <li>• Coaching and mentoring.</li> </ul>
<b>ECCE teachers</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. At the start of each school year, teachers can use the framework to identify competency areas they need to demonstrate throughout the school year and plan to improve on those areas, aligned with the ECCE centre's/ school's curriculum.</li> <li>2. At the start of each school year, teachers can use the framework to assess the areas they wish to improve on as professionals.</li> <li>3. Throughout the year, teachers can refer to the competencies to assess progress in terms of planned self-improvement goals.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuing professional development</li> <li>• Enhancing skills, knowledge, and other areas for improvement</li> <li>• Assessing progress in terms of planned career/professional development goals.</li> </ul>
<b>Regional ECCE centre/s (e.g. Pacific Regional Council for Early Childhood Care and Education (PRC4ECCE), etc)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The PRC4ECCE/ other regional ECCE organizations can use the framework to craft capacity-building programmes for ECCE practitioners in the region.</li> <li>2. Regional organizations can design and conduct research and knowledge dissemination activities around ECCE teacher competencies and professional development.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guiding the development of capacity-building programmes</li> <li>• Providing a platform to strengthen regional research collaboration.</li> </ul>

## V. The way forward

The development of this framework responds to the challenges set forth during the Putrajaya Forum, specifically action agenda 3, which calls for the development of clear policies, strategies and guidelines for the professionalization of ECCE personnel through professional development. Further, the framework's development is in line with UNICEF's (2017) recommendations for governments to continue supporting and providing resources to professionalize the ECCE workforce.

The Pacific SIDS commitment to early childhood care and education was further strengthened during the Pacific Early Childhood Development Conference: Moving Forward with Sustainable Development Goals for Early Childhood held in Fiji in September 2017. During the conference, ministers of education, health, social services, and finance, as well as other government officials and ECCE stakeholders from across the Pacific SIDS, committed to adapt a nine-point regional agenda to concretely address SDG targets for ECCE (UNICEF, 2017a).

This competency framework for ECCE teachers specifically responds to the *Pacifika Call to Action for Early Childhood Development* call for governments to provide quality services for young children and personnel resources (including adequate compensation, improved working conditions, the sharing of best practices and knowledge and competency frameworks) to professionalize the ECD workforce. The teacher competencies identified in the framework support action items such as promoting parents', communities', and other stakeholders' awareness of the importance of ECD, and developing, strengthening, and use of comprehensive data management, monitoring, and assessment systems for informed decisions on early childhood.

Should ministers of education and key ECCE stakeholders in the Pacific SIDS decide to adapt this competency framework for ECCE teachers, this will be another step forward in terms of addressing commitments made towards achieving development goals on improving teacher quality, and on ensuring readiness for primary education by promoting access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education. Recognizing that each Pacific SIDS country has different contexts and situations, a possible concrete way forward for ECCE stakeholders is to assess where they are in terms of initiatives and systems in place for ECCE, review the teacher competency framework, and determine how they can best adapt and apply the teacher competency framework to make their work on ECCE more relevant.

In promoting the ECCE teacher competency framework for the Pacific SIDS, opportunities should be extended to complement and interface with existing national and regional initiatives related to regulations, standards, and competency frameworks for teachers. At the 22nd gathering of the Pacific Heads of Education Systems (PHES) held in Fiji in October 2017, Pacific

SIDS education leaders emphasized the importance of conducting a timely review of the ECCE teacher competency framework vis-à-vis the framework for primary education teachers. This could be a concrete opportunity to ensure alignment between competency frameworks, foster regional cooperation in the use of common standards, and enhance curricula of national and regional teacher training institutions.



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# Glossary of Key Terms and Definitions

<b>Assessment</b>	In the context of the ECCE teacher competency framework, assessments refer to formative and developmental processes of systematically gathering and analysing information about a child in the learning environment.
<b>Child protection</b>	This covers protection from any form of abuse and neglect, including physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional abuse. This also includes the provision of positive parenting and appropriate health and nutrition (PRC4ECCE, n.d.).
<b>Competencies</b>	These are a combination of skills, knowledge, behaviour, and attributes necessary for successful job performance (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2015).
<b>Competency framework</b>	This is a set of desired professional competencies of ECCE teachers, which may vary by country/ regional context. This framework focuses on the desired competencies for early childhood teachers in the Pacific SIDS.
<b>Development</b>	This refers to the child’s holistic development in terms of physical health and growth, social-emotional development, and language, cultural, self-care, and thinking skills (PRC4ECCE, n.d.).
<b>Developmentally-appropriate</b>	<p>This refers to activities that are age and culturally-appropriate, including those that are based on the child’s individual abilities and stages of growth (PRC4ECCE, n.d.).</p> <p>In the Pacific SIDS, countries such as Fiji have identified foundation areas of learning and development (FALD), identifying dimensions of learning and development for the early years such as aesthetics; creativity and the arts; language, literacy, and communication; learning to know; learning and living together; physical development, health, and well-being; and spiritual and moral dimensions.</p>



<b>Early childhood</b>	UNESCO, UNICEF, and most international literature define early childhood as the period between birth and eight years, the most rapid period of human development.
<b>Early childhood care and education</b>	<p>ECCE puts emphasis on the child’s holistic development (social, emotional, cognitive, and physical) to establish a strong foundation for lifelong learning and well-being. As articulated in the SDGs, ECCE includes child readiness for primary education.</p> <p>Early childhood education (ECE), early childhood education and care (ECEC), early childhood care, early childhood development (ECD), and early childhood care and development (ECCD) are among various terminologies used interchangeably.</p>
<b>ECCE programmes</b>	Programmes that, in addition to providing children with care, offer a structured and purposeful set of learning activities either in a formal institution (pre-primary or ISCED 0) or as part of a non-formal child development programme. ECCE programmes are usually designed for children from age three and include organized learning activities that constitute, on average the equivalent of at least two hours per day and 100 days per year (UNESCO and SEAMEO, 2016).
<b>ECCE teacher</b>	A suitably-qualified individual employed to provide care and education to children in a registered, out-of-home facility. For the purposes of this competency framework, individual countries will need to consider the various roles of early childhood professionals in their own contexts and develop a clear definition of the ECCE teacher for the purposes of applying the competency framework (Adapted from PRC4ECCE, n.d.).
<b>Inclusion</b>	This refers to the process of overcoming barriers that limit the presence, participation, and achievement of learners (UNESCO, 2017).
<b>Interpersonal skills</b>	As defined by Oxford, this refers to the ability to communicate or interact well with other people.
<b>Intrapersonal skills</b>	These refer to skills and communications that occur within a person’s own mind, such as through meditation, prayer, visualization, and positive affirmations.

<p><b>International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)</b></p>	<p>Developed by UNESCO in 1976, and updated in 1997, 2011, and 2013, the ISCED is the framework used to compare statistics on the education systems of countries worldwide. An important tool to facilitate international comparisons and to benchmark and monitor progress on international education goals, the ISCED is used to produce comparable data and indicators that reflect education priorities and policies. ISCED covers all formal and non-formal education programmes, offered at any stage of life. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) is responsible for maintaining, updating, and revising ISCED data (UNESCO and UIS, 2011).</p>
<p><b>Mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE)</b></p>	<p>This refers to the use of the mother tongue as the language of instruction in the classroom. MTB-MLE is not about restricting access to national and international languages, but about properly preparing children to learn these languages well. MTB-MLE recognizes that starting in the language they know best allows children to build a strong foundation, which then enables them to make an effective transition into other national or international languages (UNESCO, 2013).</p>
<p><b>Outcomes</b></p>	<p>These include desired results for children’s learning and development across different domains.</p>
<p><b>Pre-primary education</b></p>	<p>This is defined as ISCED level 0: programmes at the initial stage of organized instruction, primarily designed to introduce very young children, aged at least three years, to a school-type environment and provide a bridge between home and school. Various referred to as infant education, nursery education, pre-school education, kindergarten, or ECE, such programmes are the more formal component of ECCE. Upon completion of these programmes, children continue their education at ISCED 1 (primary education) (UNESCO and SEAMEO, 2016).</p>
<p><b>Professional development</b></p>	<p>This refers to the variety of training activities, formal education, or advanced professional learning, which can help teachers, administrators, and other educators improve their professional knowledge, competence, skill, and effectiveness (The Glossary of Education Reform).</p>
<p><b>Recruitment</b></p>	<p>This refers to the process of adding new individuals to a population or sub-population (UNESCO and SEAMEO, 2016).</p>



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