



Policy Goals

Status

1. **Autonomy in Budget Planning and Management**

The Ministry of Education, Sports, and Culture (MESC) administers the Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme, which constitutes the largest share of school funding and is based on formula financing. Principals and head teachers are responsible for executing the operational budget; salaries for teaching and non-teaching staff are managed by the MESC.



2. **Autonomy in Personnel Management**

Samoa has a two-tier education system consisting of the central and school levels. The MESC has the sole responsibility for appointing and deploying teaching staff, non-teaching staff, and principals.



3. **Participation of the School Council in School Governance**

The MESC has developed legislation and guidelines to govern and administer School Committees. The School Committees are actively involved in school operations, which include preparing and executing the operational expenditures, holding responsibility for some input on learning and teaching materials, and engaging and coordinating with the community.



4. **Assessment of School and Student Performance**

Samoa regularly uses school assessments and standardized student assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of the education system. Schools can use results to inform pedagogy changes and operational adjustment to enhance the learning environment.



5. **Accountability to Stakeholders**

Regulations have been implemented in order to increase compliance of school operation and financial management rules. School accountability is hampered by parents' inability, due to lack of power, to demand accountability on school performance.



Introduction

In 2011, the World Bank Group commenced a multi-year program designed to support countries in systematically examining and strengthening the performance of their education systems. Part of the Bank's new Education Sector Strategy,¹ this evidence based initiative, called SABER (Systems Approach for Better Education Results), is building a toolkit of diagnostics for examining education systems and their component policy domains against global standards, best practices, and in comparison with the policies and practices of countries around the world. By leveraging this global knowledge, the SABER tools fill a gap in the availability of data and evidence on what matters most to improve the quality of education and achievement of better results.

SABER School Autonomy and Accountability is the first of three SABER domains to be implemented as part of phase two of the Pacific Benchmarking for Education Results (PaBER) initiative. Funded by the Australian Government, the PaBER initiative aims to link policy with implementation to identify areas to strengthen policy, improve knowledge dissemination, and improve the quality of education and student performance across the Pacific. Specifically, the PaBER project focuses at the primary level of an education system. The project concept and determination of three pilot countries – Samoa, the Solomon Islands, and Papua New Guinea – was agreed upon at the Pacific Forum Education Ministers Meeting of October 11-13, 2010. The project is being coordinated through the Secretariat of the Pacific Board for Educational Assessment.

Country Overview

Samoa is part of a chain of volcanic islands and covers a landmass of 2,935 square kilometres. The country is home to approximately 180,000 inhabitants. The Congregational Church of Samoa and Roman Catholic

Churches are the two largest religious denominations, accounting for 60 percent and 20 percent of the population, respectively.

Economically, Samoa relies heavily on agriculture, which accounts for roughly two-thirds of the labour force and furnishes 90 percent of exports, largely featuring coconut products. In recent years tourism has experienced robust organic economic growth, and has expanded to represent 25 percent of GDP.

Like many of the Pacific island countries, Samoa is prone to major natural disasters. In late September 2009, an earthquake and tsunami severely damaged Samoa, disrupting transportation and power generation, destroying infrastructure, and causing more than 200 deaths. More recently, Tropical Cyclone Evan caused extensive flooding and wind damage throughout the country.

The country signed its constitution into effect, and became independent from New Zealand, on January 1, 1962. The country has a parliamentary democracy, with elections held every five years.

I. Education in Samoa

The Compulsory Education Act of 1992 is the foundational legislation for the education system that articulates the governments' responsibilities pertaining to the management and provision of education. The Act was most recently amended in 2009.

The Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture's (MESC) policy framework is embodied in the MESC Strategic Policies and Plan, 2006-15. This framework guides the Ministry's operations and underpins donor support, which is mainly channelled through the Education Sector Program (ESP11). ESP11 focuses on: primary curriculum and student and school assessment reform; building effective teachers; and improved access to education (especially to rural education). ESP11 also aims to strengthen capacity for research, evaluation, policy analysis and planning, and the implementation and management of development projects.

The MESC statistical digest documents that the education system consists of three service providers: government schools (80 percent); mission schools (16 percent); and private schools (4 percent). The Government's MESC is the largest provider and consists

¹ The World Bank Education Sector Strategy 2020: Learning for All (2011), which outlines an agenda for achieving "Learning for All" in the developing world over the next decade.

of seven divisions: School Operations Division; Curriculum, Material, and Assessment Division; Policy, Planning, and Research Division; Corporate Services Division; Sports Division; Monitoring, Evaluation and Review Division; and Culture Division.

Presented in Table 1, the levels of education in Samoa include early childhood education (ECE), primary, secondary, and tertiary education and training, such as university education and technical and vocational education and training (TVET), as well as informal learning after school. It is important to note that ECE was only recently formalized under the auspices of the MESC, and that provision is private. Children with special needs are included at all levels. The primary level covers an eight-year cycle from Grades 1 to 8, and is compulsory for children ages 5 to 14.

Level of Education	Age	Grade/Year
Early Childhood Education	3 – 5	Preschool
Primary School	5-12	Grades 1-8
Secondary School	13-17	Grades 9-13
Post Secondary Education & Training	18+	Technical/ Vocational schools, Tertiary

Source: MESC Statistical Digest, 2010

Table 2 presents select indicators on the education system. Public expenditure on education accounts for 5.7 percent of GDP and 17.4 percent of total government expenditure, respectively. The primary level receives 54 percent of education funding. The net enrollment rate at the primary level is nearly universal, and the average pupil-teacher ratio is 30 to 1. Data are

Public Expenditure on Education	
As % of GDP	5.7%
As % of Total Government Expenditure	17.4%
Distribution of Public Expenditure per Level (%)	
Early Childhood Education	6%
Primary	54%
Secondary	10%
Tertiary and other	30%
Pupil/Teacher Ratio in Primary	30:1
Percentage of Repeaters in Primary	n/a
Primary to Secondary Transition Rate	n/a

Source: MESC Statistical Digest, 2010

not available on the percentage of repeaters at the

primary level nor are data available for the rate of transition from primary to secondary school.

II. The Case for School Autonomy and School Accountability

School autonomy and accountability are key components of an education system that ensure educational quality. The transfer of core managerial responsibilities to schools promotes local accountability; helps reflect local priorities, values, and needs; and gives teachers the opportunity to establish a personal commitment to students and their parents (Box 1). Benchmarking and monitoring indicators of school autonomy and accountability allows any country to rapidly assess its education system, setting the stage for improving policy planning and implementation.

Box 1: What are School Autonomy and Accountability?

School autonomy is a form of school management in which schools are given decision-making authority over their operations, including the hiring and firing of personnel, and the assessment of teachers and pedagogical practices. School management under autonomy may give an important role to the School Council, representing the interests of parents, in budget planning and approval, as well as a voice/vote in personnel decisions. By including the School Council in school management, school autonomy fosters accountability (Di Gropello 2004, 2006; Barrera, Fasih and Patrinos 2009).

In its basic form **accountability** is defined as the acceptance of responsibility and being answerable for one's actions. In school management, accountability may take other additional meanings: (i) the act of compliance with the rules and regulations of school governance; (ii) reporting to those with oversight authority over the school; and (iii) linking rewards and sanctions to expected results (Heim 1996; Rechebei 2010).

School autonomy is a form of a decentralized education system in which school personnel are in charge of making most managerial decisions, frequently in partnership with parents and the community. More local control helps create better conditions for improving student learning in a sustainable way, since it

gives teachers and parents more opportunities to develop common goals, increase their mutual commitment to student learning, and promote more efficient use of scarce school resources.

To be effective, school autonomy must function on the basis of compatible incentives, taking into account national education policies, including incentives for the implementation of those policies. Having more managerial responsibilities at the school level automatically implies that a school must also be accountable to local stakeholders as well as national and local authorities. The empirical evidence from education systems in which schools enjoy managerial autonomy is that autonomy is beneficial for restoring the social contract between parents and schools and instrumental in setting in motion policies to improve student learning.

The progression in school autonomy in the last two decades has led to the conceptualization of **School-Based Management (SBM)** as a form of decentralization in which the school is in charge of most managerial decisions but with the participation of parents and the community through school councils (Barrera, Fasih and Patrinos 2009). *SBM is not a set of predetermined policies and procedures, but a continuum of activities and policies put into place to improve the functioning of schools, allowing parents and teachers to focus on improvements in learning.* As such, SBM should foster a new social contract between teachers and their community in which local cooperation and local accountability drive improvements in professional and personal performance by teachers (Patrinos 2010).

The empirical evidence from SBM shows that it can take many forms or combine many activities (Barrera et al. 2009) with differing degrees of success (see Box 2). Unless SBM activities contribute to system closure, they are just a collection of isolated managerial decisions. Therefore, the indicators of SBM that relate to school quality must conform to the concept of a system, in which the presence or absence of some critical components within the system allow or preclude system closure.

As components of a managerial system, SBM activities may behave as mediating variables: they produce an enabling environment for teachers and students, allowing for pedagogical variables, school inputs, and personal effort to work as intended.

Box 2: Different paths to School-Based Management are fine as long as they allow for system closure

In many countries the implementation of SBM has increased student enrollment, student and teacher attendance, and parent involvement. However, the empirical evidence from Latin America shows very few cases in which SBM has made a significant difference in learning outcomes (Patrinos 2010), while in Europe there is substantial evidence showing a positive impact of school autonomy on learning (Eurydice 2007). Both the grassroots-based approach taken in Latin America, where the institutional structure was weak or service delivery was hampered due to internal conflict, and the operational efficiency approach taken in Europe where institutions were stronger, coincide in applying managerial principles to promote better education quality, but driven by two different modes of accountability to parents and the community. One in Latin America where schools render accounts through participatory school-based management (Di Gropello 2004) and another in Europe where accountability is based on trust in schools and their teachers, (Arcia, Patrinos, Porta and Macdonald 2011). In either case, school autonomy has begun to transform traditional education from a system based on processes and inputs into one driven by results

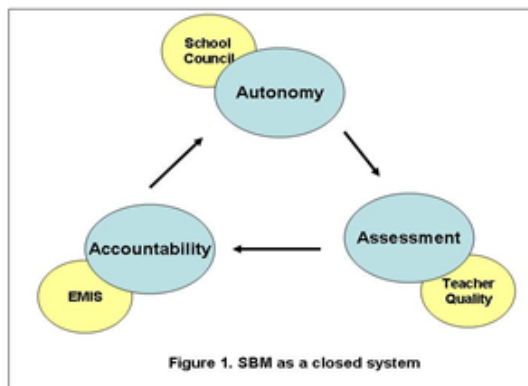
When do SBM components become critical for learning?

The improper functioning of a school or a school system can be a substantial barrier to success. The managerial component of a school system is a necessary but insufficient condition for learning. One can fix some managerial components and obtain no results or alter some other components and obtain good results. What combination of components is crucial for success are still under study, but the emerging body of practice point to a set of variables that foster managerial **autonomy**, the **assessment** of results, and the use of the assessment to promote **accountability** among all stakeholders (Bruns, Filmer and Patrinos 2011). When these three components are in balance with each other, they form a “closed system.”

Defining a managerial system that can achieve closure is conceptually important for school based management, since it transforms its components from a list of managerial activities to a set of interconnected

variables that when working together can improve system performance. If an SBM system is unable to close, are partial solutions effective? Yes, in a broad sense, in which schools can still function but their degree of effectiveness and efficiency would be lower than if the system closes. In this regard, ***SBM can achieve closure when it enforces enough autonomy to evaluate its results and use those results to hold someone accountable.***

This last conclusion is very important because it means that *SBM can achieve system closure when autonomy, student assessment, and accountability, are operationally interrelated through the functions of the school councils, the policies for improving teacher quality, and Education Management Information Systems* (see Figure 1).



Source: Arcia and others 2011.

Note: EMIS – education management information system.

In managerial terms it is clear that the point of contact between autonomous schools and their clients is primarily through the school council (Corrales, 2006). Similarly, school assessments are the vehicles used by schools to determine their needs for changes in pedagogical practices and to determine the training needs of their teachers. Both, pedagogical changes and teacher training are determinant factors of teacher quality (Vegas 2001). Finally, the role of EMIS on accountability has been well established and it is bound to increase as technology makes it easier to report on indicators of internal efficiency and on standardized test scores (Brunns, Filmer, and Patrinos 2011).

Results on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) suggest that, when autonomy and accountability are intelligently combined, they tend to be associated with better student performance (OECD,

2011). The experience of high-performing countries² on PISA indicates that:

- Education systems in which schools have more autonomy over teaching content and student assessment tend to perform better.
- Education systems in which schools have more autonomy over resource allocation and that publish test results perform better than schools with less autonomy.
- Education systems in which many schools compete for students do not systematically score higher on PISA.
- Education systems with standardized student assessment tend to do better than those without such assessments.
- PISA scores among schools with students from different social backgrounds differ less in education systems that use standardized student assessments than in systems that do not.

As of now, the empirical evidence from countries that have implemented school autonomy suggests that a certain set of policies and practices are effective in fostering managerial autonomy, assessment of results, and the use of assessments to promote accountability. Benchmarking the policy intent of these variables using SABER can be very useful for any country interested in improving the performance of its education system.

SABER School Autonomy and Accountability: Analyzing Performance

The SABER School Autonomy and Accountability tool assists in analyzing how well developed the set of policies are in a given country to foster managerial autonomy, assess results, and use information from assessments to promote accountability. There are five policy goals for school autonomy and accountability. Below are the main indicators that can help benchmark

² Examples of high performing countries that have implemented school-based management policies and frameworks include the Netherlands, Canada, and New Zealand among others.

an education system’s policies that enable school autonomy and accountability:

1. **School autonomy in the planning and management of the school budget**
2. **School autonomy in personnel management**
3. **Role of the School Council in school governance**
4. **School and student assessments**
5. **Accountability**

Each of these indicators has a set of sub-indicators that make it possible to judge how far along an education system’s policies are in enabling school autonomy and accountability. Each indicator and sub-indicator is scored on the basis of its status and the results classified as Latent, Emerging, Established, or Advanced:

Latent ●○○○	Emerging ●●○○	Established ●●●○	Advanced ●●●●
Reflects policy not in place or limited engagement	Reflects some good practice; policy work still in progress	Reflects good practice, with some limitations	Reflects international best practice

A Latent score signifies that the policy behind the indicator is not yet in place or that there is limited engagement in developing the related education policy. An *Emerging* score indicates that the policy in place reflects some good practice but that policy development is still in progress. An *Established* score indicates that the program or policy reflects good practice and meets the minimum standards but there may be some limitations in its content and scope. An *Advanced* score indicates that the program or policy reflects best practice and it can be considered on par with international standards.

III. Samoa’s Performance: A Summary of Results

Summary. The education system in Samoa is comprised of two levels of governance: central authority (Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture – MESC), and the school level. Budgetary autonomy is *Established*. The MESC is largely responsible for allocating resources to schools that have authority to execute expenditures. The school level has the authority to raise additional financial resources. Policies guiding personnel management are *Latent*. Recruitment, deployment and

salaries for all teaching and non-teaching staff are fixed and administered by the MESC. Overall, participation by parents and the community are rated as *Established*. The School Committee, which is comprised of the school principal and local community members, plays an active role in setting the vision of the school and in ongoing school operations. The MESC provides support to equip committee members with the requisite skills and competencies to perform their duties effectively and efficiently. Policies that guide school and student assessment are *Established*. The school is responsible for designing, implementing, and utilizing results from their school assessment. Standardized tests are used as diagnostic tools and also determine student progression. Accountability to stakeholders is *Emerging* as there are regulations in place for complying with rules for financial and school operations accountability, but not for linking rewards and sanctions to compliance with rules or performance, or for empowering stakeholders with the requisite mechanisms to demand accountability for learning outcomes.

1. **Autonomy in the planning and management of the school budget is Established**

This policy goal focuses on the degree of autonomy that schools have in planning and managing their budgets. In order to evaluate policy intent, the scoring rubric makes clear which areas should be backed by laws, regulations, and/or official rules in the public record. School autonomy in the planning and management of the school budget is considered desirable because it can increase the efficiency of financial resources, give schools more flexibility in budget management, and give parents the opportunity to have more voice on budget planning and execution.

Disaggregated by operational and personnel costs, education finance is largely financed by the central government in Samoa.

With the exception of personnel expenditures, all other items of the school’s budget, such as capital improvements and day-to-day operations, are categorized as operational costs. The primary source of operational funding is the Samoa School Fees Grant Scheme (SSFGS). The objectives of the SSFGS are to: (i) reduce financial barriers; (ii) assist schools to improve their teaching and learning processes; and, (iii) improve school-level resource management, which is achieved through support of school-based management (SBM)

practices. Introduced in July 2010, the SSFGS is a fixed formula that determines the operating budget for each school according to the policy and program design document. The formula provides a yearly allocation of 100 tala³ per enrolled primary school child and 200 tala per enrolled primary school child with special needs. In addition to the per child subsidy, the SSFGS entitles schools to base grants, which are determined by the number of students enrolled (i.e., less populated schools receive higher base grants).

Improving school-level resource management, the third desired outcome of the SSFGS, is addressed by empowering principals and School Committees (see Policy Goal 3 for more information) with the decision-making authority on how to use their allocated proceeds from the SSFGS.

The MESC establishes a financial and operational framework within which schools must operate. Each school is required to develop and implement a three-year School Improvement Plan (SIP) that establishes an educational vision for the school and methodically presents the objectives and areas of focus for the school. For each year of the SIP, there is a School Annual Management Plan (SAMP) that details the school's initiatives and operations for the year, including how financial resources are to be used. The school principal and School Committee are tasked with leading the development of the SIP and associated SAMPs. The approach is designed to be collaborative and include active engagement with parents, the community, and other stakeholders.

Quality assurance mechanisms are embedded within this process in order to ensure that expenditures follow guidelines and are appropriately used. The SSFGS Program Design Document clearly states what Grants may and may not be used for via a list of allowable and not allowable items. The SSFGS Manual of Operations stipulates expenditure limitations in two categories: repairs and maintenance; and use of water. In both of these areas, the expenditures cannot exceed 10 percent of the school budget.

Each school must provide monthly reports to their community illustrating how financial resources are used. Quarterly financial reports are provided to the MESC and Ministry of Finance (MoF) detailing all transactions and annual financial reports to MESC and MoF indicate expenditures for the year with explanation of how financial resources were utilized to meet the goals set forth in the SIP. If the expenditures do not comply with the general framework set forth, the MESC has the ability to withhold future SSFGS transfer (which in effect is a retroactive compliance mechanism). The MESC provides school principals and School Committees with basic training on the SSFGS, including guidance on how to prepare a budget. The SSFGS Manual of Operations also provides unambiguous information on all SSFGS processes, including guidelines delineating how to prepare the expenditure aspect of the operational budgets for schools.

In terms of personnel costs, the legal authority over non-teacher and teacher salaries rests with the MESC. According to the Public Service Commission (PSC) Act 2004, teacher remuneration is recommended by the MESC and submitted to the PSC which then presents the request to Cabinet for approval. In this context the definition of teachers includes: principals, vice principals, first assistants, teachers, and infant supervisors. The PSC provides a detailed pay scale (the annual Teacher Salaries and Allowances document) that uses years of experience, qualifications, and performance as the main determinants of pay level. Financing non-teaching staff is also the responsibility of the MESC, and is managed according to guidelines from the Public Service Commission. The only permanent non-teaching positions present in the school are the typist and the library assistant. The school level has no role and is not consulted regarding salaries. There is typically no maintenance staff hired, as the community plays an active role in maintaining school property.

The SSFGS also allows schools to raise additional resources to finance development activities and support operational shortfalls. With approval from the School Committee, the school may raise these funds in the community or seek support from the private sector or non-governmental organizations. The MESC's Manual of Operations outlines the protocol for raising additional funds and clearly states that "voluntary" or "obligatory" fees cannot be imposed on parents or guardians of students. In practice, some schools charge fees akin to

³ Exchange rate: \$1 Samoa Tala per USD \$0.42

tuition, such as building and transport fees, perhaps because the rules are not adequately enforced.

The amount of additional funding that a school raises varies significantly from school to school. In some cases, schools rely entirely on funding from the MESC, whereas in more affluent and well-organized schools it is possible to finance 10 to 20 percent of operational expenses through alternative sources. In either case, the SSFGS constitutes the most substantial financial contribution to schools.

Collaborative budget planning takes place via the School Improvement Plans and the Annual Management Plans that are developed by the Principal and School Committee, according to the SSFGS Program Document. The SSFGS grant funds finance or assist in financing the activities in the plan.

2. School autonomy in personnel management is Latent

This policy goal measures policy intent in the management of school personnel, which includes the principals, teachers, and non-teaching staff. Appointing and deploying principals and teachers can be centralized or it can be the responsibility of regional or municipal governments. In decentralized education systems, schools have autonomy in the hiring and firing of teachers. Budgetary autonomy includes leaving schools with the responsibility of negotiating and setting the salaries of its teaching and non-teaching staff, and using monetary and non-monetary bonuses as rewards for good performance. In centralized systems, teachers are paid directly by the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Finance under union or civil service agreements. As a result, in centralized systems schools have less influence over teacher performance because they have no financial leverage over teachers. Inversely, if a school negotiates teachers’ salaries, as private schools routinely do, it may be able to motivate teachers directly with rewards for a job well done.

Samoa is a unique case in that the country only has a two-level approach, consisting of MESC and school level, compared with larger countries that may have one or more sub-national levels of governance, such as Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands.

In Samoa, according to the School Staffing Manual, the MESC has complete autonomy for all matters pertaining to personnel management. The MESC National Teacher Development Framework (2011) provides the overarching framework for the management and development of high quality teachers. This process is the responsibility of the Schools Operations Division within the MESC, and its objective is to provide the best possible match of teachers’ skills and qualifications to suit the available teaching positions. The annual process includes determining staff needs at each school; identification and re-assignment of excess teachers; and allocation of graduates from the Faculty of Education (School Staffing Manual, p.8). Appointments of teaching staff members are made under civil servant agreement through the Public Service Commission. While a teacher’s union exists (the *Sosaiete Faiaoga Samoa*), it does not have a formal voice in the appointment, deployment or utilization of teaching staff. The staffing entitlement of each school is based on Teacher to Student ratio of 1:30 for primary and 1:20 for secondary

1. Legal authority over the planning and management of the school budget is Established		
Indicator	Score	Justification
Legal authority over management of the operational budget	Established ●●●○	Non-salary expenditures are managed at the school level; MESC determines level of funding through SSFGS.
Legal authority over the management of non-teaching staff salaries	Emerging ●●○○	The MESC has legal authority to manage non-teaching staff salaries.
Legal authority over the management of teachers’ salaries	Emerging ●●○○	The MESC submits recommendations for PSC and Cabinet approval for teachers’ salaries. Payment of salary is made directly to teachers from central authority.
Legal authority to raise additional funds for the school	Established ●●●○	Schools can raise additional funds from the community, private sector or NGOs.
Collaborative budget planning and preparation	Advanced ●●●●	School principal and School Committee collaborate to prepare expenditure budget.

schools. While the transfer of teachers is also under the autonomy of the MESC, the School Operations Division works directly with principals and School Committees to identify which teachers should be transferred when there is a surplus in a school. Furthermore, the “Teacher Requested Transfer approach” provides a channel through which teachers can request to be moved, whether it is for personal, professional, or other reasoning.

According to the Public Service Commission’s Recruitment and Selection Manual, non-teaching staff members are considered public servants and covered under civil servant agreement. The MESC also has the authority and sole responsibility to appoint and deploy non-teaching staff to schools.

Similar to teaching staff, the MESC is responsible for managing all aspects of the recruitment, deployment, and performance evaluation of principals and other leadership positions (known as “Positions of Responsibilities”). Positions of Responsibilities are filled through a formal interview and selection process, and the candidate is appraised directly by the principal and the school review officer (SRO) through the formal performance appraisal process. This information is used to monitor professional development progress, professional conduct, and to inform suitability for promotion or transfer, for example.

It is important to note that the SABER-SAA framework must be internationally comparable. In Samoa, the score of latent in this Policy Goal reflects the two-level approach of the education system. Considering the size and population of the country, this report does not advocate for a three-level system, but rather notes that a two-level system can be highly effective. In this regard it is important that the central authority operates in close collaboration with the school level to intimately know the school environment and associated personnel requirements.

2. School autonomy in personnel management is Latent		
Indicator	Score	Justification
Autonomy in teacher appointment and deployment decisions	Latent ●○○○	The MESC is responsible for recruiting and deploying teaching staff. For transfer of teachers the SOD works with the schools directly.
Autonomy in non-teaching staff appointment and deployment decisions	Latent ●○○○	The MESC is solely responsibility for appointing and deploying non-teaching staff.
Autonomy in school principal appointment and deployment decisions.	Latent ●○○○	The MECS has the legal authority to appoint and deploy principals and is responsible for performance evaluation.

3. Participation of the School Council in school governance is Established

The participation of the School/Parent Council in school administration is very important because it enables parents to exercise their real power as clients of the education system. If the committee has to cosign payments, it automatically has purchasing power. The use of a detailed operational manual is extremely important in this area, since it allows committee members to adequately monitor school management performance, help the principal with cash flow decisions, and become a catalyst for seeking additional funds from the community. The use of such manuals by the School Committee is thus a good vehicle for promoting increased accountability and institutionalizing autonomy.

It is important to note that change management studies have provided evidence that bringing stakeholders together to plan and implement meaningful activities also contributes to behavioral change in institutions, including schools. Collective school planning activities can provide a mutual vision and shared sense of accountability for parents and school staff and these processes provide an enabling and supportive environment for better governance.

Samoa’s MESC School Management and Organization Manual states that each public primary school must

have a School Committee that consists of at least five members. The School Committee has three defined roles: chairperson, treasurer, and secretary. The school principal is the only permanent member and serves as the Secretary of the School Committee. The School Committee and the MESC sign a School Agreement that forms the basis of the working relationship between them. The seven core responsibilities of the School Committee are outlined in Box 3.

Box 3: School Committee core responsibilities

1. Assist with preparation of the SIP and SAMP, along with an annual budget indicating sources of income and allocation of expenditure;
2. Ensure that the determination, collection and disbursement of funds raised is in accordance with the annual budget and MESC policies;
3. Be accountable for the proper use of government-provided financial and non-financial (such as teaching and learning materials) resources;
4. Be responsible for enforcing compulsory curriculum requirements, determining and providing optional curriculum requirements;
5. Maintain an up to date asset register;
6. Conduct business to ensure efficient and effective management of the school; and,
7. Ensure that the behavior of students at each school is in accordance with government requirements and expectations of the parents of the school and local community.

School Management and Organisational Manual, 2004.

Further to the description in Policy Goal 1, the School Committee plays an active role both in the preparation and execution of the expenditure aspect of the operational school budget. Specifically, the School Committee prepares the annual school budget indicating sources of income (of which the majority is from the SSFGS) and allocation of expenditures.

According to the School Management & Organization Manual, "the controlling authority of the School is the School Committee, which performs its responsibilities on behalf of the village/district community and the MESC." The School Committee has the legal authority to have a voice on budget issues, but the MESC has legal oversight on determining the amount of the transfers

through the SSFGS. During execution, the School Committee is responsible for approving expenditures within the guidelines of the SSFGS, but the MESC provides the final financial oversight.

It is important to note that the School Committee does not have legal authority on matters pertaining to personnel management, such as appointment and deployment. The School Operations Division at MESC advises schools of postings, transfers, or movement of teachers. Transfer of teachers is mainly based on oversupply (excess) or under supply of teachers. The school level only is involved in the approval of teacher transfers which must be endorsed by the principal and School Review Officer (SRO).

Beyond the role of School Committees, communities are expected to be active contributors to their local school. At a minimum, the MESC's School Management and Organization Manual outlines community responsibilities to include: i) providing school buildings, facilities and equipment as required in accordance with the minimum standards set by the MESC (see Education Facilities Planning Handbook); ii) being accountable for the maintenance of all school facilities, grounds and environment; iii) ensuring the safety of teachers and students; iv) clearly defining the boundaries of the school grounds on which the school is located; and, v) supporting and adhering to the provisions of the Compulsory Education Act.

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Additionally, the school principal, School Committee, teaching staff and the community are required to conduct a joint self-evaluation against the Minimum Service Standards and rate the findings as: below

standard, on the standard, or above the standard. The SRO is tasked with monitoring the process.

The MESC establishes the curriculum for all core subjects, which the School Committee is responsible for enforcing. The MESC recommends appropriate classroom inputs (such as textbooks), from which the School Committee has discretion to select and use. The School Committee has autonomy over non-core subjects, as well as overall school management.

There are no legal provisions for the open election of School Committee members. There is a three-year term limit for committee members (except the school principal), and replacements are permitted in instances of non-performance. There is no specific time throughout the academic year for appointment.

The composition of the School Committee is embedded in the rich “fono cultural system” which structures communities around “high chiefs.” The responsibility of the high chiefs is that of decision-makers of the village. In respect to determining the School Committee, the high chiefs appoint four or more members of the community to be part of the School Committee. In practice, the chairperson (or president) is the “orator,” the most senior of the high chiefs. Roles for the remainder of the School Committee are allocated based on candidates’ competencies and level of activity in the community.

An annual general meeting is normally held at the end of each school year. This involves parents, teachers and community members. The School Committee is required to make available an agenda prior to the meeting that indicates the main topics to be discussed, and the date, time and place. During the meeting, the School Committee presents on its progress and performance in regards to: i) SIP, ii) school budget and SAMP, iii) school curriculum plan; and iv) school maintenance plan. Minutes of annual general meetings are to be recorded and maintained at the school. General support is provided to School Committees through the School Operations Division within the MESC, such as training and capacity building initiatives.

3. Participation of the School Council in School Governance is Established		
Indicator	Score	Justification
Participation of the School Council in budget preparation	Established ●●●○	School Committee (SC) is actively involved in the preparation of the expenditure aspect of the operational budget.
Participation in financial oversight	Established ●●●○	SC is responsible for approving expenditures for operational budget.
Participation in Personnel Management	Latent ●○○○	SC does not have legal authority or input on matters pertaining to personnel management.
Community participation in school activities	Advanced ●●●●	School Management AND Organization Manual details instructions to organize volunteers, participate in school activities, and outline roles and responsibilities.
Community participation in learning inputs	Established ●●●○	SC has input on some learning inputs, including non-core courses, selection of textbooks, and teaching and learning materials.
Transparency in community participation	Emerging ●●○○	Rules governing SC are transparent, however there are no elections. Selection of members follow cultural procedures; one assembly per year.

4. Assessment of school and student performance is Established

School assessments can have a significant impact on school performance by encouraging parents and teachers to agree on scoring rules and ways to keep track of them. Measuring student assessment is an important way to determine if a school is effective in improving learning. A key aspect of school autonomy is the regular measurement of student learning, with the intent of using the results to inform parents and society, and to make adjustments to managerial and pedagogical practices. Without a regular assessment of learning outcomes, school accountability is reduced and, with it, improving education quality becomes less certain.

There are two primary methods of assessment used in Samoa: school-based assessment (termed School-wide Assessment), and standardized student assessment. Schools are assessed every year using the MESC criteria set out in the Samoa National School Assessment Policy Framework 2010. Their stated purpose is to improve student learning, help monitor school effectiveness, and ensure school accountability. Implementation guidelines for this policy are detailed in the Making Assessment Work: Classroom Assessment Manual. As school supervisors, the SROs are expected to support and assist principals and teachers in the development of their respective School-wide Assessment Plan. The plan is submitted to the MESC at the beginning of every year. The plan describes the school's assessment practice at the school level, subject level, and classroom level and specifies the: activities; schedules; recording, storing and reporting system; methods for interpretation and utilization of results; and the roles of people responsible for carrying out assessment and reporting. Specifically, each classroom teacher is required to prepare a Classroom Assessment Plan for the year as a component of the School-wide Assessment Plan. The Classroom Assessment Plan includes objectives, outcomes, success criteria, and assessment methods.

The School Operations Division in collaboration with the Curriculum, Material, and Assessment Division at the central level review the plans and provide any necessary feedback to schools. Depending on the scope of feedback, the schools may be asked to resubmit the plan.

Principals use the School-wide Assessment Plan to improve teaching and learning and also to inform and develop pedagogical skills. Furthermore, principals have the autonomy to move teachers around within the school (which could be done to best align teacher skillset with student needs), and can use the results from the School-wide Assessment to deploy teachers to maximize the learning environment.

Each school is responsible for analyzing results of the School-wide Assessment. These results are not provided directly to the MESC; instead, the SRO, who is a MESC official, is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the School-wide Assessment Plan. In their annual reports to the MESC, schools must provide information on how members have used results to improve teaching and learning.

Two methods of student assessments are used at the primary level. The first method employed is standard diagnostic assessment which is conducted annually at Grades 4 and 6. The student assessments consist of the Samoan Primary Education Literacy Level Tests and cover Samoan, English and Numeracy (SPELL 1 and SPELL 2). The focus of these diagnostic assessments is to provide education practitioners and policy makers with feedback and insight to design and develop strategies to respond to concerns and enhance performance in literacy and numeracy (SNSAPF, p 12-13). In addition, Samoa is working on introducing an Entrance Assessment Diagnostic Test at the beginning of Year 1 to measure school readiness.

The second method for assessment is a standardized student assessment at the primary level which is the Samoa Primary Education Certification Assessment (SPECA) for Year 8. It informs primary school graduates' potential for secondary and further studies. SPECA replaced National Year 8 Examination and will be administered for the first time in 2013. At the secondary level, there are National Examinations administered at Year 12 and Year 13.

According to the Samoa National School Assessment Policy Framework, the Assessment and Evaluation Unit (AEU) within the MESC is responsible for managing, analyzing, and distributing standardized student assessment results. Within this mandate, the AEU undertakes several initiatives, such as conducting research studies that utilize assessment results to improve teaching and learning processes, and assisting teachers in utilizing assessment results to design interventions to improve their teaching and student learning. Classroom reports are used by teachers to help evaluate the performance of their class, reflect on the effectiveness of their teaching, and to discuss with colleagues approaches to performance improvement. In addition, based on results from the standardized tests, the MESC provides professional development programs that address need for improved content knowledge and pedagogy of teachers. Policies are clear that standardized student assessment data are to be used for improving pedagogy, but this does not extend to making changes to school operations or personnel changes.

At the school level, the principal is responsible for coordinating all reports on students for teachers,

parents and the community. It is in the principal’s hands whether or not the information is presented well.

Furthermore, policy states that the MESC is responsible for producing and publically disseminating analysis of examination results (at the national, district, and school level) on the MESC website. Despite this policy, in practice results are only published on the website and through the Statistical Digest at the national level. They do not include an analysis across district and school levels. The explanation for this is rooted in political and social tensions surrounding school and student performance.

4. School and Student Assessment is Established		
Indicator	Score	Justification
Existence and frequency of school assessments	Established ●●●○	School-wide Assessment is conducted at the school level annually.
Use of school assessments for making school adjustments	Established ●●●○	School-wide Assessment is used to inform pedagogical, personnel, and operational improvements at the school level.
Existence and frequency of standardized student assessments	Advanced ●●●●	Standardized student assessments are administered each year.
Use of standardized student assessments for pedagogical, operational, and personnel adjustments	Emerging ●●○○	Standardized student assessments are analyzed by MESC and used to make broad recommendations for pedagogical adjustments only.
Publication of student assessments	Established ●●●○	Results are made available to the MESC and schools.

5. School accountability to stakeholders is Emerging

Accountability is at the heart of SBM. The systemic connection between budgetary and personnel autonomy, parent participation in the financial and operational aspects of a school, and the measurement of learning outcomes are all aimed to reinforce

accountability. Only by being accountable to parents can educational quality be sustainable. The following indicators below address aspects of accountability that can be implemented within the framework of SBM.

As mentioned in Policy Goal 4, the guidelines for the use of results of student assessments are provided through the Samoa National School Assessment Policy Framework. Section 11 focuses on reporting and utilization of assessment data that includes reporting to students, parents, school community, etc. Guidelines are available on the MESC website and parents may request them from the school or MESC directly. However, according to the policy there is no formal mechanism through which School Committees or parents can use the guidelines to demand accountability regarding student assessment results. In practice, School Committees are quite vocal and lodge complaints directly with MESC despite a lack of accountability mechanism.

Since the School-wide Assessment is internally focused, there is no provision for comparison across schools. For standardized student assessments, policy states that the MESC must make examination results at the national, district, and school level publicly available on the MESC website. However, in practice, there is a disconnect between policy and implementation. The MESC compares standardized student assessment results with previous years, but does not compare across districts or schools.

At the central level, the Public Service Act 2004 sets forth the framework that governs use of public monies. At the school level, the SSFGS Manual of Operations establishes the rules of financial management and transparency and required reporting procedures to the MESC. As evidenced by these documents, regulations are in place at the central and school levels to ensure transparency in financial management and reporting to those with oversight authority. Combined these policies bolster financial accountability, but could go further to link rewards and sanctions to compliance with the regulations.

In regards to school operations, the requisite policies and educational regulations are embedded in a syndicate of School Staffing Manual, School Organizational Manual, Samoa School Nutrition Standards, Education Act, Compulsory Education Act 1992, Minimal Service Standards, School Annual

Management Plan and cover various areas of school operations, including: staffing requirements; nutrition; student-teacher ratio; hours of operations; and, school infrastructure and safety. There is no system to reward schools that demonstrate effective, high-level school operations, however the MESC closely monitors poorly performing schools.

Activity number three and seven of the MESC Annual Management Plan stipulates that results from student assessment must be analyzed and shared with schools through forums to solicit feedback. However, this approach does not encompass parents and community members at large. There is also no mandate for simplifying or explaining results of the student assessments to the public.

5. Accountability to stakeholders is Emerging		
Indicator	Score	Justification
Guidelines for the use of results of student assessments	Emerging ●●○○	The MESC is required to publish guidelines indicating how results of student assessment are incorporated into classroom; school prepares annual School Assessment Plan.
Analysis of school and student performance	Emerging ●●○○	Policy requires results to be compared against district and national level; MESC compares year over year.
Degree of financial accountability at the central, regional, and school level	Established ●●●○	Strong financial accountability mechanisms regulate use of resources at central and school level.
Degree of accountability in school operations	Established ●●●○	Regulations for accountability in school operations are in place, but not for reporting and linking rewards to operating performance.
Degree of learning accountability	Latent ●○○○	There is no mandate for simplifying and explaining results of the student assessments to the public.

IV. Enhancing Education Quality: Policy Recommendations for Samoa

Historically, the MESC was tasked with decision-making authority in most areas of the education system. The country's two-level system (central, school level) has contributed to examples of effective policy coordination at the central level and implementation in schools. In recent years, Samoa has increasingly bestowed responsibilities for operation of education to the school level. The following section uses results of the benchmarking of school autonomy and accountability to highlight areas for potential policy change to empower schools to make decisions that reflect their local context and lead to improved learning outcomes.

1. Autonomy in the planning and management of the school budget (Established)

School principals and School Committees have considerable autonomy within the MESC framework and guidelines to make their own expenditure plans and use financial resources accordingly. The school also has the ability to raise funds through the community or other sources. However, authority over the design and management of the Samoa School Fees Grant Scheme is concentrated at the central level. In this regard, as a first step, the MESC could build participation into the process to ensure that the school level – the stakeholders that best know the cost of education in their community – has a formal voice in the approach and allocation through the SSFGS.

Additionally, to avoid creating or widening a gap in learning between rural and urban areas, the MESC, in consultation with the school level, should evaluate and re-adjust the financing formula of the SSFGS to ensure it is adequate, especially for poor rural communities. Anecdotal evidence suggests that a thorough study could highlight the need to allocate greater support to rural schools due to their inability to raise funds locally to cover excess operating costs and capital improvements.

2. Autonomy in personnel management (Latent)

Management of all education personnel is strictly the responsibility of the MESC. As a small island state with only central and school-level administration authorities, the central authority can be more capable of managing personnel than in some larger, more populated contexts. To be effective this approach should adequately leverage the school's insight on personnel

management, staff performance, and school needs in the interest of the school in the short and long-term.

To strengthen this area, it would be useful to document and formulate an inclusive approach that provides principals with a formal voice in matters that pertain to teaching staff deployment and recruitment.

In regards to non-teaching staff, each school has its own local characteristics which may influence non-teaching personnel needs. The MESC could consider decentralizing management to the school principal and School Committee, and provide them with the authority to hire or remove non-teaching staff within guidelines and civil servant pay rates set by the PSC. This could be an easily implemented step that would be beneficial for meeting local school needs and unburdening the central authority with handling the details of non-teaching staff appointments.

3. Role of School Committee on school governance (Established)

Considerable responsibility is bestowed to the School Committee. The selection of members reflects the “fono” cultural approach and does not include formal elections. To ensure the selected candidates have the necessary competencies and skillset to fulfill the duty of committee member, the MESC could consider a two-pronged approach. First, the MESC should develop specific Terms of Reference for positions that articulates the roles and responsibilities of the position. Second, based on ongoing feedback, the MESC could develop tailored training programs to address major areas of concern as well as initiate system-wide training and skill development for overarching themes that would build the capacity of School Committees to fulfill their roles.

According to policy, the School Committee is only mandated to have a single annual general meeting that includes the community. This meeting is usually held at the end of the school year. While it provides the School Committee the chance to reflect on the past year and reveal plans for the forthcoming year, it may miss the chance to have a meaningful exchange with the community. It would be important for the MESC to consider modifying the policy to require, at a minimum, two general meetings. This would afford the opportunity to achieve a more participatory approach. As currently designed, the format could lead to a one-way dialogue with the School Committee disseminating information without an embedded system for input

from the community and follow-up by the School Committee.

4. School and student assessment (Established)

In general, policies on school and student assessment are well established in Samoa. School-wide Assessment is administered and results are analyzed at the school level. Lots of autonomy is provided to the school with some guidance via manuals and assistance from the SOD’s to develop the School Assessment Plans.

While Samoa regularly uses school assessment and has a system in place for school self-evaluation, the central authority does not see the results of the evaluation. It is a missed opportunity to do cross-school analysis to identify common trends and provide additional specialized instruction or training for common problems. In the current approach it is difficult to ensure consistency across schools, and the information may not be comparable from school-to-school. It is recommended that the MESC strongly consider developing a policy that supports an approach enabling data to be aggregated at the system level for further evaluation and analysis to inform system-wide trends and nuances on school performance. As a first step, the MESC could consider providing a more structured framework to the school level to guide the design and implementation of their school-wide assessment and self-evaluation.

Currently the AEU is responsible for the management, implementation and analysis of standardized student assessment results. The consistency and utility of the analysis to improve education performance is not clearly evident. The MESC should consider implementing a policy to achieve better use of standardized student assessment data. Specifically, the policy should clearly stipulate that analysis of results must be used to inform pedagogy, school operations, and personnel decisions.

5. Accountability (Emerging)

Several measures can be taken to empower education stakeholders in the community and ultimately enhance accountability mechanisms. For instance, despite policy stating otherwise, standardized student assessment results are not publically available. Acknowledging that the political environment is difficult, the MESC could make efforts to improve in this area by adopting a strategy that involves widely distributing results at the national level. Gradually, the MESC could make results

available at the district level and eventually for comparison across schools. The results should include analysis that is both articulated and simplified; enabling all stakeholders the opportunity to understand the strengths and areas for improvement identified through analysis of standardized student assessment results. By implementing a layered approach, it allows the MESC to gradually expand public knowledge on student performance from the national to the school level thereby empowering citizens to hold the system more accountable both locally and nationally.

Second, the MESC could further strengthen and advance current initiatives by developing clear guidelines and providing technical training to ensure that schools are utilizing the results from assessments to maximize the learning environment. Doing so would also increase consistency across the country, while also providing schools the autonomy to respond to their local environment and educational needs.

Third, the MESC could consider developing and implementing sanctions and incentives into their accountability system. This approach would reward and encourage high-performing schools, as well as identify schools that are not performing well and provide opportunity for the schools to develop and implement improvement plans, or to be temporarily/permanently closed if they continuously do not meet standards. It is important to recognize that implementation of a holistic incentive system should be implemented gradually. For instance, the system could focus on one area (i.e. school infrastructure) and expand to include aspects of school operations. An auxiliary benefit of an effective incentive system is that it recognizes where there is good performance which can be used to improve information sharing of effective attributes and strategies across the education system. Conversely, it identifies where attention should be given to improve compliance with standards.

V. Comparison of Samoa's Level of School Autonomy and Accountability with Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands

Table 3, below, presents the comparison of results from the SABER-SAA policy assessment. Both PNG and Samoa achieve an *Established* rating in autonomy in budget planning and approval, whereas Solomon Islands is rated as *Emerging* in this policy goal. Each of the three countries employs a student fee scheme that is administered at the central level. The school level, in partnership with the associated Board of Management/School Committee, determines how resources are used. The primary reason for Solomon Islands *Emerging* rating is the absence of adequate documentation in financial management of non-teaching staff.

PNG and Solomon Islands, which received a rating of *Emerging* for policy goal 2, both have subnational levels of government – Provincial Department of Education and Education Authority, respectively – which are responsible for determining the recruitment and deployment of teaching staff. In Samoa this function is managed by the central Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture, however the education system has a two-level format consisting of the central ministry and school level.

Although PNG and Samoa are both rated as *Established* in Policy Goal 3 on the participation of the school council in school governance, the two countries have very different systems. Through the School Learning Improvement Plan (SLIP) initiative in Papua New Guinea, two entities – the SLIP committee and the Board of Management (BoM) – operate within the scope of the school council in school governance. The SLIP committee is tasked with developing the vision and strategic objectives of the school, and the BoM is responsible for quality assurance. In Samoa the School Committee – comprised of the school principal and local community members – plays an active role in setting the vision of the school and in ongoing school operations. The MESC provides some support to equip committee members with the requisite skills and competencies to perform their duties, although these tend to focus on financial management issues and less on quality education inputs and methods.

In Solomon Islands participation of the School Committee – comprised of the head teacher, teaching

staff, community members and students – is *Emerging*. The committee plays an active role in preparing the Whole School Development Plan (WSDP), annual budgets and supports school operations, however policy documentation is not well developed. Furthermore, the School Committee has limited involvement in the non-financial input and operations of schools.

Each of the three countries has achieved an *Established* rating in the assessment of school and student performance policy goal and *Emerging* for accountability to stakeholders policy goal. The biggest area for improvement relates to the dissemination of results, lack of analysis, and use of school performance results by the public for better accountability .

Table 3: Level of Development of Policy Goals Across Three Pacific Countries

SAA Policy Goals	Level of Development		
	Papua New Guinea	Samoa	Solomon Islands
1. Autonomy in Budget Planning and Approval	Established ●●●○	Established ●●●○	Emerging ●●○○
2. Autonomy in Personnel Management	Emerging ●●○○	Latent ●○○○	Emerging ●●○○
3. Participation of the School Council in School Governance	Established ●●●○	Established ●●●○	Emerging ●●○○
4. Assessment of School and Student Performance	Established ●●●○	Established ●●●○	Established ●●●○
5. Accountability to Stakeholders	Emerging ●●○○	Emerging ●●○○	Emerging ●●○○

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Acronyms

MESC	Ministry of Education, Sport, and Culture
MoF	Ministry of Finance
PaBER	Pacific Benchmarking for Education Results
PSC	Public Services Commission
SAMP	School Annual Management Plan
SBM	School-based Management
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SPECA	Samoa Primary Education Certification Assessment
SRO	School Review Officer
SSFGS	Samoa School Fees Grant Scheme

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The Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) initiative collects data on the policies and institutions of education systems around the world and benchmarks them against practices associated with student learning. SABER aims to give all parties with a stake in educational results—from students, administrators, teachers, and parents to policymakers and business people—an accessible, detailed, objective snapshot of how well the policies of their country's education system are oriented toward ensuring that all children and youth learn.

This report focuses specifically on policies in the area of School Autonomy and Accountability.

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