Tonga

Population: 102,000
Schools: 115 schools (35 secondary), 30,000 students
ICT access: Moderate

Background
The Kingdom of Tonga has been involved with educational ICT since the creation of the Community Development and Training Centre (CDTC) in the 1970s. An overarching goal is to foster a large enough ICT workforce that businesses, institutions and organisations will find it easier to use ICT solutions to develop and participate in the information society.

The Tongan curriculum emphasises quality educational delivery and is linked to the NZ qualification framework and many target skills relate to the NZQA, especially with respect to teacher training diplomas. The Ministry of Education is supportive of ICT in education and distance education programmes and aims for all schools to have access. The country also has plans for the development of a Technology University.

A notable success in Tonga has been the founding of the National ICT Society (NICTS) as a non-governmental organization, aiming to improve the use of ICT in education by brokering partnerships with government and teachers so they share their experience and resources. The Tonga Communications Corporation (TCC), the only telco and ISP, has been undergoing redevelopment and offers special rates to schools, though these are perceived as high.

Policy
An eLearning policy is entering implementation in Tonga. The Tongan government is revising the national syllabus for ICT/Computer Studies for form 3 to 5. The aim is to allow teachers to use the syllabus more effectively in the context of ICT. The government’s main objectives are to expand the role of ICT in the syllabus and develop teachers’ ICT skills. Other objectives are wider student usage; continued revision of the syllabus, improved approaches to teacher training, sustainability of ICT and improved quality of service.

Challenges

- Lack of basic infrastructure; High costs
- Lack of expertise, dependence on donor agencies for IT equipment
- Low rates of rural access; High emigration
- Limited information about current infrastructure and forecasted needs
Recommendations

- Improve training and skills for teachers, build capacity at Ministry’s CDU
- Collaborate with stakeholders to reduce costs of ICT for schools
- Improve rural access
- Upgrade IT equipment in schools
- Share and draw from regional experiences in educational ICT