

Regional Consultation of Pacific Representatives of Professional Groups on Labour Mobility

The Institute of Professional Engineers of Samoa was invited to send two representatives to a consultation on Labour Mobility hosted by the South Pacific Board of Educational Assessment (SPBEA) in Fiji. The consultation was held at the Tanoa Hotel in Nadi from June 18th – 20th.

The two delegates from IPES were the Registrar Tupai Mau Simanu and Tagaloa Fetu Osooso an engineer from Bluesky Samoa. There were also other delegates from Samoa representing the Teachers, Nurses and Medical Associations.

The Pacific Region is vulnerable to the changes in global economies and some islands are much better prepared to handle these while others are not. The whole purpose of the consultation was to try and establish regional consensus on establishing regional occupational standards as well as professional associations. This will enable professionals from the region to move freely amongst the islands and be able to work without a lot of restrictions due to recognition of professional status and qualification.

IPES was the only organisation from Samoa that was invited to do a presentation on how it registers and licenses its members. IPES was also the representative of the engineering profession amongst the islands. The presentations on the medical and nursing professions were done by Vanuatu and Fiji respectively while the teachers were also represented by Fiji.

The president of the South Pacific Institute of Engineers (SPEA) Mr Pratarp Singh was also present in the consultation and he delivered a presentation on SPEA. The engineering profession is ahead of the other professions in the fact that it already has a regional organisation. Also engineers from island states such as Fiji and Samoa are now able to work in other island states without any problems.

The main concerns raised in the consultation are the recognition of qualifications and the process of having proper registers for professionals. The benchmark for qualifications in all countries in the Pacific are those obtained from universities and institutions in countries such as Australia and New Zealand. However, some islands are now sending scholarship students to countries such as China and Cuba. The question was asked on whether students coming back with degrees from these countries will be given the same recognition level as those graduating from New Zealand and Australia.

Establishing regional organisations such as SPEA will play an important role in labour mobility. Under the Labour Mobility scheme, engineers from Samoa can fill in for a demand in Tonga and vice versa. This is seen as a win/win situation for both countries and to the engineer as well. Having a regional data base will enable countries to use it as a resource to tap into whenever a need rises. Having common standards and licensing procedures will ensure that there is mutual understanding amongst countries and the expectations on ethics and quality of work is the same across the entire region.

IPES and SPEA were able to articulate the procedures that have been in place as far as the engineering profession is concerned. While it is still an on-going process, the engineering profession is seen as a pioneer in this Labour Mobility scheme due to the fact that it already has a regional body and there is already evidence of engineers from various island countries working in other island states.

The IPES presentation was well received by the consultation. In addition the IPES delegates were also able to gather important information as well as new ideas to make IPES continue on with its current growth.



Second Row : Tagaloa Fetu Osooso 2nd from right, Tupai Mau Simanu 3rd from right and Mr Pratarp Singh 5th from right



IPES Registrar delivering his presentation to the consultation