

Concept Note

OCIES 2026 Conference Theme

Reimagining Education in Oceania: Indigenous Knowledge, Equity, and Sustainable Futures

Background and Context

The Oceania Comparative and International Education Society (OCIES) conference provides a vital platform for advancing scholarly dialogue on education within the diverse and dynamic contexts of Oceania. As the region continues to navigate complex social, cultural, environmental, and technological changes, there is an increasing need to critically examine the purposes, practices, and futures of education systems across Pacific Island nations and beyond.

The hosting of the OCIES 2026 Conference by Solomon Islands National University (SINU) presents a timely opportunity to foreground Pacific perspectives and contribute to ongoing global conversations on education, equity, and sustainability. In particular, it offers a platform to centre Indigenous knowledge systems, languages, and epistemologies that have long been marginalised in formal education discourse.

Theme Rationale

The proposed theme, “**Reimagining Education in Oceania: Indigenous Knowledge, Equity, and Sustainable Futures,**” seeks to stimulate critical and constructive dialogue on how education in the region can be reshaped to better reflect the cultural realities, aspirations, and developmental priorities of Pacific communities.

This theme is underpinned by three interconnected priorities:

- **Indigenous Knowledge and Epistemologies:** Recognising and valuing Pacific ways of knowing, including relational, community-based, and dialogic approaches such as *tok stori*, and exploring their integration into formal education systems.
- **Equity and Inclusion:** Addressing persistent disparities in access, participation, and outcomes in education, particularly for learners in rural and remote contexts, marginalised groups, and diverse linguistic communities.
- **Sustainable Futures:** Engaging with the role of education in responding to pressing regional challenges, including climate change, sustainable livelihoods, and social resilience, while preparing learners for an uncertain and rapidly changing world.

Together, these priorities encourage a rethinking of education that is both locally grounded and globally connected.

Objectives of the Conference Theme

The theme aims to:

1. Provide a platform for showcasing **Pacific and Indigenous scholarship** in education.
2. Promote dialogue on **culturally responsive and contextually relevant pedagogies**.
3. Examine issues of **equity, access, and inclusion** across education systems in Oceania.
4. Explore the role of education in advancing **sustainable development and community resilience**.
5. Foster collaboration between **researchers, educators, policymakers, and development partners** across the region and internationally.

Proposed Sub-Themes

The conference will be organised around the following sub-themes:

1. **Indigenous Knowledge and Pacific Epistemologies**
2. **Equity, Access, and Inclusion in Education**
3. **Teacher Development and Professional Learning**
4. **Education for Sustainable Development in Oceania**
5. **Digital Futures and Innovation in Education**
6. **Policy, Leadership, and Governance in Education**

Conclusion

This theme positions the OCIES 2026 Conference as a significant regional and international forum for rethinking education in Oceania through the lenses of Indigenous knowledge, equity, and sustainability. It reflects the aspirations of Pacific communities while contributing to broader global discussions on the future of education.

By hosting this conference, SINU aims to facilitate meaningful dialogue, strengthen regional research networks, and promote educational approaches that are inclusive, culturally grounded, and responsive to the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.