

EDUCATION ANALYTICS SERVICE: TEACHER DEVELOPMENT MULTI-YEAR STUDIES

Vanuatu: Final Report

Elizabeth Cassity, Debbie Wong, Jvelin Wendiady and Jennie Chainey



Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Australian
Aid 

ACER

Education Analytics Service is supported by the Australian Government and implemented by the Australian Council for Educational Research.

This document has been prepared under the management of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)'s Education Analytics Services (EAS).

Teacher Development Multi-Year Study Series. Vanuatu: Final Report

The Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd
19 Prospect Hill Road
Camberwell VIC 3124
Phone: (03) 9277 5555
ABN 19 004 398 145

www.acer.org

978-1-74286-729-8

© 2023 The Commonwealth of Australia, represented by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



With the exception of any material protected by a trademark, and where otherwise noted, all material presented in this report is licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) licence.

Recommended attribution

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade must be attributed as the copyright holder of this publication and Elizabeth Cassity, Debbie Wong, Javelin Wendiady and Jennie Chainey as the authors. You must also retain the copyright and licence information and provide a link to the original material.

Recommended citation (APA 7th ed)

Cassity, E., Wong, D., Wendiady, J., & Chainey, J. (2023). Teacher development multi-year study series. Vanuatu Final Report. Australian Council for Educational Research.
<https://doi.org/10.37517/978-1-74286-729-8>
<https://research.acer.edu.au/eas/>

Amendment history

Version No.	Date	Brief description of change	Author
1	15 March 2023	Draft 1 submitted	Elizabeth Cassity Debbie Wong Jevelin Wendiady Jennie Chainey
2	28 July 2023	Draft 2 submitted	Elizabeth Cassity Debbie Wong

Table of Contents

Amendment history	3
Table of Contents	4
Abbreviations and acronyms	5
Executive Summary	7
Introduction	7
Study Questions	7
Summary of findings	8
Overall study recommendations	13
1. Introduction	17
1.1 Objectives of the Study	18
2. Country and investment context	18
2.1 Vanuatu’s new curriculum and the VESP program	18
3. Study design and methodology	20
3.1 Qualitative data	20
3.2 Quantitative data	22
3.3 Study limitations	23
4. Summary of findings from 2022 data collection.....	24
4.1 Case studies	24
4.2 PILNA and VANSTA	29
5. Overall study findings: lessons learned within and across provinces and years	30
5.1 Key changes and challenges related to teaching quality	30
5.2 Key changes and challenges related to new curriculum implementation	40
5.3 Key changes and challenges related to student learning outcomes	45
6. Study conclusions and recommendations: informing teacher development in Vanuatu and beyond	48
6.1 Design and implementation	49
6.2 Investment in professional learning – a system for ongoing and continuous professional learning Insights from the 2021 data collection	52
6.3 Investment in collecting student learning data	54
References	56
Annex A: New curriculum timeline	58
Annex B: Detailed study design and methodology.....	60
Amended study design	60
Qualitative data	61
Quantitative data	64
Annex C: VESP in context – year 3 findings	69
Introduction	69
Santo and Erromango	69
To what extent has the investment improved teaching quality in Vanuatu?	70
To what extent has the investment in teacher training and mentoring supported effective implementation of Vanuatu’s new curriculum?	96
To what extent has the investment in teacher training and mentoring supported student learning outcomes?	112
System changes	131
Sustainability	131

Abbreviations and acronyms

ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
CDC	Curriculum Development Centre
CO	classroom observation
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
EAS	Education Analytics Service
EAU	Examination and Assessment Unit
ELT	Effective Learning and Teaching
EQAP	Education Quality and Assessment Programme
FGDs	focus group discussions
GEDSI	Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion
GoV	Government of Vanuatu
HSP	home school packages
ISU	In-Service Unit
MoET	Ministry of Education and Training
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
NUV	National University of Vanuatu
OpenVEMIS	Vanuatu Education Management Information System
PEO	Provincial Education Officer
PILNA	Pacific Island Literacy and Numeracy Assessment
PT	Provincial Trainer
SIO	School Improvement Officer
SPC	Pacific Community
VanSBITT	Vanuatu School-Based In-Service Teacher Training

VANSTA	Vanuatu Standardised Test of Achievement
VESP	Vanuatu Education Support Program
VITE	Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education
ZCA	Zone Curriculum Advisor

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Australian Government is supporting the Government of Vanuatu through its Vanuatu Education Support Program (VESP) to undertake long-term education reforms. A key focus of these reforms is the rollout of a new national curriculum in conjunction with the *National Language Policy* (2012), intended to improve teaching quality and student learning outcomes for students in the primary and early secondary years of education. Part of a multi-year study series, the Education Analytics Service (EAS) is investigating how the VESP is making a difference to these teaching and learning outcomes. The study series was commissioned by the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), to investigate teaching and learning development initiatives in three countries: Lao PDR, Timor-Leste and Vanuatu.

The new primary curriculum has been rolled out to schools in stages by year level, starting with Year 1 in 2016, and is accompanied by the distribution of teaching and learning materials and training. The new curriculum facilitates content uniformity and promotes pedagogical approaches, such as student-centred learning, that aim to transform teaching and learning. The *National Language Policy* is an important change implemented as part of the new curriculum, allowing agreed local languages to be used throughout the primary years as students make the transition to English or French (MoET, 2012).¹ Phases I and II of the VESP have been integral to the design and implementation of the new primary curriculum. In-service training modules have supported the curriculum rollout. VESP also supports the distribution and development of teaching and learning materials as part of the new curriculum.

This study has provided the opportunity to investigate teaching quality and student learning outcomes in Vanuatu linked to the rollout of the national curriculum. This study references the VESP Phase II End of Program Outcome 2 (Quality): 'Improved student literacy and numeracy outcomes (measured at Years 4, 6 and 8),' as well as Intermediate Outcome 2.1: 'Teachers are applying the curriculum and associated principles of teaching, learning and assessment' (DFAT, 2023).² The purpose of this summary is to provide a brief overview of findings and recommendations from the three years of the Study (2019, 2021, 2022). This Final Report will contribute to a multi-country report for the study series, which will explore lessons learnt and recommendations for teacher development in other contexts.

Study Questions

The EAS Teacher Development Multi-Year Study for Vanuatu (the Study) seeks to answer the question: ***To what extent does this aid investment produce improved teaching quality and improved student learning?***

¹ While the *National Language Policy* supports the use of all Vanuatu languages in education, Government endorsement of teaching of all Vanuatu languages in primary schools changed in 2023 to support only the teaching of English and French at all levels of education. This differs from the dual language/multilingual approach of using Bislama or vernacular languages in addition to English and/or French in classrooms during the period of this study (2019-2023).

² When this study was initiated in 2018 it referenced VESP Phase II EOPO 2 (Quality): 'School principals, teachers, parents and communities collaborate to enable students to achieve improved literacy and numeracy outcomes (DFAT, 2018).

Three specific questions related to this broad question are being investigated:

1. To what extent has the investment improved teaching quality in Vanuatu?
2. To what extent has the investment in teacher training and mentoring supported effective implementation of Vanuatu's new curriculum?
3. To what extent have teacher training and support activities led to improved learning outcomes?

The study adopts a mixed methods approach using qualitative case study data and quantitative student assessment data. Case studies include interview data from principals, Year 1 to 4 teachers, provincial stakeholders, parents and the community. It also includes classroom observation data of Year 2 teachers. For the final round of data collection in 2022, interviews were also conducted with Year 5 and 6 teachers, and national education stakeholders.

There have been three rounds of qualitative data collection covering islands from five of Vanuatu's six provinces: 2019 in Malekula and Pentecost, 2021 in Tanna and Efate, and 2022 in Santo and Erromango. The focus on collecting data from different contexts highlights the range of uptake of reforms across Vanuatu. The Study also includes secondary analysis of quantitative data from the Vanuatu National Student Assessment (VANSTA) (2017, 2019, 2021) and the Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (PILNA) (2018, 2021).

Summary of findings

As presented in this final report, there are a number of findings that provide insights into the extent to which teacher practices and student learning outcomes are changing with VESP's support to implement the new national curriculum. Results from the three cycles of data collection suggest that VESP – as a program that supports the broader education sector in Vanuatu – has been successful in strengthening elements of teaching quality, the implementation of the national curriculum and aspects of student learning. However, there are challenges for the sustainability of VESP inputs to teaching quality, including changes to provincial structures that have previously provided support to teachers and principals, and the absence of an ongoing and continuous program of teacher professional learning.

VESP has contributed to professional learning opportunities that have improved knowledge and practice, and particularly student-centred pedagogies. There is high value placed on curriculum support resources by teachers and principals. VESP has contributed to MoET outreach programs that support schools and communities to understand the new curriculum and the language policy, although this varies across the country.³ Students are more interested and engaged in school as a result of student-centred pedagogies, but program-level evidence that VESP has impacted student learning outcomes is for the most part inconclusive.⁴ There are wide variations in student achievement across the country and a consistent pattern of boys' underperformance.

³ One example of these programs is 'Yumi evriwan y sapote mol pikinini long eli lening blong olgeta' or 'We all support children in their early learning' to promote key messages including that children learn better in their first language and support children's learning at home and at school.

⁴ VESP relies on national (VANSTA) and regional (PILNA) assessments to reference student learning outcomes.

To what extent has the investment improved teaching quality in Vanuatu?

Results from the overall Study indicate that VESP-supported training for teachers and principals, along with the provision of curriculum materials and resources, have been effective in strengthening application of new pedagogical methods and improving knowledge about the curriculum. While teachers and principals are increasingly applying knowledge about the new curriculum, the process is complex and teachers need more support and time to fully incorporate and consistently apply new approaches. The training and resources are particularly valued by temporary and untrained teachers, as well as new teacher graduates.

The lack of follow-up training or availability of training and support for all teachers and principals is a problem that needs addressing. A key message from the three cycles of data collection is a need for more comprehensive training, refresher training and ongoing professional learning support.

The current gaps created by the dissolution of the in-service teacher training unit and provincial support structures for schools represent significant risks for how the system will support the professional learning needs of teachers and principals in the future. There are risks to any gains made towards improving teaching quality and community support for the curriculum. Table 1 summarises the overall study findings for this first research question.

Table 1: Overall study key findings for research question 1 (teaching quality)

To what extent has the investment improved teaching quality in Vanuatu?			
	Finding 1	Finding 2	Finding 3
Teacher professional knowledge, beliefs and attitudes	VESP-supported training, including <i>Effective Learning and Teaching</i> (ELT) and <i>Ademap Lanwis</i> , supported improved teacher professional knowledge about content and pedagogies used in the new curriculum, particularly related to improving student engagement and lesson planning.	Teachers and principals reported increased confidence and motivation, and attributed this to participation in VESP-supported training, the teachers' guide and resource kits, and observations of greater student engagement in learning. Some teachers noted additional workload associated with the new curriculum.	The variable quality of training received, lack of ongoing support, and uneven participation in training are key barriers to improving skills and knowledge. Teacher education and frequency of professional development opportunities are significantly associated with student achievement.
Teaching practice	VESP-supported training and new curriculum resources helped teachers improve their use of student-centred pedagogies. For example, teachers reported using group and pair work, peer-to-peer learning, hands-on activities, supporting a range of ability levels, and making connections to local contexts. However, classroom observations	Teachers and principals reported training and resources helped improve lesson planning and promoted a greater focus on creating and aligning activities to learning indicators, which helped them to monitor student learning.	Teachers found the ability to speak Bislama or vernacular in the classroom was critical for improving their teaching practice, especially for encouraging student engagement in the classroom. For example, teachers reported using Bislama or the vernacular in their classroom at a range of year levels to explain difficult concepts to

To what extent has the investment improved teaching quality in Vanuatu?			
	Finding 1	Finding 2	Finding 3
	indicated the extent of take-up varied.		students. ⁵ However, how language is used in the classroom varied widely.
GEDSI	While there was a positive change in awareness and attitudes about disability-inclusion, there was not a significant shift in classroom practice. Changes were attributed to the new curriculum, VESP-supported training and GoV strategies.	Teachers and principals who participated in inclusive education courses implemented inclusive practices in their classrooms and schools, but such specialist knowledge is not widespread beyond course participants.	Many teachers identified mixed-gender group work as a key strategy to support equal participation of boys and girls. A key issue highlighted by PILNA and VANSTA is that girls are consistently outperforming boys across both literacy and numeracy.
Assessment	Teachers and principals reported a clear shift towards more regular classroom-based assessment and using assessment information to monitor student learning and identify supports needed. Some attributed this to the new curriculum and VESP-supported training.	Teachers reported using a combination of assessment methods, and the practice of evaluating students against learning indicators has become more prominent.	Some teachers highlighted additional workload associated with the new assessment expectations.
COVID-19	COVID-19 and other disruptions presented challenges for teachers and parents to support continuity of learning. Home school packages could not reach all students, and teachers could not provide support. Many parents could not assist their children due to low literacy levels and other priorities.	COVID-19 disruptions added further hurdles for teachers and principals to participate in training, which was already limited and uneven prior to the pandemic. This affected Years 5 and 6 teachers more as the pandemic coincided with this stage of the curriculum rollout.	Many teachers and principals noted a decline in student engagement and learning upon return to face-to-face learning. This impacted how teachers prepared and delivered lessons.

To what extent has the investment in teacher training and mentoring supported effective implementation of Vanuatu's new curriculum?

Results from the overall Study indicate that access to VESP support for teachers and principals through training and provision of resources has contributed to implementation of the new curriculum. However, ongoing and follow-up support and feedback is critical for teachers to build on and consolidate their knowledge and practice. Across school communities there is variability in how the language policy is understood and implemented in classrooms, and this remains an issue

⁵ In Years 1-3 students are introduced to English or French from Year 1 along with their mother tongue. From Year 4 onwards, teachers and students transition to a multilingual approach whereby vernaculars, Bislama, English and French are incorporated in the classroom.

with wide ranging opinions. Respondents said they place high value on access to teachers' guides and curriculum resources, and these provide useful guidance for lesson planning and classroom teaching. At the same time, there are instances of limited access to resources and gaps in the types of resources that schools have access to. Questionnaire data also indicate a decline in student and teacher textbook access from 2021. Receiving support from principals, teacher peers, MoET and provincial education officers is critical to helping teachers effectively implement the new curriculum, but current system capacity and gaps in support from provincial officers to schools presents a risk to long-term uptake of new curriculum content and pedagogies. Table 2 summarises the overall study findings for the second research question.

Table 2: Overall study key findings for research question 2 (curriculum implementation)

To what extent has the investment in teacher training and mentoring supported effective implementation of Vanuatu's new curriculum?			
	Finding 1	Finding 2	Finding 3
Curriculum resources and materials	Teachers' guides and curriculum resources provided support for lesson planning and classroom teaching.	Trend data from the PILNA teacher questionnaires (2018 and 2021) indicated an overall decline in access to textbooks for students, and this is significantly associated with student achievement levels in PILNA.	Teachers reported a lack of access to curriculum resources and resource gaps, which added to teacher workload.
Teacher support	Principal support in a range of areas such as access to resources, facilitating professional learning opportunities and feedback on teaching practice were valued by teachers. But principals had limited involvement in training and awareness, and many were not able to effectively support their teachers.	Some principals reported increased capacity and confidence to focus on quality teaching and learning due to participating in Instructional Leadership training, but access to this training was very limited. The PILNA Vanuatu school leader questionnaire found that school leader participation in in-service programs for curriculum support is significantly associated with higher levels of student achievement in both Year 4 and 6.	Collaboration with teacher colleagues on the new curriculum was also valued, but the extent of this varied by location. Cross-school collaboration took place in some locations, but distance presented challenges.
Language	Across the six locations of the Study, the language policy has been unevenly articulated to schools, parents and communities. Variable levels of training on language transition resulted in difficulties for teachers in implementing the policy in classrooms.	Teachers reported improved interaction with students who are more at ease using Bislama or the vernacular in their classrooms.	Teachers in Years 3 and 4 said they needed help to support students to learn English and French. While <i>Ademap Lanwis</i> training provided some support to teachers in language transition, more training is needed.

To what extent have teacher training and support activities led to improved learning outcomes?

The extent to which teacher training and support activities have led to improved learning outcomes is unclear. It is important to acknowledge that educational changes take time and there is a need for long-term commitment and follow-through to implement large-scale policy changes such as Vanuatu's curriculum reform.

Results from VANSTA and PILNA indicate that there are widespread differences in student achievement between provinces in both literacy and numeracy. Students have also showed some evidence of learning loss in literacy and numeracy since 2021. There is a high proportion of students not meeting the learning outcomes expected at their grade level, particularly Year 4 and Year 6 boys in literacy. Teachers also shared a range of perceptions about how their students performed in the new curriculum, including concern about students' performance in reading and writing. At the same time, teachers acknowledged the benefit to their students' engagement and interest in lessons when they were able to learn in Bislama or the vernacular. The new curriculum represents significant change to both teaching and assessment practices. It is likely to take more time for teachers to understand and fully incorporate these new approaches into their teaching practice, and they need ongoing support to do so. Student performance may be related to teachers' professional capacity to master the curriculum and apply the necessary pedagogy to facilitate quality learning. Table 3 summarises the overall study findings for the third research question.

Table 3: Overall study key findings for research question 3 (student learning)

To what extent has the investment in teacher training and mentoring supported student learning outcomes?			
	Finding 1	Finding 2	Finding 3
Academic outcomes	Results from VANSTA 2017, 2019 and 2021 and PILNA 2018 and 2021 showed high proportions of students who do not meet the expected learning outcomes at their grade level. Some learning loss from 2021 was possibly related to the impact of COVID-19 or cyclone-induced school closures. There was a wide range of perceptions about academic outcomes from case study respondents.	VANSTA and PILNA indicate that there are widespread differences in student achievement across provinces in both Years 4 and 6, and girls have consistently outperformed boys at both year levels in literacy and numeracy. Literacy achievement of boys in Year 4 and Year 6 have consistently declined and the gaps between boys' and girls' achievements have widened since 2017.	PILNA 2018 and 2021 teacher professional development measures (attending professional development in the last three years) are positively associated with student achievement, especially in Year 4.

To what extent has the investment in teacher training and mentoring supported student learning outcomes?			
	Finding 1	Finding 2	Finding 3
Student participation, interest and wellbeing	Multiple case study respondents observed students as more talkative and expressive in class, and able to speak more coherently and clearly because they were able to use Bislama or their vernacular in their classrooms.	PILNA 2021 Year 4 student reading and writing scores were higher in classrooms where teachers encourage problem-solving procedures and expression of ideas in class.	Higher levels of student engagement and interest in school and supportive classroom culture (including teacher-student relationships and interactions) contributed to student wellbeing.
Parent and community support	Teachers, principals and national-level respondents reported that parents were encouraged to support their children's learning but in particular, work commitments undermine this support.	Many parents reported that they help with children's homework and attendance but some struggle with understanding how to support their children.	

Overall study recommendations

The findings from this Study indicate three areas of potential policy and program consideration. The first area includes considerations about design and implementation. The second area explores possibilities for investing in professional learning. The third area presents considerations for ongoing investment in collecting student learning data.

Design and implementation

The design and implementation of VESP presents a number of opportunities to learn about the benefits and challenges of supporting a program that provides a broad level of support for the education sector. A key benefit of a broad national and subnational approach linked to a national sector plan such as VESP Phase I and Phase II is that both programs are long-term investments that support GoV's investments and objectives in the education sector. This is in contrast to a program that may have a sharper focus on teacher and school leader professional learning. Evidence from Vanuatu indicated that while broad national and subnational approaches in education can support overall system reform, teacher professional learning programs are often rolled out as one-off inputs, which creates challenges for making sustainable changes in teaching quality. The Study also highlighted the importance of engaging in policy dialogue related to teacher systems and the need to engage with the community on education reforms.

Recommendations:

1. DFAT to consider the duration and balance of the investment needed to support the effective implementation of GoV's education reform process.
 - a. Interventions that aim to transform teaching and learning need commensurate investments in teacher development. Programs need to be sustainable and scalable.

- Long-term investments in teacher professional learning will be more effective than one-off investments in supporting effective changes in teaching quality.
- b. Parents and communities are important stakeholders and require engagement and support on how they can effectively support their children’s learning.
2. VESP and DFAT to continue to engage with MoET in policy dialogue and advocacy related to teacher systems.
 - a. DFAT to continue to engage in policy dialogue with MoET, other key ministries and development partners on areas of policy such as education sector resourcing, teacher workforce reforms, teacher education and a system for continuous teacher professional development that can also support improved student learning outcomes.
 - b. Current gaps created by the dissolution of the in-service teacher training unit and provincial support structures for schools represent significant risks for how the system will support the professional learning needs of teachers and principals in the future. This requires active policy engagement by DFAT and VESP.
 3. MoET and VESP to support communications strategies to enable schools to continue to engage with parents and communities about the curriculum and their children’s learning.
 - a. Drawing on the experiences of recent community advocacy campaigns (e.g., *6 Via Klas 1* to promote primary school enrolment at the right age), MoET to consider running another round of campaigns to inform parents about changes in schools and the importance of education.
 - b. MoET and provincial education authorities to draw on the experience of early childhood and community-based education programs that engage parents in supporting their children to develop foundational early literacy, numeracy and school readiness skills.
 4. MoET and VESP to support research to inform how teacher professional learning support could be better targeted and sustained.
 - a. MoET and VESP to conduct a gap analysis of teacher and principal training and knowledge to develop a plan to enable higher and more comprehensive levels of participation.
 - b. MoET and VESP to conduct further classroom observations and collect perception data in additional school communities and provinces to better understand which teaching practices are easier or harder to improve, and why, to inform more focused support to teacher professional learning.
 - c. MoET and VESP to identify and investigate variations in student performance results as highlighted through VANSTA and PILNA, and action strategies that address improved and more equitable outcomes that can be monitored and sustained.

Investment in professional learning – a system for ongoing and continuous professional learning

Support of teacher professional learning is a high value investment in ensuring the ongoing support of teaching quality. Professional development programs for teachers that are effective are documented as being sustained, collaborative, subject-specific, draw on external expertise, have

buy-in from teachers and are practice-based (Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2018), but questions remain as to how to deploy many of these features in practice. This Study has found that targeted, ongoing support of teachers in Vanuatu should be a critical feature of any investment in teacher professional learning going forward.

Recommendations:

1. VESP will support MoET to develop a strategy to support a sustainable and long-term model for effective and ongoing professional learning within Vanuatu schools and government that can be embedded and sustained within the MoET system.
 - a. MoET with DFAT support to consider a model that enables provincial education offices to provide school-level support through activities such as professional development, coaching, feedback and mentoring. If teachers do not receive feedback it is difficult to improve their practice.
 - b. MoET and DFAT to work together to support the devolution of support services to schools within the provincial structure reform and provide resources and training to provincial staff to enable them to provide effective support to teachers and principals.
 - c. VESP to continue to support the distribution of resources to schools and students given the reported decline in access to textbooks in 2021. There are clear links between access to resources and improved learning outcomes.
2. VESP to consider more focused support for principals beyond induction programs, as findings indicate that principals are an important source of school-level support for teachers' professional learning and development.
 - a. VESP to support MoET to conduct further investigation on possible school leadership programming strategies, especially given the PILNA-reported outcome that school leader in-service programs are associated with higher levels of student achievement in PILNA.
 - b. VESP to consider revisiting alternative models of instructional leadership, such as VansBITT (2016) to strengthen the capacity of primary school principals to support teachers in their professional development.
3. MoET and NUV to support alignment in both the areas of pre-service and in-service teacher training and support.
 - a. DFAT and VESP to continue advocating for clarity about support for the in-service training of teachers on the new curriculum and other pressing areas.
4. MoET, NUV and VESP to continue to offer opportunities for teachers and principals to develop learning and skills in gender and disability inclusion. Some possibilities include:
 - a. VESP to continue to explore opportunities to support teachers to develop specialist skills in this area through the Special and Inclusive Education Diploma offered through the University of the South Pacific.
 - b. NUV and MoET to consider how to include coursework focused on gender and disability inclusion in its Bachelor of Education programs and other teacher-focused education programs.
 - c. VESP to support MoET to offer additional training in gender and disability-inclusive approaches in teaching and learning as part of in-service teacher training.

Investment in collecting student learning data

Student learning outcomes data is an important source of evidence in understanding the impact of investments in teacher professional learning. Such data enables governments to make decisions about the need for changes in curriculum, teaching support, assessment and resourcing.

Understanding what students know and can do is also an important source of evidence for teachers and school leaders as they support ongoing student learning. One of the key strengths for the Study in Vanuatu is the availability of two large-scale assessments (VANSTA and PILNA) that are valid and reliable measures of student learning outcomes in Year 4 and Year 6. PILNA also includes questionnaires that are administered to sampled students, teachers and principals. Questionnaires enable an exploration of student learning outcomes and students and school background contexts, including why certain variables might impact student achievement.

Recommendations:

1. MoET and VESP to support the interpretation and use of data from PILNA and VANSTA.
 - a. MoET to continue engagement in workshops (such as EQAP's 'PILNA Data Digging' workshops) that support the use of assessment data to inform policy and programming plans.
 - b. VESP and MoET to use the evidence from VANSTA and PILNA on the wide-ranging provincial disparities to inform targeting of resources and professional learning programs.
2. MoET and VESP to support principals and teachers to understand the purposes and uses of VANSTA and PILNA, and how these large-scale assessments can contribute to understanding learning outcomes.
 - a. MoET to consider how to support teachers and principals to understand student assessment data and how to use that data to inform practice, and importantly how data supports monitoring of skills outlined in the curriculum.
 - b. MoET and VESP to explore disaggregated student learning outcomes data and contextual data by gender, language, location, school authority and inclusion variables to inform policy and programs to improve equity outcomes for students.

1. Introduction

The Australian Government, through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) is supporting long-term education reforms in Vanuatu, Lao PDR and Timor-Leste. Through the Education Analytics Service (EAS), DFAT is investigating teaching and learning development initiatives in a study series known as the Teacher Development Multi-Year Study Series.

In Vanuatu, the Australian Government is supporting the Government of Vanuatu (GoV) through its Vanuatu Education Support Program (VESP) to undertake long-term education reforms. A key focus is the rollout of a new national curriculum in conjunction with the *National Language Policy (2012)*, intended to improve teaching quality and student learning outcomes for students in the primary and early secondary years of education.⁶ Under the Teacher Development Multi-Year Study for Vanuatu (the Study), the EAS is investigating how the VESP supports teachers to develop teaching knowledge and to change teaching practice over time, and the extent to which this is making a difference to student learning outcomes. Three reports present the findings at certain points on the Study's timeline.

Vanuatu Interim Report 1 presents findings from data collected in Malampa (Malekula) and Penama (Pentecost) provinces in 2019, and secondary analysis of the 2017 Vanuatu National Student Assessment (VANSTA) and 2018 Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (PILNA). Interim Report 1 recommended the need for: intensive action on ongoing targeted teacher training on the new curriculum with a special emphasis on consistent application of the language policy; continued deep engagement with parents and communities to support children's learning; and ongoing follow-up with teachers, principals, Provincial Trainers (PTs) and School Improvement Officers (SIOs) to build on the gains made from the curriculum rollout. The report can be accessed [here](#).

Vanuatu Interim Report 2 presents findings from data collected in Shefa (Efate) and Tafea (Tanna) provinces in 2021, and secondary analysis of the 2019 VANSTA. It confirmed that the findings outlined in Interim Report 1 remain crucial and require continued and dedicated focus. Teachers and principals are knowledgeable about the new curriculum and are applying new methods into their practice. However, limited follow-up in teacher professional learning and inconsistencies in how the language policy is applied and communicated in schools have created challenges. Changes in provincial structure, such as the discontinuation of the PTs and SIOs have negatively impacted the delivery of in-service training and how teachers are supported in schools. The report can be accessed [here](#).

This report constitutes the Final Report. It presents findings from data collection in Sanma (Santo) and Tafea (Erromango) provinces in 2022. It aims to reflect on the outcomes of VESP by exploring the three cycles of data collection and contribute to analysis across the three countries in the Study series. The Final Report also presents on lessons learnt and recommendations related to teacher development for Vanuatu and other contexts.

⁶ While the *National Language Policy* supports the use of all Vanuatu languages in education, Government endorsement of teaching of all Vanuatu languages in primary schools changed in 2023 to support only the teaching of English and French at all levels of education. This differs from the dual language/multilingual approach of using Bislama or vernacular languages in addition to English and/or French in classrooms during the period of this study (2019-2022).

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The broad question that frames this study of Vanuatu's VESP (the Study) is:

To what extent does this aid investment produce improved teaching quality and improved student learning?

Three specific questions related to this broad question are being investigated:

1. To what extent has the investment improved teaching quality in Vanuatu?
2. To what extent has the investment in teacher training and mentoring supported effective implementation of Vanuatu's new curriculum?
3. To what extent have teacher training and support activities led to improved learning outcomes?

2. Country and investment context

2.1 Vanuatu's new curriculum and the VESP program

The Australian Government has historically been one of the most significant and long-term donors to education in Vanuatu. VESP Phase I was a joint six-year (2013–19) program between Australia and New Zealand, focused on literacy and numeracy from Kindergarten through Year 3. VESP Phase II was originally scheduled to run from 2019 to 2022 and has been extended to 2026.

VESP Phase I focused on supporting the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) to roll out the new curriculum for Years 1 to 3. Critically, the rollout of the new curriculum supports the implementation of the *National Language Policy* (2012). An aim of VESP Phase II is to build on VESP Phase I and continue to support MoET in achieving the objectives stated in the Vanuatu Education and Training Sector Strategy. VESP Phase II provides direct support to institutional activities and aligns with MoET's plans to achieve the development indicators in the National Sustainable Development Plan 2016-2030. In terms of the curriculum rollout, VESP Phase II supports the staged curriculum rollout from Year 4 to Year 9.⁷ VESP II coordinates this financial support with the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) (VESP, 2022). The Study focuses on quality teaching and learning in support of the new curriculum rollout in conjunction with the language policy. The Study references the VESP Phase II End of Program Outcome 2 (Quality): 'School principals, teachers, parents and communities collaborate to enable students to achieve improved literacy and numeracy outcomes' (DFAT, 2018).

The strategy for the curriculum rollout was to implement the curriculum in subsequent years across the country (see Annex A). The implementation of the curriculum in Year 1 commenced in 2016. This was followed by Year 2 in 2017 and culminating in Year 6 in 2021. To prepare for implementation of the curriculum, processes for planning, writing and training for teachers and principals commenced in 2014 and 2015. This included the development of two core professional learning modules – *Effective Learning and Teaching* (ELT) and *Instructional Leadership*. The process for implementation meant that materials were developed the year prior to the rollout for the year level, materials were

⁷ This rollout reflects the Government of New Zealand's support of the development of a revised Year 7 curriculum in 2021, and the Government of New Zealand's financial support for the development of curriculum resources for Years 8 and 9.

distributed to schools, and professional learning and support was provided for teachers to adapt the materials and implement the curriculum (VESP Phase I Completion Report, December 2018, p. 23). However, keeping to such timelines has been challenging in more recent years due to Tropical Cyclone Harold (2020) and COVID-19. Schools were closed due to risks associated with COVID-19 in 2020 and 2022, and movement into and within Vanuatu was restricted.

Connected to the language policy, VESP supported MoET to develop an approach known as *Ademap Lanwis* which enables students to learn first in their vernacular or Bislama and then build on those foundations as part of progressively learning the foreign languages of French or English (VESP Phase I Completion Report, December 2018, p. 23). The language policy states that Bislama or the local vernacular can be used in teaching during the first two years of primary school with either English or French introduced as a subject in Year 3. The agreed local languages may be used by teachers throughout the primary years as students make the transition to English or French (MoET, 2012).

The new Vanuatu primary curriculum has been written in Bislama (teachers' materials), whilst learning materials such as the 'readers' are written in Bislama and over 50 local vernacular languages. Subject content is sequenced for each year level to ensure content uniformity across classes (years) and schools. It also proposes new methodologies and pedagogical approaches that aim to transform teaching and learning. These are focused on inclusive education (that is, student-centred learning and local connections), language transition and classroom-based assessment practices. The new content and pedagogies included in the new national curriculum require significant change and new learning for Vanuatu teachers, school leaders and school communities. A key part of VESP has been to support a series of in-service training modules closely linked to the roll-out of the new curriculum. Annex A outlines the training programs that have been rolled out.

It is important to note changes in the education system have taken place since 2021, given their impact on teacher development. Previously, the In-service Unit (ISU) was tasked with conducting the training and professional development for the new curriculum. In 2021, the Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education (VITE) was integrated into the National University of Vanuatu (NUV), and the role of ISU was made defunct. In previous years, ISU via PTs conducted a range of training workshops with teachers, principals and some SIOs to build knowledge and capacity related to aspects of the new curriculum. The functions of PTs were to be amalgamated with SIO responsibilities, but in 2022, SIO and inspectorate positions were also made redundant.

CDU has come to fill this gap, continuing its role in curriculum development while also providing in-service training. COVID-19 restrictions have added another challenge, with many training programs delivered by trainers from 2020 to 2022 remotely.

In addition to these changes, NUV's School of Education is now responsible for pre-service teacher education and the upgrading of in-service primary teachers as part of the National Teacher Development Plan by 2030. Some teachers have already started doing additional courses as part of the upgrade process. The Teaching Services Commission oversees registration and licensing.

Finally, in 2023 a decision was made by the Government of Vanuatu to ban the teaching of Bislama and the vernacular in primary schools. This is a marked shift in the *National Language Policy* as applied to the new national curriculum, which supported the implementation of a dual language/multilingual approach of using Bislama or the vernacular languages in addition to English or French

in primary classrooms. Given this policy change took place after completion of the final year of data collection, its impact has not been explored in this Study.

3. Study design and methodology

The Study adopts a mixed methods approach utilising both quantitative and qualitative methods as detailed in Table 4. The *VESP Evaluation Plan* (EAS, 2018) and *Teacher Development Multi-Year Studies – Conceptual Framework* (EAS, 2017) provide the rationale and overall approach for this Study.

A key feature of the Study is the length of its duration (from 2018 until 2023) which acknowledges the complex nature of teacher development and that sustained change in teaching practice takes time. It also recognises the scale of the VESP investment and enables an agile and adaptive approach that is responsive to contextual affordances and limitations.

This approach enabled an amendment of the Study design in 2020 and 2022 to account for the global impact of COVID-19 on schools and governments and its associated border closures and travel restrictions, as well as Tropical Cyclone Harold. These delayed the second data collection by one year (to June-July 2021) and the third data collection by several months (to September-October 2022). Additionally, in 2021 classroom observations were added a sample of case study schools in the Vanuatu and Timor-Leste. This enabled the triangulation of case study perception data with observations, enriching the datasets related to all three research questions.

Table 4: Study data sources

Key research questions	Data sources
1. Teaching Quality To what extent has the investment improved teaching quality in Vanuatu?	Case studies at school level (2019, 2021, 2022) and system level (2022) Secondary analysis of PILNA (2018, 2021)
2. Curriculum Implementation To what extent has the investment in teacher training and mentoring supported effective implementation of Vanuatu's new curriculum?	Case studies at school level (2019, 2021, 2022) and system level (2022) Secondary analysis of PILNA (2018, 2021)
3. Student Learning To what extent have teacher training and support activities led to improved learning outcomes?	Case studies at school level (2019, 2021, 2022) and system level (2022) Secondary analysis of VANSTA (2017, 2019, 2021) and PILNA (2018, 2021)

Annex B provides further details about the Study design and methodology.

3.1 Qualitative data

The qualitative data contributes to our understanding of the impact of VESP in the three areas of teaching quality, curriculum implementation and student learning. Case study data was collected in 2019, 2021 and 2022. Two provinces were selected each year as sites for case study interviews to explore the breadth of teacher experience in Vanuatu, to investigate differences in implementation by island/province, and to investigate program sustainability.

Instrument design

Interviews and observation were the primary data collection methods for the case studies. The data collection tools included:

1. Individual semi-structured interview guides – years 1 to 4 teachers; years 5 and 6 teachers, principals, PTs, SIOs, provincial education officers (PEOs), national stakeholders
2. Focus group discussion guide – parents and community
3. Classroom observation instruments.

The ACER team worked in partnership with in-country research partners to refine and translate the case study interview guides and classroom observation instruments.

Sampling

Purposeful sampling was utilised to select the case study sites, presented in Table 5, based on specific criterion (province/island, language, education authority, VANSTA performance), and with input from DFAT Post and in-country research partners particularly on logistical feasibility. While the intention was to collect data from all six provinces, Torba was not possible given inter-island flights were still limited and unreliable in September 2022 due to COVID-19 disruptions. Over the three years, data was collected from 29 schools and communities.

Table 5: Case study sites

Year of study	Province (island)	Schools	Target respondents	Classroom observations
1 (2019)	Malampa (Malekula)	7	Years 1 to 4 teachers, principals, PTs, SIOs, provincial education officers, parents/community	No
	Penama (Pentecost)	5		
2 (2021)	Shefa (Efate)	4	Years 1 to 4 teachers, principals, PTs, SIOs, provincial education officers, parents/community	Yes
	Tafea (Tanna)	4		
3 (2022)	Sanma (Santo)	5	Years 1 to 4 teachers; years 5 and 6 teachers, principals, provincial education officers, parents/community, national stakeholders	Yes
	Tafea (Erromango)	4		

Data collection

The ACER research team worked in partnership with in-country research partners to undertake a total of 158 interviews with a range of education stakeholders over three years and 45 FGDs with parents and community (Table 6). From year 2 of the Study, where it was possible, the researchers conducted classroom observations of Year 2 *Language and Communication* lessons. The intention was that two observations would be conducted for each teacher, though three teachers were unavailable for a second observation. Table 7 sets out the number of teachers observed and classroom observations.

Table 6: Interview participants (years 1-3)

Type of stakeholder	Number interviewed / FGDs held		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Principals/head teachers	11	9	8
Year 1 to 4 teachers	32	26	26
Year 5 to 6 teachers	-	-	9
SIO	6	4	-
PT	4	3	-
PEO	-	2	2
Parent FGD	16	13	16
MoET representatives	-	-	6
DFAT/VESP representatives	-	-	10
Total	69	57	77

Table 7: Classroom observations sites (years 2 and 3)

Province (island)	Number of schools	Teachers observed	Classroom observations
Shefa (Efate)	4	4	7
Tafea (Tanna)	4	4	7
Sanma (Santo)	5	5	9
Tafea (Erromango)	3	4	8
Total	15	17	31

Data analysis

The ACER team used QSR NVivo 12 Pro to conduct the analysis of the case study interview data. Data was coded aligned with themes identified in the *Conceptual Framework* (EAS, 2017).

For the classroom observation data, the ACER team reviewed the contextual information recorded by researchers and created observation maps by theme (interactions, pedagogy, gender, inclusivity), undertaking analysis of theme activities observed across the duration of lessons. The team also reviewed records of the classroom environment. ACER developed the visual displays of the data to understand prevalence of practices and differences between municipalities.

3.2 Quantitative data

Quantitative data for the Study has been drawn from three different sources:

1. Years 4 and 6 mathematics and literacy results from the 2015, 2018 and 2021 PILNA
2. Questionnaire data from students, teachers, and principals as part of the 2018 and 2021 PILNA survey
3. Years 4 and 6 mathematics and literacy results from the 2017, 2019 and 2021 VANSTA.

PILNA and VANSTA have different objectives. PILNA is a regional assessment of students' literacy and numeracy skills in Year 4 and Year 6, and is administered every three years by the Educational Quality and Assessment Programme (EQAP) of the Pacific Community (SPC). PILNA is administered to a representative sample of Year 4 and Year 6 students in all provinces of Vanuatu. PILNA also

includes questionnaires which are administered to all sampled students, teachers and principals and enables an exploration of the Vanuatu learning environment and experiences and attitudes of students, teachers and school leaders. VANSTA is a national assessment of Years 4, 6 and 8 students' literacy and numeracy achievement within the national curriculum. VANSTA is administered as a census to all students in those levels. VANSTA was developed by staff from the Examination and Assessments Unit (EAU) and CDU alongside teachers in Vanuatu.

Given PILNA 2015 and 2018 and VANSTA 2017 were administered to students studying under the previous curriculum, they provide important Years 4 and 6 student data for literacy and numeracy, and contextual questionnaire data. VANSTA 2019 and 2021 and PILNA 2021 cover student cohorts who have been taught under the new curriculum. These student cohorts include Year 1 students, who were part of the first curriculum rollout.

The quantitative analysis for the data used a range of methods: descriptive statistics; analysis of variance to determine if there were any significant difference between groups; and simple calculations of averages of values obtained from item response theory to express the attainment of numeracy and literacy levels in PILNA.

The PILNA data are analysed using standard survey data techniques that are appropriate for surveys based on weighted data designs with clusters of respondents (i.e., groups of students). The main statistical activity in this summary is the multivariate work that is referred to throughout this report. This statistical technique is especially useful for survey data (like PILNA) because it makes it possible to analyse the effects of multiple variables at the same time and, in theory, identify the most important predictors of outcomes like student achievement.

3.3 Study limitations

Several limitations were faced on this Study, including:

1. **Attribution** – Attribution is easier to establish when there is a clear causal relationship between the outcome and any preceding outputs. Teaching itself is a 'noise-filled' context. There are a wide range of contextual factors that enable and constrain productive investments in teachers, teaching and education communities. For example, budgetary constraints and political priorities within schools and the larger national context. In addition, in developing contexts, there are often multiple donor programs providing supports to schools and systems, and it is difficult to associate particular changes directly to any single intervention. While there may be relationships between various factors associated with student learning outcomes, direct causal relationships are difficult to determine. This is equally the case with attributing VESP-supported training and the new curriculum to student learning outcomes – both are inputs in a complex context.
2. **Generalisability** – Case studies are not intended to generalise the impact of VESP across Vanuatu. Case studies are intended to explore the experience of the investment by educational stakeholders in a small sample of schools, but across a multitude of variables. In this way, the case studies are intensive rather than extensive. Further, a lesson learned from the classroom observations data collection was that it proved challenging to achieve consistency in observations across researchers for some aspects.

3. **Data availability** – While data on student learning outcomes from VANSTA and PILNA provide insight into the literacy and numeracy achievement levels, they are not a purpose-designed surveys for this Study. Nevertheless, they provide important reference points for student learning outcomes as the new curriculum is rolled out. In addition, VESP did not implement any program-level assessment based on its specific interventions.
4. **Disruptions due to COVID-19 and Tropical Cyclone Harold** – Case study data collection took place in 2021 and 2022 after each school closure. While many of the Year 1 to 4 teachers were familiar with the new curriculum and had possibly participated in related training workshops, there would have been no teaching continuity with the new curriculum due to the disruption. The theory of change assumes these teachers are consistently acquiring new skills and pedagogies, and the disruption would have limited their ability to practice and apply new learnings.

For Years 5 and 6 teachers, the impact of disruptions was arguably greater given the rollout of the Year 5 and 6 curricula took place during the pandemic, and the delivery of training was patchy and mostly conducted remotely. Again, these teachers did not have teacher continuity with the new curriculum during 2021 and 2022.

VANSTA 2021 and PILNA 2021 were administered in between COVID-19 related school closures across the country. In the case of PILNA, administration was delayed by five weeks due to the production of materials based in Fiji and the challenges of delivering materials to the 15 participating countries. The administration window for PILNA was also widened to run from 1 November to 4 December 2021 to provide maximum flexibility (EQAP, PILNA 2021 Regional Report, 2022).

4. Summary of findings from 2022 data collection

Sanma (Santo) and Tafea (Erromango) were selected as case study sites for year 3 of the Study. This section presents a snapshot of case studies and classroom observations in Santo and Erromango, interviews with national stakeholders, and analysis of VANSTA 2021 and PILNA 2021.

4.1 Case studies

Espirtu Santo (Santo) is the largest island in Vanuatu, with a population of around 40,000 people. Just under half live in the main town of Luganville – the second largest town in Vanuatu – which also hosts an airport and a deep-water port. The island is well serviced, has several industries and is a popular tourist destination. A range of different vernaculars are spoken on Santo.

Erromango is the largest island in Tafea Province, with a small population of around 2,000 people. The island is very remote and mountainous. The island has two airports and one road, but many villages are only accessible by boat. Supplies to the island can be infrequent. To illustrate, one of the case study schools is a three-hour boat ride from the nearest airport and children must cross a river to access the school. Most households on the island speak Erromangan as their first language. Due to the small population, Erromango schools tends to have smaller schools and class sizes than Santo

schools. Due to remoteness and lack of services, attracting qualified teachers and teacher turnover are major challenges.

Sample

Table 8 provides information about the nine case study school from Santo and Erromango. As Table 9 shows, 45 school and provincial level respondents were interviewed and 16 parent FGDs were conducted incorporating 79 participants. In addition, 16 national level respondents were interviewed – six respondents from MoET and 10 respondents from DFAT and VESP. These national interviews were conducted directly by ACER in Vanuatu and remotely.

Table 8. Case study sample, by selection criteria in 2022

Province	School ID	Language	Authority	VANSTA Performance ⁸	VEMIS Enrolment / School Size ⁹
Sanma (Santo)	A	English	Government	High	Very large
	B	English	Government	High	Very large
	C	French	Government	High	Medium
	D	English	Government	Low	Very large
	E	French	Church	Low	Medium
Tafea (Erromango)	F	French	Government	Low	Large
	G	English	Government	Low	Medium
	H	English/French	Government	Mixed	Large
	I	French	Church	Mid	Small

Table 9. Case studies interview participants, by province and national, in 2022

Interview participants	Santo	Erromango	National	Total
Principals/head teachers	4	4		8
Year 1 to 4 teachers	17	9		26
Year 5 to 6 teachers	7	2		9
PEO	1	1		2
Parent FGD (number of participants)	8 FGD (27)	8 FGD (52)		16 FGD (79)
MoET representatives			6	6
DFAT/VESP representatives			10	10

The following section describes some key characteristics of the school level respondents.

- Twenty-six Year 1 to 4 teachers and nine Year 5 and 6 teachers were interviewed (26 female, 9 male). Around half of the teachers (18) had more than 10 years of teaching experience.
- Nine teachers identified themselves as temporary/contract teachers, and 16 as permanent. Most temporary/contract teachers interviewed were from Erromango.

⁸ The following categories for VANSTA 2019 performance were used for this study: High (average score is 3.25-4.0); Mid (average score is 2.75-3.24); Low (average score is 2.74 or below).

⁹ School size if based on VEMIS enrolment data. The following categories are used for this study: Small (1-50 students); Medium (51-100 students); Large (101-200 students); Very large (>200 students).

- Twenty-four teachers reported they had teaching qualifications (5 in Erromango and 19 in Santo). Of these teachers, five reported they had a diploma (all Santo) and 16 certificates, and the others did not specify.
- Half of the case study principals (3 female, 5 male) had worked as a principal for more than 10 years (ranging from 10 to 20 years).
- While one Erromango principal did not hold a teacher qualification, five principals reported holding a certificate-level qualification and one new principal a bachelor's degree.
- Five of the principals were also teaching, with four covering upper-primary levels.

From 2014 to 2022, there were 25 professional development activities associated with the new curriculum training that was supported by VESP. Teachers and principals were provided with this list of training and asked to re-call which programs they had participated in. Twenty-one of these programs were targeted to Years 1 to 6 teachers (20 included Years 1 to 4 teachers in their target groups and twelve for Years 5 to 6, with some crossover). Six programs were targeted to principals, but some principals attended programs also targeted to teachers.

Training participation was uneven and patchy, and very low between 2020 and 2022.

- The Years 1 to 4 teachers had on average attended three programs, but very few after 2019. The Years 5 and 6 teachers had on average attended two training programs, but very few after 2021.
- Generally, teachers in Santo had a higher participation rate than Erromango. Five teachers in Erromango and one in Santo had attended no programs. Permanent teachers were more likely to have attended more programs than temporary/contract teachers.
- Most principals had on average attended four programs. One newer principal attended none and one Erromango principal had attended one program. Generally, principals in Santo have lower participation rate than Erromango.
- Three of eight principals (38 per cent) had attended the *Instructional Leadership for Principals* course.

Key findings from 2022 case study data

Table 10 provides an overview of key findings from the 2022 case study data presented by research question. Annex C provides full details on the changes perceived and reported by respondents in Santo and Erromango, national respondents, and observed by researchers.

Table 10: Key findings from 2022 case study data

To what extent has the investment improved teaching quality in Vanuatu?			
	Finding 1	Finding 2	Finding 3
Teacher knowledge, beliefs and attitudes	VESP training supports teachers in improving knowledge about curriculum content, student-centred pedagogies, and lesson planning.	VESP training, teachers' guides, resource kits, and improved student engagement contributes to improved teacher confidence and motivation.	The variable quality of training received, lack of ongoing support, and uneven participation in training are key barriers to improving teaching quality.
Teaching practice	New curriculum and VESP training help teachers improve lesson planning,	New curriculum and VESP training have shifted teaching practice towards	Classroom observations indicate the uptake of student-centred methods

	including incorporating learning indicators to align activities and to monitor student learning.	more student-centred methods such as pair and group work, peer-to-peer learning, different classroom set-ups, and games and hands-on activities for a range of student abilities. Teachers are facilitating more 'student talk'.	varies between Santo and Erromango. For example, lessons in Erromango were observed to have little student activity. Teachers in both locations used a narrow range of resources.
GEDSI	While there is positive change in awareness and attitudes about disability-inclusion, there is not a significant shift in classroom practices.	Mixed-gender group work is a common strategy used by teachers to encourage equal participation of boys and girls.	Teachers' use of language in classrooms varies significantly. Teachers often use Bislama or the vernacular to explain difficult concepts to students.
Assessment	New curriculum and VESP training contribute to more regular classroom-based assessment, and the use of assessment information to monitor student learning and to identify supports needed.	Teachers use a variety of methods to assess students' learning including oral assessments, group work, observations, and summative tests. Teachers are referencing the learning indicators.	Classroom observations indicate most teachers are explicitly checking for understanding and observing students practising and applying what they have learnt.
COVID-19	Home school packages are the main strategy for continuity of learning during school closures. While packages were prepared and distributed in Santo, multiple challenges were faced in Erromango.	Declining student interest and engagement, attendance levels and learning are key challenges following school closures.	Student challenges impacts how teachers prepare and deliver their lessons. Many teachers have not been able to complete all lessons.

To what extent has the investment in teacher training and mentoring supported effective implementation of Vanuatu's new curriculum

	Finding 1	Finding 2	Finding 3
Curriculum resources and materials	Teacher guides and curriculum resources provide direction for lesson planning and classroom teaching. There are challenges associated with limited access to accompanying resources.	Gaps in the types of resources provided (student textbooks) creates challenges for student learning and increases teacher workload as teachers need to develop resources and activities themselves.	Teachers need more guidance on using resources to enable their full use.
Teacher support	Teachers value principals' support in a range of areas, such as providing access to teaching materials and classroom resources, facilitating professional learning opportunities, and	Changes to the provincial support structures mean schools have no support from SIOs or PTs. This creates significant gaps for ongoing support for schools	Peer support from principals and teacher colleagues is highly valued, particularly given limited provincial and national support. But this varies by location. Santo

To what extent has the investment in teacher training and mentoring supported effective implementation of Vanuatu's new curriculum

	Finding 1	Finding 2	Finding 3
	taking time to observe teaching practice and give feedback to teachers. Many principals have had limited curriculum training, and therefore, are not able to support their teachers.	to implement the curriculum effectively.	teachers and principals highlighted more opportunities for in-school and inter-school collaboration than those in Erromango who experience significant geographical and logistical constraints.
Language	The language policy has been unevenly articulated to schools, parents and communities. There has been variable levels of training provided about the language policy, its understanding by teachers and how the policy should be implemented in classrooms.	One of the most important changes brought by the curriculum is the improved interaction between students and teachers with students being more at ease using Bislama or the vernacular.	Ongoing support is needed to support teachers to implement the new curriculum, and particularly for teachers in helping students with the important transition in Years 3 and 4 with greater use of French or English. Many teachers say they need more training than <i>Ademap Lanwis</i> .

To what extent has the investment in teacher training and mentoring supported student learning outcomes?

	Finding 1	Finding 2	Finding 3
Academic outcomes	There are a wide range of perceptions about academic outcomes, especially related to the transition to French and English.	Teachers in lower primary see benefits of using Bislama or vernacular for student confidence and understanding. Teachers in upper primary perceive challenges for reading and writing in English and French.	Teachers suggest students perform better in mathematics than literacy, but still struggle with problem solving and number spelling due to language load.
Student participation, interest and wellbeing	Student-centred learning practices, speaking Bislama or a vernacular, and using localised resources encourages student engagement and interest.	While a range of issues can impact student attendance, teachers indicate students are making more effort to attend due to higher levels of engagement related to the new curriculum.	Higher levels of student engagement and interest in school and supportive classroom culture (including teacher-student relationships and interactions) are contributing to student wellbeing.
Parent and community support	Parents report they engage with children's learning by ensuring their children attend school and helping	Principals and teachers report they try to encourage parents to be involved in their children's learning.	

To what extent has the investment in teacher training and mentoring supported student learning outcomes?			
	Finding 1	Finding 2	Finding 3
	with homework. Parents said they need to understand what their children are learning so they can better support them.	Contextual challenges limit parents' support of children, particularly if parents have travelled overseas for seasonal work or are absent for other reasons.	

4.2 PILNA and VANSTA

PILNA and VANSTA provided data on student learning outcomes over the course of the Study. While the assessments have different objectives, they enabled an understanding of trends in student learning between 2015 and 2021. The PILNA assessment also includes contextual questionnaires that were distributed to teachers and principals of all sampled students, as well as student background questionnaires. The questionnaires for teachers and principals asked questions about levels of resourcing in classrooms and schools, difficulties their students were facing, and perceptions of their performance and the challenges they face (EQAP, PILNA Regional Report, 2021). Critically, the collection of contextual data helps explore what issues may impact student learning outcomes.

Table 11 provides an overview of key findings from the VANSTA and PILNA datasets for research question 3.

Table 11: Key findings from VANSTA (2017-2021) and PILNA (2015-2021)

To what extent has the investment in teacher training and mentoring supported student learning outcomes?			
	Finding 1	Finding 2	Finding 3
Student learning outcomes: PILNA and VANSTA	VANSTA 2017-2021 and PILNA 2015-2021 indicated there are widespread differences in student achievement between provinces. Students in Penama, Sanma and Shefa at both year levels and in both languages, generally met or exceeded national level results prior to 2021.	Post-2021, Year 4 students in many provinces were performing below national expected achievement levels. Year 6 student performance declined across provinces, but not as much as for Year 4 students. Trends for Year 4 and year 6 students in numeracy were similar to literacy.	Both the PILNA and VANSTA 2021 results show that girls consistently outperform boys at both year levels in reading and numeracy.
Teacher background and student learning outcomes: PILNA	Teacher professional development measures (attending professional development in the last three years) are positively associated with student achievement especially in Year 4. Student achievement levels are higher when a teacher	In terms of wellbeing, teachers and school leaders reported the most frequent concerns are for 'I experience stress' and 'I feel overwhelmed by my job'.	A number of classroom and school resource resources reported by teachers and school leaders are significantly associated with student achievement levels.

To what extent has the investment in teacher training and mentoring supported student learning outcomes?			
	Finding 1	Finding 2	Finding 3
	reports university education.		
Principal background and student learning outcomes: PILNA	School leader reported participation in in-service programmes for curriculum support is significantly associated with higher levels of student achievement in both Year 4 and 6.		

5. Overall study findings: lessons learned within and across provinces and years

5.1 Key changes and challenges related to teaching quality

Three years of data collection (2019, 2021 and 2022) across six locations has provided opportunities to understand and capture details about changes in teaching quality with the introduction of the new curriculum.

The new curriculum represents significant change to both teaching and assessment practices, particularly taking into account the application of the *National Language Policy*. While teachers and principals are more knowledgeable about the new curriculum and are applying new methods into their practice, the complexity of this process means it is likely to take more time and support for teachers to understand and fully incorporate these new approaches into their teaching practice consistently.

Results from the qualitative data collections indicate that VESP-supported training for teachers and principals, along with the provision of curriculum materials and resources, have been effective in improving content knowledge of the curriculum and strengthening application of new pedagogical methods. The training, teachers' guides and curriculum resources have assisted teachers in lesson planning and using more student-centred classroom activities:

The main shift regarding the curriculum is that it's now student centred, and through the past years, we've really seen a change in the way teachers are teaching. They're teaching with the kids rather than at the kids. And you can see that in classrooms... most of the time you've got tables together, like small islands rather than rows of tables and chairs. (National)

Generally, these investments have also contributed to teachers also reporting higher levels of confidence and motivation to teach. The training and resources are particularly valued by temporary and untrained teachers, as well as new teacher graduates.

However, even before COVID-19 disruptions, teacher and principal participation in training was patchy, with the case study data indicating differences in participation between temporary/untrained teachers and permanent teachers, as well as between provinces. For example,

training participation was lower in Efate and Erromango, compared to Tanna and Santo. COVID-19 exacerbated this issue further. The 2022 data collection suggests very few teachers and principals participated in training after 2020, at least in Santo and Erromango. The data also indicates this affected Years 5 and 6 teachers more, given COVID-19 coincided with the curriculum for those year levels being rolled out.

A key message from teachers and principals across the three years of data collection and six locations is a need for more comprehensive training, refresher training and ongoing professional learning support to implement the new curriculum effectively, and particularly for teachers to support students with language transition. An absence of ongoing and follow-up training limits the effective long-term impact of the investment for schools, risking any learning gains made towards improving teaching quality and community support for the curriculum (and in particular the language policy).

The current gaps created by the dissolution of the in-service teacher training and provincial support structures for schools represent significant risks for how the system will support the professional learning needs of teachers and principals in the future.

Change in teachers' professional knowledge

Across the three cycles of data collection, case study respondents indicated that VESP-supported training including *Effective Learning and Teaching (ELT)* and *Ademap Lanwis*, supported improved teacher professional knowledge about content and student-centred pedagogies used in the new curriculum, particularly related to improving student engagement and lesson planning. Further, teachers and principals reported increased confidence and motivation to engage students in class and be creative in teaching. They attributed this knowledge to participation in VESP-supported training, the teachers' guides, and provision of resource kits. VESP-supported training has been particularly useful for building the knowledge and confidence of temporary and untrained teachers.

ELT was noted by teachers and principals as particularly instrumental in building the capacity of knowledge about teaching practice, and in particular, how to plan and prepare effective lessons that support student learning. As reported by a Year 2 teacher:

Effective Learning and Teaching has helped me immensely with my job as a teacher. It helped me on how to provide good learning to my students in the classroom, the different strategies and ways to provide help to my students to enable them to better understand the coursework.

In 2022, some case study respondents also reflected that orientation courses to the curriculum and teachers' guides (e.g. Language and Communication, Maths) have helped them to understand the new curriculum content, the specific learning objectives and outcomes, and how to deliver the lessons.

One national respondent explained why ELT training and training on teachers' guides were useful:

... there is a lot of practicality... not only coming to get knowledge and skills, but teachers also get practice through simulation activities... That module [ELT] has changed how teachers see teaching and learning and how children learn... What would this look like in your classroom if you were going to teach this topic?

Across the years, several teachers also reported that *Ademap Lanwis* has been helpful with language progression and the introduction of a second language. However, it's clear that there is a high level of need for further training in this area. Some national and school level respondents highlighted in

2022 that more support is needed to teachers to manage the language transition well so that it does not disadvantage student learning.

The ability to speak Bislama or vernacular in the classroom was critical to teachers for improving their teaching practice, especially in encouraging student engagement in the classroom. How language is used in the classroom varies seems to vary widely. Teachers reported using Bislama or the vernacular in their classroom at a range of year levels especially to explain difficult concepts to students.

More broadly, a consistent message from case study respondents across the three years is that the lack of follow-up training or availability of training and support for teachers and principals has the potential to undermine any long-term retention of skills and knowledge. Over the course of this Study, stakeholders continued to identify the limitations of training including duration and delivery mode, lack of ongoing support, and comprehensiveness of participation.

In addition to this, the 2021 PILNA teacher questionnaire provides insight into background characteristics of Vanuatu teachers and associated predictors of student achievement.

- Year 4 and 6 student achievement levels are higher when their teacher reports university education. The positive association between teacher education and student achievement is statistically significant in Year 4.
- Teacher professional development measures (frequency of attending professional development in the last three years) are significantly (and positive) associated with student achievement, especially in Year 4.

While the lack of subject specificity in the PILNA teacher questionnaire adds some uncertainty about causation, the overall findings about teacher professional learning suggest that the need for increased and ongoing support is critical for sustainability.

Change in teachers' beliefs and attitudes

Over the course of the Study, teachers and principals reported increased confidence and motivation to engage students in class and be creative in teaching. They attributed this to participation in VESP-supported training, the teachers' guides, and provision of resource kits, as well as observations of greater student engagement. One principal spoke about the boost in confidence training has given to temporary and/or untrained teachers:

Teachers are very confident in teaching in this new curriculum. After attending training in the new curriculum those who are untrained teachers are motivated, confident and are becoming provisional teachers.

There are some teachers who showed resistance to change, preferring the 'old curriculum'. This was sometimes related to a lack of confidence and the use of language. However, in 2022, some respondents reported the new curriculum is demanding and has created more workload for teachers affecting morale. The additional workload is associated with lesson planning and assessment, and ensuring activities are well aligned with students' progress.

The PILNA 2021 data indicates a high proportion of teachers in Vanuatu and across the Pacific region are experiencing high levels of stress and are feeling overwhelmed by their job (EQAP, 2021). Teachers and school leaders were asked about their wellbeing in PILNA 2021, and this period included COVID-19 and other natural disaster-related impacts on teaching and learning. These

questions cover the frequency of challenges teachers and school leaders experience in school and their feelings about the profession and their work.

- Teachers and school leaders agree that the most frequent concerns are for 'I experience stress' (3.0 on scale from 1-4 for teachers) and 'I feel overwhelmed by my job' (2.7).
- The least frequently mentioned problems were 'My job negatively impacts my mental health' (1.9) and 'My job negatively impacts my physical health' (1.9).
- At the same time, there were a high proportion of who were satisfied and proud of their jobs. For example, almost all teachers and leaders indicated that they 'sometimes' or 'often' are 'proud of the work they do' and 'content with their profession'.

Change in teaching practice

The new curriculum promotes teaching practices that support inclusive education (i.e., student-centred learning and local connections), language transition and classroom-based assessment practices. **Over the course of the Study, respondents reported that teachers are shifting towards more student-centred pedagogies and applying new pedagogical methods in their daily lessons.** The training, teachers' guides and curriculum resources have assisted teachers in lesson planning and using more student-centred classroom activities. However, classroom observations undertaken in 2021 and 2022 in four locations indicate that while some practices were prevalent and consistently observed, others were not, which deserves further investigation of key barriers to change.

The PILNA 2021 Vanuatu teacher questionnaire provided evidence that while teaching methods are not generally associated with student achievement levels, some variables are significant.

- Year 4 student reading and writing scores are higher in classrooms where teachers encourage problem-solving and expression of ideas in class.
- The most common teaching approaches are 'Relate the lesson to students' daily lives', 'Encourage classroom discussion', 'Encourage students to express ideas in class' and 'Ask students to explain'. These approaches are for the most part aligned with observed pedagogies in the classroom observations undertaken in this Study.

The classroom observations provide an opportunity to see whether teachers were using some of these student-centred teaching and learning approaches in their classrooms. Researchers were required to observe different teaching practices in 2021 and 2022. While the number of classroom observations undertaken were not extensive, they nevertheless provide important insights into classroom practice across a range of contexts.

Figure 1 shows a heatmap summarising the intensity of practice observed in the areas of preparation, pedagogy, inclusivity and classroom environment. Prevalence is indicated by the blue shading – darker blue indicates a higher proportion of teachers were observed to undertake a practice or reported to do so. Further analysis is detailed in the sections below where practices are noted to be either: prevalent and consistently observed (75% of teachers or greater); or less prevalent and not consistently observed (less than 75% of teachers).

Figure 1: Heatmap of classroom observation findings, 2021 and 2022

	Efate (Shefa)	Tanna (Tafea)	Santo (Sanma)	Erromango (Tafea)	Overall
PREPARATION					
Lesson plan in place (obs)					
PEDAGOGY					
Classroom interaction Whole-class, pair/group and individual activities used (obs)					
Pair/group activities used (obs)					
Prior knowledge and skills Explicit reference made (obs)					
Localisation Explicit reference made (obs)					
Local materials used (obs)					
Use of resources 5+ resources used (obs)					
Classroom setup Grouped tables and chairs (obs)					
Reading area (obs)					
Assessment Explicitly checked (obs)					
Observations (obs)					
INCLUSIVITY					
Gender Selection of boys and girls (obs)					
Consistent selection of boys and girls (obs)					
Students with disability Customised support (obs)					
CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT					
Classroom environment Cooperative and supportive (obs)					

Proportion of teachers	None	1-24%	25-49%	50-74%	75-99%	100%

Lesson preparation

Across the three cycles of data collection, teachers and principals consistently reported the introduction of the new curriculum, VESP-supported training and teachers' guides as building teachers' capacity in how they prepare for lessons:

Before the trainings offered by VESP, the teachers think that there is no other way to better teach the curriculum and use the resources effectively. However, once VESP and the ISU start offering trainings, the teachers started improving their capacity to better plan their lessons. These changes are evident in their reports, work and so on. (PEO)

Teacher's capacity has changed. They have become more creative in organising their activities and adapt with resources available to them. Teachers have progressed well, especially with lesson planning... (Principal)

An aspect that has become more prominent in year 3 of the study is that teachers are shifting away from stating aims/objectives of lessons and towards using learning indicators, thereby placing greater focus on creating and aligning activities to these indicators and monitoring student understanding:

In terms of planning, when I'm teaching lessons, there are now steps and procedures that I have to follow to ensure the kids understand what I am teaching. I see that the new curriculum really helps with taking indicators which focuses on one skill that the child must understand. (Year 1-2 teacher)

In the past, we simply write the aims. At the moment, the learning outcomes and indicators helped a lot in achieving outcomes. However, it's all mixed up and teachers must take time to align activities with outcomes. (Principal)

Across the classes observed the use of lesson plans was prevalent and consistently observed.

- While all observed teachers in Efate and Tanna, and most in Santo, had a lesson plan in place, this was not the case in Erromango.

Student-centred teaching and learning

The promotion of student-centred teaching and learning is a key focus of the new curriculum. National respondents perceive that the shift towards student-centred teaching and learning is evident, and VESP has played a significant support role:

There's only one way that teachers could have learnt about group work, about some of the strategies that we now see in operation, allowing children time to talk, allowing the use of the vernacular in the classroom – and VESP has contributed very strongly, through effective teaching and learning, through work we're doing with the provinces, through the teachers' guide development, which has examples of strategies the teachers can use... (National)

These national perspectives align with those of teachers and principals across the cycles of data collection. Multiple respondents cited examples of delivering activities that are more student-centred, target and respond to a range of student levels, and improve student interaction and engagement.

For example, in Santo and Erromango, teachers reported that using group activities, peer-to-peer learning, different classroom setups, and games and 'hands on' activities for a range of student abilities has supported their take up of student-centred teaching methods. Teachers described using activities such as small group work and peer learning, and not 'talking at' students in front of the class to encourage student engagement. To quote one Year 1-2 teacher:

This is where we make the students feel that they own their learning, while the teacher is simply a guide on the side to facilitate the learning progress and then later assesses, but the lesson is entirely owned by the students. Instead of the teacher standing in front of the classroom talking too much and the students get bored, they are given the opportunity to discover on their own.

However, despite pair and group work being highlighted as a key way for teachers to implement student-centred activities, it was less prevalent and not consistently observed across classroom observations.

- Less than half of all observed teachers used pair/group activities and a mix of the three interaction types. There were more instances of pair/group work observed in Santo classrooms. Examples of group work observed included competing in groups to answer questions and group reading. There was limited ‘student activity’ observed in Erromango classes.

The new curriculum also encourages teachers to link to students’ prior knowledge and/or skills, and make connections to Vanuatu values, customs and traditions. Many respondents across the Study highlighted how they support a range of ability levels, and the responses were particularly extensive in 2022. For example, teachers reported they gauge student understanding before introducing a topic, provide different activities to students depending on their level of learning, and group students by mixed abilities. At the same time, this practice was less prevalent and not consistently observed in classroom observations.

- More than half of the observed teachers made explicit reference to students’ prior knowledge and skills, for example by asking students what they already know or promoting their recall of an earlier activity.

Many case study respondents across the three cycles of data collection reported that adapting or linking content to students’ cultural heritage, their local context and their local environment practice, as well as using local resources, facilitated students’ learning and participation in lessons. Using elements from local contexts that students were familiar with improved their learning and enjoyment of school:

We would take our mats outside and then use nature to learn; we use leaves, sticks and stones with the lower classes for counting or they would use the leaves to write words and sounds on...This is to make the kids enjoy learning and look forward to a new day of learning. (Year 1-2 teacher)

However, this practice was less prevalent and not consistently observed in classroom observations.

- More than half of the teachers were observed to make links to students’ local contexts, and this practice was more commonly observed in Tanna and Santo. However, very few teachers integrated local materials into lessons.

An aspect of the new curriculum is the introduction of more teaching and learning resources, as well as more creative and fun activities. As part of classroom observations, researchers made note of the types of resources that were used during lessons. The practice of using a wide range of resources was less prevalent and not consistently observed. Teachers did not use a wide range of resources during lessons, with just over half of the teachers observed to use at least five resources.

- Teachers relied heavily on using the blackboard and pointer stick, and half incorporated small blackboards.
- Less than half of the teachers used student notebooks, but only two teachers in Efate used student textbooks. Notably, one-third of teachers used storybooks, but none in Erromango. No decodable readers were observed. While one-third of teachers incorporated posters into their lessons, none were observed to do so in Efate.
- While more than half of the teachers incorporated song into lessons, teachers rarely used flashcards, pictures, reference books, or drama/role play. No teachers were observed to use games, puzzles or physical actions.

Researchers also recorded how classrooms were set up. The practice of setting up classrooms in ways that are conducive to engaging students in different activities was prevalent and consistently observed. Nearly all classrooms were set-up in ways conducive to engaging students in different activities.

- All classes in Santo and Erromango had grouped tables and chairs, while there were some instances of classes in Efate and Tanna with individual/single lined tables and chairs. However, most classrooms in Erromango had no space for whole-class activities. Reading areas were common in observed Santo classrooms.

Gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI)

The promotion of inclusive education is a key part of VESP. Inclusive education addresses and responds to the diverse needs of learners by increasing participation in learning and reducing exclusion from school. The practice of inclusive education respects difference and enables structures and systems to meet the needs of all children.¹⁰ This includes ensuring disability inclusion and gender equality as a regular part of teachers' practice, as well as supporting children with different first languages.

Whilst principals and teachers widely recognise educational equity as a human right and endeavour to incorporate inclusive teaching practices, there are capacity gaps to implementing equitable systems at schools.

Across the Study, while there has been a positive change in awareness and attitudes about disability-inclusion, there has not been a significant shift in classroom practices. This change can be attributed to a range of factors including the new curriculum, VESP-supported training, and targeted GoV strategies such as the *National Disability Inclusive Development Policy (2018-2025)*. Importantly, more teachers are being supported by VESP to participate in inclusive education specialist courses such as certificate III and diploma courses delivered through the Australia Pacific Technical College and the University of South Pacific. In years 1 and 2 of the Study, it was highlighted that teachers engaged in focused disability inclusion courses and reported they had developed knowledge and classroom strategies for engaging children with disabilities in learning activities. This indicates specialist knowledge about GEDSI can improve the learning outcomes of students with special needs. However, large class sizes, limited financial and human resources, as well as the limited capacity of teachers to accurately identify specific disabilities, are constraints to implementing inclusive classroom practices. The practice of providing customised support to students with disabilities was not prevalent and not consistently observed.

- Very few teachers were observed to provide customised support to students with disabilities across the classroom observations.

In 2019, 2021 and 2022 many respondents identified mixed-gender group work as one of the new pedagogical approaches that encouraged equal participation of boys and girls. Respondents said they observed greater student confidence, active participation and more peer-to-peer cooperation as a result of encouraging equal participation of boys and girls. In the classroom observations, the

¹⁰ See for example UNESCO, Education Profiles Vanuatu: Inclusion at: <https://education-profiles.org/oceania/vanuatu/~inclusion>. Accessed 10 March 2023.

practice of teachers consistently and evenly selecting girls and boys to demonstrate ideas or skills (for example, being called up to the board) was prevalent and consistently observed.

- Notably, the practice was more extensive in Tafea (Tanna and Erromango).

At the same time, PILNA has found that girls are consistently outperforming boys across all proficiency levels, in all domains (literacy and numeracy) and in both Year 4 and Year 6. PILNA reports that this gender disparity has followed the same pattern for the last four PILNA cycles (EQAP, PILNA Vanuatu Report, 2021). VANSTA 2019 and 2021 also reports that girls are outperforming boys in literacy and numeracy in Year 4 and Year 6. These trends are similar for the entire Pacific region (see PILNA Regional Report, 2021) and for Australia as evidenced in its National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) (see ACARA, 2022). UNESCO reports this trend is reflected across many low- and middle-income countries, and the regions of East Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Arab States show some of the largest learning disparities at the expense of boys (see UNESCO, 2022). There is a need for MoET to investigate and address this issue.

The Study provides insights into how language is used in classrooms. Case study data, classroom observation data and 2021 PILNA questionnaire data indicate a highly diverse language landscape. How language is used in the classroom varies seems to vary widely between schools, within schools, and also depending on teachers' fluency in a language (e.g. local vernacular). Teachers reported using Bislama or the vernacular in their classroom at a range of year levels to explain difficult concepts to students, reflecting the dual language approach.

Assessment

The new curriculum promotes changes to classroom-based assessment practices. Many teachers and principals across the duration of the Study reported a clear shift towards using more regular classroom-based assessment, as well as using assessment information to monitor student learning and identify supports needed. Some respondents attributed this to the new curriculum and knowledge gained through VESP-supported training.

Teachers reported using a combination of assessment methods, such as oral assessments, and assessing group work and presentations through observations. Some reported using summative tests. Some note evaluating students against the learning indicators.

An aspect that has become more prominent in year 3 of the Study is the practice of evaluating students against indicators and stated learning outcomes. As discussed by a Year 4 teacher:

With the new lesson plan, there are learning outcomes that we have to achieve, there are indicators... Each day I monitor all of them to see whether or not they understand the day's topic. Maybe I will give an activity or let them top and see if they understand or not. Maybe I will give them a problem and let attempt it to see whether or not they understand the topic.

However, the additional workload associated with assessment activities was highlighted as an issue by some Santo teachers. Challenges highlighted included the work associated with assessing each skill separately and reporting expectations.

The use of classroom-based assessment strategies, by checking for students' understanding and observing students practising or applying what they had learnt, were prevalent and consistently observed across classroom observations.

- Nearly all teachers explicitly checked for students' understanding and teachers did this more consistently in Efate and Tanna. While three-quarters of teachers observed students practising or applying what they had learnt, this practice was more prevalent in Santo. It is important to note however, that these observations do not indicate teachers' capacity to interpret where students learning is at, and tailor learning strategies. At the same time, the use of classroom-based strategies indicates a first step toward evidence-based teaching.

Impact of COVID-19 disruptions

COVID-19 disruptions created immense challenges for rolling out the new curriculum, teaching continuity and student learning. The PILNA 2021 teacher and school leader questionnaire provides a snapshot of teaching and learning during the school closure period. A key finding is that Year 4 achievement levels are significantly higher in schools that reported using online learning and communication. The main differences in these results are between urban and rural school locations and by province, and it is a very small group of schools engaging in online activities.

Even before COVID-19 disruptions, teacher and principal participation in training was variable. The 2022 data collection suggests very few teachers and principals participated in training after 2020, at least in Santo and Erromango. Training in most cases occurred remotely. The data also indicates this affected Years 5 and 6 teachers more, given COVID-19 coincided with the curriculum for those year levels being rolled out.

Case study respondents in 2021 and 2022 offered a range of responses when asked about how the pandemic disruption impacted teaching and learning. In Vanuatu, regular schooling was disrupted both in 2020 and in 2022, with schools closing for a period of time.

The development and delivery of home school packages (HSP) was MoET's main strategy for supporting continuity of learning during lockdowns. The 2021 data collection highlighted issues related to increased workload for teachers and principals to prepare home packages for students, with minimal support from MoET and provincial offices. While in 2022 schools were able to draw on their experiences from creating HSPs in the previous year, the data highlighted other complexities, particularly related to remoteness in Erromango. Remoteness, restrictions on movement and distance to students meant HSPs could not reach all students and teachers were not able to provide support.

Despite this effort, respondents over both years reported that there was little, if any, learning taking place during the disruption and most students did not complete the home packages. Challenges related to limited support provided by teachers to parents and students, and many parents being unable to help their children due to low literacy levels and other priorities.

Upon return to face-to-face learning, while some children were excited to get back to school, others raised a range of issues related to declining student interest and engagement, attendance and learning. Many principals and teachers noted a decline in student learning, which has impacted how teachers prepare and deliver their lessons, with many teachers unable to complete all the lessons.

5.2 Key changes and challenges related to new curriculum implementation

The Study has provided opportunities to understand and capture details about how the investment supported by VESP has contributed to the effective implementation of the new curriculum.

While the professional learning support and new curriculum resources supported by VESP has helped teachers improve both their practice and ability to implement the new curriculum, ongoing and follow-up support and feedback is much needed for teachers to be able to build and consolidate their changed teaching practice. How the language policy is understood and implemented in classrooms continues to be varied and remains a topical issue with wide ranging opinions. It is clear that teachers need support to manage language transition well, and this remains a key risk for wider support for the language policy.

Results from the qualitative data collections indicate that the teachers' guides and curriculum resources have provided very useful guidance for lesson planning and classroom teaching. At the same time, there are instances of limited access to resources and gaps in the types of resources that were not provided but teachers and principals feel they need.

Receiving support from principals, teacher peers, MoET and provincial education officers is critical to helping teachers effectively implement the new curriculum. Principals and teachers value peer support in planning and discussing pedagogies at the school level, and this has become even more important given the gap in provincial support structures.

Across the six locations, the language policy has been unevenly articulated to schools, parents and communities resulting in confusion. There have been variable levels of training provided about the language policy, its understanding by teachers and how the policy should be implemented in classrooms.

Change in access to curriculum resources and materials

Over the course of the Study, case study data was collected on the perspectives of respondents about access to curriculum resources and materials, their use, and whether these are helpful in supporting teaching.

Case study principals and teachers reported that the teachers' guides and other curriculum support materials provided directions for lessons, and also built their confidence. A principal and a Year 3 teacher from different schools in Efate reported:

The most important support provided by VESP is the curriculum materials... With the syllabus there are clear learning outcomes, it gives a clear direction for the teacher with their lesson planning.

With the new textbooks, I am more confident with my teaching.

Some teachers noted that they better understand the new curriculum resources and teachers' guide as they are written in Bislama. There was also an appreciation for the science and numeracy kits, as one principal stated: "the students learn better by touching, doing and seeing".

However, a key aspect highlighted in 2022 was gaps in the types of resources provided, which is also highlighted in the PILNA questionnaire data. Teachers also reported a lack of access to curriculum resources and were observed to use a narrow range of resources.

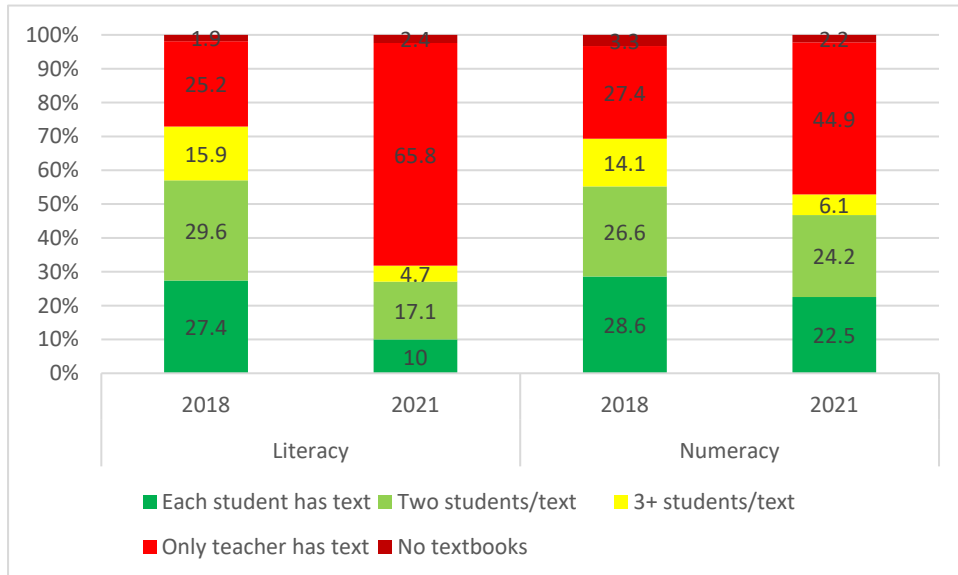
Many respondents noted the lack of student activity books or textbooks presented challenges for student learning and increased teacher workload because teachers needed to develop the resources themselves:

If there are activity books for students, then they can become active learners and work on their own according to the teacher’s instructions. (Year 1 teacher)

Trend data from the PILNA teacher questionnaires (2018 and 2021) indicate an overall decline in access to textbooks for students, and this is significantly associated with student achievement levels in PILNA.

One difference that stands out for resources is teacher-reported textbook access for students. In 2018 about 28 percent of teachers reported that each student had a text, and only 25 percent reported that the teachers alone had textbooks (Figure 2). Textbook access was reported to have declined in 2021 with only 10 percent of teachers reporting individual student text access, and 66 percent (Literacy) and 45 percent (Numeracy) reporting that only the teacher had the textbook. Year 6 teachers are much more likely to report individual student access to texts than Year 4 teachers.

Figure 2. Vanuatu teacher reported textbook access by year and subject, 2018-2021 PILNA



Data source: PILNA teacher survey, 2018-2021

The lack of a process for replacing teaching and learning materials is a real challenge for ensuring continued access to resources. School and national respondents referred to issues related to teachers being posted to other schools and taking materials with them, and the loss of materials during Tropical Cyclone Harold and during distribution processes.

The government doesn't budget for reprinting of materials after the first print after 3 years and 5 years - if you walk to schools now after the 5 years of the Year 1 curriculum, all thrown out or the wind has blown them away or the earthquake has... (National)

Whilst respondents across the years viewed the curriculum materials positively, many observed the need for further support to increase the capacity of to fully use the resources available in the classroom. As one principal noted:

The teaching resources in the new curriculum are better than the old one. The only problem is when the teachers don’t know how to use it, then they can’t teach it to the students

Teacher support

Case study respondents in all three cycles of data collection said that teacher support was a critical part of helping teachers to implement the new curriculum. Teacher support includes how principals support teachers, and how teachers work together to support one another.

Leadership was discussed in the context of how school principals directly support and influence teaching quality as a result of VESP supported interventions. This support frequently was discussed also in terms of how school leaders supported the implementation of the new curriculum. Many teachers from all six locations said they valued principals' support in a range of areas, such as providing access to teaching materials and classroom resources, facilitating professional learning opportunities, strengthening collaboration with other schools, and taking time to observe teaching practice and give feedback to teachers. A Year 3 teacher explained:

...sometimes he [principal] comes to the classroom and observes us and sees how we teach the children and do our lesson plans. Sometimes he checks our lesson plans and activities inside the classroom and our displays. After observing he goes and prints it out (his feedback) and prints it out to give to us and keeps a copy for himself... If you don't achieve it, he will still ask you to make sure you catch up to improve your work—he encourages us to improve our work.

However, not all teachers have had active principals that do these things.

In both 2019 and 2021, a number of case study principals reported increased capacity and confidence to focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning in their schools as a result of engaging in the VESP-supported *Instructional Leadership* training¹¹. The extent of principal participation in new curriculum training varied amongst the 2021 and 2022 case study principals. Compared to 2019, very few attended *Instructional Leadership* training. The 2019 data collection included schools from Pentecost, who had participated in the UNICEF-supported Vanuatu School-Based In-Service Teacher Training (VansBITT) which was piloted in Penama province. The principals interviewed in Pentecost referred to the focused leadership training as helping provide confidence in supporting quality teaching and leadership in their schools. The UNICEF-supported pilot was rolled out with VESP support nationwide in 2016 as *Instructional Leadership*.

The PILNA Vanuatu school leader questionnaire found that school leader reported participation in in-service programmes for curriculum support is significantly associated with higher levels of student achievement in both Year 4 and 6.

- School leaders reported the most common activities they supported in their schools are 'Cluster meetings with teachers from other schools' (100%), 'Curriculum delivery workshops' (88.2%), 'Provision of instructional/curriculum materials' (87.7%) and 'In-school professional development' (80.6%).
- While the overall average for curriculum support has not changed between PILNA 2018 and 2021, two indicators are different: 'Advisory visits by curriculum advisors' are significantly lower in 2021 (58.9% versus 73.1%), and 'Assistance with remedial classes by local community' is higher (28.4% versus 16.0%).

¹¹ UNICEF supported VITE-ISU to develop an instructional leadership module to strengthen the capacity of primary school principals to support teachers in their professional development. This module was part of the UNICEF-supported Vanuatu School-Based In-Service Teacher Training (VanSBITT) which was piloted in Penama province in 2015. VITE-ISU decided to roll out the *Instructional Leadership* module nationwide in 2016.

These latter two findings align with COVID-19 and disaster-imposed travel restrictions, as well as changes in provincial and national support to schools through now defunct SIO and PT roles.

Further, a consistent message across the case study schools are the benefits of teachers and principals attending training programs together. Some respondents acknowledged a gap exists in that many principals have had limited involvement in training, and therefore, have limited awareness and are not in a position to support their teachers. While VESP supports a principal induction program (50 principals per year), other models should be introduced:

In the past, we did school management, which was developing a school improvement plan. But most of those plans have nothing about teaching and learning in them... Needs to be dedicated curriculum training for principals, tasks to do when they go back to the school and follow-up around those tasks. We're also looking at mentoring coaching models... People learn best from their colleagues who are facing the same struggles. (National)

The need for effective support structures in schools and between schools is even more important given SIOs and PTs are no longer part of the provincial education structure.

While over the course of the Study many respondents reported they valued training and feedback from SIOs and PTs, they also noted the variability in the quality and regularity of support. Challenges included limited travel budget as well as skills and capacity to provide effective follow-up support. Nevertheless, many highlighted significant risks associated with the change:

To expect teachers to do stuff without a management structure is asking a lot. (National)

A principal reflected how these changes impacts ongoing support for teachers:

There used to be the SIO program which has been eliminated by the MoET... If only this program was maintained, the SIOs will be the ones training the teachers which will be really helpful. The new curriculum is helpful but it is quite hard to implement, so any teacher who has not been trained on how to plan his or her work will find it difficult.

School-level stakeholders spoke about the value they place on the support they receive from their principal and teacher colleagues on the new curriculum. While 'teamwork' was a common theme, the level of collaboration varied by location. In Erromango, teachers said they found it difficult to find colleagues to collaborate with. Whereas, other respondents reported more positive examples. For example, a principal and teacher from the same school in Efate discussed the ways in which they support each other:

We work together on planning for the classrooms. We have double streams so we have teachers coming together to plan out how we will go about it... So talk about identifying our slow learners and how we can help them better... I've seen a lot of change here... Peer teaching is also very helpful. (Principal)

With the new curriculum, myself and the other grade 1 teacher work well together. We plan our programs together and we meet up every Friday to draw up our plans for the next week. (Year 1 teacher)

According to case study respondents, it is not common for teachers to work with teachers from other schools, but there are some examples of cross-school collaboration. In Santo, some schools had formed 'area' associations to collaborate with one another or teachers said they often worked together in teams. At the same time, distance presented challenges for teachers from different schools to meet with each other.

Language

Across the duration of the Study, the language policy and its implementation was consistently highlighted as a key issue as part of the new curriculum, given the complexity of implementing the policy well and the wide range of views. In reflecting on implementation of the *National Language Policy*, Wilans (2017) writes that Vanuatu's national language policy should support a clear vision for why the languages are learnt and the purposes they will be used for by students, which should guide effective teaching (p. 708). Her evidence suggests that teacher training must provide teachers with the confidence to deal with language within the classroom (Wilans, 2017, p. 709). The language policy is at a critical juncture, and hence the 2022 data collection intentionally explored this issue in more depth. As highlighted by a national respondent:

The language policy is the big risk. I don't think there's a risk about the pedagogy that has been put into place through the curriculum in terms of student centred and don't leave anyone behind.

Across all data collections, case study respondents shared a range of opinions about the language of instruction or choice of language at school. Many of these opinions are related to the years when their students transition from vernacular or Bislama to English or French and how this transition will or will not disadvantage each students' education in these languages. School respondents, as well as parents and community stakeholders offered a range of opinions on the challenges and successes of using language in the classroom.

Nevertheless, there are consistent reports across the six locations as to how using Bislama or the vernacular in the classroom has increased engagement between students and teachers and boosted children's confidence and understanding of lessons. To quote one Year 1 teacher:

With the new curriculum the students are more comfortable in class and free to voice their opinion and move around. They understand what is being taught very easily because it is being taught in the language that they understand or speak at... In the old curriculum the child struggles in Year 1 because they get bombarded with a new and foreign language.

However, in 2022 case study respondents in Year 4 and the upper primary levels suggested that Bislama in the early years 'disadvantages' a student in the 'upper-level classes.' While this observation was raised by some respondents in early stages of the Study, given the full primary curriculum has now been rolled out, the 2022 data collection was able to capture more extensive observations and views.

In 2022, many respondents reflected on the key issues. The language policy (and its rationale) has not been clearly articulated to schools, parents and communities. Further challenges stem from variability in the quality of training provided by PTs on the language policy, its understanding by teachers and how then the policy has been implemented in classrooms. This has meant that support for the language policy has wavered, and many schools in 2022 reported to have reverted back to teaching in English or French. One PEO reflected on the implementation of the new curriculum and the confusion expressed about the language change from schools:

Some schools preferred to use Bislama or the students' local vernacular as the medium of instruction whereas some opted to remain with the use of French or English for lower classes since they think the use of Bislama will affect the students' use of English or French, which created a lot of confusion.

A national respondent observed that "bridging to second language has been very challenging" and teachers do not know how to translate *Ademap Lanwis* into practice. Many teachers noted that the

Ademap Lanwis training was useful for their practice, but insufficient. For example, a principal stated:

My only fear is the transition from Bislama to English. This is challenging and needs further training to assist the teacher with this. Should be some specific teachers with expertise and specially trained for this. *Ademap Lanwis* is not enough.

5.3 Key changes and challenges related to student learning outcomes

In addition to case study perception data about change in student outcomes, this Study has had the opportunity to incorporate two assessments of student learning: VANSTA and PILNA. These large-scale assessments provide ongoing opportunities to monitor student learning outcomes and provide insight to possible association of teaching quality and curriculum implementation inputs with student learning outcomes. While these assessments provide information on where students are at it should be cautioned that it is impossible to establish a clear causal relationship between learning outcomes and the complex teaching environments that Vanuatu's educators work in. The case study data, therefore, provide important insight into perceptions of school and classroom contexts with reflection on how these issue impact learning outcomes.

Both VANSTA and PILNA indicate there are widespread differences in student achievement between provinces in both literacy and numeracy and student have showed some evidence of learning loss in both literacy and numeracy. At the same time, teachers shared a range of perceptions about how their students performed in the new curriculum including concern about students' performance in reading and writing, to the perceived benefits of students being able to learn in Bislama or the vernacular, especially in terms of confidence and understanding. Teachers also reported that they created positive and inclusive learning environments for students which helped participation. Schools experience both challenges and enablers from parents and communities – involvement of parents can improve learning outcomes, but learning can stagnate when there is no parent support.

Change in student learning outcomes

Both VANSTA and PILNA show largely similar student learning outcomes, and as thus provide a reasonable point to understand student learning outcomes in Year 4 and Year 6. **There are widespread differences in student achievement between provinces in both literacy and numeracy. Student performance in Year 4 English and French literacy has declined since 2015, and is particularly evident after 2021, when COVID-19 would have impacted teaching and learning.** Students in Year 6 English and French literacy also showed decline, but not as steep as those in Year 4. While Year 4 and Year 6 students showed some evidence of learning loss in numeracy, these are not as steep as those in literacy.

- The widespread differences among provinces should be of concern as this indicates not all provinces and schools receive the same amount resources, budgets and trained teachers.

Overall girls are doing better than boys, and girls continue to outperform boys in both literacy and numeracy and in both Year 4 and Year 6 in PILNA 2021.¹²

¹² Trend data for VANSTA were analysed by province but not by gender.

- In Year 4 PILNA reading, there are a large number of students who do not meet regional minimum expected proficiency levels and populate the lower benchmark levels.¹³ More Year 4 girls (25%) than boys (17%) performed at or above the expected minimum proficiency level in reading. Over 30 per cent of Year 4 boys were at level 0 which indicates they can comprehend simple words.
- Girls and boys in Year 6 performed better in reading than Year 4 students. More Year 6 girls (59%) than boys (41%) performed at or above the expected minimum proficiency level in reading.¹⁴ Boys continue to outnumber girls in the lowest three proficiency levels by twice as much.
- In Year 4 PILNA numeracy, girls continue to outperform boys. More Year 4 girls (64%) than boys (52%) performed at or above the expected minimum proficiency level in numeracy¹⁵. Just under half of Year 4 boys were performing below the minimum expected proficiency levels (L0-L2).
- Girls and boys in Year 6 performed better in numeracy than Year 4 students. Seventy-nine per cent of girls compared to 66 per cent of boys were performing at or above the expected minimum proficiency level¹⁶.

The regular and systematised collections of student achievement data enable MoET to monitor change and to use the data to inform evidence-based decisions and policies.

In particular, the PILNA questionnaire data lend greater understanding to student learning outcomes by exploring student, teacher and school context, in other words an attempt to understand ‘why’ student performed in the way they did. There are some characteristics that demonstrate significant associations with student learning outcomes.

Change in academic outcomes

Teacher perceptions of how their students are performing in class are equally as important as learning outcomes monitored via a large-scale assessment. Each classroom environment is different and teachers are able to see day to day changes in student engagement and academic learning. Many teachers offered a wide range of opinions of student achievement in literacy, and particularly the challenges students face during further transition to English or French in Years 3 and 4. Teachers shared a range of perspectives about students learning from concern about students’ performance in reading and writing, to the perceived benefits of students being able to learn in Bislama or the vernacular, especially in terms of confidence and understanding.

A lot of people are against the Bislama, but in one way, it helps the kids to be able to express themselves and better understand the concepts of the lessons. (Year 5 teacher)

I must speak English to the students in class but their English is very poor due to their use of Bislama from classes 1-3. For transition into English... A main challenge for us teachers have to do with students’ spelling. They are still spelling things in Bislama instead of English. (Year 4 teacher)

I am an English teacher and already I can see in year 7 and 8, and even in primary school, a year 4 student is writing an essay of 2-3 pages in Bislama, who has an idea of how to write an introduction, body and conclusion. That’s really good. (Principal)

¹³ The PILNA regional benchmarks for PILNA literacy and numeracy are available at [2016 regional benchmarks - Pacific Islands Literacy & Numeracy Assessment \(spc.int\)](https://www.spc.int/pilna). These benchmarks will be revised in 2023.

¹⁴ Level 5 is the expected minimum proficiency level for Year 6 reading in PILNA.

¹⁵ Level 3 is the expected minimum proficiency level for Year 4 numeracy in PILNA.

¹⁶ Level 5 is the expected minimum proficiency level for Year 6 numeracy in PILNA.

Teachers had less to say about numeracy, though reported that students performed better in mathematics, but still struggled with problem solving and spelling of numbers because of language load. Principals reported that VESP-provided numeracy kits were helpful, “We have used the VESP kits to improve the students learning in the classroom” (Principal).

Yes, they perform better in mathematics because they were taught in the earlier years in Bislama or vernacular, which is easy for the child to understand... However, the student’s poor English skills makes it challenging to successfully complete a... maths problems activities. (Year 4 teacher)

Change in student participation, interest and wellbeing

Research indicates that wellbeing in school is a critical student learning outcome (Lawson, 2013) (Klem, 2004). Students who feel safe and confident in class are able to communicate more easily with other students and their teachers. Training, support of teachers and the new curriculum were reported by teachers to impact students’ wellbeing.

Over the life of the Study, data about participation, interest and wellbeing were collected primarily through respondents’ perceptions via the case study interviews and classroom observations focused on the classroom environment. Classroom environments were judged to be ‘cooperative and supportive’, ‘compliant’ or ‘unruly’.

Results from 2019, 2021 and 2022 indicate positive shifts in student engagement and interest in school and classroom culture, including teacher-student relationships and interactions. Despite factors impacting attendance respondents reported that because students were engaged in the new curriculum, they made the effort to come to school. In addition to this, teachers report *creating* classroom environments that are supportive and inclusive and this has resulted in positive shifts in student-being.

I have created an environment where I encourage the students to seek assistance or do not be afraid to ask for help if they are unsure of any lessons. This has helped the students with slow learning to actively participate... Because of the new curriculum, the children have so much confidence, if you ask the kids to stand up and talk, they will argue amongst each other about who will talk in front of the class which is very different from the old curriculum. (Year 1-3 teacher)

At the same time, some stakeholders report that challenges with learning English and French cause students to lose interest in lessons:

My grandchild finds reading hard to understand. He cannot read homework instructions which are usually in French. This has caused loss of interest to attend classes... (Parent FGD)

Classroom observations were conducted in 2021 and 2022, and three-quarters of the classrooms observed were reported to have cooperative and supportive environments. These are classrooms where teachers and students work harmoniously, the atmosphere was joyful, interactions respectful, kind and encouraging, and most activity was focused on learning. At the same time, these classrooms also had elements of ‘compliance’ where the classroom atmosphere is complacent, and activities are focused on procedures rather than engagement.

Change in parent and community support

My child is a product of the community that I live in so it is important that both parents and the community are aware of the school our children are attending since they will be future leaders one day. (Parent FGD)

Parents and communities are critical sources of support for students and schools. The Study explored two key aspects of parent and community involvement: parent support of students and school engagement with parents. Many parents said they want to engage with their children's learning and they do this by encouraging their children to attend school and helping with homework. At the same time, some teachers shared observations that lack of parent support impacts student learning.

I also think that I should be aware of what my kids are doing and learning in school or in the classroom. So, my child can come to me and tell me what he is learning in school. This is something that makes me happy, knowing what they are learning in school. (Parent FGD)

Principals and teachers discussed the strategies they used to engagement with parents and encourage parents to become involved in school. Many said that the new curriculum encourages the involvement of members of the community in learning about local culture, values and the environment. Throughout this Study principals and teachers shared a number of strategies to include parents and communities in their children's education. These include awareness sessions at school for parents or inviting members of the community to support children with aspects of their learning.

I think it's a two-way thing, if the parents help at home, then it will help the kids in the classroom. As a teacher, I can't do it on my own, we are both involved in creating who this child will be in the future. (Year 1 teacher)

Principals and teachers also discussed factors that impede student learning, and many of these factors are related to home and community contexts. These impeding factors include some children not having enough food or living in unsettled homes, or children who live a long distance from school. One principal summed up the challenges:

Most parents have travelled overseas for seasonal employment and this has impacted the students' learning in terms of homework and wellbeing. When the student is discouraged or bullied at school by other kids and returning home where there is also no support due to parents' absence then their concentration is lost.

Other factors that present challenges for student learning that are outside the remit of VESP support include very small schools, multi-grade classrooms, lack of teachers, small budgets to rebuild damaged infrastructure and lack of early learning opportunities.

6. Study conclusions and recommendations: informing teacher development in Vanuatu and beyond

This Study offers key lessons and evidence related to teacher development that can be useful to inform the design, implementation, and sustainability of such programs in Vanuatu and other contexts. These lessons are explored below, with recommendations for Vanuatu investments in teacher development.

6.1 Design and implementation

The design and implementation of VESP presents a number of opportunities for learning about the benefits and challenges of a supporting a program that provides a broad level of support for the education sector. A key benefit of a broad national and subnational approach linked to a national sector plan such as VESP Phase I and Phase II is that both programs are long-term investments that support GoV's investments and objectives in the education sector. This is in contrast to a program that may have a sharper focus on teacher and school leader professional learning.

Long-term professional learning program design

A critical overall finding discussed in this Study is that the new curriculum represents significant change to both teaching and assessment practices. It is likely to take more time for teachers to understand and fully incorporate these new approaches into their teaching practice, and they need ongoing support to do so. The most significant challenge to a long-term teacher professional learning program design – that is both intensive and responsive – is ongoing budget needs, government ownership and long-term commitment and support. In other words, broad sector support potentially dilutes the ability to impact a significant part of the education sector, such as intensive investment in teacher and school leader development.

Evidence from Vanuatu indicated that while broad national and subnational approaches in education can support overall system reform, teacher professional learning programs are often rolled out as one-off inputs addressing particular topic areas. For example, one-off inputs might take the form of short workshops, or introduction and overview of an entire new curriculum or new pedagogy. In Vanuatu, evidence indicates that this is a challenge, especially given variability in the teacher workforce with the level of teacher education and training. Evidence also suggests that teachers and school leaders place high value on VESP-supported workshops and have offered perceptions on how these workshops have specifically supported their teaching practice, but also how they could be improved. Consistent responses throughout all three cycles of data collection for this Study indicate the need for follow-up support. Nearly all categories of respondent – teacher, school leader, provincial- and national-level staff – have said that to improve teaching quality there needs to be a sustained and focused investment over multiple years. One respondent summed up the shortcomings of many one-off teacher investment programs in that there is often no follow through – a program of support will be started, but then will quickly move on to something else. This does not allow teachers and school leaders to work on practice, to follow up and to learn. This under-investment has particularly played out in the arena related to language – variable levels of training on language transition has contributed to this part of the curriculum reform at risk.

A key part of any investment in teacher development is the need to engage in policies related to teacher systems. This includes budgets for teacher development, policies on how teachers are recruited and deployed, as well as the role of subnational education personnel to provide school-level support. The VESP Phase II design was predicated on working through and with provincial education structures. As of 2021, many of the staff positions that supported working through provincial structures such as PTs and SIOs were made redundant. No replacement provincial structure has been developed. For VESP, a national respondent noted that these provincial structure changes have left a big gap in the VESP strategy for teacher development:

And when (VESP) was designed we built on those SIOs being kind of stepping stones to enrich the teachers, but SIOs and the PTs also disappeared in the past few years. So it's leaving a big gap.

In addition, there is no unit with a clear responsibility for in-service teacher training. Evidence from this Study and the global literature indicate that a clear focus and long-term commitment to teacher professional learning results in improved teaching quality. Given the range of structural change in the government, a strategy for advocacy and continued engagement in policy dialogue by DFAT and other development partners – especially focused on education governance and its impact on teachers and schools – provides a way forward for improvement of teaching and learning.

Community engagement

Vanuatu faces challenges due to the remoteness of many school communities. The immense changes to pedagogy, and particularly language, means that communities need to well understand the reforms and be part of the change process. Evidence from Vanuatu suggests that confusion around language has particularly placed a key part of the reform at risk. Community engagement and outreach needs to be part of any investment focused on large-scale curriculum reform. Given the ongoing and widespread range of opinions about the language policy and language use in the classroom, there is a need for a clear and well-resourced communications strategy around the purposes and objectives of the new curriculum, and how the language policy supports both the implementation of the new curriculum and improved learning. Related to this, parents and communities also have an important role to play in supporting children's learning in the home, and especially with supporting early literacy and numeracy skills.

Ongoing monitoring, evaluation and learning

While VESP has been designed with a long-term approach to investment in the education sector and has in-built Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) as part of its program, it would be worthwhile rethinking how to increase and refocus some of this M&E specifically to teachers and school leaders, and facilitate ongoing learning about how the training and professional learning support could be better targeted. This might entail research in gaining a better understanding of gaps in teachers' knowledge and monitoring of strategies that are effective in improving learning. This would support MoET, DFAT and VESP to consider how best to direct investment and change aspects of interventions.

Continuing to invest in studies such as the *Curriculum Implementation Monitoring Study* (VESP, 2022) and the *Teacher Policy Frameworks and Management in Vanuatu* study (VESP, 2022) are two examples of M&E that can influence how professional learning is delivered and implemented in Vanuatu.

For example, a priority could be a gap analysis of teacher and principal training and knowledge to develop a plan to enable higher and more comprehensive levels of participation, especially given the varying reported evidence of the quality and quantity of VESP-supported training. Both the lack of training and the lack of follow up training has been a headline finding of this Study. There are a large number of untrained and temporary teachers who are actively teaching the new curriculum and who have had no prospects to engage in training. Additionally, evidence from PILNA suggests some strong associations between both teacher and principal access to and participation in training programs and higher student achievement in literacy and numeracy.

There are other areas of research that could be useful. The interviews and classroom observations highlighted variation in how teachers are understanding the new pedagogies and implementing them. Much can be learned as to why some pedagogies are easier to take-up, and others more challenging, and how these learnings can be integrated into future strategies for professional learning. Other areas that require investigation stem from the VANSTA and PILNA results. These include reasons behind the variations in student performance results by province as well as boys' underperformance which is an issue that is prevalent across many countries.

Recommendations:

1. DFAT to consider the duration and balance of the investment that is needed to support the effective implementation of GoV's education reform process.
 - a. Interventions that aim to transform teaching and learning need commensurate investments in teacher development. Programs need to be sustainable and scalable. Long-term investments in teacher professional learning will be more effective than one-off investments in supporting effective changes in teaching quality.
 - b. Parents and communities are important stakeholders and require engagement and support on how they can support their children's learning effectively.
2. VESP and DFAT to continue to engage with MoET in policy dialogue and advocacy related to teacher systems.
 - a. DFAT to continue to engage in policy dialogue with MoET, other key ministries and development partners on areas of policy such as education sector resourcing, teacher workforce reforms, teacher education and a system for continuous teacher professional development that can also support improved student learning outcomes.
 - b. Current gaps created by the dissolution of the in-service teacher training unit and provincial support structures for schools represent significant risks for how the system will support the professional learning needs of teachers and principals in the future. This requires active policy engagement by DFAT and VESP.
3. MoET and VESP to support communication strategies to enable schools to continue to engage with parents and communities about the curriculum and their children's learning.
 - a. Drawing on the experiences of recent community advocacy campaigns (e.g., *6 Yia Klas 1* to promote primary school enrolment at the right age), MoET to consider running another round of campaigns to inform parents about changes in schools and the importance of education.
 - b. MoET and provincial education authorities to draw on the experience of early childhood and community-based education programs that engage parents in supporting their children to develop foundational early literacy, numeracy and school readiness skills.
4. MoET and VESP to support research to inform how teacher professional learning support could be better targeted and sustained.
 - a. MoET and VESP to conduct a gap analysis of teacher and principal training and knowledge to develop a plan to enable higher and more comprehensive levels of participation.

- b. MoET and VESP to conduct further classroom observations and collect perception data in additional school communities and provinces to better understand which teaching practices are easier or harder to improve, and why, to inform more focused support to teacher professional learning.
- c. MoET and VESP to identify and investigate variations in student performance results as highlighted through VANSTA and PILNA, and action strategies that address improved and more equitable outcomes that can be monitored and sustained.

6.2 Investment in professional learning – a system for ongoing and continuous professional learning Insights from the 2021 data collection

Support of teacher professional learning is a high value investment in ensuring the ongoing support of teaching quality. While governments support improvement of teaching quality and the ongoing investment in teacher development programs, in many low- and-middle-income countries teacher professional learning programs are often ineffective, and at-scale programs do not follow the evidence of what constitutes teacher on-going professional development that is effective and impactful (Popova et al., 2018). Professional development programs for teachers that are effective are documented as being sustained, collaborative, subject-specific, draw on external expertise, have buy-in from teachers and is practice-based (Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2018), but questions remain as to how to deploy many of these features in practice. This Study has found that targeted, on-going support of teachers in Vanuatu should be a critical feature on any investment in teacher professional learning going forward.

Ongoing support helps ensure that teachers are using materials as intended, and the fidelity of implementation is increased. Such ongoing support contributes to motivation as well as increasing teacher confidence as they adapt to new practices (Ralaingita, 2021). In fact, numerous respondents in this Study over the three cycles of data collection said that while they valued the training they participated in for support of implementation of the new curriculum and pedagogies ongoing support and follow-up would contribute to motivation and confidence to continue. Importantly, this Study has documented that there is patchy participation in professional learning opportunities, and a high rate of principals and teacher turnover. In addition, there are many temporary and untrained teachers in the workforce, particularly in Year 1-3 classrooms. There is a need to ensure that teachers and principals are not left out through sustainable programming.

Data from this Study suggests that embedding a structure of support and adequate resourcing for teachers and principals needs to be considered in a system of professional learning that is sustainable. This includes considering how to structure provincial capacities and budgets in ways that can support schools and teachers, as well as building the capacity of principals to lead and guide teachers in implementing the new curriculum and in improving their practice. In addition to this, thinking through sustainable ways of providing professional learning or training opportunities for all teachers is important.

This also includes clarifying *who* is responsible for teacher in-service professional development and resourcing. A number of system-wide changes that govern teachers in Vanuatu have changed significantly since 2021. This includes the discontinuation of the roles of PTs and SIOs, as well as the

disbanding of VITE and ISU, both of which supported the in-service and pre-service training of teachers. These institutional training roles are now the responsibility of the National University of Vanuatu (NUV) which was established in 2021. NUV's School of Education is responsible for the pre-service education of teachers to a bachelor level degree in education, and also provides opportunities for teachers to upgrade their qualifications through external studies (VESP, June 2022, p. 6).

These developments in the system are important in terms of upskilling teachers in Vanuatu, but there is still uncertainty about how to provide in-service support to teachers. At the time of writing, it is understood that a revised provincial structure has been proposed (VESP, June 2022, p. 6). At issue is also the alignment of policy and programming with the NUV School of Education, the MoET and needs of teachers. Teachers are expected to upgrade to bachelor's level degrees by 2030 but a range of equity issues including remoteness and access to transport and IT to access courses presents a significant challenge.

This Study found that specialist training in GEDSI to support inclusion initiatives in the curriculum has an impact in schools and classrooms. Government policies focused on disability inclusion and support from VESP have enabled select teachers to develop specialist knowledge in disability inclusion and achieve professional certification in *Inclusive Education*. Teachers who engaged in focused disability inclusion courses reported they had developed knowledge and classroom strategies for engaging children with disabilities in learning activities. However, large class sizes, limited financial and human resources, as well as the limited capacity of teachers to accurately identify specific disabilities, are constraints to implementing inclusive classroom practices.

In 2020-21, selected teachers also enrolled in a Special and Inclusive Education Diploma offered through the University of the South Pacific (VESP, 6-monthly report, 2021). This was a VESP-supported initiative and indicates specialist knowledge about GEDSI can improve the learning outcomes of students with special needs.

Recommendations:

1. VESP will support MoET to develop a strategy to support a sustainable and long-term model for effective and ongoing professional learning within Vanuatu schools and government that can be embedded and sustained within the MoET system.
 - a. MoET with DFAT support to consider a model that enables provincial education offices to provide school-level support through activities such as professional development, coaching, feedback and mentoring. If teachers do not receive feedback it is difficult to improve their practice.
 - b. MoET and DFAT to work together to support the devolution of support services to schools within the provincial structure reform and provide resources and training to provincial staff to enable them to provide effective support to teachers and principals.
 - c. VESP to continue to support the distribution of resources to schools and students given the reported decline in access to textbooks in 2021. There are clear links between access to resources and improved learning outcomes.

2. VESP to consider more focused support for principals beyond induction programs, as findings indicate that principals are an important source of school-level support for teachers' professional learning and development.
 - a. VESP to support MoET to conduct further investigation on possible school leadership programming strategies, especially given the PILNA-reported outcome that school leader in-service programs are associated with higher levels of student achievement in PILNA.
 - b. VESP to consider revisiting alternative models of instructional leadership such as VansBITT (2016) to strengthen the capacity of primary school principals to support teachers in their professional development.
3. MoET and NUV to support alignment in both the areas of pre-service and in-service teacher training and support.
 - a. DFAT and VESP to continue advocating for clarity in supporting the in-service training of teachers on the new curriculum and other pressing areas.
4. MoET, NUV and VESP to continue to offer opportunities for teachers and principals to develop learning and skills in gender and disability inclusion. Some possibilities include:
 - a. VESP to continue to explore opportunities to support teachers develop specialist skills in this area through the Special and Inclusive Education Diploma offered through the University of the South Pacific.
 - b. NUV and MoET to consider how to include coursework focused on gender and disability inclusion in its Bachelor of Education programs and other teacher-focused education programs.
 - c. VESP to support MoET to offer additional training in gender and disability inclusive approaches in teaching and learning as part of in-service teacher training.

6.3 Investment in collecting student learning data

Student learning outcomes data is an important source of evidence in understanding the impact of investments in teacher professional learning. Understanding what students know and can do is also an important source of evidence for teachers and school leaders as they support ongoing student learning. One of the key strengths for the Study in Vanuatu is the availability of two large-scale assessments (VANSTA and PILNA) that are valid and reliable measures of student learning outcomes in Year 4 and Year 6. PILNA also includes questionnaires that are administered to sampled students, teachers and principals. Questionnaires enable an exploration of student learning outcomes and students and school background contexts including why certain variables might impact student achievement.

While these assessments were not specifically designed for the purpose of monitoring student learning outcomes for VESP investments, the evidence provides important associations of certain factors and their impact on student learning.

Both PILNA and VANSTA have uncovered wide variations in provincial performance – and these trends have been consistent since 2017. Given the evidence provided in this Study, it would be useful to investigate the gaps in learning outcomes in provinces and what kinds of support those provinces have received through VESP.

Research on data availability conducted for this Study series found that a systematic approach to monitoring student learning outcomes is important for any education and learning system. Such data enables governments to make decisions about need for change in curriculum, teaching support, assessment and resourcing to lift student achievement levels and encourage greater equity within a system (Cassity & Wong, 2022). Importantly, the implications for collecting student learning data are valuable for systems monitoring of a range of reforms and policy initiatives. For example, data can support understanding and reform focusing on early literacy at home and in communities, or programs that can support improved literacy outcomes for boys in Year 4 and Year 6. Large-scale assessment data can also inform recovery strategies from learning loss as a result of COVID-19 or an environmental disaster such as a cyclone. Assessment data can support teachers to understand student progress in school, and whether or not that teacher needs to adjust their pedagogy to better meet the learning needs of students.

Recommendations:

1. MoET and VESP to support the interpretation and use of data from PILNA and VANSTA.
 - a. MoET to continue engagement in workshops (such as EQAP's 'PILNA Data Digging' workshops) that support the use of assessment data to inform policy and programming plans.
 - b. VESP and MoET to use the evidence from VANSTA and PILNA on the wide-ranging provincial disparities to inform targeting of resources and professional learning programs.
2. MoET and VESP to support principals and teachers to understand the purposes and uses of VANSTA and PILNA and how these large-scale assessments can contribute to understanding learning outcomes.
 - a. MoET to consider how to support teachers and principals to understand student assessment data and how to use that data to inform practice, and importantly how data supports monitoring of skills outlined in the curriculum.
 - b. MoET and VESP to explore disaggregated student learning outcomes data and contextual data by gender, language, location, school authority and inclusion variables to inform policy and programs to improve equity outcomes for students.

References

- Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) (2017). Education Analytics Service: Teacher Development Multi-Year Studies Conceptual Framework. Melbourne: ACER.
- Australian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (ACARA) (2015-2022). National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy. Downloaded from: [NAPLAN \(acara.edu.au\)](https://www.naplan.edu.au).
- ACER (2018). Evaluation Plan for Vanuatu’s Investment in Training and Supporting Teachers to Implement the New Curriculum in the Vanuatu Education Sector. Melbourne: ACER.
- Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) (2018). National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) 2018: Technical Report. Sydney: ACARA.
- Cassidy, E. & Wong, D. (2022). Teacher development multi-year studies. Insights on the challenges of data availability for measuring and reporting on student learning outcomes. Melbourne: ACER.
- Cassidy, E., Wong, D., & Cheng, J. (2021). Education Analytics Service: Teacher Development Multi-Year Study Series: Vanuatu - Interim Report 1. Melbourne: ACER.
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) (2015). Investing in Teachers. Canberra: DFAT.
- DFAT (2018). Education Support Program (VESP) Phase II. Investment Design Document. Canberra: DFAT.
- Educational Quality Assessment Program (EQAP) (2016). 2015 Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (PILNA) Regional Report. Suva: Pacific Community.
- EQAP (2016). Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment 2015 Technical Report. Suva: Pacific Community.
- EQAP (2019). Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment 2018: Regional Report. Suva Pacific Community.
- EQAP (2019). Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment 2018 Technical Report. Suva: Pacific Community.
- EQAP (2022). Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment 2021: Regional Report. Suva Pacific Community.
- Fletcher-Wood, H. (2018). Designing Professional Development for Teacher Change. Available at url: https://s3.euwest-2.amazonaws.com/ambition-institute/documents/Designing_Professional_Development_for_Teacher_Change_-_Harry_Fletcher-Wood_1.pdf.
- Klem, A.M. and Connell, J.P. (2004). Relationships matter: Linking teacher support to student engagement and achievement. *Journal of School Health* 74(7), 262-273.
- Kolisen Blong Leftemap Edukesen (KOBLE) (2020). Remote learning during COVID-19. The home schooling package in Vanuatu. Port Vila: KOBLE.
- Lawson, M.A. and Lawson, H.A. (2013). New conceptual frameworks for student engagement research, policy and practice. *Review of Educational Research* 83(3), 432-479.

- Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) (2012). Vanuatu National Language Policy. Port Vila: MoET.
- MoET (2015). Curriculum. <https://moet.gov.vu/index.php?id=curriculum>. Retrieved 15 January 2022.
- MoET (2018). Statistical Digest Report 2016-2018. Port Vila: MoET.
- MoET (2022). VANSTA 2021: A report on the results of the literacy and numeracy tests conducted in 2019 with all Vanuatu students in Years 4, 6 and 8. Port Vila: MoET.
- MoET (2020). VANSTA 2019: A report on the results of the literacy and numeracy tests conducted in 2019 with all Vanuatu students in Years 4, 6 and 8. Port Vila: MoET.
- MoET (2018). VANSTA 2017: A report on the results of the literacy and numeracy tests conducted in 2017 with all Year 4 and Year 6 Vanuatu students. Port Vila: MoET.
- Popova, A., Evans, D. K., Breeding, M. E., & Arancibia, V. (2018). Teacher Professional Development around the World: The Gap between Evidence and Practice. World Bank. Available at url: <https://doi.org/10.1596/1813-9450-8572>
- Ralaingita, W. (2021) Structured Pedagogy: A How-to guide. Teacher Professional Development: Ongoing Teacher Support. Available at url: https://scienceofteaching.site/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/SP_6_Teacher-Professional-DevOngoing-Teacher-Support.pdf.
- UNESCO (2022). Leave no child behind. Global report on boys' disengagement from education. Paris: UNESCO. Available at url: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381105>
- VESP (2022). Curriculum Implementation Monitoring Study: Final Report, June 2022. Port Vila: VESP.
- VESP (2022). Teacher Policy Frameworks and Management in Vanuatu. Port Vila: VESP.
- VESP (2022). VESP II: Context analysis, March 2022. Port Vila: VESP.
- VESP (2016). Technical Report: Professional development for the new Vanuatu primary curriculum. Port Vila: VESP.
- VESP (2018). Vanuatu Education Support Program Phase 1 Completion Report. Port Vila: VESP.
- VESP (2020). Vanuatu Education Support Program. Bi-Monthly Report, March – April 2020. Port Vila: VESP.
- VESP (2020). Vanuatu Education Support Program. Bi-Monthly Report, July – August 2020. Port Vila: VESP.
- VESP (2019). VESP II First Six-Monthly Progress Report, 1 January – 30 June 2019. Port Vila: VESP.
- VESP (2020). VESP II Six-Monthly Progress Report, 1 July – 31 December 2019. Port Vila: VESP.
- VESP (2020). VESP II Six-Monthly Progress Report, 1 January – 30 June 2020. Port Vila: VESP.
- VESP (2021). VESP II Six-Monthly Progress Report, 1 January – 30 June 2021. Port Vila: VESP.
- VESP (2021). VESP II Six-Monthly Progress Report, 1 July – 31 December 2021. Port Vila: VESP.
- Wilans, F. (2017). Another early-exit model doomed to fail? Or is this the wrong model at the right time in Vanuatu? *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 38:8, 699-711.

Annex A: New curriculum timeline

Table A.1: Overview of new curriculum rollout and study related events

		2016				2017				2018				2019				2020				2021				2022			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Y1	Materials distribution																												
	Training																												
Y2	Materials distribution																												
	Training																												
Y3	Materials distribution																												
	Training																												
Y4	Materials distribution																												
	Training																												
Y5	Materials distribution																												
	Training																												
Y6	Materials distribution																												
	Training																												
School closures - COVID-19																													
School closures - TC Harold - varied																													
VANSTA																													
PILNA																													
CS data collection																													

Table A.2: Overview of new curriculum training delivered from 2014 to 2022

Year	Course	Target group
2014	Effective Learning and Teaching (ELT)	Grade 1-3 teachers
2015	Language and Communication Teacher Guide	Grade 1-3 teachers
2015	Year 1 Mathematics Teachers Guide	Grade 1-2 teachers
2016	Language & Communication & Living in our Community	Grade 1-2 teachers
2016	Numeracy	Grade 2-3 teachers
2016	Instructional Leadership	Primary principals
2017	ELT	Primary principals
2017	ELT	Grade 1-6 teachers (not trained in ELT in 2014)
2017	Ademap Lanwis	Grade 1-3 teachers
2018	Instructional Leadership	Primary principals
2018	Ademap Lanwis	Grade 2-3 teachers
2019	Year 4-5 Curriculum	Grade 4-5 teachers and principals
2019	Year 4 Teachers Guide	
2020	Year 5-6 Curriculum	Grade 5-6 teachers
2021	Ademap Lanwis for Y4 to Y6	PSIC, SIO, Head Teachers, key teachers
2021	Class-based Assessment	Grade 1-6 teachers
2021	Supporting provincial strategic approaches to improve literacy	Teachers, provincial staff and communities
2021	Qualifications upgrading	Primary school teachers
2022	Vernacular materials development	Grade 1-3 teachers; selected primary school communities
2022	Teachers' qualification upgrading	Primary school teachers
2022	Class-based assessment professional development	Grades 1-6 teachers
2022	Ademap Lanwis for Y1 to 6	Grades 1-3 teachers; Grades 4-6 teachers
2022	Multilingual classroom professional learning pilot	Grades 1-3 primary school teachers
2022	VANSTA principals' data club	Primary principals
2022	Strengthening provincial based curriculum training and support	Provincial curriculum support staff, primary school teachers

Annex B: Detailed study design and methodology

The Study, designed in 2018, has a number of key features. Importantly, a key feature of the Study is the length of its duration (from 2018 until 2023) which acknowledges the complex nature of teacher development and that sustained change in teaching practice takes time. It also recognises the scale of the VESP investment, and enables an agile and adaptive approach that is responsive to contextual affordances and limitations.

The Study adopts a mixed methods approach utilising both quantitative and qualitative methods. It draws on existing and newly collected data quantitative student assessment data, as well as newly collected qualitative case study data as detailed in Table B.1.

The *VESP Evaluation Plan* (EAS, 2018) and *Teacher Development Multi-Year Studies – Conceptual Framework* (EAS, 2017) provide the rationale and overall approach for this Study.

Table B.1: Study data sources

Key research questions	Data sources
1. Teaching Quality To what extent has the investment improved teaching quality in Vanuatu?	Case studies at school level (2019, 2021, 2022) and system level (2022) Secondary analysis of PILNA (2018, 2021)
2. Curriculum Implementation To what extent has the investment in teacher training and mentoring supported effective implementation of Vanuatu’s new curriculum?	Case studies at school level (2019, 2021, 2022) and system level (2022) Secondary analysis of PILNA (2018, 2021)
3. Student Learning To what extent have teacher training and support activities led to improved learning outcomes?	Case studies at school level (2019, 2021, 2022) and system level (2022) Secondary analysis of VANSTA (2017, 2019, 2021) and PILNA (2018, 2021)

Amended study design

The approach adopted for the Study enabled an amendment of the study design in 2020 and 2022, to address contextual challenges.

First, to account for the global impact of COVID-19 on schools and governments and its associated border closures and travel restrictions, as well as Tropical Cyclone Harold. These delayed the second data collection originally scheduled for June-July 2020 by one year to June-July 2021. Further COVID-19 restrictions in 2022 led to a delay in data collection in 2022 by several months, to September-October 2022. Additional COVID-19 questions were added each year to understand the impact of COVID-19 school disruptions on teaching and learning. This extension in duration of the study ensured the inclusion of VANSTA 2021 and PILNA 2021, which may not have been available originally due to reporting timeframes.

Second, to account for student learning data gaps in Timor-Leste, DFAT approved the addition of classroom observations from 2021 in Timor-Leste, a decision which was extended to the Vanuatu

case studies. This enabled the triangulation of case study perception data with observations, enriching the datasets related to all three research questions.

Qualitative data

The qualitative data contributes to our understanding of the impact of VESP in the three areas of teaching quality, curriculum implementation and student learning. Case study data was collected in 2019, 2021 and 2022. Two provinces were selected each year as sites for case study interviews to explore the breadth of teacher experience in Vanuatu, to investigate differences in implementation by island/province, and to investigate program sustainability. Stakeholder interviews, FGDs and classroom observations were the primary data collection methods for the case studies. The method is detailed further below.

Method

In-country partnerships

The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) partnered with Natora Consulting (a local team of researchers) in 2019 and 2021, and KoBLE (non-government organisation) in 2022 to finalise the data collection instruments and undertake the data collection. Both in-country partners were critical to the successful collection of high-quality data.

Instrument design

Interviews and observation were the primary data collection methods for the case studies. The data collection tools were designed to address each of the overarching research questions defined in the *VESP Evaluation Plan*.

The research team developed individualised interview guides to conduct semi-structured interviews with a range of education stakeholders: years 1 to 4 teachers; years 5 and 6 teachers, principals, PTs, SIOs, provincial education officers and national stakeholders. A focus group discussion guide was developed for parents and community.

Classroom observations were introduced in year 2 of the Study. The research team developed the classroom observation code book and template to record instances of different teaching practices including student-centred learning, formative assessment and inclusiveness. It also captures information related to lesson preparation, resources, classroom set up and the classroom environment.

Instrument contextualisation and translation

The ACER team worked in partnership with in-country research partners to refine and translate the case study interview guides and classroom observation instruments. These were reviewed and adjusted prior to each round of data collection.

Sampling

Purposeful sampling was utilised to select the case study sites, presented in Table B.2, based on specific criterion (province/island, language, authority, VANSTA performance), and with input from DFAT Post and in-country research partners particularly on logistical feasibility. While the intention was to collect data from all six provinces, this was not possible due to COVID-19 restrictions. Torba

was excluded given inter-island flights were still limited and unreliable in September 2022 due to COVID-19 disruptions. Erromango was chosen given flights were available, and for its remoteness.

For each round of data collection, ACER reviewed data from Vanuatu's Education Management Information Systems (via OpenVEMIS) and VANSTA to purposefully sample schools within the selected provinces. The following sample selection criteria was used with a view to select four to six schools in each province/island. Schools were excluded based on the following characteristics:

- schools that did not cover Years 1 to 4
- schools that were not implementing the Vanuatu Government's primary curriculum
- schools that did not participate in the previous VANSTA.

Schools were then selected to account for:

- VANSTA to obtain a mix of high and low performance in VANSTA
- language of instruction to include a mix of Anglophone and Francophone schools.

Note that for year 3, given there were only seven schools in Erromango which had scores for VANSTA in 2019, case study schools were selected on the basis of accessibility.

Over the three years of the Study, data was collected from 29 schools and communities.

Table B.2: Case study interview and classroom observation sites (years 1-3)

Year of study	Province (island)	Schools	Target respondents	Classroom observations
1 (2019)	Malampa (Malekula)	7	Years 1 to 4 teachers, principals, PTs, SIOs, provincial education officers, parents/community	No
	Penama (Pentecost)	5		
2 (2021)	Shefa (Efate)	4	Years 1 to 4 teachers, principals, PTs, SIOs, provincial education officers, parents/community	Yes
	Tafea (Tanna)	4		
3 (2022)	Sanma (Santo)	5	Years 1 to 4 teachers; years 5 and 6 teachers, principals, provincial education officers, parents/community, national stakeholders	Yes

Fieldwork preparation and training

In each year of the Study, fieldwork preparation activities were undertaken. Given the cost of flights, scoping visits were not possible. However, DFAT Post and in-country research partners liaised closely with MoET authorities and schools to obtain approvals and to arrange logistical details.

In each year of the Study, ACER delivered field research training to in-country partners, to ensure high quality data collection. In 2019, training was face to face. In 2021 training took place remotely and in 2022 the training involved a mix of face to face and remote training. Short pilots and practise sessions were included each round.

The field research training programs included the following topics: study and VESP overview and background; case study methodology; roles and responsibilities, child protection; research ethics;

data collection techniques and instruments; mock interviews; classroom observations; in-school pilot and debrief; data management; and preparing for fieldwork.

Data collection

The ACER research team worked in partnership with in-country research partners to undertake a total of 158 interviews with a range of education stakeholders over three years and 45 FGDs with parents and community (Table B.3). Interviews and FGDs were audio-recorded in Bislama and transcribed into English, in preparation for analysis.

Table B.3: Interview participants (years 1-3)

Type of stakeholder	Number of respondents interviewed / FGDs held		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Principals/head teachers	11	9	8
Year 1 to 4 teachers	32	26	26
Year 5 to 6 teachers	-	-	9
SIO	6	4	-
PT	4	3	-
PEO	-	2	2
Parent FGD	16	13	16
MoET representatives	-	-	6
DFAT/VESP representatives	-	-	10
Total	69	57	77

Classroom observations

The ACER research team worked in partnership with in-country research partners to conduct classroom observations of Year 2 *Language and Communication* lessons.¹⁷ The design specified two lessons observed per teacher, but this was not always possible. As detailed in table B.4, researchers conducted 31 observations in 15 schools, across four islands.

Table B.4: Classroom observations sites (years 2 and 3)

Province (island)	Number of schools	Teachers observed	Classroom observations
Shefa (Efate)	4	4	7
Tafea (Tanna)	4	4	7
Sanma (Santo)	5	5	9
Tafea (Erromango)	3	4	8
Total	15	17	31

¹⁷ This was not always possible due to multigrade classes, teacher absences, and time constraints. In 2021: one class was a combined Year 3/4 class because the Year 2 teacher was unavailable; and at two schools only one lesson was observed due to teacher absenteeism. In 2022: one Year 3 class was observed as the Year 2 teacher was on leave; one maths class was observed due to time constraints; and one whole lesson and some parts of other lessons were excluded from analysis as the observations occurred on 'evaluation day' which meant lessons were not typical of the usual daily lesson.

Quality assurance

The ACER research team accompanied the in-country research teams in year one of the Study, to provide a quality assurance role by observing interviews and conducting daily debrief sessions. This was not possible in years two and three of the Study due to COVID-19 related travel restrictions. ACER conducted remote debriefs throughout the field work period to provide advice and address issues as they arose.

Data analysis

The ACER team used QSR NVivo 12 Pro to conduct the analysis of the case study interview data. Data was coded aligned with themes identified in the *Teacher Development Multi-Year Studies - Conceptual Framework* (EAS, 2017).

For the classroom observation data, the ACER team reviewed the contextual information recorded by researchers and created observation maps by theme (interactions, pedagogy, gender, inclusivity), undertaking analysis of theme activities observed across the duration of lessons. The team also reviewed records of the classroom environment. ACER developed the visual displays of the data in an attempt to understand prevalence of practices and differences between municipalities.

Quantitative data

Quantitative data for the Study has been drawn from three different sources:

1. Years 4 and 6 mathematics and literacy results from the 2015, 2018 and 2021 Pacific Island Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (PILNA)
2. Questionnaire data from students, teachers, and principals as part of the 2018 and 2021 PILNA survey
3. Years 4 and 6 mathematics and literacy results from the 2017, 2019 and 2021 Vanuatu Standardised Test of Achievement (VANSTA).

PILNA and VANSTA have different objectives. PILNA is a regional assessment of students' literacy and numeracy skills in Year 4 and Year 6 and is administered every three years. PILNA is administered to a representative sample of Year 4 and Year 6 students in all provinces of Vanuatu. VANSTA is a national assessment of Year 4 and Year 6 students' literacy and numeracy achievement within the national curriculum. VANSTA is administered as a census to all students in Years 4 and 6.

This analysis also includes a detailed descriptive overview of the teacher and school leader questionnaire variables in PILNA 2018 and 2021. This analysis explores the Vanuatu learning environment and experiences and attitudes of students, teachers and school leaders collected in the PILNA contextual questionnaires. The focus is on the 2021 PILNA which expanded on the 2018 versions of the questionnaires.

A final analysis of PILNA 2021 assesses the predictive power of the teacher and school leader variables for student achievement in numeracy, reading and writing.¹⁸

¹⁸ This is done using multivariate modelling (regression) where each teacher/school leader indicator is added to statistical specifications that include a number of school, student and community controls. Separate analyses are done by study subject and grade.

Given PILNA 2015 and 2018 and VANSTA 2017 were administered to students studying under the previous curriculum, they provide important Years 4 and 6 student data for literacy and numeracy, and contextual questionnaire data. VANSTA 2019 and 2021 and PILNA 2021 cover student cohorts who have been taught under the new curriculum.

Method

VANSTA¹⁹

Sample

The VANSTA is administered as a census with all students in Years 4, 6, and 8. For the purposes of this report, only results from Years 4 and 6 will be reported on.

Methodology

VANSTA is a literacy and numeracy test for students in Years 4, 6, and 8 to measure the proportion of students who were meeting expected outcomes for their year level. It is administered nationally in Vanuatu. VANSTA was developed by staff from the EAU and CDU alongside teachers in Vanuatu.

The VANSTA data trends for 2017-2019 have been summarized in Interim Reports 1 and 2. This updated analysis includes the 2021 VANSTA results and also presents provincial averages (with trends). Student achievement trends in the VANSTA have been reviewed and including in the analysis, which is especially important for comparing the performance of student cohorts who have been exposed to the new curriculum against earlier results.

PILNA

Sample

For PILNA, sampling across all the Pacific Island countries was a complex process as there is a great variation across all 15 countries. Whilst a census approach was used for the smaller Pacific Island countries (n=6), a sample approach was used for Vanuatu and larger countries (n=9), taking into account provincial, district, locality, school authority, school, and class sizes as selection variables.

In 2018 and 2021, a sampling frame was used with more specific definitions developed for the target population. That is, the Year 4 population “includes all students who have completed approximately four years of formal schooling, counting from the first year of International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) Level 1)”. Year 6 students “includes all students who have completed approximately six years of formal schooling counting from ISCED Level 1” (EQAP, 2019). Table B.5 shows student sample numbers for Vanuatu.

Table B.5: PILNA 2021 sample, Vanuatu (EQAP, PILNA)

	PILNA 2021 Numeracy		PILNA 2021 Literacy	
	Year 4 students	Year 6 students	Year 4 students	Year 6 students
VANUATU	2602	2243	2611	2234

¹⁹ At the time of writing (March 2023), the VANSTA 2021 report was not available to include the sampling design.

The PILNA data are analysed using standard survey data techniques that are appropriate for surveys based on weighted data designs with clusters of respondents (i.e., groups of students). The main statistical activity in this summary is the multivariate work. This statistical technique is especially useful for survey data (like PILNA) because it makes it possible to analyse the effects of multiple variables at the same time and, in theory, identify the most important predictors of outcomes like student achievement.

Methodology

The multivariate results are based on two different model specifications that were incorporated separately by grade level (Year 4 and Year 6) and test subject. Model 1 includes the main student and family background variables like student age, gender, ECE participation, family SES and parental education. Model 2 includes these same variables and then adds in additional school controls and a set of four student-level indices that cover student temperament, cognitive engagement, social competence, and home support. The results from Models 1 and 2 are presented in Table B.1, with significant predictors of student achievement highlighted using asterisks.

Following the initial summary of Model 1 and 2 results in Table B.1, the multivariate analysis is then used to identify individual teacher and school leader variables that are significantly associated with student achievement. These results are presented throughout the Report in a series of tables that cover specific topics (e.g. teacher characteristics, language of instruction, etc.). These results are built off the modelling that is presented in Table B.1 for Models 1 and 2. Each of the individual variables in the tables in the Report are added to the multivariate models (1 and 2), and the results for that specific variable are then included in the table.

It is important to note that these individual coefficients for each of these teacher and school leader variables of interest are not the only variables that are included in the analysis: all of the variables in Table B.1 are also included (corresponding to Model 1 and 2). But it is not necessary (or realistic) to present all the results from every multivariate model, so the presentation strategy instead just focuses on the individual parameter for each variable of interest in the different tables in the Report. The parameters refer to the difference in student test scores that are associated with that variable when controlling other variables in the model. For example, a parameter of 10.0 for 'Teacher has higher education' means that student test scores in that subject (and grade) are 10 points higher in classrooms where the teacher reports having higher education. Significant parameters are flagged using asterisks together with the t-statistic (in parentheses).

It should be noted that multivariate analysis is a powerful technique that makes it possible to assess the impact of many variables at the same time. But this does not mean that each of the variable parameters can be treated as a causal or direct effect. This is instead a form of correlation where the goal is to identify individual results that stand out among the other variables. This evidence can then be included in a larger discussion about school quality that incorporates different kinds of evidence.

Multivariate summary table

The multivariate results, even using the stripped-down approach to presenting findings only for variables of interest, generate a large amount of output. To simplify interpretation of the main findings a summary table has been prepared (Table B.6 below). For this summary a handful of variables from the teacher questionnaire (and a couple from the school leader questionnaire) have been selected. These include basic characteristics like gender, experience, and education as well as

individual characteristics that are significantly associated with student achievement in at least 1 or 2 of the estimations.

Rather than present parameters (coefficient) and t-statistics, the summary strategy instead simply flags significant predictors with a “+” (for positive predictors) and “-” (for negative predictors) signs. Two levels of statistical significance are used: a single +/- means that coefficient was significant at the $p \leq 0.10$ level, which is generally considered to be only marginally significant. And then two +/- are used to highlight variables that were significant at the $p \leq 0.05$ level, which is the standard cut point used to identify significant results in statistical analysis. So, for example, the variable ‘Teacher has higher education’ is a positive and significant predictor of student achievement in all three subjects in the Grade 4 sample, and the coefficients are significant at the $p \leq 0.05$ level (or two pluses “++”).

There is only one variable in Table B.1 that is negatively associated with student achievement: the average percentage of children who suffer from a series of problems (teacher questionnaire block 10). This is a significant, negative predictor of student achievement in grade 6, which is flagged with two minus signs “- -” in Table B.1.

Variables that are not statistically significant at the $p \leq 0.10$ level are indicated by “NS” (Not Significant).

Each variable also includes a reference to the teacher (or school leader) questionnaire question block that it comes from, which provides additional help for understanding what the variable means.

Table B.6. Summary of significant predictors of student achievement by grade and test subject, Teacher and School Leader questionnaire variables

Predictor	Questionnaire Reference	Grade 4			Grade 6		
		Numeracy	Reading	Literacy	Numeracy	Reading	Literacy
Teacher characteristics:							
Gender	TQ1	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
Experience	TQ3	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
Has higher education	TQ4	++	++	++	NS	NS	NS
Classroom-school resources:							
Books-bookshelves	TQ7-j	+	NS	+++	NS	NS	NS
Computers/tablets for students	SLQ13-f	+	NS	NS	++	++	++
Overall resource average	TQ7	NS	NS	+	NS	NS	NS
Training and curriculum support:							
Teacher PD in last 3 years (overall average)	TQ13	++	++	++	NS	NS	NS
In service programmes (for curriculum support)	SLQ14-e	+	+	NS	++	++	+
Challenges, working conditions and well-being:							
Student challenges (avg.)	TQ10	NS	NS	NS	--	--	--
Work conditions (avg.)	TQ11	++	+	NS	NS	NS	--
Overall collaboration average	TQ18	NS	++	++	NS	NS	NS
Average teaching tasks conducted in language of assessment	TQ14	NS	++	++	NS	NS	NS
Covid-19 closure period adaptations:							
Communicated by email, social media	TQ16-d	NS	+	NS	NS	NS	NS
Communicated with phone calls	TQ16-e	NS	+	+	NS	NS	NS
Delivered classes online	TQ17-c	++	++	NS	NS	NS	NS

Data source: PILNA 2021

Notes: See text in Section 3 for full results with parameters and significance levels. Summary strategy uses “+” (positive) and “-” (negative) to denote statistically significant parameters from the multivariate statistical analysis (see “Model 2” results in detailed tables). Level of significance is given by the number of +/-: $p < 0.05$ (++)/-; $p < 0.10$ (+/-). NS=Not significant

Annex C: VESP in context – year 3 findings

Introduction

The findings from the Santo and Erromango case studies are organized by key themes emerging from the overarching research question ‘to what extent does this aid investment produce improved teaching quality and improved student learning?’ The following section provides a brief overview of each of the islands, as well as a summary of the recent changes in the education system that have taken place, which affects teacher development in Vanuatu.

Santo and Erromango

Santo (Sanma)

Espirtu Santo (Santo) is the largest island in Vanuatu, with a population of around 40,000 people. Around one-quarter live in the main town of Luganville – the second largest town in Vanuatu – which also hosts an airport and a deep-water port. The island is well serviced, has a number of industries and is a popular tourist destination. A range of different vernaculars are spoken on Santo. Compared to Erromango, teachers in the case study from Santo were generally more qualified and likely to be permanent.

Erromango (Tafea)

Erromango is the largest island in Tafea Province, with a small population of around 2,000 people. The island is very remote and mountainous. The island has two airports and one road, but many villages are only accessible by boat. Supplies to the island can be infrequent. To illustrate, one of the case study schools is a three-hour boat ride from the nearest airport and children have to cross a river to access the school. The majority of households on the island speak Erromangan as their first language. Erromango schools tend to have smaller class sizes. Due to its remoteness and lack of services, teacher turnover is a major challenge. Compared to Santo, teachers in our case study from Erromango were generally less qualified and there were more temporary/contract teachers.

Education system changes

A number of important changes in the education system have taken place since 2021. These are worth noting given their impact on teacher development. Previously, the ISU was tasked with conducting the training and professional development for the new curriculum. In 2021, the VITE was integrated into the NUV, and the role of ISU was made defunct.

In previous years, ISU via PTs conducted a range of training workshops with teachers, principals and some SIOs to build knowledge and capacity related to aspects of the new curriculum. The functions of PTs were to be amalgamated with SIO responsibilities, but in 2022, SIO positions were also made redundant.

NUV’s School of Education is now responsible for pre-service teacher education and the upgrading of in-service primary teachers as part of the National Teacher Development Plan by 2030. The Teaching Services Commission is in charge of registration and licensing.

To what extent has the investment improved teaching quality in Vanuatu?

As defined in the Conceptual Framework (ACER, 2017), ‘teaching quality’ or quality teaching refers to effective instruction that promotes excellence and student learning outcomes through best practices. Quality teaching practices are based on high standards of instruction and student engagement, deep understanding of content, and application of pedagogical principles that contribute to supporting and improving student learning.

The following sections explore the extent that involvement in VESP leads to improved teaching quality in Vanuatu. Key themes for this discussion include a background of professional development that respondents in this study engaged in as part of VESP; teachers’ knowledge, beliefs and attitudes; teaching practice; and impacts of COVID-19 on teaching and learning. Overall findings are presented as part of each theme.

Professional development

From 2014 to 2022, there were 25 professional development activities associated with the new curriculum training that was supported by VESP. Teachers and principals were provided with this list of training and asked to re-call which programs they had participated in. Training participation was uneven and patchy, and very low between 2020 and 2022.

Twenty-one of these programs were targeted to Years 1 to 6 teachers – 20 included Years 1 to 4 teachers in their target groups and twelve for Years 5 to 6 (some crossed over). Training participation was uneven and patchy, and very low after 2019.

- Five teachers in Erromango and one in Santo had attended no programs.
- Twenty-six Year 1 to 4 teachers had on average attended three programs. One teacher reported they had attended nearly all programs. Only three of these teachers attended training after 2019.
- All of the nine Year 5 to 6 case study teachers on average two training programs. Only two teachers attended training after 2021.
- For those teachers that identified their professional status, temporary/contract teachers on average participated in fewer programs (less than 3) than teachers who are permanent (6).
- As expected, newer teachers had attended fewer programs.
- Generally, teachers in Santo had a higher participation rate than Erromango.
- Two ELT courses were run (2014 and 2017). Around half of the teachers participated in the ELT course, with the majority of teachers attending the first training.
- Four Ademap Lanwis courses were held (2017, 2018, 2021, 2022). Around two-thirds of teachers participated in this course, with the majority of these teachers attending the first training.

Six programs were targeted to principals, but some principals attended programs also targeted to teachers.

- Most principals had on average attended four programs. One newer principal attended none and one Erromango principal had attended one program.
- Three of eight principals (38 per cent) had attended the *Instructional Leadership for Principals* course.

- Generally, principals in Santo have lower participation rate than Erromango.

From 2020 to 2022, there were 11 teacher training programs for G1-6 teachers and 1 principal training program. The level of training participation from teachers and principals was very low.

The PILNA survey collected a national sample of teacher background characteristics, which for the most part align with the backgrounds of the study participants. The teacher samples are about 55 percent female in both surveys (2018 and 2021), with much higher concentrations of females in urban schools and Year 4 classrooms. Most teachers are in the mid ranges of age (31-45) and experience (3-15 years), with older teachers more likely in urban areas and grade 6 classrooms. About 50 percent of teachers report participation in teacher training programs (at some level), with no change between 2018 and 2021. The proportion of trained teachers is relatively higher in Year 6 classrooms.

Teachers' knowledge, beliefs and attitudes

Finding 1. In all three cycles of data collection, case study respondents indicated that VESP-supported training including *Effective Learning and Teaching* (ELT) and *Ademap Lanwis*, supported improved teacher professional knowledge about content and student-centred pedagogies used in the new curriculum, particularly related to improving student engagement and lesson planning. In 2022, some case study respondents also reflected that orientation courses to the curriculum and teachers' guides (e.g., Language and Communication, Maths) have helped them to understand the new curriculum content, the specific learning objectives and outcomes, and how to deliver the lessons. Stakeholders reported the training to be useful also for temporary and untrained teachers.

Finding 2. The lack of follow-up training or availability of training and support for teachers and principals has the potential to undermine any long-term retention of skills and knowledge. Over the course of this Study, stakeholders continued to identify the limitations of training including duration and delivery mode, lack of ongoing support, and comprehensiveness of participation.

Finding 3. In all three cycles, teachers and principals reported increased confidence and motivation to engage students in class and be creative in teaching. They attributed this knowledge to participation in VESP-supported training, the teachers' guides, and provision of resource kits.

Finding 4. Year 4 and 6 student achievement levels are higher when their teacher reports university education. The positive association between teacher education and student achievement is statistically significant in Year 4.

Finding 5. Teacher professional development measures (frequency of attending professional development in the last three years) are significantly (and positive) associated with student achievement especially in Year 4.

Finding 6. In terms of wellbeing, teachers and school leaders reported the most frequent concerns are 'I experience stress' and 'I feel overwhelmed by my job'. At the same time, teachers and school principals are generally positive about their profession.

As defined in the Conceptual Framework (ACER, 2017), 'teacher knowledge' refers to professional knowledge including content, pedagogical, and pedagogical-content knowledge. 'Beliefs about teaching' can include beliefs about content, pedagogy and learning. 'Attitudes about teaching' can include confidence and motivation.

The perspectives of teachers, principals and national stakeholders about new knowledge, beliefs and attitudes about teaching collected in case study interviews are outlined below. Case study respondents in Santo and Erromango reported a variety of changes to teacher knowledge, beliefs and attitudes as a result of attending VESP-supported training and applying student-centred pedagogies from the new curriculum. These findings are similar to those from years 1 and 2 of the Study.

Respondents reported that VESP-supported training was helpful in strengthening principal and teacher knowledge in lesson planning and delivery, and pedagogical approaches. Teachers also reported increased confidence in and motivation for teaching as a result of the training. In many cases, change in beliefs and attitudes towards teaching resulted in improved engagement with students in class, creativity in teaching, and increased confidence in using a language familiar to students and teachers. These aspects are embedded in the Vanuatu national curriculum which focuses on a 'quality, relevant and harmonized' curriculum with teaching strategies that focus on student-centred pedagogies (MoET, 2015).

Discussion – teacher professional knowledge

Teachers who had participated in VESP courses reported certain courses had helped them develop knowledge in areas such lesson planning and creating schemes of work, effective lesson delivery, and student-centred pedagogies. Generally, teachers in Santo had a higher participation rate than Erromango. Five teachers in Erromango and one in Santo had attended no programs.

A number of teachers from Santo and Erromango (4) highlighted how attending the training courses made them realise they needed to make adjustments to their teaching:

Sometimes when planning my lessons, I thought I have been doing it the right way. However, after attending the workshops, I realised that I need to adjust my lesson planning and delivery. (Year 3-4 teacher, Erromango)

As a teacher who has been teaching for a while, I often assume that my teaching strategies and methods are effective. However, after going through such workshops, I tend to realize that I still need to improve in certain areas of teaching methods so as to enable learning to take place. (Year 6 teacher, Santo)

The trainings are an eye opener. At first, I did not know or consider that all my students in class are different. Some learn slowly while some learn fast. So, after the trainings I know that I must separate them into groups based on their abilities. (Year 3 teacher, Santo)

Effective Learning and Teaching (ELT) was reported by a number of teachers and principals (6) as particularly helpful. Several respondents referred to the knowledge gained from ELT on lesson planning and creating schemes of work:

From the ELT trainings what I find helpful is the way language is taught in the classroom... helps us to see the alignment between the specific learning outcomes that students must achieve in the different language strands, all of which are included in the textbooks as compared to the old curriculum. (Year 6 teacher, Santo)

ELT really helped me in how I can prepare my lessons and how to make sure the kids learn and understand. (Year 5-6 teacher, Erromango)

Three Santo teachers referred to ELT building their understanding about different learning needs and knowledge of student-centred pedagogies. For example:

The ELT has been the most effective training that help me... The teacher mostly focuses on children's learning and interaction and not standing in front of the classroom and talking too much but let the students involve more on group activities... ELT help me as a teacher to continually refer back to the students' learning at home. (Year 1-3 teacher, Santo)

Some teachers (3) said that orientation courses to the curriculum and teachers' guides (e.g., Language and Communication, Maths) have helped them to understand the new curriculum content, the specific learning objectives and outcomes, and how to deliver the lessons. One Year 4 Erromango teacher specified how these trainings have "opened my mind to understand the assessment side of teaching." An Erromango principal reflected on the importance of training being delivered to all teachers, particularly use of the teachers' guide:

VESP to provide training to every single the teachers in the school to understand the VESP developed teachers-guide. Training needs to be taught more to teachers and principals on the how to work with the teacher's guide particularly how they can track student learning in the classroom.

One national respondent explained why ELT training and training on teachers' guides were useful:

... there is a lot of practicality... not only coming to get knowledge and skills, but teachers also get practice through simulation activities... It's more hands so that when they go back they know how to apply in the classroom. That module has changed how teachers see teaching and learning and how children learn. (National)

Other courses respondents highlighted as useful included: *Ademap Lanwis*, Instructional Leadership, 2021 literacy training and numeracy. For example, an Erromango principal noted:

In terms of language, what I noticed with those who attended workshops on language, they were able to pick up the sounds well and teach the kids on phonics, as compared to the past. This will contribute a lot in improving the students' literacy rate.

Some respondents felt the VESP-supported training was particularly important for untrained and temporary teachers, as well as recent graduates to make the transition from teachers' college to the classroom (2 from Santo):

That teacher's performance in relation to the new curriculum is outstanding; he is smart even though he is just a temporary teacher. This is because he has attended the workshops related to the new curriculum. The one teacher who did not attend trainings is the one who just came in this year and they still need to catch up. (Principal, Erromango)

I was new in the field and in my teacher college training we were taught on how to implement the old curriculum. Therefore when we started teaching we were worried about how we were going to teach the new curriculum... The training in 2020 [Year 5 and 6 curriculum training] improved my understanding of the new curriculum and how to teach it. (Year 4 teacher, Santo)

However, a number of national and provincial respondents highlighted limitations with the training they have received, including duration and delivery mode, lack of ongoing support, and comprehensiveness of participation. A national respondent said that the cascade training model undermined the quality of training, including guidance that was miscommunicated.

Two Santo respondents also noted the training was too short and there has been no further support:

We rush through to complete the training and by the end some are still unclear about the content of the guides... not enough support to guide the teachers with the curriculum. We only attended the training and that's all. (Year 6 teacher, Santo)

A key challenge is the variable levels of teacher capacity, as well as the unevenness of teachers’ participation in the suite of training programs. For example, one Santo teacher highlighted they never received an induction training before commencing Class 3 teaching and struggles to keep up:

I found it hard because I was not part of the trainings on how to use the teacher guides but I was part of the *Ademap Lanwis* training for grade 3... I didn’t start properly from the beginning... so when I attended that one, it needed the prior trainings so I found it hard. (Year 3 teacher, Santo)

A Year 5-6 teacher from Erromango highlighted the lack of consistent training participation has led to issues with language transition:

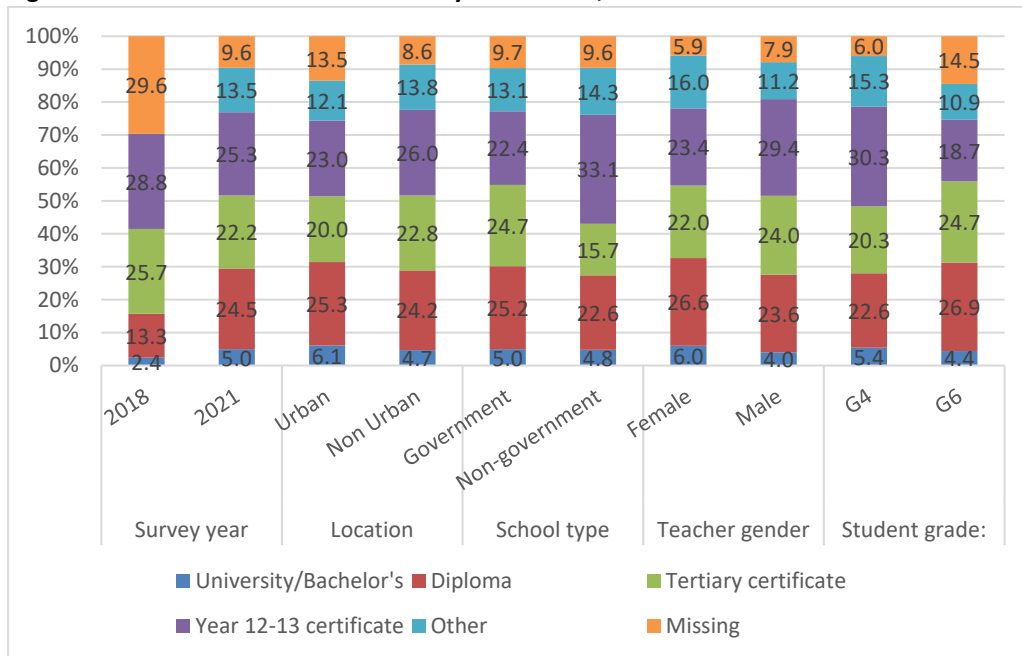
I think we will need more trainings, because we have some grade 1 and 2 teachers who were not part of the trainings. So sometimes, they don’t know how to complete the addem up part of the teaching. That’s why when the students get to our levels, we’re stuck. There are some teachers who have just recently joined, and maybe only completed one or two trainings.

Some respondents identified the need for further training support related to language transition, assessment, English (subject), lesson planning, and connecting resources to activities (e.g. introduction of novels in lessons).

PILNA teacher education

PILNA background questionnaires provide evidence from the teacher sample about levels of education. Figure C.1 summarizes reported teacher education. Only five percent of teachers in 2021 report university education (Higher Degree or Bachelors), which is up from 2.4 percent in 2018. The most common credentials are Diplomas, Tertiary Certificates and Year 12-13 certificates. There are very few significant differences between the teacher categories in Figure C.1.

Figure C.1. Vanuatu teacher education by main strata, 2018-2021 PILNA



Data source: PILNA teacher survey, 2018-2021

Urban and government teachers have fewer reported absences than their non-urban and non-government school counterparts. For example, 52 percent of urban teachers reported zero absences in the 2021 survey, compared with just 30 percent of non-urban teachers.

There are only a handful of significant differences between provinces for teacher characteristics. Malampa has fewer female teachers, Shefa has relatively older teachers, and Tafea has relatively younger teachers.

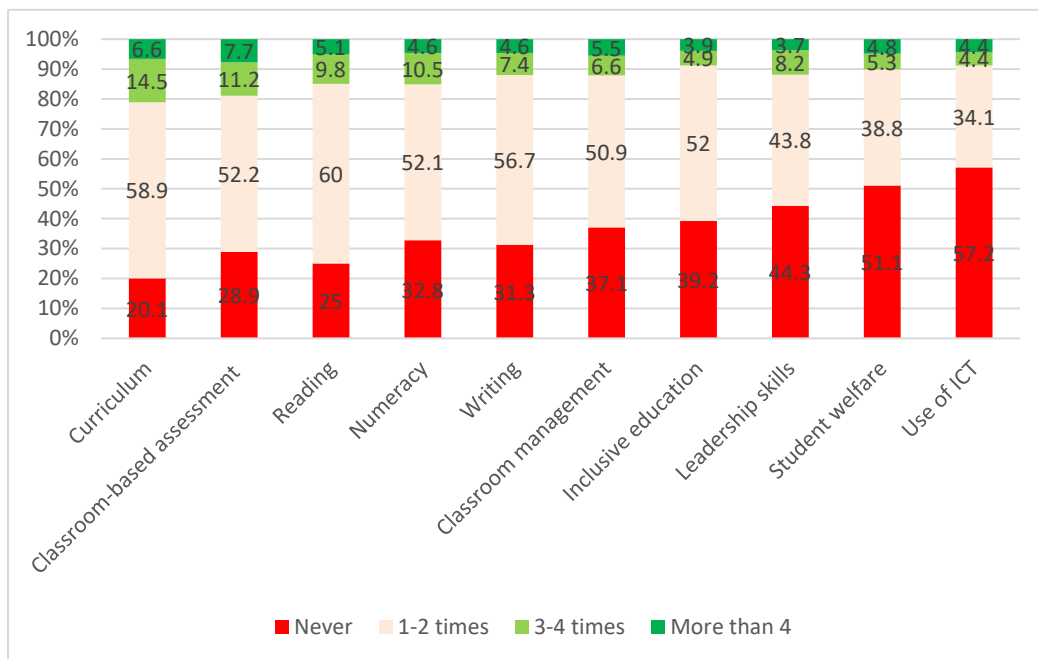
Overall, very few of the above background characteristics are significant predictors of achievement in the multivariate analysis. The most consistently significant predictor is teacher education: student achievement in literacy and numeracy is significantly higher in Year 4 when their teacher reports university education, while for Year 6 students the parameters are generally positive but not significant.

Professional development experiences and training needs

The most commonly reported training topics in 2021 are Curriculum, Reading and Classroom-based assessment (Figure C.2)²⁰. Only 20.1 percent of teachers reported they had not received professional development in curriculum in the last three years, compared with 59 percent who reported 1 or 2 sessions, 14.5 percent that reported 3 or 4 sessions and 6.6 percent that reported more than 4 times. By contrast, just over 57 percent of teachers reported never participating in PD for “Use of ICT” (Figure C.2).

School leaders indicated they need more training in nearly 85 percent of the 13 work areas, and this overall average did not change much between 2018 and 2021. The training needs measures are also not very correlated with student achievement.

Figure C.2. Frequency of teacher professional development in last three years (by topic), 2021 PILNA



Data source: PILNA teacher survey, 2021

In contrast to the school leader training needs indicators, the teacher professional development measures are significantly associated with student achievement with significant results found in Year 4. Furthermore, the lack of subject specificity in the results adds to the uncertainty about causation.

²⁰ PILNA asks teachers to report training topics rather than specific training programs such as those supported by VESP to support implementation of the new curriculum (i.e., ELT, Ademap Lanwis, Language and Communication).

For example, the parameters for the frequency of Numeracy professional development in the last three years are significantly associated with Writing achievement, but not significantly associated with Numeracy test scores.

Discussion – beliefs and attitudes towards teaching

Some national and provincial respondents reported a change in the beliefs and attitudes toward teaching, including increased levels of confidence and motivation for teaching. These changes were attributed to participation in VESP-supported training, teaching and learning resources, and improved levels of student engagement.

Many teachers reported they felt confident and motivated to teach the new curriculum and attributed it to knowledge gained from their participation in VESP-supported trainings and the teachers' guide, and provision of resource kits. This has been particularly the case for 'ISU teachers' (those not graduated from VITE):

I am happy about this new curriculum, and I enjoy teaching it. The teachers' guides and the trainings I received from the provincial trainers are helpful and helped my confidence in many ways and helped improve my teaching practice. Though I did not attend VITE but these new curriculum trainings helped me a lot. (Year 1 teacher, Santo)

Teachers were suddenly getting some acknowledgement of their work... really boosting them. (National)

Other teachers attributed their confidence and motivation to teach to student engagement and interaction. For example:

The students make me confident because we are all sharing in the learning and ideas. At this point, I understand the topic, but when they give me their feedbacks and ideas, it reassures me that I am doing the right thing. (Year 4 teacher, Santo)

However, some respondents (3 Santo, 1 Erromango) reported the new curriculum is demanding and has created more workload for teachers affecting morale. The additional workload is associated with lesson planning and assessment, and ensuring activities are well aligned with students' progress.

When I used to teach, I'd make a lesson plan just in line with the level of learning of my students. But now, the lesson plans, we have lesson plan for reading, one for writing, one for poem and rhymes, everything has its own lesson plan. Which has really downed my teaching moral because I feel like it's too much. (Year 1 teacher, Santo)

The topics are very advanced in relation to the students' learning capacity and this makes it demanding for us teachers to remain after working hours to look through the learning outcomes and indicators and try matching or aligning them with the topic at hand... As the teacher, I need to adjust this to their level of understanding and also prepare my lessons and assess their work. This is just adding to my workload. (Year 4 teacher, Santo)

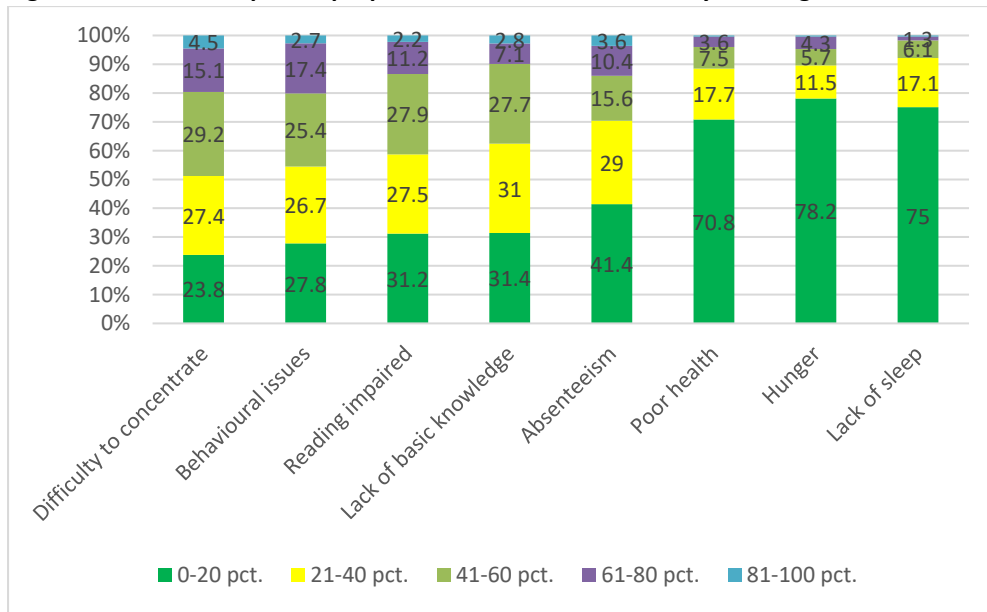
With the new curriculum, there is more to write... When the teacher has so much to write then they are exhausted easily. When the new curriculum was initially introduced, they showed us the longer version of writing a lesson plan where you have to include all the necessary details. However, when we attended the short courses, we talked against it and they have made it simpler and shorter for the teacher to write and then deliver it. (Year 1-2 teacher, Erromango)

However there continues to be some teachers who remain resistant to changing teaching practices and implementing the new curriculum. Language is discussed in depth in a following section in Curriculum Implementation. One PEO reflected that teachers' attitude towards time and their professionalism was an issue that needs to be addressed.

Teacher working conditions and wellbeing

In the PILNA teacher questionnaire teachers were asked about challenges faced by students. Figure C.3 shows that the most commonly referenced challenges that affect their students are ‘Difficulty to concentrate’, ‘Behavioural issues’ and ‘Reading impaired’; the least frequently mentioned are ‘Lack of sleep’, ‘Hunger’ and ‘Poor health’. These averages have generally increased between 2018 and 2021, which may reflect some impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and other natural disasters.

Figure C.3. Teacher-reported proportion of students affected by challenges, 2021 PILNA



Data source: PILNA teacher survey, 2021

Teachers report a moderate amount of collaboration with other teachers. On average teachers engage in collaborative activities between 1 and 2 times per week. The most common areas of collaboration are ‘work collaboratively with other teachers’ (3.5 on scale of 1-5), ‘discuss class/lessons with other teachers’ (2.7) and ‘share good teaching practices and lessons with other teachers’ (2.7). Urban teachers report significantly higher levels of collaboration than non-urban teachers and females are more collaborative than males.

Two new blocks of questions about teacher (and school leader) well-being were developed for the 2021 PILNA, covering the frequency of challenges they experience in school and their feelings about the profession and their work. Teachers and school leaders agree that the most frequent concerns are for ‘I experience stress’ (3.0 on scale from 1-4 for teachers) and ‘I feel overwhelmed by my job’ (2.7). The least frequently mentioned problems were ‘My job negatively impacts my mental health’ (1.9) and ‘My job negatively impacts my physical health’ (1.9).

Teachers and school principals are generally positive about their profession. For example, almost all teachers and leaders indicated that they ‘sometimes’ or ‘often’ are ‘proud of the work they do’ and ‘content with their profession’.

School leaders answered a block of questions about constraints they face that impact their school’s ability to provide instruction. The most commonly reported constraints (in 2021) are ‘Lack of qualified teachers’, ‘Natural disasters’ and ‘Shortage of classrooms’. There are relatively few significant differences between the school categories. For student achievement the results show

that a handful of the individual constraints are significantly associated with achievement (i.e., schools that are impacted less have higher test scores).

Teaching practice

Professional knowledge, beliefs and attitudes are factors teachers apply to their teaching practice to provide learning experiences for students. Teaching practice includes what teachers do to plan, implement, and evaluate learning experiences, and ways that teachers incorporate principles of teaching and learning (ACER, 2017). The new curriculum promotes teaching practices that support inclusive education (i.e., student-centred learning and local connections), language transition and classroom-based assessment practices.

A range of aspects of teaching practice were investigated including lesson preparation, teaching and learning activities, gender, equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI), language of instruction and assessment.

Finding 1. The majority of respondents interviewed reported the introduction of the new curriculum and VESP-supported training has helped teachers to improve their lesson plans, including incorporating learning indicators to align activities and monitor student outcomes. At the same time, in the 2022 classroom observations, most teachers in Santo were observed to have a lesson plan in place for at least one of their lessons, while only one teacher in Erromango had a lesson plan in place.

Finding 2. Student-centred learning is a focus in the curriculum. Teachers in 2022 reported that using group activities, peer-to-peer learning, different classroom setups, and games and ‘hands on’ activities for a range of student abilities has supported their take up of student-centred teaching methods. Teachers described using activities such as small group work and peer learning, and not ‘talking at’ students in front of the class to encourage student engagement.

Finding 3. During classroom observations, case study teachers in Santo were observed to have lessons with lots of student activity, including students interacting and working together on learning tasks, while lessons in Erromango were observed to have little student activity. More teachers in Santo than Erromango made links to local culture or the environment. Teachers in both provinces were observed to use a narrow range of resources in lessons. The majority of classrooms observed in Erromango did not have enough space for whole-class activities.

Finding 4. While teaching methods are not generally associated with student achievement levels, some variables are significant. For example, Year 4 student reading and writing scores are higher in classrooms where teachers encourage problem-solving and expression of ideas in class.

Discussion – Lesson preparation

Several respondents (4) from Santo reflected on how their lesson planning practices has changed with the new curriculum. The new approach has shifted teachers away from stating aims/objectives of lessons and towards using learning indicators, placing greater focus on creating and aligning activities to these indicators and monitoring student understanding. To illustrate:

In terms of planning, when I’m teaching lessons, there are now steps and procedures that I have to follow to ensure the kids understand what I am teaching. I see that the new curriculum really helps with taking indicators which focuses on one skill that the child must understand. (Year 1-2 teacher, Santo)

In the past, we simply write the aims. At the moment, the learning outcomes and indicators helped a lot in achieving outcomes. However, it's all mixed up and teachers must take time to align activities with outcomes. (Principal, Santo)

Respondents (6) from both provinces reported that the new curriculum guides and VESP-supported training have built the capacity of teachers in lesson planning. For example:

The workshops taught me how to plan my weekly lessons based off the guides and what was effective for the kids learning. (Year 3-4 teacher, Erromango)

Before the trainings offered by VESP, the teachers think that there is no other way to better teach the curriculum and use the resources effectively. However, once VESP and the ISU start offering trainings, the teachers started improving their capacity to better plan their lessons. These changes are evident in their reports, work and so on. (PEO)

However, as noted in the discussion earlier on teachers' attitudes and beliefs, some teachers said that the new lesson planning approach has created more work for them.

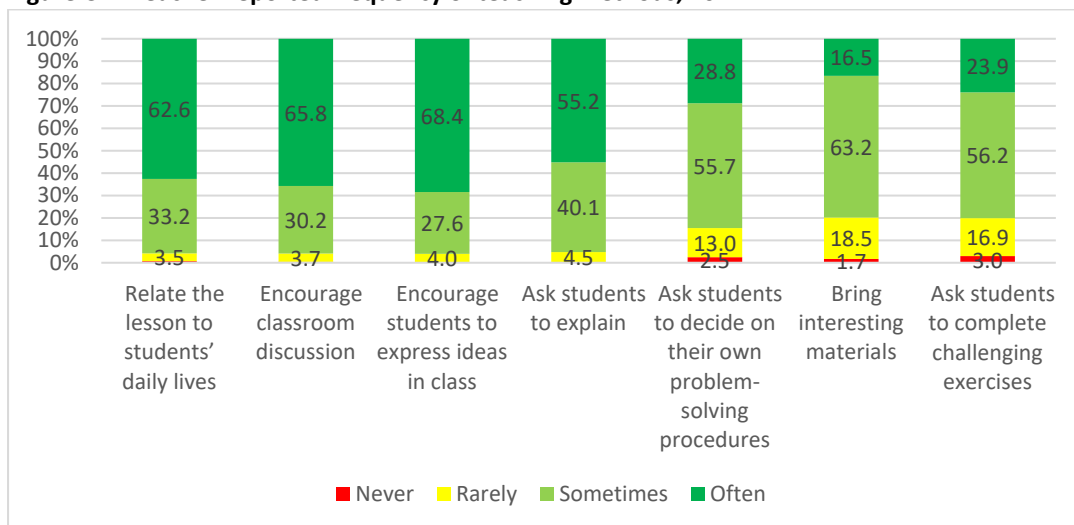
During classroom observations, researchers noted whether lesson plans were in place. Most teachers in Santo were observed to have a lesson plan in place (4 of 5 teachers), whereas only one teacher (1 of 4 teachers) did in Erromango.

Discussion – Teaching and learning activities

The PILNA 2021 Vanuatu survey included questions that asked teachers were asked about the use of teaching methods and time spent in various activities.

Teachers report very similar levels of methods usage across the various categories, and there are no significant differences in the overall average for frequency of using these methods. Figure C.4 provides a more detailed summary, which shows that the most common teaching approaches are 'Relate the lesson to students' daily lives', 'Encourage classroom discussion', 'Encourage students to express ideas in class' and 'Ask students to explain'. The least frequently reported activities are 'Ask students to complete challenging exercises', 'Bring interesting materials' and 'Ask students to decide on their own problem-solving procedures'. However even for the less frequently reported methods the teachers are generally indicating at least using these techniques 'Sometimes', as relatively small proportions (less than 20 percent) are in the 'Rarely' or 'Never' categories.

Figure C.4. Teacher-reported frequency of teaching methods, 2021 PILNA



Data source: PILNA teacher survey, 2021

For teaching methods, the overall average is not a very significant predictor of student achievement, but this does hide some individually significant results, although again this is mainly for Year 4. For example, Year 4 student reading and writing scores are higher in classrooms where teachers report more frequent use of ‘Ask students to decide on their own problem-solving procedures’ and ‘Encourage students to express ideas in class’.

Multiple national and provincial respondents provided examples of changed teaching and learning activities – in particular a shift towards student-centred teaching methods – and attributed these changes in teaching practice to the new curriculum and VESP-supported training. Related to these aspects, during classroom observations researchers also recorded the types of classroom interactions used by teachers, level of student activity, whether teachers made connections to students’ prior knowledge or skills, if teachers made local connections, resources used and classroom set-up.

Student-centred teaching and learning

The promotion of student-centred teaching and learning is a key focus of the new curriculum. Practices were collected through case study interviews and classroom observations. Multiple national respondents perceive that teachers have shifted their practice to be more student-centred pedagogies:

The main shift regarding the curriculum is that it’s now student centred, and through the past years, we’ve really seen a change in the way teachers are teaching. They’re teaching with the kids rather than at the kids. And you can see that in classrooms... most of the time you’ve got tables together, like small islands rather than rows of tables and chairs. (National)

While it’s difficult to attribute these changes neatly to VESP support, some national respondents felt that VESP had played a significant support role. For example:

There’s only one way that teachers could have learnt about group work, about some of the strategies that we now see in operation, allowing children time to talk, allowing the use of the vernacular in the classroom – and VESP has contributed very strongly, through effective teaching and learning, through work we’re doing with the provinces, through the teachers’ guide development, which has examples of strategies the teachers can use... (National)

These national perspectives align with perspectives in Santo and Erromango.

Respondents from both provinces cited examples of activities that facilitate more active student participation and less teacher talk. Some teachers referred to them as being guides or facilitators:

This is where we make the students feel that they own their learning, while the teacher is simply a guide on the side to facilitate the learning progress and then later assesses, but the lesson is entirely owned by the students. Instead of the teacher standing in front of the classroom talking too much and the students get bored, they are given the opportunity to discover on their own. (Year 1-2 teacher, Erromango)

I will introduce an activity and ask the students to share their knowledge similarly allow time for me as a teacher to share my knowledge. At times I will encourage the student to find out the solution on their own from the different concept and activity given to them. (Year 4 teacher, Erromango)

The use of group work was highlighted by many respondents as a method of student-centred teaching, given it facilitates peer-to-peer interactions and learning. Examples of group work provided included discussion groups based on a topic, group presentations, and reading groups. To quote two teachers:

I engage the students in group activities while I observe them. For example, for the social sciences topics I would divide the students into groups and have them discuss the activity in their groups. They can write a short story to describe a community activity they know about and then present it back to the whole class. (Year 3 teacher, Erromango)

I would give them group activities and then I would check their progress and later allow them to present as a group. The rest of the class would give feedback on each group presentation so that the group can learn and improve on that. (Year 4 teacher, Santo)

Some respondents observe teachers have introduced more activities, including games and hands-on activities with the new curriculum. For example:

For example, if I am teaching the concept of 'Time' I need to draw a clock face for the students to see so it stays in their memory, and they can remember the next day. If they don't see and touch or use their sensory and fine motor skills then learning won't take place. (Year 3 teacher, Santo)

Another student-centred approach that many respondents highlighted is how they support a range of student ability levels. Some respondents referred to gauging student understanding before introducing a topic. One Santo teacher noted the ELT training as being helpful to do this:

As we know the students are coming from all sorts of background at their individual home the ELT helps me to continue to assess and test the student's background knowledge before introducing a new topic to them. (Year 1-3 teacher, Santo)

Most teachers reported they provide different activities to students, depending on their level of learning. One teacher reflected:

When the activities are in line with their level of learning, they are able to understand better. If not, they don't understand anything. (Year 4 teacher, Santo)

Many respondents in both provinces gave examples of ways in which they support weak performers. A few teachers reported running extra classes. Many reported they regularly arrange groups by mixed abilities to enable well performing students to support weaker performers:

Now we are using the fast learners as also teachers in the classroom. After they have finished their work, instead of beating their chests, they are encouraged to help other students who are struggling or still have not finished their class work. (Principal, Santo)

The fast learners are all mixed in groups with all the slow learners so they can support each other. If the fast learners finishes their lessons then I will provide another activity to keep them occupied... Each week I would provide reward to the best organizing groups. (Year 4 teacher, Erromango)

One Year 5-6 Erromango teacher reported they have instituted group work across grades in their multigrade classroom.

We learnt about this in the trainings, so I started to make the changes. In the old curriculum, we didn't do much group work. When we used to do multiclass, the lessons were separated along with the kids. But now, with multiclass, we group the class and the students. It's just the activities we carry out based on their levels of learning. We draw up a lesson plan, and then just separate the activities based on their levels.

Few teachers referred to extension support, beyond having good performers assist weaker students. One teacher referred to providing well performing students with extra activities and giving them time to read in the reading corner (Year 4 teacher, Santo).

A small number of teachers referred to challenges with implementing student-centred teaching and learning, including that it takes more time and it requires more resources.

The classroom observations provided an opportunity to see whether teachers were using some of these student-centred teaching and learning approaches in their classrooms.

Pair/group work and student activity: The researchers coded classroom interaction types used by teachers in their lesson (whole class, pair or group, and individual activity) and if the classroom appeared busy with lots of student activity (all or most students are active and participating).

- While most teachers in Santo were observed to use pair/group work (4/5), only one teacher in Erromango did for a short segment. All lessons commenced with whole-class activities. One teacher in Erromango only used whole-class activities for the duration of both lessons. Generally, lessons in Erromango involved very little ‘student activity’.

Prior knowledge and skills: Researchers were asked to observe whether teachers made explicit reference to students’ prior knowledge and/or skills (asking students what they already know or promoting their recall of an earlier activity).

- Two-thirds of teachers were observed to make explicit references to students’ prior knowledge and/or skills.

Localisation: The new curriculum encourages teachers to make local connections. Researchers observed whether explicit references were made to students’ cultural heritage, local context or environment. An example of how teachers can do this is to make use of real objects from the community.

- Most teachers in Santo (4/5) were observed to make explicit references to students’ cultural heritage, local context or environment, compared to half (2/4) the teachers observed in Erromango. Examples of this included a teacher reading a story from Pentecost, and teachers and students discussing how to catch local fish, chicken and prawns.
- No teachers were observed to incorporate local materials into their lessons.

Resources used: The new curriculum encourages teachers to use a variety of resources. Researchers documented which resources were used by teachers in each observed lesson (Figure C.5).

- Teachers in both provinces were observed to use a narrow range of resources in lessons, which included the big blackboard, pointer stick, songs, small blackboard, student notebooks, and posters. Notably, story books were included in some lessons (3) in Santo, but none in Erromango.

Figure C.5. Resources observed to be used by teachers in Santo and Erromango, 2021

School	SANTO					ERROMANGO			
	A	B	C	D	E	F	H	H	I
Student textbooks									
Student notebooks			○	○	○○			○○	
Decodable readers									
Story books		○○		○					

School	SANTO					ERROMANGO			
	A	B	C	D	E	F	H	H	I
Posters	oo			oo		oo		o	
Flashcards									
Dictionary									
Pictures						oo			
Big blackboard	oo	oo	oo	oo	oo	oo	oo	oo	oo
Small blackboard	oo	oo	o				oo		oo
Pointer/stick	oo	oo		oo	oo		oo	oo	oo
Reference books									
Newspapers/mags									
Local material									
Games									
Puzzles									
Songs	oo		o	o		o	oo	o	
Drama/role play				o					
Physical actions									

o = observed in first lesson o = observed in second lesson

The new curriculum encourages teachers to adapt or link content to students' cultural heritage, their local context and their local environment. Teachers and principals discussed how they integrate local contexts into their lessons, by linking new concepts to something students are familiar with and using local resources:

With this curriculum, I would always refer a new concept of lesson to something that the students are mostly familiar with, at home, culturally or within our own country environment and context. (Year 1-3 teacher, Erromango)

But now I use real life resources a lot more than before, e.g fruits, custom stories, etc. (Year 3 teacher, Santo)

We often use that big banyan tree outside as our classroom. We would take our mats outside and then use nature to learn; we use leaves, sticks and stones with the lower classes for counting or they would use the leaves to write words and sounds on...This is to make the kids enjoy learning and look forward to a new day of learning. (Year 1-2 teacher, Erromango)

Classroom set-up: Researchers documented how Language and Communications classrooms were set-up (Figure C.6).

- Santo classrooms were set up in ways more conducive to engaging students in different activities. While classrooms in both provinces had grouped tables and chairs, only one classroom in Erromango had space for whole-class activities and none had a reading area. Most Santo classrooms had space and a reading area. All classrooms in Santo also had displays for student work, compared to half in Erromango.

Figure C.6. Classroom set-ups observed in Santo and Erromango, 2021

School	SANTO					ERROMANGO			
	A	B	C	D	E	F	H	H	I
Blackboard	oo	oo	oo	oo	oo	oo	oo	oo	oo
Space for whole-class activities	oo	oo		oo	oo	oo			
Grouped tables and chairs	oo	oo	oo	oo	oo	o	oo	oo	oo
Individual / single lined tables and chairs						oo			
Reading area	oo	oo	o		oo				
Student work display area	oo	oo	o	oo	oo		oo		oo
Displays	oo (Eng)	oo (Eng)		oo (Bis/Ver)		o	oo (Eng)	o (Bis/Ver)	oo (French)

o = observed in first lesson oo = observed in second lesson

Discussion – Gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI)

The promotion of inclusive education is a key part of VESP. Inclusive education addresses and responds to the diverse needs of learners by increasing participation in learning and reducing exclusion from school. The practice of inclusive education respects difference and enables structures and systems to respond to the needs of all children.²¹ This includes ensuring disability inclusion and gender equality as a regular part of teachers' practice.

Finding 1. Respondents in Santo and Erromango said observed a change in attitudes about the importance of all children attending school, including those with disability. This is aligned with findings from 2019 and 2021. However, while there has been a positive change in awareness and attitudes about disability-inclusion, there has not been a significant shift in classroom practices.

Finding 2. In 2019, 2021 and 2022 many respondents identified mixed-gender group work as one of the new pedagogical approaches that encouraged equal participation of boys and girls. Respondents said they observed greater student confidence, active participation and more peer-to-peer cooperation as a result of encouraging equal participation of boys and girls.

Finding 3. Case study data and classroom observation data from 2019, 2021 and 2022, and PILNA questionnaire data from 2022 indicate a highly diverse language landscape. Teachers reported using

²¹ See for example UNESCO, Education Profiles Vanuatu: Inclusion at: <https://education-profiles.org/oceania/vanuatu/~inclusion>.

Bislama or the vernacular in their classroom at a range of year levels especially to explain difficult concepts to students, reflecting the dual language approach.

Disability inclusion

Respondents in Santo and Erromango have observed a change in attitudes about the importance of all children attending school, including those with disability. This change has been observed attributed to the new curriculum and VESP-supported training:

It has changed because back in the days, for us in the islands... the teacher teaches and doesn't even bother with the disability students who may not be able to hear anything. They will catch up or they'll leave. But now the system has changed, and it is patient with everyone and treats everyone the same. This is how the new curriculum works. (Parent FGD, Santo)

Previously, I normally shout at the kids and being rude to those who have learning difficulties because they are not smart. But after attending the new curriculum workshop, I now recognize that there are different kind of learners in the classroom - those that are disabled, those with learning difficulties etc., and that completely changed my teaching approaches in supporting different learners in the classroom... I no longer shout at the children. (Year 1-3 teacher, Santo)

One national respondent echoed these perspectives, noting while there has been a positive change in awareness and attitudes about disability-inclusion, there has not been a significant shift in classroom practices:

The big change is not so much the implementation of inclusiveness but that now people talk about it. There are 12 teachers that did a Diploma in Inclusive Education with VESP in Fiji. They did it remotely. There is a lot of trialling, like VEMIS is trying to collect data on kids with disability now, which was not happening before. (National)

Principals and teachers from both provinces reflected on the strategies they use to support children with disability, but notably Santo responses were more extensive. While many respondents in both provinces observed there were children with learning disabilities in their schools (also referred to as 'slow learners'), few reported they had children with physical disabilities. The inclusion strategies included providing more guidance to learners, creating a supportive environment for their active participation, grouping learners by ability and providing targeted activities, mixing fast and slow learners so they can support each other, using more visual aids, sitting learners at the front, providing more focused one-on-one support, making physical adjustments to the physical environment, and encouraging parents to continue supporting learners to attend school.

Many respondents felt that disabled students are more engaged in learning and performing better. One teacher reported that the evaluation methods in this new curriculum helps to monitor and support their learning. (Year 1 teacher, Santo)

A few respondents noted suggested that changes to the language of instruction have supported the inclusion of children with disabilities in classes:

Our inclusive officer has just been assigned to our office this year. We have done some research and found out that children with disabilities have also improved. This is because of the change in the language of instruction. When a child with disability can understand the language of instruction because it is his own vernacular then they will smile and that is an indicator to show that they have improved in the new curriculum according to the reports we have done. (PEO)

However, some respondents from Santo highlighted how a lack of trained inclusive education teachers, supporting aids and large classes constrain the implementation of inclusive practices.

In regard to the new curriculum, I see that it is a must for us to have an inclusive teacher in our school. This teacher will focus on helping the students who need that extra support. We can include these students, but we can't meet all their needs to help them learn. (Year 1 teacher, Santo)

During classroom observations, researchers recorded when teachers explicitly provided customised support to students with physical or intellectual disabilities. No teachers provided such customised support.

Gender equality

Case study respondents were asked to comment on gender and equity at their schools. Most reported they try to ensure that girls and boys participate equally in school activities.

Many respondents identified mixed-gender group work as one of the new pedagogical approaches that encouraged equal participation of boys and girls. Some of the benefits of this approach included greater student confidence, active participation and more peer-to-peer cooperation:

There is change in the sense that the new curriculum includes a lot of inclusive work. So, there is a lot of teamwork inside and outside of the classroom... Sometimes if you only put the boys in one group, they will think too high of themselves. So, you have to mix them so there is equality of their education and for it be fair and clear for both girls and boys. That way the girls can help the boys in certain areas where they may be struggling and vice versa. (Principal, Erromango)

Teachers make sure sitting arrangements have boys and girls sitting together... in that way, everybody is participating. The interaction is very good between boys and girls. More girls are participating now as compared to the past. I think this is happening due to the human rights convention and girls are now empowered to speak than the boys. (Principal, Santo)

Many respondents observed that girls are performing better than boys. Respondents offered a range of reasons for this. Some teachers specifically reported they do not have different strategies for working with girls and boys. One PEO noted there is a need to look at how to help teachers to support boys' learning:

The indicators tell us that there are more girls in schools than boys. More girls are furthering their studies as compared to boys. In the classroom, girls are known to concentrate and focus on the work given whereas boys are not that focussed; only a few of them like to work. This is also a challenge that we have in helping the teachers to make sure that boys can also perform to the same standard that the girls are.

During classroom observations, case study researchers recorded when teachers selected a girl or a boy to demonstrate an idea or skill during classroom observations, for example by being called up to the board.

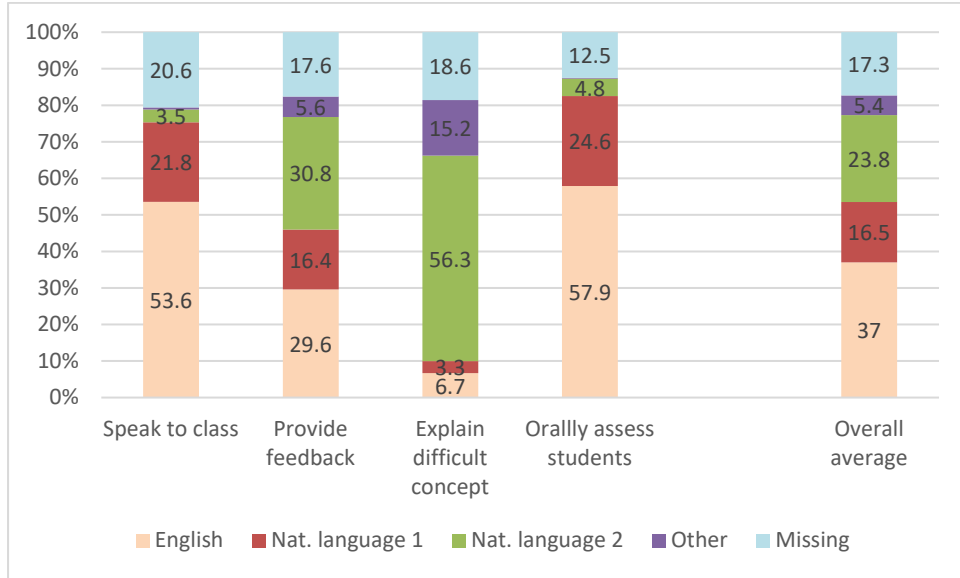
- Girls and boys were often selected to demonstrate. Most teachers in Santo (4 of 5) and all in Erromango (4) did this in at least one lesson, and more than half over both lessons.
- In most cases, teachers did not do this regularly through lessons or evenly distribute between boys and girls.

Discussion – Language of instruction

This section is focused on how teachers use language in the classroom based on findings from the teacher questionnaires in PILNA 2021, the case study interviews in Santo and Erromango and classroom observations.

In PILNA 2021 teachers were asked to indicate which language they use for a series of classroom activities. The responses, as shown in Figure C.7, shows a highly diverse language landscape. For example, teachers tend to report using English to speak to the class (53.6% of respondents), but 56.3 percent report using the national language 2 (Bislama) to explain difficult concepts to the class. In fact, across all four teaching activities the reported language use is very different.

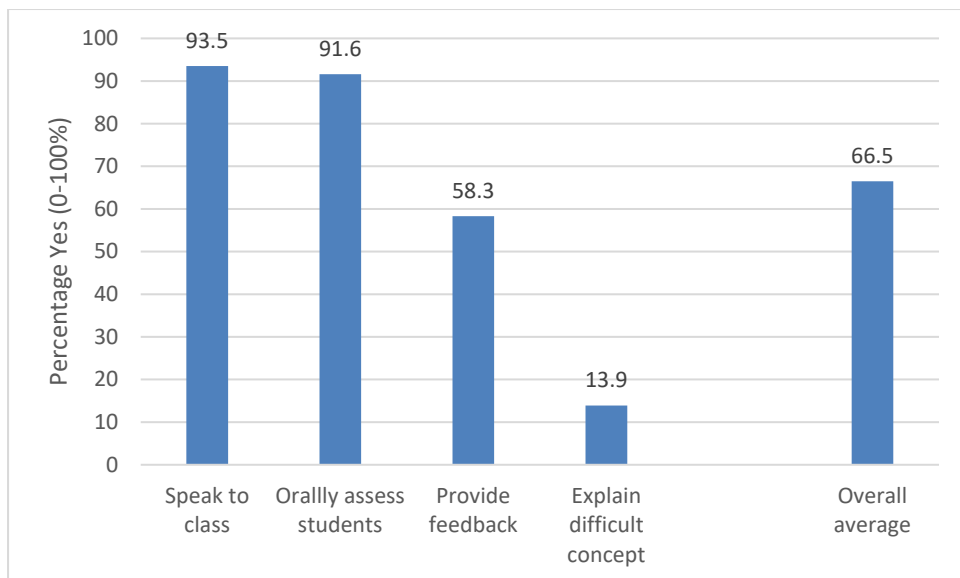
Figure C.7. Teacher-reported language use in classroom by topic, 2021 PILNA



Data source: PILNA teacher survey, 2021

Figure C.8 then summarises the ACER-generated indicator for whether or not the reported language (by topic) was the same as the language used on the assessment. Once again, the results are very different by topic, and suggest some mismatch between the assessment language and the language used by teachers in the areas of “Provide feedback” and “Explain difficult concepts.”

Figure C.8. Teacher reported language in classroom activity is the same as the language of the assessment, 2021 PILNA



Data source: PILNA teacher survey, 2021

There are some significant differences in reported language use across different variables and provinces. The main differences are between urban and non-urban (urban teachers report more English and are more likely to teach in same language as assessment) and grade 4 and 6 classrooms (grade 6 teachers more likely to teach in language of assessment). For the provinces there are some individual differences.

This diverse language landscape is also reflected in the case study data and classroom observations. A principal talked about how the teachers in his school use the vernacular in the classroom at particular year levels, reflecting the dual language approach.

...the year 1 and 2 teacher are that he uses mostly the dominant local vernacular and a little bit of Bislama as the mediums of instruction in the classroom. The year 3 and 4 teacher uses English and sometimes the local vernacular. (Principal, Erromango)

The use of Bislama to explain difficult concepts is explained by this Year 4 Santo teacher:

I use Bislama a lot in class to explain things that the kids don't understand. And I see that they understand better because I am using the language they understand. This way they catch on faster on the work in a more efficient way. (Year 4 teacher, Santo)

As part of the classroom observations, researchers were asked to record which languages were used during the two observed lessons, and also observe whether explicit support was provided to students who did not speak the language of instruction.

Figure C.9. Language of instruction observed in Santo and Erromango, 2022

School	SANTO					ERROMANGO			
	A	B	C	D	E	F	H	H	I
Bislama	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
English	○	○					○		
French			○		○	○		○	○
Vernacular						○	○	○	

- Figure C.9 shows the diversity in language use across Santo and Erromango. While most teachers were observed using two or three languages during lessons, one teacher used only Bislama (School D). The observations suggest use of vernacular is more prominent in Erromango.
- Notably, two of the schools (A and B) switched to English instruction during the past year, as a response to concerns from upper-level primary teachers, and only use Bislama if students are struggling to understand.
- School H illustrates the complexities as it is a bilingual school: *One teacher delivered instruction in English and used Bislama or the vernacular if students did not understand. The second teacher hardly used French, but mostly Bislama. Students replied to questions in the vernacular.*
- Despite these language difference, the teachers were all observed using the new curriculum.

Discussion – Assessment

Finding 1. Many teachers and principals in 2022 reported a clear shift towards using more regular classroom-based assessment, using assessment information to monitor student learning and identify supports needed. Some respondents attributed this to the new curriculum and knowledge gained through VESP-supported training.

Finding 2. Teachers reported using a combination of assessment methods, such as oral assessments, and assessing group work and presentations through observations. Some reported using summative tests. Some note evaluating students against the learning indicators.

Finding 3. In the 2022 classroom observations, nearly all teachers were observed to explicitly check for students' understanding during lessons. Nearly all teachers were documented to observe students practising or applying what they learnt in at least one lesson.

The new curriculum promotes changes to classroom-based assessment practices. Assessment practices were collected through case study interviews and classroom observations. Many teachers and principals in both provinces reported a clear shift towards using more regular classroom-based assessment and cited the value of assessment information to monitor student learning and identify supports needed. Some respondents attributed this to the new curriculum and knowledge gained through VESP-supported training.

A key difference reported by some respondents is the practice of evaluating students against indicators and stated learning outcomes (3).

Now the teachers are putting in place indicators and learning outcomes and at the end of each learning sessions the teachers assess and evaluated the children to see if they achieved the indicators and outcomes which has not been the case in the previous curriculum. (Principal, Erromango)

With the new lesson plan, there are learning outcomes that we have to achieve, there are indicators... Each day I monitor all of them to see whether or not they understand the day's topic. Maybe I will give an activity or let them top and see if they understand or not. Maybe I will give them a problem and let attempt it to see whether or not they understand the topic. (Year 4 teacher, Santo)

A Santo principal noted the challenge with using indicators when teaching multi-grade classes:

The other teacher uses the indicators for learning, but I don't use those since I teach 3 classes. What she does is tick off the indicators achieved and those not achieved, she would work on those on Fridays. (Principal, Erromango)

Teachers from Erromango and Santo reported a range of assessment frequencies and methods. Most teachers reported a shift towards assessing students more regularly, either at the end of each lesson, topic or activity, or daily and a move away from using only summative assessments. Multiple teachers reported using a combination of assessment methods, such as orally, assessing group work and presentations, through observations, while some reported they normally use tests (sometimes summative on a weekly or fortnightly basis). For example:

There are different ways of assessing students. At times, we simply observe what they are doing. We also give summative tests at the end of the year as well as short diagnostic tests. We even run reading records to see whether students can read well or not. (Year 6 teacher, Santo)

One principal noted that while the shift in assessment practices is positive there is still a need for teachers to assess “students’ practical skills and hands-on knowledge in the classroom” (Principal, Erromango).

Some Santo teachers reported the increased reporting workload associated with assessment activities. Challenges highlighted included the work associated with assessing each skill separately and reporting expectations. Teachers across four schools in Santo reported designating Fridays as the school day focused on assessment. For example:

Our assessments are completely different in the new curriculum. At the moment, individual subject components must be assessed. For instance, reading, writing and listening must be assessed separately. That’s a lot of work.... I assess individually on their daily activities and also as a group. Every day we assess all individual strands taught, not leaving out one, according to the new curriculum. (Year 4 teacher, Santo)

We have lesson plans that we daily assess them on. We also have weekly assessments to see how well they are understanding the topics at the end of the week... Every day we complete forms to assess each student. Last year we did daily but we saw that it’s too much, so decided to switch to weekly and conduct it every Friday. (Year 1 teacher, Santo)

One teacher noted they hadn’t conducted an assessment in the past three months. Two teachers in Erromango and Santo reported they had not used the assessment tools; one had not received the book while the other didn’t know how to use it: “The principal gave us an assessment book to use but we were not briefed on how to use that” (Year 5 teacher, Santo).

Some teachers from Erromango discussed how they use assessment results to monitor students and provide extra support (4), such as through re-teaching a topic with more activities and additional homework. One teacher noted that they do not do anything with the assessment results.

Teachers in Santo reporting using assessment information in different ways. Many teachers use it to monitor student performance and identify areas for support (7).

In the old curriculum these special needs children or slow learners were a bit ignored back then. That is, their needs were being ignored. Luckily the evaluation methods in this new curriculum helps to monitor and support their learning. (Year 1, Santo).

The data from the assessments are used to analyse student performance and we get to see who is progressing and who still needs help in a particular area. From this, we then organize extra classes with the weaker ones who need help... We have 30 minutes extra classes with those who need help after the normal class hours. (Year 3, Santo)

A Santo principal noted they use the results to see how the school administration can support improvements:

Once the teacher has the assessment information they analyse them then we share the results in our teachers meeting to identify improvement needs and what approaches the administration can take to support improvement of these student performance results. From there we can make recommendations to the school council for more support financially or get parents to be more involved if possible.

A smaller number of Santo teachers reported they use assessment results to display progress to students in their classroom, and for reporting to parents (4).

Researchers also observed assessment practices: when teachers ‘explicitly checked’ for students’ understanding (e.g., if teachers prompted or encouraged students to demonstrate or articulate their understandings) and when teachers observed students practising or applying what they had learnt

(e.g. if teachers moved from group to group and provided feedback, prompted or encouraged students, or recorded notes about students as they worked).

- These practices were more evident in Santo than Erromango.
- While nearly all teachers explicitly checked for students' understanding in at least one lessons (all teachers in Santo and 3 of 4 in Erromango), Santo teachers did this more regularly throughout their lessons.
- Almost all teachers observed their students in at least one lesson (all teachers in Santo and 3 of 4 in Erromango), but more Santo teachers were recorded to do this across both lessons and also more often.

Factors that impede teaching practice

Case study respondents in Santo and Erromango identified a range of challenges that impact teaching quality, some of which are contextual but nonetheless influence the potential success of the VESP investments. These included:

- Limited teaching and learning resources
- Limited teaching staff and competing demands
- High student-teacher ratios

Respondents in Erromango pointed to the challenges associated with limited teaching and learning resources, heightened by each school's remoteness.

Down here, our resources are not enough, we don't really have anything. We only have the books for the teachers. Some books we have for the kids but majority of the subjects we don't have any resources.... The math's tools, we don't have for them to use to work. For science, we didn't have anything. The kids use the textbooks, but the other materials they're supposed to have, they don't have. Stuff like rulers etc. Math's tools. (Year 5-6 teacher, Erromango)

Limited teaching staff is a key constraint across many schools in both provinces. One Santo principal reflected on the challenges of being both a multigrade teacher and principal: "this is very demanding for one person... the workload is too much for me." A PEO reflected on the limited opportunities for teachers to turn to colleagues for support in smaller schools:

When there is only one teacher in a school, even if they have attended trainings... and they come across a difficult situation in a remote area, they have no one to turn to and that is where they are demoralized. On the other hand, in a school where there are a lot of teachers, especially in a town setting, this is different. When a teacher does not know what to do, then they will easily turn to their other colleagues for assistance.

Two Santo teachers referred to the challenges of high teacher-student ratios, particularly when there is a broad range of student ability. Classroom management was highlighted as an issue.

One Santo teacher referred to the challenges of managing responsibilities associated with further training at the NUV School of Education. Other issues reported by Santo respondents included the lack of alignment between teaching and learning priorities and school council priorities (which affects how funds are directed), and the regularity of custom and cultural activities which affects teacher absences.

Impacts of COVID-19

In Vanuatu, regular schooling was disrupted in 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with case study schools closing for a period of time in Term 1. In Erromango, this ranged from 2 weeks to 3 months. In Santo, schools reported they closed for 3 months.

Respondents in both Santo and Erromango offered a range of responses when asked about how the pandemic disruption impacted teaching and learning. Teachers, principals and other education stakeholders discussed how they supported students during the school closures and how the disruptions impacted teaching and learning once schools re-opened. COVID-19 disruptions impacted teaching and learning in many ways.

Finding 1. The preparation and completion of home school packages differed with HSPs being prepared and distributed in Santo, but multiple challenges were faced in Erromango. Remoteness, restrictions on movement and distance to students meant HSPs could not reach all students and teachers were not able to provide support.

Finding 2. Respondents said that while some children were excited to get back to school, others raised a range of issues related to declining student interest and engagement, attendance and learning.

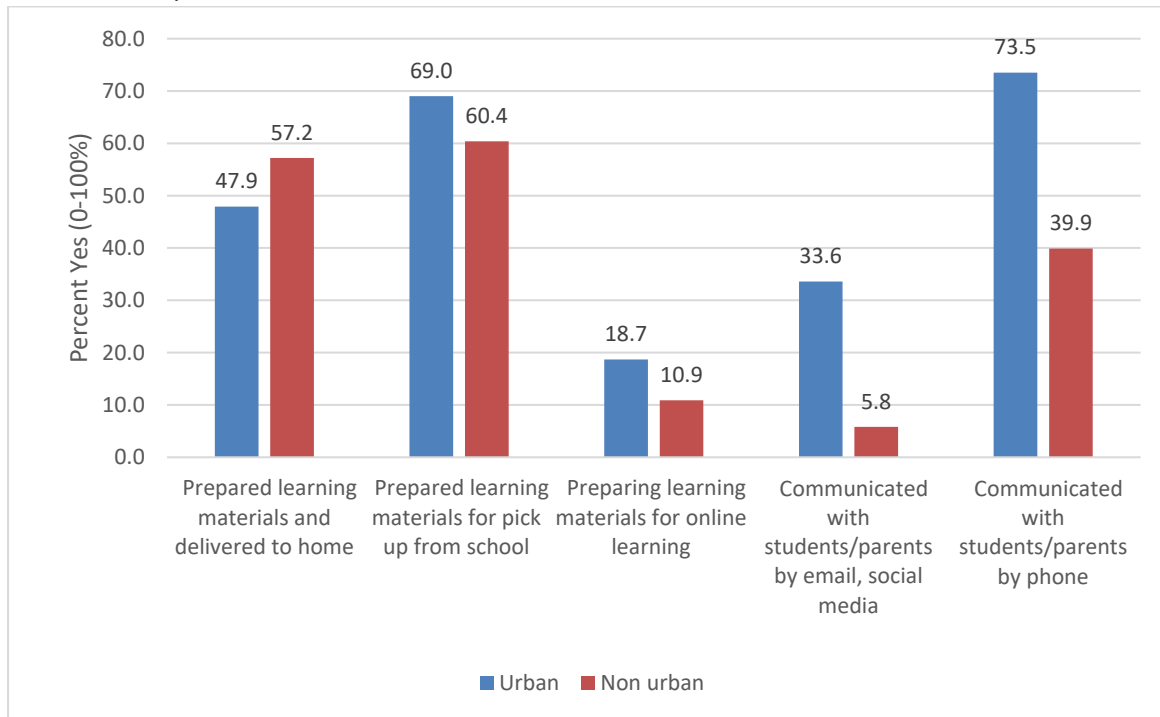
Finding 3. Many principals and teachers noted a decline in student learning, which has impacted how teachers prepare and deliver their lessons.

Finding 4. During Covid-19 school closures, Year 4 achievement levels are significantly higher in schools that reporting using online learning and communication.

COVID-19 school closure period

The Vanuatu PILNA teacher and school leader questionnaire 2021 provided insight to teaching and learning activities during the Covid-19 pandemic school closure period. First, teachers were asked about the kinds of interaction they had with students during this period, including preparing materials for students as well as connecting online. Figure C.10 shows that the most commonly employed strategies were preparing materials for students (or families) to pick up at school or be delivered to the home. Online learning and social media contact was relatively less frequent. Not surprisingly, urban teachers reported much more frequent use of online learning, social media and phone communication than their non-urban counterparts.

Figure C.10. Teacher-reported frequency of communication with students during the last two years by school location, 2021 PILNA



Data source: PILNA teacher survey, 2021

Teachers were also asked about changes made to the delivery of lessons in their schools. For example, roughly 40 percent of teachers reported that their school used (or were still using) different times for students to attend school, or had students come on different days. But only about five percent reported delivering classes online. The main differences in the reported teaching and learning environment during the Covid-19 period are between urban and rural school locations, and by province. Malampa, Penama and Torba provinces reported much less use of separate times and days than Sanma, Shefa and Tafea provinces.

Year 4 achievement levels are significantly higher in schools where the teachers reported communicating with students (and parents) through email/social media and by phone. There are also very large differences in achievement between schools that reported using online learning and those that did not, although it should be restated that this is a small group of schools engaging in online activities. All of the significant achievement effects are found in Year 4 only.

Support for the preparation and completion of home school packages

The development and delivery of home school packages (HSP) was still MoET’s main strategy for supporting continuity of learning during lockdowns in 2022.

In Santo, case study respondents reported that HSPs were able to be prepared and distributed regularly over the lockdown period, but there were some issues with reaching more remote communities. However, teachers and principals in Erromango reported many challenges. Despite best efforts, some schools were not able to complete the HSP or deliver multiple rounds of HSP due to printing supplies running out, and there not being any supply boats. Restrictions on movement and distance to students meant HSPs could not reach all students and teachers were not able to provide support.

When the school are closed, all the teachers were busy working on the HSP and when we're ready to deliver, the school reopens. We only deliver the HSP once to community nearby the school, however, the students that live outside the school does not receive any packages... The toner ran out... so all the efforts of HSP is wasted. (Year 4 teacher, Erromango)

Some children followed their parents to remote villages so it's hard to get the students. The lockdown and restriction of movement in the community unable the teachers to provide further support to the students. (Principal, Erromango)

Reports from respondents indicate that each school created their own HSPs, with limited guidance from MoET and provincial offices. No training was provided. One Santo teacher said the guidance came too late. One Erromango principal stated they had to create their own packages "apart from the standard one from the MoET since it was confusing."

A few respondents from Santo and Erromango reflected that during this time, the focus was on delivering HSPs – not supporting student learning:

We do not support students learning. Our priority is to dispatch materials or handout but not students learning or needs. (Principal, Erromango)

On the other hand, some respondents reported they did take time to develop HSPs that tailored to their students. One Year 1 teacher in Santo reflected how they learnt lessons from developing HSP in 2020 and simplified the packages:

... no officer from Sanma province came around to help... We taught ourselves because we had done one before. We did the first one in 2020, but we saw that it was too advanced.... This also helped with the parents, because a lot of them are not educated so we realised that this was an issue so we made it simpler.

Respondents from one Santo school spoke about how the principal and teachers worked together on the HSP:

I had to push the teachers to work on the home-school packages. Some of the teachers really do not know how to prepare the packages. I explained to them that they do not need to give too much content. Give them just enough so you could be able to assess easily... We worked together in the hall to prepare the packages. (Principal)

... we came together to give ideas on how to carry out this work. A lot of us were not very sure with it. So, we knew to give work we knew they'd be able to actually do, the activities and work. The staff came together to draw up the ideas of activities to give to the students for their home packages. (Year 2 teacher)

Many parents from both provinces reported difficulties with helping their children to complete the HSPs. In many cases, students did not complete the work. A key constraint was that some parents did not understand the HSP, and others didn't have time:

For us parents, some of the home school packages were quite difficult for us to explain to the kids. So, when we were confused, we couldn't do anything about it and the packages were left unfinished. The kids also did not know what to do so we all left them untouched. (Parent FGD, Erromango)

Those from primary with their home packages, depended a lot on the parents to help them. If you don't spend time with them, they don't learn because that's what it's like in the classroom with a teacher. That's why parents have to step in. The problem for us is that sometimes we have too much work that we don't have time to sit with them while they do their work. (Parent FGD, Santo)

One Erromango parent spoke about enlisting the help of secondary students:

Some of us parents were not able to help so we'd get some of the students from secondary to help the students in primary with their work. To complete their packages. (Parent FGD, Erromango)

Some teachers and principals in Santo reported that parents, not the children, completed the HSPs:

When we returned, our principal told us to do an evaluation. And we told him that we had been ticking off the work, that we didn't know what to add or comment on. We couldn't test them until they came back. When they came back, we saw that it was all a waste of time. Parents did not play their role as a teacher at home. They became the student and did the work themselves. Everything was correct, we were just ticking off everything. (Principal, Santo)

A parent acknowledged that she did this:

I came to realize that my role as a parent in helping my child learn during Covid-19 is important. However, I wrote down all the answers on behalf of my child thinking that my household chores are more important. Thus, in order to speed up the work process, I gave all the answers to my kid. I came to realise that this does not help my kid at all. (Parent FGD, Santo)

The level of teacher support to parents was variable. Some parents reported that teachers provided them with instructions for the HSP and their contact numbers, while others gave little explanation or support:

The thing is that when you go to pick up the packages, the teachers have to explain the content to you first and give you their contacts. Their explanations of the home-packages were clear. (Parent FGD, Santo)

Some parents asked teachers for further explanation, whereas others did not. (Parent FGD, Erromango)

The school packages were not explained to parents or students. They were just dropped off with textbooks (for the older students). So, as parents we were not sure how to support our children with that package content. (Parent FGD, Erromango)

One parent changed schools to get more active teacher support during lockdown:

... teachers were not consistent anymore in checking their work, and so the kids started to lose interest. So, the kids were just doing the same work over and over again. So, during lockdown, I took both my boys and included them in a different school's home packages. Every two weeks the teacher would come around, and I would give it to my boys to complete (Parent FGD, Erromango)

In one Erromango school, school only closed for a very short period. A Year 3-4 teacher reported, "I would teach from my house to the end of the village. I would call out the students from their homes as if we are having normal classes... We continued learning through the home school packages as normal."

Support from the community to schools during COVID-19 seemed minimal. However, one Erromango had a different experience:

The community members supported the teachers a great deal during the Covid-19 pandemic; they even prepared study spaces for the students to use. They organized a community building for the students to use during the lockdown to work on the home school packages. (Principal, Erromango)

Impact on teaching and learning

COVID-19 disruptions impacted teaching and learning in many ways. While some children were excited to get back to school, some respondents raised a range of issues related to declining student interest and engagement, attendance and learning. For example, one parent FGD said:

Even though the school started up again, the students struggled coming back to school. When COVID stopped school, their knowledge and learning of school dropped, and then when it opened back up again the students are struggling to come back to that level. This week and last week, the kids have finally started getting back into that rhythm again with school. (Parent FGD, Erromango)

Many principals and teachers noted the decline in student learning, which has impacted how teachers prepare and deliver their lessons. For example:

When the school are reopened you could notice that when you ask a question to a student, they will just stare at you blankly. You, as a teacher, needs to go through the whole lesson again. (Year 4 teacher, Erromango)

Many teachers in Santo and Erromango noted they have not been able to complete all the lessons. For example:

After the lockdown, the kids had no interest in school. We struggled teaching, in how we prepared the lessons. We missed a few lessons due to COVID, so we had to catch up on. And sometimes we were not able to add them in, and sometimes we tried to add them, and sometimes we see that we can't complete the topics. We're finally back to normal now. (Year 5-6 teacher, Erromango)

One Santo principal reflected focusing on key content:

If we go back to those incomplete lessons, at the end of the day, we cannot complete all our plans. We only covered the main concepts they must master before going to the next year level.

One Year 2 teacher from Santo reported they have had to give students more homework to cover the content, while a Santo teacher referred to working on foundational skills:

It affected plenty schools, but when we gave out these home-packages, we found that the kids were not doing their homework... So, when the kids got back, we had to start again from the bottom. I had to work a lot on reading and writing again, to try and help the students.

A few respondents felt that the pandemic has disadvantaged vulnerable children more:

In class we usually have slow learners, so when the pandemic hit it has disadvantaged the slow learners even more. (Year 1 teacher, Santo)

One Erromango Year 1-3 teacher reflected how the disruptions have affected their motivation to teach:

It impacted the way I delivered my lessons. I was very excited and interested when I just came in, preparing my lessons every day, but eventually I just got demotivated. I would try my best to cover the topics after COVID, but I use to mainly come down to babysit.

To what extent has the investment in teacher training and mentoring supported effective implementation of Vanuatu's new curriculum?

This section additional analysis related to new curriculum implementation. It looks at the extent to which the investment in teacher training and mentoring has supported effective implementation of Vanuatu's new curriculum and discusses a number of constraints and enablers affecting the success of curriculum implementation.

The 2021 and 2022 data collections also have the additional inclusion of how teachers use resources in the new curriculum and how teachers set up their classroom for student learning, and whether or not features of student-centred teaching practice are evident.

Curriculum resources and materials

This section discusses the perspectives of national and provincial respondents on access to curriculum resources and materials, their use, and whether these are helpful in supporting teaching. It also discussed how local contexts are integrated into the curriculum by teachers and the involvement of parents and communities.

Finding 1. Case study principals and teachers reported that the teachers' guides and curriculum resources provided direction for lesson planning and classroom teaching. At the same time, some case study respondents reported challenges associated with limited access to accompanying resources²².

Finding 2. Stakeholders in 2022 said that there were gaps in the types of resources provided, and many respondents noted lack of student activity books or textbooks presented challenges for student learning and increased teacher workload because teachers needed to develop the resources themselves.

Finding 3. The need for further training to give teachers more guidance on using resources in the new curriculum to enable the full use of resources in the classroom was highlighted by a range of respondents.

Finding 4. A number of classroom and school resource resources reported by teachers and school leaders are significantly associated with student achievement levels. Textbook access was reported to have declined in 2021 with only 10 percent of teachers reporting individual student text access, and 66 percent (Literacy) and 45 percent (Numeracy) reporting that only the teacher had the textbook. Year 6 teachers are much more likely to report individual student access to texts than Year 4 teachers.

Discussion – teachers' guide and curriculum support materials

Teachers and principals in Santo and Erromango had similar perceptions on resources and the curriculum. Many respondents emphasised the benefits of the teachers' guide and new curriculum resources to support classroom teaching but noted key constraints.

A principal in Dillon's Bay said that the teachers' guides, in particular were helpful, which has been reflected by principals and teachers in other schools. For example:

Before I don't know what is a lesson plan, but now I can better plan my lesson using the teachers' guide. The new curriculums provide an easy guide for the teacher to plan their lesson. (Year 4 teacher, Erromango)

Some respondents felt that the resources distributed with the new curriculum were sufficient and helpful, particularly science and numeracy kits:

The resources are just the same as the old one, except that there weren't too many resources available to us in the old curriculum. Whereas, for the new one, we have more than enough resources. (Principal, Erromango)

²² Accompanying resources include those provided to accompany, or support, the delivery and implementation of the curriculum. These include teachers' guides, big books, student textbooks or story books, student notebooks, etc. It is unclear from interview responses whether resources were lost, were taken with teachers when they moved to a new school, were damaged in extreme weather conditions, or were not provided at all.

The books that they have given us, in general, science and experiments come with all their resources and kits. Everything is already there; you just have to conduct the experiments with the students and explain. (Year 2 teacher, Santo)

With this new curriculum, it comes with very good resources like the tool kit for numeracy. When the students touch these, they know and it helps them learn better. The students learn better by touching, doing and seeing. (Principal, Erromango)

However, more than half of the respondents in Santo (15/24 teachers and 2/4 principals in Santo; 5/11 teachers and 1/4 principals) felt they weren't sufficient and reported a range of challenges. In contrast, more than half of Erromango respondents mentioned they had access to resources and that the resources they received supported them in implementing the new curriculum (6/11 teachers and 3/4 principals).

Many Santo respondents highlighted what they see as gaps in the types of resources provided. The lack of a student's book (activity book or student textbook) was highlighted by many respondents:

... we only have one math textbook and no pupil's book. If the students can have their own copy, then they will definitely be interested to see and write and work well (Year 1 teacher, Santo).

If there are activity books for students then they can become active learners and work on their own according to the teacher's instructions. (Year 1 teacher, Santo)

Parents in Santo East reflected that a lack of books made it challenges for children to read. Year 6 teachers highlighted they needed novels.

Teacher workload and time to develop and research activities was a teacher gripe. A Year 5 teacher in Santo explained the contrast between resources and the old and new curriculum:

In the old curriculum for English, they give us topics, questions to brainstorm the topic, we talk about picture base things like that, the reading for that topic is available, comprehensions are also provided and writing was also provided... [in the] new curriculum we must create our own activities...

A few teachers linked the lack of a student's book (textbook) to teacher workload. For example:

If there is a student book it will help the teacher to save time to work in the classroom with their student's lesson work rather than consuming too much time on developing student's activity. At least the student has a document that they can go home and work on it. As we know, the students are working on different learning levels and the pupil's book can help the teacher to accommodate more time to support the slow learners (Year 1 teacher, Santo)

A few Santo teachers reflected that the new curriculum is too advanced. For example, a Year 4 teacher (Santo East) reflected the topics are "very advanced in relation to the students' learning capacity" and they "need more insight and outlook into how to implement it." Another teacher noted they adjusted how they implement the new curriculum (Year 6, Santo East). To quote one principal:

From my observation, I see that a lot of language focus is still missing in the new textbooks. Therefore, we are trying to fill those gaps with inserting our own activities into our lessons. We are trying to insert the topics in language that we feel our kids must master before moving on to the next year level. (Principal, Santo)

While one teacher felt the activities are too easy:

Sometimes I feel that the activities are too easy for my students. So, I try to design some more activities to add to the existing ones because my students complete the book activity quickly. (Year 3 teacher, Santo)

Some Santo respondents also noted challenges with creating their own resources:

A lot of times we have to improvise by using local resources but the resources that need to be provided are not given. (Year 1 teacher, Santo)

Teachers and principals said they often refer to the old curriculum when planning lessons and teaching with the new curriculum because they are missing new curriculum resources. For example, a Santo principal said that “teachers also use the guides from the old curriculum to help them plan their lessons in cases where the new curriculum lacks information on a certain topic.”

For a majority of responses, teachers and principals said they either never received teachers’ guides or classroom resources, or materials were damaged during Cyclone Harold and not replaced:

All of our school materials were damaged during cyclone Harold and have since then affected our teaching of lessons until now... we have still not received support for all the resources or materials needed in the classroom for more effective learning (Principal, Santo).

A Year 1 teacher and principal (Santo) said they have reading books and numeracy kits to support the new curriculum but are still missing other resources such as colours and paints, and need posters and books, adding: “We need some laptops as well to conduct research to help us come up with activities when we run out resources.”

A few teachers in Erromango noted the challenges when there is a lack of resources, and one said they used a textbook from the old curriculum:

I mentioned earlier the lack of resources sometimes. I think that’s the new one. Sometimes when they come to school, we only have pens and paper. So, there is a lack of resources, and sometimes we have to skip topics that require certain resources. (Year 1-3 teacher, Erromango)

A number of teacher perspectives suggest that teachers need to have more training in using the resources contained as part of the new curriculum. Two Erromango principals noted that the resources supported implementation of the new curriculum but that there wasn’t adequate training to support their full use in the classroom:

The teaching resources in the new curriculum are better than the old one. The only problem is when the teachers don’t know how to use it, then they can’t teach it to the students. (Principal)

My problem is that I attended the trainings but then I am teaching a different class... We do not have the complete syllabi for most of the subjects. For math, we only have the teacher’s guide but no pupil’s book. I have requested for new orders but we have not received any so far. (Principal)

School and classroom resources

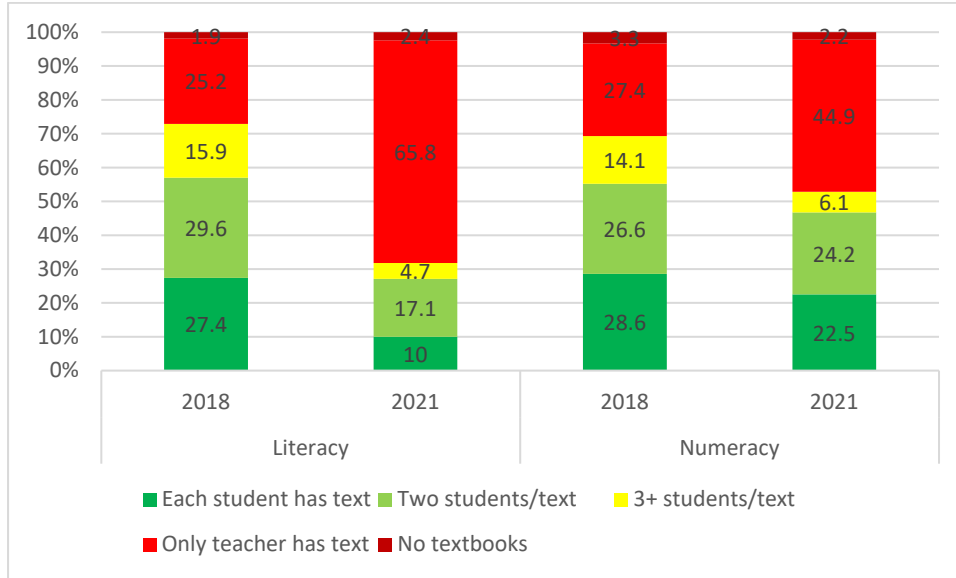
Teachers and school leaders were asked a series of questions about school and classroom resources. The results show that teachers and school leaders in urban schools report significantly better resource availability, and Year 6 teachers report more resources than Year 4 teachers. One notable difference according to teachers is that nearly 28 percent of teachers reported computers/tablets in the classroom in 2021, compared with just 10.9 percent in 2018.

Teachers report significantly more students in their classrooms in 2021 compared with 2018, while urban teachers and Year 4 teachers report significantly larger class sizes compared with non-rural and Year 6 classrooms.

One difference that stands out for resources is teacher-reported textbook access for students. In 2018 about 28 percent of teachers reported that each student had a text, and only 25 percent

reported that the teachers alone had textbooks (Figure C.11). But in 2021 only 10 percent of teachers reported individual student text access, and 66 percent (Literacy) and 45 percent (Numeracy) reported that only the teacher had the textbook. In addition to 2018-2021 changes the main difference for teacher-reported textbook access is by grade level: Year 6 teachers are much more likely to report individual student access to texts than Year 4 teachers.

Figure C.11. Vanuatu teacher reported textbook access by year and subject, 2018-2021 PILNA



Data source: PILNA teacher survey, 2018-2021

The classroom resources reported by teachers are also compared by province. Penama and Sanma provinces have the lowest overall resource averages, while the Shefa average is significantly higher than the other provinces. The textbook availability results also vary significantly, with very high proportions of teachers in Torba reporting that only teachers have textbooks (or no textbooks are available).

Not surprisingly, a number of classroom and especially school resource variables are significantly associated with student achievement in the basic estimations that only control for student grade level. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the overall measures of resources reported by teachers and especially school leaders are significantly associated with achievement levels in a number of estimations. And there is some evidence that individual features like electricity (Year 4), books/bookshelves (Year 4) and computers/tablets (Year 6) are significantly associated with higher levels of student achievement.

Discussion – making links to local heritage, context and environment

Localisation focuses on integrating local contexts into the curriculum. The new curriculum encourages teachers to adapt or link content to students’ cultural heritage, their local context and their local environment.

Finding 1. Case study respondents reported that the ability to connect the new curriculum to local context, heritage and the environment places a value on Vanuatu culture. At the same time, teachers in the upper primary years 5 and 6 said a sole focus on Vanuatu was a limitation.

Finding 2. Case study respondents highlighted how the new curriculum presents opportunities for parents and community to support schools through cultural activities.

Often parents and communities support schools in integrating local contexts and resources into lessons. As an example, a parent in Santo said that the new curriculum includes examples of animals, fish and the environment that are from Vanuatu.

Teachers and principals discussed how the new curriculum relates to learning about Vanuatu, and how these connections to local contexts enables greater student participation and understanding:

... the new curriculum, it relates a lot to the life within a community. It talks a lot about the events happening in a community. It gets children more involved with the environment they are in. (Year 1-2 teacher, Santo)

I find that the new curriculum was developed in line with our local or environment context unlike the old curriculum where some topics did not suit the child's context or the child would not even know what they were learning about. So, the child understands well the topic in their own context. Generally, the child grasps the knowledge faster. (Principal, Santo)

Some respondents reflected that this change to the curriculum places value on Vanuatu culture:

Last week the class 4 did cultural performances in their provinces... The content of the new curriculum is very applicable. It's part of life and we explore our own ways of living and celebrate and pass it on and be proud of what we have. This is one good thing about the new curriculum because now the students get to own their learning since its contextualized. (Principal, Santo)

Some respondents highlighted how the new curriculum presents an opportunity for parents and community to support schools through cultural activities:

The new curriculum makes us work a lot with the community. Science is part of life, so we are able to invite the community to step in maybe a chief of member of community to make awareness. This is part of the kids learning. So, this new curriculum allows us to contact more between school and community. Whereas before, there wasn't. (Year 4 teacher, Santo)

In the guide, there are traditional lessons on weaving etc, that I can request assistance from someone in the village to come in and teach the students. (Year 1-2 teacher, Erromango)

I support the new curriculum. We must teach that our parents and chiefs, need to be more involved in the new curriculum. They must also teach our children about custom and our ways of living. We must practice this in our own homes. (Parent FGD, Erromango)

Teachers in upper primary school, on the other hand, discussed some of the limitations of the new curriculum with focus on Vanuatu:

...in this curriculum, it is centered around Vanuatu, which is good, but it limits student learning. What the student should learn or know about the full world is limited to just Vanuatu. And before we learn about different currencies in the old curriculum but in the new curriculum student only learn about vatu... There are plenty this that we learn about in the new curriculum that are good like the constitutions, but I think there is need to know about full world... (Year 5 teacher, Santo)

Teacher support

Case study respondents in all three cycles of data collection said that teacher support was a critical part of helping teachers to implement the new curriculum. Teacher support includes how principals, SIOs and PTs support teachers, and how teachers work together to support one another. This section discusses the perspectives of national and provincial respondents on how teachers are

supported, particularly in light of the amalgamation of VITE into the National University of Vanuatu and dissolution of the PT and SIO roles.

Finding 1. Teachers from both provinces said they valued principals' support in a range of areas, such as providing access to teaching materials and classroom resources, facilitating professional learning opportunities, and taking time to observe teaching practice and give feedback to teachers.

Finding 2. The extent of principal participation in new curriculum training varied amongst the 2021 and 2022 case study principals. Respondents acknowledged the importance of training about the new curriculum to support implementation, but a gap exists in that many principals have had limited involvement in training, and therefore, have limited awareness and are not in a position to support their teachers.

Finding 3. In 2021, SIOs were no longer part of the provincial educational governance structure. The role of PTs was phased out earlier in 2020. Respondents highlighted risks associated with changes to the provincial support structure that mean schools have no support from SIOs or PTs for ongoing support of curriculum implementation.

Finding 4. School-level stakeholders spoke about the value they place on the support they receive from their principal and teacher colleagues on the new curriculum especially in the absence of provincial- or national-level support. But this varied by location. In Santo, some schools had formed 'area' associations to collaborate with one another or teachers said they often worked together in teams. In Erromango, teachers said they found it difficult to find colleagues to collaborate with.

Finding 5. School leader reported use of in-service programmes for curriculum support is significantly associated with higher levels of student achievement in both Year 4 and 6.

Discussion – support from principals

Leadership was discussed in the context of how school principals directly support and influence teaching quality as a result of VESP supported interventions. This support frequently was discussed also in terms of how school leaders supported the implementation of the new curriculum. Both case study principals and teachers commented on how they perceived leadership as impacting both teaching and curriculum implementation.

Teachers from both provinces expressed how they valued principals' support in a range of areas, such as providing access to teaching materials and classroom resources, facilitating professional learning opportunities, and taking time to observe teaching practice and give feedback to teachers:

The principal is very supportive. He would ask us to seek assistance if we required resources and or help with other teaching materials... he has encouraged us to continue to do monthly workshop to improve our teaching. (Year 1-3 teacher, Erromango)

Our current principal... visits us in the classroom, if anything is not done right, he will point it out for us. He runs extra training... We are only temporary teachers. In terms of language and communication, phonics is something we get extra training on. (Grade 1-2 teacher, Erromango)

The primary principal helps to give feedback after a lesson observation... She normally checks lesson plans and approves them on Fridays before the delivery of lessons the following week. (Year 3 teacher, Santo)

Principals from Santo and Erromango also discussed some of the ways in which they support teachers on teaching and learning. Examples included doing weekly checks of teachers' books to see

what assessments they are using and observing classes to understand teacher performance. A key area highlighted by some respondents is how principals provide school-level training and peer learning opportunities. For example:

We will choose a teacher/ principal that is most competent in-house to deliver the workshop as a peer-to-peer support and training. For instance, the new teachers' diploma graduate would train the old curriculum teachers of new concepts being taught in the curriculum. (Principal, Erromango)

Last month I conducted a workshop for my teachers... It's just so we don't depend on the materials if there are not enough supplies. We know that back in the days, our elders did not have materials, so how did they teach or help others? They used the corals to help. So, I try to prepare my teachers, if a cyclone was to hit and damage all our teaching materials, learn to use what you have around you. (Principal, Erromango)

Principals also discussed their responsibilities to ensure that teachers had access to resources to implement the new curriculum. Some have had to find ways to support teachers in 'filling gaps' for resources and activities missing from particular subjects.

From my observation, I see that a lot of language focus is still missing in the new textbooks. Therefore, we are trying to fill those gaps with inserting our own activities into our lessons. We are trying to insert the topics in language that we feel our kids must master before moving on to the next year level. (Principal, Santo)

As a leader, I need to provide resources for that to happen. For example, the speakers I mentioned earlier, if a student wants to talk about culture, I should provide the resources for that to happen...The kids these days, there has to be audio and visual aid to capture their interest in learning... (Principal, Santo)

Of course, some teachers did not receive any practical support from principals on how to implement the new curriculum. A key challenge is when the principal hasn't attended the new curriculum trainings:

In terms of the new curriculum, he doesn't really know anything about it because he doesn't attend the workshops with us. (Grade 1-2 teacher, Santo)

I have attended very few trainings for new curriculum... I have tried my best to learn and deliver what I can do - at times I would ask colleagues (teachers) who mostly attended most sessions of the new curriculum training, but these teachers are not sharing the learning from the new curriculum... I struggle to follow the new curriculum. I would like to participate in more trainings. (Principal, Santo)

Some principals referred to the training they have received. One principal discussed the range of training she received from various stakeholders including MoET, VESP, World Vision and GPE. Topics for these trainings included student reporting, financial management, induction and management. The principal noted these workshops were practical. At the same time, she said she needed to learn about how to support teachers to implement the new curriculum:

I really need to go and sit with the classes and familiarize myself with the content of the new curriculum. I am trying to get myself into the primary level but I haven't done much and I need to do that. Since I have been teaching senior and I need to attend the primary training and workshops. (Principal, Santo)

Another principal highlighted the role of VESP-supported training in building their confidence:

VESP has helped a lot in improving our confidence in supporting teachers in the classroom. That is why I am trying to encourage teachers to work hard and make use of the syllabi available. (Principal, Erromango)

Some national respondents suggested more focused support needed to be provided to principals given some principals have not have much involvement in the new curriculum training, have limited awareness of it and therefore are not in a position to support their teachers. While VESP supports a principal induction program (50 principals per year), other models should be introduced²³:

In the past, we did school management, which was developing a school improvement plan. But most of those plans have nothing about teaching and learning in them... Needs to be dedicated curriculum training for principals, tasks to do when they go back to the school and follow-up around those tasks. We're also looking at mentoring coaching models where some principals in Port Vila can mentor or coach a principal, online or visits. People learn best from their colleagues who are facing the same struggles. (National)

Curriculum support and assessment purposes

In the PILNA school leader questionnaires, school leaders were asked questions about curriculum support and student assessment policies. For curriculum support the leaders report a range of support activities that are in place. The most common are 'Cluster meetings with teachers from other schools' (100%), 'Curriculum delivery workshops' (88.2%), 'Provision of instructional/curriculum materials' (87.7%) and 'In-school professional development' (80.6%). The overall average for curriculum support has not changed between 2018 and 2021, but two indicators are different: 'Advisory visits by curriculum advisors' are significantly lower in 2021 (58.9% versus 73.1%), and 'Assistance with remedial classes by local community' is higher (28.4% versus 16.0%). The only significant differences between strata show that government schools have more curriculum support activities in place than non-government schools.

The multivariate analysis results show that leader reported use of in-service programmes for curriculum support is significantly associated with higher levels of student achievement in both Year 4 and 6.

Discussion – provincial level support of teachers and principals

In 2021, SIOs were no longer part of the provincial educational governance structure. The role of PTs was phased out earlier in 2020. These changes mean that in 2021 there was a gap in the system to support teachers in implementing the new curriculum (other than principals and teachers themselves). An alternative provincial structure had not been resolved at the time of writing.

While some national respondents noted the challenges associated with the previous system (including the limited budget SIOs and PTs had for visiting schools, and limited capacity to provide follow-up support), many highlighted significant risks associated with changes to the provincial support structure, given schools are now without both PT and SIO support and ongoing monitoring:

To expect teachers to do stuff without a management structure is asking a lot. (National)

A PEO described the challenges schools now face and the impact on teacher monitoring:

The only challenge is that the funding has stopped since the curriculum has been rolled out and there are not enough personnel to monitor teachers' performance. As a result, we observed that a lot of the teachers are not making use of the methods they were taught to since they think there is

²³ One example of an alternative model is the Vanuatu school-based in-service teacher training (VansBITT) training, which was piloted by UNICEF in 2015 for school leaders in Penama. UNICEF supported VITE-ISU to develop an instructional leadership module to strengthen the capacity of primary school principals to support teachers in their professional development. This module was part of the UNICEF-supported VanSBITT which was piloted in Penama province in 2015.

no one who is constantly monitoring them. We used to have the School Improvement Officers but the high-level decision-making body, MoET has decided that they return to their teaching posts in the classrooms..., but when they are eliminated from this post, the gap is created.

A principal from Erromango reflected how these changes impact ongoing support for teachers:

There used to be the SIO program which has been eliminated by the MoET... If only this program was maintained, the SIOs will be the ones training the teachers which will be really helpful. The new curriculum is helpful but it is quite hard to implement, so any teacher who has not been trained on how to plan his or her work will find it difficult.

At the same time, many respondents noted that there had been little support for schools and teachers provided by the provincial office:

Support from provincial authorities sometimes needs improvement to visit schools... we need them to visit us more." (Principal, Santo).

It would be great if the SIO or education authorities could pay more visits and observe us so they could identify our mistakes and provide trainings to help us improve. (Year 3-4 teacher, Erromango)

There is a need for those giving us the trainings and those who did the curriculum to visit us – for monitoring purposes to guide us check if what we were doing was right... They always give us training but the follow-up is hardly done. (Year 5 teacher, Santo)

While there are new curriculum officers in each province, some national respondents were not clear on their roles. Respondents suggested there would be replacement SIOs within a new provincial structure, but the structure and roles are unclear at the time of writing.

Discussion – school level support

Due to the limited levels of support provided by MoET, school-level stakeholders spoke about the value they place on the support they receive from their principal and teacher colleagues on the new curriculum. Responses were different in each location – many teachers and principals in Santo said they often worked together with school colleagues, while those in Erromango said they did not often collaborate with peers. This could be an issue of remoteness – not having enough colleagues to work with at small schools or not having access to VESP training.

Respondents from a school in Santo described how they have formed an association of schools in the area to work together, identify issues and share lessons:

We have an association comprising of the schools surrounding the 'Area'. We worked as a team to observe other schools and came up with comments and feedback then identified the common needs for our schools and share these ideas with everyone. (Principal)

We have an association in the Sanma zone. The principal is the chairman, we go together on a monthly basis to discuss the lessons with all teachers in nearby schools... we use the monthly catchup with other teachers as the professional development. We discuss the gaps and lessons and find out ways of addressing the gaps in our work as teachers. (Year 1-3 Teacher)

Teachers frequently mentioned 'teamwork' as a way to provide teacher support. This includes developing common schemes of work, assessment and general support:

Those of us implementing the new curriculum work together under a uniform system where we have the same scheme of work for each level and same lesson plans...to have a common format to use across the board. (Year 6 teacher, Santo)

In the absence of provincial support, principals and teachers reflected on how this teamwork has supported their learning and confidence:

The cooperation at our school is very strong and is better than other schools I've taught in, that is one of our strengths. The teachers talk and share ideas well. (Principal, Santo)

With the new curriculum, during my first year and when I was informed that I had to change everything, I struggled. With the help of the grade 1 teacher who had completed all the trainings I would sit with her and discuss about the books. She would talk to me about it and it cleared up a lot of things for me. I felt a bit better and more confident. (Year 3 teacher, Santo)

A temporary Year 1-3 teacher from Erromango said that she depended on the support of the principal and permanent teacher to help her with implementing the new curriculum:

I only work a lot with the principal...They're both permanent, and I'm only temporary so I depended on them a lot to help me. When I get stuck with anything or have any questions, I go to them for help regarding my lessons.

At the same time, many teachers in Erromango said they did not have many opportunities to collaborate with their peers or with other schools, and some teachers struggle to find colleagues that are willing to collaborate, "We never thought of working together. We should be collaborating with each other" (Year 3-4 teacher, Erromango). A principal and Year 5-6 teacher in Erromango said,

For the students to achieve good results, the teachers need to cooperate, we need to work together to share, failures and lessons so we can improve and grow – but this is lacking in the school (Principal)

We don't really work together. We sit down and talk, but we don't cooperate together with work. (Year 5-6 teacher)

Respondents described the benefits they have gained through professional development opportunities in their schools that have focused on specific topics, for example language, as a way to support implementation of the new curriculum. The majority of these responses are from Santo. For example:

We have our own professional development sessions which are school-based every Friday afternoon. This is organized in collaboration with our Academic head... This is just to help us improve our teaching strategies. Last week we had a session... based on how to standardize exam results using Excel... At other times, we do sessions on reading, phonics and so on. Those teachers who are expert in these areas tend to help those of us who are still lacking skills in these areas. (Year 4 teacher, Santo)

This year we started with reviewing our phonics during the professional development sessions. Those of us who recently graduated from VITE are the ones helping in running these sessions. (Year 3 teacher, Santo)

Language

During each year of data collection, case study respondents shared a range of opinions about the language of instruction or choice of language at school. Many of these opinions are related to the years when their students transition from vernacular or Bislama to English or French and how this transition will or will not disadvantage each students' education in these languages.

In all three cycles of data collection, parents, principals, teachers and SIOs offered a range of opinions on the challenges and successes of using language in the classroom. This points to the need

for more community engagement and education, as well as engagement between MoET and school staff.

Finding 1. The language policy has been unevenly articulated to schools, parents and communities resulting in confusion. There have been variable levels of training provided about the language policy, its understanding by teachers and how the policy should be implemented in classrooms.

Finding 2. As in 2021, respondents in 2022 said one of the most important changes brought by the curriculum is the improved interaction between students and teachers with students being more at ease using Bislama or the vernacular. At the same time, principals and teachers said they had to manage a wide range of opinions about language from parents.

Finding 3. As in 2019 and 2021, in 2022 ongoing support is needed to support teachers to implement the new curriculum, and particularly for teachers in helping students with the important transition in Years 3 and 4 with greater use of French or English with many teachers saying they needed more training than *Ademap Lanwis*.

Discussion – support for the language policy and its implementation

Opinions about language influence the level of support for the language policy and therefore how and the extent to which the new curriculum implementation is supported. As one Santo teacher said, “With the new curriculum, there has been a lot of confusion and complaints about the introduction of Bislama.” There are wide ranging and divergent views amongst parents, teachers and principals, and even amongst education stakeholders at the national level.

Many national respondents noted that language in Vanuatu is complex and a political issue. Some felt that the language policy (and its rationale) has not been clearly articulated to schools, parents and communities. Further there has been variability in the quality of training provided by PTs on the language policy, its understanding by teachers and how the policy has been implemented in classrooms. This has created challenges related to the support for the language policy, and many schools have reverted back to teaching in English or French. (National)

One PEO reflected on the implementation of the new curriculum and the confusion expressed about the language change from schools:

Some schools preferred to use Bislama or the students’ local vernacular, as the medium of instruction whereas some opted to remain with the use of French or English for lower classes since they think the use of Bislama will affect the students’ use of English or French, which created a lot of confusion.

This confusion can be illustrated by this quote from a Year 3 Santo teacher:

I think the ministry has to make sure that all schools are implementing it, at the moment, there are only some schools implementing the new curriculum. ... Personally, when I would do my lessons in French, the officer who came by told me to take out everything and everything will be in Bislama... And then, they tell me now to speak and teach in French, but only when there are some things that the kids don’t understand, then I explain in Bislama. It really confused me. This confusion will cause the teacher not to be able to do their work.

Some parents voiced their support for teaching Bislama or the vernacular, explaining they see benefits in learning using their first language:

In my view, it is important. When the child is in kindy, they don't know how to speak or understand English or Bislama. If you speak in their native language, they will be able to catch up faster, maybe after some explanation they will catch on. (Parent FGD, Santo)

...with this new curriculum, it gets the kids to learn back their native languages and they use tools that help their brains to learn slowly for example with learning their letters. Learning these basics so when they get to grade 1 or 2, they are already caught up. (Parent FGD, Erromango)

However, other parents have expressed concern, citing the challenge of multiple languages spoken at school, and the impact of learning in Bislama or vernacular on students' reading and writing skills in English and French:

... everything that they write is all written in Bislama. They never write in English and when it comes to the transition stage, the children find it difficult to switch into writing in English... It is quite difficult for the teachers to translate everything from Bislama to English for the students in classes 4, 5. This makes it confusing and hard for the students to catch up since there is a mixture of Bislama and English in classes 3 and 4. (Parent FGD, Santo)

Three languages being used in the classroom by the teachers can be very confusing for the child, from my observation. The teacher uses vernacular then also uses Bislama and French. I think the transition between vernacular and French is a hard thing because of the difference in sounds. (Parent FGD, Erromango)

Some parents expressed value in using Bislama and vernacular languages in preserving culture, while some felt it placed their children at a disadvantage when interacting with the global community.

In my opinion, it is important because going directly to French can cause us to lose some of our cultural skills. (Parent, Santo).

Yes, only English, because if we are just speaking in our country, it would be fine. But when they travel to other countries, then they will have to speak in English. (Female Parent, Santo)

A range of opinions also exists amongst teachers and principals. For example:

One of the most important changes we see is the challenge we face with students when reaching grade 4. These students have difficulties writing in English. Since last year (2021) the academic committee in our school decide that we can use Bislama as a language of instruction but delivers everything in English. This contradicts the language policy, but we did that to help students. (Year 6 teacher, Santo)

This curriculum provides an opportunity to revive and retain our vernacular which is good. The challenge through is it takes time for the kids to adjust and or for the transition to English and French speaking. (Principal, Erromango)

A PEO further explained that there are always challenges in trying something new, and that change will take time, saying

... we cannot say that it is ineffective since anything being trialled out will always have its challenges. Since we are dealing with students' learning and teachers and they are all human beings, it is not easy for them to accept everything overnight.

A few teachers and principals have tried to engage parents and community on the changes. For example, a year 3 Santo teacher commented on what she tells parents,

I told them Bislama has helped most of the students to build confidence in speaking as well as understanding difficult concepts better. It engages students in learning. This is still a process, and the outcome is yet to be analysed by the government. Hence, we shouldn't be jumping to conclusions too soon.

One Santo principal spoke extensively about how she liaises with the community about the new curriculum. She holds parent-teacher meetings in the evenings to discuss the use of Bislama in the new curriculum, and advises teachers on teaching language in the new curriculum:

Since the implementation of the new curriculum, the parents were complaining. So, I told teachers to make sure to clarify for the kids the linguistic differences between Bislama and English so that students can easily make the transition in class 3. The more you tell them, the more they know that by year 3 I have to stop and switch to English.

Discussion – student engagement and learning

Case study respondents in Santo and Erromango reflected on how the language aspects of the new curriculum supported their children's learning. Some teachers and principals highlighted that students participate more and at ease with Bislama and the vernacular:

I find out the students are more interested to do the work using vernacular. When I speak French, the students just stare at me and if I switch back to vernacular then you will see them willing to participate. (Principal, Erromango)

With the new curriculum the students are more comfortable in class and free to voice their opinion and move around. They understand what is being taught very easily because it is being taught in the language that they understand or speak at... In the old curriculum the child struggles in Year 1 because they get bombarded with a new and foreign language. (Year 1 Teacher, Santo)

Parents in Santo and Erromango also reflected on how the language aspects of the new curriculum supported their children's learning. Many observed improvements in their children's confidence and understanding of lessons:

So, with the level of confidence, I think the Bislama language usage has really boosted this confidence in our experience over the last 9 months. They learn fast and they're very confident. (Parent FGD, Santo)

It was harder back then because communication was in English, but now with the new curriculum we see the foundation with their language being established. (Parent FGD, Erromango)

In terms of the language, it is good, as the chairman I see that some of the things they talk about in French, the students don't understand. But when explained in the native language the students are better able to understand the lessons. (Parent FGD, Erromango)

Some teachers in Year 4 and the upper primary levels suggested that Bislama in the early years 'disadvantages' students in the 'upper-level classes.' A Year 4 Teacher in Santo said the use of Bislama in the early years had varying impacts on students' learning in the domains of mathematics and English, for example:

If I were to compare before and after, many students in Year 5 cannot speak the English language well. There is too much spoken Bislama which ruins their written, spoken, and understanding of English. In the old curriculum students who reach Year 5 can already read and speak English well.

Yes, they perform better in mathematics because they were taught in the earlier years in Bislama or vernacular, which is easy for the child to understand.

In terms of literacy, teachers highlighted that specific literacy skills were difficult to teach in the transition years. Teachers in Santo and Erromango said that students are stronger in some literacy skills. For example, reading in Bislama and French was not a problem, but comprehension is:

Students read Bislama and French well but the understanding is a challenge. The teachers [here] and [in] other schools have identified that they will need to work more on the comprehension...

Our experience here with class 4 and 5 is similar – they still find it hard to comprehend. (Year 1-3 Teacher, Santo)

The major challenge is that the students read but do not understand. In order to effectively introduce a lesson, I have to draw and explain slowly and once they understand then we can switch into French for the activities. (Year 3-4 teacher, Erromango)

By way of illustration, one Year 6 teacher from Santo noted spelling is challenging for students as they often use Bislama words in an English sentence, and added while reading and speaking are strong in Years 1 to 3, students struggle with reading and speaking in Year 6 making it challenging to teach English. At the same time, the teacher said he appreciates being able to explain concepts in Bislama or vernacular to Year 4-6 students if they do not understand a concept or lesson.

One Santo principal reflected it's important to consider the impact of the language policy on the holistic development of children:

It's not just language...it's the holistic development of the child...I am an English teacher and already I can see in year 7 and 8, and even in primary school, a year 4 student is writing an essay of 2-3 pages in Bislama, who has an idea of how to write an introduction, body and conclusion. That's really good.

One principal from Erromango highlighted issues some students are having with exams:

Now we can see the changes that the language is having in school. The problem is that, when we read the dictation during the exam, the student is not able to understand just because the student has learned using his native language. The student sits the exam in French, not in the native language. That's what makes it very challenging for them.

Discussion – support for teachers and principals on language transition

Respondents felt that teachers need a lot more support on language transition. A national respondent observed that “bridging to second language has been very challenging” and teachers do not know how to translate *Ademap Lanwis* into practice.

Principals and teachers from both provinces raised concerns about the availability of professional learning opportunities for teachers to support students during the transition years. Some respondents also noted that it was unclear in which year the transition was to take place:

... students moving from Year 1 to 3 into Year 4 find it very difficult to speak English. I am not sure about what best approach... I'm also not sure which is the transition period, is the transition period Yr3 or Yr4? ... There surely has to be some training on how to transition properly and get rid of this huge challenge. (Principal, Santo)

It is the teaching of English as a second language (L2) in the classroom that is a challenge due to the use of Bislama in the reading books. If only we were trained by trainers on how to use these books, we probably would have known how to teach these better (Year 1-2 teacher, Erromango)

Many respondents noted that the *Ademap Lanwis* training was useful for their practice. However, many respondents felt it was insufficient. For example, a Santo principal noted that *Ademap Lanwis* was not sufficient to support students to transition from Bislama to English and suggested 'expert' and 'special' training for these teachers. He then noted how the lack of training during the transition years impacted student learning:

...the difficulty in language transition makes learning difficult. Sadly, our current Year 8 students are still speaking Bislama and cannot master the English language well. This also affects their English

writing skills a lot... I feel that this will really affect the end of year national exam results of our Year 8 students.

Some national respondents said that teachers' knowledge of how to assess levels of students' English and French is hampering how they support their students. A specific area of concern highlighted by some national respondents was teachers' competency/fluency in the languages of instruction:

Teaching quality in the upper years of primary, there are issues with teachers' own levels of English and French. It is extremely difficult to teach through medium of English and French when they themselves don't understand it. (National)

Factors that impede implementation of the new curriculum

Case study respondents discussed some factors that impacted curriculum implementation that were beyond the tangible scope of VESP. These factors have been documented because at both a systemic and school level they have an impact on the implementation of the curriculum and related-VESP investments.

Cyclones, language and budget decisions were noted as context-driven factors that impact curriculum implementation in Santo. A principal in Santo described the impact that cyclones have on access to student resources and disrupting student learning:

There are certain mathematical resources that were lost during the Tropical cyclone we experienced in 2020 and I never requested for new ones.

Another issue raised relates to the language diversity of the community. For example, a Year 1-2 teacher in Santo said:

One challenge is the vernacular – when kids do not speak other language like Bislama, I find it hard to speak a common language or deliver lesson in common understanding.

Budget availability and how the funds are prioritised was also highlighted as impacting access to the right teaching and learning resources. A Santo teacher reflected that choices about where to spend the school budget impacted the availability of resources to support curriculum implementation:

The school grant is given purposely for these (resources); however, the Chairman of the School council is the only person apart from the principal who gives approval for the spending of it and he does not prioritise the use at all. The students need learning resources such as pencils, colours, crayons and so on, as you can see in our classroom, we do not have a lot to display since we are not provided with the resources we need.

In Erromango, the key challenges highlighted were availability of teachers and resources, and distance in school. Given the remoteness of Erromango schools, teachers said that lack of resources due to compromise their ability to implement the new curriculum. A Year 1-2 teacher referenced the difficulties of attracting and retaining teachers:

There are so many who come and work a short time and leave. Mainly more resources. We have everything, but the delaying of the ships which has all the resources. We receive everything late.

Parents mentioned problems associated with having teachers that are not paid by the government:

I would like if they could send us two government teachers to help the ones here. Because the government doesn't pay our teachers, sometimes they don't come to work for two weeks and then return. These habits ruin the kids learning. (Parent FGD, Erromango)

A parents' focus group in discussed the issue of their children having to walk a long way to school and not having enough food. The suggestion was that the school should provide food:

I think that maybe the school should build a cafeteria or somewhere the students can store their food. Walking here to the school is far. That way, the kids don't have to come home for lunch. They can just stay in school... Sometimes, they come back to school late because of that. (Parent FGD, Erromango)

To what extent has the investment in teacher training and mentoring supported student learning outcomes?

As defined in the Conceptual Framework (ACER, 2017), 'student learning' is used broadly in this study series to encompass both cognitive and non-cognitive aspects of learning – in essence, what students know, what students believe, what students are disposed towards, and what students are able to do.

Interim Reports 1 and 2 explored various aspects of student learning by presenting student literacy and numeracy data from VANSTA 2017 and 2019, and the PILNA 2015 and 2018 assessments, for Years 4 and 6 student cohorts who were yet to study under the new curriculum. This Final Report provides the opportunity to include data from VANSTA 2021, including capturing learning outcomes data from student cohorts who have engaged in the new curriculum. This report also includes findings from PILNA 2021. The secondary data analysis of VANSTA and PILNA provide insight into achievement trends of the Year 4 and Year 6 student cohorts.

The PILNA questionnaire data and the perception data that are included deepens understanding of students' learning experiences in particular school contexts.

Student learning outcomes: PILNA and VANSTA

PILNA and VANSTA have different objectives. PILNA is a regional assessment of students' literacy and numeracy skills in Year 4 and Year 6 and is administered every three years. PILNA is administered to a representative sample of Year 4 and Year 6 students in all provinces of Vanuatu. VANSTA is a national assessment of Year 4 and Year 6 students' literacy and numeracy achievement within the national curriculum. VANSTA is administered as a census to all students in Years 4 and 6.

This analysis also includes a detailed descriptive overview of the teacher and school leader questionnaire variables in PILNA 2018 and 2021. This analysis explores the Vanuatu learning environment and experiences and attitudes of students, teachers and school leaders collected in the PILNA contextual questionnaires. The focus is on the 2021 PILNA which expanded on the 2018 versions of the questionnaires.

A final analysis of PILNA 2021 assesses the predictive power of the teacher and school leader variables for student achievement in numeracy, reading and writing.²⁴

This chapter also includes perception data from the range of case study stakeholders about how students learn, and how their participation, interest and wellbeing has improved or not. The 2022 qualitative case study data from Tafea (Erromango) and Sanma (Santo), in addition to comparative

²⁴ This is done using multivariate modelling (regression) where each teacher/school leader indicator is added to statistical specifications that include a number of school, student and community controls. Separate analyses are done by study subject and grade.

highlights from 2019 and 2021²⁵, contributes to an understanding of the impact of VESP on student learning. While VANSTA shows province-wide achievement in literacy and numeracy, the perception data that follows deepens understanding of students' learning experiences in particular school contexts.

Finding 1. VANSTA 2017-2021 and PILNA 2015-2021 indicated there are widespread differences in student achievement between provinces. Students in Penama, Sanma and Shefa at both year levels and in both languages, generally met or exceeded national level results prior to 2021.

Finding 2. Post-2021, Year 4 students in many provinces were performing below national expected achievement levels. Year 6 student performance declined across provinces, but not as much as for Year 4 students. Trends for Year 4 and year 6 students in numeracy were similar to literacy.

Finding 3. Both the PILNA and VANSTA 2021 results show that girls consistently outperform boys at both year levels in reading and numeracy.

VANSTA 2017 – 2021

VANSTA is a literacy and numeracy test for students in Years 4, 6, and 8 to measure the proportion of students who were meeting expected outcomes for their year level. It is administered nationally in Vanuatu. VANSTA was developed by staff from the EAU and CDU alongside teachers in Vanuatu.

The VANSTA is administered as a census with all students in Years 4, 6, and 8. For the purposes of this report, only results from Years 4 and 6 will be reported on.

Separate Year 4 and Year 6 tests were developed for students as they were taught in either English or French at the time of administration. Each test had the same overall design and similar tasks. For literacy, three major strands from the curriculum were assessed: reading comprehension; language elements; and writing. For numeracy, five strands were assessed: numbers; measurement; geometry; patterns; and, chance and data.

Minimum test scores were identified for the test and for each assessed strand. The levels of achievement used for both numeracy and literacy were:

1 point	Critically below minimum standard
2 points	Approaching minimum standard
3 points	Meeting minimum standard
4 points	Exceeding minimum standard

This updated analysis brings in the 2021 VANSTA results and also presents provincial averages with trends. Figure C.12 begins with the global summary of VANSTA proficiency levels by grade (Year 4 and Year 6), test subject (English literacy, French literacy and Numeracy) and year (2017, 2019, 2021).

²⁵ Previous locations include: Malampa (Malekula) and Penama (Pentecost), 2019; and, Tafea (Tanna) and Shefa (Efate), 2021.

Year 4 and Year 6 trends

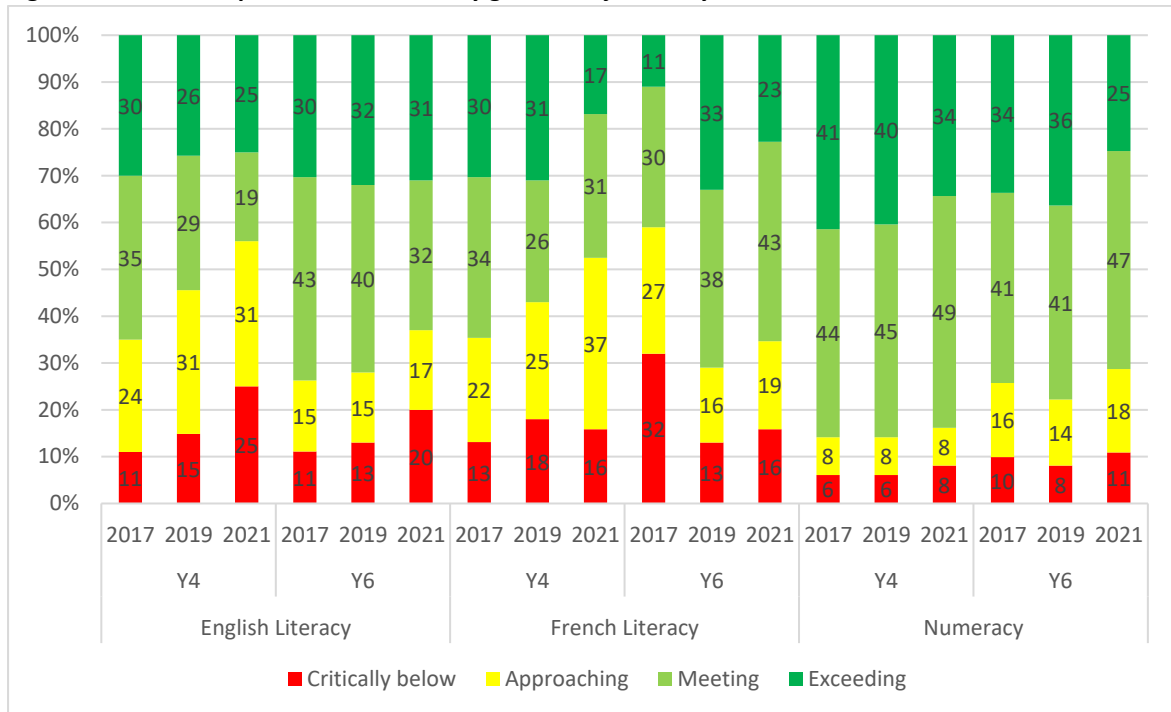
Overall, English Literacy achievement has consistently declined in Year 4 and Year 6 from 2017 to 2021. In 2021, 56 percent of Year 4 students and 37 per cent of Year 6 students were critically below or approaching minimum standard.

Achievement was also lower in Year 4 in French Literacy compared to 2017. However, there was a large improvement in French Literacy in Year 6 in 2019 from 59 per cent of students critically below or approaching minimum standard in 2017 to 29 per cent of students in 2019. In 2021, there was a decline in Year 6 French Literacy with 35 per cent of students critically below or approaching minimum standard.

For Year 4 students the 2017-2019 (pre-Covid) trends were negative in both English and French literacy, and relatively flat in Numeracy. For Year 6 students the pre-Covid trend in English was moderately negative, while in French the 2019 scores were substantially improved relative to 2017. For Year 6 Numeracy the 2019 scores were slightly better than in 2017.

In 2021 there is evidence of learning loss (i.e., scores are lower) compared with 2019 in English literacy in both Year 4 and 6. For example, 25 percent of Year 4 students were classified as ‘critically below’ in 2021, compared with 15 percent in 2019 (and 11 percent in 2017). For French literacy the 2019-2021 comparison is not consistent by grade, as the Year 4 performance levels improved moderately while the Year 6 levels declined. However, it should be noted that in some cases of apparent learning loss in the Covid-19 period the pre-Covid trend was already negative (i.e., English Literacy).

Figure C.12. Student performance levels by grade, subject and year, VANSTA



Data source: VANSTA, 2021 and ACER interim report

By province – English and French Literacy

Students in Year 4 performed lower in English Literacy and French Literacy across all provinces in 2021 compared to 2019 and 2017, again with the exception of Shefa province. More than half of the students in Year 4 were ‘critically below’ or ‘approaching’ the minimum standard in Malampa, Tafea, and Torba provinces in English (Figure C.13) and in Penama, Sanma, Tafea and Torba in French Literacy (Figure C.15) in 2021.

The results were more mixed in Year 6 for English Literacy – student achievement stayed the same or slightly improved from 2017 to 2019 in all provinces except Torba, while there was a slight decline in student performance in 2021 except Tafea and Torba where over half the students were either critically below or approaching the minimum standard (Figure C.14).

However, for French Literacy (Figure C.16), student achievement improved in all provinces by a large amount in Year 6 in 2017 and 2019, and continued to improve in Torba in 2021, and declined by only one percentage point in Sanma in 2021. At the same time, while the improvement is encouraging, over half of the students in Tafea (54 per cent) and just under half of the students in Torba (49 per cent) were still either approaching or critically below the minimum standard.

English Literacy Year 4

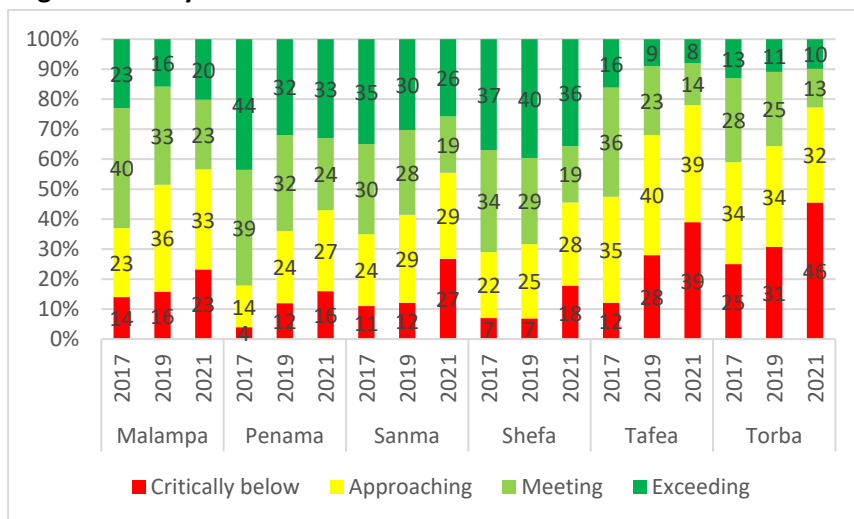


Figure C.13. English literacy Year 4 results by year and province, VANSTA

English Literacy Year 6

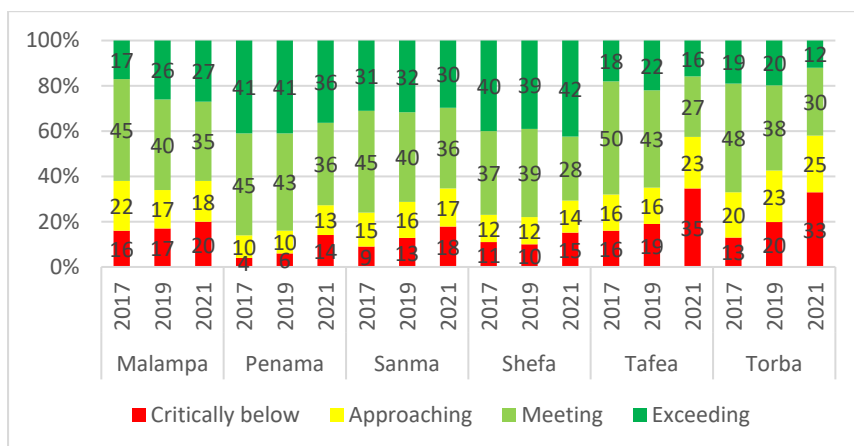


Figure C.14. English literacy Year 6 results by year and province, VANSTA

French Literacy Year 4

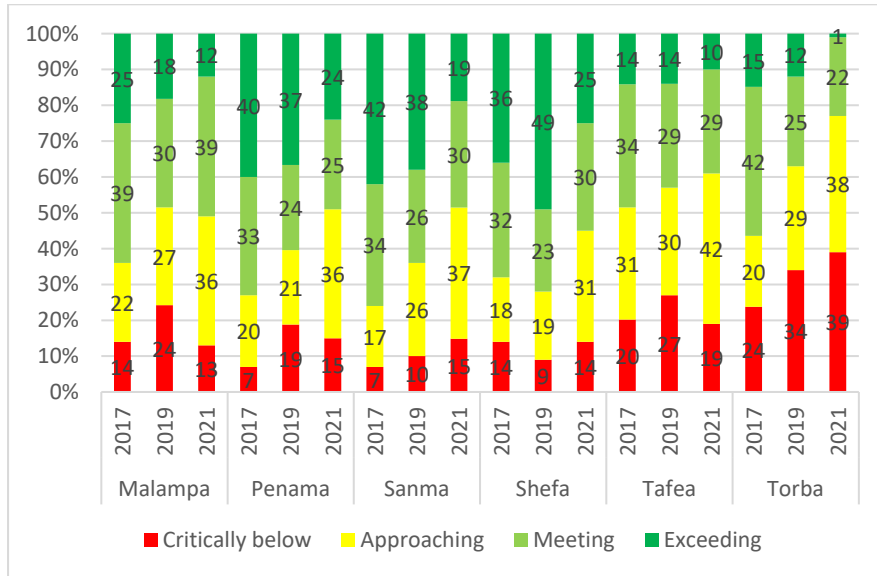


Figure C.15. French literacy Year 4 results by year and province, VANSTA

French Literacy Year 6

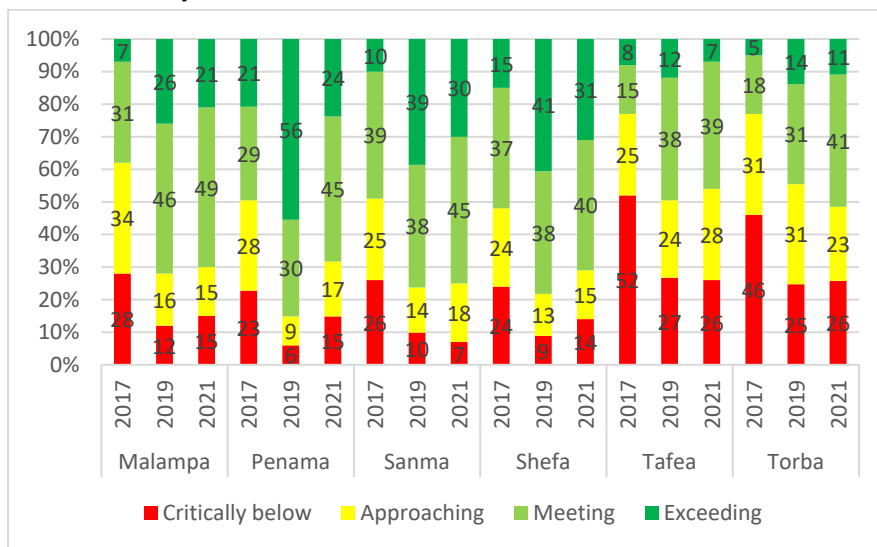


Figure C.16. French literacy Year 6 results by year and province, VANSTA

By province – Numeracy

For Numeracy there is some evidence of learning loss in 2021 in Year 4 and Year 6.

As Figure C.18 shows, provincial level results for Year 6 numeracy generally show improvement in all provinces from 2017 to 2019, with declining shares of students in the lowest performance levels and increasing shares in the highest. However, all six regions show some decline in numeracy in 2021.

This is especially true in Torba where 53 per cent of Year 6 students were critically below or approaching minimum standards in 2021 compared to 35 per cent in 2019. The other provinces did not experience a large increase in students in the lowest Numeracy performance categories in 2021, but they did see significant declines in the share of students who were Exceeding the Numeracy

standard (the highest performance category). For example, 35 per cent of students in Year 6 in Penama exceeded minimum standards in 2021 – down from 54 percent in 2019.

The Year 4 Numeracy trends (Figure C.17) are somewhat different than in Year 6. There is less evidence of a positive trend in the 2017-2019 period, and in provinces like Penama and Torba there was a notable decline in Numeracy performance in 2019. However, in all of the provinces the 2021 averages are lower, with Tafea and Torba again standing out for the increase in the share of students in the Critically below category in 2021.

Numeracy Year 4

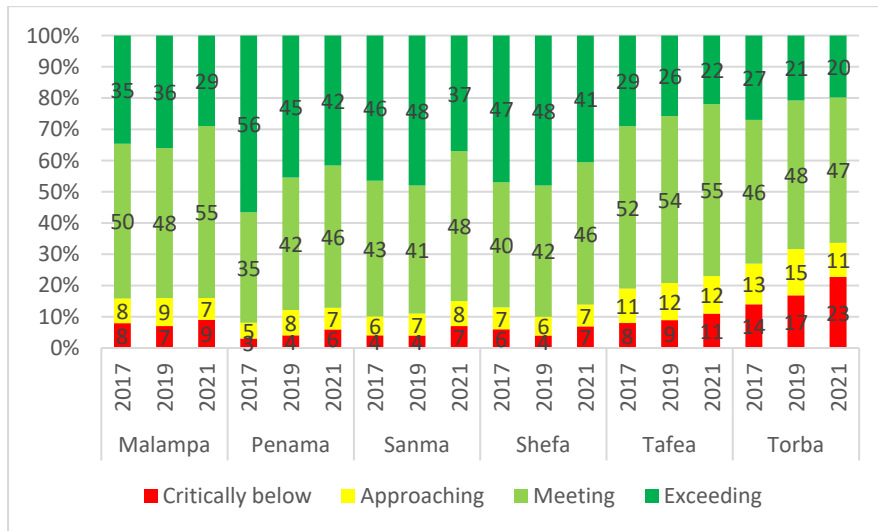


Figure C.17. Numeracy Year 4 results by year and province, VANSTA

Numeracy Year 6

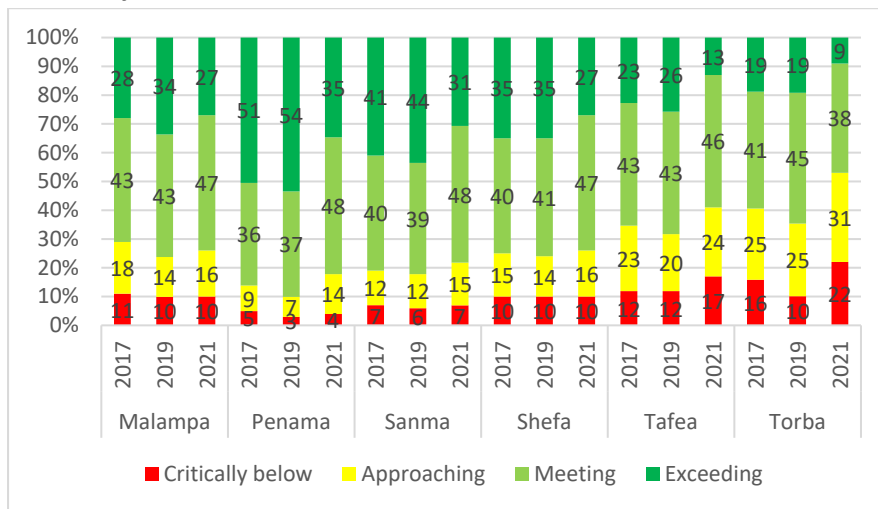


Figure C.18. Numeracy Year 6 results by year and province, VANSTA

PILNA

PILNA is a pen- and paper-based assessment of reading and numeracy skills based on a common scale, administered regionally to Years 4 and 6 students across 15 Pacific Island countries, which includes Vanuatu (EQAP, 2016). In addition to the mathematics and reading measurements, background questionnaires collected contextual information about students, teachers, and

principals to understand the factors influencing students' achievement in PILNA. These questionnaires provide insights into teachers' knowledge, attitudes and practices, and the context that students, teachers and principals operate within. PILNA in Vanuatu is administered to a representative sample of students in Year 4 and Year 6.

Reading – overall performance

In PILNA 2021, only 21 per cent of Year 4 students in Vanuatu met or exceeded the minimum expected proficiency level in reading, and Year 4 students achieved 22 per cent lower than the Pacific region. Fifty per cent of Year 6 students, however, are performing at or above the minimum expected proficiency level, which is just 3 percent below regional performance. As with numeracy, girls continue to significantly outperform boys in both Year 4 and Year 6 reading (EQAP, PILNA Vanuatu, 2021).

In terms of trend performance in reading, the distribution of students performing at or above the minimum proficiency level in Year 4 has declined from 2015 to 2021. The Year 6 performance in reading increased between 2015 and 2018 but declined again in 2021 (EQAP, PILNA Vanuatu, 2021).

The uneven trends by Year are demonstrated in Table C.1 with a summary of the overall scale scores for Reading in 2015, 2018 and 2021. In Year 4 the national Vanuatu average has declined from 440.8 in 2015 to 408.2 in 2021, while in Year 6 the average increased from 2015 to 2018 before declining in 2021.

Table C.1. Mean performance of Year 4 and 6 students in Reading, Vanuatu PILNA 2015, 2018 and 2021

Year	Descriptive statistics	Reading		
		2015	2018	2021
4	Mean	440.84	424.78 (4.28)	408.24 (3.67)
	SD	46.00	63.36 (3.35)	68.14 (2.61)
6	Mean	490.63	497.97 (5.19)	485.59 (3.68)
	SD	41.46	58.85 (4.03)	60.51 (2.51)

Numbers in brackets are standard errors SD = Standard Deviation

Numeracy – overall performance

In PILNA 2021, 58 per cent of Year 4 students in Vanuatu met or exceeded the minimum expected proficiency level in numeracy, but Year 4 students achieved 10 per cent lower than the Pacific region. On the other hand, 73 per cent of Year 6 students met or exceeded the minimum expected proficiency level and performed at the same level as the region. Girls continue to significantly outperform boys in both Year 4 and Year 6 numeracy (EQAP, PILNA Vanuatu, 2021).

In terms of trend performance, the distribution of students performing at or above the minimum proficiency level in Year 4 numeracy has declined from 2015 to 2021. The Year 6 performance increased between 2015 and 2018 but declined in 2021 to 2015 levels (EQAP, PILNA Vanuatu, 2021). Table C.2 provides an additional summary based on the scaled Numeracy scores by student year.

Table C.2. Mean performance of Year 4 and 6 students in Numeracy, Vanuatu PILNA 2015, 2018 and 2021

Year	Descriptive statistics	Numeracy		
		2015	2018	2021
4	Mean	497.48	487.27 (3.07)	460.57 (3.10)
	SD	41.67	50.89 (2.37)	55.00 (1.63)
6	Mean	522.10	542.67 (3.22)	524.85 (2.79)
	SD	36.97	43.33 (2.46)	48.61 (1.74)

Numbers in brackets are standard errors SD – Standard Deviation

By province

The PILNA tests were applied in samples in 2015, 2018 and 2021. For this summary the focus is on the 2018-2021 data. It should be noted that the PILNA 2021 reports for Vanuatu already include detailed trend summaries of student scale scores across the 2015-2018-2021 period. However, those summaries are not provided by province, which is the focus of this additional analysis here.

Table C.3 presents 2021 scale scores that are comparable between grades, by province; Tables C.1 (Reading) and C.2 (Numeracy) and can be used for additional reference for the overall national scale score averages for 2021.

Table C.3. Student scaled scores 2021 by grade, subject and province, PILNA

		Malampa	Penama	Sanma	Shefa	Tafea	Torba
Reading	Year 4	393.1	431.6	414.4	423.9	380.4	322.4
	Year 6	464.1	500.2	499.7	503.0	462.2	434.4
Numeracy	Year 4	449.5	488.8	466.4	465.0	443.2	405.4
	Year 6	517.0	542.3	542.2	529.9	504.6	473.9

Reading – Year 4 and Year 6

The mean performance of Y4 students in reading in PILNA 2021 was 408 (Table C.1). Students in Penama, Sanma and Shefa all met or performed above the mean, while students in Malampa, Tafea and Torba performed below the mean scale score. Students in Torba performed 86 scale points lower than the mean.

The mean performance of Y6 students in reading in PILNA 2021 was 486 (Table C.1). Penama, Sanma and Shefa performed above the national mean.

Numeracy - Year 4 and Year 6

The mean performance of Y4 students in numeracy in PILNA 2021 was 461 (Table C.2). Students in Penama, Sanma and Shefa all met or performed above the mean, while students in Malampa, Tafea and Torba performed below the mean scale score. These results by province are similar to those for students in Year 4 reading.

The mean performance of Y6 students in numeracy in PILNA 2021 was 525 (Table C.2). Penama, Sanma and Shefa performed above the national mean. Students in Torba performed 52 scale points lower than the mean.

By gender - reading

At both year levels, girls are outperforming boys in reading. Figures C.19 and C.20 show the results broken down by gender in 2021 for Year 4 and Year 6 for reading respectively.

More Year 4 girls (25%) than boys (17%) performed at or above the expected minimum proficiency level in reading²⁶. Eighty-three per cent of Year 4 boys compared to 75 per cent of girls performed below the expected minimum proficiency level in reading. Level 0 in reading indicates a student can comprehend simple words.

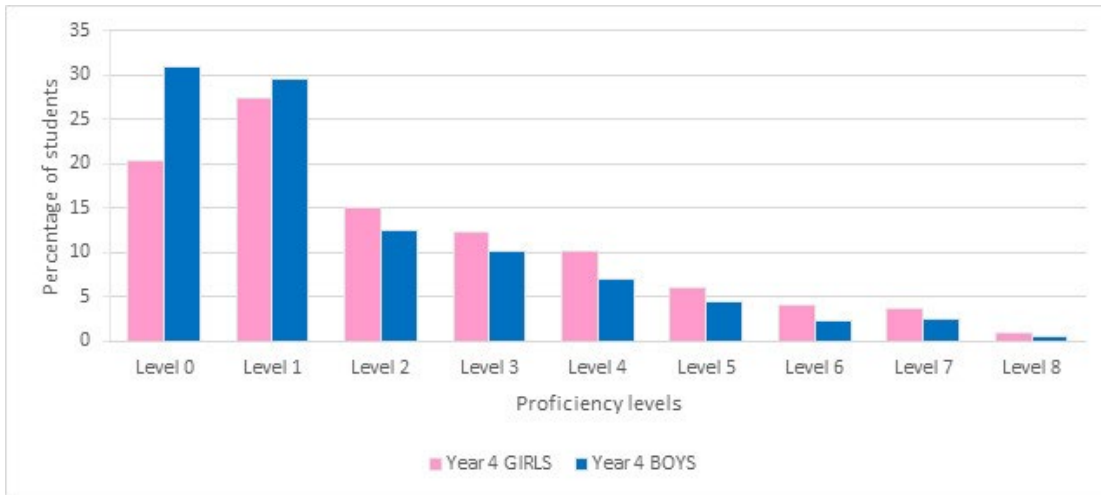


Figure C.19: Distribution of Year 4 students' proficiency in reading by gender, Vanuatu, PILNA 2021

More Year 6 girls (59%) than boys (41%) performed at or above the expected minimum proficiency level in reading²⁷. Boys continue to outnumber girls in the lowest three proficiency levels by half.

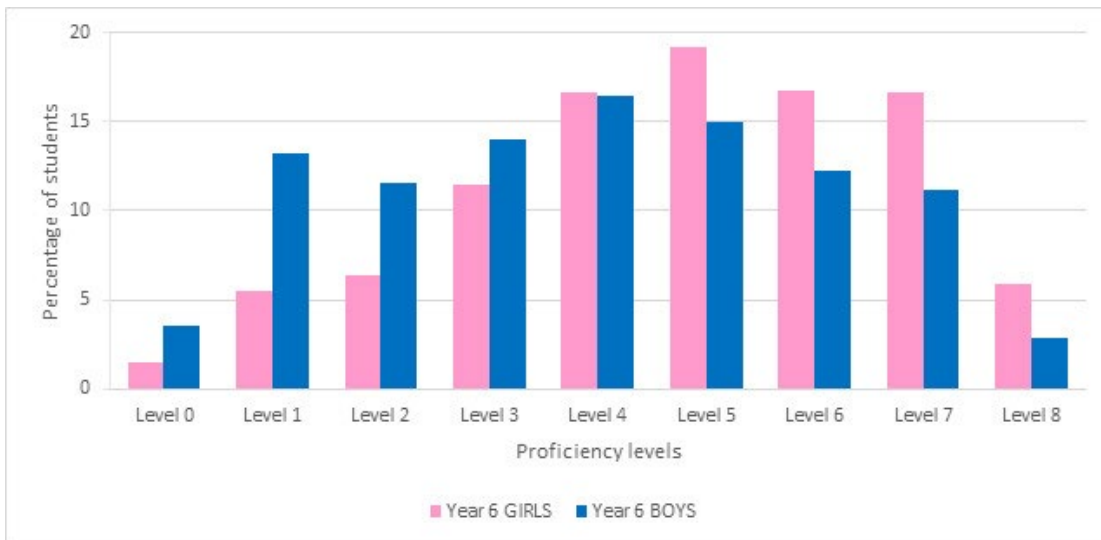


Figure C.20: Distribution of Year 6 students' proficiency in reading by gender, Vanuatu, PILNA 2021

²⁶ Level 4 is the expected minimum proficiency level for Year 4 reading in PILNA.

²⁷ Level 5 is the expected minimum proficiency level for Year 6 reading in PILNA.

By gender - numeracy

Once again, girls outperformed boys in 2021. Figures C.21 and C.22 show the results broken down by gender in 2021 for Year 4 and Year 6 for reading respectively.

More Year 4 girls (64%) than boys (52%) performed at or above the expected minimum proficiency level in numeracy²⁸. Just under half of Year 4 boys were performing below the minimum expected proficiency levels (L0-L2).

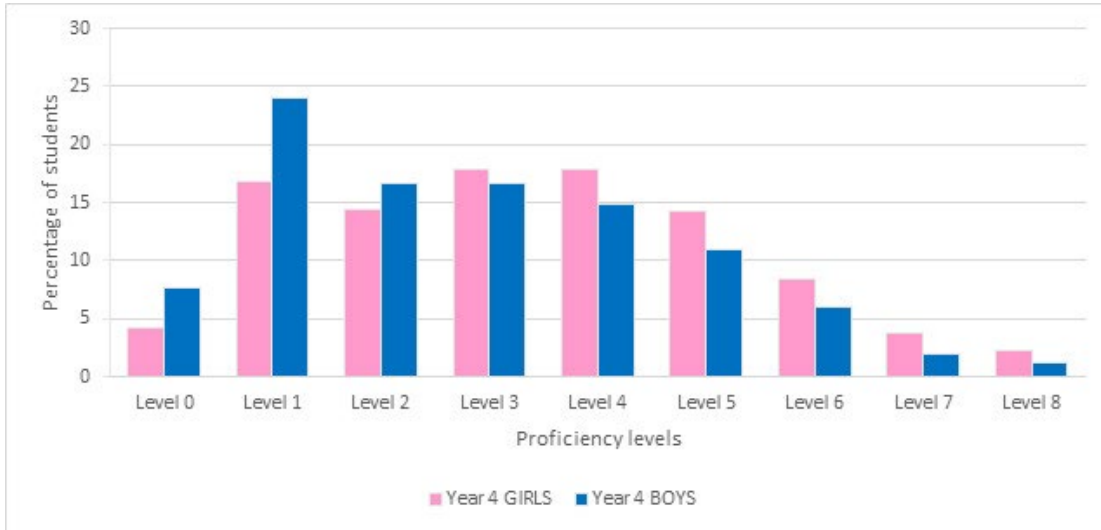


Figure C.21: Distribution of Year 4 students' proficiency in numeracy by gender, Vanuatu, PILNA 2021

Girls and boys in Year 6 performed better in numeracy than Year 4 students. Seventy-nine per cent of girls compared to 66 per cent of boys were performing at or above the expected minimum proficiency level²⁹. Overall girls are doing better than boys.

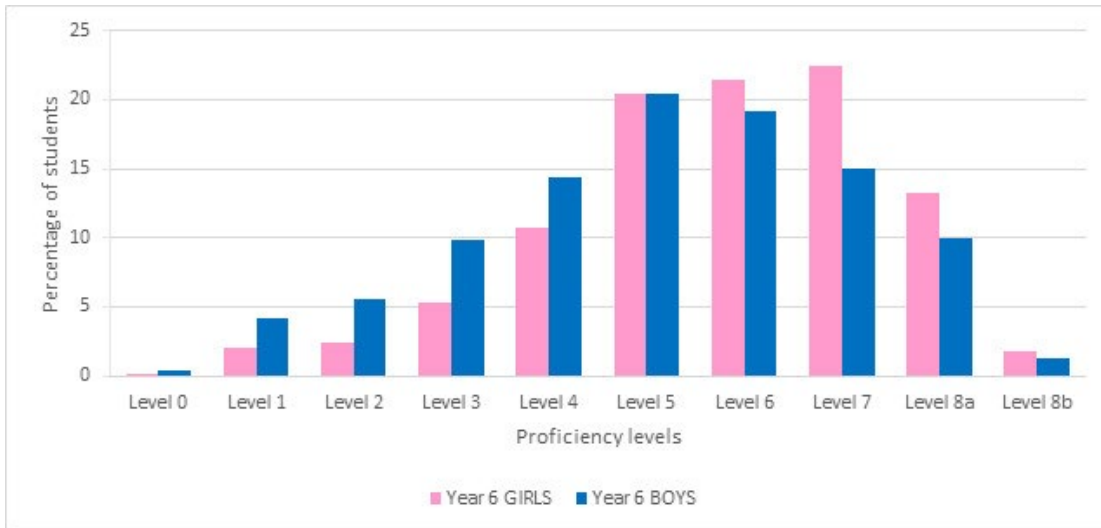


Figure C.22: Distribution of Year 6 students' proficiency in numeracy by gender, Vanuatu, PILNA 2021

²⁸ Level 3 is the expected minimum proficiency level for Year 4 numeracy in PILNA.

²⁹ Level 5 is the expected minimum proficiency level for Year 6 numeracy in PILNA.

Perceptions of student learning outcomes

The following section presents year 3 case study data from Tanna (Erromango) and Sanma (Santo) provinces to contribute to an understanding of the impact of VESP on student learning. The perception data in this section is discussed by the islands Erromango and Santo selected for the year 3 case study and provides a snapshot of stakeholder perspectives on student learning. Generally, respondents reported that a range of VESP activities have supported improvements in reading and writing, speaking, student attendance levels, interest in lessons and wellbeing, and particularly confidence.

Academic outcomes

The next section presents data from Erromango and Santo on stakeholder perspectives on changes to student outcomes in literacy and numeracy.

Finding 1. Stakeholders in 2022 shared a wide range of opinions about their students' academic outcomes as a result of the VESP investment, especially during the language transition. Teachers in upper primary (Years 4-6) perceived challenges for reading and writing domains. On the other hand, some teachers in Year 1-3 talked about the benefits of students learning in Bislama or vernacular in terms of confidence and understanding.

Finding 2. As in 2019 and 2021, stakeholders in 2022 did not offer extensive comment on student achievement in numeracy. They suggested students performed better in mathematics, but still struggled with problem solving and spelling of numbers because of language load.

Literacy

There was a wide range of perspectives reported by all stakeholders – including teachers, principals and parents – regarding students' reading, writing skills and speaking skills.

In 2022, many case study respondents noted a range of opinions regarding improvement in their students' reading and writing skills as a result of some VESP interventions, and in particular the language of the new curriculum and accompanying resources. In addition, the transition from English to French continues to be a key issue that stakeholders perceive hinders student performance in reading, writing and speaking.

Parents said that they either supported or did not support the new curriculum. Many discussed the range of languages used in the classroom and how they perceived languages helped or hindered their children's learning progress.

Three languages being used in the classroom by the teachers can be very confusing for the child, from my observation. The teacher uses vernacular then also uses Bislama and French. I think the transition between vernacular and French is a hard thing because of the difference in sounds. (Parent FGD, Erromango)

My kids, when they return from school, they are able to describe colors in French, Bislama and in their native languages. So, I see that it helps a lot. (Parent FGD, Santo)

Teachers and principals discussed a perceived difference in students' ability to transition to English and French. Some teachers and principals perceived that comprehension presents learning challenges for students. Stakeholders also frequently commented that spelling was challenging for students:

The main problem I encountered is the comprehension – kids read well but do not understand what they are reading. Our experience here with class 4 and 5 is similar – they still find it hard to comprehend. (Year 1-3 teacher, Santo)

Spelling is the very challenging part from moving from Bislama to English. Also, the communication part of it. When you ask them something and you need them to answer questions, it can take up to 3 to 4 minutes for them to answer. (Year 6, Teacher, Santo)

Teachers in upper primary grades (Years 4-6) commented on their perceptions of transition challenges for students, especially in spelling and writing.

I must speak English to the students in class but their English is very poor due to their use of Bislama from classes 1-3. For transition into English... A main challenge for us teachers have to do with students' spelling. They are still spelling things in Bislama instead of English. (Year 4 teacher, Santo)

The (transition year) in grade 3 is also problematic. Teachers find it difficult and confusing as there are so many mixed instructions from curriculum/trainers. (Year 6 teacher, Santo)

The positive change is more within the lower level, and I am not sure why it changes when their move up to higher classes like class 4 and class 5. I hear the teachers say that the children are struggling to write and read at the upper classes. (Principal, Erromango)

On the other hand, some teachers and principals talked about the benefits of students learning in Bislama in Years 1-3. These benefits included skills in constructing essays in upper years in school, reading in lower primary, and clear understanding of instructions:

I am an English teacher and already I can see in year 7 and 8, and even in primary school, a year 4 student is writing an essay of 2-3 pages in Bislama, who has an idea of how to write an introduction, body and conclusion. That's really good. (Principal, Santo)

The results are positive as the child now understands more of the lessons instruction because it's been provided in their own dialect. Again, the reading and writing is the challenge for the new curriculum. The students can really well comprehend but to write what was taught in English is very difficult. (Year 4 teacher, Erromango)

A lot of people are against the Bislama, but in one way, it helps the kids to be able to express themselves and better understand the concepts of the lessons. It flows until L2, and they do well. (Year 5 teacher, Santo)

Some stakeholders said the new curriculum was more inclusive in that it supported students with a range of learning abilities in class. For example, a Year 3 teacher in Santo said that the ability for 'slower students' to speak Bislama enabled them to participate in classroom activities:

With the new curriculum, we use Bislama. But before, the slower students would be shy to talk because of the language barriers. But now we have students who are slow with reading and writing, but still participate really well in other activities, because language is no longer an issue.

Other stakeholders shared similar perceptions that ability to speak Bislama or the vernacular has increased participation and confidence in the classroom. For example,

There has been a tremendous change in their confidence due to the use of Bislama. They now can speak as much as they want without being shy or embarrassed. (Parent FGD, Santo)

They do better with the vernacular. The English and French is still challenging when it comes to speaking. (Principal, Erromango)

The students are much more confident in speaking and do not hesitate to respond to the teacher's questions. (Year 3 teacher, Santo)

Numeracy

As in years 1 and 2, not many case study respondents spoke about numeracy. Those case study respondents who commented on changes to student learning outcomes as a result of VESP investments in numeracy reported that students performed better in mathematics, but still struggled with problem solving and spelling of numbers because of language load.

Yes, they perform better in mathematics because they were taught in the earlier years in Bislama or vernacular, which is easy for the child to understand...However, the student's poor English skills makes it challenging to successfully complete a...maths problems activities. (Year 4 teacher, Santo)

For maths and numeracy is slightly better than English. However, when it comes to problem solving, they still need to use English to understand a math scenario. (Principal, Erromango)

Two principals in Erromango said resources – especially numeracy kits provided by VESP – were helpful:

We also comment highly is the importance and advantage of having the kit box of numeracy, literacy. We have used the VESP kits to improve the students learning in the classroom.

Yes, the students know how to do the maths and they are smart. The numeracy kits help them on how to do their work.

Student progress

Stakeholders were asked about their perceptions of change in overall student performance as a result of the new curriculum. There was a range of responses – some teachers based their responses on assessments they conducted in their classrooms during the year, while others discussed their observations of student performance. Some teachers shared observations that lack of parent support impacts student learning, which is discussed at length in Parent and Community Support.

I assess them based off small tests at the end of each topic. I assess them on their readings and writings. I use this to tell whether or not they are improving in the subject. (Year 5-6 teacher, Erromango)

I think now the kids are progressing slowly but they're doing well. In the past, like we mentioned, because they're learning in a language, they're not confident in, we'd have more students dropping out. Because they were only allowed to speak in French. (Year 5-6 teacher, Erromango)

I am a long-time teacher, I taught in the old curriculum. The idea that has been brought forward, is too advanced for the kids. It helps the kids in some areas, but to read, they can't. In our school, we try our best to help the kids to read. With this new curriculum, it helps them to talk, but to read, nothing. (Year 1 teacher, Santo)

The children are progressing well. Some students are not performing but when we assess these slow learner students, we see that they have issues at home – parental support affects the students. (Year 1 teacher, Santo)

Student participation, interest and wellbeing

Over the life of the study, data about participation, interest and wellbeing were collected primarily through respondents' perceptions via the case study interviews and classroom observations focused on the classroom environment. Classroom environments were judged to be 'cooperative and supportive', 'compliant' or 'unruly'.

Results from 2019, 2021 and 2022 indicate positive shifts in student engagement and interest in school and classroom culture, including teacher-student relationships and interactions. Despite factors impacting attendance students were reported to enjoy and have interest in coming to school.

Finding 1. In all three years of data collection, respondents said that the new curriculum encourages student engagement in the classroom and interest in school through the teacher using student-centred learning practices, speaking Bislama or a vernacular, and using resources and materials that students are familiar with.

Finding 2. All three years of research indicate that a range of issues can impact the ability of a student to attend school regularly. Teachers and principals suggested that because students were more engaged in the new curriculum, they made the effort to come to school.

Finding 3. Results from 2019, 2021 and 2022 indicate positive shifts in student wellbeing due to higher levels of student engagement and interest in school and supportive classroom culture, including teacher-student relationships and interactions. Teachers create a classroom environment that support students with a range of abilities because of pedagogies in the new curriculum.

Student participation and interest in school

Case study respondents reported that the new curriculum encourages student engagement in the classroom through the teacher using student-centred learning practices, speaking Bislama or a vernacular, and using resources and materials that students are familiar with. Student participation and interest in lessons are important factors in student engagement in and enjoyment of school.

They are interested. That's because I put them in groups according to their levels and give out activities according to each group level of understanding. Therefore, they find the activity interesting to participate in when it suits their level. (Year 1 teacher, Santo)

I noticed that my son likes working in school and he is eager to do any task given by his teacher. He is always up to date with all his work and makes sure that he must complete all his homework. (Parent FGD, Erromango)

Through the new curriculum, the students are happy to come to school and one advantage is the student's resource kits – it motivates the students. The set, the colours attract the student's attention. (Year 4 teacher, Erromango)

Some stakeholders reported that language and the new curriculum supported student interest in lessons:

Curriculum has made a change to the children's learning because they have become more interested in the class activities and their learning environment. (Principal, Santo)

When the language of instruction is unfamiliar for the student, then it becomes a hindrance to learning. We realized that when students are taught in their vernacular then they are eager to participate in activities and learning actually takes place. (PEO)

At the same time, some stakeholders said that during transition to English or French students start to lose interest in lessons:

They are interested to come to school every day, just because they want to learn...when the teachers start with L1, the kids are very active and participate. But when we switch to L2, then they start to become quiet. (Year 3 teacher, Santo)

My grandchild finds reading hard to understand. He cannot read homework instructions which are usually in French. This has caused loss of interest to attend classes... (Parent FGD, Erromango)

Student attendance

All three years of research indicate that a range of issues can impact the ability of a student to attend school regularly. At the same time, teachers and principals suggested that because students were more engaged in the new curriculum, they made the effort to come to school.

The ability to attend school linked to local contexts. For example, a high attendance rate might be associated with the teacher's ability to connect with students. Students may be very engaged in school, but weather may prevent them coming to class.

Parents said that their students were happy to go to school. At the same time, some teachers suggested that some students' attendance was impacted because of issues at home, distance to travel to school and environmental factors.

Most of the time they are excited to attend school. They will only be absent a few number of times due to minor reasons. (Parent FGD, Santo).

The attendance is good. The kids are very interested to learn. There are only a few who have issues at home that I've discovered impacts them in school. But majority of them are active in school. (Year 2 teacher, Santo)

Specifically, for us here, the distance is quite far for students to come to school and most of them have been missing classes since the pandemic outbreak as well as the wet season this year. This has caused an increase in the number of student absences. As the school principal, I can say that the academic progress this year is very poor. (Principal, Erromango)

One teacher suggested being able to learn in Bislama or vernacular was a reason students' attendance is improving:

I think now the kids are progressing slowly but they're doing well. In the past, like we mentioned, because they're learning in a language, they're not confident in, we'd have more students dropping out. Because they were only allowed to speak in French. (Year 5-6 teacher, Erromango)

Wellbeing

Results from 2019, 2021 and 2022 indicate positive shifts in student engagement and interest in school and classroom culture, including teacher-student relationships and interactions. Despite factors impacting attendance students were reported to enjoy and have interest in coming to school.

Research indicates that wellbeing in school is a critical student learning outcome (Lawson, 2013) (Klem, 2004). Students who feel safe and confident in class are able to communicate more easily with other students and their teachers. Training, support of teachers and the new curriculum were reported by teachers to impact students' wellbeing.

A number of case study respondents reported a range of benefits as a result of changes in the new curriculum, including confidence, happiness, engagement and attendance. Parents shared their differing perceptions of changes to their children's wellbeing at school:

Looking at these kids, you watch them from kindy, you see that they are not shy. They are not the same as us. I believe they are confident and able to stand in front of the classroom or write on the whiteboard. (Parent FGD, Santo)

My child in Yr5 finds his studies very difficult. It is also emotionally hard for me as a parent, I am not sure what to do to help my child improve. I can tell that my child is not catching up with his

studies in the classroom. My child does not want to go to school anymore. (Parent FGD, Erromango)

A Year 1-3 teacher in Santo explained how she creates a classroom environment that supports students with a range of abilities because of pedagogies in the new curriculum:

I have created an environment where I encourage the students to seek assistance or do not be afraid to ask for help if they are unsure of any lessons. This has helped the students with slow learning to actively participate... Because of the new curriculum, the children have so much confidence, if you ask the kids to stand up and talk, they will argue amongst each other about who will talk in front of the class which is very different from the old curriculum.

Other stakeholders explained how new pedagogies engage students in classroom activities and 'own' their learning:

When it comes to group work, the kids are always fighting over being the one to present. They are very confident, so you have to pick one. Or sometimes I just get them all to line up and do a presentation of different things. (Year 2 teacher, Santo)

This is where we make the students feel that they own their learning, while the teacher is simply a guide on the side to facilitate the learning progress and then later assesses, but the lesson is entirely owned by the students. In this way, the students feel free to learn inside the classroom. Instead of the teacher standing in front of the classroom talking too much and the students get bored, they are given the opportunity to discover on their own. (Year 1-2 teacher, Erromango)

At the same time, there were differing opinions once students entered Years 4-6:

To my understand in terms of confidence and participations in the lower grades grade 1,2 and 3 we can see more of this there. But when it comes to grade 4,5 and 6 it's about the usage of the English language. (Year 5 teacher, Santo)

Classroom environment

In case study schools, researchers were required to make an assessment of the classroom environment. Table C.4 below sets out examples of evidence that researchers might observe related to class environment and class interactions. Researchers were asked to select each evidence type observed, and to make an overall assessment as to whether the class was 'cooperative and supportive', 'compliant' or 'unruly'. Cooperative and supportive environments are more likely to indicate the presence of positive student attitudes and dispositions towards learning.

Table C.4. Classroom environment section of classroom observation instrument

Class is....	Evidence might include:
Cooperative and supportive of one another	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers and students work together harmoniously (1) • Classroom atmosphere is joyful (2) • Interactions are respectful, kind and encouraging (3) • Most activity focused on learning (4)
Compliant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students do what the teacher says (5) • Classroom atmosphere is complacent (6) • Interactions are respectful but may not be kind or encouraging (7) • Most activity focused on procedures and completing tasks (8)
Unruly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students do not do what the teacher says (9) • Classroom atmosphere is disrupted (10) • Interactions are disrespectful (11) • Most activity focused on managing student behaviour (12)

As shown in Figure C.23, all classes in Santo were assessed as having ‘cooperative and supportive’ environments. In Erromango, two teachers had ‘compliant’ classes and two ‘cooperative and supportive’.

Figure C.23. Classroom environment assessment made by researchers during classroom observations, 2022

School	SANTO					ERROMANGO			
	A	B	C	D	E	F	H	H	I
Cooperative & supportive	○○	○○	○○	○○	○○		○○		○○
Compliant						○○		○○	
Unruly									

○ = observed in first lesson ○ = observed in second lesson

Parent and community support

Finding 1. Parents said they engage with their children’s learning by ensuring that their children attend school and helping with homework. Parents said they need to have an understanding of what their children are learning so they can better support them.

Finding 2. Principals and teachers said they try to encourage parents to be involved in their children’s learning through visiting the school and meeting teachers. Teachers said that contextual challenges limit parents support of children, particularly if parents have travelled overseas for seasonal work or are absent at home for other reasons.

The next section presents stakeholder perception data from Erromango and Santo on how parents support students’ learning and how schools engage with parents.

My child is a product of the community that I live in so it is important that both parents and the community are aware of the school our children are attending since they will be future leaders one day. (Parent FGD, Santo)

Parent support of students

Parents and communities have an impact on students’ engagement in school. Parents’ focus groups emphasised that in addition to their responsibility to ensure that their children attend school, parents need to have an understanding of what their children are learning so they can better support them. At the same time, some parents said they were ‘too busy’ to meet with teachers.

I also think that I should be aware of what my kids are doing and learning in school or in the classroom. So, my child can come to me and tell me what he is learning in school. This is something that makes me happy, knowing what they are learning in school. (Parent FGD, Santo)

I don’t go to talk to the teachers. Only when we have interviews or discuss reports, and the I go in to talk to the teachers. But during normal days, I don’t because I am too busy doing things at home. (Parent FGD, Erromango)

I think we see that the teachers are doing a good job, so we don’t feel the need to have to talk to them. (Parent FGD, Erromango)

Parents also discussed supporting their children with their homework or finding other family members to support them.

So, after I prepare dinner, I would just sit with him, not talking but just looking at how he does his work. Whenever he comes across a difficult task, he would then ask for my phone so he could google up a concept. (Parent FGD, Erromango)

This is a failure for us as parents, when we've been in the garden the whole day and sometimes when we get back, we're too tired. Sometimes when I am able to, then I help, but when I can't, then I just tell them to follow the examples the teachers showed them in class (Parent FGD, Santo)

A number of parents explained that they were taught in English and have no understanding of French (or vice versa) and were unable to help their students with homework:

However, I am not happy because I am anglophone and find it hard to help him with his homework which is in French. (Parent FGD, Santo)

We also have an issue with being taught in English and do not understand French so we cannot help our child much at home with homework. (Parent FGD, Santo)

Some parents talked about how they should engage more with the school and the teachers and be more aware of their children's learning.

When the teachers come around to tell us about our kids and their performance, we have a responsibility to step in. The kids first place of learning is at home, we teach them at home and they are able to go to school. I also get happy when the teacher tells me about how my child is doing in school, if there's anything he needs help in, then I assist my child and the teacher to improve in his learning. (Parent FGD, Erromango)

It is not helpful to just be home and do not know what is going on with our children's learning. Life is changing a lot so it is important to be able to help our child in any way we as parents can, with their studies. (Parent FGD, Erromango)

Engagement with parents

I think it's a two-way thing, if the parents help at home, then it will help the kids in the classroom. As a teacher, I can't do it on my own, we are both involved in creating who this child will be in the future. (Year 1 teacher, Santo)

Teachers and principals in Erromango talked about how they encouraged parents to become involved at school:

In July this year, we had normal classes in the mornings and organized afternoon academic sessions related with the new curriculum, whereby the parents were invited and I could tell that they really enjoyed those sessions...they stressed the fact that it is the first time an activity like this is organized for them...This is just an initiative to involve parents and make them be aware of what is happening at school every day. (Principal)

The new curriculum requires members of the community to be involved and assist in the kids learning... and the parents need to work better with the teachers to change the results within the classroom. (Year 3-4 teacher)

Teachers and principals in Santo also discussed contextual challenges for their communities and parent engagement in school:

Most parents have travelled overseas for seasonal employment and this has impacted even the students' learning in terms of homework and wellbeing. When the student is discouraged or bullied at school by other kids and returning home where there is also no support due to parents' absence then their concentration is lost. (Principal)

In this school, we had an awareness last year to bring the parents in for an hour to see how their kids are going. We even asked the parents to come in to talk to the teachers about their cultures etc. But we had no turn up at all, which makes it hard for us to work with the community. (Year 2 teacher)

Factors that impede student learning

There are a range of factors that impact student learning outcomes that are outside the interventions implemented by VESP. Respondents reflected on some of the contextual issues that they perceived as influencing their children's learning outcomes.

Home and community contexts

Parents noted challenges in the home environment as an issue that could affect a child's learning outcomes. Some respondents reported that some children may not have enough food or live in unsettled homes. Stakeholders said that context can impact student learning outcomes.

A lot of the students come from different social background; some are absent regularly, some are slow. They are present in class but their learning is very slow. These are some of the things that I think have contributed to them not progressing well. (Teacher, Santo)

Some of our kids live very far from the school, that they get tired walking to school every day. (Parent FGD, Erromango)

Some stakeholders emphasized the size of schools was a factor emphasizing student learning including access to resources and lack of teachers. As one Erromango teacher said, "There is only a few of us, I have eight students.

In rural areas some have smaller schools and single schoolteachers, and this can also affect the students' academic performance. (PEO)

My school is a small school and money is very limited that's why the parent-teacher association is very weak. (Principal, Santo)

The lack of teachers also affects the kids learning, if the teachers don't come, then the lesson doesn't happen and we have to wait before progressing in in the topics. (Year 3 teacher, Santo)

A Year 1 teacher in Santo said that lack of early learning opportunities impacted students' preparation for school in Year 1:

When they are not ready in class 1, because they were not prepared well in Kindy, then the teacher will face a lot of difficulty with them...Even at the moment the Kindy classes are on hold due to lack of teacher, as a result, some students enter class 1 without having gone through early childhood education and that is a huge challenge for us classes 1-3 teachers.

Inadequate or damaged infrastructure

Damaged infrastructure and challenging home contexts were reported often in parent focus groups as issues that impacted their children's learning outcomes.

Parents talked about cyclones that damage infrastructure, but at the same time stated that communities come together to rebuild. Regardless weather event impact access to education:

Cyclone Harold removed our school and threw it forty to fifty meters out...There was no help or donors that helped us, only the community... Even our office was damaged, so we picked up the broken pieces and put it back together for the wellbeing of our children's learning. But we need to have better access for the kids learning. (Parent FGD, Santo)

Maybe they should have more buildings and resources for the kids to use. We need more books for the kids to use. (Parent FGD, Erromango)

System changes

Previously, ISU was tasked with conducting the training and professional development for the new curriculum. In 2021, the VITE was integrated into the NUV, and the role of ISU was made defunct.

In previous years, ISU via PTs conducted a range of training workshops with teachers, principals and some SIOs to build knowledge and capacity related to aspects of the new curriculum. The functions of PTs were to be amalgamated with SIO responsibilities, but in 2022, SIO positions were also made redundant.

VESP's Curriculum Implementation Monitoring Study (VESP, 2022) discussed the discontinuation of the PT and SIO roles and Government plans for devolved services based closer to schools as part of a revised provincial structure. Several provincial roles to support curriculum implementation have been proposed, but a restructure has not to date (March 2023) been formally endorsed.

NUV's School of Education is now responsible for pre-service teacher education and the upgrading of in-service primary teachers as part of the National Teacher Development Plan by 2030. The Teaching Services Commission is in charge of registration and licensing.

Sustainability

The ability of schools and education stakeholders to sustain inputs to improve teaching quality, support the implementation the new curriculum and improve student learning outcomes is a significant ongoing challenge. The following section presents respondent perspectives on systems challenges, key risks to sustainability, and suggestions for improvement. These include approach to and support systems for teacher development, language policy, replacement of teaching materials, teacher and principal turnover, teacher qualifications and inclusive education.

Approach to teacher development

Without the ISU and PTs, there is a vacuum in knowledge and a critical gap in the teacher training structure. Some national respondents reflected the lack of clarity on which body is now responsible for managing the in-service professional development of teachers. While NUV's School of Education (SOE) has been given the mandate to upgrade in-service teacher qualifications, it does not see a role for NUV to deliver non-accredited training. As one national respondent noted, "MoET needs to define the role." CDU has in turn, filled this role in order to deliver the new curriculum training. Some respondents questioned whether filling the gap is an appropriate role for CDU:

CDU is becoming a very big machinery that is developing the curriculum, the learning and teaching material, and at the same time...filling the gap left by ISU (National)

Many national respondents noted the limitations of a cascade training model for improving teaching quality. Improving teaching practice requires small, targeted professional development programs conducted at regular intervals over a substantial period (e.g., fortnightly over a semester or school year) with follow-up and accountability measures, rather than one-off large-scale training. Limited resources are likely to necessitate cascade models, as one respondent said, "The budget to implement any activity or any training at primary level is pretty low." (National)

Teacher and principal participation in the training has been uneven and patchy. Many teachers and principals highlighted the need for more training and refresher courses:

If there is something that we are doing that works, we keep doing it. But if the teachers aren't doing the practical things of what they learn in theory, they will forget it. I just want them to re-run the trainings they did in the past, so it can refresh their minds. I can put together my own planning, but you will see it may not be in line with what we are actually doing, I really believe we need refresher workshops. (Principal)

Some respondents said it was important to attend a variety of courses and for a range of year levels given teachers often are required to fill in for other teachers or are posted to different classes. One teacher reflected they found training difficult, having missed prior sessions. (Year 3 teacher). One teacher suggested:

If the trainings could be offered in our schools rather than just picking some teachers to attend the trainings elsewhere; if the trainers could come to the island to offer the trainings. (Year 1-2 teacher)

Teachers highlighted areas in which they needed further training support. These included: language transition, assessment, lesson planning, creating resources, leadership and management. One respondent felt that curriculum training is crowding out all other training:

In-service training, L&D should be more self-determined and more dependent on teachers' needs. (National)

Some national respondents raised the need for increased coordination and policy/program alignment between the SOE and MoET (CDU). Issues in the past have related to disagreements on the value of the language policy and the pre-service program did not incorporate the new curriculum.

SoE should be the ones training the teachers with the resources...developed at CDU. Instead, they're doing something else. (National)

New graduates need to be equipped to teach the new curriculum. Reports are the SOE are now incorporating some aspects of the new curriculum into its programs. However, an emerging issue is that the SOE does not recognise the new curriculum training as part of its upgrading process:

CDU professional dev is not qualified or accredited training. It's not recognised as part of the SOE upgrading process. (National)

Support systems for teacher development

Support systems are critical to sustaining and integrating gains from initial teacher development inputs. Many respondents see the need for more resources to be allocated towards ongoing professional learning and for the dismantling of provincial support structures to be rectified.

Training is just the beginning, and very important what happens afterward with the follow up... Focus on one thing and resource it in a realistic way. (National)

There's not enough support provided to teachers with this new curriculum, especially in terms of implementation support. (Year 5 teacher)

Without the PTs, there is a critical gap in the teacher support structure. This is further accentuated by SIOs also being made redundant. For the VESP investment, the provincial structure changes have left a big gap for the VESP strategy for teacher development:

And when (VESP) was designed we built on those SIOs being kind of stepping stones to enrich the teachers, but SIOs and the PTs also disappeared in the past few years. So, it's leaving a big gap. (National)

Many respondents highlighted issues with the extent and quality of provincial support, noting irregularity of school visits and the varying knowledge and capacity of PTs and SIOs to provide this support well.

... making sure that everyone has been on the same page in the system. We can target teachers, but if everyone not on board it is very hard for teachers to be the agent of change. (National)

Nevertheless, many respondents highlighted there needs to be some way of getting ongoing support to teachers and principals at school.

(We) need to think of sustainable ways in which you can provide training to teachers in your provinces. We should have people on the ground paid by MoET and GoV should give budget to these people so they can continue to provide support to teachers – either PD, coaching, feedback, mentoring. This is what teachers need. They do not have feedback, they cannot change, they cannot improve their practice. (National)

In filling a gap, CDU is trying to train provincial officers (curriculum officers), and some select principals and teachers. “Provinces need to have a bigger role in supporting their teachers” (National). Some national respondents highlighted that MoET needs more education specialists working in its ranks.

The less educators we have working in the Ministry, the more confused and no connection to teaching and learning in classrooms exists.

One respondent highlighted the need for the MoET to do some forward planning to build a cadre of subject specialists:

MoET's never thought about sending people overseas, not just to be specialised in language – specialised maths teachers. The CDU does not have subject specialists... MoET should identify who are the special people that we will need in the future one day to drive our education forward. (National)

Language policy and its implementation

The language policy and its implementation continue to be highlighted as risks associated with the sustainability and continuation of the new curriculum. There is a wide range of opinions and all levels of the system from school to national level government:

The language policy is the big risk. I don't think there's a risk about the pedagogy that has been put into place through the curriculum in terms of student centred and don't leave anyone behind. (National)

Key issues highlighted by a range of respondents is there hasn't been enough effort from MoET to schools about understanding language policy, and more support is needed to teachers to manage the language transition well so that it does not disadvantage student learning. Respondents also said that communication and support need to be ongoing.

No follow through... we start something and move on, not enabling people to work on practice. (National)

My only fear is the transition from Bislama to English. This is challenging and needs further training to assist the teacher with this. Should be some specific teachers with expertise and specially trained for this. Ademap Lanwis is not enough. (Principal)

Renewing and replacing teaching and learning materials

An issue highlighted by case study and national respondents is the lack of a process for replacing teaching and learning materials. Challenges include teachers being posted to other schools and taking materials with them, and the loss of materials during TC Harold and during distribution processes.

The government doesn't budget for reprinting of materials after the first print after 3 years and 5 years - if you walk to schools now after the 5 years of the Year 1 curriculum, all thrown out or the wind has blown them away or the earthquake has... (National)

Teacher and principal turnover

A challenge identified by case study and national respondents is teacher and principal turnover, which means that in some schools teachers may not have been trained to deliver the curriculum.

A training was done for all Class 1 teachers with the teacher guide. And they get all this information. But the TSC might post them to another school and maybe teach in Year 4. That was the setback of that training. But teachers today who are handling Year 1, 2 and 3 are no longer the teachers who got that specific training. (National)

Teacher career regime and teacher qualifications upgrade

A priority of the GoV is to upgrade the qualifications of primary school teachers by 2030, many of whom are underqualified or unqualified, to a Bachelor of Education degree. These requirements will be connected to TSC's teacher registration and licensing processes. The SOE is responsible for implementing these reforms and is in the process of delivering online programs via Moodle. Given the varied experience of Vanuatu's teacher workforce, SOE has designed different entry requirements and pathways for groups of teachers depending on their qualifications level.

Challenges identified by respondents include:

- the different capacity levels and experience of teachers
- the need for teachers to have access to computers and IT experience
- how teachers who are undertaking the course are backfilled in classrooms
- fees for coursework.

In addition, national respondents said that teachers' salaries are too low for them to afford to enrol in courses to earn a Bachelor-level degree. Further, given the lack of a teacher career regime, teachers tend to stay on the same pay scale and there is a perception this affects their motivation.

Reviews and evaluations

Several respondents noted the need to undertake reviews and evaluations of this reform process so that it can be adjusted and improved (Principal, Santo). One respondent noted it needs to be consultation with teachers and a review of whether the curriculum is targeted at the right level for learners (Principal, Santo).

Inclusive education

While a handful of teachers have participated in and completed certification in inclusive education, there continues to be a need for specialist support in schools to support inclusive practices. A

teacher noted how specialist support would help her teaching and help students who may need additional assistance:

In regard to the new curriculum, myself as grade 1 teacher, I see that it is a must for us to have an inclusive teacher in our school. This teacher will focus on helping the students who need that extra support. We can include these students, but we can't meet all their needs to help them learn.
(Year 4 teacher)