EDUCATION ANALYTICS SERVICE: TEACHER DEVELOPMENT MULTI-YEAR STUDIES

Vanuatu: Interim Report 2

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Amendment history

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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
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GEDSI	Gender equality, disability and social inclusion
ISU	In-service Unit
MoET	Ministry of Education and Training
NUV	National University of Vanuatu
PILNA	Pacific Island Literacy and Numeracy Assessment
PT	Provincial Trainer
SIO	School Improvement Officer
VANSTA	Vanuatu Standardised Test of Achievement
OpenVEMIS	Vanuatu Education Management Information System
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 *National 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 curriculum includes teachers' materials in Bislama and learning materials such as 'readers' in Bislama and over 50 vernacular languages. Subject content is sequenced for each year level to ensure content uniformity. Pedagogical approaches – such as student-centred learning, language transition and classroom-based assessment practices – aim to transform teaching and learning. Phases I and II of the VESP have been integral to the design and implementation of the new primary curriculum. VESP-supported in-service training modules support 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): 'School principals, teachers, parents and communities collaborate to enable students to achieve improved literacy and numeracy outcomes' (DFAT, 2018). The purpose of this summary is to provide a brief overview of findings and recommendations from the second year (2021) of the study.

Methodology

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?***

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 and national education stakeholders, and parents and communities. It also includes classroom observation data of Year 2 teachers.

There have been two rounds of qualitative data collection: in 2019 in Malekula and Pentecost, and 2021 in Tanna and Efate. The first two rounds also include quantitative data from the Vanuatu National Student Assessment (VANSTA) in 2017 and 2019, and the Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (PILNA) in 2018[1]. The focus on collecting data from different contexts highlights the range of take-up of reforms across Vanuatu. The table below provides a snapshot of the Year 2 study data sources. A third round in 2022 will include qualitative data collection as well as data from VANSTA 2021 and PILNA 2021.

Quantitative	Qualitative
VANSTA 2019 administered as a census in all six provinces	Case studies in 8 schools in Shefa (Efate) and Tafea (Tanna) - 4 English and 4 French
Covers Year 4, 6 and 8 student cohorts who studied under the new curriculum	44 interviews with principals/head teachers, Year 1 to 4 teachers, school improvement officers, provincial trainers and provincial education officers
Administered in 385 schools for Year 4 and 373 schools for Year 6	13 focus group discussions with parents
	14 classroom observations of *Language and Communication* lessons

Table: Snapshot of 2021 sample

Summary of findings

As presented in this Interim Report 2, there are a number of findings that provide insight into the extent to which teaching practices and student learning outcomes are changing with the implementation of the new curriculum. Although there have been examples of positive progress towards improved teaching quality and student learning outcomes, inconsistent follow-up in teachers' professional learning, unclear use of language in the Years 1 to 4 curriculum, and changes in provincial structure – such as the loss of the provincial trainer (PT) role and unclear definition of the role of school improvement officers (SIOs)[2] – are issues that require continued and dedicated focus. The new curriculum represents significant change to both teaching and assessment practices, particularly taking into account the application of the *National Language Policy*. The complexity of this process means it is likely to take more time for teachers to understand and fully incorporate these new approaches into their teaching practice. Teachers and principals are more knowledgeable about the new curriculum and are applying new methods into their practice. While there are indications of improved student participation and engagement in the classroom evidenced through

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[1] PILNA 2018 analysis has been included only in Interim Report 1 and will be included in the Final Report with PILNA 2021 data.

[2] Following submission of this Interim Report 2 in January 2022, the role of SIOs was also discontinued.

stakeholder perception data, it may be too early to associate these changes with improved student learning given VANSTA 2019 results continue to show high proportions of children in Years 4 and 6 who are not meeting the expected learning outcomes for their grade levels.

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

Results from the 2019 and 2021 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 strengthening application of new pedagogical methods and improved content knowledge of the curriculum. Teachers' guides and curriculum resources have assisted teachers in lesson planning and using more student-centred classroom activities. Findings also show there has been an increase in engagement between students and teachers with teachers stating that the ability to use Bislama or the vernacular in the classroom has been crucial to classroom interaction. When teachers and principals were engaged in specific training courses, particularly related to inclusion, they developed knowledge and skills in engaging all children. However, there is ongoing need for follow-up or refresher training and support. Below are the key findings about changes to teaching quality connected to the introduction of the new curriculum and associated training. These findings are based on perception data reported by respondents, or observed by the research team after two rounds of data collection:

- In both 2019 and 2021, case study respondents indicated that VESP-supported training, including *Effective Learning and Teaching* (ELT), *Ademap Lanwis* and *Language and Communication*, supported improved teacher professional knowledge about content and pedagogies used in the new curriculum, particularly related to improving student engagement and lesson planning.
- Principals reported increased capacity and confidence to focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning in their schools as a result of leadership training.
- 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.
- 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.
- Teachers and principals who participated in disability inclusion courses developed knowledge for engaging disabled children.
- Respondents observed there was little, if any, learning taking place during the COVID-19 disruption.

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

The findings from 2019 and 2021 indicate that the professional learning support received through VESP has helped teachers improve both their practice and ability to implement the new curriculum. There is ongoing consensus, however, on the urgent need for ongoing or follow-up support and feedback. Teachers highlighted the importance of peer support in planning and discussing pedagogies at the school level but said networking with peers at other schools was a challenge due to distance between schools. Concerted efforts need to be made by the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) to build knowledge in communities, especially among parents, about the language policy.

- Support to teachers from provincial officers to implement the new curriculum was inconsistent, especially with the 2020–21 amalgamation of PT and SIO roles.
- 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 to French or English.
- While collaboration within and between schools was valued, there is generally no inter-school collaboration.
- Respondents observed increased levels of student and parental engagement in schools because of the language policy and the new curriculum. While communities generally recognised the benefits of the language policy, they raised concerns due to uneven messaging and application of the policy.

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

The extent to which the VESP investment leads to improved learning outcomes for Vanuatu students remains unclear. Results from VANSTA 2017 and 2019 show there is a high level of variation in student performance across the country. There are still a high proportion of students not meeting the learning outcomes expected at their grade level, particularly in French and English literacy despite the introduction or the new curriculum. Student performance may be related to teachers' professional capacity to master the curriculum and apply the necessary pedagogy to facilitate quality learning. At the same time, 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. In both 2019 and 2021, students were reported to be more engaged and confident under the new curriculum.

- Results from VANSTA 2017 and 2019 show high proportions of children do not meet the expected learning outcomes at their grade level, particularly for English Literacy (35% and 46% of Year 4 students in 2017 and 2019 respectively) and French Literacy (35% of Year 4 and 59% of Year 6 students in 2017, and 43% of Year 4 students in 2019). Performance in numeracy was better for both French- and English-speaking students. Only 14% of Year 4 students did not meet the expected learning outcomes in both 2017 and 2019. For Year 6 students, 26% in 2017 and 22% in 2019 did not meet expected learning outcomes for numeracy. There are widespread differences amongst provinces.
- Interestingly, despite a high variation of student learning outcomes and a generally high level of students not meeting expected outcomes for their grade level, case study teachers reported observed improvements in speaking, reading and numeracy skills of students within their own classrooms.
- Multiple case study respondents observed students were 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.
- Case study data suggests students are happier, more confident, more interested in lessons, and more engaged under the new curriculum. Student-centred strategies and a familiar language were key factors identified by respondents.

Conclusions and recommendations

Key findings from Interim Report 1 pointed to the need for intensive action on ongoing targeted teacher training on the new curriculum with a special emphasis on consistent application of the national language policy, continued deep engagement with parents and communities to support children's learning, and ongoing follow-up with teachers, principals, PTs and SIOs to build on the gains made from the curriculum rollout. The key findings from Interim Report 2 confirm these issues remain crucial and require continued and dedicated focus.

Interim Report 1 documented a range of challenges related to the transition in Years 3 and 4 from Bislama or the vernacular to French or English. Respondents also commented on these challenges, but to a lesser extent, during the second year of data collection. VANSTA is important in understanding trends in student learning in literacy and numeracy in Years 4 and 6. Yet, students are generally not meeting expectations for their year levels and there are wide variations in achievement across the provinces. At the same time, 2019 was the first year that students engaged in the new curriculum from Year 1 participated in VANSTA (as Year 4 students). As emphasised throughout this report, it takes time for teachers to understand and fully incorporate new curriculum approaches into their teaching practice, and these reforms may show improvements in student learning in the coming years. Recommendations for policy consideration include:

Investigate ways to embed ongoing and refresher professional learning for teachers and principals to ensure long-term take up of the curriculum, including the need to support teachers and students during language transition in Years **3 and 4**. Case study respondents said ongoing professional learning and support should be a key priority. Schools are complex and reform takes time. Exploring options to provide ongoing learning for teachers and principals is critical to extend their knowledge and application of effective teaching strategies and how to use resources. Teachers and principals, and particularly temporary teachers, reported they benefited from VESP-supported training, but not all teachers and principals have had access to this training.

Clarify how the role of SIO can support teachers and principals into the future. There has been institutional change at the provincial level, and case study respondents said that inconsistency of support, especially with teaching practice and classroom observations, has been apparent with the amalgamation of the PT and SIO roles. While this was beyond the control of VESP, the loss of specialist PT knowledge in supporting teachers to learn about and implement the new curriculum left a critical gap in the teacher support structure. A priority is to develop strategies to improve SIO knowledge of the new curriculum and strategies to support teachers and principals in implementation.[3]

Support schools to engage with parents and caregivers about how to support children with learning, including support of ongoing community engagement with the curriculum and language policy. Parents and caregivers reported that during school disruption many lack the knowledge and skills to support their children. Teachers and principals need to be provided with advice on how to engage parents to support their children's learning. Closely linked to this is the need to continue to engage with communities and parents to understand the objectives of the new curriculum. Once communities understand these objectives, the majority are supportive of it. It would be worth

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[3] Following submission of this Interim Report 2 in January 2022, the role of SIOs was also discontinued.

investigating high performing schools who have consistently applied the language policy to understand the approaches they have used.

Continue to offer opportunities for teachers and principals to develop learning and skills in gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI). Multiple respondents indicate the importance of inclusive education and the right of every child to access education. Teachers demonstrated awareness about equal treatment of disabled children. This change can be attributed to a range of factors in the curriculum, targeted Government of Vanuatu strategies such as the *National Disability Development Policy (2018-2025)*, and Education Support training delivered by the Australia Pacific Technical College. 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.

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 the context of Vanuatu, the EAS is assessing how VESP Phases I and II, through its support of the Government of Vanuatu's primary education reforms, is making a difference to improving teaching quality and student learning outcomes.

Three reports present the findings at certain points on the Vanuatu study's timeline.

[Vanuatu Interim Report 1](#) presents findings from data collected in two provinces in 2019. This collection focused on primary school teaching practice, the implementation of the new curriculum, and student learning outcomes in 2019. Interim Report 1 recommended the need for: continued targeted teacher training on the new curriculum; consistent application of the language policy; deep engagement with parents and communities to support children's learning; and supported ongoing follow-up with teachers, principals, Provincial Trainers (PTs) and School Improvement Officers (SIOs) to build on the gains made from the curriculum rollout.

Interim Report 2 presents data collected in two additional provinces after VESP Phase II support of schools and the curriculum rollout in Years 1 to 4, and student learning outcomes data from Vanuatu National Student Assessment (VANSTA)[4]. The report identifies key findings and recommendations for policy, programming and research.

A third and final year of data collection and analysis will take place in 2022, allowing for continued detailed investigation of teaching practice and student learning. The Final Report will reflect on the three cycles of data collection and contribute to analysis across the three countries in the study series.

1.1 The Vanuatu Education Support 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 2019–2022 and has been extended for a period of five years.

VESP Phase I focused on supporting 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) ('the language policy'). 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. This rollout reflects the Government of New Zealand's support of the development of a

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[4] Students in Years 4, 6 and 8 sat the VANSTA 2019 on 15th and 16th October 2019. Each student sat a numeracy and literacy paper. The papers were set in the language of instruction for the school (French or English).

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. VESP II coordinates this financial support with the Curriculum Development Unit (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 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 Year 3 in 2018. In order 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* – that were extended over the life of the program. The process for implementation meant that materials were developed the year prior to the rollout for the year level, materials were 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 and COVID-19.

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). 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 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, such as ELT and Ademap Lanwis. Table X outlines the training programs that have been rolled out.

Table 1.1: Overview of new curriculum training delivered from 2014 to 2021

Year	Course	Target group
2014	Effective Learning and Teaching (ELT)	Year 1-3 teachers
2015	Language and Communication Teacher Guide Mathematics Teachers Guide	Year 1-3 teachers Year 1-2 teachers
2016	Language and Communication and Living in our Community Numeracy Instructional Leadership	Year 1-2 teachers Year 2-3 teachers Primary principals
2017	ELT ELT Ademap Lanwis (Language transition)	Primary principals Year 1-6 teachers (not trained in ELT in 2014) Year 1-2 teachers
2018	Instructional Leadership Ademap Lanwis	Primary principals Year 2-3 teachers
2019	Year 4-5 Curriculum Year 4 Teachers Guide	Year 4-5 teachers and principals
2020	Year 5-6 Curriculum	Year 5-6 teachers
2021	Year 5-6 Ademap Lanwis Classroom Based Assessment	Not yet rolled out at time of 2021 data collection

Source: VESP reporting

Previously, the In-service Unit (ISU) was tasked with conducting the training and professional development for the new curriculum, supported by PTs. In 2021, the Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education (VITE) was integrated into the National University of Vanuatu (NUV), and the roles of ISU and PTs were made defunct. Without ISU and PTs readily available, MoET's Curriculum Development Unit and VESP were tasked with identifying SIOs, school principals and key teachers to become PTs to provide regular support to teachers in schools in all provinces for the planned *Classroom-Based Assessment* and *Ademap Lanwis* professional learning programs. This has been a challenge for the program because trainers with suitable skills are sometimes not available due to competing priorities (VESP, 2021).

1.2 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?

1.3 Highlights of VESP-supported change

Results from the 2021 data collection suggest the VESP-supported in-service program has been effective in strengthening elements of teaching quality, curriculum implementation and student learning outcomes.

Changes that can be attributed to VESP in-service support (as presented in Table 1.1) include:

- Improved teacher knowledge and practice related to content and pedagogies used in the new curriculum, in particular student-centred approaches, managing behavioural issues, using teaching guides and developing lesson plans
- Improved teacher-student interactions and student engagement
- Improved teacher capacity to effectively deliver the new curriculum as a result of support from principals, SIOs, PTs and teacher peers
- Strengthened principal knowledge of lesson planning, subject matter and pedagogical approaches used in the new curriculum
- Increased collaboration between principals and teachers, and improved understanding of classroom activities amongst principals
- Increased leadership capacity and confidence to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools.

Changes that can be attributed to VESP support and the new curriculum collectively include:

- Increased levels of confidence and motivation for teaching
- Improved lesson planning and preparation, delivery of learning activities and use of assessment
- Use of new teaching and learning activities, particularly student-centred teaching methods
- Improved awareness of the rights of disabled children, and understanding of classroom strategies for engaging children with disabilities
- Stronger consideration of and catering to a range of student abilities

Changes attributed solely to the new curriculum were primarily related to the language policy.

Annex D provides further detail on the changes perceived and reported by participants, focusing on changes attributed to the new curriculum and/or VESP support.

2. Methodology

2.1 Modified study design

A key feature of the Vanuatu Study is the length of its duration, from 2018 until 2023. The timespan acknowledges the complex nature of teacher development and that sustained change in teaching practice takes time. The Study presents a mixed-methods approach, comprising quantitative data and qualitative case studies conducted by the research team over the period of the Study. Evidence has been collected from teachers, principals, parents, students and education stakeholders over three cycles of data collection across different provinces in Vanuatu.

The Study design was updated in 2020 to account for the global impact of COVID-19 on schools and governments and its associated border closures and travel restrictions. These delayed the data collection originally scheduled for June-July 2020 by one year. Further, schools in some provinces of

Vanuatu were closed for up to two months, not only because of COVID-19 restrictions, but because of Tropical Cyclone Harold. Teacher and principal professional learning opportunities for the curriculum rollout were delayed by the State of Emergency declared between March and April 2020 (VESP, 2020). The late progress on these activities through August 2020 meant that a late 2020 data collection was logistically challenging. However, by June 2021, several VESP-supported activities had restarted, and the program continued to adapt to support requests from MoET (VESP, 2021). The Study was able to engage in a second year of data collection in two new provinces in June-July 2021.

The updated study design maintains the original purpose of the Study and includes opportunities to collect additional data on teaching quality and student learning outcomes. The Study retains its mixed-methods approach and now includes three key data collection sources to provide evidence:

- case study interviews with a range of education stakeholders
- classroom observations in sampled schools
- student learning outcomes data from VANSTA and the Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (PILNA).

Annex B provides details about the Study's instruments and analytic approach.

2.2 Data collection

Quantitative data

The quantitative component of the Study uses Year 4 and Year 6 student data from VANSTA 2017 (reporting year 2018) and VANSTA 2019 (reporting year 2020), which have been analysed for year 2 of the Study.[5]

VANSTA is a national assessment of reading, writing, and numeracy for students in Years 4, 6 and 8, conducted in both French and English depending on the school. It measures the proportions of students who met expected outcomes for their grade level.

The VANSTA data in 2017 and 2019 provide a reference point for student learning. VANSTA 2017 covers student cohorts who were yet to study under the new curriculum. VANSTA 2019 covers 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 in 2016.

Qualitative data

The qualitative case studies involve three data collection points: 2019 and 2021, both completed, and 2022. As a key feature of the Teacher Development Multi-Year Study Series, they provide the opportunity to understand the differences within Vanuatu and across Vanuatu, Lao PDR and Timor-Leste. When the Vanuatu study design was approved in 2018, all key stakeholders agreed that it was a priority to understand the breadth of teacher experience in Vanuatu. Therefore, qualitative data are collected from two different provinces in each Study year.

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[5] Year 4 and Year 6 PILNA data are not included in this reporting period as PILNA was only administered in late 2021 (reporting year 2022). PILNA 2021 data should be available for inclusion in the Study Final Report.

The provinces of Shefa and Tafea were chosen for the case studies series in year 2. The islands of Efate and Tanna were selected for logistical reasons and because of the travel challenges between islands caused by COVID-19 and Tropical Cyclone Harold.

Vanuatu's capital Port Vila is located on Efate, the most populous island in Vanuatu. Many people migrate to Port Vila for work and family, and Bislama is widely spoken across the island. Tanna is the largest island in Tafea and well-known for its volcanoes, particularly Mount Yasur. There are three main vernacular languages, and several dialects spoken in Tanna. In both provinces, schools are managed by a range of Education Authorities and the Government of Vanuatu.

Eight schools, four from each island, were selected based on a set of selection criteria. See also Annex C for further details on the case study sample including demographic tables.

Table 2.1. Case study sample, by selection criteria in 2021

Province	School ID	Language	Authority	VANSTA Performance	VEMIS Enrolment / School Size[6]
Shefa (Efate)	A	English	Government	Low	Very large
	B	English	Government	Mid	Very large
	C	French	Government	High	Very large
	D	French	Government	Mid/Low	Medium
Tafea (Tanna)	E	English	Government	High	Large
	F	English	Government	Mid	Very large
	G	French	Government	Mid/Low	Very large
	H	French	Church	High/Mid	Very large

Stakeholder interviews and classroom observations were the primary data collection methods for the case studies. The case studies are comprised of individual semi-structured interviews with teachers in Years 1 to 4, principals, SIOs, former PTs and Provincial Education Officers. Focus group discussions (FGDs) with parents are also a key feature of the case studies, and unique to the Vanuatu Study. Classroom observations of teachers giving *Language and Communication* lessons in each of the schools visited by the research team were included as an additional data source from year 2 of the Study. These observations focus on teacher practice.

A team of three researchers collected the data in June and July 2021. Translation and transcription of the data were completed by September 2021. Forty-four semi-structured interviews and 13 parent FGDs were completed for the case studies. Interviews and FGDs were conducted in Bislama and recorded and transcribed into English. Fourteen classroom observations were conducted.

2.3 Study limitations

There are some limitations to the Vanuatu study. First is the issue of attribution within a study investigating teaching quality and student learning outcomes. 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

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[6] 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).

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.

Second, the qualitative 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. The ability to extract this level of detail from the investment is an important part of the overall study design. 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. This will require refinement for the final data collection.

Third, while data on student learning outcomes from VANSTA 2019 provide insight into the literacy and numeracy achievement levels of Year 4 and Year 6 students, it is not a purpose-designed survey for this Study. Nevertheless, it provides an important reference point for student learning outcomes as the new curriculum is rolled out to upper primary school and post-primary school year levels.

Fourth, VANSTA 2019 was administered prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and related school closures across the country. Case study data collection took place in 2021 after the school closures. 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.

3. Key findings about teaching quality

The 2021 data collection provided opportunities to understand and capture details about changes in teachers' knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and practices after four years of VESP support for the Years 1 to 4 curriculum rollout.

Results from the 2021 data collection indicate that the VESP-supported in-service program has been effective in strengthening some facets of Year 1 to 4 teachers' knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and practices in line with aspects promoted in the new curriculum that focus on student-centred teaching and use of Bislama or the vernacular in lessons. Many Years 1 to 4 teachers have participated in VESP-supported short training workshops that provide orientation to specific foci of the new curriculum. These specific in-service training programs are discussed in Section 3.1 below (*Finding 1: Teacher professional knowledge*). Overall, Year 1 to 4 teachers are more aware of the new pedagogical approaches, have broadened their range of teaching and learning activities and use of resources, and are engaging more with classroom-based assessment methods as part of their teaching practice.

Regular schooling was disrupted in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with case study schools closing for a period of time ranging from 1 week to 2 months. The inclusion of case study data on the

impact of COVID-19 disruption on teachers and students was part of the 2021 data collection. Unique to the Vanuatu study was the inclusion of data from parent FGDs. Results from the 2021 data collection indicate that despite efforts of teachers and principals to prepare home packages for remote learning, few students were able to complete these. Key challenges included the inability of teachers to effectively introduce new concepts and provide targeted support or monitor students, the inability of parents to assist their children with remote learning, and the lack of resources in students' homes. Annex E provides further data and analysis.

3.1 Findings about teachers' knowledge, beliefs and attitudes

Teacher professional knowledge

With the new curriculum being rolled out, case study teachers were asked to recall which in-service training programs they had participated in. Around one-quarter (7 of 26) of the case study teachers had not participated in any of the training programs (five in Efate and two in Tanna across a mix of grades). The remaining teachers reported they participated in various training programs to different extents, with some only having attended one or two programs, and others attending most. The extent of teacher-participation was higher in Tanna than Efate, with half of the teachers in Tanna (compared to one-fifth in Efate) having attended at least five of the training programs. As was the case in Year 1 of the Study in Malekula and Pentecost, the most widely attended programs by teachers were *ELT* and *Ademap Lanwis*, followed by *Language and Communication Teachers Guide*, and *Mathematics*. Annex A has further information.

In 2019 and 2021, teachers reported these training courses improved their understanding of pedagogical principles in the new curriculum, particularly related to improving student engagement; and, the application of teaching guides in developing lesson plans. Temporary teachers, in particular, reported they found these courses helpful in improving their knowledge. Teachers reiterated the need for follow up workshops to reinforce knowledge.

Beliefs and attitudes towards teaching

In 2019 and 2021, many teachers and principals reported changes in their beliefs and attitudes towards teaching, which resulted in their overall increased confidence and motivation, particularly in engaging students in class, being creative in teaching, and expressing confidence in using a language familiar to students and teachers. Respondents specified that increased student-teacher cooperation and engagement had improved their confidence in teaching the new curriculum.

3.2 Findings about teaching practice

Lesson preparation

The majority of respondents interviewed reported the introduction of the new curriculum, VESP-supported training and teaching guides has helped teachers to improve their preparation and planning for lessons. In the 2021 classroom observations, all teachers were observed to have a lesson plan in place for at least one of their lessons.

Teaching and learning activities

A large number of case study respondents reported using new teaching and learning activities in their classrooms, particularly student-centred teaching methods, and attributed these changes to the new curriculum and VESP-supported training.

Student- centred learning is a focus in the curriculum. Teachers in 2021 reported that learning about using group activities and targeted 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, taking students out of the classroom for 'refresher activities' to aid in motivation, and developing classroom strategies to address behaviours such as bullying.

During classroom observations, case study teachers were observed to have lessons with lots of student activity, including students interacting and working together on learning tasks. While teachers were observed to use a mix of interaction activities, primarily they used whole-class or individual activities. Practice and application activities are generally done by students in pairs or small groups.

The new curriculum encourages teachers to make local connections. During classroom observations some teachers made connections to local context, the local environment and cultural heritage.

Gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI)

In 2019 and 2021, teachers reported that the pedagogies in the curriculum, such as selecting girls and boys to participate in group work together as part of a student-centred approach, encouraged equal participation of boys and girls in class and greater confidence amongst girls.

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*. In 2019 and 2021, three teachers engaged in focused disability inclusion courses and 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.

Language of instruction

In 2019 and 2021, many teachers reported that the ability to speak Bislama or vernacular in the classroom was critical to improving their teaching practice and confidence in implementing the new curriculum. This was reported in both French- and English-speaking schools. However, some teachers continued to introduce French or English in Year 1, a practice that is not aligned with the language policy. During case study observations most Year 2 teachers consistently used Bislama and/or the vernacular during their lessons.

Assessment

In 2019 and 2021, case study teachers reported they used assessment data for a range of purposes, such as recording student progress, producing reports for parents, and identifying students who were struggling. In 2021, many teachers reported using student assessment results as a self-evaluation tool to help modify their teaching practice and work towards optimal student learning

and engagement even though a formal classroom-based assessment course had not been rolled out at the time of data collection in 2021 (VESP 2021). Delivering this training has been complicated by the fact that the roles of appropriately trained PTs no longer exist[7]. In the 2021 classroom observations, all teachers were observed to explicitly check for students' understanding during lessons. However, just over half the teachers were documented to observe students practising or applying what they learnt.

Factors that impede teaching practice

The 2019 and 2021 data collections provided opportunities to understand any factors outside of VESP that impeded teaching practice, and therefore have the potential to influence the success of VESP investments. These factors include:

- Classroom overcrowding leading to teacher exhaustion, classroom management issues, and an inability to effectively respond to a wide range of student abilities.
- Insufficient teacher workforce with temporary and often untrained teachers filling staffing gaps.
- Inadequate access to resources such as teaching guides and materials, limiting teachers' ability to develop and deliver lessons.

3.3 COVID-19 impacts

Impact on teaching and learning

Case study teachers and principals in 2021 reported they had an increased workload to prepare home packages for students. Despite this effort, respondents reported that there was little, if any, learning taking place during the disruption and most students did not complete the home packages. Key challenges identified by respondents included: teachers were unable to effectively introduce new concepts and provide targeted support; teachers were unable to monitor students; and there was a lack of resources in most students' homes. Teachers consistently had to repeat the lessons when students returned to school.

Similar findings relating to the need for more support for schools and students as well as the need for clear guidelines to support home schooling packages were reported in a survey by KoBLE (2020).

Support for teachers

Case study respondents in 2021 reported that limited support was provided to teachers, principals and schools to support remote learning. Case study teachers indicated they worked closely with their teaching peers to develop activities for the home packages.

Several case study principals reported they supported teachers and parents by coordinating the preparation of home packages, facilitating planning meetings with teachers, and sometimes

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[7] The workshop in classroom-based assessment was listed to take place by December 2021, after the data collection for this Interim Report 2. A mid-2021 VESP target was to distribute classroom assessment and reporting workbook materials to all Year 1-6 teachers (VESP, 2021, p. 89).

managing delivery of home packages. Only a small number of case study respondents reported receiving support from ministry or provincial authorities.

Support for parents

Parents that participated in FGDs reported a range of challenges in supporting their children during school closures, particularly those in remote areas where literacy levels are low. Nearly half of the parents said they were busy with work and were unable to support their children. Some parents reported they did not understand the home packages and therefore could not assist their children.

4. Key findings about the implementation of the new curriculum

Results from the 2019 and 2021 data collections indicate that teachers and principals value VESP support of training and provision of resources, but that follow-up support remains important. In 2021, VESP reported it provided professional development primarily for school principals and focused on principal induction and a workshop on operation guidelines for school principals (VESP, 2021, p. 1). Training workshops were also held for SIOs and school inspectors and focused on management, supervision and coordination activities (VESP, 2021, p. 30). Thus was in response to the need for regular monitoring and communications with principals in the provinces (VESP, 2021, p. 10). VESP is also developing a coaching program for Provincial Education Officers (PEOs) and School Improvement Officers (SIOs) focused on engaging schools around literacy improvement strategies (VESP, 2021, p. 1). It is unclear at this point if these initiatives will support improved teaching quality and curriculum implementation.

Receiving support from principals, SIOs, PTs and teacher peers is critical to helping teachers effectively implement the new curriculum. However, the amalgamation of the roles of PTs and SIOs has in year 2 of the Study created challenges for ongoing training and follow up support to schools to facilitate the implementation of the new curriculum. It is unclear what institution will be responsible for ongoing professional development into the future.

In relation to language, the 2019 findings from Malekula and Pentecost indicated that application of the language policy requiring the use of Bislama or the vernacular in Year 1 to 3 of the curriculum was applied unevenly across schools depending on the mix of language groups in some communities. There were also a range of opinions offered by respondents on language of instruction. These 2019 findings are largely similar in the 2021 data collection and analysis for Efate and Tanna. Despite this, data from both years of the Study point to greater levels of student and parent engagement in school because of the language policy and the new curriculum. Annex F provides further data and analysis.

4.1 Findings about curriculum resources and materials

Teachers' guides and curriculum support materials

Case study principals and teachers reported that the teachers' guides and other curriculum support materials provided direction for lesson planning and clear learning outcomes. At the same time,

some case study respondents reported challenges associated with limited access to accompanying resources[8]. The need for further training to support teachers to implement the new curriculum and use materials effectively was highlighted by a range of respondents.

Localisation

Many case study respondents reported that the ability to use local contexts, culture and the local environment facilitated students' learning and participation in lessons. Using elements from local contexts that students were familiar with improved their learning and enjoyment of school. In both 2019 and 2021, case study respondents acknowledged the importance of parents and community in supporting local aspects of the curriculum.

Use of resources

During classroom observations, teachers used a range of resources during lessons that provides insight into how resources in the new curriculum are used. The most frequently used resources were storybooks, a blackboard with pointer, and songs. Some classes used student textbooks, student notebooks and small blackboards.

Classroom setup

In 2021, all observed classrooms had space for whole-class activities, and most classrooms had grouped tables and chairs for students. Classroom setup provides insight into whether teachers can facilitate a range of teaching and learning activities. Most classrooms had areas to display students' work. One classroom had a dedicated reading area.

4.2 Findings about teacher support

Support from principals

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* training[9]. In 2021, principals gave examples of specific support for teachers including facilitating peer learning opportunities for teachers, strengthened collaboration with other schools, and a better understanding of the curriculum in order to support teachers.

Compared to 2019, however, only a small number of case study principals in 2021 reported participating in *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

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[8] 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.

[9] 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.

teaching and leadership in their schools. The UNICEF-supported pilot was rolled out with VESP support nationwide in 2016 as *Instructional Leadership*.

Some principals also noted that their capacity to support teachers with implementing the new curriculum would be strengthened if they participated in the training programs. The extent of principal participation in new curriculum training varied amongst the 2021 case study principals. Of the 10 case study principals, two newly appointed principals (Efate) reported they had not attended any new curriculum training. Four principals had only attended one or two programs, and three principals at least three programs.

Provincial level support of teachers and principals

In 2019 and 2021, teachers and principals reported they valued training and feedback from SIOs and PTs but said there was rarely follow-up. In 2021, case study respondents reported that provincial level support for implementing the new curriculum was even more inconsistent in terms of school visits, especially with the 2020-21 amalgamation of PT and SIO roles. SIOs reported the challenges associated with increased demands on their position, as well as a need for more knowledge on how to support curriculum implementation given SIOs had only been included in new curriculum training over the past two years. A lack of funding for travel was also cited in 2019 and 2021 as a key barrier to follow up support to schools.

School level support

In 2019 and 2021, case study respondents reported that collaboration within and between schools was important in supporting teachers and principals to implement the new curriculum. However, case study teachers reported that there was generally no inter-school collaboration because principals do not initiate meetings and the distance between schools is too great.

4.3 Findings about language

Student and parent engagement

In 2019 and 2021, case study respondents reported there was increased student and parental engagement in schools because of the language policy and the new curriculum. One of the most important changes brought by the curriculum is the improved interaction between students and teachers. Respondents also stated that they had to manage a wide range of opinions about language from parents.

In 2021, case study respondents reported several parents were more involved in helping students with homework because it is now in a language they can understand.

Factors that impede implementation of the new curriculum

The 2019 and 2021 data collections provided opportunities to understand any factors outside of VESP that impeded implementation of the new curriculum, and therefore have the potential to influence the success of VESP investments. A key factor identified was the inconsistent application of the language policy between church and government education authorities.

5. Key findings about student learning outcomes

Interim Report 2 provides the opportunity to include data from VANSTA 2019, including capturing learning outcomes data from student cohorts who have engaged in the new curriculum. While VANSTA is a secondary source of data on student learning outcomes for this Study, it provides insights into how Year 4 and Year 6 students are performing over time.

This section 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 2019 and 2021 qualitative case study data 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.

Overall, the VANSTA 2019 results continue to indicate widespread differences in student achievement in literacy and numeracy between provinces with Tafea and Torba lagging behind other provinces. Girls also continue to outperform boys in both literacy and numeracy. In general, the results do not indicate much change between 2017 and 2019, with students in Years 4 and 6 performing at similar levels in Numeracy and Literacy. The one area where there was a large improvement between 2017 and 2019 was in French Literacy for Year 6 where only 44 per cent of students were meeting or exceeding expectations in 2017 compared to 71 per cent in 2019.

For the perception data collected through the case studies, in line with the findings from 2019, respondents in 2021 said that students were more interested and engaged in the new curriculum, but there was little agreement on whether use of Bislama or the vernacular improved academic outcomes, especially with reading and writing. As has been discussed, the new curriculum represents significant change to both teaching and assessment practices, and while there are instances of positive progress, it is likely teachers will need more support before they can consolidate their teaching practices and make an impact on student learning. Further, while teachers have reported increased student engagement there is often a gap in the timing of a reform and subsequent reflections on nationwide assessments.

However, many teachers in 2019 and 2021 reported students speak more in class and respond to teachers' questions than before the new curriculum was implemented. In 2021, many teachers reported that the use of student-centred pedagogies had improved student confidence and engagement. Teachers reported that VESP-supported training and the new curriculum helped them acquire these skills. Annex G provides further data and analysis.

5.1 Findings about Year 4 and Year 6 student performance

Overall Performance

Results from VANSTA 2017 and 2019 showed that there are high proportions of children who did not meet the expected learning outcomes at their grade level, particularly for English and French

Literacy. Performance in numeracy across the two assessments was better, particularly for Year 4 students.

Overall, English literacy achievement declined in Year 4 and Year 6 from 2017 to 2019. Achievement was also lower in Year 4 French literacy compared to 2017. However, there was a large improvement in Year 6 French literacy in 2019 in all three domains of language elements, reading comprehension, and writing.

For numeracy overall, in 2019 fewer Year 6 students met or exceeded the minimum standards compared to Year 4 students, which was the same as in 2017. Year 4 and Year 6 numeracy performance levels for students tested in English and French were similar. See Figure 5.1 below.
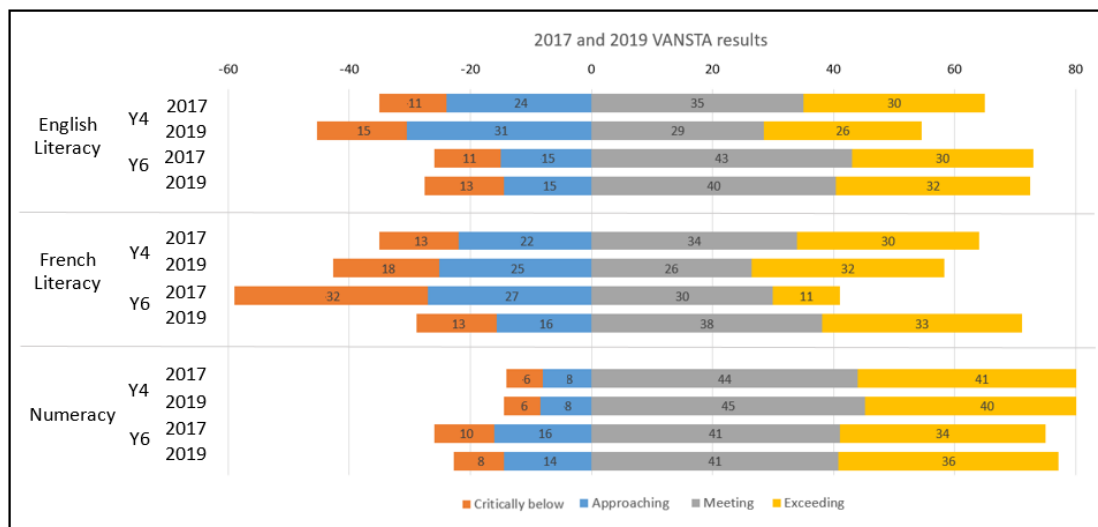
Figure 5.1. Summary of VANSTA 2017 and 2019 results for each domain

Performance by province

VANSTA 2017 and 2019 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, with students in Tafea and Torba often having lower performance. Year 4 students in Malampa performed at similar levels to the national results but were underperforming in both languages by Year 6.

Performance by gender

VANSTA 2017 and VANSTA 2019 and PILNA 2018 indicated that girls generally outperform boys at both year levels in literacy and numeracy.

5.2 Findings about perceptions of student learning outcomes

Literacy

In 2019 and 2021, multiple case study respondents observed students were more talkative and expressive in class, and able to speak more coherently and clearly in Bislama or their vernacular. Students were also able to quickly respond to teachers' questions. Students were confident in engaging with one another in the classroom.

In 2021, many respondents noted improvement in their students' reading and writing skills because of some VESP interventions. In 2019 and 2021, respondents reported improvement in students' reading skills as a result of the language of the new curriculum and accompanying resources.

On the other hand, some case study respondents in 2019 and 2021 reported that the transition to English or French in Year 4 presented challenges. Some teachers and parents reported the transition had a negative impact on students' reading, writing and spelling skills.

It's important to note there is a gap between these perceptions of student literacy outcomes and the VANSTA results. The VANSTA 2017 and 2019 shows students in Year 4 and Year 6 are not meeting minimum expected learning outcomes in English and French literacy. It is possible there is a gap between teachers' understanding of what progressing as expected means and the new curriculum expectations as assessed through VANSTA. At the same time, the new curriculum represents significant change to both teaching and assessment practices. It is likely to take more time and support for teachers to understand and fully incorporate these new approaches into their teaching practice, before they translate into improved student learning outcomes.

Numeracy

In 2019 and 2021, case study respondents reported that resources in the new curriculum supported and even improved students' understanding and learning in numeracy.

In 2021, some case study teachers reported that use of the vernacular had helped students understand key concepts in numeracy.

Performance in numeracy improved slightly across the two VANSTA assessments, particularly for Year 6 students.

Participation and interest in school

In 2019 and 2021, case study data suggested that students are more interested in lessons and participate actively in lessons. Respondents noted that a combination of student-centred strategies such as group work and students being able to speak in a familiar language were key factors in improving student participation.

Student wellbeing

In both 2019 and 2021, multiple case study respondents reported students appeared happier, more confident and more engaged under the new curriculum. Many also reported students seemed to interact better with each other and their teachers and were not scared of teachers. Respondents perceived increased student confidence because the curriculum and activities were taught in a language students and teachers are familiar with.

Student attendance

As in 2019, case study respondents in 2021 reported that factors such as travel distance from home to school, the weather and flooding affected student attendance. COVID-19 school closures also affected student attendance in 2020. Despite contextual challenges that impacted regular attendance, case study respondents suggested elements of the new curriculum, such as resources and classroom activities, encouraged students' interest in lessons and learning, and therefore facilitated attendance.

Classroom environment

In 2021, case study teachers were observed to primarily have classroom environments that were either 'cooperative and supportive' or 'compliant'. 'Cooperative and supportive' environments are more likely to indicate the presence of positive student attitudes and dispositions towards learning. Two of the eight Year 2 teachers observed had 'unruly' classroom environments with significant student management and behaviour issues.

Parent support of students

Case study parent respondents in 2021 reported it was important to work together with their communities and schools to support the development of their children.

Parents reported that providing homework support for their children was critical. The curriculum's language changes (Bislama or the vernacular) encouraged more parents to help their children with homework.

Engagement with parents

Case study parent respondents in 2019 and 2021 reported that information disseminated through national campaigns, and government and school communities working together, were key factors in understanding the importance of sending children to school.

Schools were making efforts to engage with parents and caregivers through information sessions at the school or through advice about how to support children with their homework.

Factors that impede student learning

The 2019 and 2021 data collections provided opportunities to understand any factors outside of VESP that impeded student learning, and therefore have potential to influence the success of VESP investments. These factors include:

- Some home contexts such as limited food or unsettled homes that affect student engagement in class
- Some community contexts such as cultural events that require students to be away from school for extended periods of time
- Inadequate or damaged infrastructure such as the lack of a school library or experiencing cyclone damage to library resources

6. Summary analysis and recommendations

This Study has provided the opportunity to investigate teaching quality, implementation of the new curriculum and student learning outcomes in Vanuatu over two rounds of data collection. Interim Report 1 presented findings collected in Malampa (Malekula) and Penama (Pentecost) provinces in 2019. Interim Report 2 presents findings from Shefa (Efate) and Tafea (Tanna) provinces from the second round of data collection in 2021, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. It also presents learning outcomes data from student cohorts who have engaged in the new curriculum via VANSTA 2019. A third round of data collection is planned for 2022.

6.1 Teaching quality and curriculum implementation

Insights from the 2021 data collection

- As in 2019, case study principals and teachers valued VESP-supported training and reported the courses improved teacher knowledge related to content and pedagogical methods. Teachers' guides and other curriculum support materials also provided an important source of direction for lesson planning and learning outcomes.
- In 2019 and 2021, many teachers reported that the ability to use Bislama or vernacular in the classroom was a factor in improving their teaching practice and confidence in implementing the new curriculum. At the same time, some schools continued to introduce French or English in Year 1, which is not aligned with the language policy.
- In 2021, the role of PTs and SIOs were combined due to the amalgamation of VITE into the National University of Vanuatu (NUV). In previous years, 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. Given the PT role no longer exists, there is now a vacuum in knowledge and a critical gap in the teacher support structure.
- Government policies focused on disability inclusion and support from VESP have enabled teachers to develop specialist knowledge in disability inclusion and professional certification in *Inclusive Education*. In 2019 and 2021, teachers and principals who had 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 and limited resources are constraints in implementing inclusive classroom practices.
- During school closures related to COVID-19, there was limited support provided to teachers, principals and schools to implement remote learning. Teachers and principals were often left on their own to develop home packages for students. Few parents were able to support their children to complete the home packages.
- In both 2019 and 2021, case study respondents acknowledged the importance of parents and community in supporting local aspects of the curriculum, and the need for more parents to be engaged in their children's learning.

These findings highlight the complex interface between context, curriculum and teaching, and the important role that language plays in implementation of the new curriculum. This is highlighted in the following vignette.

The complex intersection of language, the curriculum and teaching in Tanna

There are a number of vernaculars and dialects in Tanna. One of the case study schools in the 2021 data collection encompasses the complexities of using the local vernacular in the classroom, the lack of access to vernacular resources, and availability of trained teachers to teach the vernacular. While the school principal has a diploma in teaching, the temporary teacher who teaches a multigrade Year 3 and 4 class has not been able to access any curriculum training. Years 3 and 4 at the school are also transition years to French.

While the school has been provided with the curriculum and resources in Bislama, no one in the community is familiar with Bislama. The teacher reported that she must first translate reading books from Bislama into the local vernacular, and then she translates the books into French. She said this

process is 'complicated' and 'difficult'. In the classroom she said they communicate in vernacular but write in French. At the same time, she noted increased participation by her students in class because of the use of the vernacular.

The Tafea PEO noted the range of languages in Tanna, and that often temporary teachers were the only ones who can teach the early primary years because of their knowledge of the vernacular. The PEO emphasised the need for improved bridging classes in Years 3 and 4 to support students in transitioning to French or English.

VANSTA performance for the school in 2017 indicated students were some of the lowest performing in Tanna in Years 4 and 6. Year 4 students at the school achieved national average performance in literacy and numeracy, and the Year 6 students performed below the national average in both literacy and numeracy. Students who took VANSTA 2019 were the first to have experienced the new curriculum from Year 1 (rolled out in 2016). The results for both Year 4 and Year 6 in literacy and numeracy VANSTA 2019 showed no change from 2017.

The majority of teachers and principals reported on the value of knowledge and skills gained from training courses, but there is limited opportunity for ongoing professional learning to improve on and embed learning. A risk identified in the 2019 data collection was that the absence of ongoing and follow-up training limits the effective long-term impact of the investment for schools. This risk continues and is particularly stark given the PT role no longer exists.

A particularly encouraging aspect of the data collections in both 2019 and 2021 was an increasing focus on training for teachers in disability inclusion. Continued program focus on enabling teachers and principals to access this specialist training should be continued.

Recommendations for policy and programming

Investigate ways to continue ongoing and refresher professional learning for teachers and principals to ensure long-term embedding of the curriculum

Without doubt ongoing professional learning in areas to support improved teaching practices and implementation and embedding of the new curriculum was identified by the majority of case study respondents as a key priority. While this Study recognises the complex challenges of context and government resourcing priorities, exploring options to provide ongoing learning for teachers and principals is critical to extend their knowledge and application of effective teaching strategies and how to use the resources. Teachers and principals, and particularly temporary teachers, reported they benefited from VESP-supported training and the use of associated curriculum resources. Not all teachers and principals have been able to attend all the training programs.

In both 2019 and 2021, not all teachers delivering the new curriculum have had access to the full suite of training. In addition to this, the lack of ongoing and follow-up training limits the effective long-term impact of the investment for schools, risking any learning gains made in the early years and school and community support for the curriculum. A key area of need is the support teachers in Years 3 and 4 who are teaching students in the language transition years. Principals, teachers, PTs and SIOs noted that while the new curriculum has helped support students' learning, they reported the transition year from Bislama to English or French has not been well supported in the new curriculum.

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. Embedding teacher development into systems is critical to sustaining and integrating gains from the initial training supported by VESP.

SIOs and principals can play an important role in leading ongoing professional learning and collaboration in schools through teaching working groups and peer learning. But SIOs and principals need to be equipped to do this, such as through training on coaching and mentoring methods. The role of SIOs is discussed further in the next recommendation. Accountability measures to set up these measures and recurrent funding to facilitate travel and materials is an important for sustainability of these initiatives.

Clarify how the role of SIO can support teachers and principals into the future

Case study respondents reported that provincial level support is inconsistent, especially with amalgamation of PT and SIO roles. In 2019 and 2021, teachers and principals reported they valued training and feedback from SIOs and PTs but there was rarely follow-up. In 2021, the role of PTs was amalgamated to the responsibilities of SIOs. This was a governance decision beyond the control of VESP, but the loss of specialist PT knowledge in supporting teachers to learn about and implement the new curriculum has left a critical gap in the teacher support structure. Further, SIOs are managing dual roles of administration and supporting the curriculum rollout without additional funding for travel, and often without the training and background that was provided by PTs associated with ISU.

Connected to the previous recommendation, a priority is to develop strategies to improve SIO knowledge of the new curriculum and ability to support teachers and principals in implementing the new curriculum, including resources and funding.

Support ongoing community engagement on the new curriculum and language policy

A key area that requires focus is clear application of the language policy across provinces, and SIOs have responsibility in managing this at the school level. In 2019 and 2021, case study respondents reported increased engagement in school by students, and even parents, because of the language policy and the new curriculum. At the same time, teachers and principals reported that they had to manage a wide range of opinions about language in Years 1 to 4 from parents.

It would be useful to continue to explore ways to provide follow up information sessions for communities about the changes in the new curriculum and the use of Bislama and the vernacular in Years 1 to 4. Evidence indicates that once communities and parents understood the objectives of the new curriculum, the majority were supportive of it. Efforts need to go towards building in SIOs a clear understanding of the language policy so that they can facilitate community engagement.

Continue to offer opportunities for teachers and principals to develop learning and skills in GEDSI

Multiple case study respondents from both provinces in 2021 highlighted the importance of inclusive education and the right of every child to access education, with many teachers demonstrating an improved awareness about equal treatment of disabled children. This finding was also apparent in one province from the 2019 data collection.

This change can be attributed to a range of factors including the new curriculum, targeted Government of Vanuatu strategies such as the *National Disability Inclusive Development Policy* (2018-2025), and Education Support training delivered by the Australia Pacific Technical College. In

2020-2021, 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 that specialised knowledge about GEDSI can improve the learning outcomes of students with special needs.

Develop a strategy to address extended school disruptions and support school transition to remote learning inclusive of pandemic setting

COVID-19 revealed a gap in support for teachers, principals and parents to facilitate children's learning during disruption. During school closures related to COVID-19, there was limited support provided to teachers, principals and schools to support remote learning. Teachers were often left on their own to develop home packages for students. Developing a nationally agreed strategy supported with adequate resources for remote education will help schools to consistently deliver education services to students during school closures.

Support schools to engage with parents and caregivers about how to support children with learning

Parents and caregivers were also left without knowledge about how to support their children during the school closures. Teachers and principals need to be provided with advice on how to engage parents to support their children's learning.

Foundational literacy and numeracy skills start in the home. Parents have a role to play in providing a stimulating environment for their children and developing early literacy and numeracy skills. While parents do not need to have high levels of literacy to do this, practical advice from teachers and principals on activities that help develop their short-term memory, oral language and early literacy and numeracy skills would help with empowering parents. For example, parents can play games, count small collections, tell stories and have frequent conversations with their child.

6.2 Student learning outcomes

Insights from the 2021 data collection

- The results from VANSTA 2017 and 2019 show that there is a high proportion of children not meeting the learning outcomes expected at their grade level, particularly for English and French Literacy, and the data indicates achievement levels have declined except for Year 6 French Literacy in 2019. Performance in numeracy across the two assessments is better, particularly for Year 4 students.
- VANSTA 2019 results also show there continues to be differences in student achievement between provinces, and girls continue to generally outperform boys. Students in Tafea, Torba and in some cases Malampa, were often performing below national level results.
- In 2019 and 2021, multiple case study respondents observed students were more talkative and expressive in class. Teachers were divided on improvement in students' reading and writing skills as a result of the new curriculum – some noted improvement, while others reported a negative impact on these skills during the transition to English or French in Year 4.
- In both 2019 and 2021, students were reported to appear happier, more confident and more engaged under the new curriculum. Many also reported students interacted better with their teachers. It is unclear whether this is teachers' increased use of student-centred pedagogies, learning in a language they are familiar with, or a combination of both.

- In 2019 and 2021, teachers reported they use assessment data for a range of purposes. Multiple teachers in 2021 also reported they use student assessment results as a self-evaluation tool and to modify their teaching practice to ensure optimal student learning and engagement.
- Parents are an important source of support for students, and parent respondents in 2021 reported that they need to work together with their communities and schools to support the development of their children, and with homework.

Recommendations for policy and programming

Target interventions for underachieving groups

Multiple case study respondents from both provinces highlighted the importance of inclusive education and the right of every child to access education. VANSTA 2017 and 2019 data indicate that girls outperform boys in both literacy and numeracy and in both Years 4 and 6, and that certain provinces are lagging. Additional teacher and student interventions to support boys and the lowest performing students need to be considered. Detailed information about what students know and can do is essential for informing systems-level and classroom-level strategies to improve learning and reduce inequity. To inform systems-level strategies, further research is needed to understand the factors that are associated with underperformance as a precursor to designing specific interventions. This is also what is needed to understand boys' underperformance and why students in certain provinces are consistently lagging.

Classroom-based assessment data can be used to help teachers develop strategies that target students' individual learning needs.

Continue to invest in large-scale learning assessments to monitor the longer-term impact of curricula changes to inform policymaking

Given this report presents the early student learning outcomes of the first cohort's experience under the new curriculum reforms, monitoring needs to continue over the next few years to fully understand policy implications. The 2019 VANSTA results and perceptions of student learning outcomes in French and English literacy suggest ongoing monitoring is needed to fully understand the impact of the language policy and the new curriculum on learning, and how the changes are being implemented in schools.

Continue to support the upskilling of teachers and principals to use and understand the results from classroom-based assessments and large-scale learning assessments

Classroom-based assessment data can help teachers and principals to understand where students are at in their learning to develop strategies that target their individual learning needs. One significant theme that emerged from teaching quality in 2021 was the way in which teachers reported using assessment. They use assessment both to understand their students' progress and as a means of self-evaluation to improve their own pedagogy to improve student learning.

Findings in 2021 indicate that some provinces offer support to teachers based on evidence of student learning outcomes from VANSTA. For example, one PEO spoke extensively about how his province offered a workshop to teachers in each zone on how to improve their practice based on evidence from VANSTA and PILNA. VESP responded to the request by sending experts to provide training in phonics. This has formed the basis for training across the province – supporting teachers to identify student learning issues and finding activities to help students learn. Lifting teaching and

principal capacity in this area is especially important. Additional training on assessment, interpretation of learning data, and the design of remedial strategies should be resourced.

Continue to support the use of student-centred pedagogies in class with the aim to encourage student engagement in learning and teacher self-reflection on practice

Findings from 2019 and 2021 indicate that students are more engaged in lessons and perception data indicates students enjoy learning through a range of student-centred activities. The change in student-teacher interaction because of pedagogies in the new curriculum has increased teacher motivation and student engagement in learning. Teachers reported they used assessment data to record student progress, produce reports for parents, and identify students who are struggling. Additionally, as discussed above, a number of teachers in 2021 reported that they used assessment as a means of self-evaluation in order to improve their teaching practice and support students' learning.

Continuing to support these practices through ongoing professional learning will help refine and embed the delivery of student-centred pedagogies in the classroom, to further improve student engagement.

7. Conclusions and next steps

As presented in this Interim Report 2, there are several findings that provide insight into the extent to which teaching practices and student learning outcomes are changing with the implementation of the new curriculum. Although there have been examples of positive progress towards improved teaching quality and student learning outcomes, inconsistent follow-up in teachers' professional learning, unclear use of language in the Years 1 to 4 curriculum, and changes in provincial structure – such as the loss of the PT role and unclear definition of role of SIO – are issues that require continued and dedicated focus.

The findings included in Interim Report 2 reflect and build on those reporting in Interim Report 1. To highlight, the first Interim Report also emphasised the need to support teachers, principals and SIOs with ongoing and follow-up training to build on the gains made from the curriculum rollout. Many teachers and principals have not had access to the full suite of VESP-supported training, and it was recommended an audit be conducted of which teachers and principals had received particular types of training. One area of opportunity is further support of teachers with students in the language transition Years 3 and 4. Both reports encourage continuing endeavours to ensure consistent application of the language policy, especially engaging with parents and communities in both supporting their understanding of the curriculum and how to support their children's learning.

In 2022 there will be a third and final round of qualitative data collection, with interviews and classroom observations taking place in a new sample of case study schools. The data collection will involve capturing the perspectives and experiences of Year 1 to 4 teachers, principals, SIOs, PEOs, parents/caregivers and national education stakeholders as the curriculum rollout progresses.

The data collected will provide further evidence on which to ascertain the extent to which VESP II supports and encourages improved teaching quality and student learning outcomes in Vanuatu. The Final Report will reflect on the three cycles of data collection and contribute to analysis across the

three countries in the Teacher Development Multi-Year Study Series – Lao PDR, Vanuatu and Timor-Leste. PILNA 2021 data should be available for inclusion in the Study Final Report.

To read Interim Report 1 please visit the [DFAT website](#).

Annex A: Timeline

		2015	2016				2017				2018				2019				2020				2021			
		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																			▓	▓					
	School closures - TC Harold - varied																									
	VANSTA									▒								▒								▒
	PILNA	▒												▒												
	CS data collection														▒	▒								▒	▒	

Annex B: Instruments and analytic approach

Annex B provides additional information about the quantitative and qualitative instruments and analytical approach used.

Quantitative – Vanuatu Standardised Test of Achievement (VANSTA)

VANSTA is a reading, writing, and numeracy test for students in Years 4, 6 and 8 to measure the proportion of students who were meeting expected outcomes for their grade level. It is conducted in both French and English depending on the school, and administered nationally in Vanuatu. VANSTA was developed by staff from the Examination and Assessment Unit (EAU) and Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) alongside teachers in Vanuatu. The VANSTA 2019 was administered as a census to all students in Years 4, 6 and 8. VANSTA 2017 data was included in the Study's first Interim Report. Students participating in both VANSTA 2017 and 2019 have been matched to compare achievement in this Interim Report 2.

The VANSTA data in 2017 and 2019 provides a reference point for student learning. VANSTA 2017 covers student cohorts who were yet to study under the new curriculum. VANSTA 2019 covers student cohorts who studied under the new curriculum. These student cohorts include Year 1 students, who were part of the first curriculum rollout in 2016.

Qualitative

The qualitative data contributes to our understanding of the impact of VESP in the three areas of teaching quality, curriculum implementation and student learning. The case studies are comprised of individual semi-structured interviews with teachers in years 1 to 4, their principals, SIOs, former PTs and PEOs, and FGDs with parents.

Classroom observations of Year 2 *Language and Communication* lessons were added to the data collection methodology in 2021. The classroom observation tool was purposefully designed to capture information relevant to this teacher development study, and aligned with the overall Multi-Year Teacher Development Study of the three countries. It included four main sections: 1) Background information (details including school, teacher, year, lesson time); 2) Pre-lesson tasks (details including lesson number, lesson plan, notes related to lesson preparation); 3) Lesson observation template (details of direct observations during the lesson, including items in three foci areas – student-centred activity, formative assessment, inclusiveness); 4) Post-lesson tasks (details including resources for Language and Communication lessons, classroom set up, classroom environment, additional notes to inform understanding of the lesson).

A team of three researchers (grouped into pairs of one lead researcher and one supporting researcher) collected the data in June/July 2021. Translation and transcription of the data was completed by September 2021. Forty-four semi-structured interviews and 13 parent FGDs were completed for the case studies. Interviews and FGDs were conducted in Bislama and recorded and transcribed into English for analysis.

While the research team was very familiar with the process and content of stakeholder interviews and FGDs, the classroom observations were a new method. The research team was trained in the

data collection methods in late May 2021 via a two-day workshop on MSTeams. The researchers were also able to conduct a short pilot in a Port Vila school for classroom observations. The research team conducted 14 classroom observations of Year 2 *Language and Communication* lessons in eight schools (four in Tanna and four in Shefa).

ACER conducted a detailed analysis of the interview transcripts. The ACER team used QSR NVivo 12 Pro to code the interview data and align with themes identified in the Conceptual Framework (ACER, 2017).

ACER then analysed the classroom observations. This involved reviewing the contextual information recorded by researchers, creating observation maps by theme (interactions, pedagogy, gender, inclusivity), undertaking quantitative analysis of theme activities observed across the duration of lessons, and reviewing records of the classroom environment. ACER developed the visual displays of the data in an attempt to understand and represent changes over the Study period.

Further details about methodology can be found in the 2019 Interim Report 1.

Annex C: Case study sample

This Annex C provides more detail about the case study sample for Year 2 of the study, including the process for selecting provinces and schools, and details about the respondents.

For Year 2 of the case study series, two provinces were selected. As per the process in Year 1, ACER liaised with DFAT Port Vila Post to select the provinces of Shefa and Tafea, with the islands of Efate and Tanna the focus for fieldwork. As the research team was based in Port Vila, Efate and Tanna were selected based on accessibility and ease of logistics due to travel challenges between islands because of COVID-19 and Tropical Cyclone Harold.

Vanuatu's capital Port Vila is located on Efate, the most populous island in Vanuatu. Many people migrate to Port Vila for work and family, and Bislama is widely-spoken across the island. Tanna is the largest island in Tafea and well-known for its volcanoes, particularly Mount Yasur. There are three main vernacular languages, and a number of dialects spoken in Tanna. In both provinces, schools are managed by a range of Education Authorities and the Government of Vanuatu.

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 per zone within 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 2017 VANSTA[10].

Schools were then selected to account for:

- VANSTA to obtain a mix of high and low performance in VANSTA 2017
- language of instruction to include a mix of Anglophone and Francophone schools.

Table C.1 provides information about the eight case study schools. The majority of schools selected are classified in VEMIS as 'very large', and this was because of logistics and location, including ease of access and budget.

Table C.1. Case study sample, by selection criteria in 2021

Province	School ID	Language	Authority	VANSTA Performance	VEMIS Enrolment / School Size[11]
Shefa (Efate)	A	English	Government	Low	Very large
	B	English	Government	Mid	Very large
	C	French	Government	High	Very large
	D	French	Government	Mid/Low	Medium
Tafea (Tanna)	E	English	Government	High	Large
	F	English	Government	Mid	Very large
	G	French	Government	Mid/Low	Very large
	H	French	Church	High/Mid	Very large

[10] At the time of sampling in April 2021, ACER did not have access to VANSTA 2019 data.
[11] 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).

Table C.2. Case studies interview participants, by province in 2021

Interview participants	Tanna	Efate	Total
Principals/head teachers	4	5	9
Year 1 to 4 teachers	12	14	26
SIO	3	1	4
PT	3		3
PEO	1	1	2
Parent FGD	6	7	13

As Table C.2 shows, 44 respondents were interviewed (9 principals/head teachers, 26 teachers, 4 SIOs, 3 PTs and 2 PEOs) and 13 parent FGDs were conducted. Some parent FGDs were mixed male and female, while some were single-sex FGDs. The following section describes some key characteristics of the respondents, and further information is provided in Table C.3.

Principals/head teachers

Case study principals (4 female, 5 male) had on average worked for seven years as a principal, with the range from one to 12 years. Their years of teaching experience ranged from 14 to 31 years. One of the principals had a Master of Education, one had a Bachelor of Primary Education, with the remaining interviewed having attained a teaching diploma or certificate.

Teachers

Case study teachers (20 female, 6 male) had on average 15 years of teaching experience, ranging from three to 32 years. Only four teachers had five years or less of teaching experience. Four teachers held a teaching diploma, one teacher is currently undertaking their diploma, and 11 held a teaching certificate. Ten teachers (8 in Tanna, 2 in Efate) reported they had no teaching qualification, and, most of these teachers also reported they were temporary teachers. Three teachers had completed a Certificate III in Education Studies, but this was not included as a *teaching* qualification.

School Improvement Officers (SIOs)

SIO positions replaced Zone Curriculum Advisor (ZCA) positions in 2018. Two of the four SIOs interviewed held a teaching certificate, one a diploma and one attended the Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education (VITE). They all worked in various positions as teachers, principals and two previously worked as ZCAs.

Provincial Trainers (PTs)

Two of the PTs interviewed held a teaching certificate, and two held a diploma. All three had teaching experience, and two worked previously as ZCAs.

Table C.3. Case study participants' qualifications, experience and training participation

PRINCIPALS	EFATE						TANNA			
	A	B1	B2	C1	C2	D	E	F	G	H
Qualification	Cert	Mast	Cert	Dip	Dip		Dip	Bach	Dip	Dip
Also currently teaching? Which grades?										G3
Years of experience (principal)	12	1	-	2	2		Many	12	7	12
Years of experience (teaching)	14	18	16	21	-		31	23	15	21
New curriculum training participation*										
None		X		X						
Most/all (5+)								X		X
Some (3-4)									X	
Minimal (1-2)	X		X		X		X			

Note: Participation is indicative only as participants were asked to recall training programs they had participated in, not review a checklist of training programs.

TEACHERS IN EFATE	A1	A2	A3	B1	B2	B3	B4	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	D1	D2
Qualification														
Temp.			X											
None	X		X											
Cert.				X	X	X		X	X		X	X		X
Dip.		X					X			X			X	

TEACHERS IN EFATE	A1	A2	A3	B1	B2	B3	B4	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	D1	D2
Grade(s) teaching now	G1	G2	G3	G1	G2	G3	G4	G1	G3	G2	G4	G4	G3/4	G1/2
Teaching exp (years)	19	12	4	21	14	22	3	10	21	6	32	25	9	22
New curriculum training participation*														
None		X				X	X			X			X	
Most/all (5+)				X					X			X		
Some (3-4)			X		X			X			X			X
Minimal (1-2)	X													

TEACHERS IN TANNA	E1	E2	E3	E4	F1	F2	F3	F4	G1	H1	H2	H3
Qualification												
Temp.		X	X					X		X		
None	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X		
Cert.				X					X		X	X
Dip.												
Grade(s) teaching now	G3	G4	G2	G1	G1	G2	G3	G4	G3/4	G1	G2	G4
Teaching exp (years)	16	4	13	16	11?	9	9	5	7	30	22	14
New curriculum training participation*												
None									X	X		

TEACHERS IN TANNA	E1	E2	E3	E4	F1	F2	F3	F4	G1	H1	H2	H3
Most/all (5+)	X	X	X	X		X					X	
Some (3-4)					X							
Minimal (1-2)							X	X				X

SIOs and PTs	S1	S2	S3	S4	PT1	PT2	PT3
Qualification	Cert	Dip	? Attended VITE	Cert	Dip (NZ)	Dip	Cert
Teacher exp.	5	14	13	18	19	4	19
Principal exp.	11	?	5	?			
Provincial exp.	8	8	3	5	7	3	9
New curriculum training participation*	G1/2 training	Teachers Guides Numeracy	None as SIO	Language and Communication TG; Language and communication and living in our community; Numeracy; Ademap	?	?	ToT for new curriculum Leadership skills

Classroom observations

The researchers conducted 14 classroom observations of *Language and Communication* lessons. One classroom was a combined Year 1 and Year 2 class, while one classroom was a combined Year 3 and Year 4 class because the Year 2 teacher was unavailable (refer to Table C.4). The design specified two lessons per teacher, but at two schools only one lesson was able to be observed due to the teacher being absent for the second observation.

Table C.4. Classroom observation participants, by school, year and gender in 2021

Province	School ID	Year	Gender	Classroom observations
Efate	A	2	F	2
Efate	B	2	F	2
Efate	C	2	M	1
Efate	D	1/2	F	2
Tafea	E	2	F	2
Tafea	F	2	F	2
Tafea	G	3/4	F	2
Tafea	H	2	F	1
Total	8			14

Annex D: Attribution

Annex D provides an overview of the perceived changes attributed to VESP in-service support and/or the new curriculum. Noting a key aspect of VESP involves supporting curriculum implementation, it is often not possible to distinguish attribution to either the new curriculum or VESP support, unless respondents differentiated and specifically stated which intervention led to the outcome. Respondents also often conflated VESP support with the new curriculum and could not provide this level of detail.

	Change attributed to VESP in-service support	Change attributed to the new curriculum	Change attributed to both
TEACHING QUALITY			
Knowledge	• Strengthened principal and teacher knowledge on lesson planning, subject matter and pedagogical approaches *(VESP-supported training)*. • Improved teacher knowledge about content and pedagogies used in the new curriculum, particularly related to improving student engagement and the application of teaching guides in developing lesson plans *(ELT, Ademap Lanwis and Language and Communication)* • Improved understanding of pedagogical principles that support student learning *(ELT)* • Language progression *(Ademap Lanwis)* • Improvements in teaching knowledge such as student-centred		

	Change attributed to VESP in-service support	Change attributed to the new curriculum	Change attributed to both
	approaches, and how to apply this knowledge to classroom practice *(Language and Communication)*		
Motivation and confidence			• Change in beliefs and attitudes toward teaching, including increased levels of confidence and motivation for teaching (Tanna). *(VESP-supported training, teaching guides, and student-centred pedagogies in the new curriculum.)*
Teaching strategies	• Improved teaching practice such as lesson delivery *(ELT, Language and Communication, Ademap Lanwis)*		• Strengthened lesson planning, delivery of learning activities and use of assessment *(new curriculum, teaching guides and VESP supported activities)* • Improved lesson planning and preparation *(new curriculum, VESP-supported training and teaching guides).* • Use of new teaching and learning activities, particularly student-centred teaching methods *(new curriculum and VESP-supported training).*
Language		• The ability to use Bislama or the vernacular in the classroom as a critical factor to improved teaching practice • Increased student interest as a result of language	
Gender		• Mixing genders to participate in group work together as part of a student-centred approach • Increased confidence of girls	

	Change attributed to VESP in-service support	Change attributed to the new curriculum	Change attributed to both
Disability			• Improved awareness of equal rights of disabled children, and improved inclusion of disabled students *(new curriculum, National Disability Inclusive Development Policy (2018-2025), APTC Education Support training)* • Improved knowledge of classroom strategies for engaging children with disabilities and capacity to support disabled students *(Government policies, VESP support).*
Student-centred teaching	• Improved teacher-student interactions, student engagement and understanding *(VESP-supported training)*		• Shift towards student-centred teaching methods (new curriculum, VESP-supported training, peer learning). • Stronger consideration of and catering to range of student abilities *(new curriculum, VESP-supported training)*
CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION			
Teacher support	• Support from principals, SIOs, PTs and teacher peers was critical to helping teachers effectively implement the new curriculum.		
Leadership	• Increased collaboration between principals and teachers, improved understanding of classroom activities *(leadership training)* • Increased capacity and confidence to improve the quality of teaching		

	Change attributed to VESP in-service support	Change attributed to the new curriculum	Change attributed to both
	and learning in schools *(leadership training)*		
Lesson planning			• Clearer direction for lesson planning and learning outcomes *(new curriculum, teaching guides and other curriculum support materials)*
Language and localisation		• Increased student and parental engagement in schools because of the language policy and the new curriculum. • The use of local contexts, environments and cultures facilitated students' learning, participation in lessons and enjoyment in school.	
STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES			
Student wellbeing and engagement	• Improved ability to manage bullying behavior *(VESP-supported training)*	• Students appear happier, more confident, more engaged and interactive, have higher attendance and less scared of teachers • More interesting activities resulted in improved student engagement, which led to increased effort to attend school.	• Use of student-centred pedagogies improved student confidence and engagement *(VESP-supported training and new curriculum)*
Reading and writing			• Improvements in students' reading and writing skills as a result of some VESP interventions, and in particular the language of the new curriculum and accompanying resources.
Numeracy		• Use of the vernacular helped students understand key concepts in numeracy.	• Accompanying numeracy resources supported improved academic outcomes

	Change attributed to VESP in-service support	Change attributed to the new curriculum	Change attributed to both
			for students (eg. textbooks and numeracy kits)
Language and localisation		• Increased student confidence as a result of the curriculum and activities being delivered in a language familiar to students and teachers. • New curriculum language (Bislama or the vernacular) encouraged more parents to help their children with homework.	• Use of resources and materials that students are familiar with improved student engagement

Annex E: Teaching quality: supporting analysis

This Annex E provides additional analysis related to teaching quality.

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.

E.1 Teachers' knowledge, beliefs and attitudes

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 and principals about new knowledge, beliefs and attitudes about teaching collected in case study interviews are outlined below, including where appropriate, comparisons of their perspectives in 2019 and in 2021. Case study respondents in Efate and Tanna 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 year 1 of the Study in Malekula and Pentecost.

Respondents reported that VESP-supported training was helpful in strengthening principal and teacher knowledge on lesson planning, subject matter and pedagogical approaches. Teachers also reported increased confidence in and motivation for teaching as a result of the training. In many cases, particularly in Tanna, 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).

Teacher professional knowledge

A number of teachers cited specific VESP courses that helped them develop their knowledge – *ELT*, *Ademap Lanwis* and *Language and Communication* – as was also reported in Malampa and Penama provinces in year 1 of the Study. Temporary teachers, in particular, reported they found these courses helpful in improving their knowledge.

ELT was noted as instrumental in improving understanding of pedagogical principles that support student learning. As reported by a Year 2 Tanna 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.

Multiple teachers reported that *Ademap Lanwis* has been useful for language progression. For example, a Year 4 temporary teacher in Tanna identified *Ademap Lanwis* to be helpful:

> I think the two trainings on *Ademap Lanwis* helped me a lot as a temporary teacher to improve my teaching. It teaches me on how to effectively carry out lessons in my textbooks to my students.

Language and Communication training has also supported the improvement of teaching knowledge, which a number of teachers from both Efate and Tanna have applied in their teaching practice. For example, as reported by one Year 3 temporary Efate teacher:

> When I attended the *Language and Communication*, it was both maths and English. Because it was my first year teaching, I found that the workshop really helped. It taught me planning and the context. After the workshop, I realised I understood better. How to deliver to the kids their work. I knew how to work better with my students.

A Year 1 teacher in Tanna explained the value of this course for improving teaching through effectively using the teaching guide and working with sounds:

> The one I find most helpful is *Language and Communication*. I have seen that it helps me on how to teach subjects to my students, when I use it I notice that the children are interested to learn. It helps me on how to teach my letters, to make up words and to sound out these letters and words. The guides help me to implement my teaching plans… Afterwards, when I applied what was being taught at the training I can see that my teaching is better. It wasn't a burden to me anymore, the students talk and respond to me and answer the questions I ask.

Teachers also commented on learning how to implement a student-centred approach in their classrooms. A principal from Efate observed about teachers:

> …they also realise they got learning outcomes and they have to make sure they have the skills to help a child achieved their learning outcome. From observation and listening to the teachers, they begin to realise that their teaching approach needs to change.

Multiple teachers reflected that orientation to the teaching guides during workshops were particularly useful. Some respondents including principals and teachers advised refresher training is needed to reinforce the learning, with suggested areas of focus being pedagogical methods and reinforcing how to use the teaching guides.

Beliefs and attitudes towards teaching

Multiple respondents in Tanna reported a change in the beliefs and attitudes toward teaching, including increased levels of confidence and motivation for teaching. Respondents in Efate did not provide detailed reports of change in beliefs and attitudes, though one Year 1 teacher in Efate said the new curriculum made her "feel more confident" in teaching. These changes were attributed to participation in VESP-supported training and by using the student-centred pedagogies included in the new curriculum.

Tanna teachers reflected on their newfound recognition of the vital role they play in facilitating student learning. For example, several teachers explained how the training has improved student-teacher cooperation, student engagement and therefore motivation to teach:

> With the new curriculum training I found that I now cooperate well with my students and I have the desire to help them more with their learning. (Year 1 teacher)

> Afterwards, when I applied what was being taught at the training I can see that my teaching is better. It wasn't a burden to me anymore, the students talk and respond to me and answer the questions I ask... When I teach and I see that my students are responsive I am happy to teach and am creative to construct more activities to help my students learn. (Year 2 teacher)

A Year 1 teacher from Tanna added this recognition of the role of teachers has inspired her to adopt more creative ways to engage students:

> I think that the students' ability and interest to learn nowadays really depends on the teacher. As a teacher you have to be creative and find ways to get the students interested to learn.

However there continues to be some teachers who remain resistant to changing teaching practices and implementing the new curriculum. Multiple Tanna principals and one SIO noted there were teachers who prefer the 'old curriculum' and were resistant to changing teaching methods. One principal reported:

> …even when they are teaching the new curriculum, I observe them still going back and using bits of the old curriculum – its methods.

A principal in Efate presented a perspective that a lack of confidence by teachers contributes to resistance to change. For example, she said some teachers said, "I don't want to do this because I don't want to be seen as a failure."

E.2 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.

Aspects of teaching practice that were investigated through case study interviews and classroom observations are: lesson preparation; teaching and learning activities; gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) practices; language of instruction; and assessment.

Case study respondents in Efate and Tanna reported a variety of changes to teaching practice, attributed to the new curriculum, teaching guides and VESP-supported training. The application of knowledge gained through the *ELT* and *Language and Communication* courses, as discussed in section 3.2, were identified as supporting improvements to teaching practice in both year 1 and 2 case studies. In addition, the *Ademap Lanwis* workshop was identified in year 2 as helping to improve lesson delivery.

Both year 1 and year 2 respondents reported the ability to use Bislama or the vernacular in the classroom as a critical factor to improved teaching practice. Strengthened lesson planning, delivery of learning activities and use of assessment were also attributed to the new curriculum, teaching guides and VESP supported activities, in both year 1 and 2 case studies.

Lesson preparation

Multiple principals in both provinces reported the introduction of the new curriculum, VESP-supported training and teaching guides is beginning to improve how teachers prepare and plan for lessons.

> 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…

…they begin to align their lesson plan with the curriculum.

Multiple teachers from Tanna said that the new curriculum guides have been instrumental in helping them with lesson planning. To quote a Year 1 teacher:

> The new teaching guides have helped the teachers greatly, guiding them to create better teaching plans.

One Year 4 Tanna teacher reported he now considers student levels when planning lessons, and attributed this change to VESP-supported training:

> …after going through these trainings I had a realisation that the students actually need us in order to properly learn. So the lessons and activities that you as a teacher create must align with the students learning.

During classroom observations, researchers noted whether lesson plans were in place. All teachers were observed to have a lesson plan in place for at least one lesson, as shown in Figure E.1 below.

Teacher	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
CO1	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
CO2	o	o		o	o		o	

o = observed

Figure E.1. Lesson plans observed to be in place in 2021

Teaching and learning activities

Multiple 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, the level of student activity, whether teachers made connections to students' prior knowledge or skills, and if teachers made local connections.

Student-centred teaching methods

The promotion of student-centred teaching and learning is a key focus of the new curriculum. 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, a Year 1 Efate teacher reflected on how the knowledge acquired from training has helped her to apply a more student-centred approach in her teaching, especially through peer learning:

> We don't usually group the kids, but with the new curriculum we look into 3 different areas. In each class we make small groups and then I work with the individuals. So this is where I think the workshop has really helped. Sometimes if I find a student that may be struggling, I use peer learning as well…

Multiple teachers highlighted how the new curriculum and training has supported them to cater to students of different abilities by providing targeted support. The support was often expressed as extra time or different activities for student with different abilities. A Year 4 teacher in Tanna described in detail how she support students:

…students who are slow learners need me to give them activities that can be understood by their level, if I give activities that are too advance they find class boring. When this happens I take my class outside for a refresher activity called "Just Play", when we come back inside they are motivated to learn. I have done this with the grade 2 class I taught last year, a lot of them are slow learners and I have seen great improvement in their learning.

Other teachers in both provinces explained how the training and new methods of teaching has helped improve teacher-student interactions, and student engagement and understanding.

…the training taught me how to properly handle the situation, properly handle bullies, by coming up with activities that can get the student's attention and get them to quiet down… you have to have a good relationship with your student so that when you teach a lesson your student will be able to grasp what you are teaching. (Year 1 teacher)

But with the new curriculum they have outlined everything for us. When I use these new ideas or teaching methods to deliver to my kids, I find that it also really helps them understand what we are talking about. (Year 4 Teacher)

Classroom interaction and student activity

During the classroom observations, researchers observed and coded against three classroom interaction types used by teachers in their lessons: whole class activity, pair or group activity, and individual activity. Often, teacher-directed whole class activities will prepare students for practice and application activities. Practice and application activities are usually pair, small group or individual activities to support students to work independently with the teacher's support.

All teachers used a mix of interaction types, but mostly whole-class and individual activities. All lessons commenced with whole class activity, and whole class activity was used across large portions of all lessons (at least 25 minutes).

- Nearly all teachers (7 of 8) included individual activity during at least one lesson.
- Pair or group activities were included in half of the lessons (7 of 14 lessons), but only used by four teachers. As an example of this, in one school (Launalang) groups of students were handed a passage of a story to read and given a set of questions to answer.

One indicator of student-centred learning is if the classroom appears busy with lots of student activity such that all or most students are active and participating (e.g. students interacting about learning tasks, students working together on learning tasks).

- Five out of 14 lessons involved large portions of lots of student activity (at least 25 minutes).
- Across ten lessons researchers observed instances of lots of student activity. This was not observed in one classroom (Matarisu).

However, it proved challenging to achieve consistency in observations across researchers, and coding of this element of interaction will need refinement for the final data collection.

Prior knowledge and skills

During classroom observations, researchers were also asked to observe whether teachers made explicit reference to students' prior knowledge and/or skills, either through asking students what they already know or promoting their recall of an earlier activity. This strategy is often helpful in introducing new lesson content in a clear and meaningful way.

Teacher	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
CO1	○			○	○	○		
CO2			▓		○	○	▓	▓

○ = observed

Figure E.2. Explicit reference to students' prior knowledge and/or skills observed in 2021

- Figure E.2 shows that half of the teachers were observed to refer to students' prior knowledge and/or skills – two during one lesson only, and two during both lessons.
- There was no specific pattern, however, when teachers did this during their lesson.

Localisation

The new curriculum encourages teachers to make local connections. Case study researchers were asked to observe whether teachers adapted or made links to students' cultural heritage, their local context and their local environment. An example of how teachers can do this is to make use of real objects from the community.

- As seen in Figure E.3, during the observed lessons, three teachers made some explicit reference students' cultural heritage, local context and environment.
- As an example, one Tanna teacher had students bring in local flowers and fruits and present on these.

Teacher	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
CO1				○	○	○		
CO2			▓	○	○	○	▓	▓

○ = observed

Figure E.3. Explicit reference to students' cultural heritage, local context or local environment observed in 2021

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.[12] This includes ensuring disability inclusion and gender equality as a regular part of teachers' practice.

Disability inclusion

Multiple case study respondents from both provinces highlighted the importance of inclusive education and the right of every child to access education, with many teachers demonstrating an improved awareness about equal treatment of disabled children. This change can be attributed to a range of factors including the new curriculum, targeted Government of Vanuatu strategies such as the *National Disability Inclusive Development Policy* (2018-2025), and Education Support training delivered by the Australia Pacific Technical College (APTC). Two teachers interviewed in 2021 for the

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[12] See for example UNESCO, Education Profiles Vanuatu: Inclusion at: https://education-profiles.org/oceania/vanuatu/~inclusion. Accessed 15 January 2022.

Study had achieved a Certificate III in the APTC Education Support course. In 2020-2021, 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 request for VESP support by MoET, and highlights the responsiveness of VESP. The objective of this request is to support the development of educators specialising in the needs of disabled students.

Respondents from both Tanna and Efate observed a noticeable change in perception about the importance of all children attending school, including those with disability. Multiple Efate respondents observed this change in perception has also resulted in non-disabled students showing improved awareness of including their disabled peers in activities. A number of Tanna respondents reported that disabled children are now actively encouraged to attend school, and one Tanna principal observed attendance rates of disabled students has improved.

Additionally, respondents from both Tanna and Efate observed disabled students seem happier and more interested in learning since the introduction of the new curriculum. One Efate principal reported:

> As there is space created for them and for teachers to be aware and take note of them, students with disability are happy to come to school. Other students are also aware /inform of the particular group and why this important for them to attend school.

One Efate teacher reported disabled students are now more engaged in learning, and one Year 2 Tanna teacher agreed, reporting:

> …now students with disabilities are the first to be addressed as students when school starts... we note the different disabilities of the student and help them and see that there is improvement to the child's learning and that they are able to grasp the lesson.

Teachers (2) in Efate who attended the APTC Education Support training reported it was effective in improving their knowledge of working with disabled students. One Year 3 teacher said:

> I went to APTC. I went through an Education Support course. I learnt a lot about working with kids with disability

Multiple principals also advised they are better able to support and monitor disabled students learning as a result of the training.

One Tanna PT attributed the improved inclusion of disabled students to the new curriculum:

> Before the new curriculum, the teachers used to isolate these special needs students. But now when you enter classrooms, all the students attend the same lessons, including the disabled students. I have seen a big change here.

However, multiple respondents from both provinces noted large class sizes and limited financial and human resources remained significant constraints to implementing inclusive classroom practices and provide all students with enough attention. Another challenge recognized was the capacity of teachers to accurately identify specific disabilities, in order to determine appropriate and targeted support for those students. Some parents and teachers from Tanna held concerns that teacher capacity to incorporate inclusive practices and provide targeted support is still limited.

During classroom observations, researchers recorded when teachers explicitly provided customised support to students with physical or intellectual disabilities. Three teachers provided such customised support, one of these extensively to students who had learning difficulties (reported as "slow learners").

Gender equality

Case study respondents were asked to comment on gender and equity at their schools. Most reported that girls and boys participate equally in school activities, with multiple respondents including parents, principals and teachers advising there has been no change in this respect.

Of the teachers who observed changes to gender inclusive practices, many of them identified mixed-gender group work as one of the new pedagogical approaches that encouraged equal participation of boys and girls, resulting in fair treatment in the learning process. One Year 2 teacher from Efate said:

> The new curriculum allows for more activities that can involve both girls and boys.

Another Year 2 teacher from Efate agreed, and highlighted the importance of the teacher's role in encouraging gender equity:

> I think with the new curriculum I see that the students work together a lot… they are starting to understand that gender doesn't matter, boys can also do what girls do…. the boys use to only want boys in their teams. They'd say the girls would make them lose. The more I talked to them, I noticed that they started to work together.

Multiple SIOs agreed boys and girls work well together now, and one SIO attributed this to mixed gender group activities.

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. Seven of the eight teachers did this seven or more times across the two lessons. One teacher did not do this at all.
- The distribution between girls and boys was mostly even.

Multiple teachers from Tanna also reported girls have become more confident as a result of the new curriculum, with one Year 4 teacher observing girls have surpassed boys in confidence and participation rates:

> In the past it usually was the boys who are more confident and talkative in class, they are the ones who participated more. But these days, it's the girls that are more confident in replying and talking and stepping up to finish activities on time.

Language of instruction

A number of teachers in Efate and Tanna reported that a critical factor to improved teaching practice has been the change in language of instruction, and the ability to use Bislama or the vernacular in the classroom. According to one Year 2 teacher in Efate:

> …English is the second language for all the kids. Bislama is their first language. So when I teach in Bislama, they understand better.

One PEO observed the impact of the curriculum being accessible in both Bislama and vernacular language has had on teachers:

> …in Tanna some of my teachers are emotional when they read in their language. They realised they finally teach, read, and write in their own language.

One SIO noted increased interest in the new curriculum by *both* teachers and students:

> …they teach using their language and I see the teachers are interested and the students are also interested in what the teachers are giving them.

A Year 1 teacher in Tanna said that she can observe that the students understand what she is teaching:

> I notice that when I teach using Bislama or native tongue, the students understand what I am teaching.

A Year 1 teacher in Efate reported that students are better able to participate in classes as a result of delivering lessons in Bislama:

> But then with this new curriculum where we use Bislama, I find that the students are more comfortable and friendly towards us. They are also able to express themselves better. When we were speaking and asking them questions in English we'd find the place very quiet.

At the same time, while many teachers recognise the benefits of using Bislama and the vernacular in the classroom, many are still resistant to change, and adopt an approach of introducing French or English in Year 1 which is not aligned with the language policy. A principal in Tanna explained:

> French (probably mission schools) schools on Tanna usually meet to discuss progress on the new curriculum and we have discussed that the transition from Year 3 to Year 4 is hard. We have not been adding up French from Year 1 to Year 3 but only in Year 4. But now we have decided to start adding up language beginning from kindergarten up to Year 3. This would ensure a good transition in Yr4.

One SIO reported that although some teachers initially resisted the language policy, the SIO observed their appreciation for the new curriculum has grown over time with SIO support, and when student learning has been seen to improve:

> One challenge I take here is in the first years when the new curriculum came, it was hard because the language came with it and with schools… they nearly refused it. I did a lot of work with them and in the end they found out that the students were grasping things very quickly... Then this year many good changes happened… [this] school came out as one of the top schools and it is clear to see that there have been good changes and at the end we had good results.

During classroom observations, case study researchers were required to observe whether explicit support was provided to students who did not speak the language of instruction (Figure E.4). Researchers also recorded which language(s) were used during the observed lessons.

Teacher	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Year	2	2	2	1/2	2	2	3/4	2
CO1			○		○		○	○
CO2		○			○		○	
Language used	English/ Bislama	English/ Bislama	French	Bislama	Bislama/ Vernacular /English	Bislama/ Vernacular /English	French/ Vernacular	French/ Vernacular

○ = observed

Figure E.4. Explicit support provided to students who do not speak the language of instruction observed in 2021

- Five teachers were observed to provide explicit support to students who did not speak the language of instruction during lessons.
- Bislama and/or a vernacular language was observed to be used by seven of the eight teachers in their classes. In Efate case study schools, three of the four teachers were observed to use Bislama. One Year 2 teacher in Efate was observed to use French only. In Tanna, all four teachers were observed to use vernacular, and two also used Bislama.

Assessment

The new curriculum promotes teaching practices that support classroom-based assessment practices. Assessment practices were collected through case study interviews and classroom observations. A number of teachers and principals reported a shift in how formative and summative assessments are undertaken, and also how the information is used.

Respondents noted a range of assessment frequencies, including daily, weekly, fortnightly, at the end of topic, and end of each term or semester. Many teachers reported assessing students daily through observation, checklists, or orally, and some teachers advised they conduct written assessments less frequently. Multiple teachers reported using a combination of assessment methods.

Teachers reported using assessment results for a range of purposes including to record student progress against indicators, to produce reports for parents, and to reflect on and improve their teaching. They also said they use assessment to ascertain learning areas that require more attention, inform student groupings and peer learning arrangements, and identify students who need additional support.

According to multiple respondents, assessments are now conducted to measure teaching effectiveness, by comparing student outcomes to learning objectives. A Year 1 teacher in Tanna explained:

> Before the new curriculum we used numbers, but after the new curriculum we are now assessing students on each lessons... After we teach a lesson we note which students understand and which don't and place a tick (if he/she understands) next to their name, this is a daily assessment on each students.

One SIO also observed this change and described how assessment are conducted in alignment with learning outcomes:

> Now I see they are no longer giving them marks like 20/20... They are now only giving out learning outcomes, which is good.

Multiple teachers in both provinces explained how they now use assessment results as a self-evaluation tool, to modify their teaching methods as needed to ensure students are learning.

> I use the results to determine if there are students that are struggling. If I discover that there are struggling students, then I look back at my approach. When we go through the same topic, I'll use a different method. (Year 1 Teacher)

> Looking at these assessments, if a lot of students do not understand a lesson I teach in class I will have to formulate another way to teach the same activity to my students but in another way that will be more effective and will make the student understand the lesson. (Year 1 Teacher)

> I assess at the end of each lesson for each individual. If I find that that the class did not really grab what I taught then I try another method to improve their understanding on a specific topic. I may

also give an extra exercise. I can change the language into Bislama if I had been explaining the topic in French. (Year 4 Teacher)

A Year 4 Tanna teacher explained how they use assessment results to group students in order to facilitate peer learning:

…the results I obtained I use to come up with solutions to help those who do not understand the topic. I do this by grouping students who understand the topic with those who do not, this allows the students to explain with each other because I find that sometimes when I explain the student does not grasp the idea…

A Year 3 Efate teacher explained how assessment results are used to identify students who are falling behind:

I use the results to determine their current levels. If there's a student that is struggling, then I will help them catch up.

In terms of providing additional support to students who require it, teachers reported spending extra time with individual students, revising their teaching methods and adjusting activities, delivering additional activities, or allocating homework.

Case study parents also recognised the value of assessments, as reported by one Tanna parent:

…the way the teacher is doing with assessment is very good you can see that there is learning taking place.

A Tanna principal and an Efate principal reported they support teachers with assessments by providing guidance on assessment criteria and monitoring administration rates.

During classroom observations, case study researchers recorded examples of formative assessment during classroom observations. Firstly, researchers documented when teachers 'explicitly checked' for students' understanding. For example, if teachers prompted or encouraged students to demonstrate or articulate their understandings (Figure E.5).

Teacher	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
CO1	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
CO2	○	○		○	○	○	○	

○ = observed

Figure E.5. Explicitly checking for student understanding observed in 2021

- All of the eight teachers explicitly checked for students' understanding during the lessons observed.
- Five teachers had multiple instances across the 60 minute lesson, with regular checks throughout. The Figure E.6 below displays a classroom observation map from two such teachers.

Lesson Minutes	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60
Teacher												
F												
G												

■ Instance in two lessons   ■ Instance in one lesson

Figure E.6. Examples of classroom observation maps from two teachers with the highest number of instances of explicitly checking for student understanding

Secondly, researchers documented when teachers observed students practising or applying what they had learnt. For example, if teachers moved from group to group and provided feedback, prompted or encouraged students, or recorded notes about students as they worked (Figure E.7).

| Teacher	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
CO1		○	○	○	○		○	
CO2				○			○	

○ = observed

Figure E.7. Observing students practising/applying what they have learnt in 2021

- Two of the eight teachers undertook such observations in both lessons, and three in one lesson only.
- Three teachers did undertake these types of observations.

See Figure E.8 which displays an example classroom observation map of a teacher undertaking these observations often.

Lesson Minutes	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60
Teacher												
G												

■ Instance in two lessons   ■ Instance in one lesson

Figure E.8. Examples of classroom observation maps from one teacher with the highest number of instances of observing students practising/applying what they have learnt

E.3 Factors that impede teaching practice

The 2019 and 2021 data collection rounds provided opportunities to understand factors that impeded teaching practice.

Case study respondents in Efate and Tanna identified a range of challenges that impact teaching quality, some of which are contextual but nonetheless influence the potential success of the VESP investments. Similarly to year 1 of the case study series, these challenges included overcrowding, a significant number of untrained and temporary teachers, a lack of resources and funding for SIOs

and PTs to visit schools. Conversely, multigrade classes were not reported as issues as much, compared to year 1 of the Study, and poor mobile and internet reception were not identified by year 2 respondents.

Classroom overcrowding

In both Efate and Tanna, teachers, principals, PEOs and parents raised the challenge of overcrowded classrooms, and thus the need for more teachers. For example, one teacher in Port Vila (Efate) had 47 students in her class, even though the limit is 30 students. Case study respondents commented the range of challenges overcrowding presents for student learning, including: teacher exhaustion; catering to a wide range of student ability in class; insufficient resources for students; and difficulties in teaching and effective classroom management.

An SIO in Efate explained how high enrolments lead to teacher exhaustion:

> Over-enrolment has a huge impact on schools and even the teachers... In the rural area teachers are facing challenges with multi-grade classes and the huge number of students per class... teachers are exhausted.

Teachers reported they did not have enough tables and chairs, could not cater for the range of student ability in class, and experienced discipline problems. A Year 3 teacher in Efate explained how overcrowding and limited resources impacts their teaching:

> The high number of students in one class. I can't photocopy to give the kids copies for them to share so I have to write it up on the black board. And when I write it on the black board, there are some kids who are fast and some who are slow. The slow ones will have to take their time just to complete the one activity.

A Year 2 Tanna teacher explained they do not have the physical space required for the number of students in her class:

> One of the challenges is, the number of students I have to teach in one class is bigger compared to the space available in the classroom.

A parent in Tanna further explained the impact of large class sizes on teaching and classroom management:

> The other challenge is the number of students per class are too big/many. This has put stress on teachers trying to control the huge number of students. If only they can limit that for teachers to provide good support to a child.

Teacher workforce

Many schools do not have enough teachers, and many use temporary teachers to fill these workforce gaps. A school principal in Tanna reported seven temporary teachers working at his school.

One temporary teacher said she is teaching Years 3 and 4 because the school does not have enough teachers, and has not attended a workshop on the new curriculum:

> I did not attend any workshops on the new curriculum so when I came here the principal said I am to look after grade 3 and grade 4. I was hesitant to teach these two classes because I had not attended a workshop on the New Curriculum, regardless, the school principal told me that there were not enough teachers and that I had to do it.

Temporary teachers described how they valued the support of their permanent colleagues who had attended training about the new curriculum and could support them. A Year 1 Tanna teacher said:

> Those of us who are 'unpaid by the government' teachers, work together with our permanent teachers to learn more and receive help on our teaching.

Parents in Tanna voiced concerns about the number of temporary and untrained teachers in their children's schools, and one parent shared that temporary teachers often hold other jobs for income, indicating their availability to teach is impacted.

> We want quality education… we had a volunteer teacher teaching in our school and now we have too many temporary teachers. (Parent, Tanna)

> We have too many temporary teachers. Most did not have proper training to help support our child. (Parent, Tanna)

This was not raised as an issue in Efate. However, a PEO noted that teacher attrition leads to institutional knowledge gaps at schools, especially when transferred teachers are the sole representative of the school at the training.

Access to Resources

Multiple respondents identified limited resources as a barrier to improving teaching quality. A Year 2 Tanna teacher said that she does not have access to the materials that she was introduced to in the training:

> There are a few challenges that I faced after these trainings such as materials that are mentioned in the textbooks are not available to us. So it is difficult for me as a teacher to teach the lesson to the class without the required teaching materials, for example reading books.

Multiple respondents highlighted a need for additional resources to effectively teach the new curriculum. A Year 1 teacher from Efate reported:

> The main challenge would be the lack of resources. The books are great, I really like them because they specify everything. But it's the resources and time that you need to sit and prepare your resources.

A Tanna principal explained that a lack of resources is the main challenge to sustainability:

> The school cannot provide enough for all students. The school council sometimes has to prioritise school funds towards the school buildings and then there is not enough funds for materials and resources. But if once school funds are targeted at satisfying that then I am very sure that this new curriculum will run smoothly in this school.

SIOs and principals noted funding is a key challenge for many schools. One SIO said he did not have adequate funds to do his job. One principal discussed the funding priorities for the school community, with classroom maintenance a priority above additional resources for the new curriculum:

> The school grant provided is being used also to fix classroom conditions first to build a good classroom environment for learning. Once this is all fixed we will direct a lot of the funds to materials and resources to run the new curriculum.

E.4 Impacts of COVID-19

In Vanuatu, regular schooling was disrupted in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with case study schools closing for a period of time ranging from 1 week to 2 months.[13] During the closures, VESP supported MoET to develop and disseminate home schooling packages (VESP, 2020). VESP also provided financial and technical support to MoET to develop and broadcast radio shows to publicise the home schooling packages (VESP, 2020). This response was reported to cause MoET and provincial staff to reallocate time to home schooling development activities (VESP, 2020).

In the 2021 study, new questions were added to the case study interviews that gathered stakeholder perspectives on how teaching was impacted by the COVID-19 disruption and how teaching was supported by other teachers, principals, provincial level authorities and parents during this period. Unique to the Vanuatu study in the Teacher Development Multi-Year Study Series was the inclusion of parent FGDs. These focus groups asked parents about how they perceived their children's schooling was impacted by the COVID-19 disruption and how they as parents and/or caregivers were supported in helping their children with home schooling.

Impact on teaching and learning

Respondents in both Efate and Tanna offered a range of responses when asked about how the pandemic disruption impacted teaching and learning. Teachers, principals and other education stakeholders in both provinces discussed the effectiveness of home packages and the increased workload for teachers and principals.

Increased workload

In Tanna, all teachers reported that school closures caused significant disruptions to teaching and learning. Teachers prepared 'home school packages' with no training or experience, and distributed them through community centres or directly to student homes.

A Year 1 Tanna teacher explained how the disruption led to an increased workload for teachers:

> All the teachers were very busy in preparing school work for the students during the one month COVID-19 disruption. We felt as though it was the most hectic and busiest than all the times we spent preparing for a day's lesson. This was because we had to prepare multiple lessons in such a short time to be able to deliver them to students…

An Efate principal also reported an increased workload on school staff.

> …we prepared their full term work for them to take home…We worked so hard during that time…There was a lot of pressure with the workload and preparing the lessons. Even distributing the work was hard. We gave them our contacts to call us if they needed any help.

Effectiveness of home packages

Despite the investment of time and resources, none of the interviewed Tanna teachers were able to complete their teaching plans. Many respondents in Tanna reported the substantial amount of work involved in preparing the home packages proved ultimately ineffective in supporting student learning during the disruption. This was due to a number of reasons, including the inability of

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[13] Tropical Cyclone Harold also hit Vanuatu on 5 April 2020, causing destruction to mainly the northern islands, and extending school closures in some areas.

teachers to effectively introduce new concepts and provide targeted support, the lack of resources in students' homes, and teachers not being able to monitor students.

Many Tanna students did not utilise their home school packages. One challenge was the lack of resources available in the students' homes, which prevented them from completing the home school assignments. A Year 2 teacher said:

> When I teach math in class I am able to provide the students with materials to use to solve problems but at home the parents are tired or do not find these materials to give to their kids to use when solving math problems.

Tanna parents confirmed that most children did not complete their school work during the closure period. Multiple Tanna parents also said that home packages were often completed by older siblings or parents, rather than the students themselves. One Tanna parent reported some children never received their home school packages, with disabled children disproportionately affected.

All of the interviewed teachers from Tanna stated the home packages were not effective, and some spoke of how the disruption continues to have enduring impacts on teaching and student learning. Multiple Tanna teachers reported little or no learning took place during COVID-19 disruptions:

> …we did not finish the topics we were supposed to …The students came to school to collect these home learning packages just once to complete and then return. However, only a few students returned the packages while a lot did not until school was opened again. (Year 3 and 4 teacher)

> After the COVID-19 disruption, the students' learning declined greatly. (Year 1 teacher)

> …we had to go back and go over everything we had learned before and during the COVID disruption… (Year 2 teacher)

Principals and SIOs agreed the home school packages were ineffective, and also expressed concerns about poor student learning progress. One SIO shared their perspective that teacher motivation, and therefore student progress, was also impacted by the disruption:

> With the home package I can see that it did not work out because when the students took it home, they did not carry out their work. There was no support from the parents. The teachers' morale to work also was gone and the interest was gone and this affected the students' learning and their results dropped a lot.

Many Efate teachers were unable to meet all curriculum outcomes for the year and had to repeat many lessons. The following Year 1 teacher highlighted the challenges to learning progress:

> …when the packages would come back to us they would be empty or blank. The kids weren't doing the work…This causes a situation where we have some kids moving forward and some not.

Efate teachers also mentioned the impact on planning and preparation for lessons. A Year 3 teacher said:

> It disrupted my planning…My lesson planning and preparation were all affected. When we came back, you have to pick only a few topics from term one to teach… You can't squeeze everything in.

One Efate parent, however, mentioned home schooling enabled students to learn about local culture:

> It stopped school but it also gave us the chance to teach them a few things about culture.

Support for teachers and parents

The case study interviews also presented the opportunity for respondents to discuss how teachers and parents were supported during the COVID-19 disruption. The majority of teachers and parents said that they received little support during this period. Some parents also discussed challenges related to student learning.

Teachers working together

Teachers in Tanna and Efate worked closely with their peers, particularly in the absence of consistent government support.

Most Tanna teachers reported their biggest support came from other teachers, as they worked together to prepare activities and coordinate delivery of homes packages.

> Other teachers did support me during that time. We would come together, prepare the activities and check it together before delivering it… (Year 3 Teacher)

> If I have students living in areas that are the same with students of a colleague teacher, I will give their package to that particular teacher to deliver when they go to deliver their home packages. (Year 1 Teacher)

Teachers in Efate also reported working together to develop a program and put together home packages. A Year 3 teacher in Efate explained how she worked with a peer in the absence of government support:

> We had no help from the Ministry during the COVID disruption. Myself and the other grade 3 teacher came together to put together the home package for the students. We helped each other.

Support from principals

Some Tanna teachers acknowledged their school principals as sources of support, usually by way of coordinating the preparation of home packages, facilitating meetings, performing quality assurance checks and sometimes delivering the home packages. As reported by one Year 2 teacher:

> The Principal of my school was the only support. He gathered us together to instruct us on what to do and teachers gathered together to talk on how to formulate packages and ways to help students learn.

Principals in Efate reported they supported teachers by advising on MoET directions, and coordinating the development and distribution of home packages.

> The school gave out home packages for children's learning at home. Myself and the teachers had to go to each student's house to explain the package and how the parent can assist the child on the package. We took a full week to prepare the packages.

One Efate principal explained the challenge of applying health and safety measures upon school resuming and how it impacted teaching and learning activities such as group work:

> Social distancing had to be applied when students returned and that caused more challenges as we taught only a certain number of students at a time and no group activities could be held in class as children had to be distanced from each other in the classroom as well…

Support to parents

Parents in Efate and Tanna reported experiencing significant challenges supporting their children with the home packages due to low literacy and education levels.

> Some parents who did not have an education did not help their child. They find it hard to help their child with schoolwork.

> Personally, there were some of the home packages that I just couldn't understand.

This challenge was particularly prevalent in remote areas, where literacy levels are low.

> A lot of parents have not reached that level of learning in their education. So when you provide home packages, the teacher should go to each home and explain to the parents what topics and how to help their children. It's not 100% sure the parents will understand the work… I also need the teachers' help.

Some Tanna parents were traveling for work during the disruption, and so were not present to facilitate the home packages, and parents in Efate said they had limited time to support their children due to work conflicts.

> …because we also had work every day, so we could only assist in the evenings.

Some Tanna teachers attempted using accessible language in the instructions to parents, or offered additional support to parents who needed assistance.

> …teachers gave out packages weekly, at the end of each week they come back to collect the package… Those of us who find difficulties and wanted to help our child we usually asked the teacher for explanation when they come over to collect schoolwork at the end of each week.

One Tanna parent acknowledged the effort of teachers who tried to provide in-person support to children during the disruption. However lengthy travel distances and timing visits for when children were at home was challenging for teachers. In one Tanna village, older children and educated adults were called on to support children's learning in a community-based approach. These strategies seemed to have minimal impact, as most Tanna teachers reported little or no learning taking place during the disruption.

A number of parents in Efate offered a range of opinions about how teachers and schools supported them at home:

> Yes there was support…the teacher had it all planned out, the work for each day. The package was given for a month at a time. When you'd finish the work, then they'd give you another one.

> And not much was done to support parents. Teachers just asked parents to collect school packages without explaining the activities and expecting parents to know everything in the home package.

A Year 3 Efate teacher discussed challenges with supporting parents:

> The home package we prepared for them was a bit hard. Mainly because it was hard communicating with the parents. Helping the parents to teach the children. Maybe if all the parents had a way of messaging and communicating with me. I had to organise and plan writings for the parents… When the students returned to school, I found a lot of failures.

Annex F: New curriculum implementation: supporting analysis

This Annex F provides 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 Study also has 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.

F.1 Curriculum resources and materials

This section discusses the perspectives of principals, teachers and SIOs on access to curriculum resources and materials, their use, and whether these are helpful in supporting teaching. Year 2 respondents reported that the resources and materials provide clear directions to teachers and support improved teaching practices. However, more training in using and applying resources is needed. The In-Service Unit (ISU), no longer operational, previously provided training for education and school staff on the new curriculum, including the teachers' guides and resources that accompany the new curriculum. VITE, which hosted ISU, was moved out of Education Services in MoET and integrated with the NUV. This caused challenges for implementing training sessions with teachers and principals in the provinces. One key challenge is that trainers with aligned skills for a training topic are unavailable.

Teachers' guide and curriculum support materials

A number of principals and teachers said the teachers' guide and other curriculum support materials were helpful in providing directions for lessons and building confidence. A Year 2 teacher said he was more confident in his teaching because he can "look at the guide and know what is expected to be executed in a lesson". A Year 3 teacher said, "…with the new curriculum, everything is already outlined for the teacher to simply follow". 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.

A Year 2 teacher in Tanna outlined specific areas in which the new curriculum helped him improve his teaching practice:

> When the new curriculum came in, it taught me how to do my lesson plans, and how to display work in the classroom.

One Deputy Principal from Efate mentioned that the new curriculum requires the teachers "do extra research to support knowledge in the activities that are provided" in addition to creating new activities in the new curriculum. At the same time, two Year 4 teachers in Efate noted challenges in

accessing materials, including related to internet access and teachers taking materials with them when they are posted to another school:

> But there aren't any activities in place. I have to go through the Internet to find some. But if you are in an area with no internet, the teacher won't be able to teach it.

> Limited resources – teachers who are posted to other schools move away with resources or school materials.

One SIO in Tanna commented on the need for resources to accompany the curriculum to support teachers in their work:

> It is good but there are some areas that still need some tools to be developed, especially in the vernacular with some language, where there is no vernacular in language. The teachers are teaching in language but there is no story book in language to support them.

Whilst multiple respondents from both municipalities viewed the new curriculum positively, many observed the need for further support to increase the capacity of teachers to implement it. Many teachers in both Tanna and Efate said that more training would help support them implement the new curriculum. Access to training for teachers was inconsistent in year 2, as in year 1 of the Study. Teachers that did receive training reported high learning outcomes, and valued the opportunity for professional development.

Principals and teachers from Efate suggested additional workshops and refresher trainings are needed to properly master the curriculum.

> The trainings that we have attended should have refresher courses. Run the trainings every few years or visit us again to update. (Year 3 Teacher)

> The teachers need more refresher courses and a bit more time to know how to teach the new curriculum properly. (Principal)

One SIO from Efate added a major challenge to upskilling teachers was an inability to deliver the training widely due to limited funding:

> It only reaches the main key area or key people but never reaches every teacher … the most important people here are the teachers in the classroom, those are the ones who needed this most.

Localisation

The new curriculum encourages teachers to adapt or link content to students' cultural heritage, their local context and their local environment. This discussion focuses on how teachers do this. A principal and SIO in Efate emphasised the importance of local context:

> …good thing about the new curriculum is that it is based local context, so it eases students' learning and participation in activities. (Principal)

> The new curriculum it talks about things that we know – thinks we live alongside each other and within our everyday life. (SIO)

Often parents and communities support schools in this endeavour. This also includes the use of local resources in lessons. An SIO in Efate emphasised that the new curriculum provides parents and communities an opportunity to be part of the curriculum through input into local activities and culture. A principal in Efate said:

> But referring to life in the community, there are activities like learning cultural dances or songs to come perform in class. They are happy to be involved and I can see that it keeps them coming back to school to learn.

A teacher in Tanna explained that when she talks about beliefs, folklore and culture in class, she asks her students to obtain information from parents and the community so they can discuss these in class. A principal in Tanna expressed a similar view about the opportunity for parents to be involved in the new curriculum:

> Community are also part of this – in the new curriculum parents are also part of this so some decisions that we need to do also involve the community particularly the parents – school activities is a good example.

The use of local resources and references in teaching improves student interest and enjoyment in school. A teacher in Tanna noted that the ability to refer to and use objects in the local context was helpful for both students and teachers, especially when books contain examples from a student's environment. A principal in Tanna said that the resources that can be developed from the new curriculum can be from the local context:

> Resources used in class are locally produce for activities and it fitted our context. Student know about the things identify in the resources that are used in their activity example, we name animals that we have in Vanuatu unlike in the old curriculum some of the animals are never found in Vanuatu.

Use of resources

Classroom observations provide insights into how resources provided with the new curriculum are used.

During classroom observations, case study researchers documented which resources were used by teachers in each lesson. Figure F.1 displays the possible range of resources.

- Notably, four classes were observed using story books, but none used decodable readers. Teachers relied heavily on use of a big blackboard (obs = 6) and a pointer/stick (obs = 6) in observed classes. Songs were included in more than half the classrooms (obs = 5).
- Student textbooks were used in two observed classes, and student notebooks and small blackboards in three classes.

Teacher	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	TOTAL (class-lessons)
Teacher guide	o			o				o	3-3
Lesson plan		o			oo	oo		o	4-6
Student text books		o		oo					2-3
Student note books		o	o	oo					3-4
Decodable readers									0
Story books		o		o	oo		oo		4-6
Posters					oo	oo			2-4
Flashcards					oo				1-2
Dictionary									0
Pictures					o				1-1
Big blackboard	o	oo		oo		o	oo	o	6-9
Small blackboard		oo	o					o	3-4
Pointer/stick		oo	o		oo	oo	oo	o	6-10
Reference books				o					1-1
Newspapers/mags									0
Local material		oo				oo (1)			2-4
Games									0
Puzzles									0
Songs	oo	o			o	oo		o	5-7
Drama or role play						o			1-1
Physical actions									
Children's shows									
Computer									
Other		o (3)			o (2)	o (1)	o (3)		4-4

o = observed   (1) Local material – flowers, fruits; Other – poems   (2) Other – poems   (3) Butcher Paper

Figure F.1. Resources used in *Language and Communication* lessons as observed in 2021

Classroom setup

Case study researchers were asked to observe how classrooms were setup for *Language and Communication* classes, providing insight into whether they can facilitate a range of teaching and learning activities (Figure F.2).

- All the classes had space for whole-class activities. Six classrooms had grouped tables and chairs for students, whereas the remaining two classrooms had individual/single lined tables and chairs.
- Only two classrooms had a dedicated reading area.

- Most classrooms had display areas for student work and displays with Bislama or vernacular labels.

Teacher	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Blackboard	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Space whole-class	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Grouped tables and chairs	○	○		○		○	○	○
Individual or single lined tables and chairs			○				○	
Reading area				○	○			
Student work		○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Displays		○	○	○	○	○	○	
Other								

○ = observed

Figure F.2. Classroom set-up observed in 2021

F.2 Teacher support

Case study respondents in years 1 and 2 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. One significant educational governance shift in year 2 of the Study is that PTs no longer play a role in the educational system. This is because VITE has been amalgamated into the National University of Vanuatu, and ISU no longer exists as a unit to deliver training by PTs to support the implementation of the new curriculum. It is unclear what institution will be responsible for ongoing professional development into the future.

Support from principals

As documented in year 1 of the case study series, in 2021 principals reported increased collaboration with teachers and improved understanding of classroom activities as a result of training. Principals in both year 1 and 2 case studies also reported receiving limited or no ongoing support from SIOs. Year 2 case study teachers (from Efate) were more critical of school leadership, compared to year 1.

Some Tanna principals reported they were more confident in their roles and more focused on the quality of teaching and learning in their school, as a result of VESP support. Principals also reported strengthened collaboration with their teachers and other schools. One principal explained:

> Working together with teachers and other schools we evaluate the everyday indicators and report on indicators for each student to their parents… we know how to assist each student to improve and assist the next teachers teaching and knowledge on each student performance…This project has changed principals' work a lot in the sense that we have improved…

This principal further explained how he facilitates peer learning opportunities for teachers:

> …we discuss any issues or challenges and look at ways to address them. We then set up a schedule for when to address each challenge or issue and we dedicate each responsibility to each teacher with the corresponding skills to address each issue. In this way they learn from each other…

Many teachers discussed direct support from their principals. Generally, Tanna teachers said that the support provided to them by principals was helpful, in terms of improving teaching practice. Examples of the types of support provided by principals included undertaking classroom observations and providing feedback, providing school-based training, facilitating peer-learning opportunities, and checking lesson plans. 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.

Several Efate teachers from different schools reported their principals also effectively support them by observing lessons, monitoring student results and providing advice. A Year 2 teacher reported:

> Our principal looks into making sure we have our books. Looks over our lesson plans. If the principal comes by to observe my class and sees that they are not behaving, then they will talk to the kids and will give us some ideas.

However, Efate teachers were generally more critical of school leadership, with multiple teachers reporting their principals were not very active in providing support. One teacher advised they seek out support from their principal as needed, and another teacher noted support is limited to providing school materials. A Year 3 teacher explained:

> Our principal doesn't really work closely with us. We find it hard. Sometimes we tell the principal that our resources aren't enough and we need more materials.

In 2019, principals reported they were more confident in their roles and more focused on the quality of teaching and learning in their school, as a result of specific training in *Instructional Leadership*. Only two principals in 2021 reported participating in *Instructional Leadership* training, possibly due to leadership training being accessible via APTC. While *Instructional Leadership* is no longer offered through ISU/VITE, a school leadership and management training via APTC, Certificate IV, is available for principals, with an additional focus on women leaders.[14]

Provincial level support of teachers and principals

In 2019, case study data showed that PTs, who received training through the ISU of VITE, conducted a range of training workshops with teachers, principals and some SIOs to support various aspects of the new curriculum. In 2021, an important system outcome impacting support of principals and teachers was that the role of PT was combined with that of SIO.

This change resulted in PT responsibilities being reallocated to SIOs, as described by a PEO:

> They (PTs) were employed under the ISU at VITE and deliver courses/training…Early this year I notice that there are no longer PTs, that positions were terminated…I have spoken with their manager and asked how we can use them, and he responded with 'They are resourceful people, …They have huge knowledge and they know the content of the new curriculum very well.

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[14] There are some documented shifts in focus in VESP II as a result of shifts institutional contexts and MoET priorities.

One (former) PT explained:

> It is a need to always have a training unit, because teachers always need trainings… The SIO are just administrator… VESP have supported me a lot in running the new school curriculum throughout every schools in the Tafea province and I am happy for that, I think we still need support in the area of monitoring in the schools.

With the amalgamation of provincial roles, especially with SIOs taking over the commitments of PTs, SIOs report challenges in managing expectations. An SIO commented on the increased demands of his position:

> The challenge with my role is we take so much on board - everything that comes through…the PEO ended on my plate. We have NGOs as well who are contributing to support education in Vanuatu, and this always ended on my table with the already over loaded work that I have.

A PEO and SIO shared concerns that SIOs are responsible for monitoring curriculum implementation, but did not receive any training on the new curriculum. The PEO reported:

> …the principals did not attend and SIO did not attend the trainings but the SIO main role is the monitoring part. They did not know the content of the curriculum and how can they monitor it.

One SIO reported that SIOs had only been included in training focused on implementing the new curriculum in the past two years. Of the four case study SIOs, one had not received any training during his time as SIO.

Case study respondents reported that the amalgamation of the PT and SIO roles has contributed to inconsistent provincial level support. In 2019 and 2021, teachers and principals reported they valued training and feedback from SIOs and PTs (as reported in 2019) but said there was rarely follow-up.

Many teachers expressed the need for more training and for follow up training to implement the new curriculum. Principals and other education stakeholders shared similar views in terms of teacher support, as reported by one principal from Efate:

> I think they need to do the actual follow up. They need to find the issues that the teachers may have with the guides. And then do another workshop for us to work on it.

Former PTs recognised the importance of follow up visits, but reported a lack of funds prevented them from providing this level of support to teachers.

One PEO spoke extensively about how his province offered support to teachers based on evidence from VANSTA and PILNA. This formed the basis for additional training to other zones in the province with support of funding from VESP:

> Seeing the VANSTA and PILNA results we identify that our main issue is reading and writing- student can't pronounce word and that lead to not being able to write as well. Finding that phonics is a challenge to teachers. We communicate VESP and they come over and they supported us…After the training provided by VITE teachers are improving in Phonics.

While teachers spoke positively about the role of PTs in observing them after they had attended training, they were less clear about the role of SIOs. Many teachers reported that SIOs supported only principals, and that principals then supported teachers. A Year 1 Tanna teacher said, "The SIOs do not come to observe our teaching in class at all."

A Year 1 teacher in Efate noted a lack of consistency in support from SIOs, "We haven't had a visit from an SIO since last year. Maybe they will come, but we just don't know when".

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.

With increased responsibilities, many SIOs now ask principals to observe teachers and send them a report. A principal in Efate said that it was up to her to provide support to teachers:

> So far, this year ever since I come on board there has been nothing for teachers to attend outside but we have a professional development training here and one of the sessions is the assessment session…I used the opportunity to relate to them that we do have Ademap language policy, we do have vernacular education from ECCE to Year 3 and Year 4 is the transition period.

To build school-wide knowledge and capacity associated with the new curriculum, and therefore enable more support and collaboration within schools, other principals noted the importance of sending the principal and multiple teachers to attend training together. One principal in Efate noted if he had gone through the new curriculum training, "then I would be in a better position to assist my teachers, both those teachers who have participated in trainings and those who have not." A principal in Tanna explained that when teachers attend training together they can discuss issues and provide support to one another:

> When attending the training I was encouraged to have two teachers per schools to attend the training. The purpose was for teachers after the training they can discuss lessons among themselves. They also encourage teachers not to isolate themselves in their classes but to support each other.

Teachers and principals also reported extensively how they worked to support each other in their teaching, often in peer groups or working with another colleague. A principal and teacher from the same school in Efate discussed the ways in which they support each other. The principal discussed school-wide planning, and the teacher explained how she works with another teacher at her grade level:

> 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)

A Year 3 and 4 teacher in Tanna described how teachers at her school work together to collect local stories, and send these to the Curriculum Development Unit of MoET for printing:

> We work together with other teachers to write stories in our natal tongue, custom stories. These stories are then sent to the new curriculum officers to print them and send them back…I think working together with other teachers is good because we can come together to share thoughts and ideas to better each other's teaching.

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. Principals and teachers reported they are encouraged to work together to develop relationships with other schools. One Year 2 teacher said, "This new curriculum has caused us to work together with the other schools to

put together learning outcomes." At the same time, distance presented challenges for teachers from different schools to meet with each other.

Case study respondents suggested that schools and teachers meeting together to share experiences about the new curriculum is, for the most part, dependent on the principal's initiative.

A Year 4 teacher in Tanna also suggested that meeting together was important to improve, but teachers are often dependent on a principal's initiative to meet together or run workshops:

> This relationship of working together with other teachers can be improved by running workshops and getting together with other teachers to find out where we are failing and where we need to improve. That depends entirely on the principal to organize these workshops…We also work together with other teachers from the nearby schools.

F.3 Language

In 2019, 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 2021, parents, principals, teachers and SIOs also offered a range of opinions on the challenges and successes of using language in the classroom.

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. The range of opinions offered by parents on this issue, as well as principals, teachers and SIOs points to the need for more community engagement and education, as well as engagement between MoET and school staff. However, data in 2019 and 2021 indicate greater levels of student and parent engagement in school because of the language policy and the new curriculum.

Student and parent engagement

Overall, principals and teachers noted increased engagement in school by students, and even parents, because of the language policy and the new curriculum. Parents expressed a wide range of opinions about language in schools including choice of language, the use of English or French from Year 1 onward, the challenge of multiple languages spoken at school, and the impact of learning in Bislama or vernacular on students' reading and writing skills from Year 4 onward.

A parent focus group in Tanna explained that they were aware of the new curriculum and the teaching of local languages, and suggested the decision of language to teach at the school be left to the school communities:

> The schools in the village can decide who will teach language etc. and then they can shift to French or English. The ministry should then allocate the teachers who can teach in certain languages to different schools to ensure proper translations… So the child can understand what they're learning with their language. So when they reach home everything just flows with their parents etc.

Parents voiced a variety of opinions about whether their children should learn English or French in the early years:

> We send our children to school to learn English and French but when they are speaking Bislama or vernacular in school making it very difficult for them to understand French and English.

> There are a lot of awareness around education during the past years and I am not really sure which is about the curriculum but I personally think Bislama is good. I speak Bislama at home and find out that the used of Bislama is good for my child. Teaching kids in school with Bislama has help my child. Bislama is a bit like English those who speak Bislama can easily understand English.

Parents from a community in Tanna raised some concerns about the new curriculum and using the vernacular:

> The chance I see is children are still speaking language up to class 3 and did not speak French or English. The changes I am seeing is children understand really well words and meaning because it in our language.

> I was frustrated about the change in curriculum and I have raised my concern with the teachers about learning in our language and Bislama, but they explained why it is important to teach in vernacular. I have come to understand but still I find that my child finds it hard with reading and writing.

A parent in Efate suggested that a Y 4 transition year to French is too late:

> This is a good question because I experienced this with my daughter. I think it is good to include Bislama, but it shouldn't just be Bislama or another language. If she's French for example, they shouldn't wait until she's in grade 4 to start implementing… The slow learners would be struggling the most in all of this. I think that if they do involve Bislama in grade 1, it shouldn't all be in Bislama. They should add some French to it, to prepare them for older grades.

Many principals and teachers reported increased student and parent engagement, due to the language policy. For example, a Tanna principal noted improved student-teacher interaction in class:

> There are plenty changes with the new curriculum one of the most important change is the interaction with students and teachers. Student who are quiet have the courage to talk in class since they learned in a language they understand and used that same language to communicate, whereas in the old curriculum we can't communicate well since we have limited understanding of the language itself and we know very few words.

Some case study respondents reported parents were more involved in helping students with homework because it is in a language they can understand. For example, as observed by a Year 3 teacher in Tanna:

> I have seen really big changes. One main change is that parents can helped their children with their home wok. Because of the language parents also understand.

F.4 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. In line with issues identified in year 1 of the Study, these include application of the language policy.

Application of the language policy

Some case study respondents spoke about the systems challenges which affects how schools implement the language policy. For example, as reported by the PEO in Tafea, the availability of teachers is a factor:

Tanna has different language so temporary teachers are usually the one teaching those lower classes due to the vernacular language and its barriers. For example there are teachers from other provinces teaching in that school. Those teachers cannot teach lower classes they do not speak the language.

Further, there are inconsistencies between how government and church education authorities implement the language policy:

Some schools who are under another authority like churches decided to teach either in French or English which is a misunderstanding. We have asked them to stop because it is a government policy for schools to act on and the government's intention is to take full vernacular across the board take vernacular as our identity and a child need to know his identity. (PEO)

This is a Catholic mission school therefore the school also has to adhere to church authorities. Therefore, we use the guides but we are translating all the Bislama guide contents back to French and teach it in French instead… We run the full new curriculum here but the only difference is the language of instruction – lessons are delivered in French but the teacher can use Bislama and vernacular where appropriate or needed. (Principal)

Annex G: Student learning outcomes: supporting analysis

Annex G provides additional analysis about 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 Report 1 explored various aspects of student learning by presenting student literacy and numeracy data from VANSTA 2017 and the PILNA 2015 and 2018 assessments, for Years 4 and 6 student cohorts who are yet to study under the new curriculum. Interim Report 2 provides the opportunity to include data from VANSTA 2019, including capturing learning outcomes data from student cohorts who have engaged in the new curriculum. It 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 2021 qualitative case study data from Tafea (Tanna) and Shefa (Efate), in addition to comparative highlights from 2019 data from Malampa (Malekula) and Penama (Pentecost) provinces, 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.

VANSTA 2019

VANSTA 2019 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 CDC alongside teachers in Vanuatu.

The VANSTA 2019 was 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.

A total of 385 schools (249 English-speaking; 136 French-speaking) took part for Year 4, and 373 schools (245 English-speaking; 128 French-speaking) schools for Year 6. Table G.1 shows a further breakdown of the characteristics of the students who took VANSTA 2017 and 2019 by gender and province.

Table G.1. Characteristics of students who participated in at least one domain of VANSTA 2017 and 2019

Characteristics		2017		2019	
		Y4	Y6	Y4	Y6
Gender	Male	3545 (53)	2640 (50)	4226 (52)	3351 (52)
	Female	3122 (47)	2666 (50)	3918 (48)	3098 (48)
	N/A	7 (0.1)	1 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Province	Malampa	1114 (17)	1012 (19)	1241 (15)	1027 (16)

Characteristics		2017		2019	
		Y4	Y6	Y4	Y6
	Penama	744 (11)	536 (10)	912 (11)	657 (10)
	Sanma	1534 (23)	1158 (22)	1827 (22)	1422 (22)
	Shefa	175 (26)	1449 (27)	2180(27)	1994 (31)
	Tafea	1253 (19)	920 (17)	1596 (20)	1105 (17)
	Torba	278 (4)	232 (4)	388 (5)	244 (4)

Number in parentheses denotes percentage of student cohort.

G.1 Year 4 and 6 student performance

The following section outlines results from VANSTA 2017 and 2019 assessments.

To summarise, the results from the two years show that there is a high proportion of children not meeting the learning outcomes expected at their year level, particularly for English and French Literacy. Performance in numeracy across the two assessments is better, particularly for Year 4 students. Differences in performances by province is considerable. Girls, generally, have performed better than boys.
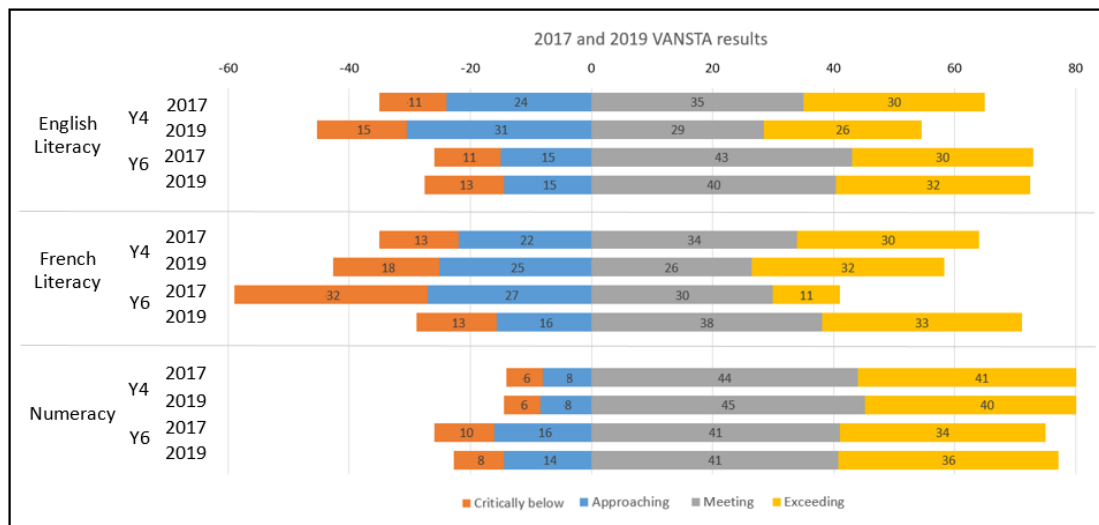
VANSTA 2017 and 2019

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

Figure G.1 displays a summary of the VANSTA 2017 and 2019 results. The percentages in the figure represent the proportion of students who returned a test result.

Figure G.1. Summary of VANSTA 2017 and 2019 results for each domain
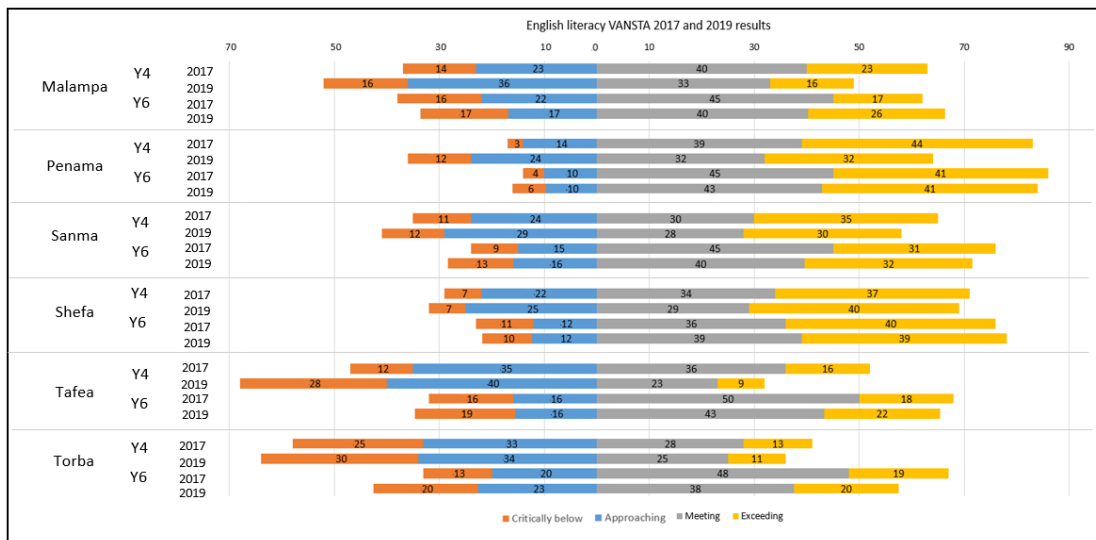
Literacy

Overall, English Literacy achievement declined in Year 4 and Year 6 from 2017 to 2019. 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. A closer look at the different domains in the literacy section below show the specific areas in which students perform less well.
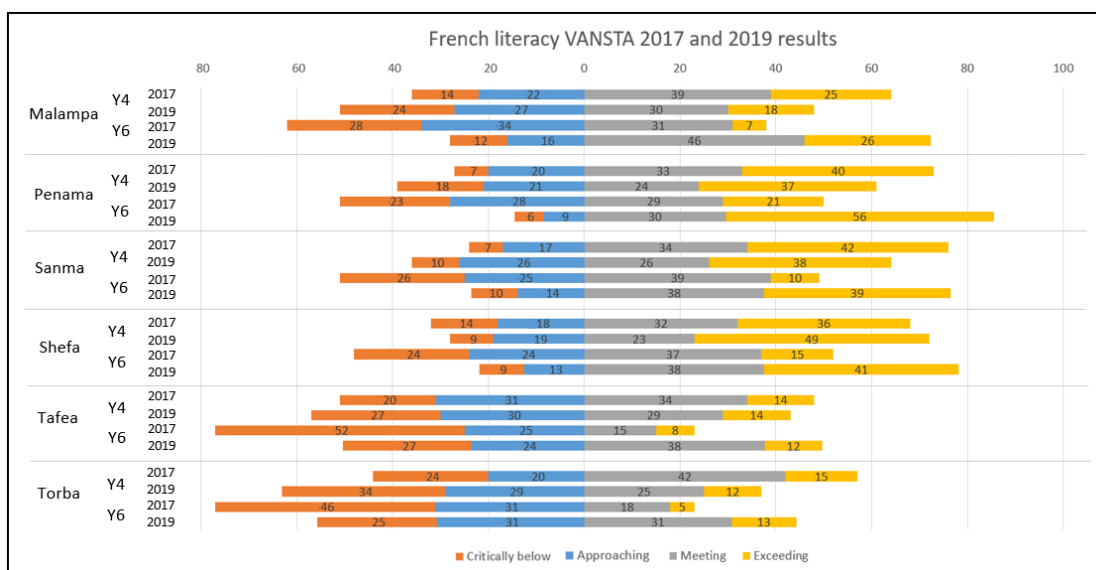
By province

Students in Year 4 performed lower in English Literacy and French Literacy across all provinces in 2019 compared to 2017, 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 and French Literacy in 2019.

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. In Torba, the percentage of students who were critically below the minimum standard increased by 7 percentage points (Figure G.2).

Figure G.2. English literacy results by year level and province in 2017 and 2019

However, for French Literacy (Figure G.3), student achievement improved in all provinces by a large amount in Year 6. The percentage of students performing at critically below the minimum standard decreased by 10 to 20 per cent from 2017 to 2019. While the significant improvement is encouraging, over half of the students in Tafea and Torba were still either approaching or critically below the minimum standard.
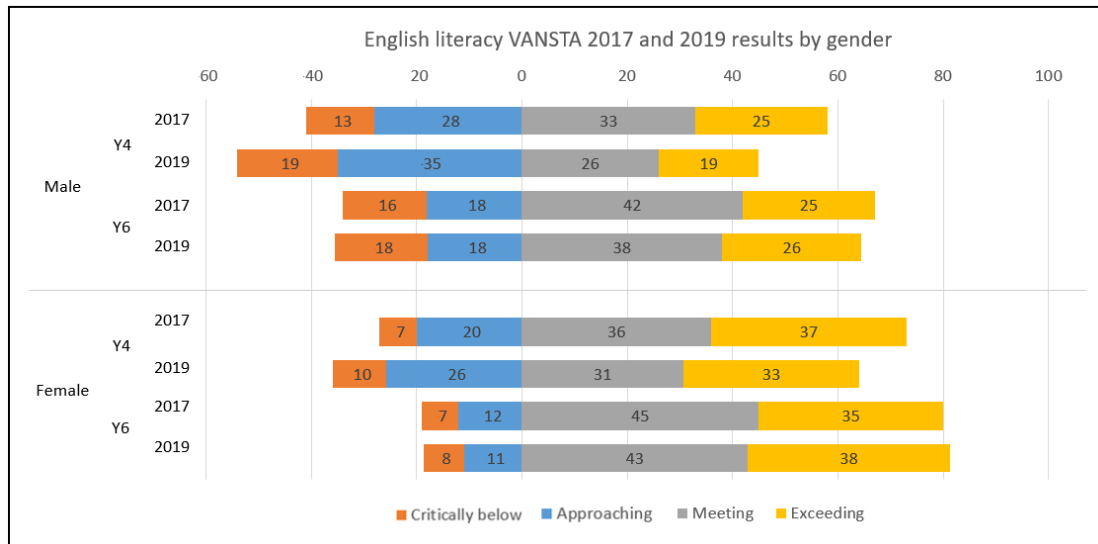

Figure G.3. French literacy results by year level and province in 2017 and 2019

In contrast, the provinces of Penama, Sanma and Shefa at both year levels and in both languages, generally met or exceeded national level results. Year 4 students in Malampa performed at similar levels to the national results, but were underperforming in both languages by Year 6.

A t-test shows that the difference between provinces is significant in 2019 for both year groups for English (p<0.001 for both years) and French literacy (p<0.001 for both years).
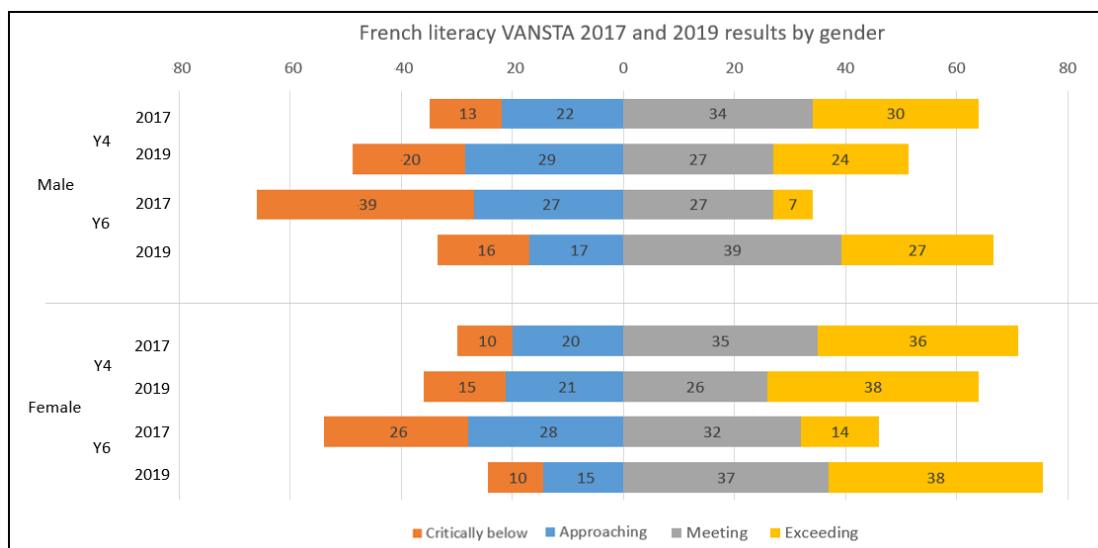
By gender

At both year levels, girls are outperforming boys in both languages in literacy. Figures G.4 and G.5 show the results broken down by gender in both 2017 and 2019 for each year group for English and French literacy respectively.

Figure G.4. English literacy results by year level and gender in 2017 and 2019

A one-way ANOVA shows that the difference between genders is significant in 2019 for both year groups for English (p<0.001 for both year groups) and French literacy (p<0.001 for both year groups).

Figure G.5. French literacy results by year level and gender in 2017 and 2019

By domain

All the VANSTA literacy assessments included three domains from the language curriculum – language elements, reading comprehension, and writing.

The Year 4 tests included:
- 15 - 17 questions about different elements in language (spelling, article, singular/plural usage etc.);
- 4 - 5 comprehension passages with 10 - 14 multiple choice questions; and,
- One writing passage requiring students to describe their classroom in four sentences.

The Year 6 tests consisted of
- 19 questions about elements of language (spelling, article, singular/plural usage etc.);
- Comprehension passages with 14 multiple choice or short response questions;
- Writing a creative story about a fish in the English assessment and for the French assessment,
- Writing a persuasive article about why a favourite sport, interest or activity should be undertake by the reader.

Table G.2. Percentage of students' achievement by literacy domain for Year 4 in 2017 and 2019 for English schools

Literacy (English) – Year 4	Critically below min. standard	Critically below min. standard	Approaching min. standard	Approaching min. standard	Meeting min. standard	Meeting min. standard	Exceeding min. standard	Exceeding min. standard
	2017	**2019**	**2017**	**2019**	**2017**	**2019**	**2017**	**2019**
Language	10%	10%	17%	14%	52%	55%	21%	22%
Reading	6%	13%	31%	34%	28%	48%	35%	4%
Writing	8%	20%	11%	22%	39%	32%	42%	26%

Table G.3. Percentage of students' achievement by literacy domain for Year 6 in 2017 and 2019 for English schools

Literacy (English) – Year 6	Critically below min. standard	Critically below min. standard	Approaching min. standard	Approaching min. standard	Meeting min. standard	Meeting min. standard	Exceeding min. standard	Exceeding min. standard
	2017	**2019**	**2017**	**2019**	**2017**	**2019**	**2017**	**2019**
Language	20%	6%	24%	32%	33%	39%	23%	23%
Reading	18%	11%	26%	29%	39%	25%	17%	35%
Writing	14%	16%	17%	23%	32%	33%	37%	28%

For English Literacy in both Years 4 and 6, students achieved lower scores in the reading comprehension and writing domains compared to the language elements domain in 2019 (refer Tables G.2 and G.3).

Table G.4. Percentage of students' achievement by literacy domain for Year 4 in 2017 and 2019 for French schools

Literacy (French) – Year 4	Critically below min. standard	Critically below min. standard	Approaching min. standard	Approaching min. standard	Meeting min. standard	Meeting min. standard	Exceeding min. standard	Exceeding min. standard
	2017	**2019**	**2017**	**2019**	**2017**	**2019**	**2017**	**2019**
Language	7%	13%	33%	58%	42%	19%	17%	10%
Reading	7%	7%	31%	56%	29%	13%	33%	25%
Writing	19%	39%	15%	13%	31%	24%	35%	24%

Table G.5. Percentage of students' achievement by literacy domain for Year 6 in 2017 and 2019 for French schools

Literacy (French) – Year 6	Critically below min. standard	Critically below min. standard	Approaching min. standard	Approaching min. standard	Meeting min. standard	Meeting min. standard	Exceeding min. standard	Exceeding min. standard
	2017	**2019**	**2017**	**2019**	**2017**	**2019**	**2017**	**2019**
Language	21%	19%	35%	21%	30%	52%	14%	8%
Reading	19%	21%	23%	9%	40%	26%	18%	44%
Writing	57%	31%	21%	8%	12%	29%	10%	31%

In contrast, students performed lower in the language elements domain in French in Year 4, with 71 per cent of students critically below or approaching minimum standard, compared to 63 per cent of students for reading, and 52 per cent for writing. In Year 6, students demonstrated a low performance in the language domain and the writing domain, with 41 per cent and 40 per cent of students critically below or approaching minimum standard respectively (refer to Tables G.4 and G.5).

Numeracy

In 2019, there were fewer Year 6 students meeting or exceeding the minimum standards (77%) than Year 4 students (85%) – the same pattern as 2017. Year 4 and Year 6 numeracy performance levels across students tested in English and French students were similar (Table G.6).

Table G.6. Percentage of English-speaking and Francophone students achieving different levels in the VANSTA 2019 numeracy test

Level of achievement	English students	English students	Francophone students	Francophone students
	Y4	**Y6**	**Y4**	**Y6**
Critically below minimum standard	6%	9%	5%	7%
Approaching minimum standard	8%	15%	9%	14%
Meeting minimum standard	43%	40%	50%	44%
Exceeding minimum standard	43%	37%	36%	35%

By province

As Figure G.6 shows, provincial level results for numeracy show a large improvement in all provinces from 2017 to 2019 for Year 6. The largest improvement was seen in Torba and Tafea provinces for Year 6 students going from 52 per cent of students critically below minimum standards to 12 per cent in Tafea and 46 per cent of students critically below minimum standards to 10 per cent in Torba.

Ninety per cent of students in Year 6 in Penama and 90 per cent of students in Year 4 in Shefa met or exceeded minimum standards in 2019.
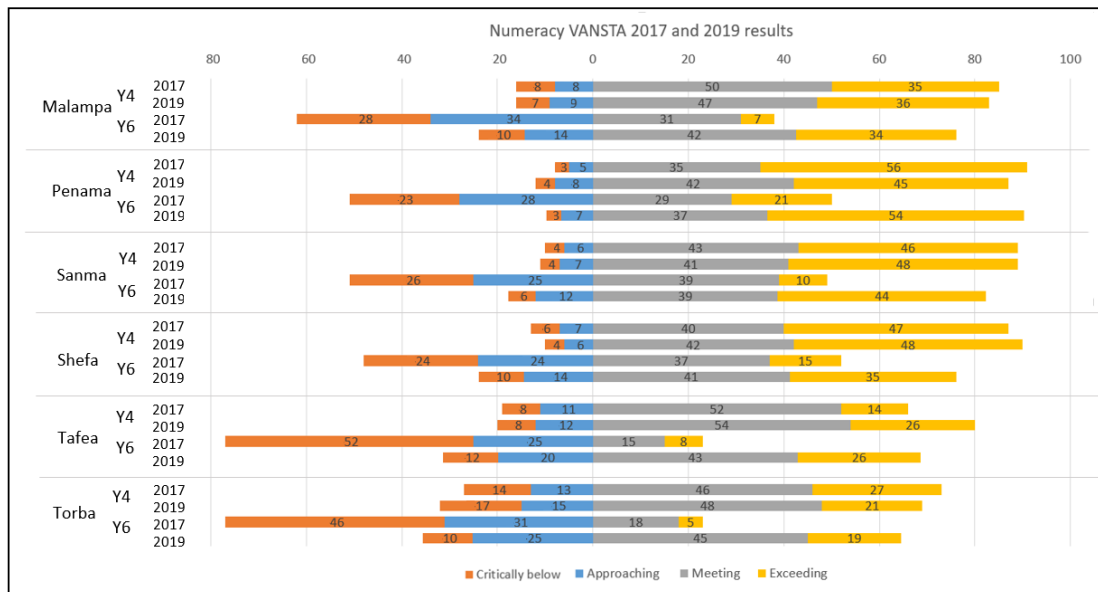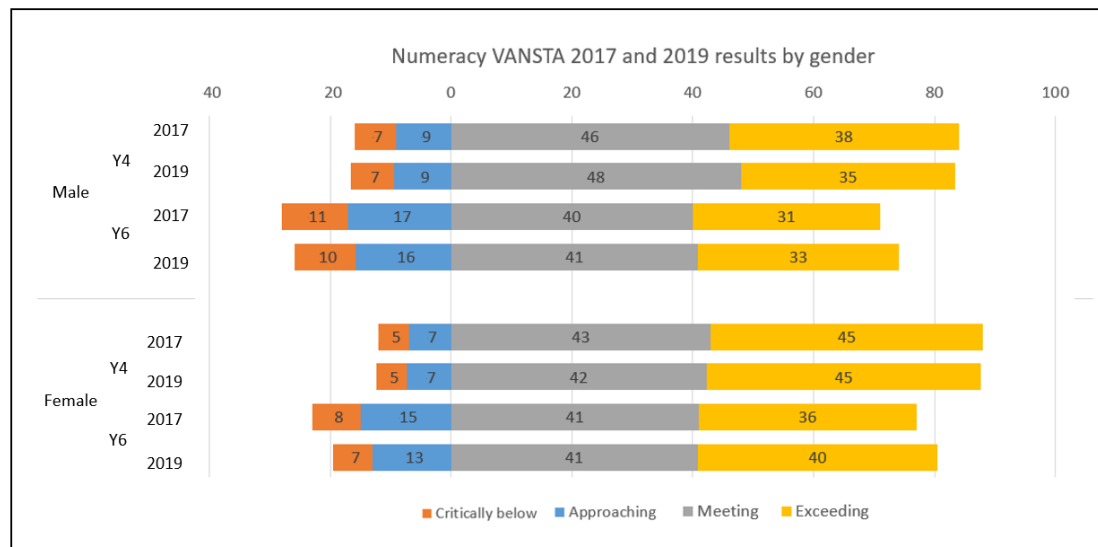
Figure G.6. VANSTA 2017 and 2019 Numeracy results by year level and province

A t-test shows that the difference between provinces is significant in 2019 for both year groups for Numeracy (p<0.001 for both years).

By gender

Once again, girls outperformed boys in 2019 compared to 2017. Figure G.7 shows that in 2019, a greater percentage of girls either met or exceeded minimum standards by six per cent (Year 4) or seven per cent (Year 6) compared to boys.

Figure G.7. VANSTA 2017 and 2019 Numeracy results by year level and gender

A one-way ANOVA test shows that the difference between genders is significant in 2019 for both year groups for Numeracy (p<0.001 for both year groups).

Change in student performance between 2017 and 2019

Students who took VANSTA 2017 can be matched using the VEMIS unique identifier (ID) to their results in 2019.

During the matching process, it was revealed that:

- For Year 4 there are 1048 students who do not have a VEMIS ID attached to their name. Fourteen students in Year 4 in 2019 were also in Year 4 in 2017.
- For Year 6 there are 764 students who do not have a VEMIS ID attached to their name. There are 3418 students who can be matched to the Year 4 2017 database. Four students in Year 6 in 2019 were also in Year 6 in 2017.
- For Year 8 there are 389 students who do not have a VEMIS ID attached to their name. There are 1892 students who can be matched to the Year 6 2017 database.

First, we will examine the 3418 Year 6 students in 2019 who also completed the VANSTA 2017 assessment as Year 4 students.

Out of these students:

- 2265 students completed the English Literacy assessment in 2017 and 2019. 1452 of these students (64%) either maintained or improved their level to be performing at or above the minimum curriculum standard. However, there is a proportion of students (18%, N=411) who are still achieving below the minimum curriculum standard from year to year.
- 883 students completed the French Literacy assessment in 2017 and 2019. 658 of these students (75%) either maintained or improved their level to be performing at or above the minimum curriculum standard. However, there is a proportion of students (15%, N=132) who are still achieving below the minimum curriculum standard from year to year.
- 3203 students completed the Numeracy assessment in 2017 and 2019. 2608 of these students (81%) either maintained or improved their level to be performing at or above the minimum curriculum standard. In Numeracy, only a small proportion of students (8%, N=263) are still achieving below the minimum curriculum standard from year to year compared to English or French Literacy.

Now looking at the 1892 Year 8 students in 2019 who also completed the VANSTA 2017 assessment as Year 6 students, where a VEMIS ID was present and could be matched.

Out of these students:

- 108 students completed the English Literacy assessment in 2017 and 2019. 83 of these students (77%) either maintained or improved their level to be performing at or above the minimum curriculum standard. Eleven per cent (N=12) are still achieving below the minimum curriculum standard from year to year.
- 16 students completed the French Literacy assessment in 2017 and 2019. Twelve of these students (75%) either maintained or improved their level to be performing at or above the minimum curriculum standard. A small number (N=4; 25%) are still achieving below the minimum curriculum standard from year to year.
- 179 students completed the Numeracy assessment in 2017 and 2019. 142 of these students (79%) either maintained or improved their level to be performing at or above the minimum curriculum standard. Improvements in Numeracy from 2017 to 2019 was vast – only eight students (4%), out of the matched sample, are still achieving below the minimum curriculum standard from year to year.

G.2 Perceptions of student learning outcomes

The following section presents year 2 case study data from Tanna (Tafea) and Efate (Shefa) 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 (Tanna and Efate) selected for the year 2 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 Tanna and Efate on stakeholder perspectives on changes to student literacy and numeracy outcomes.

<u>Literacy</u>

There were a wide range of perspectives reported by all stakeholders – including teachers, principals, parents and SIOs – regarding students' reading, writing skills and speaking skills.

In 2021, many case study respondents noted 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.

A Year 2 teacher in Tanna explained how the ability to use Bislama has supported her students' ability to read and comprehension skills:

> Now with the new curriculum, teachers and students can communicate. The students can understand and give quick responses…when the passage is in Bislama they can read and understand what they are reading. If you ask them what the passage is about, they are able to tell you.

Another Year 2 teacher in Tanna said the resources that accompany the new curriculum supported students' reading skills:

> But with the new curriculum, it has made it easy for us teachers to properly present reading book to our students. For example…they also provide smaller books that can be distributed among the students so they can all follow along with you, word by word, what you are reading…In the past these resources where not present.

The case study interviews asked stakeholders about challenges for students in literacy. In 2019 and 2021, case study respondents reported that the transition to English or French in Year 4 presents challenges. Some principals, teachers and parents reported the transition had a negative impact on students' reading and writing skills. For example:

> It was a challenge, especially for the Francophones. It wasn't easy for them. Talking to the kids is fine because they can do it in Bislama, but transitioning was hard. For grade 4 was hard… Their goal is to use Bislama but it's harder with French... But the structure of writing in French, is hard. (Principal, Efate)

> Teaching using Bislama in grade 1 and 2 then transitioning to English in grade 3 and 4 is difficult on the student's learning. My colleagues think this transition is not good. Especially when the students get to grade 3 and 4, they find it hard to understand their reading and writing, because of the sounds as I have already mentioned. (Year 2 Teacher, Tanna)

> When it comes to the transitioning, then there is a problem. They're speaking is okay, but their writing is not the same. Switching to English, their spelling is all in Bislama. (Year 3 Teacher, Efate)

> So the students find it difficult during writing because of the difference in how words are spelt and written in English and Bislama. When it comes to speaking, the students do okay however, it is the writing part that students have trouble with. (Year 2 Teacher, Tanna)

Multiple teachers from French schools recognise the benefits of applying a dual language transition approach:

> Going through the books that are also in Bislama, we'd have to also take time to translate it back to French. At the moment, we're just following the book, but just in French... We teach in French, but when we're explaining in Bislama the students understand better.... (Year 1 Teacher, Efate)

> But when I started to balance it, the kids like it and understand better. The work flows better. In the classroom I use French, but when I see that they're still not understanding then I use Bislama. (Year 4 Teacher, Efate)

Parents reported a range of opinions in terms of using Bislama or vernacular and their children's abilities in reading and writing. Parents offered many perspectives on the challenges and successes of language use in the new curriculum:

> The changes I am seeing is children understand really well words and meaning because it in our language. I was very impressed by these young kids, we are using the Bislama Bible for church on Sundays and listening to them reading it, was really good.

> For this new curriculum, I notice many children in class 4 cannot read. In the old curriculum class 4 children can already read. My daughter is in class 4 but cannot read

> With other subjects it will be ok to learn in the local language but reading in French or writing is very hard.

In years 1 and 2 of the Study, multiple case study respondents observed students are now more talkative and expressive, and able to speak more coherently and clearly. Many teachers reported that their students are able to quickly respond to questions, and show increased interest and confidence in engaging in the classroom. A Year 1 teacher in Efate explained how using a familiar language improves the ability of teachers to understand their students' learning:

> I think the kids are no longer afraid to speak up. When we use to speak in English, the students found it too difficult to respond. Now they are able to express themselves better. You are more able to communicate with the students, and you can get an idea of how much of the lesson they understand. You're speaking a language you both understand well, so communication flows.

A Year 2 teacher in Tanna explained how language use in the new curriculum improves speaking and use of language in class:

> The new curriculum is much easier for learning to exchange between me and the student. Whatever I say, the student understands, because the language I use is the language the student knows. The student can reply to me and ask questions and talk to me about what he/she knows.

A frequent expression used by respondents was 'communication flows'. A principal in Efate discussed the 'flow' of conversation in the classroom:

> One of the most significant changes is the great flow of discussion in the class because the students get to speak in Bislama or the language they are fluent in and are very comfortable using it. That makes it easier for the teacher as well. The flow of discussions in the classroom is more powered in the classroom.

A SIO in Tanna reported a similar shift in classroom talk:

> Many children are excited with the new curriculum because they are free to talk. When teachers talk to them in the local language, they are free to talk with them. The teachers are also helping them with their speaking.

<u>Numeracy</u>

As in year 1, 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 resources had supported improved academic outcomes for students. Two teachers in Efate offered perspectives of how textbooks and numeracy kits accompanying the new curriculum supported students' learning in numeracy:

> Mathematics has improved a lot with the new textbooks. I see through the results I get from the kids. I am working a lot with the kids and the new textbooks that come with resources. I see that it's working really well. (Year 3 teacher)

> Before the new curriculum we didn't have numeracy kits… With the hands-on material in the lower classes, I discovered that the kids learn a lot. (Year 1 teacher)

A Year 1 teacher in Tanna said that using Bislama or vernacular in the new curriculum had improved students' understanding of key concepts in numeracy:

> In terms of addition and subtraction, the old ways of teaching had teachers using "plus" and "minus" but after the new curriculum teachers use the words "addem up" and "tekem out" making it easier and clearer for the students to understand.

Student participation, interest and wellbeing

In 2019 and 2021, 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 and 2021 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.

<u>Student participation and interest in school</u>

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. A former PT in Tanna explained that the new curriculum encouraged both teacher and student enjoyment in school:

> Through the new curriculum, I see that the children are enjoying school. They are learning things that are a part of or within their environment…With the new curriculum, I have found that a lot of teachers enjoy teaching the new curriculum and a lot of student enjoy coming to school.

A Year 2 teacher in Efate reported that the combination of strategies such as group work and students able to speak in a familiar language improved student participation:

> It used to be only the teachers talking, but now more participation from the students. We put them in groups for discussion to share their experiences.

A principal in Tanna observed an improvement in student confidence and engagement since the implementation of the new curriculum:

> The children are happy and like the activities and always come to school when compared to the old curriculum. The activities interest them a lot…When I ask a question to the class everyone would put their hand up to answer and want to be picked on. They have confidence.

A number of respondents attributed the change in student interest to language and connection to the lessons. A Principal in Efate said:

> We started late but we used the guides and the activities required and they really capture students' interest – they learned about things that they know or understand - especially activities in history classes or social science where we have field trips or talk about our surrounding/society.

Many parents noted a shift in students' interest in school. A parent in Efate acknowledged the importance of home support in stimulating student interest in lessons:

> I asked about their performance in schools – asked about anything that the teacher may find that I can help my child with at home. Helping your child and praising them for their achievements in class and also getting to help your child also help create boost their interest in learning.

Student 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.

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. As one Year 3 teacher in Tanna said, "They read well and have confidence". A Year 4 teacher noted that training provided through VESP helped him address bullying issues in his classroom, "The training taught me how to properly handle the situation, properly handle bullies, by coming up with activities that can get the student's attention and get them to quiet down".

The changes cited include not only the ability to use a language the students are familiar with, but also lessons and resources that support wellbeing. An SIO summarised:

> Especially in my area, the use of foreign languages like French and English makes children scared to come to school. Using the local language makes children happy to go to school.

A Year 3 teacher in Efate suggested that the connection between speaking a language a student is familiar with resulted in more confidence in class:

> We have morning news in the morning; and the students are no longer scared to stand up in front of the class and talk. They have confidence when talking, because it's his home language.

A principal in Tanna noted activities in the new curriculum improve student's confidence in class:

> The child is no longer shy like…before. If you ask the class to go put an answer on the blackboard the whole class runs to the black board to want to write the answer. So, the new curriculum has

changed the child a lot. The shy child (is) shy only during the first term and towards the second and third term (is) confident because the activities encourage every student to participate.

Student attendance

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.

Regardless, many attendance issues are 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. A principal in Tanna emphasised that class activities supported students' interest in lessons, despite the challenges of weather or parent priorities:

> The activities also are interesting for the students especially the group or class activities. Therefore, the student is always interested to attend classes. The only thing that would be stopping them from coming to class is bad weather or their parents wanting them to participate in some special community occasion or traditional event.

A principal in Efate suggested a link between high attendance rates and student interest in learning:

> From my level of management this school has been having a low level of absenteeism, which means that students are interested to learn.

A Year 1 teacher in Tanna said:

> In the past students aren't interested in coming to school, but presently they are because of the resources provided for teaching. They can see it and feel and touch so they are interested to come to school every day. The students are all willing to learn, there is not one that will just sit there and refuse to learn, everyone wants to learn.

Classroom environment

In case study schools, researchers were required to make an assessment of the classroom environment. Table G.7 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 G.7 Classroom environment section of classroom observation instrument

Class is….	Evidence might include:
o **Cooperative and supportive of one another**	o Teachers and students work together harmoniously o Classroom atmosphere is joyful o Interactions are respectful, kind and encouraging o Most activity focused on learning
o **Compliant**	o Students do what the teacher says o Classroom atmosphere is complacent o Interactions are respectful but may not be kind or encouraging o Most activity focused on procedures and completing tasks
o **Unruly**	o Students <u>do not</u> do what the teacher says o Classroom atmosphere is disrupted o Interactions are disrespectful o Most activity focused on managing student behaviour

As shown in Figure G.8, three teachers were assessed as having a 'cooperative and supportive' class for their observations (one teacher for both observations, and two teachers for their single observations). Three teachers were assessed as having a mix of 'cooperative and supportive' and 'compliant' classes over the two lessons. Two teachers were classified as having elements of an 'unruly' class.

Teacher	A	A	B	B	C	C	D	D	E	E	F	F	G	G	H	H
CO	1	2	1	2	1	2*	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2*
Cooperative & supportive	o			o	o		o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	
Compliant	o	o						o	o	o	o	o				
Unruly	o	o	o													

o = observed   *Only one CO conducted due to teacher being absent for CO2.

Figure G.8. Classroom environment assessment made by researchers during classroom observations

Set out below are some excerpts from researchers' notes for 'unruly' classes which indicates significant student management and behaviour issues:

> The building was divided half way and there is space for noise to come through from the grade one students to their class. The teacher also tries her best to control her class as the support/assistant teacher did not turn up that day to help her. When explaining or giving instruction to do activities only a few students were listing most of her class is either playing or trying to distract those who are concentrating. Throughout the lesson she is trying her best to manage her class as they were not doing what she is saying. (Efate)

> Teacher managed student behaviour many times during the lesson. Behaviour here was mainly around talking with others when the teacher is talking and not paying attention to what the teacher was saying. Usually, the same students repeatedly. (Efate)

Parent and community support

The next section presents data from Tanna and Efate on stakeholder perspectives on how parents support students' learning and the impact of government and school level initiatives focused on engaging parents on education.

Parent support of students

Parents and communities have an impact on students' engagement in school. In particular, 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.

Many parents said that it was important for them to be informed about the education of their children, and recognised the importance of their role in their children's learning. For example:

> Yes, because I believe that we shouldn't always be depending on the teachers. Like a popular saying used by wise people in the past, "education starts at home". Kids spend most of their time at home and in their communities, so I believe that parents, communities even chiefs need to work together to ensure that our kids are successful in school and outside of school.

> I believe that our children can perform well if we parents put in extra effort to support them.

> Sometimes it is my fault because I should also be helping from home. When we don't help, and they aren't performing we end up complaining about the language. But it's not just their fault, it's all of ours. So when my son isn't reading or pronouncing well, I think I also have responsibility.

Parents in Tanna emphasised the importance of Government and school councils working together to support student learning:

> The school Council and the parents must work together for the betterment of our school in improving our children's learning.

A Year 2 teacher in Efate suggested she was aware when students did not have parent support at home:

> We have parent interviews…Some parents who help with homework. They care about their kids' education. We can tell which students do not receive any help from home.

Some parents also acknowledged that they speak to teachers when they want to know about their children's academic progress, or about issues that their children might experience in school:

> It is important so you know your child's education. Whether their education level is increasing, decreasing or remaining the same. I come to see the teachers and ask them about the progress of my child's learning.

A number of respondents discussed the role of parents in supporting children's homework. One parent described the benefits of supporting her child's homework:

> It is also a good way of stay on track with your child performance in schools. This has helped my child to get good results as I was informed of her work in school and have helping her out at home.

A principal in Efate suggested that the shift to Bislama encourages parent support of homework:

> Parents tend to help their children more with homework when their homework is given in Bislama.

Teachers in Tanna also noted that language familiarity was an important aspect of parents' support of homework. One Year 3 teacher said:

> I have seen really big changes. One main change is that parents can helped their children with their homework. Because of the language parents also understand…when we give children their homework we also provide space were parents can give comments and we teachers will go through it later during class.

At the same time, some students live in households where they do not have homework support. A principal in Tanna discussed some of the challenges in for parents in providing support to their children:

> I tell my teachers to provide a bit more support towards those students who live with their grandparents alone, and not expect them to be completing their homework, as most or all of the grandparents in this part of the island may have not attended formal education and would not be able to assist with homework.

Some schools hold workshops or other school awareness activities to discuss how parents can support their children in school. Some principals noted that it is a challenge to encourage parents in his school's community to commit to their children's learning. A principal in Tanna discussed the role that his school and teachers play to encourage parents to be engaged in school:

> My teachers and I communicate with the community a lot. Last Saturday we had a talk with the community about students' absences from classes so we cooperate well. This is a community school which is kind of owned by the community.

<u>Engagement with parents</u>

Since 2016, the Government has sponsored national campaigns informing parents about the importance of education and the importance of enrolling children in school at the right age *(Yia 6 Klas 1)*, and parents said they heard about these through the radio or via a phone message. Parent focus groups noted that they were familiar with two national campaigns to encourage engagement with schools. Parents in Tanna discussed the importance of these campaigns in spreading awareness about education:

> It would be good for a lot of parents to come to the awarenesses so we can give our thoughts and ideas to take to the ministries so they can change the system. This is what I think about these awarenesses. At this point, there are only a few of us.

Parents in Efate put forward similar reflections to parents in Tanna:

> The messages in those campaigns help people understand the importance of it. After the campaign you can see parents taking the message serious and putting their child in school as early as 3 - 4 years old.

Another parent focus group in Efate discussed the importance of exposing their children to the school environment at a young age. One parent said that school-sponsored activities like 'pikinini play time' help familiarise young children with the school:

> I bring my one year old here every Wednesday. They are already starting kindy with pikinini play time. I think it is good for one day each week, because my daughter is now in grade 2... By the time they went to kindy, everything just flowed. Because they already got use to the school environment.

Case study respondents reported that schools are making an effort to encourage parents to become engaged with the school, and particularly through involvement in their children's education. A principal described how his Efate school is doing this:

> We organise parent's discussion with the teachers. We have programs where communities come to the school. We have parent's interviews. We also invite a father or mother to sit in a class and observe their child's behaviour.

A Year 2 teacher in Efate explained how her school involves parents in supporting children with homework:

> We give them readings to take home, and the parents have to sign their reading folders. With numeracy, we do visual aids. We ask the parents to assist them when needed. It lets us know if the parents see what their kids are doing or not.

G.3 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.

A parent in Efate acknowledged that it is not only the school's responsibility to support student learning, but the responsibility of parents as well:

> Maybe it could also be the problems in the home that could be affecting the kids. When they come to school seeing their parents fight or not have food at home, it could also really impact them. We can blame the school, but if we also have problems like this happening at home then we also need to address it.

This observation was also made by a Year 2 teacher in Efate who commented on lack of engagement by some students in her class:

> There are students who sometimes come without breakfast because they live very far from school. So they have to come early in the morning.

A Year 4 teacher in Efate explained that some of her students enrolled in school at a late age, and supporting a range of learning levels in one class is challenging:

> About 5 students in my class never went to Kindergarten so never learnt the basics but because of their age they had to be enrolled directly into Yr 2 or Yr1 and that is a challenge in classroom learning.

Cultural events in the community also contribute to factors that impede student learning. A principal in Tanna described an event in his community in which students were unable to participate in formal education for a year:

> In 2020 there was a custom movement in the community which restricted its members from participating in some specific activities such as formal school/education or church attendance. Almost 50% of my school children did not attend school but stayed at home for a year…This affected the students learning. I had to make them repeat the class they were in last year.

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. The lack of a library – or a library damaged by a cyclone – was particularly noted as an issue that impedes improvement in reading, given that may be the only source of books for a child. A Tanna parent said:

> There is a need to have more school resources especially with reading. The library was damaged in 2015 during cyclone Pam and reading books were damage at that time. If we want our kids to improve with reading, they need to provide us with reading books to support our child.

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