

EDUCATION ANALYTICS SERVICES: TEACHER DEVELOPMENT MULTI-YEAR STUDIES

Evaluation of Australia's Investment in
Teacher Development in Lao PDR
Summary of the 2019 Baseline Report



Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



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Acronyms

ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
BEQUAL	Basic Education Quality and Access in Lao PDR
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
EMIS	Education Management Information System
G1	Grade 1
Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic
LADLF	Laos-Australia Development Learning Facility
MoES	Lao PDR Ministry of Education and Sports
PAs	Pedagogical Advisers
PESS	Provincial Education and Sports Services
SEAMEO	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization
SEA-PLM	Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

“Results from the baseline indicates that the majority of G1 students fall well below the expectations of the Lao curriculum for reading, writing, listening and speaking. This highlights the complex interface between context, curriculum and teaching and the important role that teachers can play in supporting children as they enter school.”

1. Introduction

1.1 Context of the summary report

In 2019, the Government of Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) introduced a new primary education curriculum to improve teaching quality and student learning outcomes. The Government's *Education and Sports Sector Development Plan 2021-25* focuses on improving teacher knowledge and skills as a means to improve student learning outcomes. This report summarises baseline findings just prior to these significant curriculum changes. These changes are supported by the Australian Government through its Basic Education Quality and Access in Laos (BEQUAL) program. The Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has commissioned a study to investigate how BEQUAL is making a difference to the Government of Lao PDR's ongoing primary education reforms. This study is part of a multi-year series undertaken by DFAT's Education Analytics Service to investigate teacher and learning development initiatives in three countries: Lao PDR, Timor-Leste and Vanuatu.

Key findings from this study include: the need for intensive action on Lao language literacy; targeted teacher training on the new curriculum, with a special emphasis on second language learners; and deepened engagement with school communities to reduce student absenteeism and improve student readiness for school.

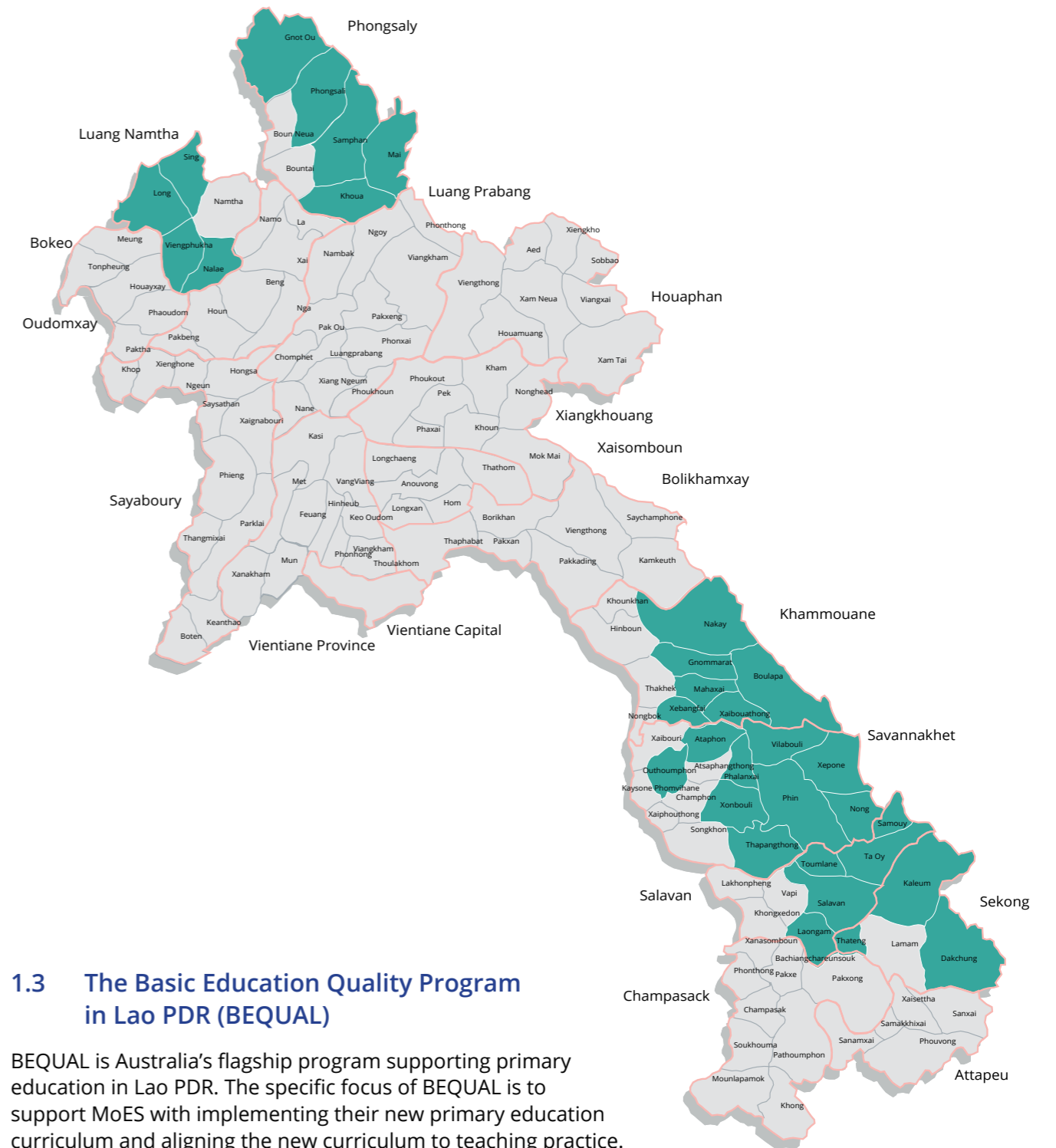
The key findings were identified at the end of the first data collection period in 2019 and reported by Wong et. al (2020). The focus of this summary is therefore prior to the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 and subsequent major impact on education systems throughout the world, especially in low-middle income countries including Lao PDR. The first cycle of the Lao PDR study is referred to here as the baseline study. The next two cycles of the Lao PDR study, in 2021 and 2022, will gather further data from G1 teachers and students who have received the new G1 curriculum.

The completion of this baseline study was the product of a strong and collaborative partnership that was developed between the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), the Laos-Australia Development Learning Facility (LADLF), DFAT's Vientiane Post and Education Section, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), the BEQUAL program team, and an in-country team of data collectors and researchers.

1.2 Lao PDR education context

Lao PDR has made significant progress towards achieving universal primary education and gender parity in primary enrolment in the last 10 years, however, the quality of education remains a major challenge. High rates of drop-out and grade repetition are persistent problems (MoES, 2020). The results from national and regional assessments in Grade 3 (MoES, 2018), Grade 5 (UNICEF & SEAMEO, 2021) and Grade 9 (MoES, 2020) show very low levels of proficiency in Lao language and mathematics. Student achievement is generally lower in rural and remote agricultural communities with high concentrations of ethnic and linguistic diversity (LADLF, n.d.). Underlying factors include limited exposure to print materials outside of formal schooling and a linguistic mismatch between the Lao language of instruction and students' mother tongue (ACER, 2015).

The Lao education system faces a range of challenges that impact teacher quality. Teaching methods typically emphasise rote learning. The minimum qualification to become a teacher is lower-secondary education, and the system has struggled to attract and maintain qualified teachers in remote and ethnic areas. Staffing challenges contribute to the problems of incomplete schools (that is, where the school does not offer all primary grades) and multi-grade classes (DFAT, 2014).



1.3 The Basic Education Quality Program in Lao PDR (BEQUAL)

BEQUAL is Australia's flagship program supporting primary education in Lao PDR. The specific focus of BEQUAL is to support MoES with implementing their new primary education curriculum and aligning the new curriculum to teaching practice. The new curriculum for Lao language and other subjects was introduced in the 2019-20 school year, and is being gradually phased in across all five primary grades.

Under the new curriculum, teachers are provided with teacher guides and other supporting teaching and learning resources (for Lao language, these include storybooks, decodable readers, flashcards and pictures). The new curriculum also introduces a number of specific teaching practices, including student-centred learning approaches, localised curriculum, active learning, and formative assessment of student learning progress. These practices are complemented by an in-service teacher professional development program to support Provincial Education and Sports Services (PESS) to deliver face-to-face teacher orientation training. Additional in-service support is provided to teachers, principals and schools in the 32 BEQUAL targeted districts through strengthening communities of practice, monitoring visits, teacher cluster meetings and district level education support grants.

2. Methodology of the Lao PDR study

2.1 Research questions

The Lao PDR study seeks to answer the question: *To what extent does BEQUAL support improve teaching quality and student literacy in Lao PDR?*

It approaches this broader question by focusing on change in these two key areas:

Question 1

To what extent and how does teaching quality change following BEQUAL-supported in-service program?

Question 2

To what extent and how do students' literacy outcomes change following the new curriculum implementation?

The study has adopted a mixed methods approach utilising both quantitative and qualitative methods. The research follows teachers and principals over four years while the new BEQUAL-supported national Lao language curriculum is rolled out.

2.2 Data collection

The first stage report captured 'state of play' information in 2019 before the start of the curriculum reforms. This information is important for providing the foundation for later comparison of change in teaching quality and student literacy outcomes: (a) before curriculum reforms started [baseline study]; and (b) after curriculum reforms are underway.

The baseline data collection process was conducted over two weeks in April-May 2019, at the end of the school year and prior to the roll-out of the new curriculum. Study participants included Grade 1 (G1) teachers, principals, pedagogical advisers (PAs) and G1 students within BEQUAL's 32 target districts. As shown in Table 1 below, quantitative data was collected via questionnaires administered in 355 schools to 347 G1 teachers (55 per cent female) and 348 principals (23 per cent female). A G1 Lao language literacy test and student background questionnaire were administered to 2,269 G1 students (47 per cent female). In addition, across 12 case study schools, 34 interviews and 30 classroom observations of G1 Lao language lessons were completed.

Table 1: Locations for baseline study

Province	Districts	Number of Schools
Khammouane	6	61
Luangnamtha	4	34
Phongsali	5	43
Saravane	5	61
Savannakhet	9	131
Sekong	3	25
Total	32	355

3. Findings of the baseline study

The findings of the baseline study highlighted four distinct themes:

Teaching practice



- Nearly all teachers were confident in their ability to teach Lao.
- Teachers had a limited range of approaches and resources for teaching and assessing students' Lao language skills.
- The majority of teachers used a mother tongue language while teaching Lao.
- The majority of teachers have not received specific training in Lao language teaching in the past two years.

Student literacy outcomes



- The majority of G1 students fell well below the expected outcomes of the Lao language curriculum.
- At least 80 per cent of all students are struggling to know the expected range of basic letters.
- Student literacy outcomes varied by region. In some provinces, nearly 1 in 5 students had no Lao language literacy skills.

Factors affecting teaching practice



- Shortage/inadequacy of instructional materials to support Lao teaching was reported as a primary issue in schools.
- School principals are critical in providing assistance to teachers to prepare materials, lesson planning and teaching methods in the field of Lao language.
- Teacher to teacher collaboration is a fundamental part of supporting Lao language teaching.
- Limited teacher supervision and support from PAs is a significant challenge.
- Additional training in Lao language teaching methods, materials production, teaching ethnic students, how to use teachers' guides and multigrade teaching were identified by principals as the most pressing needs.

Factors affecting student literacy outcomes



- Students who spoke Lao at home demonstrated higher literacy levels than those students who did not speak Lao at home.
- Teachers ranked students' low Lao language skills as the greatest challenge for student learning progress. Other challenges reported were school readiness, student absenteeism, lack of student interest, drop out and poor health.
- The type of training teachers received during pre and in-service training had little effect on student literacy outcomes.
- Students who attended kindergarten or pre-school, and those who had greater exposure to Lao language resources outside of school, demonstrated higher literacy levels.
- Students who were absent more often demonstrated poorer literacy levels.
- Students who had teachers that used a greater range of Lao language resources had higher literacy levels.

3.1 Teaching practice

'Teaching practice' refers to teachers' application of their professional knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes to provide learning experiences for students. It includes what teachers do to plan, implement and evaluate learning experiences, and ways teachers incorporate principles of teaching and learning (ACER, 2017). Within the scope of the Lao PDR study, teaching practice is being examined as a measure of teacher effectiveness. Baseline data provides an indication of where teachers were at in relation to different aspects of teaching practice in 2019, before receiving BEQUAL support.

Baseline data showed that nearly all surveyed teachers indicated existing confidence in their Lao language teaching ability, particularly when teaching students who spoke Lao at home. When asked about the extent to which they used mother tongue in Lao language lessons, nearly half of surveyed teachers reported that they used a mother tongue language during their lessons. When the native languages of teachers and students were taken into account, the data showed that teachers were more likely to rely on their mother tongue and the mother tongue of students while teaching Lao. Nearly 75 per cent of teachers whose native language was other than Lao reported using a mother tongue in the classroom, while two-thirds of all teachers used the students' mother tongue when teaching Lao.

Teachers displayed a limited repertoire of teaching practices and use of resources to support learning activities. Teachers tended to dominate the classroom discussion – primarily to practise pronunciation – reading text written on the board, instructing students to copy from the board or having students respond to their dictation. The new curriculum rollout is providing additional teaching and learning materials to support improved teaching practices, including a teacher's guide, student textbook, storybooks, readers and alphabet cards.

The new curriculum also emphasises a move away from traditional assessment practices to include the use of indicators to check students' understanding and application of what they have learnt. While nearly all teachers reported undertaking some type of formative assessment, they typically used a narrow range of methods to assess students, such as student reading and writing through copying or dictation.

Data on teachers' professional learning indicated wide regional variation in terms of access to in-service training. Nearly half of all G1 teachers had undertaken some form of in-service training over the last two years, with only one-quarter having received specific training focused on Lao language. Other forms of professional development undertaken by teachers included learning groups/clusters and self-learning. The southern province of Sekong appeared to have the lowest participation rate in teacher professional development.



3.2 Factors affecting teaching practice

The baseline study found that while resourcing and training support for teachers is crucial for quality teaching, teachers and principals received inconsistent access to such support. Some reported receiving support from their principal for Lao language teaching, especially in preparing materials, lesson planning, pronunciation, and teaching methods. The majority of teachers (77 per cent) reported that their principal observed their teaching and provided feedback at least once during the school year. One third (33 per cent) reported that they were observed more than twice. Principals reported that they were confident in supporting G1 teachers for Lao language teaching.

Further support by colleagues from both within and between schools were also reported, however this did not take shape in a consistent format. Almost half of the teachers (44 per cent) reported that they were observed by their colleagues. Sixty-four per cent of teachers also worked with other colleagues to prepare Lao language teaching lessons and materials. The exchange of knowledge across schools was also reported, but primarily in informal settings through social networks amongst teachers to share lessons learnt, plans, teaching resources, and approaches. This finding suggests there is a network of support within schools that is available and often used by teachers.

However, the study found that access to and provision of external support for teachers and principals were inconsistent. Pedagogical advisers (PAs), existed to provide ongoing support for teachers, but their availability was variable. Twenty-six per cent of teachers reported that the PA had not visited them during the 2019 school year of the baseline study. Seventeen per cent had been visited once, 28 per cent twice and 30 per cent more than twice. In comparison, 58 per cent of principals indicated that a PA had visited them twice or more, while 20 per cent said they had not received a visit. These PA visits focused mostly on providing teaching support or advice (66 per cent), encouraging discussions among teachers (50 per cent), delivering

resources (39 per cent), collecting data (37 per cent), and performing administrative tasks (21 per cent). The majority of principals (80 per cent) reported district officers had visited their school at least twice in the 2018-19 school year, while 11 per cent reported no visits at all.

Respondents noted that the lack of materials was a key constraint to Lao language teaching, including textbooks, readers and storybooks. Some teachers reported producing their own teaching and learning materials to address this resource gap. Principals reported the lack of adequate school infrastructure, such as toilets and classroom facilities, as a challenge. The data showed that the number of school facilities had a weak, but significant effect, on student performance. Principals also cited a lack of qualified teachers, teacher absenteeism and teacher turnover as key constraints. Other pressing needs identified were the lack of additional training in Lao language teaching methods, materials production, teaching ethnic students, how to use teachers' guides and multigrade teaching .

When asked about student characteristics in Lao language teaching, 70 per cent of teachers ranked low Lao language skills as the most problematic for learning progress. Student ethnicity and their home language was reported as a challenge to Lao language teaching and teachers often reverted to using the local language for instruction. Other student-related factors impeding Lao language learning included school readiness, student absenteeism, lack of interest, drop out and poor health. Respondents noted that student absenteeism was often due to children accompanying their parents to work in the field or forage for food. Their absence affected the ability of teachers to teach the required curriculum content and impeded student learning outcomes.

3.3 Student literacy outcomes

Data about students' literacy outcomes was collected via a Lao language literacy test for Grade 1 (G1) students. The Lao language literacy test assessed skills described in both the old Lao language curriculum and the new curriculum. These skills included:

- Sound recognition
- Speaking
- Reading fluency and comprehension
- Listening comprehension
- Writing (Tasks 1 and 2).

The Lao language proficiency scale was developed to assess student performance, from proficient to no Lao language literacy skills at all. At the proficient level, students are expected to name eight consonants, eight vowels and three compound consonants, describe a picture using ten or more relevant words, answer three questions about a story, correctly spell two words and write a sentence using five or more relevant words. A student who is demonstrating limited Lao language proficiency would be expected to name seven consonants, describe a picture using three to five relevant words, answer one question about a story and correctly write some letters.

The test results showed that only three per cent of students were proficient in Lao language skills, with 85 per cent only able to recognise a few words, if at all. Figure 1 outlines the variation of skills and the distribution of students in each skill cluster.

When these results were broken down by different skill categories, the majority of students performed poorly across the five categories. At least 80 per cent of G1 students in this study did not meet expectations for knowing basic letters and sounds in the Lao language curriculum. For speaking tasks, approximately half of the students scored zero, indicating a lack of understanding of the Lao language for communicating or learning. The majority of students (85 per cent) had insufficient phonic knowledge to blend sounds and 95 per cent could not read simple text. While half of the students demonstrated an understanding of the main ideas of a short text, almost none could draw a simple conclusion about the text. These results suggest that the majority of G1 students fall well below the expected outcomes of the Lao language curriculum.

Student absenteeism and classroom engagement were reported as the biggest risk factors to student learning performance. Thirty per cent of G1 students in the sample schools did not participate in the study survey. This was reported as a result of a range of factors, including the timing of the survey coinciding with the wet season and rice cultivation. These factors were further confirmed by the teachers surveyed and were explained as part of a greater trend of low levels of student engagement with classroom learning. As seen in Figure 2, 70 per cent of teachers reported low Lao language skills as a problem to a 'moderate' or 'large' extent, followed by lack of readiness for transition to school (53 per cent), lack of interest or motivation (50 per cent), absenteeism (49 per cent), drop out (21 per cent) and poor health (11 per cent).

Extent of issue in Grade 1 class

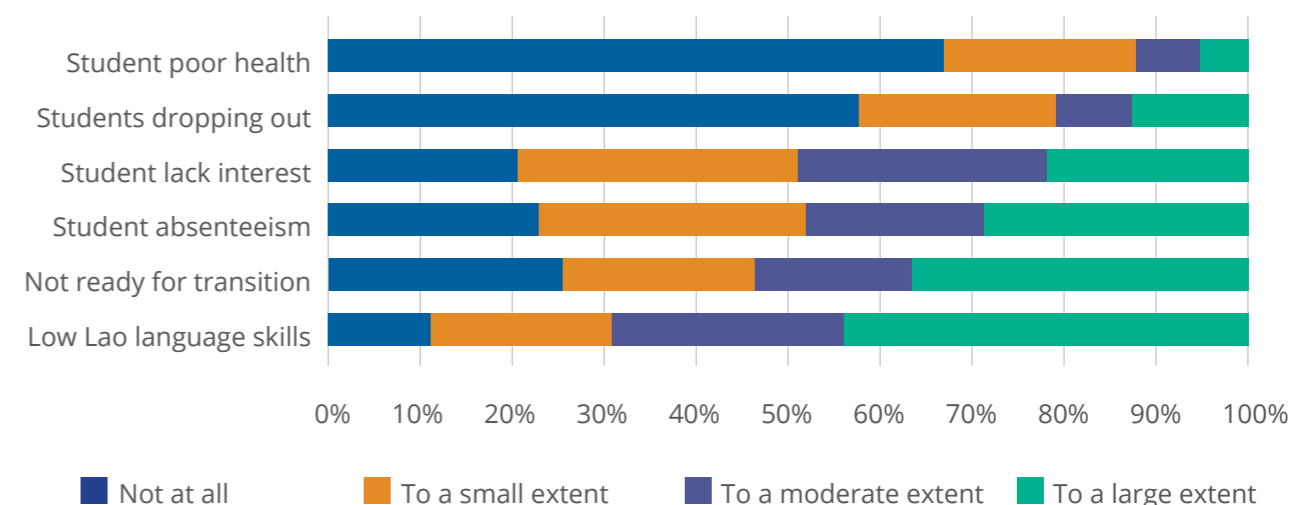


Figure 1: Surveyed teachers' perceptions of the extent of student issues in their G1 class in baseline study

Proficient Lao language literacy for G1: 3 per cent of students answered almost all questions correctly. These students met G1 expectations for Lao language skills.

Basic Lao language literacy skills for G1: 12 per cent of students answered most questions correctly. These students were working towards G1 expectations but needed more time to consolidate their literacy skills.

Very basic Lao language literacy skills for G1: 25 per cent of students answered just over half the questions correctly. These students demonstrated the lowest levels of Lao language skills.

Limited Lao language literacy skills for G1: 30 per cent of students answered about one quarter of the questions correctly.

Very limited Lao language literacy skills for G1: 20 per cent of students could only name 5 consonants.

No Lao language literacy skills: 10 per cent of students attempted many questions but scored zero for all.

“The curriculum reform, and associated teacher professional development processes supported by BEQUAL, suggest that the systems-level responses are providing important foundations towards addressing the key challenges identified by teachers and principals.”



There was also significant variation in student performance across the sampled provinces. Table 2 shows the percentage of students in each skill cluster, by province. Sekong had the highest proportion of students in Cluster 6 (highest performing), with 7.6 per cent. This is substantially higher than Khammouane or Phongsali provinces. Phongsali had the highest proportion of students in Cluster 1 (lowest performing) – one in five students were in the lowest cluster. This compared with only 3.6 per cent of students in Khammouane and 10.2 per cent in Sekong.

Table 2: Percentage of students in each cluster, by province, in baseline study

Percentage of students per cluster						
Cluster	1	2	3	4	5	6
Khammouane	3.6	8.4	34.1	42.5	10.1	1.3
Luangnamtha	15.0	14.6	29.1	30.5	7.5	3.3
Phongsali	19.7	13.8	34.4	25.2	5.5	1.4
Saravane	12.2	11.2	30.9	30.0	10.3	5.4
Savannakhet	17.7	11.7	29.3	29.1	8.9	3.3
Sekong	10.2	11.2	32.5	28.9	8.6	7.6
Overall	13.9	11.7	31.1	30.9	8.8	3.6

1 = lowest performing, 6 = highest performing

3.4 Factors affecting student literacy outcomes

Factors related to a child's home, classroom and school were found to be associated with different levels of student performance.

Student language in the home was strongly associated with test performance. Students who spoke Lao-Tai at home performed better than those who spoke other languages at home. Students in classes that frequently use mother tongue language had lower test performance than their peers. Student absenteeism also appeared to have an impact on learning outcomes, where those absent for more days had the lowest performance.

The relationship between student test performance and teacher or principal experience was minimal. There were no clear differences between a teacher's or principal's education level and student test scores. Similarly, there were no observable differences in students' literacy performance, regardless of teachers' pre-service or in-service training. The provision of Lao language teaching resources was noted as an important factor in student learning outcomes, with a small, but significant correlation observed between the number of resources used by teachers in class and percentage of correct responses.

School factors including multigrade classes and facilities were examined as possible variables contributing to student literacy levels. Students at schools with more than one single-grade G1 class tended to perform better than those at schools with no single-grade classes. There is a weak but significant positive correlation between student test performance and the number of facilities available at school.

Data was collected relating to students' attitudes and disposition towards learning. About two thirds of teachers (67 per cent) reported that their students enjoyed Lao language lessons to a large extent while a further 29 per cent indicated that their students enjoyed these lessons to a moderate extent. The reasons given were that students enjoyed the activities and looking at materials, such as singing, movement, stories, flashcards and pictures.

Classrooms in the 12 case study schools were observed in order to gain an understanding of

the learning environment. One-third of case study teachers created 'cooperative and supportive' environments in their lessons. Cooperative and supportive environments were noted to be more likely to indicate joyful and encouraging classrooms with students and teachers working together harmoniously. For the remaining two-thirds of teachers, classroom environments were observed to be: a mix of 'cooperative and supportive', and 'compliant'; 'compliant only'; a mix of 'compliant and unruly'; or 'unruly only'. A 'compliant' classroom environment indicated students were doing what the teacher said but many activities were procedural and complacent rather than joyful and encouraging. An 'unruly' classroom environment indicated that the majority of time was spent on managing student behaviour rather than learning.

3.5 Gender equity, disability and social inclusion

The baseline study investigated the extent to which gender equity, disability and social inclusion were promoted in the classroom. It was found that there was no difference in the way male and female students were treated in the classroom, for example, when being selected to demonstrate an idea or skill.

When teachers were asked to what extent they were able to provide extra support to students who had difficulty learning Lao language and to students who needed to have extension in Lao, almost all teachers in the survey (91 per cent) reported they were able to provide support in both instances to a moderate or large extent. The case study data revealed further details on the types of support teachers provide. The most common strategies provided to students needing assistance were targeted help and grouping them with higher achieving students. Classroom observations also recorded instances where teachers provided customised support to students with physical or intellectual disabilities.

Extra instruction in Lao language was also provided to non-Lao speaking students. Nearly half of all principals surveyed (44 per cent) reported that their school provided additional instruction at no cost, while a small percentage (1-2 per cent) noted that extra instruction was partially or fully-funded by parents. Extra lessons were usually reported as being provided weekly outside of school hours or during school break.

4. Outcomes of the baseline study

The data from this study provides a baseline from which to track changes in teaching quality and compare student literacy results over a period of four years. The study was conducted at the end of the school year in April 2019, before the start of the curriculum reform process. This timing is aligned to the gradual phasing in of the new primary curriculum, launched in July 2019 with the support of BEQUAL.

Results from the baseline indicates that the majority of G1 students fall well below the expectations of the Lao curriculum for reading, writing, listening and speaking. These findings highlight the complex interface between context, curriculum and teaching, and the important role that teachers can play in supporting children as they enter school. Data shows that students are ill prepared for their first grade of school and with so many students speaking a language other than that taught at school, the need for innovative approaches to the implementation of the new curriculum for the early years is clear. Acknowledging that the high level of student absenteeism in G1 may in part be influenced by a lack of student interest, the new curricula that embraces age appropriate and culturally sensitive whole language development, is expected to go some way in providing the critical support that children need to enter and remain in their first year of school. New ways of teaching in turn need teachers to be well versed in new pedagogical approaches, and properly equipped with teaching and learning materials that reflect and support these approaches.

The baseline study has highlighted a series of important considerations for teacher support, notably that the type of professional development teachers received during pre- and in-service training has shown little or no effect on student literacy outcomes. Case study data indicates that teachers are using a narrow range of pedagogical approaches in the classroom which relies on rote learning techniques such as instructing students to copy text or respond to dictation. More positively however, the study also highlights the important role that school principals play in supporting teachers. It also reveals a network of informal teacher-to-teacher support across the country. Teachers have demonstrated a commitment to embrace new ways

of teaching and this creates opportunities for more innovative mechanisms of teacher support across the different levels of the education system.

The curriculum reform, and associated teacher professional development processes supported by BEQUAL, suggest that the systems-level responses are providing important foundations towards addressing the key challenges identified by teachers and principals in the baseline. These include:

- a new student-centred pedagogy which is introducing an expanded range of teaching methods including opportunities for critical thinking, learning-by-doing and peer collaboration.
- a new curriculum which is providing supplementary learning resources (such as storybooks and decodable readers) and teacher guides to support effective classroom teaching, including tools for continuous assessment, data recording and strategies for supporting students with different learning needs.
- the inclusion of teacher professional learning linked to the new curriculum to address issues with teacher quality. These are implemented through face-to-face orientation sessions and opportunities to participate in communities of practice and use of self-access learning tools.

Teachers and principals also identified system-wide challenges that affect teaching performance and student achievement. Issues relating to teacher absenteeism, teacher turnover, student absenteeism, lack of school readiness and the use of mother tongue in the classroom, point to the broader teacher management system and socio-cultural context that are beyond the current scope of BEQUAL support. However, findings from the baseline study provide important insights into the readiness across different levels of the education system to adapt educational practices to better support student acquisition of Lao literacy skills in their first year of school. These include:

- incorporating new approaches in the national curriculum that directly target the teaching of Lao language in order to address poor literacy skills and help students to better transition into their first year of school.
- incorporating new pedagogies which focus on a play-based, student-centred approaches to teaching and learning, moving away from the traditional rote learning currently employed in the classrooms.

- equipping teachers with the skills to adopt classroom based formative assessment activities, based on a clearly defined learning matrix, to help with better targeted remedial strategies of student support.

At the policy level, there is evidence of political engagement and commitment to create an enabling environment to support primary teaching; while at the practice level, teachers have shown a positive aptitude and confidence in Lao language teaching which is indicative of a willingness to adapt to the curriculum reform process. Understanding the preparedness of both system and school levels is crucial to supporting educational capacity and reform. Subsequent cycles of the Lao PDR study will provide further insights on the impact of the curriculum reform process on teaching practice and how this facilitates better student learning outcomes.



5. Conclusion

As presented in this report, there are a number of findings that provide insight into the levels of support available to Lao teachers under BEQUAL. Although there are indications of emergent readiness, a number of challenges have been identified which can act as barriers to student engagement and learning, and provides the basis for further exploration in subsequent phases of the study.

The next two cycles of the Lao PDR study - in 2021 and 2022 - will gather data from G1 teachers and students who have received the new G1 curriculum. These cycles will have an important addition through the inclusion of interview questions about the impact of COVID-related restrictions on teachers, students and schools. As schools and systems face

ongoing challenges in supporting equitable teaching and learning during the pandemic, these findings may inform system responses and adjustments to better support teachers and principals during future school disruptions. The data collected from the next two cycles of the study will provide further evidence on which to ascertain the extent to which BEQUAL supports and encourages improved teaching quality and student literacy in Lao PDR. Further research could explore the broader impact of socio-cultural factors on effective teaching and learning in Lao PDR, and how institutional structures could be leveraged to support the wider reforms of the teacher development system to ensure student success.

To read the full [Lao PDR baseline report](#) please visit the [DFAT website](#). *Where available, sex-disaggregated data is provided in the full report.

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