



Spotlight on teacher supports

The Australian Government is supporting the Government of Lao PDR to undertake significant primary education reforms through its flagship Basic Education Quality and Access in Lao PDR program (BEQUAL), including the roll-out of a new primary curriculum.

Phase 1 of BEQUAL (2015-22) supported the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) to roll out the new primary curriculum in schools. BEQUAL support included teaching and learning materials, orientation training on the new curriculum, and education support grants. Phase 2 (2022-26) is focused on inclusive teaching practices, student engagement and improved learning outcomes.

To understand progress and to make necessary adjustments, the Australian Government commissioned an independent evaluation. Led by the Australian Council for Educational Research, a multi-year study investigated how BEQUAL supported improved teaching quality and student learning. Here we take a closer look at teacher supports.

KEY FINDINGS

The multi-year study found that overall, the BEQUAL program has contributed to strengthening elements of teaching quality. BEQUAL-supported orientation training, together with new curriculum resources, increased Grade 1 teachers' knowledge and confidence with Lao language teaching. Grade 1 teachers also expanded their repertoire of teaching and learning strategies.

'Biggest change... is in teaching approach and moving from rote learning towards more active learning, providing students chances to learn more and better.'
- National interviewee

Evaluation insights on teaching quality was captured over 3 cycles of data collection via questionnaires, case study interviews and classroom observations of Lao language lessons from 2019 to 2022.

Teachers and principals valued the training as it introduced the new curriculum content and teaching strategies. There was a high level of participation in the orientation training, and study participants suggested they would like more ongoing and regular professional learning opportunities.



Positive changes to teaching quality indicates that the new curriculum is making a real difference in classrooms. Going forward, it is critical for teachers to receive ongoing professional learning support to further build their skills and knowledge.



The new curriculum resources provided significant support for teachers.

- The teacher guide was highlighted as particularly useful given its clear instructions about techniques, activities, materials and time.

'I feel I have more confidence in teaching because I learn from many resources like the teacher guide which is not only my learning source, but also my reference.' – Teacher, southern province



Professional learning opportunities, including communities of practice and self-access learning were highly valued.

- Support is effective when it involves colleagues with expertise and experience, and builds knowledge and skills to use ICT support tools.

'There is a learning circle where all teachers can exchange lessons. There are classroom observations among teachers and a WhatsApp group was set up. There is a support program between teachers.' – Pedagogical support, northern province



Technical support provided by principals, teacher colleagues and pedagogical advisers was greatly valued by teachers, and in some cases access to this support increased.

- More frequent and extensive support was provided by pedagogical advisers, facilitated by BEQUAL support grants.

'If I don't understand, I can call pedagogical advisers... Advising via telephone calls is the most helpful for me.' – Teacher, northern province

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The new primary curriculum in Lao PDR represents a significant change to both teaching and assessment practices. While there was evidence of positive changes to teaching quality, the complexity of education reform means it is likely to take more time and support for all teachers to understand and fully incorporate these new approaches into their teaching practice. Improving student engagement and learning requires a collaborative and targeted approach beyond teachers, involving education systems, schools, parents and the community.

The MoES continuous professional development approach is targeting resources for teacher training and inclusive classroom practices. BEQUAL is playing its part, together with a range of programs and partners led by MoES and supported by the Australian Government.

Visit [DFAT's website](#) to read the full report, Evaluation of Australia's Investment in Teacher Development in Lao PDR. This report forms part of a study series commissioned by the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), to investigate teaching and learning development initiatives in 3 countries: Lao PDR, Timor-Leste and Vanuatu.

