

VESP View

VANUATU EDUCATION SUPPORT PROGRAM

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Issue 11: The Professional Development and Upgrading of Vanuatu Teachers through the VITE In-Service Unit



International research confirms teacher quality is one of the most important factors influencing student achievement. Quality teaching is at the centre of school effectiveness and recognition of the critical relationship between teachers and learners highlights the need to ensure quality teachers in every classroom. A key aspect of quality teaching is maintaining a workforce of trained teachers with the required professional qualifications who engage in ongoing professional development to maintain their knowledge and skills throughout their teaching lives.

Since gaining independence in 1980, successive national development plans and education sector strategies have identified quality education as a priority, with teachers being a major component. The Vanuatu Education Road Map (VERM, 2009), for example, highlighted the key priorities for teacher education with the major focus on, “developing a program to upskill the estimated 50% of teachers in Vanuatu who are currently untrained...” and anticipated putting in place policies that would “... support improvements to the quality of teaching in Vanuatu”.

Teacher training – building and maintaining a qualified work force

Despite the priority given to teachers in the education strategies of the MoET over the years, there has been limited growth in the number of teachers with the required professional qualifications in Vanuatu schools. At the present time a very high number of teachers in primary schools have no qualifications beyond secondary schooling or are “under-qualified”, having only a Certificate of Education from VITE or another institution.

Similarly, many teachers in secondary schools today are deemed as under-qualified, having diploma qualifications or lower. Very few teachers in ECCE centres currently have formal qualifications.

In 2017 the Ministry identified the need for a more systemic approach to tackling the issue of a better qualified teaching service. A draft National Teacher Development Plan (NTDP) was presented to senior management in May 2018 and is currently being finalised.

The draft NTDP highlights the need to develop teachers' skills in Vanuatu through improving pre-service and in-service training through full-time, part-time, external and online modes of delivery. A revised Bachelor of Education program has been developed and is pending Vanuatu Qualifications Authority approval. Since 2016 VESP has assisted VITE to trial the delivery of course modules by distance mode to 120 practising teachers across the 6 provinces. The lessons learned from this trial are helping VITE in its efforts to find cost-effective and flexible mechanisms to open the way for teachers to upgrade their qualifications.



Ongoing professional development

Considerable efforts have been made to address the gaps in teacher knowledge and skills through Professional Development (PD). In 2010, the VITE in-service unit was established to support MoET to coordinate, plan and deliver PD for teachers at primary and secondary levels. It coincided with the introduction of the new primary curriculum and the focus of the Unit's work since 2012 has largely been on delivering PD to support teachers to implement the curriculum as it was progressively rolled out by the Curriculum Development Unit.

Since 2014, with support through VESP, ISU has provided professional development to 7,546 primary teachers and principals in the four subject areas for Years 1-3 and in more general areas such as effective teaching and learning methodologies, language learning, literacy and numeracy and instructional leadership.

Year	Course	Number of teachers trained	Target group
2014	Effective Learning and Teaching (ELT)	508	Year 1-3 teachers
2015	Language and Communication Teacher Guide	632	Year 1-3 teachers
	Mathematics Teacher Guide	475	Year 1-2 teachers
2016	Language & Communication and Living in our Community	506	Year 1-2 teachers
	Numeracy	727	Year 2-3 teachers
	Instructional Leadership	375	Primary Principals
2017	Effective Learning and Teaching (ELT)	392	Primary Principals
	Effective Learning and Teaching (ELT)	998	Year 1-6 teachers not trained in ELT in 2014
	Ademap Lanwis (Language Transition)	2,080	Year 1-2 teachers
2018	Instructional Leadership	415	Primary Principals
	Ademap Lanwis (Language Transition)	438	Year 2-3 teachers

VITE-In-Service Unit courses between 2014 and end of July 2018

Provincial Trainers and School Improvement Officers based in Provincial Offices provide ongoing support to teachers in schools to help improve the quality of teachers and build school leaders. Teachers and principals are encouraged to work collaboratively, share their experiences and learn from each other and part of improving teaching and learning.

The future for developing teacher quality

The Bachelor of Education is scheduled for implementation in 2019. Opportunities will also be provided for teachers to upgrade their qualifications through various modes of study at the Bachelor or Diploma level. The role of the VITE In-Service Unit is evolving beyond its current focus on professional development to the delivery of gap training for unqualified and underqualified teachers. This includes exploring the use of Recognition for Prior Learning (RPL) and linking accredited professional development courses to the Bachelor of Education.

The establishment of a mechanism for Recognition for Prior Learning (RPL) will enable VITE to grant credit towards the qualification for teachers who demonstrate knowledge and

skills up to a defined standard. Gap training provided by ISU can then offer a pathway for in-service teachers to complete the qualification. VITE/ISU is exploring a range of delivery possibilities including face-to-face, online and through the external mode training to overcome the distance challenges.

While ISU's major focus will turn to addressing the qualifications gap, it is expected that the unit will support MoET to provide school based professional learning opportunities for teachers and principals through initiatives such as "lighthouse schools" to share successful practices, professional learning community hubs and ICT solutions for upskilling teachers.

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