

Early Childhood Care and Education in Vanuatu- Financing and Teachers

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Executive Summary

This study is about financing Early Childhood Care and Education and teachers working in kindergartens in Vanuatu. The analysis is based on primary data collection from 3 provinces and secondary data analysis of Open VEMIS data where available. The findings regarding the financing of kindergartens and teachers are first summarized followed by a list of study recommendations.

Key Findings

Financing kindergartens

1. Considering the fairly high Gross Enrolment Rates for 4- and 5-year old's, there is significant provision of kindergartens across Vanuatu, However, similar to primary, there is much fluctuation and instability with enrolment numbers differing across kindy principal reported numbers, teacher reported as well as the number of students present in class. Particularly concerning are the 47% kindies reporting that not all the children had birth certificates.
2. The majority (90%) of kindergarten heads reported a Kindergarten Improvement Plan for both 2020 and 2021 or at least one of these years. About half the heads indicated that they were set to achieve Plan targets for 2021. On average kindergartens spent approximately 70% of their annual budget in 2020. Infrastructure targets were the most popular. Less than 20% of the sample included targets related to the procurement of toys, playground, monkey bars, swings and sand pits. Less than 5% spent on stationery.
3. Except for 35% of kindy heads or kindy principals, all the remaining heads said that fees were charged. The range in fees charged per term was VT150 to VT15,000 and the average was around VT3000. Though 45% kindies said they were responsible for the budget, only half this number could identify the amount. Most kindies were unfamiliar with financial management requirements. The attached primary school principal usually monitored the accounts for attached primary.
4. The study specifically examined availability of teaching and learning material. Only about a third of the schools had books. Less than 20% had paper, crayons and pencils in 2019 and this proportion decreased even further to about 13% in 2020. About 75% kindergarten heads and 71% teachers reported that they did not have enough learning resources. However, expenditure usually did not focus on these items and if they did spend, it was on playground items mainly sand pits and monkey bars.
5. About 80% of the school councils had working kindergarten committees, and membership ranged from one to 13 members. On average there were 7 members,

with approximate even gender balance. On average, committees met 3 times a year. Most kindies are unfamiliar with financial management. The attached primary school principal usually monitored the accounts for attached primary.

Teachers

1. Government and community paid teachers are teaching across kindergartens in the surveyed schools. With only government teachers the student teacher ratio (STR) is 15 and with community teachers, the average STR is 12 students to a teacher. The distribution of work across the teachers, helpers and part time employees is unclear.
2. Only 15% of kindergarten teachers were senior secondary and remaining just had primary or junior secondary schooling. Regarding their qualifications in teaching, except for 26% teachers who had a Certificate III, the remaining did not have any preservice credentials. The Vanuatu School of Education is intending to support kindergarten teachers obtain a Certificate IV in ECCE. With a capacity to graduate 60 teachers annually, this task will take many years. Moreover, differential upgrading for teachers with just primary or junior secondary will need to be considered. Most teachers have received in-service training, however, the variety in the content of the in-service makes it difficult to conclude that specific skills were developed across the teacher population.
3. Vernacular and Bislama are used in most of the kindergartens as the medium of instruction. Teachers teaching 4 hours a day was the most common (43%). In the observed kindergartens, children were playing, singing, drawing, listening to a story or some other activity. Though unit plans displayed a focus on subject content, curriculum coverage was weak.
4. Except for 11% of teachers who were not attending to student attendance, the remaining teachers were systematic in their monitoring of attendance. Most teachers (65%) said that they interacted with parents once a term about the performance of their son or daughter.
5. Both teachers and kindy heads were asked about the MEO visits to their school. About 24% teachers said they were visited once a month. One-third of the kindergartens were never visited.
6. Teacher demand may not be an urgent issue as GERs indicate that the current system to a large part is catering to the population of the 4- and 5-year age group. The STRs are also low, and significantly lower when community teachers are included.

Recommendations

The recommendations based on the findings of this study are organized according to short-term immediate implications and more long-term suggestions.

Recommendations for the short-term (financing and teachers)

- Support and monitor principal oversight of attached ECCEs. For feeder and standalone kindies, capacity building and support provided in the management of school grants.
- Chart and resource the provincial education office roles and responsibilities vis-à-vis ECCE teachers and primary school principals.
- Upskilling those with just primary and junior secondary to secondary is urgent. Upskilling with hybrids with remote and intensive in-person sessions during vacation could build the necessary knowledge and skill.
- Ensuring teachers' job descriptions include the 4 critical areas – teacher presence, curriculum coverage, systematic recording of student attendance and student learning.
- Strengthening OVEMIS data collection and establishing a system to regularly validate the data.

Recommendations for the long-term (financing and teachers)

- A dedicated study on private kindergartens, which account for a large proportion (71%) of providers in Vanuatu would be useful. Such a study would examine how funds are raised, the quality of teaching and learning and the oversight and accountability practices in place.
- Funding for kindergarten could be based on specific and costed school operations and development. If it is an attached kindergarten, operational costs would apply for both kindergarten and primary. This would ease pressure on kindergarten management with regard to student enrolment and encourage systematic reporting of student enrolment. Improving birth certificate registration in rural areas is critical. Support could be targeted for consistent and systematic reporting on student enrolment and attendance across kindergartens.
- To obtain a grant for infrastructure development, kindies would develop an infrastructure-specific plan for submission, distinguishing capital costs from the regular school budget. Infrastructure grants could be under the purview of the big picture national school infrastructure development program addressing equity etc
- Nationally funded direct support is available for teaching and learning materials based on enrolment. In other words, it is critical that teaching and learning resources are centrally procured, and distributed on-time to schools. The amount required for this purpose from the school grant would be held back for this procurement. In this

way, critical teaching and learning items are made available per student, with close monitoring of enrolment and attendance. The kits delivered earlier could be worth considering for this purpose.

- Rethinking the role of the provincial education offices could also begin to address the frustrations and challenges expressed by provincial staff with implementing school grants. Instead of just monitoring compliance, provincial education offices could be charged with visioning, implementing, and being accountable for kindergarten performance.

Introduction

The Vanuatu's Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) is committed to building an efficient and effective educational system. To foster the development of such a system, Vanuatu's Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) has adopted the 'Education Training and Sector Strategic Plan (VETSS)' for this decade 2020-2030 (Government of the Republic of Vanuatu, 2020a). This plan provides a roadmap for the effective expansion of the education sector.¹ The Corporate Plan 2022-2026 represents how the VETSS will be implemented over the next few years.

The strategies and activities related to improving Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) are spread across the 3 pillars of the VETSS and Corporate Plan, namely access, quality and management. The full list of interventions related to ECCE is found in Annex 1. MoET intends to expand provision of ECCE by increasing enrolment, improving the effective implementation of school grants or fee subsidies, enhance the capacity of ECCE teachers, and implement 'minimum quality service standards' for pre-school education quality and infrastructure. This study on the cost of ECCE and teachers working in ECCE in Vanuatu will inform the roll-out of MoET's planned strategies. The conclusions will help to provide direction for improving the provision and effectiveness of kindergarten and expand the thinking on ECCE overall within the country's education sector.

In Vanuatu, ECCE is effectively the financing of preschool or pre-primary kindergarten (kindy as referred to in this study) for children in the 4 to 5-year age group. (Vanuatu 2020b). Therefore, the focus of the study is on kindy and the objectives are similar to the 2 other reports on primary education (Teacher Policies and Management and Cost of Primary Education). Initially, the 2 reports on primary education were intended to include a discussion on kindy. However, the distinctiveness in the financing and teaching and learning in the kindy classroom suggested a singular focus on kindy would be worthwhile without precluding connections being made with the recommendations in the reports on teachers and costs of primary education, respectively.

A total of 9 areas are examined in this study adapted from the study on primary education. The first 5 areas relate to the cost of kindergarten and the remaining 4 areas are about the most critical resource, namely teachers.

- Patterns of student enrolment and financing.

¹ Accordingly, the VETSS includes strategies and activities arranged across 3 pillars – access and equity, quality, and management – to make improve sector performance. The access and equity pillar list ten strategies for implementation in the next ten years; the quality pillar another seven strategies; and the management pillar, six strategies. Each strategy includes a range of activities. The Vanuatu Education Sector Support Program (VESP) now contributes to the implementation of the VETSS.

- Planning and expenditure evident in Kindergarten Improvement Plans.
- Range in kindergarten fees and household costs.
- Kindergarten budget and expenditure, (especially for teaching and learning).
- Financial oversight and audits of kindergarten operations.
- Distribution of teachers across kindergartens.
- Kindergarten teacher preparation and in-service training.
- Teachers' work in the kindergarten classroom.
- Accountability and oversight mechanisms for kindergarten teachers.
- Teacher demand and supply

Global discussions on ECCE

Considerable work and discussions on ECCE are evident in the global stage. This is reflected in an entire Global Education Monitoring Report (GEMR) dedicated to ECCE (UNESCO 2006), and various reports from the World Bank culminating in the World Development Report (WDR 2018). The GEMR (UNESCO 2006) offers the clearest example of what is ECCE. It encompasses a range of programs providing on the one hand, care and stimulation to children under 3 and more structured learning for ages 3 to 6. Therefore, ECCE broadly includes:

- Home based support by providing parenting guidance and community-based programming. According to the WDR 2017, this approach would target the first 1000 days of a baby's life with health and nutrition advice and products for mothers and their babies to prevent malnutrition and facilitate development.
- Formal provision to early childhood care (under 3's) that fosters frequent stimulation and varied exposure events that will enable progress in the mastery of language and motor skills.
- Preschool or pre-primary education, which is what Vanuatu offers with kindergarten, giving children an opportunity to be safe and develop their cognitive and socio emotional skills. Most importantly, the curriculum is preparation for primary education.

A variety of studies have been undertaken in the developed world on the impact of ECCE on primary school and beyond. Studies are coalescing around which programs appear to have greater implications for transition to primary. There is agreement that the quality of the centres catering to children 5 years and below, especially for those coming from difficult and impoverished backgrounds is of paramount importance. The greatest immediate gain in attending kindy is shown by these children.

In the case of Vanuatu, specific expectations based on the global literature can be highlighted for the kindergarten years. First, identifying and encouraging families that are disadvantaged to attend kindies will have impact on children from these communities. Currently, this support is being provided by the ‘Parent Support Program.’ In addition, play groups and churches are encouraged to meet 2 times a week for the 0–3-year-olds. Second, regularly reviewing the structure and content of kindy programs across provinces will help improve services. Attendance could be part time or full time with the same impacts. However, regularity in interaction between provider and children and deliberate progression in the preparation for primary are critical. Finally, ensuring uniform quality across the kindies in Vanuatu will have an impact on primary school performance.

Country context

According to the 2020 Census (Census Basic Tables. Volume 1 2021), Vanuatu has a population of 300,019 across its 6 provinces. More than two-thirds of the population live in rural areas. The literacy rate is 77% for the Anglophone population and 40% for the Francophone population. About a third of the population are below 15 years old. The 3+ age-group in Vanuatu schools’ number 51,000 males and 49,000 females. Vanuatu’s poverty rate at USD1.90 a day (international prices) is 8.7% (2019) and at USD3:40 a day, it is 36% and USD7 a day 82%. (<https://pip.worldbank.org/country-profiles/VUT>).

Most of the Vanuatu’s households (94%) have access to indigenous lands and feel that it is sufficient for their needs. The land is used by 87% of the population to live on and to grow food. (Well Being in-Vanuatu. 2019-2020 NSDP Baseline Survey, 2021). In addition, the majority of the population have full or partial access to forest and marine resources. (Alternative Indicators of Well-being for Melanesia 2012). The availability of land and other resources has contributed to Vanuatu being second in 2021 on the Global Happiness Index. The index is calculated based on a countries experienced wellbeing multiplied by their life expectancy and divided by their ecological footprint.² All of these areas described are important and contribute to the wellbeing and growth of children growing up in these households.

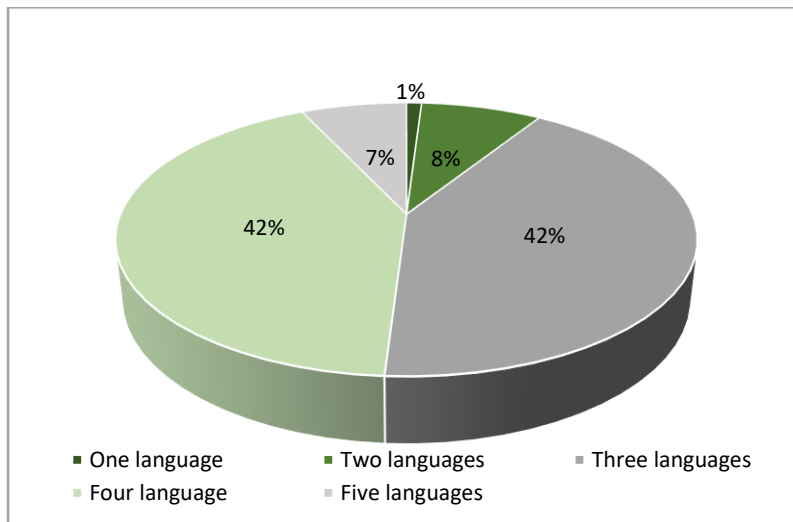
According to the WorldRiskIndex (Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft, 2021), Vanuatu is one of the most vulnerable countries to natural disasters. The country’s location in the Pacific and the ‘ring of fire,’ render it vulnerable to earthquakes, cyclones, and tsunamis. Climate Change is expected to exacerbate some of these hazards in the future. In 2015, tropical cyclone Pam caused severe damage, and in 2020, tropical cyclone Harold ravaged several islands (both

² <https://happyplanetindex.org/happy-planet-index-2021-launch-event-recap/>

Category 5). In 2017 and again in 2018, the eruption of the Lopenpen volcano led to the evacuation of the entire population of the island of Ambae. According to a World Bank report (Jha and Stanton Geddes, 2013), Vanuatu’s average annual loss from natural disasters is 6.6% of GDP, more than 10 times the global average and significantly higher than the average for other Pacific Island Countries. While Vanuatu is fortunate not to experience community outbreaks of the coronavirus when writing this report, the impact of border closures and loss of tourism income had contributed to lowering the growth rate in 2020 to 2.6% (the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, 2021). With a USD 2870 per capita income, Vanuatu falls in the lower-middle-income group of countries³. In addition to the service sector (which contributes an estimated 65% to the nation’s GDP), agriculture, fishing, and forestry are critical industries. Manufacturing and construction are relatively small, contributing less than 10% of GDP.

Culture forms the basis of sustainable social and economic development (Hybrid Fact Sheet 2020a), and language forms the primary vehicle through which culture is shared and transmitted across generations. The ‘*Lanwis*’ refers to the 110 distinct languages spoken in Vanuatu. Figure 1 displays the number of languages spoken by a ni-Vanuatu. The most common is oral proficiency in 3 or 4 languages. Only 1% of the population speaks a single language. The majority speaks 3 or 4 languages.

Figure 1: Language spoken the by people in Vanuatu



Source: Hybrid Fact Sheet 2020a

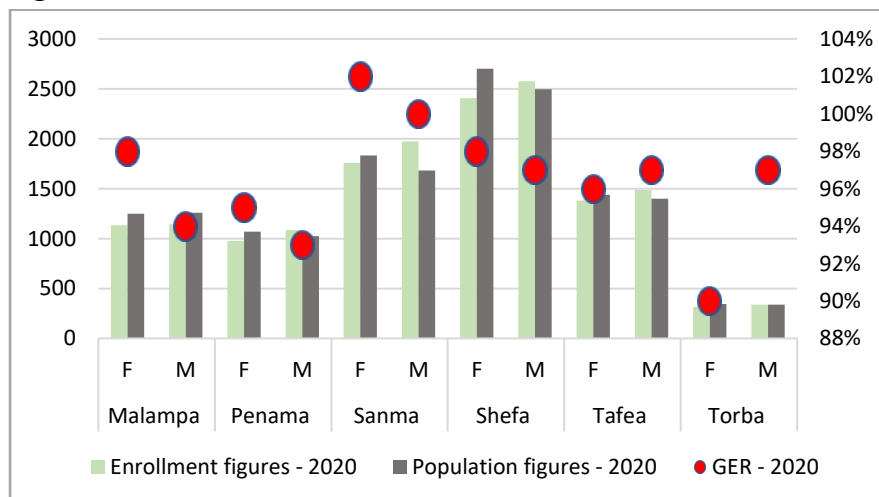
³ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=VU>. In 2019, the per capita income was USD 3115.4 and this has reduced in 2020 by more than USD 200.

Sub-sector (kindergarten) country background

The country achieved its independence from France and Great Britain in 1980. While the education system operates under a single Education Act of 2014, schools continue to operate as either Francophone or Anglophone. The Vanuatu National Curriculum Standards was established in 2010 representing a commitment to establish a truly harmonised Vanuatu curriculum.⁴

There are 6 provinces in Vanuatu. The Open Vanuatu Education Monitoring Information System (Open VEMIS) collects extensive public and private schooling data in each of the 6 provinces. The population of the 4 to 5 age group attending kindergarten accounts for 6% (16,837) of the population. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) represents the total enrolment in a specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the entire population in this age group corresponding to this level of education. The GER is expected to be 100% (not above or below). The GER is between 91 to 106% portraying a fairly effective provision of kindergarten across Vanuatu. For example, in Torba 317 girls and 337 boys out of 337 girls and 345 boys in the population, respectively are attending kindergarten. Malampa's had a GER of 91% for girls and 93% for boys, which is the lowest across provinces and indicates the need for additional provision. Shefa with a low GER of 95% is also in this category. Sanma, Tafea and Penama only for boys have GERs above 100% showing the enrolment of overage or underage children.

Figure 2: Gross Enrolment Ratios

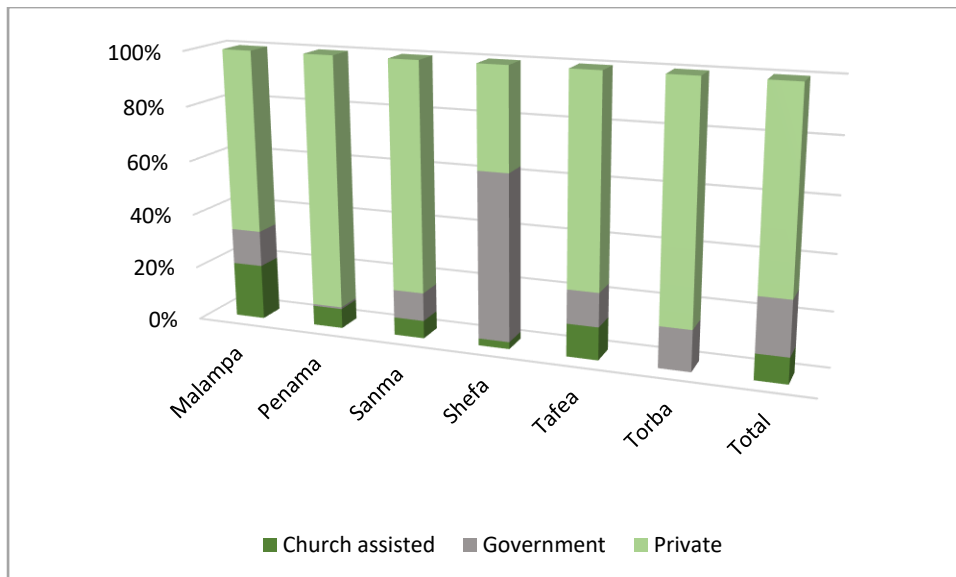


Source: MoET, Statistical Digest 2022b.

⁴ The cost for implementing this curriculum is supported by VESP, and the sustainability including replacement of materials and the training of teachers are unclear.

Kindergarten providers are mainly in the private sector (71%), except in Shefa, where government provision equals that of the private sector. Excluding Torba, the Church assisted services are evident across the other provinces. Though, in Shefa, Church assisted kindies are few.

Figure 3: Kindergarten providers



Source: MoET, Statistical Digest 2022b.

Study Methodology

This section describes the approach and sample for this study centred on kindergarten. Data collection from kindergartens across provinces lends itself to examining 2 critical dimensions of an education system: the costs for providing good quality kindergarten and the provision of good quality teachers for kindy classrooms. Accordingly, this study focuses on the financing of kindies –the criteria for school grants, school budgets, expenditure and oversight and management. The study also examines the implications for teacher management and expansion. Implications of the study findings for the provincial education office regarding kindy financing and teachers are discussed.

The methodology for this study includes the primary analysis of data collected from schools and provinces complemented by a secondary analysis of relevant data from Open VEMIS. In-depth qualitative interviews were planned of a small sub-sample to obtain a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of kindy costs and teachers. However, due to travel restrictions as a result of the coronavirus, this could not be undertaken.

Primary data collection from a sample of 3 provinces is described in detail below. Regarding the analysis of Open VEMIS, the data is used in 2 ways. Data from all the 6 provinces are examined where available, relevant, and useful to furthering the study's objectives. Open VEMIS data that applies to kindies in the sample survey is also analysed in comparison with data collected through the study surveys. This enables a comparison of global data collected in an information system (taken one day of the year) and school level data systems and relevant information.

Sample

The sample for the primary data collection included kindergartens from 3 provinces in Vanuatu –Shefa, Tafea, and Torba. Shefa and Tafea represent more populated provinces (similar to Sanma and Malampa) and Torba a less populated province (similar to Penama). About 6% of the total kindies in Vanuatu participated in the study. Representation in the 3 provinces was 13% in Shefa and Tafea and 19% in Torba.

Table 3: Provincial kindergarten sample

	Kindies	Sample kindies	% sample kindies
Shefa	236	30	13%
Tafea	260	35	13%
Torba	67	13	19%
Vanuatu	1258	78	6%

Source: MoET, Statistical Digest 2022b. Study Sample

The sample included 48 kindergartens that were attached to a primary school, 21 were feeder kindergartens and 9 were standalone. It is not entirely clear whether the 21 feeder and 9 standalone kindies received support from MoET and the magnitude of this support. In OVEMIS almost half (49%) of the kindergartens are attached to a primary. The proportion of attached kindergartens within the survey was higher, almost two thirds (64%) of kindergartens surveyed were attached to a primary. The government sector made up of 63% of the sample, and the non-government assisted 34%. The private sector accounted for the remaining 3% of kindergartens. Due to logistical challenges the proportionate sampling of kindies in the government, non-government assisted and private sectors could not be undertaken.

At the provincial level, an inspector and Provincial Education Officer from each of 5 provinces participated in the study (Officials from Sanma were not available). In addition,

the following Mobile Education Officers participated – 2 each from Shefa and Torba, and one each from Tafea, Penama, Malampa, and Sanma.⁵

Instruments

The study fielded questionnaires to 78 Heads of kindy, 68 School Council members, and 80 teachers. (Table 4). Eighty kindy classes were also observed.⁶ Since the study was doing an analysis of costs and teachers, the questionnaires were extensive. Moreover, to capture ‘business as usual,’ the questions tried to capture varying perspectives by posing similar questions to different sources. This approach enabled assessing coherence in the information or helped expand and nuance what one person said with what another person said about the same thing. For example, the study explores the issue of instructional materials by asking for cost data, asking teachers whether their students had materials in addition to the actual observation of the availability of materials in the classroom. Enumerators also took photos, which enabled visual data analysis.

Table 4: Study sample and instruments*

Interviews	No of participants	Instrument
Heads of school	78	Questionnaire
School Councils	62	Questionnaire
Kindy Teachers	80	Questionnaire
Kindy class	80	Observation

*Five observations (in the kindy principal, teacher and class surveys) do not have an OVEMIS number.

Analysis

While keeping the objectives of the study in mind, the analysis is iterative, weaving together the following in the discussion:

- Open VEMIS population level data where relevant,
- Open VEMIS data on the schools in the sample survey, and,
- school and provincial level sample survey data.

The study is quantitative, relying on descriptive statistical analysis and simple correlations of data generated through questionnaires. Data generated from the few closed-ended

⁵ Inspectors and School Improvement Officers crucial for the oversight functions of the province were withdrawn. MoET is working on a new structure to replace these roles.

⁶ A team of experienced education enumerators was engaged to collect data from the 3 provinces. Each province was assigned 2 teams of 2 enumerators each. The enumerators were responsible for data collection using the survey instruments listed in the methodology. Tablets used for the Census data collection were made available to the enumerators. The team received comprehensive training on the survey instruments, the purpose of the studies, and tablets. They also participated in a pilot and a debriefing before fieldwork commenced. The team in Vanuatu managed the data collection by overseeing data collected each day and providing comments.

qualitative questions is included in the analysis. Both qualitative and visual data are collated and triangulated with the quantitative data.

Ethical concerns and study limitations

The sharing of the Concept Note for review and feedback with MoET, internally with VESP, and with the donor enabled transparency in the proposed study objectives and the intended data collection and analysis process. The translation of all the instruments into Bislama also assisted ease in understanding and thereby, transparency. The research team consistently included a representative from MoET.

MoET was involved with identifying enumerators. Before recruitment, the enumerators needed valid police clearances and compliance with the child protection code of conduct before approval to work in a school environment. Data collection could only begin after receiving formal authorization from the provincial education offices. The provincial education office also approved the randomly selected schools. School personnel signed letters of consent before the interviews, and provincial education staff accompanied the enumerators to the schools when possible.

The names of the individuals interviewed are removed from the analysis and the kindergartens are only identified by the Open VEMIS number. All spreadsheets containing the content of the questionnaires and the photos taken include the Open VEMIS number only. Confidentiality and the aggregation of information at the school level are maintained throughout the study. The focus is on broad patterns across schools and not on idiosyncratic distinctiveness, which would require identification.

The limitations of the study include:

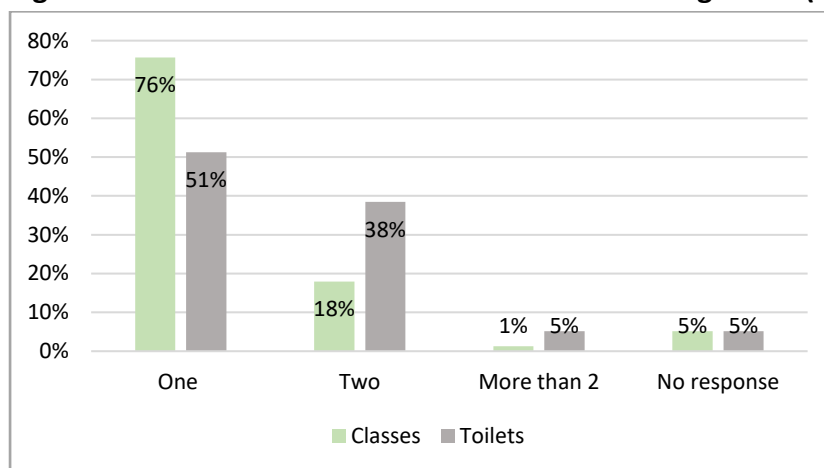
- Without qualitative interviewing, the study could not capture in-depth an understanding of the different procedures and processes surrounding the school and province. In addition, a better interpretation of the quantitative findings would be possible with qualitative interviewing.
- This study being a first of its kind, could not build on prior experiences with the instruments used to collect data from schools and classrooms that are hives of activity and movement. Follow-up studies could build on the methodology and findings of this study.
- Including an analysis of the role of the highest level of government vis-à-vis the school would have contributed to a broader and richer understanding of school functioning. In future, connections made, especially by government officials, with study findings will be invaluable in addressing the constraints to quality education.
- Baseline information on some areas would allow the study to expand on this information. For example, there was limited information on the actual situation of

government and community teachers working together, which would have allowed the study to analyze further how this works on the ground.

Introducing the sample

The kindy head questionnaire asked about the number of classrooms and toilets that were available for this age group (Figure 5). The majority (76% of kindies) had one classroom and 18%, 2 classrooms. Similarly, about 51% had one toilet while 38% had 2 toilets. Most of the kindies (81%) had access to water.

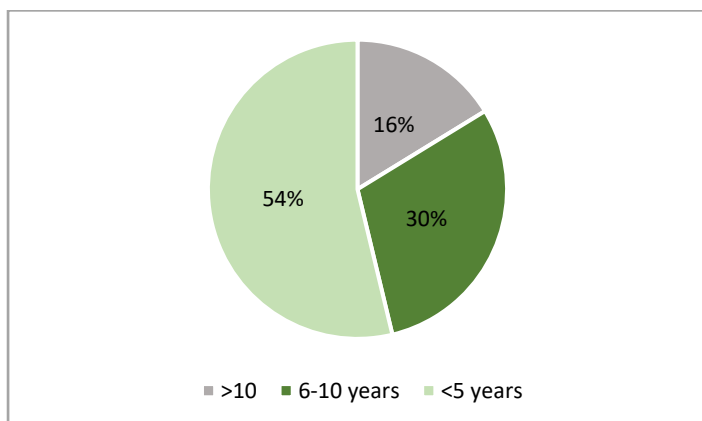
Figure 5: Classrooms and toilets available for kindergartens (n=78)



Source: Kindy Head Survey 2021.

Only 6 of the kindy heads were not teaching. Most kindergarten teachers were women (96%). Regarding teaching experience, most teachers (54%) had less than 5 years of teaching experience and most teachers had less than 5 years of experience teaching in kindergarten. A third of the teachers possessed between 6 to 10 years of experience and 16% more than 10 years. Belonging and proximity to the community in which the kindergarten is located is important for teachers involved with young children. Interestingly, most teachers live in their own home, mostly in the rural area (75%) and some in town (21%). A small proportion (4%) rents the school house.

Figure 6: Kindergarten Teachers years of experience (n=80)



Source: Kindy Teacher Survey 2021

Table 5: Teachers' accommodation (n=80)

Accommodation	No. of Teachers	% Sample
Living in their own home in a rural area	60	75%
Living in their own home in town	17	21%
Rented school house	3	4%

Source: Kindy Teacher Survey 2021

Financing Kindergartens

This section on kindergarten financing, begins with an overview of the design and financing of the school/kindy grants program. This discussion is followed by an analysis of the Open VEMIS and survey data, which includes the criteria for providing grants, school fees and household costs, kindergarten budget and expenditure and financial oversight and audits.

Overview of the design of kindergarten financing

The Ministry of Education introduced 'school grants' in 2010 for primary education to dissuade schools from charging any school fees and to facilitate direct payments to schools (Ministry of Education, 2010). This initiative expanded to include kindies in 2018 (referred to as kindy grants in this paper). The 2021 School Grants Code document reiterates this intention for grants to 'eliminate the parents' cost for school fees.' (MoET, 2021a, p.8).

Kindy grants are paid on a per student basis. The number of children enrolled in a school (Open VEMIS data collection) each year determines the amount received as grant. The grant money is paid into school Bank accounts in 3 tranches. The kindy Head of School, the Chairman of the School Council, and one other nominee of the Council would be signatories for all transactions. The following criteria are applied for schools to be eligible to receive grants: (MoET, 2021)

- All schools must teach the Vanuatu National Curriculum.

- All the students' information in a school is complete and entered accurately on Open VEMIS, with no duplicate students recorded.
- All financial reports are in Open VEMIS and submitted to the Provincial Education Officer by due date.
- The School Council is approved by the Provincial Education Board and meets at least once a term.⁷
- All eligible school/kindergarten improvement plans are approved by the school council.
- All eligible schools have no pending audit issues.⁸

The Provincial Education Officer (PEO) verifies that the schools have met the above criteria. If the fee proposal exceeds the ceiling set by MoET, that school submits their fee proposals to MoET as part of the process of budget submission to receive clearance. Table 2 includes the eligible per pupil grant amount for different levels of education.

Table 2: Annual School Grant Government Rates

School level	Age-group and Years	Amount 2020	63% (1 st and 2 nd tranche)	40% (3 rd tranche)
Kindergarten	4 & 5 years	9,000 VT	2,700 VT	3,600 VT
Primary	Years 1-6	8,900 VT	2,670 VT	3,560 VT
Secondary	Years 7-10	8,125 VT	2,437 VT	3,250 VT
Secondary fee subsidy	Years 7-10	42,000 VT	12,600 VT	16,800 VT

Source: Vanuatu School Grants Code (2021), p. 32.

Though not implemented, if school fees were charged, the school grant was to be reduced by this amount.⁹ On the other hand, if the school was charging more than this amount in fees before the grants were instituted, school fees could continue to be charged to make up this difference. Parents are expected to continue to cover school uniforms, transportation costs, lunch or meal costs and boarding costs.

The following units from MoET are involved with its administration – Finance, Education Services, Policy and Planning, and Internal Audit. The compliance and disbursement of school grants are clear at the national level. MoET publishes a

⁷ School Councils are made up of 7 members.

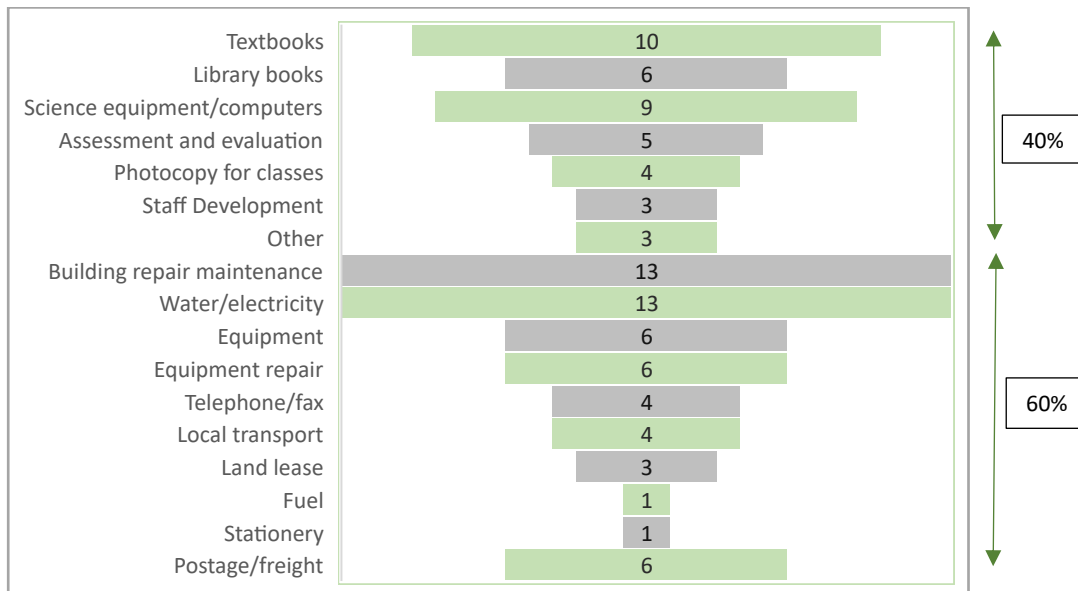
⁸ Education institutions (including kindies) are given time to correct or respond to any faults found in an audit. They are not precluded from accessing grants during this period.

⁹ The Education Act (2014) and the Education Regulation (Amendment) Order No. 107 of 2019 regulates school fees.

detailed School Financial Manual, which is distributed to every school.¹⁰ This manual and the quick guide to this manual are aimed to help schools manage their finances. The manual gets updated regularly with new versions introduced at regular intervals. MoET also organizes regular training sessions for school authorities on financial management.

Figure 4 shows the proportionate spending expected for different items in 2010. The total grant amount allocated for academic items is 40% and the remaining for non-academic items. Expenditures above VT 500,000 is only allowed with the direct involvement of MoET. These proportions are updated and the most recent updated version of what expenditures are possible and what is not allowed is provided in the School Grant Codes (2021), found in Annex 3. Annual school grant financial reports are to be approved by the School Council and submitted to the provincial education office prior to uploading in Open VEMIS. Even though these financial reports on grant expenditure can be observed, there are few details and it is difficult to obtain a sense of whether budgets and expenditure are contributing to increasing and sustaining access and quality in kindergartens, discussed in this study.

Figure 4: Eligible school grant expenditures (in%)



Source: Financial Management Manual 2010 p. 95

¹⁰ Ministry of Education. School Financial Manual. 2010. This Manual is being updated, based on Grant criteria and Open VEMIS data. Another document also assists schools -- School Financial Procedures Quick Guides (2010).

The next few sections examine the implementation of the kindergarten grants program and other government financing in addition to any other resources available for kindergartens. The use of these resources informs the discussion on the financing of kindergartens.

Criteria for student grants

The design of the school grant provision for kindy is similar to the primary and secondary sector.¹¹ Two dimensions determine the size of the grant to each kindy. First, is the number of children enrolled in kindergarten and second, the existence and design of a Kindergarten Improvement Plan.¹²

Student enrolment and financing

The first criteria for the amount received by each school are dependent on the number of eligible 4- and 5-year-old students enrolled in the school. The surveys tried to capture the number students normally attending kindergarten (Figure 7).¹³ The kindy head questionnaire asked for this information.¹⁴ In addition, the classroom observation also tried to capture this data. The discrepancies between the different individuals reporting the size of the kindy class are concerning. The kindergarten head who could also be a kindy teacher reported the high numbers. However, when the enumerator examined the attendance register, this number was not the same as what the head stated – it was more or less.¹⁵ And the number of students in the classrooms was in all cases much lower than the number of students in the register. Less than half the kindergarten heads (47%) could guarantee that every child attending had a birth certificate.¹⁶

Figure 7: Enrolment in the sampled kindergartens (n=66).

¹¹ Three quarters of kindergarten heads (76%) reported receiving a grant in 2020, while around half reported receiving one in 2021 (56%) at the time of data collection (July-September 2021). However, early 2021 the final tranche relating to 2020 was disbursed. It is likely, those that received this tranche assumed it related to this calendar and financial year.

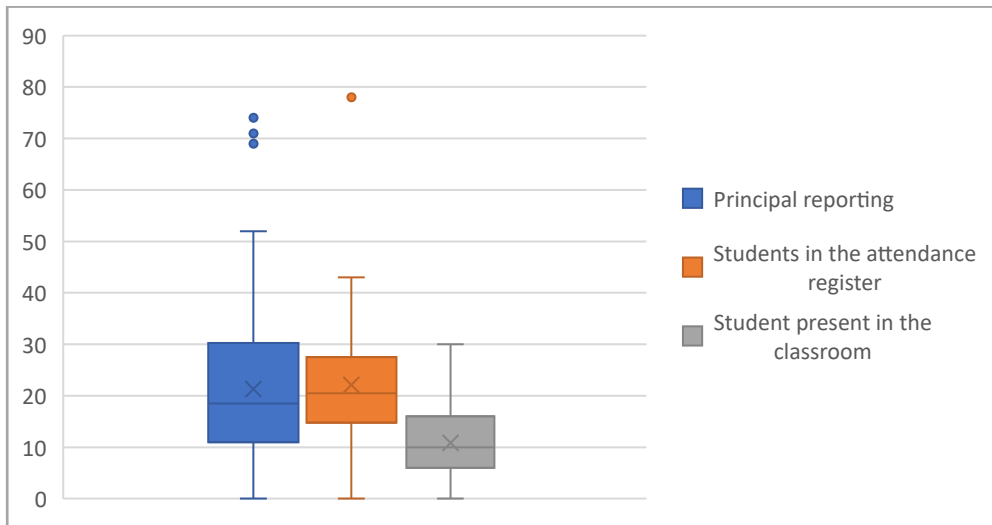
¹² In 2020 and earlier, 100% of ECCE grants were funded by the Australian Government. Australian funding is expected to be taken over by MoET, decrease by 25% annually from 2021 to 0 in 2024.

¹³ Annex 5 includes an explanation of box plots.

¹⁴ There were gaps in the Open VEMIS data on kindy enrolment and teachers and is not included in this analysis.

¹⁵ If the Head of kindergarten was consistently reporting much more students in kindergarten than those in the observed kindergarten class, then it could be assumed there is a second kindergarten class. However, this was not the case. For example, one Head reported 16 students attending kindergarten, but in the attendance register there were 19 students and 9 students were observed sitting in the class (10 students were supposedly absent).

¹⁶ The GPE ESP appraisal raises concerns with the VEMIS data. Based on 'The Urban School Study,' a 16% discrepancy was estimated in primary between reporting and survey data.



Source: Kindy Head Survey 2021, Kindy class observation survey 2021.
Twelve observations were incomplete and therefore, could not be compared.

Kindergarten Improvement Plans

The majority (90%) of kindergarten heads reported that a Kindergarten Improvement Plan for both 2020 and 2021 or at least for one of these years was available. The remaining kindies had submitted no Plans for 2020 or 2021. On average kindergartens spent approximately 70% of their annual kindergarten budget in 2020, retaining the remaining 30%.¹⁷

Kindergarten heads were asked about the Kindergarten Improvement Plan targets that were achieved for 2020 and 2021. Overall, kindergartens reported they were set to achieve more of the Plan targets in 2021 compared to what was achieved in 2020. There were a number of non-respondents, in addition to 'don't know' or 'none' responses – 42% in 2020 and 15% in 2021.¹⁸ For those principals or kindy heads that did respond with an answer, infrastructure improvements including toilets, classrooms, and fencing were the most popular in 2020. The proportion giving this answer increased significantly in 2021. For example, in 2020, only 12% of the sampled kindies said their target achievements included the building of classrooms. In 2021, this number increased to 29%.

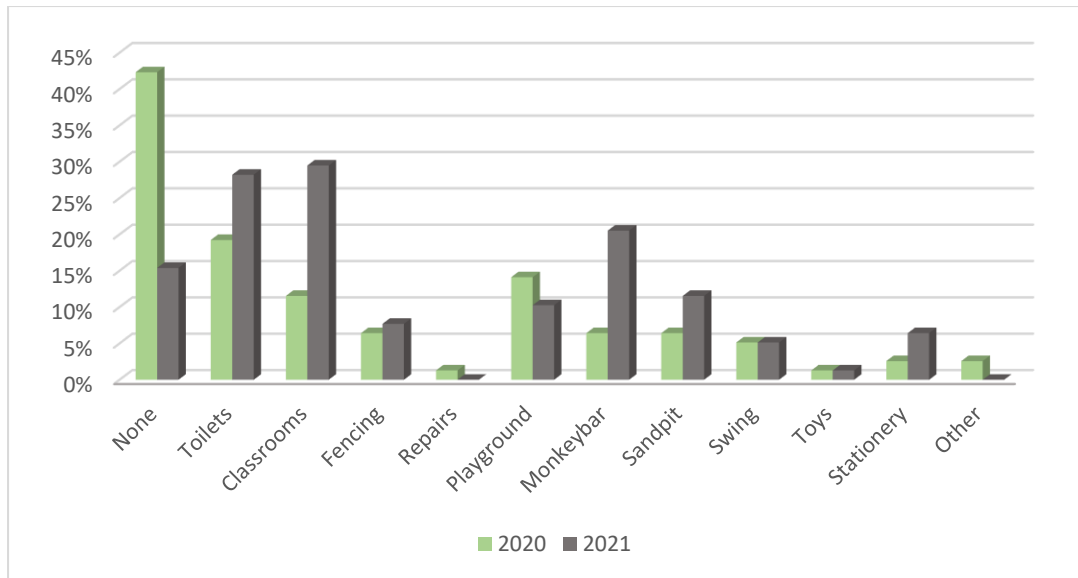
Interesting, between 3 and 14% in 2020 included Plan targets related to toys, and playground items including monkey bars, swings and sand pits (Figure 8). The proportion that included such targets doubled in 2021. Having said this, the proportion of kindies that spent on play items only amounted to a fifth of the sample. Moreover, stationery is

¹⁷ This area needs more investigation. It is not clear whether this amount is retained by the kindergarten or management because the next year's allocation is late. Moreover, whether the kindergarten receives that much less in the following year's allocation is also not clear.

¹⁸ Note, the question allowed for multiple responses.

important for teaching and learning in kindergarten as children begin to practice drawing and writing using various instruments. Less than 5% of the kindies spent money on stationery. A few others included items such as ‘notice boards’ or ‘school logos’ which are tangentially related to teaching and learning.

Figure 8: Kindergarten Improvement Plan targets achieved (n=78)



Source: Kindy Head Survey 2021

School Fees and household costs

In addition to kindy grants, students are charged fees. About 35% kindy principals, indicated no fees were charged for kindergarten. Of those kindergartens who charged a fee; the range per term was VT 150 to VT 15,000 for 4- and 5-year-old. The average fees charged per term was around VT 3000. The provincial education office indicated similar numbers. One province said it was between VT 2000 to VT 6000 per year. Another province indicated it was VT 15,000 per year. It is likely that on the one hand, these numbers are only estimates and on the other hand, the fees charged could differ according to what the child’s family can afford.

In addition to fees, households are responsible for transportation cost, food, uniform, bag/shoes (usually thongs), in some instances, basic stationery. Communities also contribute additional funds for kindergartens through fundraising etc., which can include the support for a community teacher, volunteers, kindergarten infrastructure/ facilities and their maintenance, administration, operational expenses including freight and learning resources.

Budget and expenditure

Around half (55%) of the Heads from attached, feeder and standalone kindies, could report on their kindergarten budgets for 2020. The average budget in 2020 for feeder and non-feeder kindies was lower than for kindergartens that were attached to primary schools. Of the 45% kindy heads (that included attached, feeder and standalone kindies) who could not identify their budgets, nearly half said they were responsible for funds received. A similar divide was evident with the group that could identify their budget. For example, even those who could say what their budget was half said they were not responsible for the budget. It is likely that the semantics and actions associated with common financial management terminology are unfamiliar for the respondents.

Attached kindergarten heads indicated that they would usually submit to the primary school principal, a request list and often with accompanying financial quotes, for approval and purchase based on their Kindy Improvement Plans. They would then provide receipts after acquitting the funds. A small number indicated that they were provided with the funds directly. Only, a few responses suggested the funds were not enough or there was a lack of transparency on the part of the primary school principal. For most of the kindergartens, the primary school principal had procured what was needed.

The study specifically examined availability of teaching and learning material. Around a quarter (27%) of the kindergarten heads reported receiving resource kits from the MoET approximately 2 years ago, and 95% of those indicated they were still using those kits. About 75% kindergarten head teachers and 71% teachers reported that they did not have enough learning resources. It would be expected that for this group of around 70%, the Kindy Improvement Plans would include the procurement of these learning resources. However, as discussed above, the Plans were focused on infrastructure development. If there was expenditure on teaching and learning, it was restricted to playground items mainly sand pits and monkey bars.

The questionnaires also asked the head of kindy about the availability of teaching and learning material in 2019 and 2020 inside the classroom (Table 6). The situation is unsatisfactory and reflects the lack of funds spent on items basic to a functioning kindy. Only about a third of the schools had books. About less than 20% had paper, crayons and pencils in 2019 and this proportion decreased even further to about 13% in 2020.

Table 6: Teaching and Learning materials (n=78)

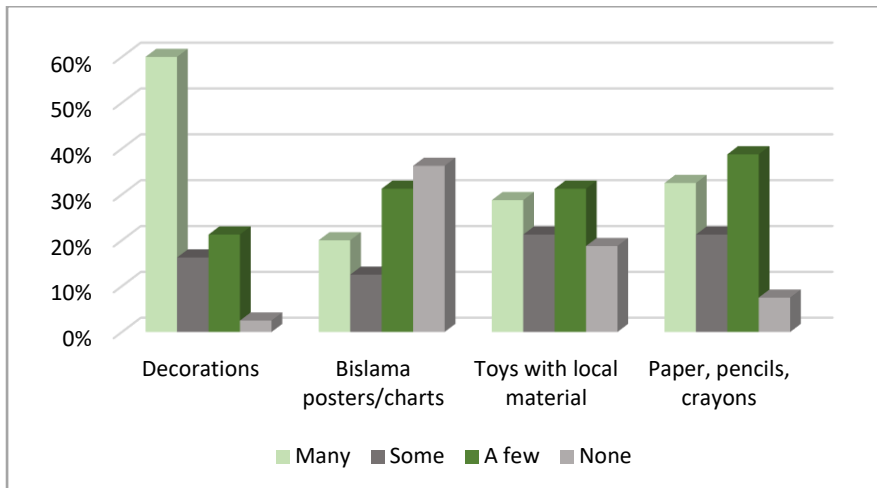
Item	2019		2020	
	Schools	%schools	Schools	%schools
Buks	27	35%	28	36%
pencils,	16	21%	10	13%
Crayons	15	19%	11	14%
Paper	14	18%	10	13%

Glue	13	17%	10	13%
Paint	9	12%	10	13%
Toys	5	6%	6	8%
narafala ting1	6	8%	1	1%
narafala ting2	3	4%	14	18%
narafala ting3	2	3%	2	3%

Source: Kindy Head Survey 2021

The study collected additional information on learning resources by observing the kindy classroom. The kindy grant was not providing for the most important items for learning at this level reiterating the situation described in Table 6. Most classrooms were decorated, though, only about half the classrooms had Bislama posters/charts, toys made with local material. The proportion of classrooms with essential pencils, crayons or paper in plenty was only 30%. (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Availability of teaching and learning material in classrooms



Source: Kindy Class Observation 2021

Financial oversight and audits

The Kindy Council is expected to play an important role regarding kindy grants and other government fund transfers. The council also helps to determine school fee levels and other community contributions for kindergarten. About 20% of the kindy councils were non-functional in 2020. The 80% that had working kindergarten committees, membership ranged from one to 13 members. On average there were 7 members, and evenly gender balanced. Half of the kindergarten heads indicated they met 'last month'. On average, committees met 3 times a year. Almost three quarters (71%) indicated that committee members were not involved in the classroom.

Most of the kindergartens (90%) do not have bank accounts. Regarding the few kindies that had a separate account, the primary school principal or the kindergarten committee is expected to monitor expenditure. Almost two thirds of kindergarten heads indicated that they had not received any training on administering grants. A third indicated they knew about the Ministry's financial manual but only half of this group could say they had fulfilled the expectations of this manual. Most kindies (68%) indicated that grant information was submitted to the Provincial Education Office. Regarding whether the Provincial Education Officer had completed an audit on the kindergartens grant, around three quarters indicated either no or that they didn't know. This is likely because the primary school would likely be managing the funds.

Summary of Findings - Financing Kindergarten

The following points summarize the findings of this section on financing kindergartens.

- Considering the fairly high Gross Enrolment Rates for 4- and 5-year old's, there is significant provision of kindergartens across Vanuatu, However, similar to the primary sector, there is much fluctuation and instability with reported enrolment numbers, differing across the Open VEMIS, kindy head reported numbers as well as the observed number of students sitting in class. Particularly concerning is the large number of kindy principals (47%) reporting that they could not guarantee all children had a birth certificate. The ages of these children can only be approximations making it a challenge to calculate Net Enrolment Rates.
- The majority (90%) of kindergarten heads reported a Kindergarten Improvement Plan for both 2020 and 2021 or at least one of these years. About half the heads indicated that they were set to achieve Plan targets for 2021. Infrastructure targets were the most popular. Less than 20% of the sample included targets related to toys, playground, monkey bars, swings and sand pits. Less than 5% spent on stationery. On average kindergartens spent approximately 70% of their annual budget in 2020.
- The study specifically examined availability of teaching and learning material. Only about a third of the schools had books. About less than 20% had paper, crayons and pencils in 2019 and this proportion decreased even further to about 13% in 2020. About 75% kindergarten heads and 71% teachers reported that they did not have enough learning resources. However, expenditure targets did not focus on these items and if they did spend, it was on playground items mainly sand pits and monkey bars.
- Except for 35% of kindy heads, all the remaining heads said that fees were charged. The range in fees charged per term was VT150 to VT15,000 and the average was around VT3000. Though 45% kindies said they were responsible for the budget, only

half this number could identify the amount. The average annual budget for feeder and standalone kindies was VT 192,733 and for those attached to primaries was much higher at VT 322,534. Primary schools were mostly in-charge of for budget and expenditure with respect to the attached kindies.

- About 80% of the school councils had working committees, and membership ranged from one to 13 members. On average there were 7 members, with approximate even gender balance. On average, committees met 3 times a year. Most kindies are unfamiliar with financial management. The attached primary school principal usually monitored the accounts for attached primary.

Teachers for Kindergarten

This section focuses on the teachers teaching in the kindergarten classrooms in Vanuatu. A number of areas are examined including the characteristics and distribution of the teachers, their preparation and training, work in the classroom, oversight and management, and teacher demand and supply.

Global discussions-kindergarten teacher management

There are few overarching international reports that discuss and analyse specific dimensions associated with kindergarten teachers. In general, global discussions on primary school teachers applies also to this level. An early document done jointly by the International Academy of Education and the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (Cooper and Alvarado, 2006) highlights the importance of 3 areas associated with managing the teacher workforce – preparation, recruitment, and retention. Moreover, policies in each area should not be ad hoc but developed holistically and coherently for quality teachers. If it is ad hoc, then there will be ‘gaps, conflict, and inefficiencies (Cooper and Alvarado, 2007, p. 5).’

The 2007 Global Education Monitoring Report is dedicated to ECCE. According to this report, ECCE teachers could have shorter preservice training than primary teachers but with longer on-the-job support and professional development. The World Bank’s ‘System’s Approach for Better Education Results (SABER)’ was introduced in 2013 to improve education systems in developing countries. SABER tries to build a knowledge base on existing policies and institutions in different areas. This is done through interviews with education officials and without any in-depth analysis of whether and how these policies are implemented. Based on anecdotal evidence, statements are made in the SABER documents on the complicated and inadequate policy implementation, leading to what would be considered as failed policy.

According to the SABER on ECCE (World Bank 2013), having ‘Clear learning standards for what children should know and be able to do can help teachers understand what they should be doing in the classroom and clarify their responsibilities and goals.’ (p.40). Standards connected to the curriculum can assist the national level monitor and encourage consistent quality across different service providers.

The SABER teacher frameworks (World Bank, 2013), lists policy dimensions to assist countries manage their teacher workforce. A selective summary of this framework relevant to the Vanuatu context is listed below.

Forecasting teacher requirements

- Collecting and analysing data on the supply and demand of teachers to direct recruitment efforts for kindergarten, primary and secondary.

Requirements for remaining in the teaching profession

- Upgrading framework for teachers already in the workforce.
- Defining continuing requirements for teachers to remain in the teaching profession.

Teacher recruitment processes

- Regulating the requirements for entry into the teaching profession.
- Detailing the application process for teachers to be recruited.
- Defining the list of criteria that informs the selection process.

Teacher employment placement, and transfer

- Logical and clear teacher salary scales available.
- Incentives available for teachers to work at hard-to-staff schools, teach critical subjects (where there is a shortage), and take on leadership roles.
- Defining a transparent and straightforward process for school appointments.
- Policies in-place for transferring teachers across schools.

Teacher job descriptions, oversight, and support promoting

- Clear job expectations (for example, teaching hours) for teachers communicated across schools.
- Clear process in-place for evaluating teachers' performance based on job descriptions.
- Specifying and monitoring teacher performance evaluations on employment conditions (promotion and disciplining).
- Specifying and monitoring the connections between the results of teacher performance evaluations and professional development opportunities.

Kerrie Wratten (2018), has a thoughtful analysis of teacher performance evaluations in developed countries for the Australia Parliament between 2008 and 2018. This review highlights the importance of accountability measures, professionalization, and instructional leadership, very important and relevant to this study. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2018) examines teachers' selection, development, evaluation, and compensation in countries with high and low student achievement. Though mostly focused on countries with considerable resources, some of these findings are relevant for Vanuatu.¹⁹ The analysis highlights common elements across high performing countries:

- Teachers had the abilities of college graduates,
- Teachers were required to have an extended induction period before confirmation of employment,
- Teachers were appraised regularly,
- Teachers were provided continuous professional development based on appraisal,
- The differences between a teachers' salary and the salary of persons in other professions were not significant.

This section examined the global discourse and analysis on teacher workforce management keeping in mind that the discussions so far were not able to avert the learning crisis across developing countries. (World Bank 2018, UNESCO, 2017).²⁰ Therefore, while this section summarizes the most pertinent and relevant research for Vanuatu, this study tries to go beyond these international discussions in search of the drivers for learning specific to the Vanuatu context. The following analysis helps to understand existing policy implementation in schools and inform the development of an overarching Teacher Quality Framework.

Teacher distribution

Almost all of the kindergarten principals interviewed are also teachers, and 96% of the teachers are women. Except for 15% of the kindies, all the kindergartens had at least one government paid teacher (Figure 10). About 23% kindergartens had 2 teachers. In addition to government teachers, 55% of kindy heads indicated that community paid teachers were also teaching in the school. There was more than one community paid teacher in 16% of the kindergartens. Overall, the kindergartens are well staffed as the discussion below portrays.

¹⁹ A third area examined was school control over teachers recruited for the school. This would not work for small, rural schools in developing countries as the applicant pool may not be skilled, or there may not be applicants.

²⁰ Globally, 56% of the children in the primary and lower secondary age groups did not meet minimum proficiency levels in mathematics and 58% in reading. All these numbers are averages with wide variations across countries, states and provinces within a country. (UNESCO, 2017).

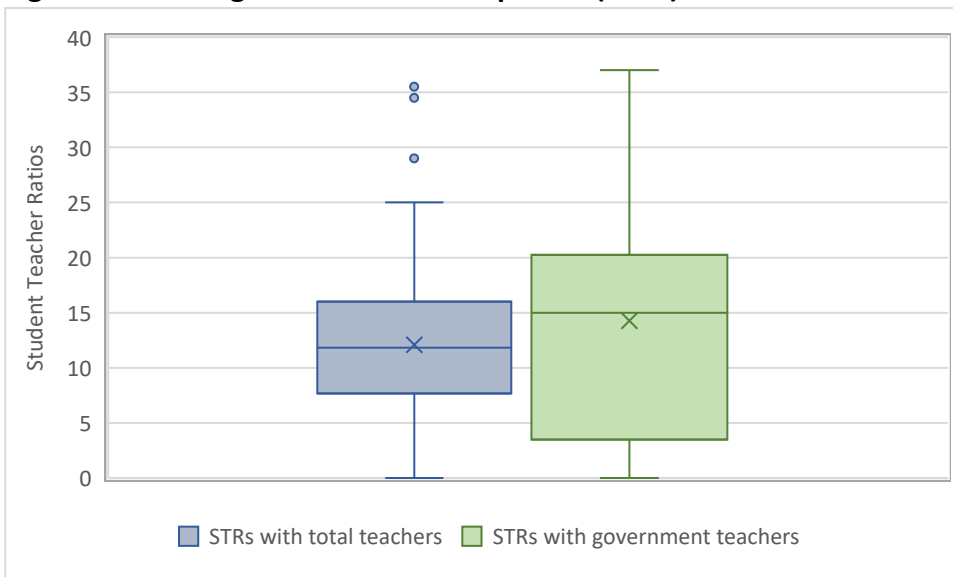
Table 7: Teachers in kindergarten

	Government paid	Community paid
None	12 (15%)	35 (45%)
One teacher	45 (58%)	30 (38%)
Two teachers	18 (23%)	12 (15%)
Three teachers	2 (3%)	1 (1%)
Four teachers	1 (1%)	

Source: Kindy Head Survey 2021

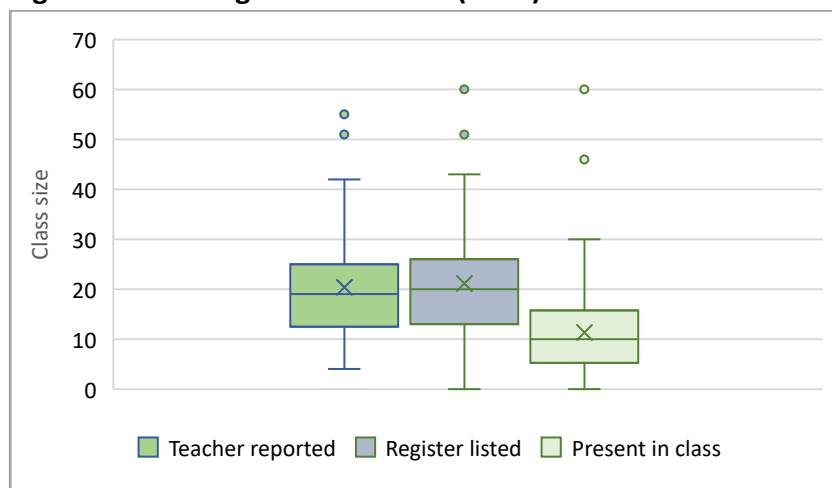
The Student Teacher Ratios (STR) norm for kindergarten is around 20 to 25 students to a teacher. STRs were calculated using 4 different enrolment numbers – kindy head reported enrolment, teachers reported enrolment, the number listed in the attendance register, and the number observed sitting in the class. Open VEMIS enrolment is still being finalized and therefore, could not be part of this analysis. With only government teachers the average STR for kindy head reported enrolment is 15 and including community teachers average STR is 12 students to a teacher (Figure 10). The distribution of work across the teachers, helpers and part time employees is unclear. If the teacher reported students in his or her class and the number in the attendance register are considered, the average STR is less than 20 (Figure 11). There are differences in the numbers in the register and the teacher reported number in his or her class. If the number present in the classroom at the time of data collection is considered, the average STR is around 10 students to a teacher. The STR data also confirms that there are sufficient teachers for kindergarten.

Figure 10: Kindergarten STRs Head reported (n=78)



Source: Kindy Head Survey 2021

Figure 11: Kindergarten class size (n=77)²¹



Source: Kindy Teacher Survey 2021; Kindy Observation Survey 2021.

Teacher preparation and training

Three dimensions were examined in the survey with regard to kindergarten teachers' qualifications, which are still being streamlined in Open VEMIS (Table 7). First, the study asked about the basic school background of teachers. Only 3% teachers had a diploma and 6% a certificate III/IV. Most teachers (54%) possessed junior secondary schooling followed by a group of teachers with only primary schooling (23%). A small percent had senior secondary qualifications (15%).

Second, the kind of teaching qualifications obtained by kindergarten teachers was examined. Only 26% teachers had a Certificate III in teaching.²² Some of the teachers that responded with 'other' had a certificate. A large proportion (48%) said that they did not have any qualification. Finally, teachers were asked whether they were certified and 50% said they were. But it is not clear whether teachers understood what this meant.

Table 7: Teacher qualifications

Basic schooling		Teaching qualification		Certification	
Primary	18 (23%)	Certificate III	21 (26%)	Certified	40 (50%)
Junior secondary	43 (54%)	Other	16 (20%)	Non-certified	40 (50%)
Senior secondary	12 (15%)	None	38 (48%)		
Diploma	2 (3%)	No response	5 (6%)		

²¹ Outliers are removed as the data did not align with each other. For example, in one kindergarten where the principal reported 4 government paid teachers and 116 students enrolled, the teacher reported 119 students in his or her class, the register listed 32 students and observed students present in class were only 18.

²² The only expectation in previous years was a certificate of attendance at a field-based Training. A large proportion of teachers (around 80%) attended this training. After this field-based training was no longer offered, kindergarten teachers were expected to complete Cert 111 from APTC and USP.

Certificate III, IV	5 (6%)				
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Source: Kindy Teacher Survey 2021

In response to MoET’s plans to upgrade teachers, the Vanuatu School of Education is intending to support kindergarten teachers obtain a Certificate IV. This will involve full-time on campus study. Pre-requisites for participating in the program include

- a level III in LLN;
- at least 5 years’ experience in ECCE (only for In-Service Teachers)

Sixty teachers are expected to graduate each year, starting this year. Completing the entire group of existing teachers will take about 2 decades. Moreover, the implications of having just primary schooling or junior secondary are unclear for the upgrading program.

In-service training

Most kindergarten teachers interviewed (84%) had received in service training. There was considerable variation in the training received by different groups of teachers. Teachers reported being trained in a range of areas listed below. As the list indicates the areas covered are numerous. Because of the different types of training different teachers have received it would not be possible to conclude that all the ECCE teachers had gone through specific capacity building (for example toy making) and future in-service could concentrate on the other dimensions. A strategic approach and an overall master plan to this area that includes well documented data in the teacher’s database could help in identifying specific skills built in the kindy teacher population.

Types of inservice training received by teachers

Hygiene	Financial management
Lesson planning	Librarian course
New curriculum	Administration
Quality standards	English teaching
Field training	Vernacular education
Classroom management	Toy making
Literacy and numeracy	

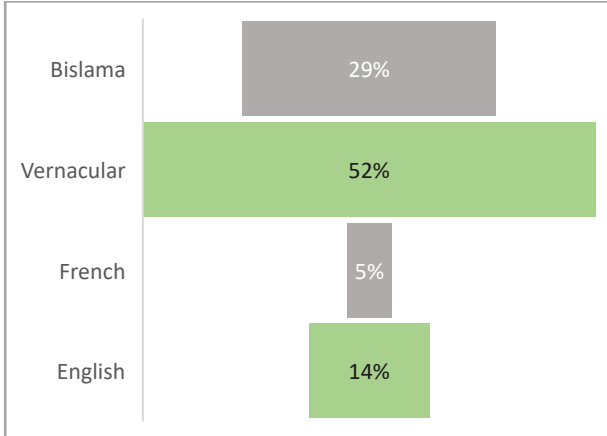
Source: Kindy Teacher Survey 2021

Teachers’ work in the classroom

The study asked teachers the language used for instruction and hours of instruction (Figure 12). Regarding the language of instruction, the majority of schools (52%) used the vernacular in the classroom followed by Bislama (29%). English was used in 14% of classrooms and French 5%. There was considerable variation with the hours of instruction

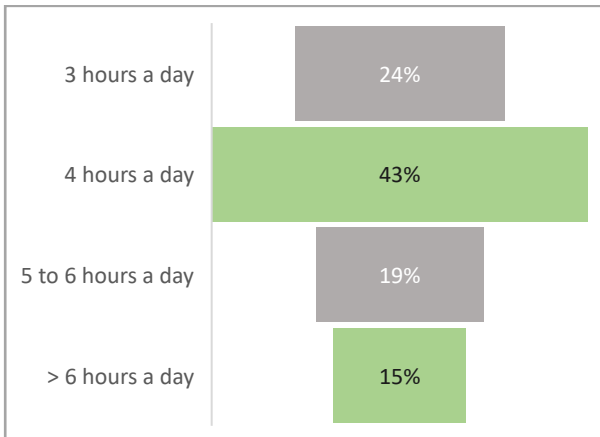
across teachers (Figure 13). Four hours a day was the most common (43%), followed by 3 hours a day (24%).

Figure 12: Teachers' language of instruction (n=80)



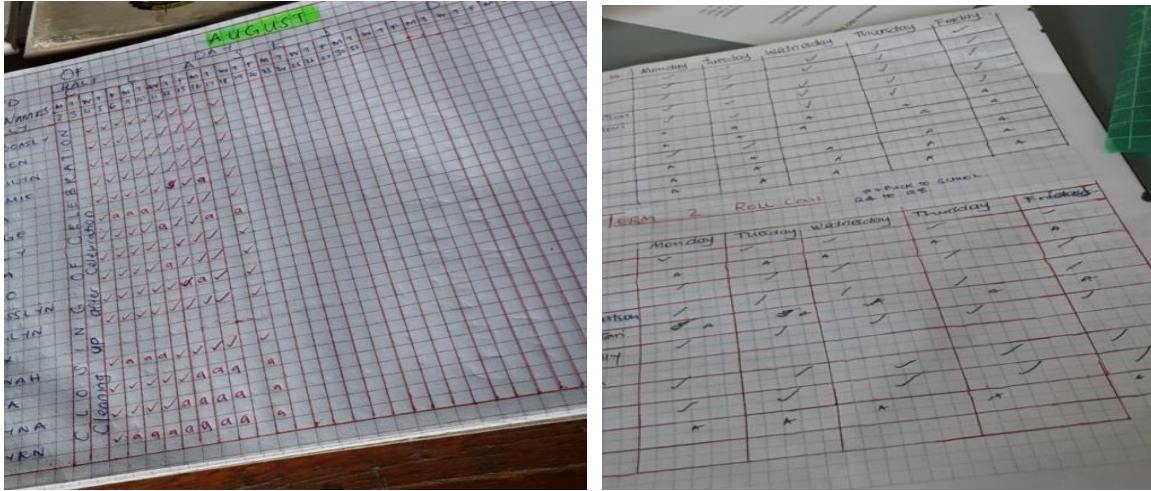
Source: Kindy Teacher Survey 2021

Figure 13: Teachers' hours of instruction (n=80)



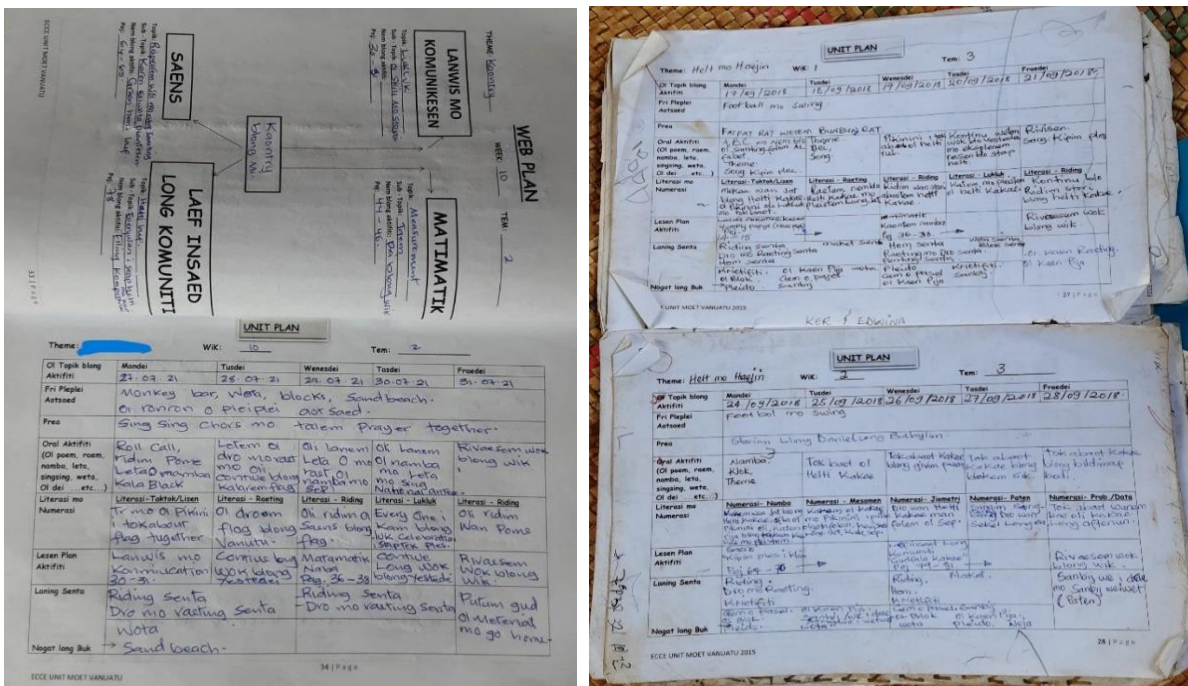
Except for 11% of teachers who were not monitoring attendance, the remaining teachers displayed a fairly uniform and structured approach to monitoring student attendance. Photos of attendance registers from almost all the sampled classes displayed clarity in monitoring student attendance. (Picture 1). In addition to student attendance, the study looked at the content of what took place in the kindy classroom. Again, similar to attendance, there was a uniformity in approach with a focus on lesson content evident in most of the unit plans. (Picture 2). Language, math, lifelong learning and science were included.

Picture 1: Examples of monitoring student attendance



Source: Kindy Teacher Survey 2021

Picture 2: Examples of lesson plans



Source: Kindy Teacher Survey 2021

The study explored the question of what children do in a kindy classroom and the alignment with unit plans. Enumerators were asked to observe the activities children were involved with when visiting the classroom. In 7 of the classrooms, children were not in the classroom or they had gone home. In the remaining classrooms, children were involved in one of the

activities listed in Table 8. Taking each category individually, in about half the classrooms, children were mainly involved with playing. And in about a third of the classrooms, children were involved with singing, drawing, listening to a story or some other activity. Dependent on the availability of musical instruments or puzzles, as expected making music or doing a puzzle was only evident in a small proportion of classrooms – 4 and 14%, respectively. In 15% of classrooms, groups of children were involved with 2 or 3 different activities. For example, some children would be singing while others would be playing or drawing. In 5% of classrooms, this number increased to 4 or 5 different activities.

Table 8: Activity involvement in the classroom (n=73)

Activity	Play	Puzzle	Music	Singing	Drawing	Listening	Other
Classes	39	10	3	22	22	22	23
% Sample	53%	14%	4%	30%	30%	30%	32%

Source: Kindy Observation Survey 2021. No children in the classroom in 7 classrooms

While there are structured unit plans in place, there is considerable variation in the teacher implementation of the plan. Table 9 shows this variation in curriculum coverage. Data collection took place in August 2021 so the expectation is that teachers would finish at least 60% of the curriculum. Only a quarter of the teachers (27%) was in this group in 2021. For the previous year (2020), the expectation was that all of the teachers have finished a minimum of 80% of the curriculum. Around 40% are in this group. The length of the school year also has implications for curriculum coverage. Interestingly, when kindy heads were asked about the number of weeks in a school year, it ranged from 20 weeks to 42 weeks.

Table 9: Teachers' curriculum coverage (n=80)

Unit plans completed	August 2021		2020	
	Teachers	% Sample	Teachers	% Sample
Up to 20%	5	6%	0	0%
20 to 40%	16	20%	3	4%
41 to 60%	34	43%	19	24%
61 to 80%	17	21%	21	26%
80 to 100%	5	6%	29	36%
New teacher			3	4%
No response	3	4%	5	6%

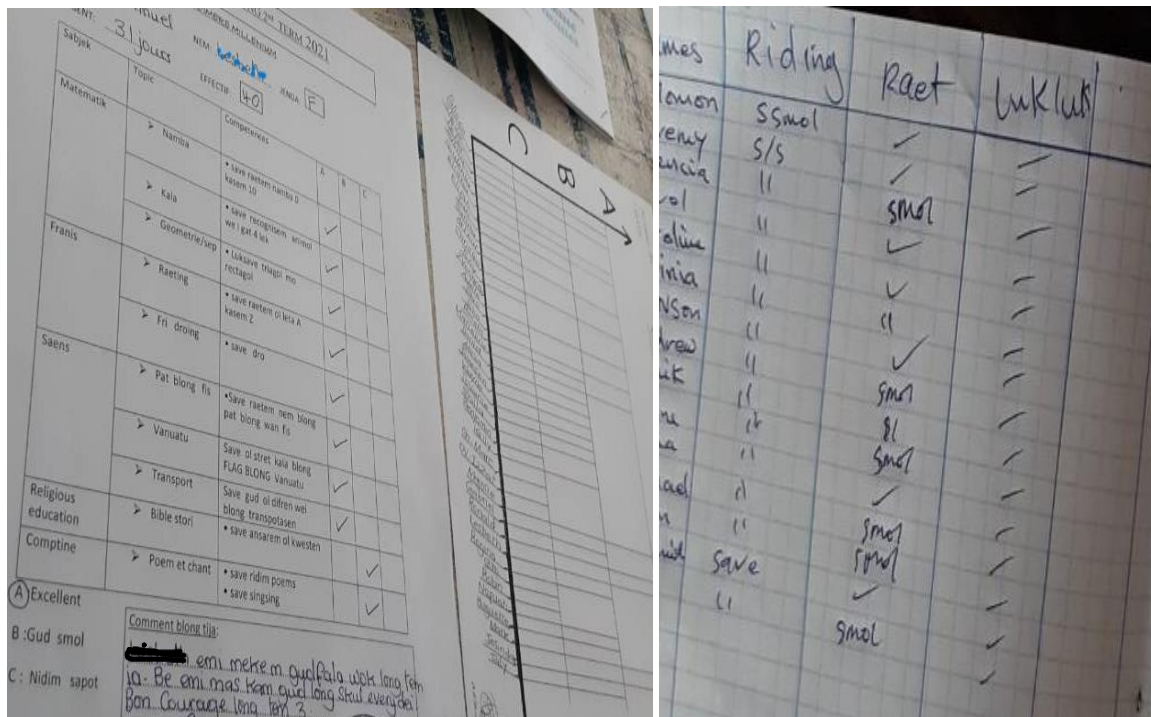
Source: Kindy Teacher Survey 2021

Finally, this section examines how teachers monitored the impact of their teaching on students' learning. About 40% of kindy heads could say that students were well prepared for Class 1 while 46% said they were somewhat well prepared. Only a small proportion said they felt students were not well prepared. About a quarter of the teachers interviewed kept

medical records for each student and also made available deworming medicines of kindy children.

Teachers' monitoring of student learning is important. Picture 3 displays a few examples of these initiatives. MoET had rolled out a tool for kindy teachers to monitor learning. The use of the tool is not entirely clear. This lack of clarity is evident in the photos taken of its use by teachers. If a single sheet is intended per student, then the tool is likely to be paper intensive for rural schools. And therefore, teachers are using it in a somewhat general way, which creates inefficiency and error. Having said this, there are a few teachers that have implemented their own way of monitoring student development of knowledge and skill that seems fairly comprehensive and concise.

Picture 3: Teachers' assessment of student learning



Source: Kindy Teacher Survey 2021

Oversight and management of teaching and learning

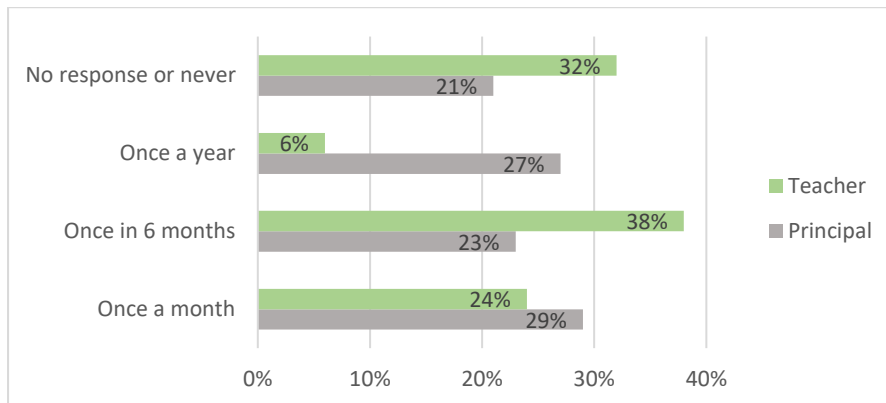
About 75% of teachers arrived on time and an equal number said there was a register that they needed to fill in when they arrived and left at the end of the kindy school day. There are 4 constituencies that can provide oversight over the functioning of kindergartens – parents, kindy head, the Mobile Education Officer (MEO), and the Inspector. Except the kindy head, the study examined the role of each of these groups. To examine whether a kindy principal was involved with oversight for a kindy would not be appropriate as the

principal would also in most cases be the teacher (with low enrolment numbers). Therefore, analysis of the oversight roles of kindy principals is not included in this study.

Regarding parents' visits, 38% of kindy teachers said parents had visited their class in the last 6 months. This was not the case with the remaining teachers. Having said this, with parents, there is no obligation for them to oversee activities except regarding the education performance and support that is received by their wards. On the other hand, the general expectation is for teachers to work with the parents of children attending kindergarten. Teachers were asked how often they shared with parents the performance of their wards. Most teachers (65%) said that they interacted with parents once a term and the remaining teachers indicated it was either weekly or monthly.

The MEOs and inspectors play an important oversight role for kindergartens, in their visits and interactions with the teacher. Both the kindy head and the teacher questionnaires were asked about the frequency of MEO's visits (Figure 13). The head and teachers' answers are similar but not identical. Between 21 to 32% of the kindergartens were never visited. The remaining kindergartens received a visit either once a month, once in 6 months or once a year. Regarding the inspector's visits, 90% of both the kindy heads and teachers said they were never visited. While the content of the visit of MEOs and inspector is important, since policies and reporting structures are still being developed, these were not available.

Figure 13: MEO visits to schools



Source: Kindy Teacher Survey 2021; and Kindy Principal Survey 2021

Teacher demand and supply

The demand for teachers for kindergarten would need to be considered based on GERs, micro data relating to repetition, retention and dropout and STRs. The GERs discussed above indicate that the current system is, to a large extent, catering to the population of 4- and 5-year age group. Therefore, new teachers required would be replacement teachers due to teacher attrition. The rate of teacher attrition is not known as there is informal

ongoing recruitment of community paid teachers. Repetition and dropout rates are also not clear as enrolment numbers provided are not stable, evident in the differences in enrolment reported by kindy heads, the attendance registers and teachers.

The existing STRs are also low at an average of around 10 students to a teacher. With significant student absenteeism, the number is even lower at 7 students to a teacher. Even with a population growth rate of 2.4%, current STRs can accommodate some increases in the kindy population.²³

About 70% of teachers did not know about the government mandated salary scale and their own place in this salary scale. The amounts and consistency in the payments made to community teachers are unclear and will need to be investigated.

Summary of findings – Teachers for kindergarten

Government and community paid teachers are teaching across kindergartens in the surveyed schools. The STRs indicate that there are sufficient teachers for pre-primary. With only government teachers the average STR is 15 and with community teachers, the average STR is 12 students to a teacher. The distribution of work across the teachers, helpers and part time employees is unclear.

Two dimensions examined in the survey with regard to kindergarten teachers' qualifications are clear.

- With reference to basic schooling, only 15% teachers were senior secondary and the remaining were either junior secondary or just primary.
- Regarding their qualifications in teaching, except for 26% teachers who had a Certificate III, the remaining did not have any preservice credentials.

The Vanuatu University School of Education is intending to support kindergarten teachers obtain a Certificate IV in ECCE. With a capacity to graduate 60 teachers annually. Completing the training of the entire group of existing teachers will take about 2 decades. Moreover, the implications of having just primary schooling or junior secondary for the upgrading program are unclear. Most teachers have received in-service training, however, the variety in content makes it difficult to conclude that specific skills were developed across the kindy teacher population.

The vernacular was used in 52% of classes, followed by Bislama (29%). English was used in 14% of classrooms and French 5%. Teachers teaching 4 hours a day was the most common (43%). In the observed kindergartens, children were playing, singing, drawing, listening to a

²³ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.GROW?locations=VU>. The World Bank data shows a decline growth rate since 2010 when it was 2.8% for Vanuatu.

story or some other activity. Making music or doing a puzzle was uncommon. Though unit plans displayed a focus on subject content, curriculum coverage was not satisfactory.

Except for 11% of teachers who were not attending to student attendance, the remaining teachers were systematic in their monitoring. MoET had rolled out a tool for kindy teachers to monitor learning. Teachers are using it in a somewhat general way. There are a few teachers that use their own method of monitoring that seems fairly comprehensive and concise.

About 75% of teachers arrived and left on time. Most teachers (65%) said that they interacted with parents once a term. Both teachers and kindy heads were asked about the MEO visits to their school. Two-thirds of the kindergarten teachers said they were visited and 24% said they were visited once a month. A third of the kindergarten teachers and a fifth of kindy principals reported the MEO had never visited.

GERs discussed above indicate that the current system to large part caters to the population of the 4- and 5-year age group. The STRs are also low, especially taking into account community teachers. New teachers required would be replacement teachers due to teacher attrition, which is not known.

Recommendations

The recommendations based on the findings of this study are organized according to immediate implications and more long-term suggestions.

Recommendations for the short-term (financing and teachers)

- ❖ Kindergartens are not well equipped to receive and manage school grants. When kindies are attached to a primary, the primary school principal is responsible for grant management and oversight of both primary and kindy grants. This is helpful taking into account efficiency and accountability, especially considering the appointment of separate bursars/principals would not be financially viable for the size of kindy student enrolment. **Support and monitoring principal oversight of attached ECCEs. For feeder and standalone kindies, capacity building and support provided in the management of school grants.**
- ❖ An urgent need is to understand how the different types of teachers, helpers and part-time employees are working in kindergartens. The task of teaching, salary scales and payments, oversight and management of the different types of teachers would be critical information that can inform improvements in these areas. **Chart and resource the provincial education office roles and responsibilities vis-à-vis ECCE teachers and primary school principals.**

- ❖ Upgrading of kindergarten teachers will need to be carefully organized so students do not lose time for learning. Based on teachers schooling background, training may need to be staggered starting with those teachers with just primary school qualifications. **Upskilling those with just primary and junior secondary to secondary is urgent. Upskilling with hybrids with remote and intensive in-person sessions during vacation could build the necessary knowledge and skill.**
- ❖ Observation of students in classrooms indicated that children are occupied playing, singing, drawing, listening to a story or some other activity. Moreover, teachers are to a large extent monitoring attendance and learning, which bodes well for kindergarten education. More attention is required for ensuring systematic and comprehensive completion of curriculum coverage. **Ensuring teachers' job descriptions include the 4 critical areas of teacher presence, curriculum coverage, systematic recording of student attendance, testing, and documenting study learning.**
- ❖ The fluctuations in enrolment and attendance requires critical attention. **Strengthening OVEMIS data collection and establishing a system to regularly validate the data can address this situation.**

Recommendations for the long-term (financing and teachers)

- A dedicated study on private kindergartens, which account for a large proportion (71%) of providers in Vanuatu would be useful. Such study would examine how funds are raised, the quality of teaching and learning and the oversight and accountability practices in place.
- Funding for kindergarten could be based on specific and costed school operations and development. If it is an attached kindergarten, operational costs would apply for both kindy and primary. This would ease pressure on kindergarten management with regard to student enrolment and encourage systematic reporting of student enrolment. Improving birth certificate registration in rural areas is critical. Support could be targeted for consistent and systematic reporting on student enrolment and attendance across kindergartens.
- To obtain a grant for infrastructure development, kindies would develop an infrastructure-specific plan for submission, distinguishing capital costs from the regular school budget. Infrastructure grants could be under the purview of the big picture national school infrastructure development program addressing equity etc
- Nationally funded direct support is available for teaching and learning materials based on enrolment. In this way, instructional materials critical for learning in kindergarten are made available for every student, with close monitoring of

enrolment and attendance. The kits delivered earlier could be worth considering as a regular distribution item to kindies.

- Rethinking the role of the provincial education offices could also begin to address the frustrations and challenges expressed by provincial staff with implementing school grants. Instead of just monitoring compliance, provincial education offices could be charged with visioning, implementing, and being accountable for kindergarten performance.

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Annex 1: Corporate Plan 2022-2026: Strategies and Activities related to ECCE

<i>Key Pillar 1 – Equitable Access to education is improved</i>		
<i>Outcome 1 - Increased and equitable access opportunities for children to attend schools</i>		
Strategy	Program	Key Activity
1. Maintain and utilize Fee Subsidy to schools (ECCE – Senior Secondary) by revising School Financial Management Manual and Code and disbursing grants according to work plan	<i>1. School Financial Management Manual are updated</i>	1. Revise the School Financial Management Manual to include new administrative functions
		2. Provide support and training to improve capacity and performance
	<i>2. Grants are disbursed according to work plan</i>	3. Grants disbursed each year and reported upon
	<i>3. School Grant Code updated</i>	4. Revise the school grant formula to be equity-based
		5. Disbursement of grants
		6. Provide support and training to improve capacity and performance
<i>Key Pillar 2 – Quality education delivery is improved</i>		
<i>Outcome 6 - Teachers and school leaders engaged and support learning in schools</i>		
17. Improve teachers' and school leaders' skills to support achievement of learning outcomes, by developing and implementing (1) National Teacher Quality Framework, (2) National Teacher Development Policy, (3) Teacher Registration and Licensing Policy and (4) Teaching Service Staff Manual Standards	23. Develop and implement National Teacher Quality Framework	77. Develop and implement the National Teacher Quality Framework
		78. Professional development for teachers
		79. Provide support and monitoring for effective teaching practices
	Develop and implement National Teacher Development Policy by 2030	80. Develop and implement the National Teacher Development Policy Framework and finalise and implement the National Teachers Development Plan (NTDP)
		81. Develop and implement Bachelor in ECCE/ Primary and Secondary education (VITE)
	Implement teacher registration and licensing policy 2030	82. Creation and maintenance of a register of all teachers
		83. Establishing standards for issuance of licenses
		84. Cancellation of licenses through under-performances and code of conduct breaches
		85. Setting standards for professional performance and ethical conduct
	Teaching Service Staff Manual Standards	86. Continue to implement the Teaching Service Staff Manual and Principals and Teachers Minimum Standards
		87. Strengthen alignment between Teaching Service Commission (TSC) and PSC structures
		88. Implement teachers code of conduct/ethics

		89. Establish teachers/trainers/lecturers' succession plan with clear costing (TSC)
<i>Key Pillar 3 – Management is improved</i>		
<i>Outcome 7 - MoET strategic management processes implemented at the central and school level</i>		
19. Implement MoET Research Policy Guidelines	28. MoET Research Policy Guideline is developed and implemented by 2030	96. Develop a Research Policy guideline for MoET
		97. Allocate Academic Research scholarships for Masters and PHD
		98. Conduct tracer studies for graduates to ensure efficient and responsive PSET provision and a coherent labour market training strategy
		99. Conduct an expenditure review of the education sector (ECCE up to PSET) and implement recommendations from
		100. Research and develop the financial model for the PSET sector based on the findings of the research on costs of PSET sector
20. Develop and implement School Inspector Guidelines and strengthen SIP (or KIP) Practice	29. School Improvement Unit Policy is developed and implemented	101. Finalise and implement School Improvement Unit Policy
		102. Support schools to develop and implement their SIPs (or KIPs)
		103. Review, finalize and implement schools' MQS and use findings to improve quality through school improvement planning processes
		104. Implement ECCE Policy and Minimum Quality Service Standards to monitor and improve quality of pre-school education
		105. Implementation and timely reporting of school improvement plans, with accountability of School Council, into OV
		106. Strengthening & monitoring School Improvement Plan (or Kindergarten Improvement Plans or KIP)
	107. Use Open VEMIS in school planning	
	30. School Inspector Guideline is developed and implemented	108. Develop and implement School Inspector Guideline

Annex 2: Data collection and Report writing Timeline

Key Tasks	2021											2022							
	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	
Finalize Concept Note	■	■	■																
Develop instruments			■	■															
Field work plans/budgets			■	■															
Instruments piloted				■	■														
Finalize instruments					■	■													
Fieldwork					■	■	■												
Data entry							■	■	■										
Data analysis, Report writing									■	■	■								
Bronze, silver and gold review												■	■	■	■	■			
DFAT review																■	■		
MoET review and finalization																	■	■	

Annex 3: Acceptable Expenditures

Acceptable expenditures (School Grant Codes, MoET, 2021, pp. 20-24)

Education Supplies such as

1. Effective instruction
2. Desks, chairs and school furniture
3. teaching and learning materials, equipment, books and stationery; and
4. educational resources such as Library, Science laboratories, information, communication and technology;
5. school professional development training and other capacity developments for students and teachers, including other school staff; and
6. school excursions and field trips; and
7. freight of school materials and resources.

Administration costs which include

1. administration costs, including internet access to maintain data on the Open VEMIS;
2. IT assets and communication to allow maintenance of school records on the Open VEMIS and improve reporting and monitoring of grants by schools;
3. student insurance, student registration, student ID cards and student transfer fees;
4. transport for Principal or school finance officer to attend bank for school banking or provincial centre for administration support, shopping for school needs, and other essential school related activities;
5. school sports and development;
6. a member of the school council is to be reimbursed for expenses incurred when engaged on the business of the school council;
7. development and review of school manuals and policies;

Operations and maintenance such as:

1. water. Sanitation and Hygiene facilities;
2. electricity, water, gas, oil, fuel for school use;
3. minor maintenance of school buildings;
4. minor maintenance of school vehicles and equipment; and
5. for extension or expansion of a classroom, dormitory or any other school building, with approval of the Director administration and finance division; and

Personnel such as:

1. wages and Vanuatu National Provident Fund contributions for non-teaching staff, approved by the school council, with consideration of the school budget, legislated minimum wage and Vanuatu National Provident Fund requirement;
2. wages and the Vanuatu National Provident Fund contributions for teaching staff that are approved by the Director Education Services, the Director Finance and Administration and the Ministry, based on recommendation of the Ministry, Teacher Management Unit and with consideration of:
 - i. the school annual plan;
 - ii. the school budget;
 - iii. the legislated minimum wage;
 - iv. the Vanuatu National Provident Fund requirements; and
 - v. addressing the teacher- pupil ratio.

Student boarding which includes:

1. ration for students for boarding schools, but in certain occasions may apply to day schools;
2. kitchen cooking equipment and resources to improve hygiene in kitchen services and better nutrition for the students;
3. toilet paper and cleaning agent;
4. boarding furniture and supplies for students;
5. security equipment material resources; and
6. extra curricula for boarding students.

Development projects such as:

1. specific development project for the school, as approved by the School Community Association, through the school council; and
2. school's self-sufficient projects.

Schools may use school monies for other activities if, authorized jointly by the Director of Education Services and Director of Finance and Administration, and must be in line with the school improvement plan or school annual plan.

Capital works (the acquisition of land, construction, modification and renovation of buildings) may be funded by the Government or stakeholders such as development partners, individuals, or others. Capital works is to be undertaken by schools upon the prior approval of a capital works plan by the Facilities Unit in the Ministry to ensure that the Building Standards are met.

Government grant and school fees must not be used for any of the following:

1. loans or advances;
2. wages or salaries for non-certified or non-qualified teaching staff;
3. maintenance of school houses;
4. any expenditure of over 500,000 vatu per item, unless approved in writing by the Ministry. These items must be funded by separate contributions or donations;
5. capital improvements;
6. transporting students and staff to or from school, except as provided under subclause (2);
7. entertainment, gifts, hospitality, alcoholic beverages or kava for any reason;
8. subsidising or establish a commercial activity within the school;
9. investing in any commercial Investment activity without the approval of the Ministry;
10. maintenance of a school house (as rental payments paid by the teachers or staff are to be used to cover the maintenance costs of the house);
11. any purpose which does not directly benefit students.

Annex 4: 2021 School Grants Checklist

Disbursement of School Grants

Preparation of Grant Disbursement

- I. Principal Finance Officer is to inform Principal Education Officer

Education Services, Principal Education Officer Higher Education, Principal Education Officer Policy and Planning and Principal Education Officer

Internal Audit of the government grant payment schedule. Query: Please confirm.

2. Ministry data validation process completed on the Open VEMIS, following Ministry Census data on 21st March.

3. Principal Education Officer Policy and Planning provides an approved schools registry, signed by the DG, of all government school and government assisted education authorities schools to the Principal

Education Officer, Education Services, Finance and Audit. This will include new schools/year levels, closed schools/year levels.

4. Principal Education Officer Internal Audit with the assistance of the Principal Education Finance Office to confirm any changes (new or closing or joint) of bank accounts references of all government schools ad government-assisted schools.

5. Principal Education Officer Policy and Planning liaises with Principal Education Officer Education Services, Principal Education Officer Internal Audit, and Principal Education Officer Finance to confirm status about completeness and accuracy of data on the Open VEMIS.

Grant Disbursement Process for Compliant Schools

6. Principal Education Officer Education Services must compile signed notification from the 6 Provincial Education Officers to confirm which schools are eligible to receive the government grant, and which schools are not.

7. Principal Education Officer Internal Audit Unit signs confirmation of schools that have audit issues, at the time of payment Of grant.

8. Director Education Services signs cover letter confirming schools that are eligible to receive the government grant, and schools that are not eligible.

9. School Finance Officer provides Principal Education Office Financer with the listings of the government grant calculator, including for each school any correction of over/under payment from previous tranches, and Principal Education Office Finance to discusses any errors/discrepancies and way forward, with the School Finance Officer.

10. Principal Education Officer Finance provides School Finance Officer and the Director of Administration and Finance with a signed copy of the final eligible school list.

11. The Director of Finance and Administration signs the checklist, indicating approval of eligible schools to be paid the government grant.

12. Finance Unit raises Local Purchase Order to National Bank of Vanuatu for eligible schools according to the approved checklist.

Grant Disbursement Process for Non-Compliant Schools

13. Principal Education Officer Finance must draft a letter for Director General to instruct Internal Auditor to carryout check on individual bank statements and audit records to determine whether a school is subject to further audit action (desktop or full audit)

14. For all non-compliant schools, grants are to be paid, except for those which are under audit or non-updated enrolment data. Schools that are not submitting financial report are to be paid, but supported, in bullet point 25 to 29

15. In case a Principal Education Officer Audit unit confirms that there is no need for further action beyond desktop audit, government grant is to be paid.
16. Finance Unit in the Ministry of Education and Training raises Local Purchase Order to the National Bank of Vanuatu for ineligible schools that have no audit and enrolment issues according to the approved checklist.
17. In case Principal Education Officer Audit detects any inappropriate practices, a full audit will be carried out and a report will be provided to the Audit Committee for decision.
18. Ministry will implement the decisions Of the Audit Committee and will decide on payment of grant. Process must not be more than 2 months.
19. Finance Unit in the Ministry of Education and Tertiary raises Local Purchase Order to the National Bank of Vanuatu for ineligible schools that Audit Committee decided payment of grant, and the Policy and Planning Unit have confirmed enrolment issues.

Operations after each payment into school accounts

20. Once confirmation has been received from National Bank of Vanuatu that cheque has been received and transfers to schools bank accounts is completed, the Internal Audit unit with the assistance of the Finance Unit, must need to confirm that the funds were correctly transferred to the accounts listed, and transactions reconciled.
21. Principal Education Officer Internal Audit will need to perform reconciliation of transfers to schools bank accounts on O n VEMIS.
22. Principal Education Office Internal Audit sends confirmation email to principal Education Officer Finance that school grants are processed and paid into school banks accounts.
23. Principal Education Officer Finance sends email to DG, all Directors, 6 Provincial Education Offices, Provincial Education Officer Audit and provincial Education Officer Policy and Planning unit that school grants are processed and paid into school banks accounts

Supports School Capacity

24. Director Education Services requests a written report from the Provincial Education Officers on reasons for non-compliance and what detailed Action Plan the Provincial Education Office intends to execute in order to support schools. 25. Based on Provincial Education Officers report, Director Education Services will issue warning letters to Principals or Provincial Education Office staff for under performance.
26. In case the non-compliance is related to non-submission of financial report, or have an audit issue, the Director of Education Services must instruct the Provincial Education Officer to confiscate the cheque book for the respective schools.
27. Provincial Education Officer, supported by Provincial Finance Officer, School Improvement Officer, School Inspector and Compliance Officer, Audit and Peer Principals must support the principal in accordance with the Provincial Education Office Action Plan to support schools. In no more than 2 months, Provincial Finance Officer return the cheque book and records and reports to the principal.
28. In case of non-compliance with enrolment data, the Open VEMIS officers, School Improvement Officers will be supporting the principals as part of the Provincial Education Office action plan to ensure that data is completed within 2 months.

Communication

29. Schools to print individual school grant certificate, and post on school notice board.

30. Principal Education Officer Finance will develop materials for publication of information in national paper, social media, OV public view area and the Ministry public website.

Summary of main responsibilities of counterparts:

Director Education Services — responsible to manage performance and compliance of Provincial Offices and Schools

PEO Education Services — coordinate compliance and data collection from Provincial Offices

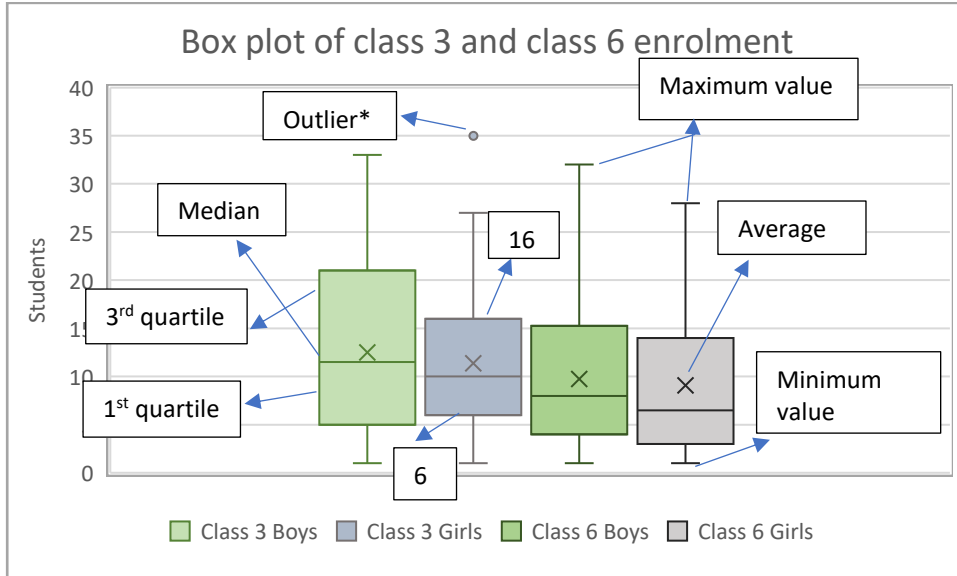
PEO Provinces — responsible for supporting schools to comply with government grant processes

PEO Policy and Planning — verify completeness of OV data required for government grant

PEO Finance — coordination of government grant and ensures correct government grant calculation and disbursement

PEO Audit ensure that OV data regarding school bank accounts, bank statements, reconciliation of grants disbursements is up to date in OV and provide confirmation on School Audit status

Annex 5: Explanation of box plots.



*The outlier in excel boxplots is 1.5 times the interquartile range.

Interquartile range is obtained by subtracting 1st and 3rd quartile

For Class 3 girls it is $16 - 6 = 10$.

Outlier is anything above $[16 + (10 \times 1.5)] = 31$.