



Ministry of Education & Training  
Government of Vanuatu



**VANUATU**  
**Education and Training Sector**  
**Strategic Plan 2021-2030**  
SUMMARY





Mp<sup>o</sup> T<sup>o</sup> P<sup>o</sup> / An<sup>o</sup> 2003  
Ministère de l'Éducation de Vanuatu

**AU BORD DU LAGON**  
livre du maître



# The education sector: *an overview*

The education sector in Vanuatu is the largest government employer, funded by communities, churches and the government with support from donor partners. Christian values have a strong presence in most communities. Since Independence in 1980, the French and English bureaucracies have merged and education is administered under one act. A language policy exists that encourages students to begin the early years in vernacular before transitioning to French and English.

More than 50% of Vanuatu's population is of school age, putting significant pressure on the system. Primary provision accounts for the largest proportion of students in a given year, with a large share of students dropping out at junior secondary level. The non-compulsory nature of education creates additional challenges in achieving universal access and participation.

High demand for schools in urban centres may become stronger if expected increases in enrolment and school attendance at pre-school and basic levels, along with anticipated reductions in absenteeism and drop-out rates, are confirmed. Issues related to poverty, housing conditions, water and electricity supply, food and nutritional quality may also continue to hamper Vanuatu's educational development, despite the substantial progress the country has achieved to date.

In the past few years, education spending as a share of total public expenditure has remained at around 13%. As a share of gross domestic product, it has been maintained at around 5%.

The formal education structure comprises:

- Early childhood care and education (ECCE) (ages 4 and 5);
- Primary school education, Years 1 to 6 (ages 6 to 11);
- Junior secondary school, Years 7 to 10 (ages 12 to 15);
- Senior secondary school, Years 11 to 13 (ages 16 to 18); and
- Post-secondary education and training (PSET) (age 19 and over).

## Early childhood care and education

Steps are being taken to support the ECCE sector, in particular through the payment of grants and salaries. Parental involvement is essential to genuine coordinated progress, as is active support by political, religious, administrative and cultural leaders. ECCE teachers need a minimum standard of qualification and yearly professional development, and all centres need to be registered and licensed. A standard remuneration scale based on job descriptions for all ECCE teachers is required.

## Primary and secondary education

The new primary curriculum is the same for English and French schools and steps are being taken to harmonize the content from primary to secondary level. All schools have a committee to assist the principal in running school affairs. The functions of school-based management are slowly being devolved to the provinces. Improvements to infrastructure are needed and teacher management continues to represent a challenge.

## Post-secondary education and training

Currently, there is a lack of accessible and consistent PSET data. Tracer studies are critical to develop efficient and responsive provision and a coherent labour market training strategy. The large specialist providers (nursing, police, maritime, agriculture, teacher education) may be directly connected to the industry sector they supply. Regulatory arrangements and quality assurance strategies are not consistent. Scholarships provide pathways and are critical to a merit-based and equity-focused system.

Indicator	2016	2017	2018
<b>Total % of student attending in ECCE, Primary and Secondary schools</b>	N/A	N/A	92%
<b>Percentage of entrants in Primary Year 1</b>	77.3%	88.8%	89.1%
<b>Gross Intake Rate in Primary Year 1</b>	123%	150%	154%
<b>Net Intake Rate in Primary Year 1</b>	45%	49%	60%
<b>Transition Rate from Year ECCE to Year 1</b>	N/A	102%	79.3%
<b>Transition Rate from Year 6 to Year 7</b>	N/A	78.2%	82.8%
<b>Transition Rate from Year 10 to Year 11</b>	N/A	64.4%	59.7%
<b>Transition Rate from Year 12 to Year 13</b>	N/A	63%	68.5%

Source: Open VEMIS, 2018.

- **Enrolment** of students has increased considerably, mainly at primary level. However, a large number of overage and underage children enrol in primary schools, and internal efficiency-related issues exist at secondary level. With disasters like cyclone Pam and Ambae Volcano, all provinces experienced a slight decline in enrolment at all levels of education.
- In terms of **retention**, a significant proportion of students leave school earlier than expected. Mother tongue-based education needs to be promoted to improve retention and reduce drop-out, particularly in ECCE. More boys tend to drop out from secondary than girls.
- **Learning outcomes** show improvement but many students still perform at critically low levels. The share of students meeting the minimum numeracy standards in Years 4 and 6 is 86% and 74%, respectively; in literacy, it is 65% and 58%. The share passing national exams in Years 8 and 10 remains under 50%, in both English- and French-speaking schools.
- There remain a number of **inequities** in the Vanuatu education sector, between English-medium and French-medium schools as well as between individual regions. Inequities also exist with regard to access to textbooks and learning materials, classroom and student–teacher ratios and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities in schools.
- In terms of **gender equity**, enrolment rates for boys and girls from 2010 to 2015 were relatively similar. From 2016, the number of girls enrolled in ECCE and primary was much lower, suggesting that, when external events such as disasters affect family income, boys' education is still prioritized. Nevertheless, in 2017 and 2018, female enrolment in senior secondary increased and male enrolment declined.
- In terms of **sector management**, Open Vanuatu Education Management Information System (Open VEMIS) is used for collecting, storing and analysing data from all levels for planning, monitoring and decision-making. Challenges remain with regard to implementation, usage and ongoing technical development. Meanwhile, the collection, storage and maintenance of hard copy files need rationalizing. Communication policies and/or strategies are also needed.
- In financing, MoET spends the intended budget as planned but often deviates from stated priorities. There are challenges related to managing payroll expenditure. The payroll budget is the largest component of the MoET budget yet the most vulnerable, and needs the school structure to be finalized and implemented.
- In **disaster management and climate change**, in addition to its ever-present vulnerability, Vanuatu has limited financial and technical capacity to respond. There is a real need to mainstream disaster management and climate change in all sectoral policies as part of a sustainable development process that adopts a broader and more integrated approach. MoET is a key agent in this regard, but resources are often limited dependent on the size and complexity of the disaster.

## Findings of the recent 'Barriers to Education Report'

### WHO ARE THE OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN?

- ECCE and secondary schools have very low rates of enrolment.
- Only a small number of students enrol in tertiary studies.
- Females have a higher tertiary scholarship rate but the GPI for graduation is at 0.76.
- Almost twice as many males as females enrol in vocational programmes.
- A significantly higher share of boys than girls drop out of school. In primary, drop-out is most common at Year 6 (presumably after the Year 6 exams, which determine entry to secondary).

### WHAT ARE THE DETERMINANTS OF CHILDREN DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL?

- Meeting school fees
- Quality of education and class sizes
- Parental perceptions of education
- Distance to travel and poor road infrastructure
- Disability – access and teaching inclusion, discrimination
- Impact of disasters on facilities, as well as relocation

### WHAT ARE THE RISK FACTORS FOR CHILDREN DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL?

- Expectation on children to assist with domestic or agricultural work
- Absent parents
- Low child interest (peer pressure, social media and other distractions, alcohol/marijuana)
- Desire to earn an immediate income
- Parents' perceptions of risk of sexual relationships and teenage pregnancy
- Perceptions that discipline is not enforced at schools

## The institutional background

The mission of MoET is to provide a quality, student-centred education that is accessible, relevant, sustainable, inclusive and responsive. The mission seeks to guarantee every person:



A quality, equitable, pre-school and basic education to Year 10, including literacy, numeracy, life skills, and livelihood skills, respect for our history and culture, and respect for human rights;



Expanded, equitable opportunities for secondary, technical, tertiary and higher education;



A strong relationship with parents and communities to encourage them to participate and engage with schools, and to support children's education and learning at home as well as at school;



A well-managed, equitable, and accountable education system which focuses on building the human resources of Vanuatu, improving learning, living, and working opportunities, and enabling young people to contribute to the productive sectors in both rural and urban areas;



Well-qualified and trained teachers and trainers cohort for all levels of education;



A well-coordinated disaster readiness plan to assure continuity of education in case of natural disaster(s); and



A healthy, safe, equitable and nurturing learning environment, which helps the diversity in students' learning styles.

## The Vanuatu Education and Training Sector Strategy 2021–2030

Education is a priority for the country's growth and development. Only a healthy, educated and skilled population can build a modern and sustainable economy based on the private sector, to lead the country to increased prosperity. The VETSS aligns with the National Sustainable Development Plan 2016–2030 development goals under Pillar 1 Goal 2:

### Quality Education: An inclusive, equitable and quality education system with life-long learning for all

Within this framework, MoET works under three broad result areas to design and develop strategic interventions and assess key results: access, quality and management. These are embedded in all policy development and management processes in the sector and are a central theme of the VETSS Strategic Goals. They also align with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 targets.

**Increase equitable ACCESS to education for all people at all levels of education**

**Improve the QUALITY of education**

**Improve planning, fiscal and financial MANAGEMENT**

All VETSS strategic interventions are geared towards improving schools and the classroom – in other words helping principals, teachers, students and MoET itself improve learning outcomes through a renewed effort to support the curriculum, strengthen teacher quality, put in place infrastructure and promote harmony between policy and strategy frameworks.

# Summary of the VETSS strategies and their rationales

## Access and equity

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### STRATEGY 1: IMPLEMENT A FEE SUBSIDY IN SCHOOLS (ECCE – SENIOR SECONDARY)



MoET will continue to provide grants to eliminate school fees and reduce compulsory parental contributions. This support has been expanded to ECCE. MoET will also help schools comply with the grants criteria and use the grants to identify and minimize barriers to enrolment and attendance. There will be an active focus on cost-saving initiatives and extending the school fee-free policy.

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### STRATEGY 2: PROVIDE AND MONITOR ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL STUDENTS, IN AN EQUITABLE MANNER



This strategy will guide the approach to monitoring and oversight of improved access to quality education for all students by measuring their learning outcomes on objective assessments, and monitoring, disaggregating and actioning data with equity in mind. This is particularly important given that data show that learning outcomes are poorer for at-risk groups.

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### STRATEGY 3: PLAN AND IMPLEMENT QUALITY SCHOOL-BASED INFRASTRUCTURE



All schools are to continue to upgrade infrastructure in accordance with agreed standards, which will be refined to ensure they are aligned and promote best practice. MoET is also committed to reviewing existing policies and strategies related to infrastructure, including an overall asset management strategy to guide and support infrastructure investments going forward.

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### STRATEGY 4: PROMOTE AND MAINSTREAM INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SO ALL CHILDREN HAVE EQUITABLE ACCESS



MoET will ensure those with special needs are given equitable opportunities to participate in all levels of education and training. It will also identify children who are not enrolled and the reasons for this, and allow them to participate in appropriate levels of the education system.

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### STRATEGY 5: PROMOTE AND MAINSTREAM HEALTH PROMOTION STRATEGIES IN SCHOOLS



Health and hygiene barriers affect overall enrolment, attendance, repetition and promotion rates. Health promotion strategies will centre on the provision of WASH facilities and initiatives for all schools to promote healthy and inclusive lifestyles.

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### STRATEGY 6: MANAGE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT PLAN



The NSIDP aims to direct infrastructure planning, school rationalization and cost-effective use of existing capacity, detailing existing resources and education needs within the country, taking into consideration ongoing policy reforms.

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**STRATEGY 7: STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES**

A key component of supporting schools is to ensure teachers and principals engage with communities to communicate key messages with regard to right age enrolment and student performance. MoET has the responsibility to ensure schools play a central role, not only in learning and engagement of students but also in supporting the broader social and development agenda.

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**STRATEGY 8: STRENGTHEN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT**

Placing DRRM at the centre of policy and planning and ensuring all schools have a DRRM strategy is a critical component for all education centres and schools.

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**STRATEGY 9: REDUCE THE NUMBER OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN**

There are still significant numbers of children out of school, preventing Vanuatu from achieving universal access in education. MoET will work on strengthening universal access by further reducing these numbers in a systematic and continuous manner.

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**STRATEGY 10: ELIMINATE GRADE REPETITION**

Learning outcomes as well as access are significantly undermined by the continued practice of grade repetition. As grade repetition has been shown to provide limited to no benefit to learning outcomes for affected students, MoET will aim to eliminate it completely.

## Quality

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**STRATEGY 11: REVIEW AND IMPLEMENT THE NATIONAL EDUCATION LANGUAGE POLICY**

MoET will develop and implement a National Education Language Policy to propose a centralized approach to language teaching that takes account of the differences in the bifurcated system in a coordinated and consolidated way.

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**STRATEGY 12: DEVELOP MOET POLICY GUIDELINES TO HARMONIZE AND UNIFY FUTURE POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

Variation and overlap between policies lead to conflicts in implementation and interpretation by local actors. MoET will develop guidelines to inform future policy development and ensure policies are harmonized, well implemented and understood by relevant actors. This will help drive clarity and consequently compliance, and make it easier to identify policies in need of update.

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**STRATEGY 13: REVIEW AND IMPLEMENT AN IT POLICY TO IMPROVE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN SCHOOLS**

Technology is generally underutilized in teaching and learning in Vanuatu. MoET will review important policies and strategies as part of an ongoing commitment to strengthen the quality of education services and support overall. Policies and strategies will be updated as necessary.

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**STRATEGY 14: SUPPORT QUALITY CURRICULUM REFORM AND HARMONIZATION OF ASSESSMENT PRACTICES**

MoET will continue to provide schools with an appropriate national curriculum and continue the progressive harmonization of all subjects from Year 1 to Year 13, in multiple languages. MoET will also provide professional development to support teaching and improve learning outcomes and continue to improve links between curriculum implementation and national assessment practices.

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**STRATEGY 15: IMPROVE ENROLMENT AND QUALITY IN TERTIARY EDUCATION**

MoET will assess the viability of the establishment of a national bilingual institutional structure of higher education and research. Scholarships will be linked with identified skills and national qualification priority needs, and MoET will look into developing a scholarship policy and sound related procedures. MoET will manage its information system with regard to scholarships data.

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**STRATEGY 16: STRENGTHEN ENROLMENT AND QUALITY OF THE PSET SECTOR**

MoET will seek solutions to progressively increase support to mainstream technical and vocational training, higher education and research into the formal education system. As with Strategy 15, scholarships will be linked with identified skills and national qualification priority needs and MoET will look into developing a scholarship policy and sound related procedures.

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**STRATEGY 17: IMPROVE TEACHERS' AND SCHOOL LEADERS' SKILLS TO SUPPORT ACHIEVEMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES**

MoET will design and implement a National Teacher Development Plan that will set a long-term vision for both pre- and in-service teacher training to lead to an accredited qualification, raising the standards of entry to the teaching profession and increasing the number of certified teachers. Additional licensing and guidelines will be developed to guide and codify good teaching practice.

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**Management**

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**STRATEGY 18: STRENGTHEN CENTRALIZED PLANNING, BUDGETING AND REPORTING**

MoET will proceed with appropriate structural reforms at central, provincial and school level, by reorganizing and reviewing functions and posts in a process of continuous improvement. Links between policy development, planning, budgeting and reporting will be improved at all levels.

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**STRATEGY 19: IMPLEMENT MOET RESEARCH POLICY GUIDELINES**

MoET will establish and strengthen its research unit to ensure decision-making that is based on evidence, and improve the prominence and quality of research in Vanuatu's institutions of tertiary education.



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**STRATEGY 20: DEVELOP SCHOOL INSPECTOR GUIDELINES AND STRENGTHEN SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PRACTICES**



MoET will continue to disseminate the approved schools, teachers and principals' standards, and to make sure these are incorporated in various policies of the education sector. It will also continue to strengthen its teacher planning function to implement merit-based management and performance appraisal, and assist in the control of payroll expenditure.

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**STRATEGY 21: PLAN AND DELIVER THE DEVOLUTION OF MOET FUNCTIONS TO IMPROVE SERVICE DELIVERY**



MoET will develop processes to better allocate sufficient resources to the provinces to enable efficient and effective education delivery, with a greater focus on functions for policies, standards, plans and priority-setting supported by reporting. Public finance and procurement will be strengthened at provincial education offices and schools.

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**STRATEGY 22: ALIGN MOET WITH SDG 4 THROUGH THE NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PLAN**



MoET is a signatory to SDG 4 and works as part of a broader coalition of education ministries and departments around the world to promote basic education. Domestically, MoET will also continue to monitor its own progress against the National Sustainable Development Plan to ensure all activities and programs are aligned with the broader framework.

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**STRATEGY 23: STRENGTHEN OPEN VEMIS TO INFORM MANAGEMENT AND RESOURCE DECISIONS**



MoET will continue to strengthen Open VEMIS and focus on training to improve the number of users at the school level in providing reliable, accurate quality data. Open VEMIS functions will be extended to the ECCE, PSET and scholarship systems. Open VEMIS has its own strategy, given the importance of the information and data to support evidence-based decision-making.



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