

Vanuatu ECCE Teachers Breaking Barriers



The University of the South Pacific (USP) through its Pacific Technical and Further Education (Pacific TAFE)'s ECCE program helped upskill 189 Early Childhood Teachers between 2020 to 2021. Thirty-one (31) of these teachers successfully completed the certificate programme and graduated with a Certificate III in Early Childhood Care and Education on Friday the 17th of June 2022. Out of the thirty-one ECCE teachers who graduated, twenty-two are from the remote areas in Vanuatu (one from Santo, one from Ambae, eight from Port Vila, eight from Malekula and thirteen from Pentecost).

This is a historical milestone for the ECCE program in Vanuatu since these teachers were teaching for over 10 years without a formal teaching qualification.

The lack of qualified ECCE teachers was one of the major concerns raised at a three-day workshop that was co-organised by the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education (UNESCO Bangkok), UNICEF Pacific and Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts (MoEHA) Fiji in 2018.

Under the framework of the project ECCE Teacher Development in Southeast Asia (SEA) and the Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS), UNESCO Bangkok and PRCE4ECCE in collaboration with USP and MoEHA, Fiji supported the development of the ECCE Teacher Competency Framework for the Pacific SIDS.

The framework aimed to enhance the professionalization and capacity development of ECCE teachers in the Pacific SIDS by providing comprehensive descriptions of knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions that ECCE teachers in the Pacific SIDS need, to support the holistic development of a child.

(Source: <https://bangkok.unesco.org/content/workshop-ecce-teacher-competency-framework-pacific-working-together-teacher-professionalism>)

This project is closely aligned with Pacific TAFE's initiative on teacher development across the Pacific region and is the outcome of the close collaboration between Pacific TAFE's ECCE Programme Coordinator, Ms Salote Rokotogalevu and Vanuatu's Ministry of Education's National ECCE Coordinator, Ms Serah Liki Vurobaravu. There was an agreement made at the end of the three-day workshop to implement this project with ECCE Teachers in Vanuatu. As a result, teachers across Vanuatu enrolled in the ECCE programme at Pacific TAFE, in 2019. In 2020, Vanuatu campus had the highest number of enrollment because of the high number of students entering the program. Therefore, there was a need to recruit a fulltime trainer for ECCE in Emalus campus at Port Vila, Ms Anjila Prasad. Several more part time tutor-markers were later engaged at other USP Centres outside of Port Vila to provide service to the large number of students and to ensure that the teachers' work schedule is not affected by tutorials that were held occasionally.

Some challenges encountered during the students learning process were the weak network connectivity, the language diversity, the unreliable transport services, unexpected family commitments, and the pandemic. These challenges did not deter their determination to gain an internationally accredited qualification. Despite the challenges, the teachers still managed to attend tutorials that were colorfully delivered in the English, Franco, and Bislama languages, and completed the prescribed assessments which includes an online test.

Reaching this standard in their career as an ECCE Teacher has been a humbling and exciting experience for the graduates. They totally agree that it would not have been possible without the distinguished USP Staff who have been at the forefront of their learning journey and to whom gratitude should be conveyed: the Pacific TAFE Director, Ms Susan Sela, the Head of College for CVET, Mr

Nilesh Kumar and the Coordinator ECCEP, Ms Salote Rokotogalevu, the National ECCE Coordinator in Vanuatu, Ms Serah Liki Vurobaravu and the Ministry of Education in Vanuatu, the USP Campus Director in Vanuatu, Dr Andrew McKenzie, the PTAFE Campus Coordinator in Vanuatu, Mr Brownly Suvwa and his PTAFE Team, Ms Anjila Prasad, Ms Maxine Liliord, Ms Rose Leeman Iou for their tireless support. Not forgetting several USP Centre Coordinators across Vanuatu, Mr Damien Hophand (Malampa), Gayleen George (Santos), Ms. Rose Stephen (Tafea), and Ms Meri Worek (Torba).

Written by Salote Rokotogalevu, Brownly Suvwa and Anjila Prasad
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