

2012

Situational Analysis



Ministry of Education in partnership with
UNICEF

11/9/2012

Introduction

This Situational Analysis reports on site visits and interviews regarding early childhood education carried out during two weeks in October 2012. A number of community partners, parents, government officials, kindergarten (Kindy) teachers, head teachers and primary teachers were interviewed using a situational analysis tool prepared by UNICEF, with the support of the World Bank's Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER). This tool helps countries systematically examine and strengthen the performance of their education systems to achieve learning for all.

This Situational Analysis Report advances an overview of the status of early childhood care and education (ECCE) in Vanuatu, and summarizes feedback from stakeholder interviews. Expert analysis is combined with input from stakeholders to identify challenges and opportunities for change. A SWOT analysis of the Ministry of Education contributes to the exploration of next steps on curriculum development, training and support for teachers and communities.

Topics covered in the Situational Analysis include Policy; Workforce; Performance Measurement and Assessment; Community Partnerships; School Readiness; Primary Teachers; Parents' Roles, SWOT Analyses of MOE, parents and educators; as well as a section on Recommendations and Conclusions.

Although the government of Vanuatu supports early learning, parents have to pay fees to send their children to kindergarten. This creates great disparities among families, with many parents unable to afford these fees. The fees cover everything, including materials, playground equipment, books and teacher salary.

The government does set aside approximately four million vuv dollars for ECCE which is mostly spent on operations. It also covers photocopying for workshops, materials for workshops, some materials for the schools and other administrative needs.

It is evident from the remarks of all participants that the government must endorse funding for early childhood education and also invest in children ages 0 to 3. A national vision of Early Childhood Education exists but it must be translated into reality. Implementation should be a priority for all government leaders, as well as donors and NGO agencies. Various funding models need to be investigated and reviewed to understand the scale and sustainability of ECCE funding and the impact it may have on the future of children and adolescents in Vanuatu. It would be important for the government of Vanuatu to convene partners and public and private sectors and have roundtable discussions to review innovative approaches to ECCE. It would also be important to engage in a mapping exercise of ECCE facilities and enrollment to ensure equity, access, and quality.

In particular the government must ensure that minimum standards are met for all children, and that teachers are trained to in child development, literacy (language development), numeracy, science, health and physical education, and assessment.

A strong partnership must also be established between Kindy teachers and grade one teachers to assure professional continuity between both levels. This would include joint training, an aligned curriculum, joint meeting and equal professional status.

Background

Vanuatu faces considerable challenges in Early Childhood Education. Vanuatu is a chain of 83 islands and there is a considerable diversity in terms of language, customs and the quality of education. The geographic dispersal of the islands over a vast expanse of the sea makes access extremely difficult and costly for the government of Vanuatu. Some 40% of the population live on an income less than a dollar a day and Vanuatu ranks 125th on the United Nation's Human Development Index, which measures comparative data on life expectancy, literacy, education, income and quality of life among 187 countries.

Historically Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) have been viewed as separate from the rest of the educational system. It therefore has little or no funding, different types of governance and little training support for teachers. Yet, as stated in the Vanuatu Daily Post on October 29 of this year,, the Ministry of Education is facing difficult challenges when over one half of the children do not attend ECE programs, putting great pressure on the year one teachers.

The recognition of early childhood education must permeate the policies of the government of Vanuatu. Various research studies indicate that investment by governments in early childhood education reduce the incidence of grade repetition, youth unemployment, and teacher turnover. Ludwig and Sawhill (2006) summed up these trends by saying:

- Intervene early
- Intervene often
- Intervene effectively

The Ministry of Education has one staff person in the position of National Preschool Coordinator and six provincial staff. The provincial coordinators' experience and expertise in the area of early childhood education varies considerably.

The work of the National Preschool Coordinator is extensive and it is quite remarkable to see what has been accomplished in a short time despite limited resources. It is evident that this position needs to be revamped and staffed according to national needs so that the agenda for ECCE can be implemented properly.

The regional staff members receive a salary but no money is allocated for travel. Therefore any type of mentoring, monitoring and or support for teachers is unavailable unless there is a project supported by

donors that fund travel. These six positions need to be reviewed and assessed to ensure they are meeting the current needs and demand of ECCE requirements for quality implementation.

Travel seems to be viewed by many, including donors, with some scepticism and yet this is the only way to implement an effective monitoring system. Unless funding is put in place for monitoring the area of assessment will always be weak.

Bislama is the national language of Vanuatu and one of the three official languages along with English and French. In the past Bislama was regarded with some disrespect and a negative attitude, yet the language continues to grow as the main means of communication among the people of Vanuatu. Most research points to the fact that people must have a strong foundation in their own language before learning a second language. The importance of Bislama cannot be ignored and the education system should be reviewed in order to understand the complex language issues that fundamentally affect learning. Areas of health, nutrition and special needs are foremost in all Ministry of Education (MOE) documents but a strong integrated approach in these areas of growth is not evident. The government does not fund directly fund any early childhood centres. The government provides a central budget to support training and some materials. The Kindy's are solely funded by the local communities in which they are located. Fees vary greatly across the islands (from 200 to 5000 vats) in the rural area to 5000 to 3500 in the urban area which has an impact on the quality of the learning environment. These fees are per child per term and cover materials, teacher salary, and any additions to the structures or playgrounds. There are great inconsistencies and inequalities in the quality of teaching resources, teacher preparation and teacher retention.

Very few of the people (mainly women) who run and work in the area of ECCE have the money and means to pay for certification and degrees in the area of ECCE. The preconditions for successful ECCE programs are simply non-existent regardless of the efforts put forward by the ECCE National Preschool Coordinator.

Vanuatu has to ensure capable and qualified teachers work in ECCE, that they are well paid, have the infrastructure (light, water, materials) to provide quality programs, have outdoor play areas and is supported by a monitoring and evaluation process. The government has to commit to funding quality ECCE in the whole of Vanuatu and be the leader in the Pacific region.

Programs for children ages 0-3 do not exist despite general agreement of its importance, as proven in a range of studies. Neuroscientists were once unaware that the experiences to which babies are exposed in the early days, months and years of their lives had a decisive impact on the architecture of the brain of the child. Policy makers were not aware of the impact that the stimuli or the lack of them, in early development have on a person's adult life. However, some 20 years ago, neuroscientists confirmed that brain structure is already determined at birth, and that most of the growth of brain cells occurs during the first two years of life, accompanied by the structuring of neurological connections, mostly completed by age 6.

The first years of life are therefore extremely important for children especially in the formation of their intelligence, personality, social behavior, and that the effect of the negligence of positive stimuli in this

age group can be cumulative. Research suggests that there are critical points in the various phases of ECCE which is crucial to ensure positive experiences for children that will support their growth and development.

The latest findings in neurosciences, as well as longitudinal econometric studies, demonstrate the high level of benefit from investment in early childhood development.

Families and communities must be supported to understand that their children can reach the primary school age, healthy and well nourished, more intellectually fit, socially confident and equipped with a solid foundation for lifelong learning should be a fundamental effort of all involved in ECCE.

Section 1: A National Perspective

1.1 Early Childhood Care and Education Policy

The present Education Act and Regulations do not make mention of ECCE. However, this is in the process of being revised due to a project that is currently being implemented in the sector wide information system.

There are significant wording changes proposed to the Act by the consultants conducting this project, with several references to ECCE to be added the changes include a change in terminology, changes to registration of preschools and other significant suggestions that will improve the collection of data in the area of ECCE.

There is an existing national policy in ECCE that will be reviewed in 2014. The policy is robust and significant but still needs support for implementation in various areas such as curriculum development, readiness tools, early identification tools, and the development of several content areas to support instructional practice.

The ECCE policy does reference:

- The Convention on the Rights of the Child
- The use of vernacular language in the schools dialects in classroom teaching and curriculum materials?
- The link between school, parents and community
- The participation of parents and community in schools
- The protection of children
- The management of education in emergencies

The Ministry of Education is also in the process of collecting baseline data on early childhood education, developing a National Framework for ECCE and ensuring ECCE indicators are part of the data management system. These major milestones will support the foundation of ECCE and increase the opportunities to impact young children's lives.

1.2 Teacher Salaries, Accredited and Non Registered ECCE and Enrollment of Children

ECCE is not funded by the government of Vanuatu. Rather, parents pay fees for teacher salaries, materials, infrastructure and other resources. The fees vary greatly in each area and this affects the quality of each center and the incentives for teachers to value their work and stay focused on their duties.

The salaries vary from rural areas where teachers are depending on the fees collected by the parents. These fees have to cover a variety of cost therefore teachers' salaries are low. These fees cover everything, including teacher salary, resources, materials, and infrastructure.

Enrolment in ECCE varies according to a parents' understanding of the importance of education and also their economic status. Attendance is also an issue in some islands. Celebrations, deaths, and any other community event can interfere, with children absent for weeks to attend these important cultural traditions.

The following table tracks the net enrolment and intake rates (Source Vemis 2011) Table 1: General Education Indicators, 2007-2011

NER: refers to total enrolment of pupils of the official school age group, NIR refers to the total enrolment of pupils of the official age as defined by school level (for example ECE or Grade 1) GER refers to the total enrolment in a defined school level expressed as a percentage of the total population.

Indicator	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
NIR Primary Year 1					
Girls		43%	37%	42%	38%
Boys		38%	34%	38%	36%
Total		40%	36%	40%	37%
NER					
ECCE	33.3%	37.9%	38.4%	40.5%	40.5%
Primary (Year 1 – 6)	86.7%	87.1%	85.5%	88.1%	87.9%
Secondary (Year 7+)	25.9%	29.2%	32.4%	31.8%	30.0%
GER					
ECCE	55.7%	61.4%	57.6%	58.2%	58.3%
Primary (Year 1 – 6)	109.9%	111.6%	110.8%	117.4%	118.6%
Secondary (Year 7+)	39.6%	42.5%	44.4%	42.1%	40.9%
Dropout rate					
Primary (Year 1 – 6)	4.6%	6.8%	2.1%	6.0%	8.0%
Secondary (Year 7+)	27.8%	27.0%	37.9%	39.9%	44.2%
Repeater rate					
Primary (Year 1 – 6)	12.6%	13.5%	14.4%	15.1%	12.1%
Secondary (Year 7+)	2.0%	1.8%	1.9%	2.8%	3.0%
Promotion rate					
Primary (Year 1 – 6)	82.8%	82.8%	80.5%	78.2%	75.6%
Secondary (Year 7+)	71.1%	79.7%	76.8%	73.3%	69.3%
Survival rate to Year 6*	78.7%	71.2%	96.0%	75.3%	82.5%
Transition rate from Year 6 – 7	90.9%	94.8%	89.8%	87.4%	84%

Source Vemis 2012

More Useful Statistics at a glance 2010 2011

NER and Gender Parity for ECE

School Level	Year	M	F	T	GPI	
ECE	2009	38.3	38.5	38.4	1.01	
Age #-5	2010	39.5	41.6	40.5	1.05	
	2011	40.3	40.8	40.5	1.01	

School Enrolment 2009-2011

Year	ECE
2009	10.992
2010	11.272
2011	11.601

Number of Teachers

	Male	Female	Total
2009 ECE	69	737	806
2010	52	766	818
2011	44	769	813

Number of Teachers by Province

Province	ECE
----------	-----

Torba	52
Sanna	202
Penama	140
Malampa	169
Shefa	126
Tafea	124
Total	813

Number of Schools in Vanuatu

Year	ECE
2009	606
2010	563
2011	543

The community sector includes schools run by churches. All schools run by community and churches involve a committee of parents. There are a total **140 community schools and a total of 388 private centres.**

1.3 Registration of Early Childhood Education Centres

The government of Vanuatu requires schools to fill out documents and register with the National Pre School Coordinator and/or Provincial Coordinators. The form asks for information on building facilities, materials available for children, teacher qualifications, and possible intake numbers. There is also a form that indicates the steps to follow to set up an early childhood centre and a safety plan. These completed plans are required by the Ministry and must be filled out in order for a centre to function.

1.4 The following reports and or documents are available from the Ministry of Education:

1. Hanbuk blong ol Tija: Live and Learn Environmental Education, Sophie Scott, Diana Hinge, Margarete Canttwell, Sembuu George mo Helen Ainsworth
2. Tija Training: A training manual for Teachers: written by Ministry of Education Staff
3. Kindabuk, Claudia Brown and Terry Crowley, University of the South Pacific 1990.
4. Certificate in Children's Services, Australian Pacific Technical College Six Month Training
Certificate in Health and Community Services

5. Handbook on Education in Emergencies , with subject areas Earthquakes, Cyclones, and Floods, CARE
6. 36 short story readers produced for every school, Rotary International, 2004
7. Kerikulum Ministry of Education, funded by UNICEF July 2001
8. Charting the Way to an Improved Methodology Program Proposal, Trisha Shipman and Jennifer Kilby (no date available)
9. Vanuatu National Curriculum Statement 2010
10. Government of Vanuatu , Ministry of Education, Vanuatu Early Childhood Care and Education Policy 2010
11. Vanuatu Early Learning and Development Standards 2010

1.5 Successful Examples of ECCE Programs:

It is difficult to identify successful program models since resources, salaries and conditions vary so much across the island. Teachers are not well-equipped with training or resources and they receive little support or mentoring. These teachers are ill-equipped to manage literacy and numeracy and the foundations of learning. There is also a strong feeling of disappointment since teachers are constantly asked to participate in donor reports and/or data collection and every time they mention the lack of support and low salaries and yet nothing has changed.

Kindergarten facilities (“Kindy’s”) vary from clean, large, structures with large playgrounds to small, dark, and untidy spaces. In most Kindy’s there is a nice playground with swings, sandboxes and other play structures that families manage to organize.

Section 2: Workforce

2.1 Teachers

Teachers are encouraged to use the vernacular language in the classroom but there are almost 100 different dialects in the island and also an emphasis in English, French and Bislama. The language diversity is both rich and difficult to manage. It is also important to note that if teachers are not proficient in the language of instruction children will not learn the skills they need to be multilingual. The training unit within the Ministry is working with the National Preschool Coordinator to train Kindy teachers.

Policies related to ECCE state that at least seven weeks of basic training spread over a period of two years has to be organized by either the Ministry of Education or VEJA (Vanuatu Eli Haelhud Asosisesen). Incentives could be provided to ensure retention of good ECCE teachers.

Kindy teachers have a very mixed educational background. Some have graduated from grade 8 or 10, and others have completed teachers’ college. It is evident that they need training every year.

Classrooms sometimes have posters with numerous words that are misspelled, teachers are sometimes absent, and classroom teaching varies in quality and consistency.

There should be at least three different sets of training in specific areas such as child development, using play to learn, and setting up reading centres, self-regulation of children, and literacy and numeracy.

The training available to ECCE teachers by other institutions is:

1. A six-month certificate offered by the Australia Pacific Technical College: this certificate focuses on health and community services.
2. An Education in Emergencies Training Course offered by Ministry of Education staff
3. Field Based Training Offered by Ministry of Education staff during a seven-week period
4. The University of the South Pacific offers a diploma and a degree in ECE
5. The Ministry of Education also offers training in health, nutrition, play based learning, literacy, numeracy and other areas when money for travel is available.
6. There are presently two scholarships available through AUS AID and there is discussion of more scholarships to support teachers to study for a period of one year abroad.
7. MOE staff also invites parents and elders as resources to the classroom to support teachers with the vernacular language, customs and traditions.

Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning.

Sutton (19970

There is an existing ECCE curriculum but it is out of date and needs to be revised and reviewed. The learning standards, key developmental areas and instructional strategies for children with special needs have to be aligned and included in the National Framework and the new Curriculum.

The present curriculum and practices do not include any areas to support teachers to identify children with special needs. There is no training in this area and parents in particular have difficulties both identifying and addressing the special needs of their children. Often parents feel stigmatized when they have children with special needs and therefore isolate their children from others. It is imperative that teachers and parents be fully trained and supported in order to nurture the development of children in their homes and communities.

Health professionals in rural areas and some urban areas are unequipped to support children with special needs. There is a legitimate call to establish a strong accreditation program for ECCE teachers and make it affordable so that they can attend. All teachers are trained in First Aid.

The Vanuatu Daily Post, on Thursday October 4th 2012, published an interesting article titled “Teachers Deserve Recognition”. The article refers to the fact that developing countries do not value the profession of teaching and therefore the salaries are mostly low. The article calls for supportive environments, adequate training, and safeguarding of teachers’ rights and responsibilities.

Teachers make an immense contribution to society when they support learning in the early years. Unless the government decides to invest in early childhood education, and parents equally support these programs, literacy and numeracy levels will remain low and the future will impact the economic stability of Vanuatu. Language development should be a primary focus on ECCE.

2.2 Ministry Staff

Currently there is one Ministry of Education National Preschool Coordinator and six provincial coordinators who support key teachers who (key teaching are selected in each province which is divided by zones) to support Kindy teachers. There is no succession planning at the moment and the amount of staff time needed to implement the National EECE Framework and Curriculum demand a larger complement of staff. When the National Coordinator retires the history of ECCE in Vanuatu will be lost. Duties such as leading the process of policy implementation, curriculum development, and training; attending important meetings; and sitting on strategic committees cannot possibly be carried out by only one person. .

The National Preschool Coordinator also needs the opportunity to review the existing provincial coordinator positions. The coordinators in the field need to upgrade their skills in order to ensure that a National Policy and Curriculum is implemented effectively. People in these positions need to have the skills to support teachers, assess and observe classroom instruction, and supervise teacher attendance.

There is an existing performance appraisal tool but this should be reviewed and turned into a 360 performance tool so that various individuals can comment on the performance of the coordinators. Consideration should also be given to turning the coordinator positions into contract term positions. The National Preschool Coordinator should have at least two people who support her centrally to manage the workload and the regional coordinators need to have budgets to cover travel, materials, photocopying, phones and other much-needed resources.

In turn, the provincial coordinator coordinators need a tool to support them to assess the key teachers in their work and to provide feedback and support so that they can improve their instructional practice.

Section 3: Curriculum

Curriculum can be defined as “all the experiences that take place in a planned and unplanned manner that contribute to a child’s learning and development”.

There are several resources to support ECCE. The available resources focus on literacy, numeracy, education and the environment, nutrition, play, science, art, culture and music. While reviewing these documents it is evident that as all “living documents” there is a need to engage in a process of revision and alignment of all documents. The different documents need to be updated and revised. The ECCE curriculum also needs to be aligned to grade one. Also, a system of team training with Kindy and grade

one teachers is imperative so that they understand the child they are presently working with and the transition plans that need to be in place for the child to move from Kindy to grade one.

A new national curriculum or program framework needs to be developed to systematize all the learning domains and assessment tools that need to be used in ECCE the framework also needs to address children with special needs, using play as a tool for learning and looking at differentiated instruction for children with special needs.

Learning outcomes and/or key learning's in ECCE will have to be clearly identified and linked to grade one so the transition from KINDY to grade one can support a continuum of learning.

The key issues for developing a strong culture of monitoring and evaluation will be:

- The complexity of language and culture
- The travel prerequisites involved in monitoring and supporting teachers
- The engagement of specialists to support children who have special needs
- The links between instructional practice and assessment of learning outcomes

All children can learn

When the present curriculum was written it only involved teachers but no other stakeholders. The present curriculum and resource documents do reference:

- Play
- Child Protection
- Health
- Nutrition
- Family and Community Engagement

The curriculum is also accompanied by a document on Early Learning Development Standards. This document is well developed and promotes child-centered learning. The Early Learning Development Standards were developed by the Ministry of Education National Coordinator with the support of various representative groups of experts.

The document makes reference to children aged 0 to 8 and references areas of learning, specific indicators for each key learning outcome and activities to engage to ensure learning outcomes.

Section 4: Performance Monitoring and Assessment

A strong performance monitoring and assessment system has to be developed and must be used by the Ministry and all educational intuitions to monitor student's success, parental and community engagement, and teacher and principal performance.

Assessment is the process of gathering information and data for the purpose of improving professional and personal growth of teachers and enhancing the quality of schools. There are different types of assessments that can be used.

- Diagnostic Assessment gives information about the strengths and challenges of a student and assists the teacher in planning appropriately
- Formative assessments allow students and teachers to identify areas for improvement. The teacher can assume a mentoring or coaching role and build on the strengths of each student.
- Summative Assessments assist teachers in determining a child's ability, and they can assign a grade or percentage that reflects the child's current performance.

A student's success depends on continuous support and motivation. It is therefore necessary for a culture of assessment take root in Vanuatu, and to link it to curriculum standards and learning expectations.

Staff development for Ministry personnel and teachers is critical since they are all involved in students' learning. They are part of a learning community and therefore professional growth should be embedded in their performance appraisals.

Teachers in particular need to be observed and given feedback.

In Vanuatu this is none existent. Monitoring and assessment demands skills, travel, knowledge and skills to engage in effective performance measurement. Unless this is embedded in the curriculum, planning and school site management it will not happen.

Section 5: Community Partnerships

Communities are a vital unit in our human society. They are also a great influence on children's learning. In Vanuatu where community engagement is evident the classroom is a large structure, the playgrounds are kept up to date, the community knows when the teacher is present or absent and they support the school in raising funds for materials

Most Kindy's were set up by the local chief and community in agreement with the Ministry of Education. The land was given to set up the classroom and the playground. The community is proud of their contribution and this is evident in some of the areas visited.

In other areas where parents are not involved the teacher is frequently absent, there is a lack of materials and the fees do not cover the teacher's salary and or the resources needed to teach.

One Kindy in particular had no materials, no mats on the ground floor, materials and or playground.

5:1 School Readiness

Educators understand this word but most community partners do not. When the question of school readiness was changed to ask community members “how they knew when children were ready to attend Kindy” they quickly engaged in the conversation.

Readiness cannot mean that children are tested for specific skills in order to enter a Kindy or it will impact negatively on some children and keep them from school. School readiness is about readiness to learn in the important developmental domains of physical education and health, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development and communication skills and general knowledge.

Community members saw readiness as an age appropriate issue. They felt that at age 5 their children were ready to attend Kindy. Other members indicated that when the child development social skills and began to play with others, or was creative and used imaginary play they were ready to go to Kindy. They also commented that the child had to be able to go to the bathroom on their own before they attended Kindy.

It is important that Vanuatu develop an instrument to assess the domains of children’s development including: health and wellbeing, social interaction, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development and communication skills and knowledge

5:2 Support for Kindy’s by Community Members

Each member pays 200 to 5000 Vat per child per term in the rural areas and 5000 to 35000 in the urban areas. If a parent cannot afford the fees then they wait to send the child to grade one. The fees cover everything from teachers’ salaries to materials. If parents have numerous children then they sometimes choose to just send one.

Most community members support Kindy’s in various ways. They raise funds, weave mats for the floor, they build and maintain the playground, and they pay for the upkeep of the classroom.

Section: 6 Parents

Studies show that student learning and achievement are improved when parents play an active role in their children’s education. Good education is even better when parents are involved. A strong government of Vanuatu policy and campaign needs to be established to promote exemplary parental engagement and support.

Parents have a strong influence on their children's attitude towards school and this begins at an early age. There are many challenges to engaging parents in Vanuatu from economic issues, to village isolation, to differing views of education and also skepticism of political efforts. The World Health Organization in 1984 includes not only physical health but a combination of social, emotional, mental, moral, spiritual and cognitive dimensions to promote the wellbeing of students.

Parents stated that they send their children to school for the following reasons:

- To learn and prepare for grade one
- To socialize and learn to read and to count
- To learn confidence
- To play with other children
- To learn English and or French

They all felt that their children should learn English or French depending on the Kindy they attended and also Bislama. They unanimously agreed on a combination of two languages, Bislama always being a priority.

They suggested that some parents do not send their children to school because "they are lazy", they do not understand the importance of education and or they do not have money to pay school fees. They all felt that all young children should attend school for free and that the government should pay for early childhood education and they as parents would contribute to other areas when necessary. They felt that fees hurt families and children who could not afford them. They also stressed the need to have the teachers trained and for ministry officials to visit the schools to provide feedback, training and support.

In regards to a quality preschool they expressed different views. They felt a quality preschool would have:

- Nice large classroom
- Permanent structure
- Washrooms
- Big playground
- Chairs and tables
- Books
- Stationery
- Crayons
- Manipulatives
- Trained teacher
- Resource teacher
- No fees
- Community support and engagement
- Display children's work
- Toys

- Blackboard

In terms of what they liked most and or least about their preschool the answers varied. Parents liked that their children were happy, that they played and learned to sign and recognize letters and numbers. They felt that their children seemed more confident than before they entered Kindy. They liked the idea that the Kindy was close and that it gave status to their village.

They did not like the fact that they had to pay fees, that the teachers were sometimes absent and or poorly paid and not trained. They felt that they needed everyone in the community involved but that only some parents had a strong commitment to upkeep of the buildings and playground. Some felt that a few powerful people in the village chose the teacher and they could not replace her/him even though they were not good teachers. Most parents wanted the Kindy to be in the primary school so they could go directly into grade one and teachers could meet and talk about the children.

Mothers were the most engaged with children in the home. They engaged in:

- Getting children to help them clean the house
- Telling children stories
- Reading to them
- Helping them by counting money
- Singing to them
- Showing them how to garden and learn about fruits and vegetables
- Engaging them in their traditional ceremonies
- Asking them what they did in school
- Helping them recognize coins
- Helping them to recognize colours, patterns, letters and numbers

Parents shared that they are involved in various areas in terms of the Kindy. They sometimes volunteer to go into the classroom to help with the vernacular language and or to share customs and stories. Others maintain the gardens, playground and classroom. They also weave mats and fix the classroom. They help to raise funds.

In response to the question what else they wanted their Kindy teacher to support their children with the answers seemed consistent. They wanted the teacher to always be on time and attend classes every day, they were happy with the current situation and or they wanted the teacher to help their children feel more confident. They also wanted the teacher to teach more customs, stories of their culture and tradition.

The last observation from parents with regards to implementing changes once again the issue of attendance and time of the teacher was a big factor. They also all commented that the government should pay for early childhood education if it really mattered to them and was important for children. Some parents suggested they wanted more parent and teacher meetings to know how their children were doing. They wanted the teacher to have more materials and resources.

Section: 7 Early Childhood Education Teachers

Interviews with early childhood teachers were varied and interesting in terms of the differences and similarities in their responses. The qualifications of the Kindy teacher vary some graduating from grade six, eight, ten and or having gone to teachers college. There are usually two teachers in each Kindy since the amount of children varies from 20 to 36 children in attendance. There usually divide the children into two groups, age's 3-4 play and children age 5 attend what they refer to as readiness which means preparation for grade 1.

All Kindy teachers attend the six week Ministry training which focuses on child development, learning standards, emergency procedures and other areas of interest to the teachers. They also have a First Aid training course to ensure that they can respond in case of an emergency.

The scale of confidence from 1 to 10 varies in how they perceive themselves. The scale presented to the teachers identifies ten as feeling very confident in teaching the curriculum and one is having little or no confidence. The responses on the scales were 7 to 10. They felt they needed training and refresher course in areas such as supporting children with special needs, assessment, child development, literacy and numeracy. They also referred to phonics as something they needed to learn how to teach.

All Kindy teachers have to teach ten activities each day. Seven of the activities take place inside the classroom and three outside in the playground. Most of the teachers have their lessons mapped out in a binder or placed on the wall. Each activity differs and after they have completed them they try to assess their learning by asking children questions to see if they understood and if most responses are adequate they move on to the next activity.

Besides the Ministry curriculum they use materials given to them by NGO's in particular materials from Save the Children. They also create their own lessons based on their area of interest and expertise. They did indicate a lack of knowledge in terms of assessing children. They did not refer to adjusting instructional practise after observing their children.

The collaboration between the Kindy and grade one teacher is lacking and therefore planning for transition to grade one is left to chance. They do not meet and or attend trainings as a team. A transition team should be put together in every school to ensure the best possible transition for children in a school environment. A reflective environment has to be established so that there are opportunities for the Kindy and grade one teacher to engage in critical reflection and examine areas that need further improvement and support before the child transitions to grade one.

All the teachers indicated that English and or French should be the language of instruction but that Bislama had to be taught. They were not clear as to how this would work but they indicated that Bislama and or the vernacular language were the language spoken at home and therefore a priority for all schools. They indicated that children get confused with so many different languages and that they do not have a strong foundation in one particular language that would support them to be multilingual.

Some teachers indicated they had children with special needs but seemed reluctant to identify the disability unless it was obvious. They perceive parents as not wanting to send their special needs child to school and pay fees. They feel the parents are embarrassed and feel stigmatized when they have a child who has a special need. The Kindy teachers do not have the knowledge or skills to differentiate instruction for children who have special needs and therefore this area remains a priority. An early identification tool would greatly support the identification and needs of children with special needs. This tool must be seen as a way to prepare teachers to adapt the curriculum and not a tool to label children.

Strong efforts have to be focused on working with parent so that they understand that their children is unique and has individual needs like all other children. The government of Vanuatu must support parents to give learning opportunities to all their children. Teachers must be encouraged to liaise with families who have children with special needs and encourage and support them to send their children to Kindy.

Kindy teachers see their strengths as caring individuals, interested in the welfare of the children, engaging them in learning and playing and also supporting those to prepare for grade one.

Their main difficulties are shared among them. They have difficulty in:

- Managing children's behavior
- Teaching literacy and numeracy
- Helping children to hold a pencil or crayon
- Helping children to write
- Teaching without materials
- Supporting children with special needs

When it comes to describing a quality preschool they seem to agree that a quality preschool has:

- A permanent structure with washrooms and is located close to the primary school
- Materials, books, pencils, stationery, manipulative
- A large playground with good equipment
- Parental engagement
- A school committee
- Good management
- First Aid kit

Teachers partner with parents and community members when they have an Open Day, a fund raising event, custom dancing, and or celebrations. Parents do not often come into the classroom as resources or volunteers except in some Kindy's were they are invited to teach the vernacular language and or support story telling activities

Kindy teachers felt that they would like to change the training provided to them and have more accessibility for refresher courses and upgrading. They felt that the government should pay for early childhood education so that their salaries would remain stable and be consistent with other teachers.

They felt that the community and the government did not necessarily support early learning even though they say they do. They commented that if the government were committed the education officers would visit them, mentor them and support them. In some Kindy's the primary principals takes on the Kindy and pays the teacher's salary.

The inconsistency in fees creates an unequal status in the early childhood areas and isolates parents who do not have money and or simply can pay for three children to go to school and have to choose who to send therefore punishing the other children. It has created a system of inequity and it is not a fair and just system.

Section: 8 Primary and head teachers

Most of the primary teachers have children in their classroom with Kindy certification and children who did not attend Kindy. They felt that those who attended Kindy had better concentration skills, knew how to hold a pencil and could engage in some letter recognition and count.

They also indicated that they did not feel the Kindy teachers were doing their job. Some commented on the teacher's lack of experience; on their attendance record and the children's lack of preparation for grade one.

A lively discussion evolved around the inability of children to recognize letters, patterns, shapes, and numbers.

The following responses were common among primary teachers:

- Children cannot recall
- They only recognize a few words
- They do not know where a page begins and ends
- They do recognize letters and or numbers
- They do not colour within the lines
- They only learned how to play
- They cannot match letters or colours
- They do not have eye contact
- They do not know how to stay still when they sit on a chair they are used to sitting on the floor

As most other respondents they felt children should learn English and or French but also Bislama.

In reference to their view of a quality preschool they all agreed that:

- Teachers had to be trained and have qualifications beyond grade 10 to teach
- The teachers should be on time and attend daily
- The teachers should meet with them and understand what is taught in grade one. They did not say that they the grade one teacher should meet with the Kindy teacher. It seemed as if their expectation is for the Kindy teacher to approach them.
- The teacher should not be selected by the village because this creates tension
- Parents should be more involved
- They should use play to learn not play for playing sake.
- They have a lot of materials and manipulatives
- They are permanent structures
- The government pays the fees and the teachers' salaries
- The curriculum is written in partnership between Kindy and grade one teacher
- They attend trainings together and form a team

The primary teachers expect children to be able to manipulate blocks, recognize letters, hold a pencil, count to ten, competence in personal hygiene, communicate their needs, persist in a difficult task, make connections, know size, length, and names of numbers, communicate in English and or French, draw, sing, listen and respond to sound patterns, and develop an understanding of symbols.

The one thing they all agreed that they would change in terms of preschool is that children were actually better prepared to enter grade one. Better learning outcomes will be achieved if Kindy and grade one teachers work in partnership. In a genuine partnership they can share their instructional practices, trust each other and communicate freely about the children's wellbeing.

The Kindy and grade one teacher needs to understand the importance play in early childhood education. The intense focus on academic learning minimized the value of play. Play builds cognitive skills and contributes to the social, emotional, and language development of children. Both the Kindy and grade one teacher would greatly benefit from understanding where play fits into learning. There are various stages of play from exploration, pretend play to play with rules. Teachers must comprehend that fact that to play is to learn and to learn is to play.

Section 9: Strengths, opportunities weaknesses and threats

In order to capture the various strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats of ECCE in Vanuatu a set of tables have been prepared. These may be useful when considering areas of support and improvement in ECCE in Vanuatu.

Advocacy and sustainability are an important component of ECCE programs and there is no expectation that everything will change immediately. Sometimes small steps that are measured, guided, and monitored yield important results.

SWOT Ministry of Education

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<p>The Ministry of Education has a very strong and knowledgeable staff member in the preschool area</p>	<p>The government has not invested enough any money in ECCE and parents have to pay for ECCE.</p>	<p>The government has the opportunity to work with donors, partner, private and public sectors to ensure a committed focus is place on integrated services for children ages 0 to 6.</p>	<p>Parents cannot afford to pay fees.</p> <p>Inequities in terms of socio economic status with regards to ECCE</p>
<p>The Ministry has several good policies and documents in the area of early childhood education.</p>	<p>Poorly qualified teachers</p>	<p>The government has the opportunity to abolish school fees and invest in the early years. Family centres can be set up to ensure reduction of child mortality, information on nutrition and literacy programs for mothers and fathers.</p>	<p>If anything should happen to the National Preschool Coordinator a huge gap would exist in the area of ECCE. The knowledge, skills, commitment and history of ECCE would be lost.</p>
<p>The data collection system is being revamped and therefore will support monitoring of young children.</p>	<p>Lack of commitment and follow through by government officials.</p>	<p>The government has the opportunity to ensure reduction of child mortality, information on nutrition and literacy programs for mothers and fathers.</p>	<p>Youth unemployment will continue since early learning influences the advancement of students.</p>
<p>Learning Standards are in place for ECCE</p>	<p>Large disparities in Kindy's due to the fact that some parents cannot afford fees.</p>	<p>A focused and integrated approach for children ages 0 - 3 is needed</p>	<p>Investment in ECE</p>

<p>will yield very high economic returns and offset disadvantages and inequities of poor families with young children</p>	<p>There is a lack of integrated services.</p>	<p>Parental Campaign could be started and information sessions for parents to understand the value of education and the early years.</p> <p>The government can begin to identify children who do not attend school and or dropout and engage in an outreach program.</p> <p>Pre service programs could be established for all Kindy teachers and on the job practice with professional incentives to work in the rural areas.</p> <p>Strategies to recruit and retain good Kindy teachers should be developed.</p>	<p>Poverty will continue to increase and the levels of literacy will remain low.</p> <p>The MDG goals will not be met.</p> <p>Children who suffer from malnutrition and preventable diseases will continue to grow in numbers.</p>
--	---	--	---

		<p>A national Kindergarten curriculum (program) with assessment tools should be developed and implemented.</p>	
--	--	---	--

SWOT: Community and Parents

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<p>Communities and parents are mostly engaged in paying fees for their children’s education and ensuring that the school grounds and the classrooms are maintained.</p> <p>They also raise funds for the school and participate in school committees.</p>	<p>Not all school committees play an active role in the Kindy.</p> <p>Parents sometimes cannot afford fees for all of their children and therefore do not send all of them to school.</p>	<p>Since parents are engaged in supporting the upkeep of the school there could be workshops offered to engage them to understand the value of ECE and they could also volunteer and present their skills and knowledge in the classroom.</p>	<p>Some parents simply cannot pay the fees and their children do not go to school.</p> <p>Fathers are not as involved in their children’s education as mothers are.</p> <p>When celebrations take place children are absent from school sometimes for a period of three weeks.</p> <p>Parents wait to</p>

			<p>send their children to grade one and therefore the grade one teacher has a complexity of issues to manage.</p> <p>The community chooses the Kindy teacher and if she is not a good teacher it is difficult to move her from her position.</p>
--	--	--	--

Swot: Early Childhood Education Teachers

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<p>Most Kindy teachers seem eager to teach and care about their classroom.</p> <p>They want to be trained and upgraded.</p> <p>They acknowledge the areas where they need more</p>	<p>Teacher's certification and qualifications are varied and range from completion of grade 6 to teachers college.</p> <p>Teacher absenteeism is a serious problem in some areas.</p> <p>There are no</p>	<p>There are numerous opportunities for shorter in school training of Kindy teachers.</p> <p>Good housing could be provided for teachers in rural areas.</p> <p>Literacy (language</p>	<p>The fact that teachers are no on time and frequently absent will discourage parents and children from attending.</p> <p>Inadequate teachers will continue to teach since they have the support of the village chief.</p>

<p>support.</p> <p>They want stronger parental involvement.</p>	<p>incentives for the Kindy teacher to upgrade their skills.</p> <p>Language skills are weak and teachers need to upgrade their English and or French.</p> <p>Little understanding of special needs children and how to identify them and differentiate instruction.</p> <p>Teachers lack knowledge in the area of assessment and observation of children.</p>	<p>development and communication) is still an elusive subject and investment has been put into this area.</p> <p>Teachers can be supported to understand the concept of play as a tool for learning.</p>	<p>Some teachers have minimal education and this impacts on their teaching skills</p> <p>They are not monitored and or observed by the MOE since the MOE staffs does not have money to travel.</p> <p>They are not all preparing children for grade one and this stirs feelings of discontent among the primary teachers</p>
---	--	--	--

SWOT: Primary and Head Teachers

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<p>Primary teachers seem to have good qualifications to teach and their salary is quite adequate.</p> <p>They want to work closely with the Kindy teachers</p> <p>Their classrooms display children's work and they are proud of the children.</p> <p>Some have water outside to encourage children to wash</p>	<p>Children of various ages come to primary school and it is difficult for the teacher to cover all subject areas with such varied ages, skills and knowledge.</p> <p>The classrooms have about 36 children and have are multi grade</p> <p>Their view of education is much more traditional and they believe in memorization and rote learning.</p>	<p>There are vast opportunities to engage in a team effort between the Kindy and grade one teachers.</p> <p>Training sessions should be offered to both Kindy and grade one teacher</p> <p>Kindy and grade one teachers should plan and meet once a month at least.</p> <p>Kindy and grade one teacher should visit and observe each</p>	<p>The lack of respect for the Kindy teachers and the way they prepare the children for grade one can hurt the perception of ECE.</p> <p>The perceived lack of Kindy teachers interest in what happens in grade one is detrimental to the overall perception of ECE.</p> <p>Parents could feel that it is best to wait to send children to grade one where they will learn and not pay fees.</p>

<p>their hands after using the washroom and or playing outside.</p>	<p>They see play with skepticism.</p> <p>They are not content with the children who come to grade one from Kindy they feel they have not been prepared.</p>	<p>other's classroom.</p> <p>Grade one teachers can mentor and coach Kindy teachers and vice versa</p>	<p>Grade one teachers lose a lot of time trying to bring the skills of children who did not attend Kindy up to grade one level.</p>
--	---	--	--

Conclusions

The following diagrams indicate the strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats to the early childhood planning and implementation process. These conclusions are summarized from the data gathered during the interviews and the frequency of answers to each response and or the lack of answers.

The trends are similar in context and the problems are mostly system issues that need to be addressed by the government of Vanuatu and donors that support early childhood education. There is a lack of coordination between donors and there are sufficient materials at the Ministry that simply need to be updated and aligned.

There are also significant issues such as teacher certification and training, monitoring and evaluation, early identification of special needs children is unavailable, and school readiness tools need to be upgraded.

A consistent approach with knowledgeable provincial coordinators and a strong Ministry preschool unit will greatly enhance the needed supports for teachers in the field. The National Preschool coordinator supported by a strong cadre of people, a revised and focused curriculum, literacy and numeracy plan, and a strong parent engagement campaign will be able to make significant changes to the early childhood area.

The government of Vanuatu must commit to funding the early years and set up integrated services to support children from ages 0 to three and then review the Kindy hours and maybe implement a full day or two year Kindy to ensure that children are prepared for grade one and have a strong foundation in the language of instruction.

The use of play as a tool for learning needs to be understood by all engaged in children's learning so that they comprehend the essence and importance of play and the significant role it plays in Kindergarten.

A strong parental outreach must be implemented in Vanuatu so that all parents can understand the significance of good early childhood education and its impact on the poor and vulnerable. The formalization of early childhood education will also support mother's employment. Public policies that support infant care and mother's well-being will impact on the social capital of Vanuatu.

Research shows that at least 85% of children with special needs live in developing countries and yet Kindy's have very few if any children with identifiable needs. This is significant since it means that parents do not send them to school and or teachers are not able to identify the needs of children who need differentiated instruction.

Language development is also a complex issue in the island of Vanuatu where English and French are the language of instruction but Bislama is the language used on a daily basis but there are also numerous dialects in each island. Learning an official language in school is most important even if it is a bilingual model. The government has to support teachers with language instruction, curriculum resources, and activities in the language of instruction and possibly consider Bislama as the vernacular language with English and or French. The first three years could be the focus on a combination of two languages. It is imperative that people preserve their home language and culture and therefore action is urgently needed in this area.