REVIEW OF
THE PEDAGOGICAL SUPPORT
SYSTEM FOR PRIMARY EDUCATION
IN LAO PDR

May 2016
Acknowledgements
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<tr>
<td>ASLO</td>
<td>Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes</td>
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<td>BEQUAL</td>
<td>Basic Education Quality and Access in Lao PDR</td>
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<td>DESB</td>
<td>District Education and Sports Bureau</td>
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<td>EQIP2</td>
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<td>Education Sector Development Plan</td>
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<td>INSET</td>
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<td>JICA</td>
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<td>LABEP</td>
<td>Laos-Australia Basic Education Project</td>
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<td>LAO PDR</td>
<td>Lao Peoples Democratic Republic</td>
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<td>MoES</td>
<td>Ministry of Education and Sports</td>
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<td>PA</td>
<td>Pedagogical Adviser</td>
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<td>PD</td>
<td>Professional Development (for teachers and Principals))</td>
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<td>PESS</td>
<td>Provincial Education and Sports Service</td>
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<td>PPE</td>
<td>Pre-primary and Primary Education</td>
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<td>RIES</td>
<td>Research Institute for Education and Science</td>
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<td>TA</td>
<td>Technical Assistance</td>
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Executive Summary

Background and objectives

Improving pedagogical support for primary teachers means better teaching and better learning outcomes for students. This must therefore be an important focus for MoES. Indeed, the Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP) 2016-2020 identifies the provision of pedagogical support as a key element of Outcome 2: Increased number of primary school children with functional literacy and numeracy skills.

This review complements the ESDP in providing recommendations for strengthening the pedagogical support system. The main objectives of the review are to: a) review the existing pedagogical advisory support system (its structure, management and functionality); b) analyze existing capacity development within the pedagogical advisory support system and identify ways to improve its effectiveness; and c) propose strategies for MoES, through the key line departments of the Department of Pre-Primary and Primary Education (DPPE) and Department of Teacher Education (DTE), to improve this system.

Methodology

The review is predominantly qualitative, supplemented by quantitative data from MoES and other sources. The data was gathered from: document reviews; field trips to three provinces (Saravan, Khammuane, Xiengkhuang); interviews with key stakeholders in MoES and agencies engaged in in-service teacher education and training (INSET), and feedback about tentative findings from a national workshop.

Key findings and recommendations

The main results of the review and the key recommendations are:

1. There is no clear national policy directive and coordinating agency for all PPE INSET and associated technical experts, despite the fact that the ESDP 2016-2020 proposes a comprehensive in-service training system to address teachers’ needs at each stage of their professional career. The planning, timing and delivery of INSET is largely ad hoc, fragmented and uncoordinated.

Recommendation 1:

*Develop a national policy for INSET at pre-primary, primary and secondary levels. The policy should be jointly developed by DPPE, DTE and Department of Secondary Education (DSE) in collaboration with other stakeholders. The policy should include: 1) clearly specified roles and responsibilities at the central MoES office, Provincial Education and Sports Service (PESS) and District Education and Sports Bureau (DESB) for INSET and the provision of costed, recurring*
INSET budgets; 2) national courses to be listed in all teacher training centres; 3) description of standards for the registration and accreditation of all courses (to be administered by each PESS office); 4) INSET courses offered through MoES to be harmonized with those offered by foreign-assisted projects and NGOs; 5) training courses for trainers that are linked to the school curriculum and the pre-service curriculum and training programme; and 6) MoES central office to compile standards for the registration and accreditation of trainers, with provisional lists for each PESS.

2. The existing pedagogical advisory support system has strong potential to provide in-service training for teachers and School Principals in each district to improve teaching quality and lead to better student learning outcomes. The DPPE (and DSE) should re-affirm the key role of Pedagogical Advisors (PAs) at primary and lower secondary level in supporting teachers, as laid out in the ESDP 2016-2020.

Recommendation 2:

The DPPE should re-affirm the importance of PAs within the DESB structure, and ensure the content and intention of MoES Decree 5683 (Pedagogical Supervision in Pre-Primary and Primary Levels) is up-to-date and followed. The DESB structure should clearly include the organizational structures, roles and responsibilities of Pedagogical Advisory committees for pre-school and primary education (PPE) level, and the working principles for PAs.

3. There is a lack of regular and systematic pedagogical support to schools. This means that there is no planned regular contact between PAs and teachers. District offices are not following the protocols specified in the Decree 5683 updated in 2015, apparently due to a lack of budget. District offices are following a standard staffing pattern for PAs without any apparent consideration for their own topography, number of schools and ease of access between schools and the district office.

Recommendation 3:

Each district should consider its topography, number of schools and ease of access to determine the number of trained PAs needed to provide effective support to all of its schools. These positions should be filled in accordance with the Decree 5683. All teachers (especially women) qualified to be PAs should be encouraged to apply for vacant positions, to ensure the best candidates are appointed, using a transparent recruitment process.

4. There is no “career structure” for PAs. The main incentive of PAs is a 25 per cent addition on their regular salary but only after they have completed a formal PA training programme with certification. However, there is a lack of regular and systematic training programmes for PAs and many PAs are left with few training opportunities. There is also no performance appraisal system for them whereby their work might be evaluated and assessed, presumably at the DESB level.
Recommendation 4:

PAs should receive annual performance appraisals on:

- Preparing weekly, monthly, semester and annual work plans
- Developing teaching support aids for demonstration in schools
- Advising and mentoring teachers in lesson planning, teaching methods, assessing learning outcomes, and making and using teaching aids
- Linking and fostering collaboration between nearby schools to share best practices

5. A serious shortcoming in the PA system is the irregular provision of training programmes for new PAs and refresher programmes to upgrade the skills of experienced PAs. This is a major gap in preparing PAs to carry out their work effectively.

Recommendation 5:

A comprehensive national plan for the training of PAs should be developed. A regular programme of training for PAs should be implemented across the country. This will enable a full complement of PAs to work intensively with teachers to improve the quality of teaching and student learning outcomes. The programme might be extended to build the capacity of key personnel supporting teachers in schools, including School Principals and Senior Teachers.

6. There is no systematic register of PAs. There is no detailed information available on the profile of PAs (including age, ethnicity, languages spoken, level of education, teaching qualifications, and the level at which they were appointed). Nor are any records available regarding the content and form of PA training over the past 10 years.

Recommendation 6:

Establish a National Register of PAs that: records new PAs; documents their initial training; and updates refresher training for experienced PAs. Every PESS office to maintain a sub-register of PAs, which will be used to update the National Register.

INSET is a critical component of any education system that is seeking to maintain and improve quality learning outcomes across all levels. The Pedagogical Advisory Support system established in Lao PDR has significant potential to contribute to INSET if, as the ESDP suggests, it is recognized as a key component in the overall system and it receives endorsement and budget support from Central MoES. This paper proposes a strategy whereby the PA Support system might be enhanced so that it can play a key role in rejuvenating INSET in Lao PDR.
Section 1  Overview of the Report

Introduction

1 It is widely held that the key determinant of the quality of any country’s education system is the standard of its teachers and teaching.\(^1\) Society is continuously evolving, and new technologies are changing how we gain access to new knowledge. Therefore, teachers must receive continuing education to keep abreast of these changes if they are to help young learners to adapt to the demands of modern living. This continuing education for teachers demands a systematic strategy of pedagogical support that is accessible to all teachers at all levels. The training of practising teachers and education administrators (including School Principals and provincial and district personnel) at all levels (Pre-primary, Primary, Secondary and Higher Education) is called In-Service Teacher Education and Training (INSET), although some recent literature refers to it as ‘Continuing Professional Development’. This review will use the term ‘INSET’ to refer to all planned formal or informal training activity designed for, with or by practising teachers for the purpose of improving student learning outcomes. It may include workshops, observing other teachers, whole-of-school discussions about teaching and learning or visits by pedagogical advisers (PAs) to schools.

2 INSET is an on-going process of learning from the beginning to the end of a teacher’s career, and also covers teachers promoted to the position of Principal. This concept of teacher learning being developmental and continuous relates closely to the notion that student learning is also developmental and continuous. Therefore, INSET should be considered an integral part of a whole school learning community that is engaged in a continuous developmental process.

3 One of the general targets for teacher education in the Teacher Education Strategy and Action Plan (TESAP 2011-2015) was to “develop an action plan for continuous in-service teacher education and training and provide an opportunity for each teacher to attend in-service training at least once every 5 years and to receive credits for upgrading”. Although some progress was made in parts of TESAP (for example, improving the student-teacher ratio across the whole system by recruiting more teachers), a systematic INSET programme was not achieved because of: a limited education sector budget; a lack of a co-ordinated plan between each sector; and an insufficient number of trainers available for such a comprehensive programme.

4 Recent field observations conducted in various contexts in Lao PDR reveal that teachers, especially those in the most disadvantaged and remote areas: do not have sufficient opportunities to attend INSET training; do not receive adequate technical and professional support within their schools; and have insufficient classroom resources. Therefore, the quality of teaching is also poor because teachers use traditional teaching methods that involve rote learning. These and other limiting factors mean that student learning achievement is generally poor, as shown by the findings of the 2009 Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes (ASLO).

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\(^1\) Hattie, J (2008) Visible Learning, Routledge, Oxford
Only 19 per cent of grade 4 students have a level of independent functioning in Lao language. In addition, a 2012 Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) found that only 42 per cent of grade 5 students are able to read fluently with comprehension. Nationally, only 12 per cent of students were assessed to be pre-functional in the core subject ‘World around Us’. It is apparent that many teachers need up-dated content knowledge and awareness of new methodologies in effective teaching techniques if they are to improve student learning outcomes. The provision of INSET through new programmes, accompanied by enhanced levels of pedagogical advisory support may be effective in addressing the current low performance levels.

5 This review was established to provide advice regarding the form that effective INSET might take, and it has the following main objectives: (a) review the existing pedagogical advisory support system (structure, management and functionality); (b) analyse existing capacity development within the pedagogical advisory support system, identify its shortcomings and ways to improve its effectiveness; and (c) propose strategies whereby the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), through the key line departments of the Department of Pre-Primary and Primary Education (DPPE) and Department of Teacher Education (DTE), might improve this system. The full Terms of Reference for the review are given in Annex 1.

Methodology

6 Following a desk review of background papers and reports, the review used participatory consultation methods (face-to-face interviews and consultation discussions, and workshops) involving as many key stakeholders as possible, at the central offices and in selected provinces and districts. The review was predominantly qualitative, but some quantitative data from MoES and other sources was included.

7 The following key informants provided data for the review:

- Central MOES: DPPE (Director-General, Deputy Director-General, Heads/Deputy Heads of Departments); Department of Teacher Education (DTE – Director General, Deputy Director General, others). Internationally funded projects: Lao-Australia Basic Education Quality and Access in Lao PDR (BEQUAL); Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA, Japan).
- International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs): Plan International; Save the Children.
- UN agencies (UNICEF).
- Field Personnel: Provincial Education and Sports Service (PESS); District Education and Sports Bureau (DESB), School Personnel (administrators, Principals and teachers); PAs and Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs).

A full list of persons consulted is provided in Annex 2.
Three provinces outside Vientiane were included in two field trips made during the consultations:

- Xiengkhuang (North)
- Khammouane (Central)
- Saravan (South)

Two districts in each province, and at least two schools in each district were visited. The Khangkhai Teacher Training College in Xiengkhuang was also visited. The field trips were included to collect the views of PESS and DESB officers regarding the pedagogical support system. PAs were also asked about their experiences, and how their current roles might be enhanced. Teachers and School Principals also provided information regarding the level of pedagogical support that was currently available to them. The field visits were also intended to clarify or confirm comments made in reports and by central office officials during interviews about pedagogical support for teachers, and particularly PAs. The review also included observation of a four-day PA training workshop in Thalad that yielded useful data. The consultation field trip schedule is attached as Annex 4.

Section 2 Overview of INSET for Primary Teachers in Lao PDR

Policy and Planning for INSET

The Government of Lao PDR is improving strategic policy planning, budgeting, and monitoring and evaluation capacity across all sectors. In 2012, it proposed a series of decentralization policies through the ‘three builds’, which detailed the decentralization roles and responsibilities of central MoES and sub-national level units. At the time of this review (2016), these decentralization policies are being established at local level.

The Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP 2016-2020) includes the three-builds strategy, and provides for central MoES to guide the implementation of the Plan to all subsectors. PESS has a responsibility to develop its own 5-year plan and annual plans based on ESDP 2016-20. DESB is in turn required to follow the PESS education development plans in developing its own annual development plan. MoES has strengthened PESS and DESB in all provinces and districts in order to improve vertical management structure and capacity, and it is implementing a number of capacity building programmes. For example, ESDP 2016-20 Goal 6 is to improve the quality of education, and one of the outcomes expected is an increased number of primary school children with functional literacy and numeracy skills. This outcome requires strengthened human resources capacity, with more technical experts across the sector to help improve teaching. ESDP 2016-2020 suggests that an enhanced INSET programme should be put in place to provide the additional subject specialists to work with teachers across all levels. This would be accompanied by a comprehensive in-service training system designed to address the different needs of teachers, identified through teacher competency standards at each stage of their professional career.

3 The provinces and districts were chosen, which are a representative cross-section of the Northern, Central and Southern regions of Lao PDR, and include those with a TTC and those without.
4 Education Sector Development Plan 2016 – 2020, Department of Planning, Ministry of Education and Sports, Vientiane, Lao PDR
Recent assessments (EGRA and ASLO) at grades 3 and 5 have demonstrated that current levels of functional literacy and numeracy are not sufficient to support quality learning at higher grades of primary and lower secondary education. ESDP 2016-2020 recognises that there are a series of key issues here: (a) time allocated for complete coverage of the primary curriculum in all grades is inadequate and/or imbalanced across grades; (b) support that schools and teachers receive from visiting pedagogical advisors is not sufficiently effective; (c) schools do not allocate enough time for remediation with learners in need; (d) pedagogy for teaching Lao as a second language for ethnic children is inadequate in both schools and pre-service teacher training programmes; (e) learning resources to improve the transition of ethnic learners to the Lao language are not widely available or used; and (f) inexperienced teachers often teach Grade 1.

The ESDP proposes that the following intermediate outcomes should be a focus for MoES development between 2016-2020 in order to accomplish the vital goal of improving the quality of education in Lao PDR:

- Developing a literacy-based primary curriculum across all five grades.
- Increased and improved PA services to be provided to schools.
- Improved teaching of Lao language to ethnic students who do not have Lao as their mother tongue, through new learning approaches and new resources.
- Implementing the new strategy on literacy development for primary education.

To achieve these outcomes, ESDP 2016-2020 proposes the following strategies:

- PAs should be financially supported to advise teachers in all schools.
- Ensure grade 1 classes use a single grade teaching approach and are taught by the school’s most experienced teachers.
- Develop strategies for literacy and numeracy skill improvement, and use them to inform training programmes for upgrading district PAs and to revise pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes.

These strategies necessitate the review and revision of the skill requirements and duties of District managers, District pedagogical support personnel and school managers. This is to ensure they can provide the quality support needed to teachers of early primary grades to improve functional literacy and numeracy outcomes.

These ESDP 2016-2020 proposals have important implications for the provision of enhanced pedagogical support across the sector to improve the quality of education. Under the ‘three builds’ policy, MoES Central Office is responsible for providing overall direction to all subsectors regarding policy implementation. It is specifically accountable for approving policies and regulations related to the development of pedagogical support for early childhood and primary education, and providing overall pedagogical advice and directives (MoES Ministerial Decree No. 5683/ສສກ.ອປ dated 22 October, 2015). At sub-national level, PESS is responsible for approving and supervising the overall pedagogical implementation plan for general education within each province. At district level, DESBs are responsible for providing professional technical advice and support on the teaching and learning process in primary
schools within respective districts. DESBs are responsible for managing a pedagogic support system that includes the INSET programme. This system intends to provide teachers with new approaches to teaching methodology, and enhanced approaches to understanding curriculum, effective lesson preparation and the appropriate use of classroom teaching resources. ESDP 2016–2020 identifies an important role for PAs based within DESBs who are required to help teachers to improve student learning outcomes. The role of PAs is discussed further below.

14 By decree, DTE at MoES Central Office level has primary responsibility for policy direction and planning for INSET for primary and pre-primary teachers. However, much current INSET training is planned and conducted by DPPE using trainers from Central Office, PESS, DESB, the Research Institute for Educational Sciences (RIES), TTCs, Teacher Development Centres (TDCs), PAs and outstanding academic teachers in schools. DTE monitors the training, generally by providing an observer at each training activity. DTE is responsible for both pre-service training of new teachers and the in-service training of teacher training staff in the TTCs.

15 Though there is some collaboration between DPPE and DTE regarding INSET, this review has found that its planning, timing and delivery is largely ad hoc, fragmented and uncoordinated. This is due to an absence of clear national policy directives for INSET, poor levels of coordination and a reduced operational budget at PESS and DESB that does not leave enough for INSET. School block grants are not sufficient to allow the required INSET allocation. Almost always, INSET takes the form of training sessions for teachers through workshops run by assigned trainers either within schools, within school cluster groups or at district or provincial centres. The training may range from a half-day session of 3 to 4 hours, up to a variable period of 1 or 2 weeks of full-time training.

16 Because these INSET courses are not accredited or moderated nationally apart from some monitoring by DTE, there is considerable variation in their content, duration and quality. There is no systematic plan at national level that sets out guidelines for PESS / DESB to follow for the provision of training. Therefore, there is no clear timetable for when training sessions will occur or where they will be held, and no directives regarding the percentage of budget allocations for INSET. More importantly, there are no guidelines for any evaluation of the effectiveness of the training. There is also no database in PESS or DESB offices that records which teachers have received training, what topics were addressed in the training or its length. Neither is there a database that lists a pool of accredited trainers at central, provincial or district level.

Assistance of Development Partners on In-service Training of Teachers

17 For over a decade, Development Partners, including non-governmental organization (NGO)-supported INSET projects have been running alongside the periodic INSET conducted by MoES. These projects are usually situated in pre-selected districts and schools and in remote, rural locations where poverty is high and student learning outcomes are historically low. A
survey of INSET programmes for teachers and agencies undertaken in 2008\textsuperscript{5} showed that 20
different agencies were providing programmes for teachers across Lao PDR at that time. The
same detailed survey showed that agencies and projects often cover very similar material in
their different courses using common source materials. Although there is no overall
coordination of all of these project inputs, audits are often updated by different agencies as
part of the Education Sector Working Group (ESWG) planning strategy. However, this audit
provides only a summary of those courses that have been offered or are being offered at a
particular time. It does not serve any forward planning exercise that might allow agencies to
avoid duplication. While much of this ‘external’ INSET is conducted in liaison with MoES Central
Office, PESS and DESB offices and with their approval, it is fragmented and there is only
moderate central coordination. This results in overlaps in the form of technical support,
sometimes within the same geographical area. The technical support provided in these projects
is almost always limited in duration, and although many of the interventions are welcomed by
teachers and successfully implemented with significant learning outcomes in the short-term,
they are frequently unsustainable in the medium and long term. Therefore, they are rarely
adopted by MoES and scaled-up to national level. Without on-going funding from the Lao
Government, most initiatives stop when the project ceases and funding stops.

18 Common threads run through all of the interviews conducted with teachers and School
Principals when questioned about the INSET they had received over the previous 2 to 3 years.
Most training had been provided by various projects and/or NGOs, lasted between 1 and 5 days,
and was only available to teachers from selected schools in nominated districts. The training
emphasised Lao Language teaching (Grades 1–3) and English language teaching (Grades 3–5).
Only a small sample of evidence was gathered about the INSET programmes during the past few
years. However, it was clear that there is no planned regular INSET programme available from
MoES that has fixed dates and venues, and that is widely publicized to allow teachers, schools,
DESBs and PESS to plan an integrated and systematic training programme targeting all teachers
on rotation over a nominated cycle. All training is short-term, input-based and generally ‘one-
off’, with little follow-up or evaluation of its effect on teacher behaviour or the level of student
outcomes. Such follow-up is not possible because of a lack of funding and an insufficient number
of personnel able to provide this level of support. While Guskey\textsuperscript{6} has criticized such training
programmes as superficial and ineffective, very few international research studies that can be
applied across different levels, contexts and subjects, have recommended alternative strategies
to directly improve student learning.

In-Service Training Teams

19 In-service courses for primary teachers are most often delivered by teams of trainers
derived from different sources. They are typically Provincial Teams, where trainers are engaged
from: PESS; TTCs (in provinces where they exist) or from TDCs (in provinces without a TTC); and
from the DESB supported, by master trainers from MoES central office (DPPE and sometimes

\textsuperscript{5} Willsher, Michele (2008) The Provision of In-service Training for Primary School teachers in Lao PDR,
UNICEF.

Educational Leadership Volume 59, Number 6.
RIES, depending on the topic, with DTE as monitor). Trainers may also form District Training Teams consisting of trainers from the DESB, selected school Principals, PAs and some experienced teachers (called ‘academic teachers’) selected from schools in the district. ‘Mobile teachers’ (those with specific expertise in a subject area, such as English teaching) are also engaged for short periods to participate in INSET sessions. A third category of trainers consists of foreign or local specialists working in projects implemented by donor agencies and NGOs. These specialists are most relevant and effective when introducing modern curriculum approaches, new resource materials or context specific topics (such as UXO training). Most projects now include a ‘capacity-building’ component, where specialists are expected to transfer their knowledge and skills with local trainers as part of the activity. However, the short-term nature of these projects means that capacity-building is often limited in its effectiveness.

In-Service Training Models for Primary Teachers

20 The predominant model used for training teachers in PESS or DESB venues is the ‘one-off’ workshop that may run for 1 or 2 days. The workshop is held at a central point in the province (or district) and usually consists of a one-way transmission of information to teachers, with little or no opportunity for the trainers to get feedback or follow-up on the outcome of their training. Sometimes ‘mass training’ occurs, with all teachers of a particular class (or subject) in the district included in the activity. Although this training strategy has been shown to have little or no effect on changing teaching behaviour, either in the short or long-term, and is essentially a waste of time and resources, the model persists. This is because it is easy to implement this kind of training as part of a budgeted programme, and a large number of ‘trained’ teachers can be reported without giving justification of the learning that may or may not have occurred.

21 An alternative to the ‘one-off’ workshop model and ‘mass-training’ model is a school-based training model where the whole school staff (or a group of staff with similar needs from a school) is trained together as a learning community. This model has become increasingly popular in many countries as it allows whole school communities to work together on issues that are relevant and within a specific context. Guskey (2002) has shown that this model is effective if there is some “expert outside advice” introduced into the school-based setting. In Lao PDR, provincial or district trainers, particularly PAs, and academic teachers from other schools would be appropriate as the “expert outside advice” resource persons for in-school INSET. A variation on the school-based model is the cluster-based model, which has been shown to be effective under previous projects ITSME9 and TTEST.10 The cluster model involves a group of (usually) smaller schools joining together to share resources and trainers on a common topic. While the cluster model appears to work well for urban schools where distances between cluster schools are small and access between them is easy, it is much less successful for remote, rural schools separated by larger distances. Details about how the cluster system is still working

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9 ITSME (2010 – 2014) In-Service Teacher Training in Science and Mathematics Education, supported by JICA in 8 Districts in 3 Provinces (Khammuane, Savannakhet and Champassack).
10 Teacher Training Enhancement and Status of Teachers Project.
in Khammouane and Xiengkhuang provinces is given in Annex 6. ESDP (2016-2020) supports school and school-cluster based training as a strategy to match specific school needs to the INSET provided to them.

22 This review has considered three of the main models for INSET used in Lao PDR: the training course/workshop; the school-based model; and the cluster-based model. Other forms of INSET that can also be effective are: attendance at education conferences and seminars (at which teachers and/or researchers present their research results and discuss education problems); enrolment in a degree programme; observation visits to other schools; and mentoring and/or peer observation and coaching. Such programmes are focused more on individual teacher learning than a shared collaborative model. Hattie (2015) suggests that in-service training should not focus on individual teachers because there are so many elements of success that are outside their control. Everyone in a school community needs to work collectively to improve student achievement. Hattie contends that changes in student achievement are unlikely when working on one teacher at a time, and supports the notion that INSET should entail a collaborative learning model involving a number of teachers from the same source.

23 In summary, there is no clear national policy directive and co-ordinating agency for all PPE INSET across Lao PDR. The planning, timing and delivery of INSET is largely ad hoc, fragmented and uncoordinated, with:

- No systematic approach to the provision of training, no clear timetable for when training sessions will occur or where they will be held, and no directives regarding the percentage of budget allocations for INSET.
- Training courses that are not accredited or moderated, apart from some monitoring by DTE.
- No database in PESS or DESB offices that records those teachers who have received training, what topics were addressed in their training or its length of it.
- No database listing a pool of accredited trainers at central, provincial or district level.

ESDP 2016-2020 notes the importance of a strong professional development initiative as part of its key goal to improve the quality of education. This support, along with the review’s observations and analyses, leads to the following recommendation (secondary education is included here although it was outside the terms of this review), with six additional sub-recommendations (Labelled as Recommendations 1 (a – f)).

24 Recommendation 1:

Develop a national policy for INSET at pre-primary, primary and secondary levels. The policy should be jointly developed by DPPE, DTE and DSE in collaboration with other stakeholders. The key components of this national policy for professional development should include:

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a) Clearly specified roles and responsibilities at the central MoES office, PESS and DESB for INSET and the provision of costed, recurring INSET budgets.
b) National courses to be listed in all teacher training centres.
c) Description of standards for the registration and accreditation of all courses (to be administered by each PESS office).
d) INSET courses offered through MoES to be harmonized with those offered by foreign-assisted projects and NGOs.
e) Training courses for trainers that are linked to the school curriculum and the pre-service curriculum and training programme.
f) MoES central office to compile standards for the registration and accreditation of trainers, with provisional lists for each PESS.

25 A high-level working group from DPPE, DTE and DSE should be formed to develop the national policy for INSET as recommended above. This revised policy is an essential first step at relatively low cost, although when fully implemented across the country it will require a budget allocation from MoES. Such an allocation might be re-directed from existing budgets, or donors could provide targeted support to priority areas within the programme. Policy-makers must recognize that improving education quality has a cost attached to it, and the relatively higher costs of delivering basic education to Lao PDR’s many remote, hard-to-reach locations means that efficient and effective solutions will need to be found.

26 Classroom teachers, even when situated in different provinces and districts, seem remarkably consistent in their opinions regarding the specific content topics for which they need additional training. They suggest that an enhanced national INSET programme should contain the following topics:

- Preparing teaching aids and resources for the classroom (low-cost and using every-day household materials).
- Lesson planning, especially for multi-grade classes.
- Assistance with school administrative procedures – particularly with regard to the move towards school-based management, and the need to document classroom data accurately.
- How to monitor learning and provide feedback to students – skills in formative assessment and diagnostic testing to monitor student progress.
- Peer observation techniques; providing feedback to each other - how to be more focused when observing both teaching techniques used by peers and student responses to active teaching.
- How to teach Lao Language, Mathematics, English and World around Us – four different content modules, further sub-divided into specific year groups.

27 The Basic Education Equity and Access in Lao PDR (BEQUAL) programme has undertaken a Training Needs Analysis of a sample of teachers. Findings from the study can be used to determine whether the topics listed in paragraph 26 are actually the priority areas in which teachers need most support. Once topics for INSET are confirmed, it will be necessary to
convene specialist writing groups (lead by RIES) to prepare an outline of the content and form of each topic area to be offered for INSET.

28 Each course should be in the form of Content Modules that may comprise a new programme in its entirety or, more likely, built onto existing INSET courses but enhanced to fit the modern day classroom, with its emphasis on student-centred activity and the teacher acting as a facilitator of learning. The content should be closely aligned to the revised PPE curriculum and initially consist of core topics as headings, so that provincial and district trainers may develop their own context-specific programmes. Initially, trainers will need to make a considerable effort to develop their own content within the guidelines for each module, but this will be a ‘one-off’ effort that will significantly build their capacity. Some modules may be shared between provinces. The result will be a set of course titles for all training centres (or schools or school-clusters) on a pre-determined, rotational basis across the country. The modules, once trialled and confirmed as part of a national INSET programme, should then be accredited and listed so that teachers can obtain credit for completing them.

29 It will be necessary for each province to compile a central register/database to record every teacher and school involved, and the form of INSET received. It should be maintained in each PESS with data supplemented from the DESBs. The School Principal or the supervisor/evaluator assessing teachers’ performance can refer to the training profile as one way of assessing their on-going performance after attending a training programme. This would supplement the current, unreliable ways of rating a teacher’s performance, such as quality of lesson planning or a cursory observation of a single lesson (currently the most commonly used forms of teacher evaluation).

Section 3  Pedagogical Advisory System in Lao PDR

Background

30 The pedagogical advisory support system was first established under the World Bank-financed Education Development Project, which commenced in 1993. This project provided a technical mechanism of Professional Pedagogical Supervisory Support for General Education in Lao PDR. PAs were established to provide advisory and mentoring support to teachers and to take part in INSET activity when required, in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning outcomes within classrooms. The use of the term “supervisory” in the project terms was contentious, as the role of PAs within the Education Development Project was not envisaged as a supervisory one but rather intended to support classroom teachers. At this time there was no formal provision for training PAs, who received training from agencies including UNICEF (Schools of Quality programme), JICA (ITSME), PLAN International, and Save the

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12 World Bank (2001) Implementation Completion Report for Lao-Education Sector Development Project,
Children at various times and places. The role of PAs came into sharper focus with the advent of the Laos-Australia Basic Education Project (LABEP), which was implemented between 1999 and 2007 across 11 provinces (and 52 districts). LABEP provided intensive training for all PAs in the target DESBs, along with the recruitment and training of an additional 52 PAs (one LABEP-designated PA for each district). Twenty-one were female PAs selected from remote ethnic communities specifically to support ethnic teachers with pedagogy and multi-grade teaching. A review of the impact of LABEP conducted in 2012 revealed that this strategy of selecting and training PAs specifically to work in remote ethnic communities with a specific and focused role was successful.

In principle, the experience gained in LABEP’s target districts showed that the PA system has strong merit as a means through which an entire district can receive regular INSET to improve the quality of education outcomes. In practice, this pedagogical support to schools must be regular and systematic, with a recurrent budget that is sufficient to allow regular contact between PAs and teachers. However, this has not been the situation for the 9 years since LABEP concluded.

The period between 2000 and 2007 was a high point for PA effectiveness within the LABEP target districts because: the PAs were funded by the Project; they received enhanced training; and they were able to travel to schools using motorcycles provided by the Project. The PAs also received learning materials and teachers’ guides to help their work. The same level of financial support for PAs was not available in the non-LABEP districts. When LABEP support ended, insufficient budget in the respective districts prevented the PAs from maintaining their level of intensive support to schools, and they could no longer visit schools regularly. However, the concept of using PAs to provide advisory and mentoring support to teachers and to take part in INSET activity to improve the quality of teaching and learning outcomes within classrooms was recognized by MoES. Therefore, the system was retained beyond the end of the project, and PAs were given substantive positions within the district education structure. This structure is summarised below.

Structure and Management of PA Roles in Lao PDR

PAs are recruited and employed under the revised and updated MoES Decree 5683 dated 22 October 2015. This Decree (Pedagogical Supervision in Pre-Primary and Primary Levels) defines the organizational structures and the roles and responsibilities of PA committees for PPE level, and covers the administration procedures, working principles, job positions and incentives for PAs. An abbreviated English version of the document is attached as Annex 3. According to this regulation, the DESB Director is responsible for the Pedagogical Supervision Unit, whose members are expected to provide advice, help and support for teachers regarding processes related to the practice of their daily professional tasks.

The review found that not all DESBs were following this formal structure. The placement of PAs within the office was arbitrary and they were not assigned to any obvious unit within the

DESBs. The review found that a number of DESB Directors and Deputy Directors were former PAs when there were more funds available to carry out the PA role effectively (for example, from LABEP and UNICEF projects). In each instance, these officers were very supportive of the PA role in principle and were mentoring the new PAs in the absence of any organized external training, because they had seen its potential usefulness for teachers and they wanted the role to be carried out effectively.

35 During the review, there was some confusion in district offices because of a directive from the Division of Organization and Personnel in MoES Central Office that the PA Centre (Unit) was to be transferred away from the DESB into a nearby primary school. This move had already occurred in one district office but it had left the PA unit isolated in a corner of a primary school and uncertain of their position. They were without a telephone (except for personal cell phones), they shared one laptop belonging to one of the PAs, and the office did not have adequate furniture. However, all other DESB offices visited during the field trip had rejected such a move because of a belief that it would be inefficient, it would decrease the professional standing of the PAs, and it would have broken the direct line management of the DESB. They stated that most primary schools do not have suitable space to accommodate the PAs anyway. It appeared at the time of this review that the PAs would remain in the DESB offices and the directive would be rescinded.

36 Decree 5683 states that the Pedagogical Advisory Centre is expected to have a Director and Deputy Director nominated from among the PAs. The Pedagogical Advisory Centre is tasked to:

- Prepare activity plans and budgets and submit them to the DESB for approval.
- Pilot and introduce new ideas and methodologies.
- Participate with other sectors to organize teacher training at district level.
- Collect information on teaching-learning performance to plan for improvement.
- Monitor, follow up and support new teachers in schools.
- Prepare reports on PA performance and submit them to DESB.

37 This list of tasks was not mentioned or raised in any of the DESBs visited, so they are either unaware of it or they are ignoring its content. In principle the Decree is a clear statement of roles and responsibilities for PAs, but in practice the PAs are not fully engaged with their roles because they lack training and have not been fully acquainted with the expectations associated with them. There was no evidence of any specific Pedagogical Advisory Centre in any DESB visited; rather the PAs tended to sit together and were occasionally called on to work as a small team. It was acknowledged that the most senior PAs are always nominated as the notional leaders of the group because they have the most experience and have already received PA training, even if the training took place 10 or more years earlier.

38 In addition to the stated role for a Pedagogical Advisory Centre in the DESB, the PAs are required by the Decree to undertake the following duties:
• Prepare work plans to be implemented on a weekly, monthly, semester and annual basis.
• Develop supporting teaching aids to be used for demonstration by PAs in schools.
• Provide advice and mentoring support to the teachers in lesson planning, teaching methods, assessment of learning outcomes, making and using of teaching aids.
• Provide advice and mentoring support in the field of school administration, coordinate with Village Education Development Committees (VEDC), and participate in meetings with other sectors.
• Perform other duties as assigned by higher authorities.

The duties specified in the Decree regarding the provision of advice in school administration, coordination with VEDC and participation in meetings with other sectors is outside the experience of most PAs unless this role is supported by intensive training. The duty to “perform other duties as assigned by higher authorities” is much too broad, and could result in PAs being assigned all manner of tasks (such as monitoring teacher and principal performance), that are outside their core support and mentoring roles.

39 While the duties described in paragraph 38 represent the activities expected of PAs in a fully functioning PA unit, in practice, they are not undertaking them in any systematic manner. No detailed schedule was observed either in their daily work, and no proposed schedules for weekly, monthly or semester visits were evident. School visits occurred when there was a specific invitation from the school for them to participate in training. There was no evidence of PAs being pro-active in seeking opportunities to visit schools. Motorcycles were frequently unavailable because other units in the DESB office were using them for other assignments, so PAs would need to use their own transport with minimal reimbursement. Some PAs felt restricted by their lack of training, and the limited budget to visit schools (particularly remote schools) meant that funds for travel and daily allowances for food and overnight accommodation are scarce. The ESDP (2009-2015) mid-term review noted that the operational budget for in-school support was only 10 per cent of the total school budget. This created challenges for DESB staff (including PAs) to adequately support schools to promote pedagogical development in the manner envisaged in the Decree. Because of these administrative pressures on DESB staff, the PAs are frequently asked to undertake other administrative roles in the DESB office outside providing pedagogical support to teachers. One PA said that he was acting as the district financial officer because that position was currently vacant.

40 The evaluation report carried out during the implementation of the UNICEF Schools of Quality programme\textsuperscript{14} noted that each school was visited by PAs 1.5 times each year (on average). However, the regulations state that each teacher should be seen by a PA at least 3 times each year. Clearly, PAs are still facing the same difficulties in visiting schools regularly (apart from those in donor-supported programmes). The lack of resources also means that teaching aids for use by PAs in demonstration lessons cannot be prepared, and other resource materials such as text books and teacher’s guides cannot be easily procured.

41 The previous paragraphs highlight the role that PAs have played, despite being under-funded except when supported by donor projects. The ESDP 2016-2020 identifies an important role for PAs and there is a formal structure in place for them that is being under-utilized. The place of PAs in providing pedagogical support to teachers as an integral part of INSET in the future needs to be clearly designated, and this is addressed in the following recommendation.

42 Recommendation 2:

The DPPE should re-affirm the importance of PAs within the DESB structure, and ensure the content and intention of MoES Decree 5683 (Pedagogical Supervision in Pre-Primary and Primary Levels) is up-to-date and followed. The DESB structure should clearly include the organizational structures, roles and responsibilities of Pedagogical Advisory committees for pre-school and primary education (PPE) level, and the working principles for PAs.

43 It is important to make a clear distinction between MoES personnel who supervise and evaluate teachers and schools and those personnel (such as PAs) who mentor and coach teachers. The role of PAs is to provide assistance and support to teachers in a collegial relationship rather than a hierarchical one. PAs have the primary function of enhancing the quality of teaching and promoting better learning outcomes; monitoring quality is only a secondary function. PAs should only review lesson plans to help a teacher plan a better lesson; they should not scrutinize lesson plans to assess the teacher’s competence. It is critical to recognize that a PA cannot fill the roles of a trainer/coach/mentor and an assessor/evaluator at the same time. These roles are distinctively different and should not be confused. A dilemma can arise when a School Principal is required to both provide pedagogical advice to a teacher, and evaluate the same teacher for promotion or salary progression. In many schools (particularly remote ones) the School Principal is likely to be the key instructional leader for the whole school staff, and he/she should be trained to provide this leadership to the whole school.

Current Status of PAs – Profile and Numbers

44 While the review was able to record the number of PAs within all DESB offices from records held in the DPPE, there was no detailed information available on the profile of PAs (including age, ethnicity, languages spoken, level of education, teaching qualifications, and the level at which they were appointed). Nor were any records available regarding the content and form of PA training over the past 10 years. There is no systematic and on-going provision for PA training scheduled in any of the main centres where PA training has occurred.

45 The number of PAs within each District fluctuates over short periods. The field visit with DESBs revealed that the turn-over of PAs is quite high, and they are not always immediately replaced when they leave or are promoted. Some turn-over of PAs was due to retirement and death, and several PAs (who were clearly outside the stated age guidelines) were close to retirement and needing to be replaced. Several DESB administrators indicated plans to recruit replacement PAs, but they recognized that these appointments would not be effective unless training programmes were provided.
The process for selecting and confirming the appointment of a teacher as a new PA involves several steps. His/her name is passed from DESB to PESS and then to central office and back again once the teacher has been identified as a potential PA. Despite clear guidelines and criteria for selecting suitable PA candidates listed in the Decree, these guidelines are not always followed. Potential PAs must have 5 years of continuous teaching at an “outstanding” level, be aged between 25 and 45, and reach at least 8+3 training level (see the footnote)\textsuperscript{15}. Several PAs suggested during interviews that those selected as PAs were not always best suited to the role.

Table 1 shows the number of PAs in the system disaggregated by gender, those who have completed training programmes, and those who have not had any formal PA training.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>Number of PAs</th>
<th>Number of PAs</th>
<th>No. of PAs trained</th>
<th>No. of PAs un-trained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(77.5%)</td>
<td>(22.3%)</td>
<td>(39.5%)</td>
<td>(10.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows that in 2016 there are three times more male PAs than female PAs. However, 50 per cent of all PAs have not yet been trained. When the number of female PAs employed across all provinces is compared to the number of female teachers in PPE, there is a clear imbalance.

Table 2 shows that while there are approximately even numbers of male and female teachers in PPE, 78 per cent of PAs are male. Various reasons are given to justify this imbalance. The most common is that it is too risky from a security viewpoint for women to travel long distances to reach remote schools, especially if the travel involves overnight stay. Another is that women are unable to ride the large trail bikes required to traverse the difficult roads, especially during the wet season. Both of these reasons have some justification, but there are many schools in every district that are within a short distance of the DESB office. Women can use smaller motorcycles to reach these schools and there is no reason why competent women teachers could not be deployed as PAs to work in these schools. All groups of teachers

\textsuperscript{15} 8+3 was one of pre-service teacher training course for lower secondary graduates (with of 8 years of schooling) and had 3 year pre-service course.
interviewed indicated that they would welcome more female PAs because they thought they might relate better to the female teachers as mentors and advisers.

It is significant that the review team met with 15 PESS and DESB Directors and Deputy Directors across the three provinces and six districts (see Annex 2), and every one of these senior administrators were male. A UNDP report (2011) noted that only 9 of 143 Heads of DESBs in Lao PDR were female and there was one only female PESS Director. Clearly, “there is no balance between men and women in educational leadership in Lao PDR, especially at the top level. Female leadership is not commonly seen, especially at the local level although the government emphasizes a policy of gender equity and equality so that men and women equally can contribute to the national socio-economic development.” Bringing Lao women, especially ethnic minority women, into mainstream leadership roles in MoES offices is clearly difficult, despite an accepted international trend to ensure that more women are considered for senior leadership positions across all sectors.

Table 3 reveals that some un-trained PAs have been in their position for a number of years. This small sample relates only to the PAs in the eight districts (three provinces) interviewed during the field trip, but it is likely that similar responses would be obtained in most other districts since the sample was representative of all geographical areas.

Table 3: PAs interviewed about experience and training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of PAs interviewed</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>No. of Years of experience as a PA</th>
<th>Trained or Un-trained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6 PAs newly-appointed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 PAs&gt;18 years of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5 PAs between 6 – 10 years of experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 PAs &lt; 4 years of experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10 PAs have received training as PAs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 PAs had no training despite being PAs for 3 or more years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 PAs are newly-appointed with no training</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The gaps in training shown in Table 3 show that the provision and scheduling of training for PAs has not been regular or consistent in the past 8 years, and a number of PAs are still un-trained. One-third of the PAs interviewed in the field had been in the position for three or more years and had received no training, and all wanted training as soon as possible. The lack of training represents a serious lack of capacity within the whole pedagogic support system.

Table 4 shows the distribution of PAs within each Province and District disaggregated by gender and the number of primary schools in each district. It shows that there is enormous variation in the number of PAs between provinces, with no account apparently taken of the

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16 Human Development Report, Lao PDR (2011) -UNDP
number of districts and primary schools in each province. The number of PAs in relation to primary schools ranges from an average of 23 schools for each PA in Houaphan to only 8.5 schools for each PA in Xayaboury. This simple statistic does not take into account important variables such as the number of districts, the number of remote schools in each district, topography, distance between schools, the condition of roads, and the number of teachers in each school.

Table 4: PAs distribution between provinces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Province</th>
<th>Number of Districts</th>
<th>Number of PAs (by gender)</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>No. of Primary Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vientiane Capital</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vientiane Province</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phongsaly</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luang Namtha</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oudomxai</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bokeo</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luang Prabang</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houaphan</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xayaboury</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xiengkhuang</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolikhamsay</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khammouane</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savannakhet</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saravan</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sekong</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champassack</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attapeu</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saysomboun</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>147</strong></td>
<td><strong>414</strong></td>
<td><strong>119</strong></td>
<td><strong>533</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

54 Under the regulations for staffing in DESBs, districts may appoint up to six PAs, but the actual average is 3 to 4 PAs per DESB. The regulations give no rationale for setting the maximum number of PAs at six, and it is not apparent why most districts choose three or four. The allocation of a fixed number of PAs to every district regardless of its topography and distribution of schools introduces a number of inequalities. Table 4 shows that there are large differences between the potential workloads for PAs according to the province and district to which they are assigned.

55 If the importance of PAs within the DESB structure is re-affirmed by DPPE as recommended, then each district needs to consider its topography, number of schools and ease of access between them before estimating the number of trained PAs needed to provide effective support to all schools in the district. These positions should be filled in accordance with the procedures laid down in MoES Decree 5683.
56 **Recommendation 3:**

All teachers (especially women) qualified to be PAs should be encouraged to apply for vacant positions, to ensure the best candidates are appointed, using a transparent recruitment process.

**Functionality of PAs**

57 There is no ‘career structure’ for PAs, and the main incentive for them to work as PAs is a 25 per cent loading on their regular salary (but only after they have completed a formal PA training programme with certification). However, as has been shown in Table 2, some PAs have been waiting for training for up to 3 years, and still do not know when the next PA training will occur. Some have been the PA in a DESB for very lengthy periods (some for more than 12 years) without receiving planned refresher training or INSET beyond either their initial training as a PA or specific incidental training, perhaps because the district has been involved in a project. For example, 200 PAs selected from specific districts across all provinces received 45 days training in 2013/14 under the Education for All Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI) programme. They were trained on school management, teaching-learning method, Education Quality Standards, the role of the VEDC, and carrying out their roles as PAs. PLAN International has been working in Bokeo province and is proposing to train 12 PAs in three districts (Meung, Paktha and PhaOudom) as part of its on-going programme of educational support to these districts in improved school management. Around 30 PAs attended a five-day UNICEF-funded PA refresher training activity in Thalad in January 2016, but there was no schedule for the next MoES-planned training for new PAs.

58 PAs who do not have formal training and certification are perceived by teachers as merely “another classroom teacher”, and so are not given much status as visitors. Nor are they consulted by teachers on curriculum matters, new teaching methods or assessment of learning outcomes as often as they might if they were formally trained.

59 In addition to the absence of any career progression for PAs, there is no performance appraisal system for PAs, or any structure in place to evaluate and assess their work, or to say who might make such an evaluation. Their performance could, in principle, be evaluated against the terms of reference as stated in the Decree (see para 36), but the review found no evidence that PAs were following this specification of their role anyway. If PAs are affirmed as an integral part of the INSET system and their duties are specified by DPPE in line with the Decree described earlier, their performance should be monitored by the DESB Director.

60 **Recommendation 4:**

PAs should receive annual performance appraisals on:

- Preparing weekly, monthly, semester and annual work plans
- Developing teaching support aids for demonstration in schools
• Advising and mentoring teachers in lesson planning, teaching methods, assessing learning outcomes, and making and using teaching aids
• Linking and fostering collaboration between nearby schools to share best practices

The uncoordinated training that PAs receive from various agencies and NGOs means that there is no overall moderation of its quality or content, and so teachers may receive conflicting and confusing advice. For example, the field trip revealed serious confusion about the requirements for Lesson Planning, with one group of teachers stating that they had been given three different templates to follow, each suggested by different agencies working in the DESB. The PAs were unable to offer advice on which method was preferred because they had not been trained about the current DPPE requirements, or the merits of one plan against another. This example reveals that un-trained PAs can feel confused, restricted and hesitant about the quality of the advice that they can provide to teachers.

Section 4 Building the Capacity of PAs

Section 3 established that there are clear signs that the potential of the Pedagogical Support System to align with INSET strategies and to help improve the quality of student learning outcomes is currently not being fulfilled. It is apparent that there are gaps in the capacity of the pedagogical advisory support system, and this section considers strategies to build capacity to overcome these gaps.

The lack of regular and systematic training programmes to build the capacity of PAs has been highlighted as a major gap in preparing PAs to carry out their work effectively. Newly recruited PAs have not received any formal training at all, and neither have many others who have been in the role for some time. Experienced PAs have not received any ‘refresher’ training since they were originally appointed (in some cases over 10 or more years), except for some instances of short-term training during project implementations.

63 Recommendation 5:

A regular programme of training for PAs should be implemented across the country. This will enable a full complement of PAs to work intensively with teachers to improve the quality of teaching and student learning outcomes. The programme might be extended to build the capacity of key personnel supporting teachers in schools, including School Principals and Senior Teachers.

64 This new and enhanced systematic programme for PAs should be developed at national level but delivered and managed at provincial level. The elements of the proposed training programme for PAs are:
• The content should be based on the perceived needs of teachers and linked to the revised PPE curriculum, and its final form could be determined by a team selected from DPPE, DTE, RIES, TTCs, PAs and outstanding teachers.

• The programme should be run as a cyclical model (also called a ‘sandwich model’) over 15 weeks, with 6 weeks at a training center, followed by 6 weeks in the workplace, and a final 3 weeks at the training center. The competence of participants can be assessed after 15 weeks, and a certificate of accreditation issued.

• The programme can be offered each year during summer break through each of the eight TTCs and possibly in two to four TDCs to give greater coverage across provinces. The teams of trainers will be selected from a pool of accredited trainers established in each PESS. In the early years, there may not be sufficient accredited trainers available to run 10 training programmes simultaneously across the country but the pool of trainers should be built up as soon as possible.

The current INSET needs of teachers are listed in paragraph 26. The PAs interviewed during this review identified the following specific technical support that they believe they need from enhanced training programmes:

• Preparing teaching aids and resources for the classroom.
• Lesson planning, especially for multi-grade classes.
• Assistance with school administrative procedures.
• Monitoring teaching through observation and providing feedback to teachers.
• Peer observation techniques.
• How to teach Lao Language, Mathematics, English and World around Us.

There is remarkable consistency between this list and the list of needs expressed earlier by teachers. It is reassuring that the lists correlate so closely, because PAs are basing their training needs on the requests for pedagogical assistance that they receive from teachers. It would seem to be effective and efficient if PAs were trained in these areas as a matter of urgency so that they can pass on this knowledge to classroom teachers.

Although a process for determining the content and format of a PA training programme was proposed in paragraph 65, there are some core content elements that take into account both teacher and PA needs:

• How to teach Lao Language, Mathematics, English and World around Us – pedagogic content knowledge linked to the PPE curriculum along with Teachers’ Guides for each subject.
• How to monitor teaching and learning and how to use formative data to diagnose learning progress; providing feedback to teachers and students.
• Peer observation techniques, clinical supervision strategies including conferences with teachers to provide feedback.
• Preparing teaching aids and resources for the classroom using low-cost, readily available household materials.
• Lesson planning, especially for multi-grade classes.
• Adult Learning Theory.

68 Each of these course topics could be developed in modular form and accompanied by a training manual that can assist PAs with strategies for when they visit schools. An additional topic might be ‘designing additional modules for training’ so that PA teams will be prepared to design their own learning modules when teachers generate new areas of need.

69 A comprehensive national plan for the training of PAs developed around a series of modules could also contain provisions to allow other key personnel who provide pedagogical support to teachers (such as School Principals or Senior Teachers), to participate when there are vacancies in programmes. Donor-funded projects and NGOs would also welcome the provision of a modular training plan that would allow them to use selected modules for training in a consistent and systematic manner.

70 Recommendation 6:

Establish a National Register of PAs that: records new PAs; documents their initial training; and updates refresher training for experienced PAs. Every PESS office to maintain a sub-register of PAs, which will be used to update the National Register.

71 The review of the INSET system for PPE revealed the absence of any coordinated and systematic provision of up-to-date training for most trainers in the system. Although this review considers strategic planning for PA training, it might also be seen as a set of recommendations for a more general Training of Trainers strategy for MoES. The preparation of a register of accredited trainers that might benefit from such a strategy was contained in Sub-recommendation 1 (f).

Conclusion

72 INSET is a critical component of any education system that is seeking to maintain and improve quality learning outcomes across all levels. The Pedagogical Advisory Support system established in Lao PDR has significant potential to contribute to INSET if, as the ESDP suggests, it is recognized as a key component in the overall system and it receives endorsement and budget support from Central MoES. This paper proposes a strategy whereby the PA Support system might be enhanced so that it can play a key role in rejuvenating INSET in Lao PDR.
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**Annexes**

**Annex 1**

**TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**TASK 1:**
Review the existing pedagogical advisory support system - structure, management and functionality:

- **Pedagogical supervision system:** review the overall pedagogical supervision system including promotion and performance appraisal system (procedures, processes and routines).
- **Structure and management:** review the overall structure and management of pedagogical advisers in Laos. This assignment will review what is the current organizational structure of pedagogical advisers, how is pedagogical adviser governed and managed.
- **Functionality of pedagogical advisers:** Examine how the existing pedagogical mechanism functions in primary schools. This will include how and to what extent district pedagogical advisers implement their duty in order to support teaching and learning process to primary school teachers and directors, how each primary school implement internal pedagogical advisory support practice, how effective the current pedagogical mechanism is functioning.

**OUTPUT 1:** An initial finding report on the present status of pedagogical adviser support system focusing on the current structure, governing and management, and functionality.

**TASK 2:**
Analysis of capacity development for pedagogical advisory support system:
Conducting an analysis of capacity development gap of the existing pedagogical advisory support system, identifying capacity development needs for effective and efficient pedagogical advisory support system.

**OUTPUT 2:** A summary of the capacity gap analysis identifying key existing capacities and what additional capacities are needed to serve as inputs for formulating capacity development approach to address capacity development gaps and further strengthen and optimize existing capacities of pedagogical advisory support system.
Based on the capacity development needs identified, drafting/formulating capacity development approaches as inputs for consultation and dissemination workshop on the findings together with power point presentation of the findings and workshop agenda in Education Sector Working Group (ESWG) Focal Group 1: Basic Education meetings.

**TASK 3:**
Consultation and Dissemination Workshop on findings of the review:
Facilitating a one-day consultation and dissemination workshop on the key findings of the review and the drafting/formulating development approaches for improving pedagogical advisory support system with the relevant stakeholders.

Summarizing comments and feedback from the workshop as inputs for final report.

**OUTPUT 3:** Final report and the proposed capacity development approaches for effective pedagogical advisory support system.
### LIST OF ALL PERSONS CONSULTED

#### PERSONS CONSULTED IN MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SPORTS (MoES)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CENTRAL OFFICE</th>
<th>CENTRAL OFFICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr Mythong Souvanvixay</td>
<td>Director-General, Department of Pre-Primary and Primary Education, MoES, Lao PDR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr Kheun Xayxanavongxay</td>
<td>Deputy Director-General, Department of Pre-Primary and Primary Education, MoES, Lao PDR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Kaygnasone Navamane</td>
<td>Deputy Director-General, Institute of Educational Administration Development (IFEAD) MoES, Lao PDR</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### PERSONS CONSULTED IN MoES PROVINCE and DISTRICT OFFICES

**SARAVAN**

PESS Deputy Director: Mr Boulay Saxavongsaa

DESB Director Samouay: Mr Khamchong Duantauchin

DESB Samouay PA (2 males)

DESB Samouay School Principals (3 males)

DESB Director (TaOy) Mr Dodsavanh Orasa

DESB TaOy PA (4 males) – interviewed in Thalad workshop

DESB TaOy teachers (4 female)

**KHAMMUANE**

PESS Director Mr Siha Keokaythu

PESS Deputy Director Mr Nanthaxay Inphasone

PESS Head Pre-Primary and Primary Unit Mr Duangmala Phommehend

DESB Deputy Director Thakek Mr Intha Desanuphab

DESB Thakek PA (3 – 1 male; 2 females)

DESB Thakek teachers (7 females)

DESB Nongbok Deputy Director Mr Phetsomphou Khotsouvah

DESB Nongbok PA (3 – all males)
**DESB Nongbok teachers (12 – all females)**

**XIENGKHUANG**

- PESS Director Mr Boualee Phannavong
- DESB Director Phaxay Mr Siamphai Boudalathon
- DESB Deputy Director Phaxay Mr Khamphet Thansamai
- DESB Phaxay PA (1 male)
- DESB Phaxay (Kadkhai PS) Principal (male); Teachers (3 – all females)
- DESB Director Phoukout Mr Bounhone Thaboulat
- DESB Phoukout PA (3 – all males)
- DESB Phoukout (Ha Ngom PS) Principal (male), 3 teachers (1 male 2 female)
  
  **Khang Khai TTC – 3 persons (2 males 1 female)**

**PERSONS CONSULTED IN OTHER AGENCIES**

**UNICEF**

- Takaho Fukami Chief of Education, Lao PDR Country Office
- Simon Jan Molendijk Education Specialist, Lao PDR Country Office
- Siamphone Buakhamvongsa Education Specialist, Lao PDR Country Office
- Sengarun Budcharen Education Officer, Lao PDR Country Office
- Myo-Zin Nyunt Deputy Representative, Lao PDR Country Office

**BASIC EDUCATION QUALITY and ACCESS in LAO PDR (BEQUAL) – Australia**

- Peter Deacon Team Leader
- Gary Ovington Education Specialist – Teacher Education
- Mike Lally Education Specialist – Systems Management

**JICA (Japan)**

- Masako Iwashina Chief Adviser, Community Initiative for Educational Development (CIED 2) Project

**SAVE THE CHILDREN – Lao PDR OFFICE**

- Els Heijnen-Maathuis Senior Education Adviser

**PLAN International**

- Jodie Fonseca LEARN Project Director
- Somxay Inthasone ECCD and Education Program Adviser
Decree 5683, dated 22 October 2015
Minister of Education and Sports, concerning PA activities for pre-school and primary education

Chapter 1 General Provision

1. Objectives
This Decree defines the organizational structures, the roles and responsibilities of PA committees for PPE level. It also covers the administration procedures, working principles, job positions and incentives of the PAs. It serves as a legislative document for PA works within PPE level with the aim to improve education quality in the PPE system.

4.2 PESS
Committee composition
- PESS director as chairperson
- PESS deputy director as vice-chairperson
- Head of PPE Unit as member
- Head of Personnel and Organization Unit as member
- Head of Administration Unit as member
- Head of Teacher Development Unit as member
- Education Development Center as member

4.3 DESB
1. General responsible committee
- DESB director as chairperson
- Head of PPE Unit as vice-chairperson
- Head of Personnel and Organization Unit as member
- Head of Administration Unit as member
- Head of Teacher Development Unit as member

2. PA Center for PPE
- Director of the PA Center
- Deputy Director of the PA Center
- PAs

5. Duties
The PA committees at all levels, PA Education Centers and PAs shall assume the following duties:

5.1 National Supervisory Committee
- Supervise and provide advises on PA activities for PPE;

5.3 DESB
The district committees, PA Center and PAs shall assume the following duties:
1. District Committee
- Supervision of PA activities, coordination with sectors concerned so that PAs can perform their duties accordingly;
- Adoption of PA work plans, approval of budgets and facilitation supports for PA activities;
- Follow up, monitor, evaluate and prepare and submit report on PA performance to higher authorities;
- Selection of teachers who meet the criteria and submit the list of proposed PAs to the PESS to consider to be appointed as PAs for PPE;
- Organize annual workshop to review PA activities;
- Make proposal for admiration outstanding performance or for disciplinary measures for misconducts of PAs.

2. PA Center
- Prepare activity and budgets and submit to the DESB for approval;
- Pilot and introduce new ideas/methodologies concerning PA;
- Participate with other sectors to organize teacher training at district level;
- Collect information on teaching-learning performance to plan for improvement;
- Monitor, follow up and supports new teachers in schools;
- Prepare reports on PA performance and submit to DESB.

3. PAs
- Prepare work plans to be implemented on weekly, monthly, semester and annual basis;
- Development of PA supporting aids to be used in schools;
- Provide advice and mentoring supports to the teachers in lesson planning, teaching methods, assessment of learning outcomes, making and using of teaching aids;
- Provide advice and mentoring supports in the field of school administration, coordination with VEDC and participate in meetings with other sectors;
- Perform other duties as assigned by higher authorities.

6.3 DESB
1. District Committee
- Approve of plans and allocate budgets for implementation of PA activities;
- Propose to PESS on the nomination or dismissal of PA positions;
- Propose to PESS on the nomination of the head and deputy head of PA center;
- Propose for admiring for outstanding performance or taking disciplinary actions against misconducts of the PAs;
- Manage and utilize the assets and budgets for implementation of PA activities;
- Perform other duties as assigned by higher authorities.

2. Management Team of PA Center
- Present activity and budget plans to the DESB for approval;
- Propose for admiring for outstanding performance or taking disciplinary actions against misconducts of the PAs;
- Manage and utilize the assets, budgets and facilities for implementation of activities of PA Center in collaboration with DESB;
- Perform other duties as assigned by higher authorities.

3. PAs
- Deserve to be praised and receive incentive supports as defined in relevant policies;
- Manage and utilize available assets, budgets and facilities for implementation of PA activities;
- Deserve the opportunities for training and continuing career development;
- Provide comments to DESB for improvement and development of PA works and other areas;
- Perform other duties as assigned by higher authorities.

4. The PA Center comes under the supervision and management of DESB.

Annex 4
Schedule of Field Visits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/Time</th>
<th>Place and Whom to visit</th>
<th>Activity Details</th>
<th>Objectives and Expected Outputs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 24-29 Jan 16  | Saravane and Khammuane Field Mission | Travel to Saravan (car)  
Traveling Overnight in Saravan | Arrive in Saravane safely |
| Sun 24 Jan 06:30-15:30 | Travel to Saravan (car) | Traveling Overnight in Saravan | Presenting the objective of field mission with PESS Saravan team and interviewing PESS officials on PA  
Presenting the objective of field mission with Ta Oy and Samuay DESB and interviewing DESB officials on PA |
| Mon Jan 25    | Saravane PESS  
Samouay DESB  
Overnight in TaOy | Presenting the objective of field mission with PESS Saravan team and interviewing PESS officials on PA  
Overnight in TaOy  
Meet teachers & PAs | The objective of field mission presented and discussed with Saravane PESS team so that they clearly understand it.  
To gain feedback from PESS & DESB about the strategies used for Professional Development and the role of PAs  
To talk with PAs & teachers about the role of PAs, the strengths & weaknesses, and how PA might be improved |
| Tue Jan 26    | TaOy DESB  
Meet teachers & PAs | Drive to Khammuane  
Overnight in Thakek | As for Saravan (above)  
As for Saravan (above) |
| Wed, Jan 27   | PESS Khammuane  
DESB Thakek  
DESB Nongkok  
Meet teachers and PAs | As for Saravan (above)  
Overnight in Thakek | As for Saravan (above)  
Overnight in Thakek |
| Thu Jan 28    | Khammuane PESS for additional meeting | Additional meeting with PESS Deputy Director | Arrive in VTE; Mission completed for Saravane and Khammuane |
| 08:00-16:00   | Return to Vientiane | | |

4. The PA Center comes under the supervision and management of DESB.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mon Feb 1</td>
<td>07:00-15:00</td>
<td>Travel to Xiengkhuang (car)                                                                rophicalll catting the objective of field mission with PESS Xiengkhuang team and interviewing PESS officials on PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15:00-16:00</td>
<td>Travel to Xiengkhuang PESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tue Feb 2</td>
<td>08:00-16:00</td>
<td>• DESB Pek • DESB Phoukood • Primary School 1 • Primary School 2                                                                                                                                     Presenting the objective of field mission with DESBs Pek and Phoukood • Visit 2 primary schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed Feb 3</td>
<td>08:00-16:00</td>
<td>• DESB Pek • DESB Phoukood • Primary School 1 • Primary School 2                                                                                                                                     Presenting the objective of field mission with DESBs Pek and Phoukood • Visit 2 primary schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thu 4 Feb 16</td>
<td>08:00-14:30</td>
<td>Travel to Vientiane                                                                                                                                                                                                 Arrive in VTE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Annex 5

Reasons for ineffectiveness of PAs compiled during a workshop for Pedagogical Advisers in Thalad, Lao PDR, January 12, 2016

- Time limitation for PA works
- Insufficient budgets
- No activity focus
- Lack of consultation
- No actual practice
- Limitation of self-development
- No high sense of responsibility
- No continuation of PA activities
- Poor explanation / instruction
- Lack of capacity in providing assistance
- PA plans not fully implemented
- Low levels of knowledge and skills
- Insufficient technical support
- Low level of knowledge about textbooks and teachers’ guide
Annex 6

**Cluster-based Professional Development**

The visits to PESS, DESB and schools during the field trip provided some evidence of cluster-based training that was developed under previous projects (ITSME\(^{18}\) TTEST\(^{19}\)) being sustained, mainly because a district manager was sufficiently motivated to keep the initiative going despite the absence of budget support previously enjoyed under ITSME. In general terms, a cluster is formed between several smaller schools situated within a defined geographical area and reasonably close proximity to each other in order to share experiences and maximise any Professional Development (PD) training provided to the cluster. A cluster usually has one lead school within the cluster and a cluster head who manages all collaborative activity.

The terminal evaluation report for ITSME reported that the school cluster mechanism is effective,\(^{20}\) and DESB Thakek in Khammouane province has continued with the strategy, with six groups of three schools grouped together according to geographic location. Each of the three schools in each group focuses on different subjects in each half-day session held three times every semester (for example, Lao Language for Grade 1; Mathematics for Grade 3; World Around Us for Grade 4 might be covered in one half-day session). The teachers rotate between schools (according to grade level and subject being covered) and the three PAs visit in a team and provide additional support. Costs are shared across the three schools in each group using school block grant allocation, and it is internally managed from within the cluster, although the DESB has overall co-ordination so that the PAs can be deployed effectively. It was suggested that most teachers are well-motivated by the cluster strategy because they feel they are getting effective PD according to their needs, and without this strategy they feel they would not receive any PD at all. The system works well between urban schools where distances between cluster schools are small and access between them is easy, but it is much less successful for remote, rural schools. Instead, PAs from Thakek visit these more remote schools individually to provide PD support.

In Xiengkhuang province, PD through the cluster training strategy was provided by UNICEF between 2003 and 2006 and the arrangement is persisting in DESB Nongkok, with a cluster of nine schools currently working together to support each other with English language training for Grades 3 to 5. The cluster functions with no PA support and 5,000 kip is gathered from each class to cover incidentals like water and small snacks during the half-day training. It is noteworthy that this strategy is being applied for one subject only in the PPE curriculum, and there is little or no PD for the other subjects.

\(^{18}\) ITSME (2010 – 2014) In-Service Teacher Training in Science and Mathematics Education, supported by JICA in 8 Districts in 3 Provinces (Khammuane, Savannakhet and Champassack)

\(^{19}\) Teacher Training Enhancement and Status of Teachers Project

\(^{20}\) ITSME Terminal evaluation; JICA, 2013