

Policy for Open and Distance Learning



...A Picture of Success

Ministry of Education
Republic of Vanuatu
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Purpose

The purpose of this memorandum is to set out the general policies of the Ministry of Education as they relate to Open and Distance Learning (ODL) within the Republic of Vanuatu.¹

Vision

Open and Distance Learning will provide opportunity for ni-Vanuatu people to better prepare themselves for entry and re-entry into the structured education system or continue life-long learning at their own place and time.

Rationale

The Ministry of Education (MoE) clearly states that distance learning will be a primary strategy for increasing access to formal and non-formal education opportunities in Vanuatu. The MoE Education Master Plan (1998), Education for All (EFA) Action Plan for Vanuatu (2004), and the MoE Corporate Plan 2004 to 2006, support and mandate a distance learning policy and strategy for new learners, "second chance" learning for school leavers, and continuing education to support life-long learning. Furthermore, the Ministry recognizes distance education as an effective means of equitable access to education for those who are geographically or physically disadvantaged and those adults who wish to pursue education to improve their lives. Therefore, given current policy directives, the MoE will setup a programme and system to deliver ODL throughout Vanuatu.

The ODL policy initiative is an opportunity for ni-Vanuatu to engage in a conversation on issues concerning learning and education. The MoE wishes this conversation to illuminate the needs of education throughout the country so it can better respond to provide relevant and realistic opportunities for ni-Vanuatu.

Challenges

Many challenges will face planners as the ODL Policy is implemented in Vanuatu and these should be brought to bear as foci of dialog and discourse in conversations concerning ODL, its development, management, and resourcing. Some of these challenges are:

- Ministry-wide acceptance of ODL as a legitimate mode of learning.
- Awareness-raising such that the vision of the MoE translates into valued practices at the local level.
- Sustaining an active willingness of the local community to engage and participate in local ODL efforts.
- Identifying an appropriate and cost effective ICT system to best meet the needs of Vanuatu.
- Sustaining a donor-funded project beyond the term of the assistance.
- Engaging the local community to participate in the ODL initiative.
- Developing incentive schemes for participants and stakeholders to take ownership of the system.
- Provide trained human resources to support capacity development locally, provincially, and nationally.
- Establishing workable and responsive technical assistance mechanism to ensure ODL system is nurtured and remains operational.

¹ See Annex 1: Definitions

Policy

Goal 1: Provide for new, continual, and “second chance” learning opportunities for formal and non-formal education through an ODL system.

Objective 1.1: Develop effective support and monitoring system coordinated by the MoE.

- 1.1.1. The MoE will establish an ODL Unit to coordinate and manage ODL programmes in Vanuatu.
- 1.1.2. The MoE will develop and assist the implementation of an ODL plan and system.
- 1.1.3. The MoE will work closely with the National Education Council (NEC) and the Vanuatu National Training Council (VNTC) to accredit ODL course offerings or programmes when appropriate.
- 1.1.4. The MoE will identify ODL priorities and plan pilot programmes based on these priorities, with the intention of scaling the developed system to all provinces of the country. All interventions will include human resource development, a monitoring and evaluation plan and a sustainability plan.
- 1.1.5. The MoE will integrate ODL into the formal education system as the ODL infrastructure and institutional capacity evolve.
- 1.1.6. On its part the MoE, lead by the ODL Unit, will continue to seek additional funding and in-kind donations from foreign agencies and donors apart from the normal government budget.
- 1.1.7. Existing teachers in schools will be used after normal school hours, and existing school facilities, Rural Training Centres, Youth Drop-in Centres and other existing facilities may be used as ODL centres after consultation with appropriate authorities.
- 1.1.8. Parents, who value ODL for their children, and adults, will be charged fees which in turn shall be used to meet related costs. Whenever possible, ODL opportunities will be supported by external funding to defray costs of users.

Objective 1.2: Engage in meaningful stakeholder partnerships and collaboration to support the vision and goals of the policy.

- 1.2.1. The MoE will work closely with current and future providers of formal and non-formal education opportunities to ensure harmony among all education stakeholders on activities as they relate to ODL.
- 1.2.2. The MoE will collaborate with other ministries, agencies, institutions, organizations, community members, and other stakeholders in order to more efficiently coordinate, resource and implement the ODL plan.
- 1.2.3. The ODL Unit will have an overarching responsibility of coordinating MoE departments and liaising with other ministries and stakeholders to carryout the provisions of the ODL policy.
- 1.2.4. The Ministry of Youth Development and Training (MYDT) will designate an ODL Officer to engage with the MoE in ODL administrative and programmatic activities.

- 1.2.5. A Nation ODL Steering Committee will be established through the ODL Unit that consists of relevant ODL stakeholders for the purpose of identifying, prioritizing, and administering ODL initiatives.
- 1.2.6. Each provincial education office will assign ODL duties to existing staff, or designate a new Provincial ODL Officer when appropriate, to direct and coordinate all provincial and local activities related to ODL. This officer will work closely with the Provincial Education Officer and the Provincial Education Board to articulate and promote ODL programmes.
- 1.2.7. As technical facilities are installed, the Provincial ODL Officer will collaborate with the MoE and liaise with other stakeholders to identify and appoint a local ODL steering committee that will undertake the responsibility of administering all ODL activities associated with the ODL facility.
- 1.2.8. The MoE will work with existing ODL providers, such as USP, other regional tertiary institutions and international programmes to provide accredited foundation, regular education, and “second chance” course offerings for students wishing to advance their knowledge and skills, or re-enter the structured education system. The MoE will work closely with the National Education Commission and the Vanuatu National Training Council on issues of accreditation.
- 1.2.9. The MoE will actively pursue public and private partnerships with the intent to leverage support for ongoing strategies and operations of the ODL system.
- 1.2.10. Local ODL Steering Committees will assist in developing funding strategies, and the policy will allow for approaching donors and funding agencies independently to help sustain local ODL facilities and human resources.

Objective 1.3: Develop a phased-in system of electronic communication in all provinces of the archipelago to support ODL.

- 1.3.1. The MoE will seek, and if appropriate, apply regional and global best practices for electronic communications as they relate to ODL to ensure lessons learnt underpin strategies for implementation.
- 1.3.2. The MoE will investigate and trial an EMIS data collection mechanism supported by the ODL system.

Goal 2: Develop and implement ODL programmes based on the needs of the local community.

Objective 2.1: Raise awareness among ni-Vanuatu concerning ODL and its opportunities.

- 2.1.1. The MoE will facilitate awareness and training within the ministry and among school teachers and staff as they relate to ODL.
- 2.1.2. The MoE ODL Unit will be primarily concerned with developing ODL strategies, plans, and programmes to support non-formal education opportunities for community-based needs in Vanuatu. The ODL Unit will liaise with the MYDT and other organizations and agencies to ensure synergies among programmes and optimization of resources.
- 2.1.3. A bottom-up approach to ODL training, curriculum, and local capacity development will serve to meet the needs of the local context.

Objective 2.2: Ensure language use is in harmony with local needs.

- 2.2.1. The ODL system will be structured to have language flexibility, providing opportunities for all citizens of Vanuatu regardless of their spoken or literate language.
- 2.2.2. Language of delivery, whether spoken or written, will be chosen by the local community. The ODL system will make every effort to accommodate language needs, anticipating a multi-lingual development of resources, materials and procedures.

Objective 2.3: Identify regional and global best practices for creating greater information access in remote communities.

- 2.3.1. The MoE will seek, and if appropriate, apply regional and global best practices for ODL in remote communities to ensure lessons learnt underpin strategies for implementation.
- 2.3.2. The MoE will enter and cooperate with any regional and international initiatives supporting free and open learning content that may have relevance to the local needs of Vanuatu.

Objective 2.4: Ensure gender and special-needs equity in the ODL system.

- 2.4.1. The ODL system will be structured to have gender and special-needs equity, providing opportunities for all citizens of Vanuatu regardless of their gender or physical disabilities.

Strategies

- Strategy 1: An essential component of the ODL system will be a grassroots awareness-raising campaign to help educate local populations on the community value and learning opportunities facilitated through an ODL network.
- Strategy 2: Community and parents will play the most significant role to ensure use of ODL provisions for learning of their children, and of adults themselves. Therefore, adults in the community will be a primary target of awareness-raising.
- Strategy 3: The local ODL community will work closely with the MoE and Provincial ODL Officer to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that will determine the mandate associated with the structure and administration of the local ODL facility.
- Strategy 4: In order to optimize resources and build awareness at the MoE, the ODL Unit will investigate similar regional ODL projects and systems that have a close relevance to the geographic and demographic situation in Vanuatu.
- Strategy 5: The MoE views ODL as a dynamic approach to supporting local efforts to identify needs to improve their livelihoods. To facilitate identifying local needs and establishing a plan to meet those needs, the MoE envisions locally based ODL steering committees as the primary decision making body for ODL in their area. The local steering committee will comprise appropriate community leaders and stakeholders identified through consensus in the community.
- Strategy 6: Volunteers will be a primary human resource for supporting ODL locally. Retired citizens, such as teachers, doctors, government workers, and others will be targeted as important human resource components for supporting local efforts. Aid and donor volunteer organizations, such as Peace Corps, are important human resources for tasks such as awareness raising, training, capacity development, language harmonization and on-the ground coordination, and their participation will be sought.
- Strategy 7: All ODL initiatives will include a data gathering component to help the MoE monitor and evaluate programmes for a more responsive system as needs change. Every effort will be made to integrate impact assessment frameworks to ensure that current offerings are meeting the needs locally.
- Strategy 8: The MoE will actively engage in regional partnerships with other Pacific MoEs and institutions for sharing of best practices, educational resources, and promote human resource exchanges to help create a regional network of ODL stakeholders.

Responsibility

Ministry of Education and Ministry of Youth Development and Training

A range of Ministry of Education and Ministry of Youth Development and Training (MYDT) activities supports the ODL Policy. The two ministries will work together under coordination of the MoE ODL officer to identify and coordinate tasks through the Office of the Director General. The MoE will assign, according to its priorities and plans, personnel and resources to conduct the following:

- Review and monitor ODL policies and programmes.
- Develop ODL strategic plan, project proposal and costings.
- Promote ODL as a means of life-long learning.
- Liaise with local communities to best provide for language and other socio-cultural considerations.
- Continued development and implementation of educational broadcasting strategic plans and policies.
- Delivery and development of educational programmes through an ODL framework and network.
- Set up a process to evaluate impact and review ODL programmes and activities.
- Coordinate and liaise with other sub-sectors of the MoE regarding educational programmes and their delivery to children, youth, and adults.
- Prepare project proposals to seek donor assistance in the development of an ODL system.
- Develop a phase-in sustainability plan to mitigate financial and human resource challenges as donor funds expire.
- Assist in the development of provincial and school support services to students.
- Maintain and develop links with and between local and international ODL institutions and agencies.
- Assist community in capacity building for training.
- Ensure membership of Vanuatu in International ODL agencies and organizations.
- Conduct, coordinate and compile research and studies of ODL
- Establish and sustain an accessible resource centre for ODL in Vanuatu.
- Take the lead in raising awareness ODL among other government ministries, agencies, and stakeholders.
- Advise and assist students on courses and programmes available through ODL from basic, secondary, post-secondary, tertiary institutions.
- Provide teachers, other staff and community people with training and professional development.
- Work towards accessibility of satellite to achieve better delivery of ODL.
- Provide advice to other ODL providers as to the type of system, computers, software, and programmes to be used.
- Develop an incentives scheme to help build capacity both internal and external to the MoE.

Community

- Appoint a steering committee to over see issues related to ODL and empower the community to participate and take ownership of local ODL opportunities in their community
- Develop local vision and strategic plan for ODL in their community.
- Identify preferred language of local ODL operation.
- Identify important stakeholders and key persons motivated to participant in the ODL initiative.
- Work with the MoE to identify and recruit appropriate volunteers to support the ODL system.
- Develop a local incentives scheme to garner interest and participation in the ODL system.

Annex 1: Definitions

Distance Learning

Education that is provided through means of communication and other sources to ensure learning is equitably available for access by all members of the society.

Open Learning

A learning mode where people of all ages and gender are given the opportunity to learn at their own place and time.

Second Chance

A second opportunity given to those pupils who for various reasons could not continue after Year 8 through Year 14. It is intended to keep young people in school until they are over 18 years old.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Any technology that facilitates electronic transmission of information including telephone, mobile phone, radio, audio tape, television, video tape, digital video disk (DVD), CD-ROM, computer, the Internet, or other related media that transmits information.