

SCALING TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN VIETNAM

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ABOUT THE LEARNING CYCLE ON TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AT SCALE (TPD@SCALE)

This case study is a result of the KIX EMAP Learning Cycle “Teacher Professional Development at Scale (TPD@Scale)”. Facilitated by the TPD@Scale Coalition for the Global South, through the Foundation for Information Technology Education and Development, Inc. (FIT-ED), this course ran from 23 September until 16 December 2022. Across 11 weeks, this Learning Cycle enabled participants to examine how Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)-mediated Teacher Professional Development (TPD) programmes can be scaled through adaptation/localization for a large number of teachers to improve students’ learning outcomes. 13 national teams took part in this Learning Cycle: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Georgia, Kyrgyz Republic, Maldives, Moldova, Mongolia, Nepal, Sudan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Vietnam and Yemen.



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Ms Dang Tuyet Anh is the current Program Manager of the Peace Corps' English Education Program. She graduated from Pyatigorsk State Linguistics University, Russia in 1996 and received her master's degree in Educational Leadership and Management from the University of Leicester, UK in 2008. Anh has over 22 years of experience working in education, including 9 years as an English teacher and over 13 years in management positions in education development projects with partners at different levels, such as the Ministry of Education and Training, leading universities in Vietnam, Provincial Departments of Education and Training, District Bureaus of Education and Trainings, and schools in disadvantaged areas, all focusing on capacity building and especially teacher professional development. She has a sound understanding of the Vietnamese education system, from general to higher education. Anh is committed to inclusive and equitable quality education for all.

Nguyen Ngoc Anh is a research fellow at the Center for Higher Education Studies of the Viet Nam National Institute of Educational Sciences (VNIES). Anh has extensive expertise in the field of teacher training in Vietnam. Her areas of interest include educational policies and practices, digital transformation in education, teacher education and professional development, learning assessment and creativity education. Anh has led a range of international projects and has been awarded international grants to conduct her studies on technology transforming education, teacher professional learning and global citizenship education.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BOET	[District] Bureau of Education and Training
CG	Career guidance
COP	Community of practice
DOET	[Provincial] Department of Education and Training
DTEA	Department of Teachers and Educational Administrators
ICT	Information and communications technology
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
OER	Open educational resources
TPD	Teacher professional development
VUCA	Volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity

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In developing our report, we also referred to the report on “Support of development partners to the implementation of the post 2020 ECE curriculum” jointly developed by Plan International Vietnam, ChildFund Vietnam, Aide et Action, UNESCO and VVOB Vietnam.

We would also like to express our appreciation and thanks to Hường nghiệp Sông An, a social enterprise working on career guidance for their initiative to gather lesson plans on career guidance from participants in their Career Guidance Education courses. This initiative inspired us to upscale the use of open education resources in career guidance lesson plans.

Last but not least, we would like to thank Dr Nguyen Thi Huong from the Department of Teachers and Educational Administrators (Ministry of Education and Training), who initially connected the Vietnam team with KIX EAP to join the course.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Vietnam introduced a new education curriculum in 2018 that focuses on enhancing students' capabilities through experiential activities and career guidance, rather than the provision of knowledge. In the last few years, the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) has worked to enhance the capacity of teachers and management staff to meet the requirements of this new curriculum; in fact, all general education teachers have been required to participate in trainings on the curriculum and related textbooks since the 2020–2021 school year.

Challenges and Solutions

Despite these efforts, there have been a few challenges in teacher professional development (TPD) programmes in Vietnam, including (i) lack of teacher motivation to participate due to lack of agency in selecting TPD content that meets teachers' needs, (ii) impractical or off-topic content, (iii) insufficient training time, (iv) lack of post-training follow-up, (v) lack of an enabling environment, (vi) lack of reflection/monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and (vii) insufficient focus on equity, wherein TPD programmes are not differentiated according to teachers' needs or individual work contexts.

To remediate these challenges, we propose to focus on three main areas: (i) enabling the learning environment by supporting teachers with a formal support system, capacity building and a community of practice (COP); (ii) providing high-quality resources and trained school leaders for support; and (iii) delivering cascaded and blended trainings that meet teachers' needs, with opportunities for reflection.

TPD Scaling Project Proposal

The project proposed in this report, entitled "Enhancing capacity in the implementation of educational activity: Experiential activities and career guidance for upper secondary school teachers in Quang Nam province", aims to improve capacity in experiential activities and career guidance for the approximately 2000 teachers in charge of these subjects from 49 upper secondary schools in Vietnam's Quang Nam province. A select group of teachers will pilot lessons in experiential activities and career guidance using open educational resource (OER) lesson plans developed by the project partners. Lesson delivery will be followed by reflection sessions with the support of a core group of five mentors.

Initially, there will be a baseline survey to assess the teachers' knowledge gaps. There will also be a yearly workshop to assess applicable TPD methods. After Year 2, there will be a strategy evaluation and assessment of the OER materials through surveys, workshops and focus group discussions. After Year 3, there will be an external evaluation to advise on OER usefulness and scaling strategy.

This project will involve three project partners: the Vietnamese Department of Teachers and Educational Administrators (DTEA/MOET), the Quang Nam Provincial Department of Education and Training (DOET) and the Sông An Career Guidance Enterprise. The estimated cost of this project is US\$285,000.

PART 1

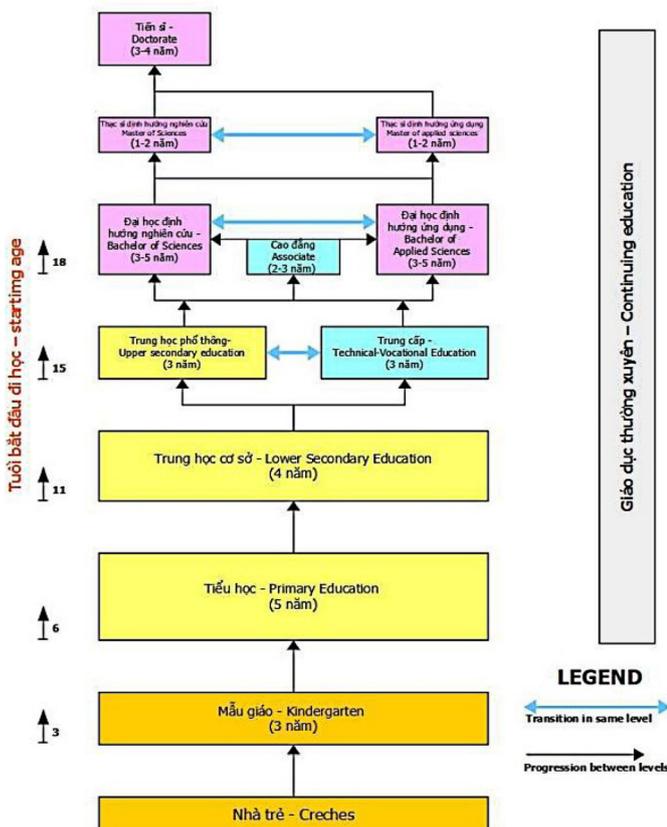
POLICY BRIEF

Context and Background

1. Vietnam's education system

Vietnam's education system is divided into five levels: early education; primary education; lower secondary education (secondary schools); upper secondary education (high schools), which together with lower secondary education forms the general secondary education level; and tertiary education (colleges and universities). Formal education consists of 12 years of school (5 years of primary education, 4 years of lower secondary education and 3 years of upper secondary education). Vietnam achieved universal primary education in 2014 and universalization of preschool education for 5-year-old children in 2017 (MOET, 2017a, 2017b).

Figure 1. The structure of Vietnam's education system



Source: The Government of Viet Nam (2016a)

2. Teacher policy

Vietnam's 2019 Education Law makes the following stipulations regarding teacher qualifications:

- a) Teachers of preschool education teachers must possess at least a pedagogical college diploma;
- b) Teachers of primary education, lower secondary education and upper secondary education must possess at least a bachelor's degree in pedagogy training.

In case a subject is yet to acquire enough teachers with a bachelor's degree in pedagogy training, teachers of this subject must possess a bachelor's degree of suitable specialization and a certificate of pedagogy training."

Table 1 summarises the number of teachers in Vietnam.

Table 1. The number of teachers in Vietnam

	2019–2020	2020–2021	2021–2022
Early Education			
Pre-school teachers	326,332		
General Education			
Primary teachers	377,900	384,700	382,500
Lower secondary school teachers	284,100	286,700	285,300
High school teachers	142,500	145,300	145,400
Total (General Education)	804,500	816,700	813,200

Source: MOET (2022)

3. Description of the TPD system and practices – Pre-service, induction and in-service TPD

Pre-service/Teacher training

As required by Vietnam's 2019 Education Law, teachers need to follow pre-service education for at least two years (college diploma) to teach at the preschool level and for at least four years to teach at the primary, lower secondary and upper secondary levels (bachelor's degree; The National Assembly of Vietnam, 2019).

Induction

Teachers must have an induction period when beginning their careers at schools. The induction time is stipulated by Decree 115/2020/NĐ-CP as 12 months for those with a bachelor's degree and nine months for those with a college diploma (The Government of Viet Nam, 2020).

In-service training

As required by MOET guidelines Circular 12/2019/TT-BGDĐT and Circular 17/2019/TT-BGDĐT (MOET, 2019a, 2019b), every year teachers need to follow 120 hours of in-service training, which includes 40 hours of instruction with the content/modules designed by MOET and the Ministry of Internal Affairs; 40 hours of formal training on professional skills organised yearly by the Bureau of Education and Training (BOET), DOET or MOET; and 40 hours updating themselves on new policies and guidelines organised by DOET/BOET.

In addition, teachers need to participate in professional meetings that take place at their schools every two weeks, as stipulated in Circular 32/2020/TT-BGDĐT (MOET, 2020). There are also teacher professional meetings organised by BOET for clusters of 3–4 schools.

In the last few years, MOET has emphasised the enhancement of teachers and management staff's capacity to meet the requirements of the new curriculum. Since academic year 2020–2021, all general education teachers take turns participating in different trainings on the application of the curriculum and related textbooks through the project "Training and fostering teachers and administrators of educational institutions to meet the requirements of fundamental and comprehensive renovation of general education in the 2016–2020 period, defining towards 2025" (The Government of Viet Nam, 2016b). Regarding early education, there is an additional project "Training and fostering teachers and preschool education administrators for the period 2018 – 2025" to improve pre-school teachers' capacity (The Government of Viet Nam, 2019).

Existing Issues and Challenges in TPD

Despite several efforts, there is much criticism of the ineffectiveness of TPD in Vietnam. These issues and challenges include:

Lack of teacher intrinsic motivation: Decisions on the TPD content of cascade trainings¹ are centrally made for implementation in the whole Vietnamese education system. Parts of this content disseminate policy information, while

others concern professional requirements and often teaching methodologies or school/classroom management. This top-down approach does not allow teachers a voice. In cases of TPD at the provincial and district levels, teachers' opinions are collected as a formality rather than as an integral part of the content's development. Teachers are not well-aware of their rights either, and in many cases school leaders present these rights just to tick a box. All this leads to teachers almost not participating in the decision-making process of their own training content. Therefore, they lack intrinsic motivation.

Impractical or unattractive content: The TPD content is usually quite theoretical as well. Often there is a lack of classroom practices for teachers to reflect on, whether at the pre-school, primary or secondary level. Therefore, it is challenging for individual teachers to adapt the content to their specific contexts.

Irrelevant length of time and delivery: The content's training time is fairly short but is further shortened once it reaches lower levels of the education system (e.g. from MOET to DOET, BOET and schools). Thus, a significant portion of the content is lost by the time it reaches teachers at schools, leading to misunderstandings of even key concepts at different levels. In addition, trainer quality is another problem. Trainers at the MOET level have the best knowledge and facilitation skills, while those at lower levels often give less satisfying training.

Lack of post-training follow-ups: Support in application after the training is also very limited. The system currently lacks the human resources and time to coach and support teachers in the transfer of knowledge into practice.

Lack of an enabling environment: Teachers are hesitant to try new initiatives, partly because of their weak capacity and lack of confidence, and partly because of the lack of an enabling environment. This is due to pressure from school leaders and core teachers for high levels of work, facilitation skills and expertise, as they are responsible for ensuring these qualities at their schools. Accordingly, the current TPD activities at schools and within districts (e.g. professional teacher meetings, teaching competitions, class observations, etc.) or school-based TPD do not yield the desired results.

Lack of reflection and proper M&E: At each level, the whole TPD system shows a lack of reflection on its own effectiveness. M&E often takes the form of reporting, but it mainly reflects the number of participants rather than aspects of the application itself. School leaders and BOET officers combine inspection and supporting responsibilities, but this combination of tasks is challenging and not conducive to creating a safe and enabling environment where teachers feel free to try new things, make mistakes, innovate and learn.

¹ Cascade training: At the central level they will train core trainers e.g., from university, institute, provincial managers and teachers – key personnel selected by the provincial department of education and training. After a training course, these core trainers will duplicate the training at their provinces. Duration depends on the budget of the province. It usually happens during summer, called: summer in-service professional development.

Insufficient focus on equity: Current TPD policies do not sufficiently address equity. The requirements are the same for teachers from different areas in different contexts, and the support they receive has not been modified for best effectiveness.

In summary, all aspects of TPD – equity, quality and effectiveness – have not been achieved to the desired extent.

Proposed Solutions and Policies

The above-mentioned issues and challenges need to be solved to improve the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of TPD in Vietnam, all while taking into account equity and sustainability, especially with Vietnam's formal introduction of the new curriculum for general education in the 2020–2021 school year. The following recommendations can help tackle these issues:

Environment:

- Ensure that the learning environment enables teachers to be ready to apply and reflect on their own practices and share with others. This can be done through step-by-step capacity building for teachers as well as DOET/BOET and school leaders.
- Create a formal support system and resources to support teachers during their application process.
- Form a collective learning environment (e.g. COP) among teachers between provinces, districts and schools, and/or within schools.

Resources:

- Give special attention to improve both the knowledge and skill facilitation of school leaders and core teachers so that they can support teachers with the implementation of new approaches and initiatives.
- Provide a quality open resource for teachers' reference.

Delivery approach:

- Accompany national cascade trainings with guidance on how to integrate the same content into the school-based TPD, and include reflection as a requirement.
- Promote blended TPD to ensure accessibility and the exchange of different groups of teachers, as well as to ensure timely guidance from experts and policymakers on the implementation of the new programme.
- Develop a delivery approach and accompanying materials that take into account the access of different groups of teachers.
- Develop serious training content, with a strong consideration of teachers' needs.

- Separate M&E from inspection to create an enabling environment.

Reference model:

- The Teacher Education through School-based Support in India (TESS-India) OER model can help address the aforementioned issues (i.e. lack of reflection, follow-up and support, insufficient attention to equity and impractical content).

Prioritised Area when Scaling TPD

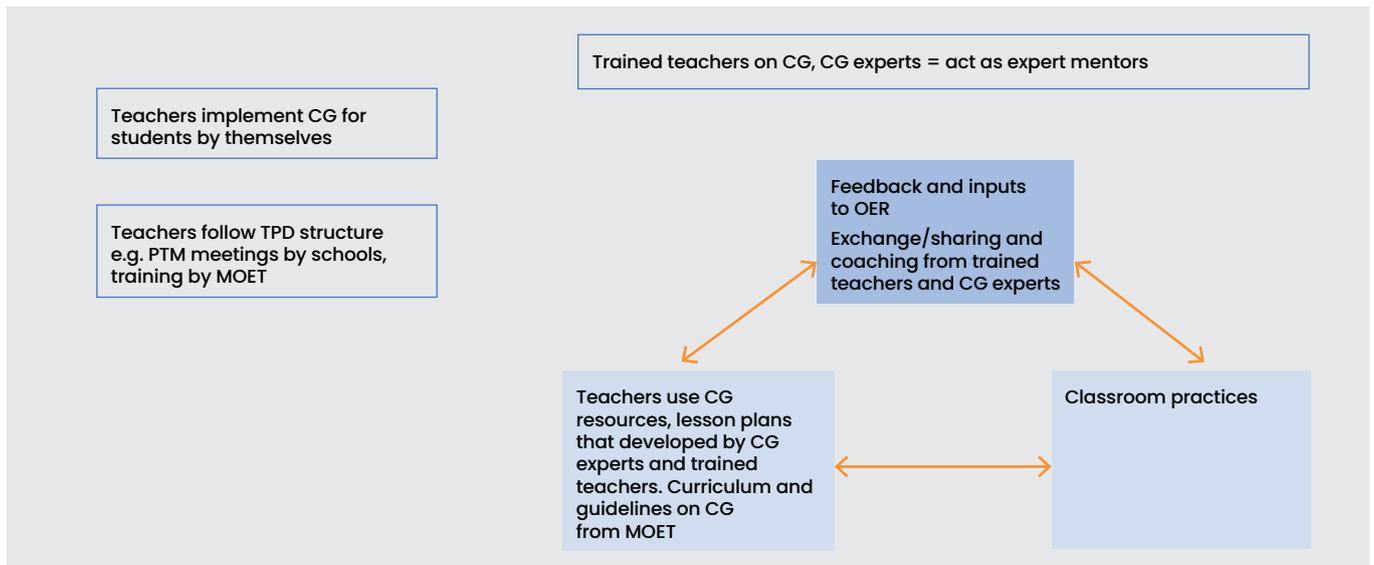
Compared to the 2006 curriculum, Vietnam's 2018 curriculum is new in its approach, contents and requirements. Considering the scope and the group's capacity, in this paper we **focus on capacity building in experiential activities and career guidance for school leaders and teachers at high schools.**

In the 2006 curriculum, career guidance was included in extracurricular activities and pre-service education did not provide training on the subject. Therefore, teachers lacked the knowledge and skills to deliver career guidance, especially those working in remote areas where they did not have many opportunities for learning. In contrast, in the new curriculum experiential activities and career guidance are compulsory. In the context of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity (VUCA), young people need to prepare for their career paths while they are at school, with the earlier the better. Teachers are therefore the foremost individuals who can and should help these students.

Currently, there are different social enterprises for working in career guidance and providing quality training for career guidance specialists at schools and universities. There is also a group of teachers who are willing to produce lesson plans on how to deliver experiential and career guidance lessons and activities, which we want to make use of for scaling. Example steps to reach this goal are:

- Forming groups of teachers in several high schools in different areas (e.g. provincial, urban, rural and mountainous areas) to try out these lesson plans in their classes.
- Allowing teachers time to reflect to improve their instruction.
- Using information and communications technology (ICT) to spread these classroom practices for teachers in different regions of the country to refer to and adapt.
- Having existing career guidance specialists and experts mentor and support teachers as the latter adapt the lesson plans to their classrooms.
- Documenting lessons learned on TPD@scale to advocate at the national level (MOET), as well as experiential and career guidance itself.

Figure 2. Proposed TPD@Scale model OER for career guidance (CG)



Note: This model requires discussion with a social enterprise that organises courses for career guidance experts and runs networks of experts.

PART 2

PROPOSAL

ENHANCING CAPACITY IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY: EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVITIES AND CAREER GUIDANCE FOR UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN QUANG NAM PROVINCE

Project Overview

1. Project particulars

Project title

Enhancing capacity in the implementation of educational activity: Experiential activities and career guidance for upper secondary school teachers in Quang Nam province

Context

Vietnam introduced a new education curriculum in 2018 which emphasises the development of students' capabilities rather than knowledge provision, thereby differing from the previous 2006 curriculum in its approach, contents and requirements. As part of this new curriculum, educational activity on experiential and career guidance is now compulsory. During these periods, teachers (usually form teachers) will guide students to explore themselves, world of jobs and training systems and plan for their future careers.

In the 2006 curriculum, career guidance was included in extracurricular activities while pre-service training did not provide content on this subject. As a result, teachers have insufficient knowledge and skills to deliver this subject, especially those working in remote areas, where there are not many opportunities for self-learning. In the new curriculum, one big change is thus the compulsory nature of experiential activities and career guidance, with the vision to prepare young people earlier and more effectively for their future career pathways.

Quang Nam is a disadvantaged mountainous province in the central region of Vietnam. There are 49 upper secondary schools (Day Hoc Tot, n.d.) with approximately 2,000 teachers and 30,135 students. Like upper secondary school teachers elsewhere, teachers in Quang Nam struggle with how to effectively deliver lessons on experiential activities and career

guidance to students.

Currently there is no clear-cut plan indicating which teachers are responsible for implementing experiential activities and career guidance. Rather, this depends on the provinces, cities and school themselves, which can either bring form teachers together with school youth union representatives or psychological group members, or teachers with less teaching time (e.g. teachers of technology and citizen subjects). These teachers face difficulties in delivering experiential activities and career guidance, as they do not have systematic guidance from experts, despite lacking the appropriate knowledge and skills.

Target participants

The target participants of this project are form teachers and teachers of the technology subject who are also in charge of experiential learning and career guidance from the 49 upper secondary schools in Quang Nam, as well as Department of Education and Training (DOET) staff responsible for the subject.

Project duration

3 years: 2023–2025

Estimated project cost

285,000 USD

2. Project Group Members and Partners

Project partners:

- **Department of Teachers and Educational Administrators (DTEA/MOET):** to be involved in the discussion of strategy and research on how applicable the TPD@scale methods are for experiential and career guidance.

- **Quang Nam Provincial DOET:** to be involved in administrative procedures, discussions and evaluations of TPD@scale strategy, evaluation and effectiveness in using the developed lesson plans to teach students.
- **Sông An Career Guidance Enterprise:** to jointly lead the implementation of project activities, which includes collaborating to develop OER for the lesson plans, review and contribute to the finalisation of the strategy to implement experiential activities and career guidance for upper secondary schools.

These partners will offer support from different perspectives depending on their functions.

Project group members:

- Participants of the TPD@scale courses and career guidance experts, including trained teachers previously working at Sông An Career Guidance Enterprise. The Sông An Career Guidance Enterprise staff is also involving in coordinating the expert group to provide technical input to the teachers. These are core people who will coordinate, manage and hold responsibility over the project's implementation.

3. Project Summary

This proposed project aims to improve the capacity for experiential activities and career guidance for the approximately 2,000 teachers in charge of this subject from 49 upper secondary schools in Vietnam's Quang Nam province through scaling up and collaborative learning. Teachers will have their capacity grown step by step. Namely, a select group of teachers will **pilot the delivery of lessons** in experiential activities and career guidance using pre-developed lesson plans, followed by **reflection sessions** with the support of mentors. The OER will include but not be limited to lesson plans, videos of lessons and videos on basic career guidance knowledge for further scaling up and multiplication. By the end of the third year of the proposed project, 100% of the involved teachers are expected to complete this professional development trajectory. The expected impact is higher levels of confidence about career guidance among the students at the 49 upper secondary schools in Quang Nam upon graduation. The results of this project are expected to be upscaled to MOET for further dissemination nationwide.

Project Description

1. Objectives and deliverables

General objective:

The TPD@scale strategy for experiential activities, career guidance and lesson plans is intended to contribute to the successful implementation of Vietnam's new 2018 curriculum.

Specific objective:

In total, 100% of the teachers in charge of experiential activities and career guidance from upper secondary schools in Quang Nam will have enhanced capacity to deliver these topics.

2. Approach, framework and strategies

1. Establish groups of expert mentors (5 core experts and other collaborators).
2. Conduct a baseline study to determine teacher knowledge gaps and learning conditions.
3. Hold a triggering workshop with all partners to kick off the project and agree on roles and project strategy.
4. Hold introduction workshops for the target groups (teachers), including school management boards.
5. Teachers will self-study, then apply the delivery of lesson plans and provide feedback on the OER system.
6. Hold reflection workshops for teachers with the expert mentors on ways of working, showing videos of the lessons.
7. Year 1: small; Year 2: double; Year 3: the whole province.
8. Research the project's applicability.

3. Proposed partner agencies and organizations and their roles to achieve the intended impacts:

(See Part 2, Project Overview, 2. Project Group Members and Partners)

4. Evaluation plan and methods:

- **Yearly workshops** to assess the applicability of the TPD methods and TPD@scale strategy.
- **Year 2:** Evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy and reflect on the OER's usefulness in terms of its content and modality through surveys, workshops and focus group discussions.
- **Year 3:** Evaluations by the DTEA and DOET with the aid of an external consultant to help determine how they should guide DOETs/schools to make use of the OER and TPD@scale strategy.

5. Project time scale:

This project is planned to take place over three years, organised as follows.

- **Year 1, first 6 months:** procedures and set up the project's implementation.
- **Year 1, last 6 months:** agree on a plan and the roles of different stakeholders, hold triggering workshop, design the OER and guide teachers on how to access it and give feedback.

- **Year 2:** teacher application of lesson plans from the OER according to the grade 10 school year schedule in three areas of the province (low, middle and upland)
- **Year 2:** Expert group visits some schools, enacts online mentoring and gathers teacher feedback to bring to the yearly workshop to fine tune the lesson plans, as well as draw on experiences of how to support teachers. These experiences will be gathered to finalise the strategy for TPD@scale in Year 3.
- **Year 3:** Application of the improved lesson plans for grade 10 in all 49 schools. The lesson plans for grade 11 will be developed by the expert group and select teachers from Year 2 in parallel over the school year. They will be applied by the teachers who joined the project in Year 2.

6. Proposed budget

Approximately 285,000 USD

The budget will be used to establish stores of OER, organise different workshops to draw lessons learned about the delivery of experiential and career guidance educational activities, as well as the triggering workshop of this topic and the discussion of the different stakeholders' roles within the project. Video recordings of the activities will be given to teachers for self-learning. Personnel and overhead costs are also included in this budget.

- **Year 1:** 30%
- **Year 2:** 40%
- **Year 3:** 30%

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