





LANDSCAPE MAPPING STUDY REPORT

Afghanistan Maldives Nepal

A Multi-Modal Approach to Teacher Professional Development to Address Evolving Educational Changes in Low Resource Settings

Country Report - Maldives 2022



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Afghanistan | Maldives | Nepal

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DISCLAIMER

The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent those of International Development Research Centre (IDRC) or its Board of Governors.

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ACRONYMS

TPD Teacher Professional Development

TISS Tata Institute of Social Sciences

TE Teacher Educator

GDP Gross Domestic Product
PD Professional Development
LGA Local Government Authority

UNCT United Nations Country Team

MoE Ministry of Education
AEC Atoll Education Centre

ITE Institute of Teacher EducationEDC Educational Development CentreNIE National Institute of Education

ENAP Every Newborn Action Plan **MoHE** Ministry of Higher Education

ICT Information Communication Technology

MNU Maldives National University

SA School Administration

TVET Higher Education & Technical and Vocational Education and Training

MCHE Maldives College of Higher Education

TRC Teacher Resource Centre

AR Action Research

IEP Individual Education Plan

MEMIS Maldives Education Management Information System

ISP Internet Service Providers

SEN Special Education Needs

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Landscape Study Report is part of a larger project designed for under-resourced and developing contexts of teacher education and professional development (PD) of teachers and Teacher Educators (TEs) in low resource settings. The landscape study consisted of a study carried out to understand the status of teacher education and Teacher Professional Development (TPD) in the Maldives. Presented below is the summary of the main findings of the landscape mapping based on key areas concerning TPD

Teacher Education Institutions

Key Findings

- There are two government universities and seven private higher education institutions offering teacher training programs. However, the programs are offered in "block mode" in some higher education institutes in the Maldives.
- Only the two public universities and few colleges have their own funds to conduct research to guide policy making.

Teacher Recruitment

Key Findings

- Regarding the established guidelines on teacher and TEs recruitments, the teachers / educators
 are now recruited through a rigorous process including multiple interviews and teaching
 demonstrations.
- Expatriate teachers are selected by the Ministry of Education (MoE).

Financing

Key findings

• In 2019, the Maldives spent 12.1 percent government expenditure on education which is lower than global standards and the breakdown of the MoE budget based on demographic, enrollment and other policy goals to improve quality education is unclear.

Model of Teacher professional Development

Key Findings

- Although there is a TPD policy, there is inconsistency following through the policy in terms of TPD.
- It is mandatory for every employee to complete 15 hours of PD/year, and PD is seen as a responsibility of the school management.

- Many PDs are not on par with the needs of the teachers.
- TPDs related to pre-service teachers lack sufficient opportunities for micro-teaching before the teachers go for teaching practice.
- Mentoring/coaching, though much needed, is not meaningfully implemented and practiced in schools.
- Mentoring is present both in the pre-service and in-service teacher training.
- Significant number of untrained teachers are still working in outer islands, and this poses a new challenge to the quality of teaching and learning.
- Inclusive education workshops are conducted for pre-service teachers working with IEPs.
- In-service training to teachers in remote islands is delivered through online courses and training to develop competency in teaching new curriculum; however, it is unclear if this includes inclusive education.
- Teaching jobs are highly female dominated in the Maldives and few males take up teaching as a profession.
- Internet access is available although the speed of the internet in outer islands is a serious issue.

Professional Development of Teacher Educators

Key Findings

- PD of academics is an area that is not explored sufficiently to understand the gaps and challenges.
- Regardless of the investment, the expected aims from the PD were not achieved, as organising only one PD session for each programme, such as one for Moodle or GEM, seems to be too limited for gaining sufficient knowledge from these sessions.
- TEs do not need one-off or occasional sessions, rather ongoing PD sessions to support their everyday teaching practices.

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SECTION I

1.1 Introduction to MATPD

The Multi-Modal Approach to Teacher Professional Development (MATPD) project aims to influence policy, practise and further research in distance Teacher Professional Development (TPD) in South Asian countries.

Specific Objectives

- Generate knowledge about the enablers for an integrative distance TPD model in low resource settings.
- Enhance the capacity of TEs and teachers by developing their leadership skills and knowledge in constructive use of new media and technology to enhance their practices.
- To mobilise support of and share insights with relevant stakeholders on adapting, adopting, and sustainability of pedagogically rich TPD approaches

Research Questions

The research questions will pave the way to delve deeper and progress towards the core intended outcomes of the initiative. They are as follows:

- How can TEs and Teachers be enabled to take ownership of adapting and adopting the proposed innovation along with the support of relevant stakeholders in the education system.
- What are the levers for and barriers to delivering pedagogically rich distance teaching and learning experiences at scale?
- How can media and technology be used to enhance and develop leadership skills in TEs and teachers?

Project Activities

The Project aims to implement elements of two innovative approaches on TPD developed by the Centre of Excellence in Teacher Education (CETE), Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS). It is designed for under-resourced and developing contexts with a collaborative adaptation to suit the national contexts of the participating countries in South Asia (Afghanistan, Maldives, Nepal). With the usage of diverse technological modalities for TPD that are context-appropriate and combined with action research and social change through the formation of Professional Learning Communities while building on the communities of practice that exist or get developed through mobile based chat groups.

The main activities of the project are:

- **I.** A Landscape Mapping Study to be organised in two stages. The first stage entails in-depth interviews with key informants in each country including policy makers, TEs, teachers. The second stage comprises extensive secondary research on TPD. The study will help:
 - a. To inform the projects' strategy, design and activities.
 - b. To identify available resources and contextual factors that may impact implementation, discussion on adaptive management/risk mitigation strategies in case of a change in conditions.
- **II.** Research study of change in attitude, beliefs, perceptions and skills of TE's.

This will entail conducting a pre and post-test to understand the development in content, pedagogy, inclusion and distance education with reference to TE's perceptions, attitudes, skills and behaviour.

III. Research fellows to undertake the training program as well as carry out an Action Research Project.

They will also be expected to record and analyse interventions with approximately 6-10 school teachers assigned to them.

IV. A compendium of case studies/action research reports to be prepared based on the coursework of research fellows mentioned in the previous activity.

The compendium will present emerging insights and provide a deep dive into some of the reflections of the fellows based on the training program and peer to peer interactions.

V. Development of a guideline document comprising perspectives for policy and practice of distance TPD in the South Asian Region.

Expected Outcomes

- Based on the analyses of comparative data, this study will generate knowledge relevant for improving the quality of Distance Teaching and Learning (DTL) in developing country contexts.
- Training for TEs and teachers will enhance TEs' competency and skills as they will get an opportunity to engage in hands-on practices and knowledge sharing with teachers. This is in addition to the coursework on a meaningful integration of new media and technology for DTL, action research, design thinking, mentoring, and leadership.
- It will also foster the 21st-century skills of critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and digital literacy in learners, thereby, making space for iteration and dynamism in the TE's and teachers' practice.
- The case studies and action research reports will provide emerging insights and a deeper understanding of the reflections of the fellows based on the training program and peer interactions. Also, it gives an opportunity for TEs to get authorship and showcase their work as a knowledge product.
- Lastly, the guideline document will supply a conscious observation and recommendations for governments and other stakeholders tasked and involved in distance teaching and learning.

Project Partners

The study is funded by IDRC under the Global Partnership for Education Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (GPE-KIX). The consortium comprises Villa College in Maldives, Swedish Committee for Afghanistan and the Centre of Excellence in Teacher Education (CETE), Tata Institute of Social Sciences, India which serves as a technical partner.

Villa College is the first and largest private higher education institution in the Maldives offering a variety of academic programmes. Villa College has established a strong foothold in the Maldivian community and has a strong collaboration with international partners in the UK and Malaysia. Villa College is recognized by international accreditation bodies such as the APQN, INQAAHE, IAU and the ACU. The Institute of Research and Innovation at the college is a first of its kind in the country, dedicating itself to promote, undertake and foster research. The college has undertaken successful research projects for local clients and international agencies such as the United Nations. It has also introduced Research grant schemes to provide opportunities for more people to undertake research. The teacher training programs offered at the Faculty of Educational studies are known to be popular. VC Faculty of Educational Studies have always had a role in contributing to the policy formulation, by attending and engaging in discussions with the MoE and National Institute of Education. It is one of the key institutes that provides an accessible education to all islands throughout the country via their Atoll Campuses or through the Outreach Learning centres.

The Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) has been operational in Afghanistan for over 35 years. Currently, SCA operates in 17 out of 34 provinces in Afghanistan. SCA'S presence in Afghanistan consists of the Kabul Management Office (KMO), five Regional Management Offices and three Liaison Offices. SCA receives funds from various international and private donors, mainly from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). With more than 6,000 Afghan employees, it is one of the largest organisations in Afghanistan. SCA implements education, health, and disability programmes in rural and remote areas through the Rights Based Approach (RBA). It also builds the capacity of individuals and civil society organisations to enhance their capacity to advocate for their rights. SCA also supports empowerment and rights of women throughout its programmes. SCA has been involved in implementation of education projects that include capacity development, advocacy and service delivery since 1984. Currently the programme is being implemented in 745 districts across 14 provinces. Through the Education Programme SCA aims to provide equal access to quality educational opportunities. SCA's Education Programme aspires to: Improve students access to education and provide an inclusive learning environment for all children; Enhance effective teaching and quality in education; Support community-based organisations in target communities and professional associations to be more self-organised, representative and to fulfil their responsibilities in the promotion of, and advocacy for accountable and responsive education services and; Provide support to Education authorities to enable them have the required capacity to ensure sustainable, inclusive and effective education services in Afghanistan. The SCA Teacher training is probably the most important part of the SCA Education Programme intervention. It aims at building teachers' capacities in subject knowledge and pedagogy/ which are geared towards TPD in short courses. Teacher Educator Master Programme (TEMP) is another activity under SCA teachers' capacity development. The focus of TEMP is TEs drawn from all over the country.

Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, India (www.tiss.edu) is among South Asia's premier research and teaching universities in social Sciences. The Centre of Excellence in Teacher Education (CETE), an Independent Centre on the TISS Mumbai Campus engages in teaching, research, and field action, and has multidisciplinary expertise in the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in Education for quality reform at scale. It has designed the TPD innovations whose elements will be piloted in this project. Centre was awarded the UNESCO King Hamad Prize for Excellence in Use of ICTs in Education in 2018 for its flagship initiative Connected learning initiative as well as the OER Award

The Leadership team for the MATPD project is as follows:

- Principal Investigator: Ms. Fathimath Saeed, Villa College, Maldives
- Country Lead Investigators: Dr. Ruchi Kumar, TISS, India, Mr. Mohamed Tahir Ismat, SCA, Afghanistan
- Convener, Steering Committee: Ms. Dhwani Bafna, TISS India
- Advisor: Prof. Ajay Singh, IGNOU, India
- Research Team Anchors: Dr. Aishath Nasheeda, Ms. Reema Govil , Mr. Charles Osaka Kesa

1.2 Research Methodology and Data Collection

The Situation Analysis for the three countries (Afghanistan, Maldives and Nepal) is based on data gathered from interviews and secondary research as part of the Landscape Mapping Study.

<u>I. Interviews:</u> The interview tool was developed collaboratively by the partner organisations. It enables us to understand the space of "teacher professional development" with a focus on concepts: (a) action research (b) mentoring (c) distance education and (d) inclusion that are key to the MATPD project intervention.

II. Secondary Research: This entailed studying policy documents, research articles and impact studies etc.

Research Procedure

A total of 26 interviews (Afghanistan: 7, Maldives: 8, Nepal: 11) were carried out with a diverse set of stakeholders working in the space of Teacher Education. These comprise teacher training institutes, government functionaries, teachers, school principals, non-profit organisations, aid agencies, consultants amongst others. The selection of respondents was through purposive and convenience sampling. In order to eliminate gender bias, an equal number of participants were selected from both genders for the interviews. Once the list of interviewees was finalised, the interviews were scheduled based on a mutually convenient time. Consent was sought from the interview respondents to record the interaction. In Nepal, these took place virtually over zoom while in Afghanistan and Maldives, it was a combination of in-person and virtual means.

For the post phase of data collection, the interviews were transcribed for the purpose of data analysis and report writing. This was followed by the process of data querying based on codes generated from the discussion tool themes and voices from the ground. The codes were then subjected to content analysis to consolidate data from the interviews taken.

Table 1: List of Stakeholders Interviewed

	Interview Stakeholders		
Country Stakeholder Number of respondent			
AFGHANISTAN			
1	Government Functionary	2	
2	Non-Governmental Organisation	3	
3	Teacher Training Institute	1	
4	Non-Profit Organisations/Teachers Council	1	
MALDIVES			
1	Government Functionary	1	
2	Teacher Training Institute	2	
3	Non-Profit Organisations	1	
4	Consultant	1	
5	Head of schools/ Leading Teachers	3	
NEPAL			
1	Government Functionary	3	
2	2 Teacher Training Institute 2		
3	3 Non-Profit Organisations 3		
4	4 Consultant 2		
5	Aid Agency	1	

Challenges in the data collection process

The consortium members faced a few challenges while carrying out the landscape mapping study which led to a delay in completion of the interviews.

- Change of regime in Afghanistan.
- Last minute cancellation of interviews by the respondents and the need to identify new respondents.
- Covid-19 Pandemic: Few consortium members and interview respondents were affected with covid-19.
- Initial few interviews overlapped with the annual leave of the interview respondents and had to be rescheduled.

In addition to the above, access to data has been challenging on several accounts such as (a) data was inaccessible for it could not be shared in the public domain, (b) The interviewees did not have information/details for some of the questions asked and, (c) lack of available data as evidence, (d) some of the policy documents, online information could not be accessed since they were in the vernacular language. (this point is specific to Nepal)

SECTION II

2. Country Profile

2.1 Geographic, Demographic, Social and Political profile

The Maldives, an archipelago situated in the Indian Ocean, is one of the world's most geographically dispersed countries with 1190 islands, out of which 185 are inhabited (see Appendix A for geographical facts) (The World Bank, 2022). The total resident population of the Maldives is estimated at 557,426 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). For administrative purposes, the Maldives islands are clustered into 20 administrative units or atolls divided into seven provinces (Transparency Maldives, 2019). According to the Decentralization Act 2010 (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2010), the main purpose of the administrative units or atolls is to allow flexibility for island communities to make decisions to improve the overall living standard of the people in the islands. Thus, each province consists of atolls, islands, and cities each administered by its own local council. The Local Government Authority (LGA) monitors and coordinates the work of council on two aspects: ensuring consistency with the legislative framework; and ensuring that councils adhere to standards set out for them in executing their duties (Transparency Maldives, 2019).

The Maldives embraced Islam in 1153 A.D. and Islam is the state religion. All Maldivians share the same culture and speak a unique language, Dhivehi, and use Thaana script to write, which is written from right to left. Although Dhivehi is the official language, English language is used as a medium of instruction in schools (United Nations Country Team (UNCT), 2020). The Maldives is a democratic republic whereby the president is the head of the government. The president and the vice president are elected by the citizens based on popular votes for a five-year term. The president then appoints his cabinet for his executive branch. The People's Majlis is the legislative body of the Maldives and has the authority to enact, amend and revise laws, but the constitutions. The Majlis is composed of 87 members elected by the public for a 5-year term.





Maldives Parliament House, People's Majlis Source: Avas.com

Oath taking ceremony of Cabinet Ministers

Source: Hussain Waheed

The Maldivian legislative system is derived from the Islamic Shariah. The supreme court comprises 5 judges including the chief Judge who is appointed by the president. The members of the Supreme Court need to be approved by the people's Majlis.



Supreme Court
Source: psmnews.mv

2.2 Impact of Covid-19 pandemic

The first wave of Covid-19 reached the Maldives towards the end of the year 2019. The pandemic brought with it a lot of challenges and it impacted the country in numerous ways. Measures were taken by Health Protection Agency (HPA) due to the spread of the pandemic and as such, borders were closed for all international travellers. This prevented the spread by restricting the tourists arriving from all over the world and at the same time, had a huge impact on the economy of the country. In order to ensure social distancing, the country went for a full lockdown whereby all government and non-government institutions including schools, offices, shops, cinemas, and all such platforms for social gatherings were closed. Among the many areas that were affected, education happened to undergo a major change by shifting to online mode, in a rather sudden manner (Ministry of Education, 2019).

SECTION III

3. Education System

3.1 Historical Background

"...it started with a need to develop a more organised educational system in the country..."

(Former TE, 2022)

The Maldivian traditional school system comprises three types of schools; edhuruge (or kiyavaage- an informal neighbourhood quranic and literacy school), makthab (formal quranic and literacy school) and madhrasa (school offering wider curriculum) run by island communities (Ali, 2017). These traditional institutions have contributed in attaining high rate of literacy, preservation of Maldivian culture and development of a modern education system (World Bank, 2014).

The introduction of the first constitution in 1932, acknowledging the government's responsibility in the administration of basic schooling, resulted in the formation of a ministry to oversee the provision of education (Ali, 2017). Henceforth, remarkable changes took place between 1940s and 1950s, when education was regarded as an agent for national development. As a result, many islands built and operated a makthab. Some exceptional students were given opportunities to study in Male' schools. In 1960, schools in Male' began schooling in the English medium. With this system several expatriate teachers were enrolled to Male' schools. This was a new system to the Maldivians and this change led to a decline in schools in outer islands due to withdrawal of government support to atoll education. However, changes to education policy in the early 1970s led to an increase in educational opportunities in the islands with atoll madhrasa being established and the enrolment of outstanding students from the entire atoll.

In 1977, teacher training started as in-service training for teachers who have been working as teachers in schools and the training was conducted only in the capital island, Male' (Wheatcroft, 2005) Additionally, in 1978 the decision to move to a more unified national education system to provide equal distribution of facilities, through a unified curriculum from grades 1 to 7, led to improving teacher training and upgrading established schools in the atolls to Atoll Education Centres (AEC) (Ali, 2017). Hence, the government provided scholarships for teachers working in the islands to come to Male' for short term training.

During the 1980s specialised institutions were established within the Ministry of Education (MoE) to cater to the growing demands in the education system. Hence, teacher training was separated to form the Institute of Teacher Education (ITE) IN 1977, now integrated into the Faculty of Education, at Maldives National University (Education Sector Plan, Maldives, 2019 - 2023).

By 2009, the MoE had divisions to manage its functions; Corporate Services, Human Resources, Finance and Development, Planning and External relations, Schools, Educational Supervision and Quality Improvement, Projects and Physical Facilities development, Center for Continuing Education (CCE), Department of Public Examination and the Educational Development Centre (EDC) (UNESCO, n.d.). MoE merged its two most prominent centres (EDC and CCE) to form National Institute of Education (NIE). NIE's role in life-long learning through collaborative research and innovation is crucial (MoE, 2012). Hence, its main responsibilities include design and development of curriculum, development of instructional materials, orient teachers to curriculum, providing in-service training to teachers to upgrade on content and pedagogy (MoE, 2012).

3.2 Administration of Education

All the schools across the country are administered under the supervision of the School Administration (SA) Division of MoE. Schools in Maldives are divided into 8 different zones that are placed under Zone Coordinator in the SA Division who follows the instructions given by the Minister or a political appointee who takes directives from the Minister. Day to day activities of the schools in the respective atolls are managed by the focal points for each atoll who coordinates with zone coordinators in the MoE. Each school is appointed a principal or a professional staff of similar rank who manages and administers the school in accordance with the rules and regulations of the MoE. From 2009 to 2012 MoE, had a decentralised system of administration, where schools were managed by the province coordinators placed in respective atolls.

3.3 Academic Structure

Education and skills are provided in the Maldives through five distinct phases as follows:

- 2 years of Preschool Education (Foundation Stage)
- 6 years of Primary Education (Key Stage 1 and 2)
- 4 years of Lower Secondary Education (Key Stage 3 & 4)
- 2 years of Higher Secondary Education (Key Stage 5)
- Skills development (Higher Education & Technical and Vocational Education and Training: TVET)

Each phase targets a specific age group, and thereby developmental level (See Appendix B for schooling and key stages). The general education is delivered through a network of public and private schools. Free education is provided from Foundation level to Higher Secondary level (Up to Key Stage 4, grade 10) by the government of Maldives in all public schools. Completing 12 years of schooling is compulsory (i.e. from Foundation Phase to Lower Secondary phase). Free education is provided at Higher Secondary phases for students who wish to continue formal schooling, but this is not compulsory. Two standardised national and international examinations are delivered at the end of lower secondary phase and higher secondary phase.

3.4 Financing - Ministry of Education Budget

The education sector of Maldives is funded by both domestic and foreign sources, with over 90 percent of the funding covered by domestic sources. In 2019, Maldives spent 4.1 percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on education, which is higher compared to other South Asian countries. Additionally, 12.1 percent of total government expenditure is also spent on education (Ministry of Finance, 2021), although this figure is below the international standards of 14.2 percent (UNESCO, 2016). In terms of cost per student, during the past 10 years there has been an increment of 6 percent from MVR 14,334 in 2008 to MVR 25,838 by 2017 (Annual Report, MoE, 2019).

The government introduced incentives to support over 2500 local students annually, in financing their higher education from both local and foreign educational institutes. This includes fully funded undergraduate studies from public universities, scholarships, loan schemes and specific schemes for skill development (See appendix C for new budget policy initiatives).

3.5 Policy and Reforms

By 2006, the Maldives had issued seven national development plans which was later replaced by the Strategic Action Plan 2009-2013 (MoE & Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), 2019). The other education relevant national level policies included: A National Child Strategy, with Every Newborn Action Plan (ENAP) 2016-2020, National Reproductive Health Strategy 2014-2018, the Youth Manifesto 2013-2018 and the National Gender Policy 2016-2021 (MoE & MoHE, 2019). The MoE has started work on implementing SGD 4 on Education through additional reforms and policies in line with Education For All MDG targets (MoE, 2019). As a result, policy initiatives over the last two decades have shown striking achievements on equity and access to public and free education from K-12 and free and compulsory education from K-10 (MoE, 2020) (see Appendix D for Education Policies).

3.6 Education Reform During the Pandemic

According to the Guide for School Emergency Operational Plan, Maldives 2009 "Schools must be prepared to respond to an emergency or traumatic event in an organized and timely manner so as to ensure that students and staff can continue to function effectively without additional trauma or the development of additional crises" (MoE, 2009a, p. 12).

On 15th April 2020, a lockdown restriction was enforced in the Maldives, and thus, all government offices, schools, universities and private institutions were closed. With no proper contingency plans to continue teaching and learning during an unprecedented situation, several months lapsed with school closure.

Over 91,000 school children from pre-KG to higher secondary were greatly affected (MoE 2020). At the onset of the pandemic, teachers were immediately tasked with implementing distance learning modalities (such as *Telekilaas*¹ and online learning), without sufficient guidance, training, or resources on these modes of teaching and learning. Some teachers' lack of preparedness for the use of ICT in teaching despite the Google training courses conducted for teachers, posed challenges for the teachers

 $^{^{\}rm 1}{\rm Pre\text{-}recorded}$ lessons that were broadcasted via television during COVID 19 pandemic lockdown

as well as the students in many aspects of teaching and learning (Maldives National University, 2020). This could have been due to the limited time in which the training was conducted. However, Maldives is among one of the very few school systems where 100 percent of teachers had the capacity to deliver an online class, within two months of lockdown. Moreover, 45 percent of our teachers had become Google certified educators by the end of July 2020. It is worthwhile to highlight the teachers' capacity to prepare and conduct televised sessions with the limited experience and training. Thus, Maldives

has been awarded the UNESCO Innovation Award for this accomplishment.

With these rapid changes to the modality of learning, the psychological tension of many teachers, coupled with new demands on teaching impacted the schools. Therefore, if competency-based teaching and assessment models are to be implemented for remote/virtual teaching and learning situations, teachers require intensive capacity building programs on job training (MoE, 2020). The need for this has been stressed by relevant stakeholders.



Telekilaas Grade 10- Dhivehi Source: Telekilaas by MOE Maldives, Youtube.com

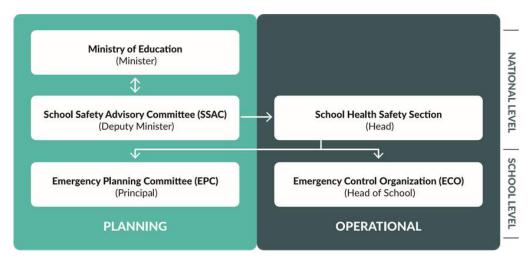
"These are conducted in workshops, and it's always in school. Since COVID, as you know, there was Google training online like that. But other than that, it's always been workshops, and nothing else." (MS)

Teacher training came to an abrupt halt in some of the teacher training institutions while other institutions continued to teach using online means. Thus, comes the necessity for teachers to be trained to use the resources practically rather than just knowing the basics, as mentioned by a TE.

"ICT use is not just using PowerPoint, more resource familiarity is required." (HZ)

In this regard, teachers were trained to teach online and this created a positive impact on teacher training and it increased accessibility for students in the outer atolls.

Figure 1: National and school level teams and their functions in emergencies and disasters



Source: (MoE, 2009b)

Actions taken in response to Covid-19 (Sosale et al., 2020)

- 1. Prepared an education response plan for Covid 19 with support from GPE
- 2. The MoE partnered with three national television stations to develop educational programming.
- 3. Discussion boards, hosted on social media platforms, have reached nearly 50 percent of all students across Maldives.
- 4. Internet service providers have also agreed to provide 5GB of free data to every student.
- 5. The government online education platform, Filaa, is a resource repository that includes digital textbooks.
- 6. The Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), in collaboration with the National Knowledge Network of India, set up an Education and Research Network (NREN) to connect all higher education institutions and research institutes
- 7. The National Computer Network and the National Data Centre have connected two public universities, to help facilitate students' access to lectures and digital libraries.
- 8. All textbooks for grades two through 10 are available online through Cambridge University Press, the MoE's curriculum development partner. The manuals come with interactive learning activities, animations, videos, images, links, and other digital assets.
- 9. To boost teachers' confidence and prepare them to use G-Suite effectively, the Ministry launched a new training program for teachers with several Google-certified educators. Challenges: Beyond COVID-19, education and training will still face unique challenges due to the scattered geography and far-flung atolls in the Maldives require specific responses.

4. Teacher Education in the Maldives

Teacher training initially started in the Institute for Teacher Education (ITE) and teachers had been trained since the year 1980 (UNESCO, 2006). The institute later changed to Maldives College of Higher Education (MCHE) on 1st October 1998, and then it became a university and was named as Maldives National University (MNU) on 15th February 2011. Since its inception as ITE, teacher training was always given special emphasis due to the role performed by teachers in moulding the citizens of the nation. Rapid changes have taken place in teacher education in the past few years as several private colleges have been established and they offer different teaching programmes.

Currently, there are two government universities and seven private higher education institutions in the Maldives who offer teacher training programmes. They are: Maldives National University, Maldives Islamic University, Villa College, Clique College, Cyryx College, Mandhu College, Avid College, Mianz International College, and Zikura International College. "Block mode" teacher education is widely adopted by the Education related Faculties in each of the above-mentioned institutions (UNCT, 2020). Additionally, the two public universities and only a few private colleges have their own funds to conduct research to guide policy making.

To bring improvements to the education system, the MoE, collaborated with The Maldives National University, to conduct a teacher training programme for 3000 in-service teachers to upgrade themselves with their qualification level over the last three years (UNCT, 2020). With the increase in the number of teachers trained, there was also the drawback of compromising the quality of teachers. Today, we see the numbers becoming more important than the quality of those who graduate as teachers.

The structure of Teacher Education in the country comprises two forms; pre-service teacher education and in-service teacher education. All the nine higher education institutions cater to training and educating teachers through pre-service education by means of various programmes catering to the different levels or specialisations. Teachers are trained in these institutions ranging from the foundation stage to secondary education by providing pre-service training. Next is the in-service teacher training that is provided for those who are already in the profession. The task of conducting in-service teacher education is mandated to NIE. All centrally planned TPD is led by NIE, which is targeted to support Teacher Resource Centers (TRC)s, school principals and teachers to close the gap between quality research, policy and classroom practice. Thus, TRCs are mainly responsible for conducting atoll level TPD while school-based PD (SBPD) is initiated and conducted by Schools according to the SBPD policy. Facilitators for these SBPD are selected by approaching the higher education providers in the country to get expert TEs in the respective fields who could conduct these programmes.

4.1 Regulation of Teacher Education

The teacher education institutes are regulated through the MoHE. They ensure that all the institutions meet the required standards. The Maldives Qualifications Authority under the MoHE is the body responsible for approving and accrediting the respective programs developed and offered at various institutions. This is further strengthened by the use of periodical monitoring and evaluation of the programmes. However, the lack of qualified staff has posed several issues in quality assurance of higher education (UNCT, 2020).

4.2 Financing of Teacher Education

Teacher education is mostly financed by the government, especially in the public universities. As such the strategic action plan of the government includes building higher education centers and TVET institutions across the country (Ministry of Finance, 2021). The 2021 National Budget allocated funds to develop tourism training facilities and state of the art TVET institute of the Maldives National University (MNU) (Ministry of Finance, 2021). According to a TE,

"the government subsidizes the public universities definitely, but when it comes to private colleges, mostly it is through the fees collected from the students." (TE).

The students are also eligible to apply for a government grant which entitles them to a certain amount of subsidisation from the government.

Approximately 5% of the studying population consists of students pursuing higher education, which also include those getting trained as teachers are expected to apply for loans and scholarship schemes (MoE, 2019). While the universities have their own separate budgets, Higher Education expenditure is incurred for the MoHE via scholarships and loans. Hence, university spending is not estimated using numbers (MoE, 2019). In 2019, Maldives spent 4.1 percent of GDP on education out of which 13 percent was allocated for scholarships, training, grants, and subsidies (MoE, 2019). Additionally, findings from the Maldives Sector Analysis Plan indicates that the breakdown of the MoE budget is unclear and it is important that the appropriate funds are allocated based on demographic, enrollment and other policy goals such as improving the quality of education (MoE, 2019).

In addition to this, NIE has spent extensively on in-service teacher education prior to the pandemic (Rizwan, Personal communication, 17th May 2022). These short term programmes helped to reach a large number of teachers in the profession and proved to have an impact on teaching and learning. Inservice teacher education remains costly due to the geographical barriers, which incurred costs related to travelling, and food and accommodation of the facilitators. Another difficulty was the challenge of keeping teachers away from their classrooms for extended periods of time which resulted in frequent, short programmes and additional costs. The teacher training budget has become limited since 2020, and most training is now advised to be conducted online.

4.3 Teacher Recruitment

Teacher recruitment in the Maldives Education system was not so strict several years ago. However, with the strengthening of quality measures, teachers are now recruited based on their educational qualifications and rigid procedures are in place to recruit teachers to the schools. Today's recruitment procedures both, in recruiting teachers as well as TEs, include multiple interviews and teaching demonstrations. Expatriate teachers are selected by teams from the MoE who travel to neighbouring countries for this purpose.

"...at that time, it was very focused on training very quickly, people who have been practising in the system, these are not trained people. But these are people who have been in the system teaching in the atolls, and the need was greater not in Male' at the time, but in the Atolls, because most of the schools in Male' even then have English medium as a medium of instruction. So there were a lot of expatriate teachers, but the need for teachers in the Atolls was quite high, there was no trained teachers as such in the Atolls outside Male'..."(TE)

"...started with a one-year intensive, full-time program in Male' by bringing people from the Atolls, I think there are about 23 or 22 people in the first batch, it was a one year, very intensive program. And these were, technically should be called an in-service teacher education program at the time, because they were all practising teachers. They were not pre-service teachers but they have been practising, but they were pulled out of the system and brought to Male' and it was conducted as a full-time pre-service course although because of the nature of the participants, I would technically call it an in-service program..." (TE).

5. Professional Development of Teachers

5.1 Policies around Teacher Professional Development

In reference to Education Sector Analysis February 2019, teaching materials and teacher training support are two crucial areas of successful implementation of National Curriculum Framework. While efforts were made to provide support and training to teachers using a cascade model by mentors/teacher coaches to assist in implementation of the new curriculum (MoE, 2019), issues such as; formulating higher order questions to help deepen student's learning and understanding, difficulty in using ICT in teaching and learning have been identified as reasons. There is a need for rigorous and effective Professional Development (PD) (MoE, 2019; MoE & MoHE, 2019) as limited skills of teachers are greatly impacting the quality of education (UNCT, 2020).

5.2 The Teacher Professional Development Model

According to the PD Policy (MoE, 2009c), it is mandatory for professional employees in each school to complete at least 15 hours of PD within a year. The education policy mandates the school management to conduct three PD sessions of 5 hours per session during three specific days in an academic year (NIE, 2016) (See Appendix E for the academic calendar with PD days). Therefore, PD is often seen as a responsibility of the school management rather than a lifelong learning process by the teachers (Moosa, 2018), and takes place in the form of workshops, courses, seminars, and research (Zuha et al., 2021).

Even though teacher PD is a buzz word and all schools abide by the policy requirement and fulfil the necessary hours of training, it is evident that the current practices are insufficient, especially when it comes to curriculum related training (MoE & MoHE, 2019). This has been brought up in consultative forums as an area that needs to be strengthened by the teacher training institutions that offer preservice training for teachers. Additionally, the lack of sufficient opportunities for micro-teaching before the teaching practicum was highlighted as a weakness TPD related to pre-service teachers (UNCT, 2020) particularly in relation to subject specific teaching skills.

In-service teacher education is a practice that is done by NIE in collaboration with Atoll (TRC). In this regard, the TRCs perform several roles to ensure PD of teachers. Their main roles include coordinating teacher proficiency assessment within the atolls and monitoring the implementation of new policy initiatives as well as that of school-based PD. Furthermore, additional tasks related to teacher networking and creating resources for the schools were part of their functions (MoE, 2009c).

5.3 Challenges in effective implementation of Teacher Professional Development

PD sessions are organised occasionally and there is no connection from one PD session to the other. When PD sessions are not linked to each other, TEs easily forget what is being introduced. Several teachers stated that PD was not organised properly to enhance TEs' pedagogical practices.

But the thing is, what is desired is not what is seen in the practice most of the time. Like for example, when it comes to a TPD, it has to be something that's about the student learning like for example, you identify a gap in student learning, learning means like overall child development. So, if the teacher lacks capacity to bridge that gap, then the teacher needs professional development, for example, a teacher is having problems with classroom management. So, that teacher requires PD targeted for the problem s/he has,, but what is observed happening in the schools is like, there will be a session on classroom management, and then sometimes it so happens that none of the teachers who attend the program may have any issues with the classroom management. (SR)

The interview participants also highlighted that they did not agree with the idea of 'one off' sessions and need PD to continue on a regular basis. All in all, it can be concluded that regardless of the investment, the expected aims from the PD were not achieved, as organising only one PD session for each programme, such as one for Moodle or GEM, seems to be too limited for gaining learning from these sessions.

These conversations portrayed the TEs' limited uptake of introduced tools through the PD. It resulted from the lack of monitoring and support that should go along with PD. TEs are more willing to use digital tools when they receive support from their colleagues who understand what they need. Some TEs excitedly discussed that they learn a lot about using digital technologies through sharing and learning from each other on a regular basis. This idea suggests that TEs in this context do not need one-off or occasional sessions, rather ongoing PD sessions are pertinent to support their everyday teaching practices.

5.4 Action Research in Teacher Professional Development

The nature of Action Research (AR) in TPD, involves teachers investigating their own practices, competencies and knowledge, AR facilitating the bridging of theory to practise, and AR is known to be one of the most effective tools for PD of teachers (Moosa, 2018). In this regard, in 2016, the National Institute of Education, Maldives, conducted a series of workshops on teachers as reflective practitioners and action researchers. A total of three workshops with 122 teachers from 13 schools participated in this workshop. The main aim of the workshop was developing a research culture among Maldivian teachers. In addition to the main aim, the workshops also aimed at raising awareness among teachers in understanding the importance of doing action research for teachers, as well as familiarising with the process of action research and how to conduct action research (NIE, 2016). A leading teacher in one of the schools highlighted that although attempts are being made to engage teachers in action research, the results are not very fruitful. Therefore, it is crucial for more PD programmes to be conducted for teachers on AR such that it will contribute to embedding a research culture among the Maldivian teachers.

"At present, there is one being conducted by NIE on action research, where each school has to conduct two action research... This is for school leaders. School Management with the leading teachers are in them so that's been done, but I don't think it's going well."

Moreover, teachers rarely engage in reflective practices in their teaching and learning (MoE, 2019). More recently, it has been observed that few AR are being conducted by teacher educators (see Moosa, 2018), and NIE is currently piloting an AR workshop in two schools with a selected number of teachers.

5.5 Mentoring

Mentoring is a very much needed, but not so meaningfully implemented practice in schools in the Maldives. The fact that mentoring is present both in the pre-service teacher training and in-service

teacher training makes the component a vital one. However, the question remains as to whether mentoring is done in ways to gain the maximum benefit for the mentees. Mentoring encompasses various forms. "We do have teaching practicum in our teaching program, so through that mentoring is done" stated one of the Deans of a Faculty of Education from a university in the Maldives. A TE coordinator at NIE believes that mentoring, if done well and effectively, could bring a remarkable change in the system and ensure that full PD is in place. According to her









Highlights from Action Research workshop series

Source: nie.edu.mv

"it's about how you understand the concept of PD.... understanding the actual concept of the PD, I think even with little effect, major trends can be brought, like for example, as I said, a leading teacher observes the teacher's teaching and identifies the areas of PD and caters to those little areas, especially by coaching and mentoring. I think no other PD activity can be better than this."

No matter how important TEs and teachers believe mentoring is, there has not been any policies on mentoring/ coaching developed so far. However, NIE states that work on developing a policy on mentoring is underway. This is going to be an important step forward as some of the school principals have highlighted

"less mentoring, but mentoring is needed very much...Feedback is very important, mentoring required even in field and in training,"(A)

"Yes, mentoring is done. I would say, for example, I would know about my school where if a new teacher comes in, they are assigned a mentor when they join school, so that they learn about the culture of the school. Each culture is different in each school. So, this mentor, for example, will introduce everyone in the staff meeting, and the mentee will shadow this teacher for the probation period, like three months. And I would say for example, a lot of the time the new teacher would say that this school is very different as to how to go and meet the SMT. Usually, I (new teacher) have to go

and ask for an appointment one day ahead, but in this school I can just go and meet them, or else they'll (new teacher) say the way you talk to students are quite different. I'm not allowed to say this. I'm not allowed to raise my voice, things like that. So, all of that for them to learn or how to go about setting because each school will have a lot of set ways. For example, when they need to mark the register, when they need to update names and things like that. So, all of that is learned through the mentor. Usually individuals. But then once, for example, if it's the Math department, there will also be different meetings, for example, coordination meetings and things like that. So there, they will also get a sense of group mentoring as well. But usually, this teacher will just shadow the mentor teacher". (MS).

"Need more mentoring by experienced teachers and good leading teachers... A strong supervision and mentoring system within school is very important" (HZ)

5.6 Inclusion in Teacher Professional Development

According to the Inclusive Education Policy (2013), inclusion has been formulated to cater to all the students including those who perform at exceptional speed as well as those who are unable to meet the learning outcomes.

In Maldives, inclusive education is focused on 16 types of students under 3 distinct categories but collectively identified as children requiring an Individual Education Plan (IEP). By 2018, 212 schools with a total of 3215 students requiring IEP were studying (UNCT, 2020) and it is unknown how many trained and how many untrained teachers are working with students with special needs. What is known is that there are a significant 749 untrained teachers still working in different schools in the year 2020 (MoE, 2020)and serious learning gaps are projected to arise particularly to students in the isolated islands. With the aim of creating a systematic approach to monitoring IEP, the Maldives Education Management Information System (MEMIS) launched in 2017 enables the collection, storage and retrieval of education data crucial for tracking the progress of learners with disabilities based on IEP goals and curriculum outcomes (UNICEF, 2020). The Inclusive Education Strategic Plan which states that the school leaders need to provide instructional leadership support to teachers to support inclusion in classroom, indicates a need to ongoing support to implement disability-inclusive classroom strategies (UNICEF, 2020) thus, the department of Inclusive Education provides workshops for pre-service teachers working with IEPs. However, these IEPs have been changed to Inclusive Curriculum Plan (ICP)s which focuses more on developing the child in alignment with the curriculum.

Inclusion of the Remote Islands

The Maldives faces a number of challenges in terms of higher education opportunities in the islands as few islands have schools teaching up to higher secondary level, thus many are forced to drop out or migrate to Capital City, Male'. With the low student population in the outer islands partly due to migration, the MoE implemented multi-grade teaching in 2014. The aim was to strengthen the quality

of teaching and learning, and as a result, students were found to be more confident and enthusiastic. The teachers were also able to learn different teaching strategies, interactive activities and adapt to powerful classroom management techniques (MoE & MoHE, 2019). However, there is no evidence to indicate that multi-grade teaching impacts learning in students. Additionally, the delivery of inservice training to teachers in remote islands are delivered through online courses but there was no mention of inclusive education (UNICEF, 2020). It was also noted that the greatest number of expatriate teachers and untrained teachers are in these islands.

According to Maldives Education Master Plan 2015-2018, schools need to become innovative in delivery in quality education (MoE, 2016) hence, the most recent initiative was the virtual classrooms in the least populated schools where the students' population is less than 50. These schools from outer islands were connected to a school in Male', where students are assigned to quality teachers without having to travel to other islands (MoE, 2019). However, the effectiveness of virtual classrooms on students' performance is yet to be researched.

As far as TPD is concerned, there is no distinction between males and females in the country. However, it is common to find more female teachers employed at all levels of education. According to statistics published by the National Bureau of Statistics, 72 percent of teachers are women (Maldives Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Male teachers tend to be less compared to females although there are more male staff employed in leadership roles. Moreover, the primary grades are mostly dominated by local teachers, while expatriate teachers are mostly found in the secondary grades. Nonetheless, equal opportunities for TPD are provided for both local and expatriate teachers.

5.7 Information Communication Technology in Education

Maldives is a good example of a country for whom ICT implementation is extremely useful, mainly because of its geographical make up, and can gain great benefits given the government initiative. While inhabitants of the islands and atolls are separated from one another by sea, and physical travel is an expensive undertaking, ICT expansion virtually reduces the geographical separation and teachers can take advantage of the training available in other islands particularly those conducted in



Online teaching and learning
Source: UNICEF

the capital, Male'. ICT development has been an integral part of the policy framework in Maldives; major improvement has been seen in terms of its penetration and usage (MoE, 2019). The challenge lies in utilising ICT in education, particularly in training and motivating teachers to use ICT services. The establishment of Teacher Resource Centres (TRC) is a positive step toward developing skills of teachers although more centres need to be established and more courses to be tailored for the capacity building of the trainers.

The government of Maldives has given a lot of emphasis on developing ICT in the Maldives. The ICT in Education Master Plan developed by MoE is one such initiative. The government has also taken has taken extreme measures to expand ICT access and awareness, for instance, with the help of Dhiraagu and UNICEF, TRCs were established in all 20 atolls in the Maldives. Each centre is equipped with modern technology – smart boards; an interactive touch board replacing white boards. Teachers use the TRCs to browse the internet and download interactive teaching materials for their classes. A laptop for every teacher: This scheme provides 500 laptops a year to teachers with the condition of paying monthly charges for a period of two years (MoE & MoHE, 2019). By 2018, all schools had access to the internet but the internet connectivity is intermittent in some of the outer islands. Additionally, ICT is used as a tool for content delivery. For effective ICT integration in learning outcomes, in addition to the technical infrastructure, teachers need to have the necessary qualification and experience. It is good facilitation skills that allow learning to happen, and the rest are only tools. The effectiveness of technology in the classroom depends on the teacher's ability to use it appropriately in the teaching and learning process. The ICT related gadgets used in the classrooms include smart TVs, projectors, smartboards, computers, laptops and Ipads (MoE, 2019)





ICT Training workshop 2017
Source: nie.edu.mv

"I think it's the lack of knowledge, lack of training, lack of time for them to get used to it because they were just asked to start using it and teachers were just asked to complete the Google-Certificate level courses within a week and you know, being migrants to technology, it is not that easy.... It takes time and effort for anybody to learn." (TS) "...do not have basics, like, general ICT needs a lot of inputs and training." (HZ)

5.8 Distance Mode of Education

In the report Maldives Emergency Response (MoE, 2020), the difficulties for the teachers, with the different mode of teaching in the pandemic was highlighted. To ensure continuity of education during the pandemic the MoE decided to implement dual modes of teaching and learning: online classes and telecasted lessons via television, locally known as *'Telekilaas'*. *Telekilaas* sessions were developed and recorded to be telecasted by the Public Service Media, PSM. Data arrangements (5GB per month) were also provided for teachers and students in consultation with the two local internet service providers.

"...the biggest change is the online mode of teaching. Although this was offered, not many studentswere able to use it, because of their facilities and their financial capacity, And the other thing was the family situation wasn't the most favourable condition for them to have this." (HZ)

This was the first time that attempts like 'Teliklaas' and Online learning were used in the Maldivian school system and therefore, was not a familiar area for the teachers. It was also highlighted that teachers will require intensive capacity building programmes in student assessment in the new teaching and learning methods. To overcome one of the key challenges in online teaching in the Maldives, which is the technical capacity of teachers, the MoE, with support from UNICEF, has commenced an upskilling programme for 2,000 teachers. Using a core group of local trainers, the MoE trained teachers to become Google Certified Educators during 2020 (MoE, 2019).

By stating the key features of the contingency plan recommended to the schools by the MoE, it was noted that the academic staff are to plan and prepare to teach via digital platforms, in case school closure continues. One of the major challenges identified was that the teachers must use digital platforms approved by the MoE, and the learning process must be monitored by the respective schools. However, any trainings provided were not sufficient for all the teachers to become tech-savy and use IT excellently in their classrooms. The digital platforms approved by the MoE for teaching and learning were Google Classroom, TED-ED, YouTube, and EduPage. Almost all the schools used G suite tools to conduct live sessions and assign learning tasks to students.

"Since COVID, as you know, there was Google training online like that. But other than that, it's always been workshops, and nothing else." (MS)

With an advancement of digital technology, excessive screen time has become a huge concern. This has pushed researchers and practitioners to focus on digital well-being. Screen time during COVID-19 has further increased due to the lock down, because of public health measures enforced by governments to curb the pandemic. With the global societies under lockdown, the only medium to stay socio-emotionally connected was digitally. It has accelerated human's exposure to prolonged screen time which is becoming a growing concern. With regard to this issue, a handbook for parents on cyber safety was also launched during the first week of online classes to prevent or minimise the risks associated with technology, including cyberbullying (Maldives Education Response Plan, 2020).

The internet reach in the Maldives is much wider than in some developing countries. Though phone and internet services reach all islands of the archipelago, internet-based solutions have many drawbacks. Based on a survey carried out by the MoE in March 2020, it was found that over 31% of the audience (students, teachers and parents) did not have access to the internet or Wi-Fi at home (MoE, 2020). Some students also did not have the relevant devices. This meant a programme via the medium would not benefit a significant number of children. Hence, provision of mobile data to students and teachers was arranged. The MoE provided general instructions and guidance on the arrangement of teaching and learning for the lockdown period. For example, pre-recorded Telekilasses were conducted using the public TV channel. Consequently, schools have been instructed to use other platforms (such as Google Classroom) to conduct interactive lessons online.

Additionally, in collaboration with the Internet Service Providers (ISPs), arrangements were made for the students and teachers to receive 5GB mobile data packages. After a month, the data allowance for the teachers was increased to 10 GB. One of the major challenges to integrate ICT and deliver effective lessons on digital platforms was found to be teacher capacity. It is vital to train the teachers on using the digital tools and platforms

Based on the MoE internal comparative assessments in terms of cost, simplicity, and flexibility of alternative platforms, the MoE has decided to use G Suite by Google for general administration, and as a platform for teaching and learning. In this regard, the G suite setup has been done in all public schools, and user accounts have been created for all students and teachers in the country.

There is neither an enabling policy nor an established digital infrastructure for supporting a virtual learning system for schools that would strengthen education sector resilience to cope with school closure in the current crisis and future shocks that may also lead to school closure.

Distance learning is the "equity" solution which ensures the delivery of quality education for the few numbers of students in small islands all over the Maldives. Teachers need to extend additional engagement remotely. Schools prepared for a 'new normal' in teaching, with a hybrid/blended mode of learning. Under this mode, on-site (in school) learning and technology-based remote learning was pursued. This required training of all teachers and respective school staff for the new mode of teaching, with continuous monitoring and mentoring which was done in a haste during the pandemic.

In many contexts, TPD has moved online or been disseminated via telephone and video applications, but marginalised teachers may have missed out on such support. Web-based class meetings and messaging applications have become useful tools and new ways of communicating with their learners and the education community.

5.9 Use of Technology and Remote Learning

Enhancement projects by the MoE like 'School digitization project' have led to increased spending for ICT infrastructure. However, the low levels of mastery of language and mathematics and higher order thinking tasks at 4th and 7th Grade level indicate the need to highlight the importance of addressing the pedagogies and use of resources in schools, in order to enhance the learning outcomes. The classroom practices indicate the focus on memorisation despite the implementation of curriculum reform (Ministry of Education (MoE), 2019).

The Multi-Grade Teaching approach adopted in several schools already involves the use of the internet to monitor and provide support to teachers through qualified resource persons. Building on this infrastructure, it would be promising to build communities of teachers and enhance their capacities for use of ICTs for teaching and learning with inclusive pedagogies. The ongoing programme in Maldives to identify students with special education needs and development of Individual Education Plan for them also needs sustenance through continuous PD of teachers as focused by the proposed initiative.

Remote learning was adopted in various forms – pre-recorded lessons broadcast on TV ('Telekilaas'); live internet-mediated classes; or voice calls, video calls, document-sharing and chats (one-to-one

or in groups) using the popular Viber mobile phone application. Android tablets had recently been provided to all school students of Grade 3 and above, and they became important for continuity of learning. Teachers received intensive training on how to use the new technology; some were trained as trainers.

5.10 Access and Participation in Learning – Provision of Remote Learning

Maldives is better placed than many countries to adopt internet-based learning, but to do so still represents a challenge economically and in terms of connectivity, and for effective teaching, learning and individual learner support. The use of internet-mediated teaching, learning and school management and record keeping, using packages such as Google Suite and EduPage is useful and is expected to continue once all schools can fully reopen.

Major attention, however, needs to be given to finding ways to include those likely to be marginalised, including those with complex learning profiles (IEP, SEN) by adapting the technology or compensating for its limitations.

6. Professional Development of Teacher Educators

PD of academics is an area that is not explored sufficiently to understand the gaps and challenges. Most common modes of PD activities that lecturers engage in includes attending workshops and training, reading journal articles and books, discussion with colleagues, in contrast to reflective action research and mentoring (Zuha et. al, 2021). A former TE, regarding TE's PD mentioned "Try to observe teacher lessons (e.g. module coordinator can observe visiting lecturers) and share knowledge and insights further with each other" (HZ). Additionally, conducting research, taking part in seminars and creating conversations in social media platforms are other modes of PD that came up during the interviews. They said

"I think TEs do a lot of research these days. And they do share a lot of research information findings." (MA)

"we have like our partners, international partners, they also provide support in various wellness areas that we require support." (SR)

"I think they have conferences and seminars, and I've seen the TEs doing it. But recently, I've also seen clubhouse activities, where it was so informative, and we enjoyed it... You don't have to be physically present anywhere, but you can see TEs talking about their profession in their field..." (MA)

"The PD session will last for a week. We have PD sessions for all the lecturers including the part time lecturers." (AR).

According to Adam (2015), TEs' highlighted that they did not agree with the idea of 'one off' sessions. Rather they need PD that continue, on a regular basis. All in all, it can be concluded that regardless of the investment, the expected aims from the PD were not achieved, as organising only one PD session for each programme, such as one for Moodle or GEM, seems to be too limited for gaining learning from these sessions.

These conversations of TEs, in terms of integrating technology into their pedagogical practices, portrayed their limited uptake of introduced tools through the PD. It resulted from the lack of monitoring and support that should go along with PD; hence TEs are more willing to use digital tools when they receive support from their colleagues who understand what they need (Adam, 2015). Some TEs excitedly discussed that they learn a lot about using digital technologies through sharing and learning from each other on a regular basis. This idea suggests that TEs in this context do not need one-off or occasional sessions, rather ongoing PD sessions are pertinent to support their everyday teaching practices.

The government attempts to improve the conditions for the teaching professionals by providing better career advancement opportunities and more PD options for teachers. Moreover, like in many other countries within the subcontinent, there is a mismatch between policy outlining the newer curriculums' focus on competence and its understanding by teachers who are responsible for its implementation (MoE, 2019).

There is the need to provide opportunities for new teachers to get their training while staying in their own island as this will reduce inequality in teacher training that has been an ongoing issue for decades. Additionally, the Inclusivity in the education system can also be developed by addressing the geographic as well as gender disparities due to structural vulnerabilities like geographically isolated areas and limited human resources.

SECTION IV

7. PESTEL FRAMEWORK

This section of the report highlights the strength and weaknesses that were identified in the LMS study from political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal perspective.

7.1 School Education

	Pros	Cons
Political/	Several Educational Policies in place.	Some policies are not implemented
Governance	Structured education system from pre-	properly
	primary, and higher education.	Monitoring and evaluation need to be
	• Education response plan for COVID 19	strengthened
	was established and implemented during	
	the pandemic	
	Online platforms for education were	
	carried out	
Economic/	• Spends 4.1 percent of the country's	Low performance rate due to
Financial	GDP on education	unmatched or mismatched skills
	• 12.1 percent of total government	Unable to increase the share of
	expenditure is on education	employment in highly skilled jobs due to
	• Incentives to support over 2500 local	low enrollment, retention and completion
	students annually, in financing higher	rate at Higher Education levels
	education from both local and foreign	
	educational institutes	
Social	The education sector is funded by	Uneven demographic distribution of
	domestic and foreign sources, with over	resources and limited human Capital
	90 percent of the funding covered by	
	domestic sources.	
	All schools across the country (see	
	Appendix H) are administered under the	
	supervision of the School Administration	
	(SA) Division of MoE.	

Technology	All schools have access to internet	Internet connectivity issues are
	Remote learning was adopted in	experienced in some outer islands
	various forms eg: pre-recorded lessons	Teachers need to be educated and
	broadcast on TV ('Telekilaas'); live	sufficient time needs to be given to
	internet-mediated classes; or voice calls,	them to practise before sending off to
	video calls, document-sharing and chats	experience
	(one-to-one or in groups) using the	
	popular Viber mobile phone application.	
	Tablets are provided to all school	
	children of grade 3 and above	
Environment	High literacy rate	Decline in enrolment at higher
	Fair enrollment rate at primary and	secondary and higher education level
	lower secondary levels	No studies conducted to study trends
		and patterns in retention and completion
		of studies at various levels
Legal	Completing 12 year of schooling	Maldives Polytechnic to deliver courses
	is compulsory (foundation to lower	under the authority of TVETA
	secondary)	
	TVET units were transformed to	
	TVET Authority in 2011 as a regulatory	
	authority	

7.2 Teacher Professional Development

	Pros	Cons
Political/	Rapid changes in the past few years	With the increase in the number of
Governance	with several private colleges offering	teachers trained, there was also the
	teacher training programs.	drawback of compromising the quality of
	Enabled through government political	teachers
	initiatives	Mismatch between policy outlining the
		new curriculums focus on competence
		and teachers' understanding on
		implementation.
Economic/	The government finances the teacher	Opportunities for pre-service teacher
Financial	education programs run by public	training is still limited in some islands
	universities	There is limited budget allocation to
	There is a budget allocated for school	TPD programs
	based TPD programmes	

Social	Equal opportunities for TPD to both	In some islands more local teachers
	local and expatriate teachers	are trained to replace expatriates hence
		not providing PD opportunities for
		expatriates, when a social perspective is
		considered.
Technology	Ministry launched a new training	Teachers were required to use ICT with
	program for teachers with several	limited technical training and experience
	Google-certified educators	
Environment	Online training courses were held for	Teachers, students in remote islands
	teachers in geographically dispersed	had minimal access to the internet
	islands.	outside school premises.
	• Laptops were given to all teachers.	
	Mobile data was arranged	
Legal	Teacher education programs are	Limited policies relating to establishing
	periodically monitored and evaluated by	digital infrastructure to support virtual
	the Maldives Qualifications Authority	learning if in case of school closure

7.3 Professional Development of Teacher Educators

	Pros	Cons
Political/ Governance	• Teacher training institutions conduct PD sessions for TEs on a regular basis.	There is no policy on professional development for TEs.
and Legal		lack of monitoring and support that should go along with PD
		PD are not organised well to enhance TEs' pedagogical practices.
		• Insufficient attention given to TEs practicum, and to the practising of teaching skills in a micro-teaching situation during pre-service training of teachers.
Economic/ Financial	Budget is allocated for TEs PD by the government for the government universities.	Budget is inadequate
	Private teacher education institutions have allocated budget for TEs PD	
Social	TEs engage in conferences and seminarsSome TEs use clubhouse.	Unstructured PD for TEs

Technology	The majority of the TEs have basic skills	TEs have limited knowledge and
	and knowledge to use ICT.	training on use of digital technologies in
	There is no limitation in access to	PD sessions
	gadgets and resources	
Environment	TEs are given the opportunities to	Major attention needs to be given to
	identify the PD needs and develop a	finding ways to include marginalised
	training and development needs for that	people, including those with complex
	particular year (See Appendix G for PD	learning profiles (IEP, SEN) by adapting
	sessions conducted in a Higher education	the technology or compensating for its
	institute)	limitations.

As per the PESTEL Framework several areas of strengths and gaps have been identified. The project aims to influence the policy, practice, and further research in distance TPD through action research and communities of practice. The PESTEL Framework has been pivotal in identifying strengths and gaps in TPD in the Maldives. Firstly, in terms of the school system, it has been observed that the Maldivian schools are structured from pre-primary to higher education level.

There are several policies such as the disaster response plan and other educational policies, however, it is identified that some of these policies are not implemented properly and there is a serious issue in monitoring and evaluation. These gaps can be addressed with proper implementation of proper mechanisms to monitor and evaluate. Through TPDs schools will be in a better position to address this policy gap.

The geographical disparity poses several challenges to human capital. Although all schools in Maldives have internet access, the internet connectivity issues are experienced in some outer islands. It is foreseeable that if such issues are not resolved by the time of project implementation several challenges are to be expected in implementing the TPD project involving participants from outer islands. It is also expected that the teachers will be better equipped to conduct research to understand student enrolment, retention and employability issues. Furthermore, the project is designed in and for under-resourced and developing contexts. The project also ensures the usage of diverse technologies and modalities for TPD that are context-appropriate, combined with action research and social learning through formation of Professional Learning Communities while building on the communities of practice that exist or get developed through mobile-based chat groups.

Since there are 2 public and 7 private institutions offering teacher training there is a greater risk of compromising quality. This concern can be addressed through the project through creating awareness on the importance of TPD for quality teaching and learning in schools. Thus, PDs need to be conducted to teachers on virtual learning. This is in line with project goals that aims to enhance the capacity of TEs and teachers by developing their leadership skills and knowledge in constructive use of new media and technology to enhance their practices; and to mobilise support of and share insights with relevant stakeholders on adapting, adopting, and sustainability of pedagogically rich TPD approaches.

In addition to conducting PDs, there are specific areas that need attention in PD of TEs. In terms of governance, it is identified that there are no existing policies in TEs PDs. Many of the TE are left alone to do their work, without proper monitoring and evaluation of their skills and knowledge which is a huge risk to student teachers. Higher education institutions providing teacher training need to incorporate teaching practice and micro teaching into teaching programs. Through TPDs schools will be in a better position to address to this policy gap. It is hope that through this project several of the concerns and gaps related to teachers and TEs can be addressed.

Furthermore, available funding for professional development TE is unclear which is very crucial to the development of TE. However, funding and budgeting issues are beyond the scope of this study.

Implications of the study

The Landscape Mapping Study identifies the following gaps and research priorities in supporting TE and TPD. Through this project we hope to address the stated needs to prioritise in supporting TE engagement and collaboration efforts in developing communities of education.

- There is a lack of opportunities for TE to work with teachers in schools and develop an understanding of the knowledge and content delivery in classrooms.
- Teachers and TE have few community avenues supporting the TPD such as seminar and conferences.
- There is a need for support and inculcate a research culture among teachers and TE to engage in field-based research which allows to identify challenges and find contextual solutions.
- There is a need for an online/ hybrid curriculum for TEs and teachers to improve their practice and enhance skills of reflection in their practice.

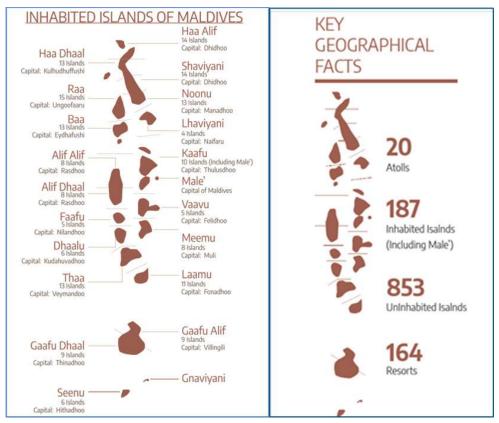
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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Inhabited Island of Maldives and key geographical facts



Source: National Bureau of Statistics, 2020

Appendix B: Schooling and key stages

Age	Grade	Key Stages	Phase
18	12		
17		Key Stage 5	Higher Secondary
16	11		
201	10		
15	9	Key Stage 4	
14	-		Lower Secondary
13	8	Key Stage 3	
12	7	ney stage s	
12	6		
11			
10	5	Key Stage 2	
9	4		Datasassas
7	3		Primary
8		W 5	
7	2	Key Stage 1	
6	1		
0	UKG	UKG	
5	100000	Foundation	Foundation
4	LKG		

Source: NIE, 2016

Appendix C: Budget 2021 - New Policy Initiatives for Education Sector 2021-2023 (in MVR)

Ministry of Education	2021	2022	2023
Enhancing Remote- Learning	5,000,000	5,000,000	
Educational Development in 5 regions	50,000,000	35,000,000	20,000,000
Establishment of Satellite School	4,000,000	2,000,000	
Relocating School Zone Offices to 5 Regions	2,500,000	200,000	200,000
Ministry of Higher Education			
Re-skilling Jobseekers	6,350,000	5,000,000	
Delivery of Trainings required for resort management	3,000,000	3,000,000	3,000,000
Establishment of an Integrate Higher Education Management System	2,280,000		

(Source: MoF 2021)

Appendix D: Education Policies (MoE, 2019)

POLICY	ACTIONS
Education Strategic Action Plan 2013- 2018	Strategic actions are listed under 5 goals 1. No child is left behind 2. Every youth is skilled 3. Ensuring higher education 4. Reputed schools with adequate resources 5. Skills related to economic revolution
Master Plan for access to quality higher education 2017-2022	Support from World Bank Key analytical work that guided the development of the master plan are: • Human Capital for a knowledge society • Higher Education in the Maldives, an Evolving seascape (2011) Human Capital for a Modern Society: General Education in the Maldives, an Evolving Seascape (2012)
No Child left Behind Policy Framework	Focus on ensuring inclusive quality learning opportunities which caters to the needs of every child To reach his/her full potential, aiming at 14 years of free education starting at the age of 4 in pre primary education till they complete higher secondary education at the age of 18 or 19, including a 10 year compulsory cycle form grades 1 to 10. Initiative include: Dhasvaaru program; Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) an international qualification offered by MoE in 178 out of 190 secondary schools The inclusive education policy for children with disabilities, offering some form of education for children with special needs (185 out of 212 schools in 2017)

National Curriculum Framework (NCF) Reform	Defining values, expected learning outcomes and key skills and competencies, rolled out starting in 2015, through the production of teaching and learning materials and teacher training programs. The external school review highlights new challenges to be addressed such as: improving teaching and learning in the classroom by supporting teachers through school-based, practical training on lesson planning, teaching for understanding and higher level cognitive skills, using remedial education best practices, supporting the implementation of new curricula in small islands as well as the student assessment process, and inadequate parental engagement (Quality Assurance Department, 2018).
Multi-grade Teaching (MGT) strategy to improve learning	In response to support island schools with very low student enrolments but with a wide grade as well as age-range and to address the declining enrollment in the atoll schools due largely to rapid migration to Malé region and to other population centres. This support is provided through additional investments in classroom set-ups and ICT, and targeted in-service teacher training on MGT strategies in around 41 MGT schools. Improving teacher quality, re-branding the MGT as 'Learning Groups for Excellence' where appropriate, and analysis of its impact on learning outcomes through the NALO findings are necessary to help the program's contribution on improving learning in the more isolated and small communities that face specific challenges in the delivery of educational services.
Pre-primary education integration in the public system:	The 2 years of education prior to Primary school, LKG and UKG years of Pre-School education, have become the responsibility of the MOE.
National Assessment of Learning Outcomes (NALO)	This policy focuses on systemic quality improvement.

The Inclusive Education Policy:	The Inclusive Education Policy (IEP) promotes and facilitates the education provision for children with disabilities across the country. Currently there are 52 specialized Special Education Needs (SEN) units and 178 schools with SEN trained teachers across the country, catering to over 1,172 students with special needs. (MoE, 2009)
TVET in schools and outside schools	Maldives is developing a system of TVET education both in schools through appropriate policy initiatives (BTEC, Dhasvaaru- alternative pathway for apprenticeship) and out of schools (Polytechnics, TVET, colleges, non-formal) for skills development matching the market needs.
Teacher Quality Policies	Continuous professional development opportunities are provided to uplift the quality of in-service teachers and to ensure all teachers hold a minimum qualification of at least a diploma.
MEMIS	The need for a comprehensive central database in the Educational System of the Maldives came about with the difficulty in managing the old system. A MEMIS familiarization program and basic training was completed for all schools in the Maldives in December 2016. MEMIS was officially launched in the Maldives on 16 July 2017, which was a major milestone as this database is the first of its kind for the education sector in the Maldives.
Quality assurance mechanisms policy framework:	The Quality Assurance Department (QAD) was established within the Ministry of Education in 2015 with a mandate to undertake studies to assess the quality of education at the system level and to advice on ways to improve quality through quality assessment through "whole school" reviews and as part of the School Improvement, Quality Assurance and Accountability Framework (SIQAAF).

Source: (MoE, 2019)



ACADEMIC CALENDAR 2021 - 2022

REVISED ON 31st JAN 2022

Term	Duration	No. of Days
Term 1	10 Aug - 23 Dec 2021	89
Term 2	16 Jan - 30 Jun 2022	110
	Total	199

EAR	MONTH		M	T.	w		F		CALENDAR DATES	PUBLIC HOLIDAYS
	AUGUST	1	2		340	5	6	7	3 Aug 2021: Teachers Reporting Day	
		8		10	11	12	13	14	10 Aug 2021: Academic Year 2021-2022 Starts	9 Aug. Islamic New Year
		15	16	17	18	19	20	21	10 Aug: Education Act comes into effect	
		22	23	24	25	26	27	28		
	SEPTEMBER	29	30	31	1	2	3	4		
		5	6	7	8	.9	10	11	8 Sep: International Literacy Day	
		12	13	14	15	16	-17	18	16 Sep: 1st PD Day	
		19	20	21	22	23	24	25		
		26	27	28	29	30			26 Sep: Academic Year for Grade 11 starts	and the second second
		3	4	5	6		8	9	5 Oct: Teachers' Day	7 Oct: National Day
2021	OCTOBER	10	11	12	13	14	15	16		
		17	33	19	20	21	22	23	17 Oct - 21 Oct: First Term Mid Break	18 Oct: Prophet Mohammad (SAW) Birth Day
		24	25	26	27	28	29	30		
		31	1	2	1	4				3 Nov: Victory Day
	NOUTHER	7	8	9	10	11	12	13		
	NOVEMBER	14	15	16	17	18	19	20		7 Nov: The Day Maldives Embraced Islam
		21	22	23	24	25	26	27		11 Nov: Republic Day
		28	29	30	1	2	3	4		
	DECEMBER	5	6	7	8	.9	10	11		
			13	14	15	16	17	18	5 Dec - 16 Dec: First Term Exam	
н	With the second	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	23 Dec: End of First Term	
		26	27	28	25	30	31	1	26 Dec - 13 Jan: First Term Holidays	1 Jan: New Year
		2	3	4	5	-6	7	8		
		9	10	11	12	13	14	15		
	JANUARY	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	16 Jan: Beginning of Second Term	
		23	24	25	26	27	28	29	To sail. Deginning of Second Ferm	
		30	31	1	2	3	4	5	3 Feb: 2nd PD Day	
		6	7	8	9	10	11	12	2100.100.000	
	FEBRUARY	13	14	15	16	17	18	19		
	LEBRUARI	20	21	22	23	24	25	26		
	1	27	28	1	2	3	4	5		
		6	7	8	9	10	11	12		
		13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20 - 24 Mar. School Self Evaluation (SSE)	
	MARCH	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	20 Mar - 31 Mar. Second Term Exam & Mock	
	A. C.	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	Exam Gr. 10,11 &12	2 Apr: First of Ramadan
		3	4	29	6	7		9	3 Apr - 7 Apr: Second Term Mid Break	2 Apr. First of Kattadan
		10		12	13	14	15	16	3 Apr - / Apr. Second Term Mid Dreak	
	APRIL	-	11	-	MARKETON				21 Apr. 3rd PD Day	
EU K.K		17	18	19	20	21	22	23	21 Apr. Sta PD Day	
8		24	25	26	27	28	29	30	ALL VI ALL IN LAND	
	MAY		-	10	-	- 12	6	7	04th May O level Exam begins	1 May: Labour Day
		8	9	10	11	12	13	14	10 May: Children's Day	2 May, Eid - al - Fitr
		15	16	17	18	19	20	21		3 May - 5 May. On the occasion of Eid - al - Fitr
		22	23	24	25	26	n	28		
		29	30	31	1	2	3	4		
		5	6	7	8	9	10	11		
	JUNE	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	12 Jun - 23 Jun: Second Term Exam	
		19	20	21	22	23	24	25	Strategic Strate	
		26	27	28	29	30	1	2	30 Jun: End of Second Term	
		1	4	5	.0	7		9		8 Jul: Hajj Day
	JULY	10	22	18.	2.3	1.5	15	16	3 Jul - 1 Aug: Annual Holidays	9 Jul: Eid - al - Adha
	-7.7.77	17	18	19	20	21	22	23		10 Jul - 14 Jul: On the occasion of Eid - al - Adha
		24	25	26.	-27	28	29	30		26 Jul - 28 Jul: Independence Day Holidays
	AUGUST	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	2 Aug 2022: Teachers Reporting Day	
	Acoesi	(7)	8	9	10	11	12	13	7 Aug 2022: Academic Year 2022 - 2023 Starts	
		1								

Source: (Ministry of Education, 2021)

Name of Atoll	GOVERNMENT	COMMUNITY	PRIVATE	TOTAL Schools
Name of Atoli	Schools	Schools	Schools	
Haa Alifu	14		2	16
Haa Dhaalu	15		1	16
Shaviyani	14	1	1	15
Noonu	13		4	17
Raa	16		6	22
Baa	12		2	14
Lhaviyani	4	- 4	2	6
Kaafu	9		2	11
Alifu Alifu	8		2	10
Alifu Dhaalu	10		3	13
Vaavu	3			3
Meemu	8			8
Faafu	5			5
Dhaalu	6		2	8
Thaa	13		1	14
Laamu	13		1	14
Gaafu Alifu	9		2	11
Gaafu Dhaalu	11	10	2	13
Gnaviyani	4		4	8
Seenu	9		4	13
Male'	16	3	19	38
Atolls Total	196		41	237
TOTAL	212	3	60	275

Source: Ministry of Education, 2020

Appendix G: List of Professional Development Activities conducted in a selected Higher Education Institution for the year 2021

		Ť
Activity	Date	Target Audience
SMS + Moodle Orientation	18th January 2021	New lecturers
LMS policy + changes to Moodle + Turnitin	19th January 2021	All lecturers
Familiarizing with parallel class setup	20th January 2021	All lecturers
Familiarizing with parallel class setup	21st January 2021	All lecturers
Introduction to academic policies and procedures	28th January 2021	New lecturers
Scheduling and conducting classes on Microsoft Team	30th January 2021	All teaching staff
Collaborative Online Learning	27th February 2021	All teaching staff
SMS + Moodle Orientation	6th June 2021	New lecturers
Introduction to academic policies and procedures	7th June 2021	New lecturers
Online conference: Digital Examinations Forum 2021	15 to 24th June 2021	All academic staff invited
Online conference: E-Assessment in Mathematical Sciences	21 June to 2nd July 2021	All academic staff invited
CRADLE Seminar Series: How can 'assessment for learning' meaningfully contribute to 'programmatic assessment'?	22nd June 2021	All academic staff invited
Setting up quizzes on Moodle	3rd July 2021	BIBM staff
Online conference: Assessment in Higher Education	July 2021	All academic staff invited
Research supervision workshop for Dhivehi Medium Programmes	12th June 2021	Research supervisors
Research supervision workshop for English Medium Programmes	19th June 2021	Research supervisors
Live webinar: e-cheating and assessment security	8th and 21st September 2021	All academic staff invited
Live webinar: The Hybrid Classroom: How to Engage Students to Promote Individual and Collective Learning	9th September 2021	All academic staff invited
Hybrid learning training session	29-30th September 2021	All teaching staff
Operation: Student engagement	2nd November 2021	All teaching staff
Workshop on developing interactive lesson-based videos through HTML5 package (H5P)	16-17th November 2021	40 staff from Villa College
Live webinar: Future of learning and work	17th November 221	All academic staff invited

