St. Vincent and the Grenadines

Summary

In 2002, all secondary and 25 percent of primary schools in St. Vincent and the Grenadines received computer labs supporting IT exam preparation and basic computer skills. These installations are currently in need of significant maintenance.

ICT policy in education is well developed, and complements significant policy and planning efforts in economic development, telecommunications, and other sectors. Capacity within the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports (MOEYS) to achieve policy goals must be developed—a need that is clearly recognized within the ministry itself.

The country of St. Vincent and the Grenadines faces an array of emerging economic challenges. These include effects of globalization, such as out-migration of skilled labor and increased agricultural competition in export markets, as well as challenges historically common to SIDS, such as vulnerability to climate events and to fluctuations in the global economy. Export agriculture, notably crops such as bananas and arrowroot that were previous mainstays of the economy, has declined, with impact of this decline felt most among the rural poor. Although recent growth rates have increased, the country remains among the poorer in the Caribbean in

Basic Data

Category	Date	Value
Population	2006	117,848
Per capita GDP (PPP)	2005	$3,600
Economy, composition	2005	Tourism, light manufacturing, financial services, agriculture
Literacy, total population 15 and over	1970	96
Literacy rate (women)	1970	96
Gross enrollment ratio, primary	2002/3	107.3
Gross enrollment ratio, primary (girls)	2002/3	105.9
Gross enrollment ratio, secondary	2002/3	69.2
Gross enrollment ratio, secondary (girls)	2002/3	72.7
Number of primary schools	2006	61
Number of secondary schools	2006	26
Language of instruction	—	English

Sources: World Factbook, UNESCO, MOE

Relevant Policies

Document	Status	Date	Key points and objectives
National Policy on the Use of ICT in Education	Draft	2004	■ Emphasis on ICT to support learner-centered activities, per OERU policy template
National Training Plans for TVET	—	—	—
Education Sector Development Plan	Adopted	2002	■ Sets goals and vision, not focused on ICT
ICT Strategy and Action Plan 2002 to 2006	Adopted Modified in 2004	2002	■ National plan, not specific to education

Source: MOEYS

terms of per-capita GDP, with 38 percent of the population living below the national poverty line.

Implementation of ICT in schools remains in its early stages. However, with support from international and bi-lateral donors, St. Vincent has embarked on a comprehensive economic-development program keyed by a PRSP and related planning and policy documents emphasizing adoption of ICT. Recent milestones include the achievement of universal secondary education. Principal donors include the EU, CDB, DfID, Taiwan, and the World Bank.

ICT policy in education, drawing from the OERU policy template, emphasizes the use of ICT to enhance education quality by facilitating learner-centered pedagogical practices. In fiscal 2007, the Government of St. Vincent allocated 22 percent of its recurrent and 20 percent of its capital expenditures to education, with the latter earmarked primarily for the construction and upgrading of schools.

Policy and planning

St. Vincent benefits from a comprehensive set of policy and planning documents relative to the country's population and the complexity of its economy. (This may in part be a result of substantial donor involvement in several sectors of the economy and government.)

The most recent and relevant policies, such as the *National Policy on the Use of ICT in Education* and the *National Training Plan for Technical and Vocational Education and Training,* emphasize

development of high-demand job skills. In emphasizing problem solving, communication, and other skills in conjunction with computer skills these plans align with broader plans and policies, such as the *ICT Strategy and Action Plan.*

Implementation, however, currently lags planning; effective influence of policy on ICT use in schools has yet to be felt.

ICT in primary and secondary Schools

With funding from Taiwan, all secondary schools and 25 percent of primary schools received computer labs in 2002. These facilities primarily support CXC IT exam preparation and basic computer studies. All schools have IT specialists on staff.

To a greater extent than is common in the region, the need to overcome barriers to maintenance of existing installations has become critical, with respondents suggesting that no more than 40 percent of installed hardware is functioning. Additional funding for maintenance has been requested, with maintenance to be provided by a unit in the Ministry of Telecommunications, Science & Technology.

Primary schools
Although still in the planning phase, MOEYS has prioritized movement toward goals that are cognate with the *National Policy on the Use of ICT in Education,* notably the use of ICT to enhance student learning in language arts and science and to support PBL.

ICT Resources in Schools

School type	Number	Median enrollment	ICT profile
Primary schools	61	~150	■ 15 schools have computer labs ■ 30 computers, one server, one printer per lab ■ Used mainly for computer literacy
Secondary schools (includes vocational)	26	~250	■ 26 schools have computer labs ■ 30 computers, one server, one printer per lab ■ Used mainly for CXC IT exam preparation

Source: MOEYS

Secondary schools

Plans for secondary schools include ICT access across the curriculum, with computers and the Internet supporting demonstrations by teachers and classroom use by students in all disciplines.

Bequia High School community multimedia center

In July 2007 the high school on the island of Bequia, the northernmost of the Grenadine islands, began broadcasting radio programming developed at its Community Media Center (CMC). Students and teachers at Bequia High School, having received training in multimedia skills including Internet use, interviewing techniques and scripting of radio content, sound editing, and other skills develop the programming, which is intended at least in part to support community development. Teachers have also received TPD enabling them to integrate information-literacy education into school curricula. The Bequia High School CMC has emerged from a partnership among the high school, UNESCO, and the St. Vincent and the Grenadines National Commission for UNESCO.

In partnership with UNESCO, Bequia High School will support the CMC-based broadcast

Teacher professional development

TPD has been roughly commensurate with ICT implementation in schools. Teachers have been trained through a variety of programs, however additional training, including training in educational uses of computers and the Internet, is required.

Among the barriers to effective TPD, as noted by respondents, is teachers' disinterest in the use of ICT in relation to both classroom activities and administrative tasks. (This lack of interest may, however, be reflective of lack of access and capacity.)

Plans for increased support for learner-centered pedagogy, noted in the previous section, also call for linking ICT use to curriculum reform and new TPD initiatives.

Teacher Professional Development Programs

TPD program type	Target population	Objectives	Scale	Barriers
MOEYS in-service training—2002 (supported by Taiwan)	In-service primary and secondary teachers	■ Help teachers build basic computer skills	■ 500 teachers overall	■ Teachers lack interest in computer use in schools
MOEYS training of IT specialists	In-service teachers selected as IT specialists	■ Provide skilled support on-site in each school	■ 45 teachers	■ Training and support for maintenance functions is inadequate
MOEYS additional training—intermittent, ongoing	In-service primary and secondary teachers	■ Help teachers build basic computer skills	■ Not known	■ Teachers lack interest in computer use in schools

Source: MOEYS

Tertiary education

Establishment of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Community College (SVGCC) was authorized in 2005. Computer facilities are located at the central Villa Arts & Science Campus of SVGCC, and in 2005 comprised 70 computers divided between the department of Computer Science and the Information Resources Center. Internet connectivity at a bandwidth of 512 Kbps is shared among these computers and among any computers used by faculty or administrators.

At the time of the 2005 assessment, student access was limited to 17 computers as a result of inadequate electrical power and limited IT management capacity.

EC funding has been requested to improve the ICT facilities at SVGCC.

UWIDEC also maintains a distance education center on St. Vincent.

Nonformal education

As part of its effort to upgrade workforce skills and support community development, the Government of St. Vincent has established Learning Resource Centers (LRCs) in each of the country's precincts. The goal of the LRC program is to afford all St. Vincent citizens with access to ICT and to effective training.

EMIS and ICT capacity within MOEYS

MOEYS has identified EMIS as a priority. However, capacity within the ministry is not adequate for procurement and implementation of complex solutions on a systemwide basis. Lack of technical skills in schools forms a second, equally significant, barrier.

Barriers and challenges

- **Significant gap between policy and practice:** Gaps between policy and practice create pressure for ambitious—as opposed to incremental—projects that may be beyond the capacity of the MOEYS and other implementing organizations. To meet the goals outlined by current policy, ICT use must be coupled with comprehensive changes in curricula, TPD, and assessment. Such changes cannot be accomplished within the shorter horizons of most political or budgetary cycles.

- **Limited capacity within MOEYS in relation to project plans:** The gap between current practice, in which basic computer skills are emphasized, and policy goals that focus on ICT integration in the service of the development of a twenty-first century workforce, reflects the limited experience within the MOEYS in relation to effective ICT implementation. Planning of incremental change and procurement of competent technical assistance are critical if the MOEYS is to avoid duplicating the failures of high-profile projects within the region.

- **Installed systems require high levels of maintenance:** Capacity within MOEYS to maintain systems currently installed is inadequate. The high proportion of non-functional computers limits existing programs that are focused on helping students build basic computing skills, and renders plans for increased ICT support of student-centered teaching and learning moot. Proposed collaboration with the Ministry of Telecommunications, Science and Technology may help alleviate this problem.