

## Professional Development of Education Managers

In many DMCs, no department is clearly responsible for administrative training. It falls through the cracks or gets grafted onto teacher training, almost as an afterthought.

If education management across Asia is to improve, there will need to be effective training on a massive scale. But training, by itself, is not the solution. Much of the weak education management in the region is due to factors other than deficits in training. The appearance of inept management can often be traced to sources other than a lack of management skills. Too often, training is offered as a remedy for problems that arise from deterioration of political influence or lack of needed funds to make the necessary changes. Planning requires hard choices, which may be difficult to make in unstable political environments. Poor training may contribute to lack of adequate strategic planning, but often is not the biggest factor.

Even when effective training is the answer, it has a downside. As educators develop new management, budgeting, and planning skills, their opportunities for alternative employment, particularly in the private sector, will increase. Hence, as the economies of Asia continue to grow and prosper, retention of qualified education administrators will become increasingly difficult.

### Climbing a Steep Hierarchy: Career Paths

The weaknesses evident in education management across DMCs can be traced, in varying degrees, to (i) who enters the field and how they are selected, (ii) the lack of formal programs that prepare administrators for the management tasks they face, and (iii) the lack of career ladders that might provide motivation for continued professional growth. These factors are discussed below.

- (i) *Who Enters the Field.* Becoming a head teacher is one of the few paths of upward mobility for a teacher, and most head teachers are recruited from the teaching force. Principals earn more than teachers, and often have increased status in the community. They move into administration based on their competence as a teacher, longevity, and interest. In some cases, the motivation is more to escape teaching than an interest or commitment to school management. For example, the Philippines Congressional Committee on Education (1992, 82) observed that one consequence of the low salary, poor working conditions, and low self-esteem of teachers is an increase in teachers' aspirations for administrative positions. Thus, their in-service

- training, instead of strengthening teaching, serves as preparation for further administrative assignments which are considered opportunities for promotion.
- (ii) *Formal Preparation.* While some countries offer short in-service training sessions for new head teachers or system administrators, few DMCs offer formal preservice training. Most head teachers and ministry staff learn their jobs by watching their predecessors or by trial and error. Given the relatively low education preparation of education administrators (who typically entered the profession 20 to 30 years ago when requirements were lower), their career options are limited. Moreover, few incentives exist for administrative and managerial personnel to increase productivity or efficiency.
- (iii) *Career Ladder.* Once a head teacher, there is again little upward mobility and not much turnover. Head teachers tend to stay in their jobs for a long time. For instance, in Cambodia head teachers average 45 years of age and have been in their positions for an average of 15 years (Table 12). Only about one in 10 head teachers has completed secondary school plus teacher training. This means that school management is largely in the hands of those trained long ago, often in very different ideological contexts, and who entered administration at a time when entry requirements were lower than they are today. The relatively low level of education required of head teachers at the time they entered the profession now works against them as it constrains their employment alternatives.

The slowed growth in enrollments being experienced in many countries, particularly in East Asia, means fewer opportunities for teachers to move into head teacher slots and fewer opportunities for head teachers to move into intermediate and senior ministry positions. To the extent this pattern becomes pronounced, slowed turnover could lead to "administrator stagnation." This takes on more significance in the light of the genuinely new pressures that await school administrators over the next decade, a topic discussed later.

The middle ranks are generally filled with civil service managers, appointed because they appeared (to senior officials) to be able individuals who wanted government employment. Some might have previously taught in or managed schools, but that is not generally a prerequisite and in some countries it is a rarity. The senior ranks are usually filled by political appointment, chosen to reward

**Table 12: Cambodia: Characteristics of School Principals, 1996/97**

<i>Area</i>	<i>Number of schools</i>	<i>Average age</i>	<i>Average years of service</i>	<i>Completed upper secondary school plus teacher training</i>	<i>Number and percentage of females</i>
Urban areas	912	45.1	17.2	125 (14%)	188 (21%)
Rural areas	4,531	45.0	15.0	228 (5%)	323 (7%)
Remote areas	725	42.7	13.2	18 (2.5%)	32 (4%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,168</b>	<b>44.7</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>371 (6%)</b>	<b>543 (9%)</b>

Notes: (1) Figures cover preschools, primary schools, secondary schools, and lycées.

(2) Data for principals by type/level of school were not recorded in the statistical report.

individuals for their political loyalty, their professional standing or, ideally, some combination. Consequently, many school principals in the region have little or no formal training for their jobs. Middle-level managers in the intermediate and central ministry levels often do not have previous on-the-job training or work experience in the schools that would help them understand the practical dimensions of the education issues that they face. *The implication of this profile is that those most responsible for leading the schools into a new era are those most deeply entrenched in the old era.*

## What Training is Needed?

Management functions at two levels. At the *strategic level*, managers develop mission statements and a vision for an organization. Managers at this level have to understand the full range of management tools and organizational functions, and how they can be integrated and adapted to changing conditions. At the *functional level*, managers focus on specific production or process-level activities, e.g., inventory control, financial accounting, or personnel assignment. The training for the two levels is quite different. Yet management training is often structured around specific skill acquisition, without sufficient attention to the integration of the skills within any larger strategic framework or to the development of the problem-solving skills needed when individuals encounter situations that do not fall comfortably within the rules.

One window into what senior education officials across Asia see as the greatest training needs of central, intermediate, and school-level administrators was provided by the Regional Seminar on Education Management Issues, Policy, and Information, sponsored by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCO-PROAP) in 1997. As part of the workshop, senior planning officials from 17 countries ranked the importance of management issues confronting central, intermediate, and school-level administrators in their own countries. Results of this exercise (Appendix 1, Tables A1.1-1.3) suggest, at the national level, more interest in strategic and long-term planning than in narrower issues, techniques, and tools. Managers at intermediate levels of the ministry were thought (by senior-level planners) to be more interested in school-oriented issues (micro-planning, school mapping, staff training) while school-level administrators were thought to be most concerned with developing fairly concrete skills in such areas as financial management, staff development, and community relations.

Most training for education managers has been *skill focused* (e.g., how to budget, analyze data, design an evaluation). Yet much of the need is for strategic thinking, analysis of cross-impacts, and ability to work with constituent groups. Lack of forward planning appears to be the main pitfall in many countries' efforts to operate their education systems. While few studies provide careful analysis of training needs, there is a remarkably common set of areas in which the need for better skills are cited:

- long-term planning;
- more analytic skills in assessing problems;

- anticipating the probable impact of proposed solutions;
- financial management; and
- attention to follow-through.

These are not necessarily amenable to short-term, skills-oriented training. While planning and problem assessment techniques can be shared during short-term training sessions, their successful use requires (i) practice, (ii) an opportunity to seek clarification and additional help in applying the new approaches, and (iii) encouragement and support for having successfully implemented the ideas. Often, none of these is present.

The more profound problem in the preparation of managers is that, even if they have strategic planning skills, they often lack firm understanding of education process. They do not know what inputs and processes can reasonably be expected to contribute to increased student learning. Lacking this, managers are left to react to daily events and political pressures. One implication is that managerial training needs to provide education administrators with some framework for understanding the education process, and information on what interventions have the best chance of yielding promising outputs.

## The Delivery of Administrator Training: What Works?

Where training is part of the solution, it typically has been organized in three ways:

- training of entry-level supervisor and managers;
- extended training in fundamental skills for existing managers and technicians; and
- professional development and skill upgrading of existing managers.

Across the region, public sector training has been conducted through four primary mechanisms: *in-house training capability* (e.g., Nepal), *centralized government training facilities* (e.g., the PRC), *nongovernment training facilities* (programs at local universities), and *on-the-job training* (e.g., in virtually all DMCs in the region). These differ in both cost and the type of training they are best able to deliver. More conceptually based training takes longer and is more expensive.

Skills-based training may miss some of the more important training needs, but is less expensive and can be delivered faster. One seemingly unanticipated outcome of the move toward decentralization is the cost of preparing lower-level managers to make choices that were once reserved for top management.

## The Role of International Assistance Agencies

Weak management capacity is a major reason for the underutilization of international funds and the underperformance of development projects.

International agencies have an interest in strengthening local government management, if only to protect their own investments in national development. Take the case of Viet Nam, where the government estimated an overall development program requirement of around \$10 billion over the 1994-2000 period. Disbursement rates in 1993 were an indicative \$400 million, or one quarter of the overall requirement (ADB 1996). One reason identified by both the Government and ADB was weakness in the management of the education sector.

Two issues need to be considered in assessing the role of international assistance agencies in strengthening education management. The first is the effectiveness of the administrative and management training provided through internationally funded projects. The second is the extent to which internationally funded projects are designed and operate in ways that reinforce effective local management. For all the eagerness of DMCs to secure external moneys, many are harshly critical of the way that international agencies operate, claiming that it undercuts local prerogatives and good management practices. They are half right.

### ***Effectiveness of Administrative and Management Training***

Most management training has been of two types: (i) short-term, skills-oriented training; and (ii) long-term, degree-oriented training. Both have been effective in limited ways, though not always in the ways anticipated. In both cases the training has provided the recipients with the skills and abilities to find higher-paying employment alternatives. This may contribute to the development of the country, but not necessarily to the education system.

There are *serious questions about the long-term impact of short-term training*. Short-term training is widely used because it is easy to design and deliver, reasonably inexpensive, and does not pull managers away from their ongoing responsibilities for long periods of time. However, there is growing doubt that short-term, in-service, skills-based training makes much difference in improving the overall management of the education sector. This is for two reasons. First, the integration of formal training with practice has been weak; the training tends to be too short, and lacks adequate supervised practice and follow-through. Second, trainees find few incentives and little support for implementing their new skills in their work setting.

One reason for the limited impact of training is the way it has been delivered. A common means of short-term, in-service training has been the *cascade model*, which assumes that by training trainers, new supervisory and management skills can be effectively disseminated to successively lower levels of the system. However, ample evidence shows that comprehensive dissemination rarely takes place without consistent follow-up and support. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) identifies this as a widespread problem (Gillies 1993).

The mistake of many governments and international assistance agencies has been to believe that because short-term in-service training has a lower cost, it is more efficient. The assumption has been that if individuals have defined positions within their hierarchies, the most important training is that which provides them with skills to do their jobs. To the extent that DMCs undertake meaningful decentralization, much of that thinking needs to be re-examined.

#### **Box 4: Management Constraints on the Disbursement of International Assistance in Viet Nam**

Five major management constraints on the disbursement of international assistance have been identified in Viet Nam. They are:

- diversity of aid agency programming cycles and procedures;
- need to reappraise outdated project designs;
- delays in completing feasibility studies;
- resolving sensitive project design issues;
- slow start-up of new project implementation systems; and
- slow resolution of grant-aid credit policies.

Source: Consultative Group Meeting Report 1993, reported in ADB 1996.

Middle- and lower-level managers are being asked to take on new responsibilities and make decisions that were not previously in their purview. Skills-based training, while still necessary, needs to be supplemented with stronger training in the substance of education itself. Both skills- and knowledge-based training needs to be more fully integrated with the trainees' work setting.

#### ***The Management of Externally Funded Projects***

International agencies are accused of not practicing what they preach. They can inadvertently contribute to undercutting the very management capacity they seek to strengthen when differing philosophies and technical approaches clash. They can be sorted into at least three types, based on their philosophy of assistance (Wheeler, Calavan, and Taylor 1997):

- (i) One group is of international aid agencies that have been in a country for a long time, are well established with local nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and other grassroots organizations, and believe that they understand the local issues and needs (e.g., Save the Children). Their power and influence are based on the depth, history, and credibility they enjoy with their local connections and ministry supporters.
- (ii) A second group is of international agencies that have large amounts of funds to spend, operate through central ministries, and seek to support their capacity to guide and control education change. They want a significant role in programming how funds are to be spent, but have a less established network of grassroots contacts (e.g., US Agency for International Development [USAID], ADB, World Bank).
- (iii) The third group is of international agencies that have significant amounts of funds to spend, but want little or no involvement in the programming of those funds and want to avoid involvement in philosophical disputes. Such agencies are often more interested in supporting improvements in infrastructure, such as building new schools or repairing those that can be salvaged (e.g., Japan International Cooperation Agency [JICA]).

In Cambodia, for example, international agencies working during the mid-1990s operated from very different philosophies of what would best accelerate education development. Given the severe situation, one large international assistance group favored a short-term, cost-effective approach that emphasized a centrally controlled strategy to provide textbooks, testing systems, distance education, and teacher training in the use of these tools. Another large international group strongly favored a more grassroots approach that emphasized building the capacity of teachers as curriculum developers, encouraging community participation, stressing the use of local materials in instruction, building up school clusters, and training teachers to do these things (Wheeler 1997).

One manifestation of how this conflict affected practice was in teacher training. Four different programs were developed, each of a different length, training teachers to use different materials, and grounded in different philosophies. In the same time period (1996/97) the European Union offered a two-year teacher training program that emphasized prepared lesson plans and instructional materials and tended to emphasize the teachers' role in delivering content. Another project supported by USAID offered a one-year in-service program delivered over two years (during school breaks, etc.) that placed more emphasis on teachers' ability to develop instructional aids from locally available materials, encourage more student participation in learning activities, and employ a wider range of instructional strategies in the classroom. UNICEF offered an ongoing in-service teacher training program that was similar in philosophy to the USAID approach, but used its own teacher training materials and offered instruction over a different time frame. Also, UNICEF was expanding to offer head teacher training. Finally, MoE operated a network of teacher training colleges that intended to prepare teachers in the use of the national curriculum.

These four approaches clashed in three ways. First, there was serious competition for teachers' and head teachers' time. The four programs overlapped in the individuals they wanted to recruit into their programs. Second, conflicts developed when the curricular and instructional approaches on which teachers were trained did not match. For example, MoE did not recognize the curriculum or materials on which some of the teachers were being trained. School inspectors clashed with the cluster system, while head teachers were given different directions by MoE and the agency-sponsored training programs. Third, MoE got caught in the middle. It did not want to antagonize the aid agencies or disrupt the flow of international assistance. Nor did it want to lose control over its schools and have what it regarded as "unauthorized" curricula and teaching methods implemented without its concurrence. This multiplicity of approaches led to competition, confusion, and wasted resources. International efforts that, among other things, sought to strengthen management capacity in the education sector had the opposite effect (Wheeler 1997).

The assistance of international agencies remains a crucial ingredient in the development of many DMCs. However, the experience of the last decade suggests that assistance needs to be managed and coordinated in more effective ways.