

Introduction

The social and economic development of nations is fundamentally an education process in which people learn to create new institutions, utilize new technologies, cope with their environment, and alter their patterns of behavior. Education in a broad sense improves the capabilities of individuals and the capacity of institutions, and becomes a catalyst for the closely interrelated economic, social, cultural, and demographic changes that become defined as national development. Precisely how these changes occur is not fully known, and this problem often frustrates attempts at national policy making and planning. However, the evidence is substantial that schooling and other forms of education can, in a supporting environment, make major contributions to the complex processes of technology transfer, economic productivity, individual earnings, reduction of poverty, development of healthy families, creation and sharing of values, learning the responsibilities of citizenship, and enhancement of the quality of life.

Yet researchers and scholars also find that education can have negative effects. When formal education is unevenly distributed and is based on inequitable selection practices, it may perpetuate and legitimize social and wealth divisions in society. Further, formal schooling, along with modern media and aspects of global culture, appears to draw children and youth away from their cultural origins and traditional familial customs. Parents from some communities, when faced with school fees and school-leaver unemployment, withdraw their children from school to help them seek alternative paths to their future.

This booklet focuses on the broad role of education in national development in Asia. It emphasizes trends, issues, and envisaged problems within education systems and in the relations between education and the environment. The foremost concerns are the implications for policy making and planning.

The booklet has five main sections:

- First, it describes demographic, economic, social, and education patterns. Descriptions are offered by region, individual countries, and groups of countries.
- Second, it examines relationships between education, economic growth, poverty, and social change. This section includes a review of the education characteristics of a set of countries with highly successful economies. It also looks inside the processes of schooling to discern the effectiveness of instruction and the impediments to learning in the developing member countries (DMCs) of the Asian

Development Bank (ADB), and analyzes policy issues by level of education.

- Third, it examines changing patterns of control and responsibility for education decisions. This section provides two national case studies of the decentralization of education governance in DMCs, identifies the possible risks and problems associated with these changes, and analyzes conditions for sustaining new approaches to policy, planning, and practice.
- Fourth, it summarizes trends in major policy areas. This section particularly focuses on governance and management, and highlights ways to provide high-quality education at basic, secondary, and tertiary levels. This section also stresses the need for improved data on education systems.
- Finally, it focuses on ways to develop more effective international assistance. Particular attention is given in this section to the role of ADB.