

# EDUCATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN ASIA

*TRENDS, ISSUES,  
POLICIES, AND STRATEGIES*

Asian Development Bank

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## ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
DMC	Developing Member Country
GDI	Gender-related Development Index
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEM	Gender Empowerment Measure
GER	Gross Enrollment Rate
GNP	Gross National Product
HDI	Human Development Index
HPI	Human Poverty Index
Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic
MoE	Ministry of Education
NGO	Nongovernment Organization
NIE	Newly Industrialized Economy
PRC	People's Republic of China
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
ROR	Rate of Return
TVE	Technical-Vocational Education
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Unless otherwise specified, "\$" refers to US dollars.

## GLOSSARY

Dependency Ratio (ages 0–14)	The population of the age group 0–14, expressed as a percentage of that country’s working age population (age group 15–64).
Gender-related Development Index (GDI)	One simple composite index to measure gender inequality in human development.
Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM)	A composite measurement reflecting the relative empowerment of women and men in the political and economic spheres of activity.
Gini Coefficient	The extent to which the distribution of income (or, in some cases, consumption expenditure) among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution.
Gross Enrollment Rate (GER)	Total enrollment of a level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the age group corresponding to the national regulations for that level of education.
Human Development Index (HDI)	One simple composite index to measure average achievements in basic human development capabilities using three indicators: life expectancy, education attainment, and income.
Human Poverty Index (HPI)	An index to measure deprivations in three indicators of human life: life expectancy, education attainment, and income.
Newly Industrialized Economies (NIEs)	Also referred to as the “Four Tigers” or “Four Little Dragons”, the NIEs comprise Hong Kong, China; Republic of Korea; Singapore; and Taipei, China.
Purchasing Power Parity (PPP)	An adjustment for exchange rate distortions and substantial differences in the relative prices of nontraded goods across economies, such that \$1 in PPP terms has roughly the same purchasing power with respect to a representative consumption bundle (including traded and nontraded goods) for all countries.

## FOREWORD

Poverty reduction is the overarching goal of the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Human development, an essential aspect of this goal, is one of ADB's principal strategic objectives. ADB recognizes that economic and social development ultimately depends on the availability of a healthy, nourished, and well-educated population. The benefits of education to the individual and to society are well documented. People with a basic education are more productive and more receptive to the introduction of new methods and technologies. Educated people are more likely to use modern medical care and to lead healthier lives. Women with basic education have fewer children, and their children have a reduced mortality rate. Educated people are more likely to actively participate in civic activities. Countries that have achieved high levels of economic growth in recent decades have done so in part because they invested substantially in education.

Differences in country groupings notwithstanding, figures from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (1998a) indicate that general literacy rates rose from 35.6 percent to 50.5 percent in Southern Asia between 1975 and 1995, while increasing from 62.8 percent to 83.4 percent in Eastern Asia and Oceania, where literacy gains have been most impressive for females. Many economies in East Asia<sup>1</sup> have achieved universal primary education and are now expanding their compulsory basic education cycles to include three years of junior secondary schooling. Despite such enormous progress, however, many challenges remain. The primary education retention rate remains low in many countries; frequently, no more than two thirds of children who enroll in Grade 1 finish primary school. The quality of education is often low since both textbooks and properly trained teachers are in short supply. The provision of primary and secondary education in some countries is both inefficient and inequitable, requiring efforts to improve overall management and to allocate resources toward populations or subsectors in greatest need. Improving the quality and efficiency of higher and technical education is also a major challenge, as the demand for more highly skilled workers becomes greater.

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<sup>1</sup> Includes Southeast Asia unless otherwise specified.

ADB has funded nearly 100 education projects totaling about \$4 billion since lending to the education sector began in 1970. More than 60 percent of this lending has been made since 1990, reflecting ADB's greater emphasis on human development. Also since 1990, around 40 percent of ADB's lending for education has been for basic education, in recognition of the importance of basic education as the foundation for development. ADB's resources are increasingly being used to support capacity building, enhance efficiency, analyze policy, and improve quality, instead of being concentrated on the provision of buildings and equipment.

To ensure that its lending to education is based on a sound policy framework that reflects the needs of the region and its own strategic priorities, ADB is finalizing a comprehensive education sector policy paper. As a first step in preparing that policy, ADB financed a major study of education trends, issues, and policies in the region, conducted by the Academy for Educational Development, Washington, DC. The study involved three basic inputs: (i) preparation of technical working papers on education policy, equity and access, finance, quality, and management and efficiency;<sup>2</sup> (ii) preparation of detailed country sector case studies of the status, issues, and policies of education in eight representative developing member countries (DMCs) of ADB;<sup>3</sup> and (iii) a regional seminar attended by officials of the case study countries, the team of experts provided by the Academy for Educational Development, and representatives of international agencies, held on 16–17 September 1999, in Manila.

These three inputs led to the integrated regional study contained in this volume. The study assesses the status of education in the region, identifies major trends and issues, and examines policies and practices that have successfully promoted equity and access, strengthened management and efficiency, improved quality, and enhanced the education resource base. It begins with an examination of demographic and economic trends that affect education, and then analyzes the relationship between education and economic and social development. After carefully reviewing the main general issues in education development and illustrating these with examples from the case studies

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<sup>2</sup> Adams 1998; Bray 1998; Chapman 1998; Chapman and Adams 1998; Lee 1998 (to be rereleased in ADB's series *Education in Developing Asia*).

<sup>3</sup> People's Republic of China (NCEDR 1997); Indonesia (OECD 1997); Kyrgyz Republic (RIHEP 1997); Nepal (RCEID 1997); Pakistan (PIDE 1997); Papua New Guinea (INA 1997); Philippines (DAP 1997); Viet Nam (NIED 1997).

and elsewhere, the study looks at some persistent issues and trends by subsector. Finally, it examines policies and strategies that could be used to address some prevalent challenges facing education provision in DMCs.

The study provides a thoughtful and analytical overview of the status of education in the Asian and Pacific region. It provides the backdrop to ADB's education sector policy paper that articulates the policies, priorities, and strategies that ADB intends to emphasize in its continued support for education development in the early years of the new century.

Nihal Amerasinghe  
Director  
Agriculture and Social Sectors  
Department (East)

Akira Seki  
Director  
Agriculture and Social Sectors  
Department (West)