

Introduction



Background

The education and training sector strategy proposed in this paper provides a framework for Asian Development Bank (ADB) support to education development in its 14 Pacific developing member countries (PDMCs).¹ It supports ADB's overarching development objective of poverty reduction (ADB 1999a) and is grounded in ADB's overall education strategy (ADB 2003b) and in its third A Pacific Strategy for the Asian Development Bank 2005-2009: Responding to the Priorities of the Poor (ADB 2004f). It thus reflects ADB's overarching vision for education: "All children and adults in the Asia and Pacific region will have equitable access to and complete education of sufficient quality to empower them to break out of the poverty cycle, to improve their quality of life, and to participate effectively in national development (ADB 2003b)." ADB support for educational development emphasizes increasing equity and access, improving quality, strengthening management, mobilizing resources, improving partnerships, and applying new and innovative technologies especially information and communication technology (ICT). It also supports innovative programs in literacy and nonformal education and in early childhood development with emphasis on low-cost,

¹ The Pacific developing member countries are: Cook Islands, Fiji Islands, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

community-based provision. ADB is committed to helping developing member countries achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 and supports the global movement to achieve Education for All (EFA) (See Box 1).

The ADB poverty reduction strategy encompasses three pillars: (i) pro-poor, sustainable economic growth; (ii) inclusive social development; and (iii) good governance. Education helps to lay the foundation for all three pillars of poverty reduction as it is closely linked to human, economic, and social dimensions of development.

Box 1 Millennium Development Goals on Education	
TARGETS	INDICATORS
Universal Primary Education	
Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • net enrollment ratio in primary education • proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5 • literacy rate of 15- to 24-year-olds
Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women	
Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary, and tertiary education • ratio of literate women to men of 15- to 24-year-olds • share of women in wage employment in the nonagricultural sector • proportion of seats held by women in national parliament
Source: United Nations Millennium Development Goals	

(See Box 2). Basic education² is the key. It is not only a human right; it helps reduce fertility and improve health and nutrition of children. Most importantly, it is an essential part of any pro-poor development strategy. It helps to lift people out of poverty, creates opportunities for social mobility, and reduces economic and social disparities. An educated population is an essential element of an economic and regulatory environment that is conducive to private sector initiatives. It is a precondition for meaningful participation in a world economy where competitive advantage is increasingly technology based and knowledge driven. Evidence on the social and economic returns on

Box 2

Education and Poverty Reduction

The relationship between education and poverty reduction is very clear: educated people have higher income earning potential and are better able to improve the quality of their lives. Persons with at least a basic education are more likely to avail of a range of social services and to participate more actively in local and national government through voting and community involvement. They are less likely to be marginalized within the larger society. Education empowers. It helps people become more proactive, gain control over their lives, and widen the range of available choices. In fact, the opposite of marginalization is empowerment, and basic education is one of the keys to empowerment, both for individuals and groups. The combination of increased earning ability, political and social empowerment, and enhanced capacity to participate in community governance is a powerful instrument for breaking the poverty cycle. In fact, education is the primary vehicle by which economically and socially marginalized adults and children can lift themselves out of poverty and obtain the means to participate fully in their communities.

Source: ADB 2003b.

² ADB defines basic education as education provided for children between the ages of 6 and 14, usually equivalent to primary and lower secondary, or nine years of schooling. This is considered the minimum for a person to improve his/her quality of life and to participate in national development. (ADB 2003b). Some organizations define basic education as up to 10 years of schooling, and include non-formal and skills development.

investments in education is abundant.³ It suggests that returns on basic education are high, most notably in low-income countries and especially for girls.

Education development strategies cannot, however, be limited to basic education. They will need to incorporate policies and investment programs that provide opportunities for further education and skills development to those who complete the basic education cycle. As countries develop and the demand for people with more advanced skills expands, the returns on higher levels of education increase. This reinforces the importance of a high quality basic education system as the necessary foundation for further education and training that makes it possible for countries to accelerate economic and social development.

ADB's Pacific Strategy (2005–2009) was formulated against the background of the generally disappointing development performance of its PDMCs over the past decades. Economic growth did not keep up with population expansion; job creation was limited, per capita incomes declined, and the incidence of poverty and economic hardship increased. The development strategies of the 1980s and 1990s that focused on getting prices and incentives right have proved necessary but not sufficient to achieve sustainable growth. Weaknesses of policies and institutions, especially economic and social institutions, have impeded development.⁴ Causes of these weaknesses include poor leadership, limited governmental accountability and transparency, narrowly based participation in reforms, and inadequate human resource development and retention.

The Pacific Strategy (2005–2009) provides a framework for PARD's country and regional operations by identifying overall goals and strategic and supporting objectives to bring focus and selectivity to its operations in the region. The objectives are: (i) to support a conducive environment for the private sector; (ii) to enhance the supply of and demand for quality basic social services (health, education, clean water, and sanitation); and (iii) to promote effective development. While all three work together to reduce poverty and all are affected by the level of educational attainment of the population,

³ For evidence on economic returns see Patrinos and Psacharopoulos 2002, Table 5 and Schultz 1993. Lockheed and Verspoor 1991 provides a summary of the full range of social and economic benefits.

⁴ "Institutions" encompass not only the organizations and structures that frame economic and social behavior, but also the "rules of the game" by which that behavior is carried out (ADB 2004d).

the second objective directly focuses on education. It aims to enhance the potential contribution of education to development and poverty reduction through improved policies and strengthened institutions. The education and training sector strategy, therefore, needs to pay particular attention to the extent to which the priority education needs of the poor are being met, what the remaining challenges are, and how those challenges might be met effectively. In this perspective, quality basic education for all must be a top priority with strategies: (i) that are relevant and responsive to national objectives and client needs; (ii) that effectively allocate public, private, and donor resources for basic education; and (iii) that enhance the capacity to manage and deliver high quality basic education services.

Purpose and Process of the Strategy Paper

This education and training sector strategy operationalizes PARD's strategic framework for the education sector, sharpens the focus, and enhances the effectiveness of ADB support to education in the region. It explores where and how ADB with its limited resources can make the greatest impact toward improving the performance of the education sector in the Pacific region. Many PDMCs face constraints due to their small population sizes and their remoteness, which means that standard service delivery mechanisms may be costly and ineffective. These countries may instead need strategies that build on the opportunities that smallness provides to mobilize local support and involvement. Several larger countries will have to implement education development programs in the context of increasingly severe resource constraints. Given the important differences among PDMCs in terms of their geography, natural resources, cultures, and development status and performance, the strategy can only provide a framework for country-level actions and for the strengthening of regional support mechanisms.

The importance of external development partners and regional institutions involved in education development in the Pacific region makes it imperative to recognize that unless ADB works in partnership with other agencies, the impact of its lending on education

development in the PDMCs is likely to be limited.⁵ The ADB education and training sector strategy, therefore, will be successful only to the extent that its programs (i) are well aligned from conception to implementation with national education development priorities and with the support of other development partners, (ii) capitalize on the contributions of regional agencies, and (iii) build on ADB's comparative advantage as an independent agency with a strong economic and social policy focus, broad experiences throughout Asia and the Pacific, and a capacity to tap experience from other regions.

Consultations during the preparation of the Pacific education and training sector strategy provided many valuable insights. In May 2003, a brief note on the strategy was presented in a meeting of donors and education officials from PDMCs in Nadi, Fiji Islands. Subsequently, terms of reference were developed, discussed within ADB, and circulated to funding agencies as well as to several PDMCs. Published and unpublished data and analyses on population, enrollment, financing, and other key issues—including recent education reviews and sector plans in Fiji Islands, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), Samoa, Tonga, and Tuvalu⁶—were important sources of information. Further information was gathered during field visits to selected PDMCs⁷ in focus group meetings with various stakeholders in education—government agencies, funding agencies, church groups, nongovernment organizations (NGO), parents, teachers, and local communities. The interests and comparative advantage of key bilateral and multilateral agencies were reviewed in meetings and discussions and through the analysis of secondary documentation. A draft strategy was then formulated and circulated for comments from ADB staff, development partners, and the PDMCs. This process of consultation and dissemination is an important element of the ADB approach to policy development and implementation and will be continued.

⁵ It should be noted that the number of external development partners are diminishing. Recently, the United Kingdom and Canada have withdrawn. Other individual European Union countries are invisible in the region.

⁶ ADB 2000a; ADB 2003h; ADB 2004g; ADB 2004k; ADB and Samoa Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture 2004; The Independent State of Samoa, AusAID and Papua New Guinea Department of Education 2002; Lowry and Rorris 1999; and Tonga Ministry of Education 2004.

⁷ FSM, PNG, and Vanuatu. Information was also collected and the strategy discussed with representatives of the Governments of Samoa and Tuvalu as well as NGOs, churches, parents, and pupils during ADB missions.

The paper next summarizes the challenges of the regional context to which the education sector must respond (Chapter 2). It reviews the progress of education development in the region and identifies the challenges that remain to be addressed (Chapter 3). It describes the support external partners are providing for education development in the PDMCs (Chapter 4). The paper then focuses on the challenges of equity, high quality service delivery, and development planning and management that PDMCs will need to address more effectively (Chapter 5). The final section (Chapter 6) discusses the way ADB can most effectively contribute to education development in the Pacific region and the strategic agenda for action.