



Validation Report

Reference Number: PCV: BAN 2008-55
Project Number: 30332
Loan Number: 1690
November 2008

Bangladesh: Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project

Operations Evaluation Department
Asian Development Bank

ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	–	Asian Development Bank
BANBEIS	–	Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics
BTOR	–	back-to-office report
DSHE	–	Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education
EA	–	executing agency
EMIS	–	education management information system
MOE	–	Ministry of Education
OED	–	Operations Evaluation Department
PCR	–	project completion report
RRP	–	report and recommendation of the President
SDR	–	special drawing rights
SESDP	–	Secondary Education Sector Development Program
TA	–	technical assistance

NOTE

In this report, "\$" refers to US dollars.

Key Words

curriculum development, equitable access, institutional capacity development, internal and external efficiency, quality improvement, school-based management, school performance-based management system, secondary education, stipends, teacher education, Upazila

Director	R. B. Adhikari, Operations Evaluation Division 1, Operations Evaluation Department (OED)
Team leader	S. Hutaserani, Principal Evaluation Specialist, Operations Evaluation Division 1, OED
Team member	M.O. Nuestro, Evaluation Officer, Operations Evaluation Division 1, OED

Operations Evaluation Department Project Completion Report Validation Form

A. Basic Project Data		PCR Validation Date:	November 2008	
Project Number:	30332		Approved	Actual
Loan Number:	1690-(SF)			
Project Name:	Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project	Total Project Costs (\$M): (SDR equivalent)	86.0	74.0
Country:	Bangladesh	Loan/Grant (\$M):	60.0	57.6
Sector(s):	Education	Total Cofinancing (\$M):		
ADB Financing (\$M):	ADF: 60.0	Borrower (\$M):	26.0	16.4
		Beneficiaries (\$M):		
Cofinancers:		Others (\$M):		
Approval Date:	22 June 1999	Effectiveness Date:	22 September 1999	3 December 1999
Signing Date:	24 June 1999	Closing Date:	30 April 2006	25 April 2007
Project Officers:	Name: G. Forsberg J. Mahmood	Location: Headquarters: BRM:	From (year) September 1999 June 2003	To (year) May 2003 April 2007
Evaluator:	Shiva Lohani, Consultant	Director:	R.B. Adhikari, OED1	
Quality Control Reviewer/Peer Reviewer:	Suganya Hutaserani, Principal Evaluation Specialist			

ADB = Asian Development Bank, ADF = Asian Development Fund, BRM = Bangladesh Resident Mission, M = Million, OCR = ordinary capital resources, PCR = project completion report, SDR = special drawing rights, SF = special fund.

B. Project Description (summarized from the RRP)

- (i) **Rationale.** Bangladesh's growing economy, and its links to the global economy, has created a demand for a capable workforce focused on local production and commercial markets. To make the leap from subsistence lifestyles to wage-based employment, individuals need academic and cognitive skills that can propel them into the job market. Through the Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project (the Project), the Government recognized the need for a reoriented secondary education system that is relevant to the country's growing formal markets as well as social needs.
- (ii) **Impact.** The Project aimed to increase the relevance of secondary education in terms of efficiency, quality, and equity.
- (iii) **Objectives or expected outcomes.** The Project was expected (a) to assist the Government in strengthening the Ministry of Education's (MOE) institutional capacity to plan, manage, and monitor the secondary education system and to improve the use of scarce educational resources; and (b) to expand equitable access to secondary education.
- (iv) **Components and/or outputs.** The Project had three components. The first component, which envisaged (a) strengthening management systems and capacity, focused on establishing a policy support and strategic planning unit; (b) supporting decentralized management; and (c) developing a transparent, performance-based management system for secondary schools. The second component, which focused on (a) building quality support systems, (b) emphasized improving curriculum development, (c) privatizing textbook publishing, (d) reforming student assessments and public examinations, (e) reforming secondary teacher education, (f) strengthening school management and supervision, and (g) providing school improvement funds. The final component, equitable access, (a) highlighted developing facilities for schools in unserved and/or underserved areas, and (b) providing stipends or tuition to females.

C. Evaluation of Design and Implementation (project completion report [PCR] assessment and validation)

- (i) **Relevance of design and formulation.** The PCR considered the design and formulation of the Project to be *highly relevant* because they were (a) consistent with the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) poverty reduction strategy in Bangladesh; (b) relevant to ADB's operational strategy; (c) appropriate as they built upon proven achievements of completed secondary education projects in Bangladesh; (d) relevant to the MOE's Five-Year Development Plan (1997–2002); (e) consistent with the recommended policies and strategies of the Secondary Education Sector Development Program (2000–2010) (SESDP); and (f) sound, replicable, and relevant between project appraisal and completion.

Although the Evaluator agrees with the reasons cited by the PCR, the Evaluator rates the project design and formulation to be lower than highly relevant (i.e., *relevant*) because of some design weaknesses: (a) the design was too ambitious to achieve sector reform goals with a project-based approach and without an effective coordination mechanism; (b) it relied on assistance from the loan for developing education reform programs instead of advisory technical assistance (TA); (c) it included a separate education management information system (EMIS) under the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) rather than developing an integrated EMIS under the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS), the agency under MOE responsible for this task; and (d) it did not include an awareness-raising program to encourage stakeholders' ownership in the reform initiatives.

- (ii) **Project outputs.** The PCR found that most expected outputs under the Project's three components were generally achieved. The Evaluator agrees with the PCR findings.

For the first component, the outputs achieved included (a) establishment of a policy support and planning unit and the EMIS within DSHE; (b) development and approval of a phased decentralized management model on a pilot basis for DSHE's major responsibility of teacher salary subvention; (c) recruitment and training of additional personnel and establishment of enhanced infrastructure facilities for the implementation of this model; and (d) development and piloting of a school performance-based management system and its introduction into about 9,000 secondary schools.

For the second component, the outputs achieved included (a) development of a modern skills-based or uni-track curriculum for grades 9–10; (b) development and dissemination of teaching and learning materials to over 70,000 secondary school teachers; (c) privatization of the publishing of 19 of 33 textbooks by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board with MOE's approval; (d) development, piloting, and dissemination of school-based management for five subjects (i.e., Bangla, English, mathematics, science, and social science); (e) establishment of the Bangladesh Examination Development Unit; (f) development and approval of a detailed proposal for secondary school certificate examination reform scheduled for 2010; (g) approval of 20 recommendations for teacher education reforms; (h) development, approval, and introduction of a revised teacher education curriculum; (i) provision of training on teacher education development, including international training of 67 persons and in-country training of 92 educators; (j) provision of in-service training to 1,700 secondary school teachers; and (k) distribution of school improvement funds to 350 poorly-performing schools.

For the third component, the outputs achieved included (a) establishment of 59 new secondary schools against the target of 115 schools; (b) construction of 111 overcrowded schools and reconstruction or repair of 140 flood-damaged schools; and (c) disbursement of stipends to females in secondary schools (i.e., 4.4 million person-years against the target of 765,000 person-years).

- (iii) **Project cost, disbursements, borrower contribution, and conformance to schedule (as relevant to project performance).** The actual project cost (\$74.0 million) was 86% of the figure estimated at appraisal (\$86.0 million). There was a 73% decrease in the actual cost of the second component from the appraisal estimate of \$16.1 million to \$4.4 million.

The Project was approved on 22 June 1999, effective on 3 December 1999, and scheduled for closure on 30 April 2006. The Project was physically closed on 25 April 2007 with one extension due to the need to bridge the gap between closing of the Project and inception of the follow-up SESDP approved on 26 October 2006. The PCR noted that several conditions and covenants relating to various reforms were not complied with in a timely manner. Moreover, some activities (e.g., implementation of pilot decentralized management model, introduction of uni-track curriculum, and secondary school certificate examination reform proposal) could not be initiated during the project period and were transferred to the SESDP.

At actual loan closing, disbursement totaled \$57.6 million, which was 96% of the original loan amount of \$60.0 million. The Government's contribution was \$16.4 million, which is only 63% of the planned allocation of \$26.0 million.

The Evaluator agrees with the PCR findings mentioned above.

(iv) Implementation arrangements, conditions and covenants, related technical assistance, and procurement and consultant performance

- (a) **Implementation arrangements.** The PCR stated that the project implementation arrangements were satisfactory in carrying out the Project effectively. The reasons cited included (1) establishment of the project implementation unit for day-to-day project implementation, (2) utilization of consultant services, (3) establishment of several committees to coordinate various activities at different levels, (4) mobilization of professional institutions under MOE, school management committees, and beneficiary institutions; and (5) utilization of four institutions for international training.

The Evaluator agrees with the PCR findings mentioned above.

- (b) **Conditions and covenants.** The PCR reported that conditions and covenants were generally complied with, though compliance with several conditions and covenants relating to various reforms was delayed.

The Evaluator agrees with the PCR assessment that most of the loan covenants were generally complied with, though some with delays.

- (c) **Technical assistance.** No advisory TA was provided by ADB to support project implementation.

- (d) **Procurement and consultant performance.** Although there was a 14-month delay in recruiting consultants causing some initial project implementation problems, the PCR pointed out that project implementation experienced no major problems or procurement difficulties. The performance of consultants and link institutions was *generally satisfactory* and instrumental in successful project implementation.

The Evaluator agrees with the PCR's *satisfactory* rating on the consultant performance. However, based on the information from some back-to-office reports (BTORs), the Evaluator points out that the management advisory services consultant recruitment undertaken by ADB, on behalf of the Government, was problematic because (a) it was taxing on ADB staff resources, (b) it reduced government ownership over consultant services, and (c) it contributed to the delay in the hiring process.

- (v) **Performance of the Borrower and Executing Agency.** The PCR rated the performance of the Borrower—the Government—*satisfactory* due to the provision of adequate and on-time counterpart funding and its positive and timely responses to specific ADB recommendations for accelerating project implementation. The PCR rated the performance of the Executing Agency (EA)—DSHE—*satisfactory* because it (a) successfully implemented all project components while mobilizing necessary support from

concerned agencies, (b) responded quickly to ADB's requests and recommendations, and (c) was responsive to school selection, design and approval, construction, and monitoring and evaluation.

The Evaluator agrees with the PCR's *satisfactory* rating on the Borrower and EA performance. However, the Evaluator notes that the approximately \$10 million decrease in borrower contribution led to the reduction in the actual project costs for the second component.

- (vi) **Performance of the Asian Development Bank.** The PCR rated ADB's performance *satisfactory* because it facilitated successful completion of the Project by (a) fielding 22 review missions; (b) monitoring project implementation and acting promptly on requests for approval, disbursement, and modifications; (c) following up with the Government on policy issues relating to compliance with important loan covenants; and (d) completing inception, midterm review, and PCR missions on time.

The Evaluator agrees with the PCR findings. However, the Evaluator notes that (a) none of the ADB review missions after appraisal included education specialists, which indicates the low priority given to educational quality aspects during implementation; and (b) there was high turnover in the position of ADB task leader (four during the project period).

D. Evaluation of Performance (PCR assessment and validation)

- (i) **Relevance.** The PCR rated the Project *highly relevant* because (a) the project design and formulation were highly relevant; (b) the Project made significant contributions to strengthening management systems and the capacity of MOE, and all concerned agencies; and (c) developed a decentralized management system through the SPBMS.

Although the Evaluator agrees with the reasons cited by the PCR, the Evaluator rates the Project *relevant*, rather than highly relevant, due to some design weaknesses assessed in Section C (i), and to the low priority given to the second component on quality improvement as reflected in the reduction of its actual costs.

- (ii) **Effectiveness in achieving outcome.** The PCR rated the Project's effectiveness in achieving outcomes *highly effective* because (a) a framework to improve secondary education efficiency, quality, and equity was established; (b) secondary education enrollment increased by 9% (from 6.8 million to 7.4 million) during 1998–2005; (c) the attendance rate increased from 60% to 65% during the same period; (d) females' enrollment share increased from 46% to 47% during the same period; (e) repetition rates for grades 6–9 remained around 5%; and (f) SSC pass rate increased from 35% to 55% during 2001–2007.

While the Project has achieved some outcomes, the Evaluator rates the Project *effective*, rather than highly effective, because the following outcomes have not yet been achieved: (a) as stated in the Government's PCR, the dropout rate for grades 6–10 remained high (42% in 2005), though it decreased from 44% in 1998; (b) most of the reforms initiated were not institutionalized (e.g., curriculum improvement, examination reform, and decentralized management) during the project period; and (c) here is inadequate evidence of an increased percentage of grade 10 graduates (who did not continue schooling) who were gainfully employed or self-employed.

- (iii) **Efficiency in achieving outcomes and outputs.** The PCR rated the Project *efficient* because (a) both internal efficiency and external efficiency improved, (b) the quality of secondary education improved, and (c) ADB's internal processing and administration of the Project was efficient.

The Evaluator rates the Project *less efficient*, rather than efficient, because there was (a) low improvement in internal efficiency as reflected through high dropout rates; (b) inadequate evidence of improvement in external efficiency in terms of increased gainful employment or self-employment of grade 10 graduates who did not continue schooling; (c) start-up delays in project implementation due to rapid changes of project directors, delayed contracting of consultants, a failure to link the Government's

development project proposal to ADB's project administration memorandum, and protracted delay of the development project proposal revision; and (d) inadequate preparation for implementation due to centralization of the review and confirmation process at the MOE level. The Evaluator also notes that a detailed analysis of efficiency was not possible because both the report and recommendation of the President (RRP) and the PCR did not carry out economic analyses to estimate the economic internal rate of return, since such analyses are not required for basic education projects.

- (iv) **Preliminary assessment of sustainability.** The PCR rated the Project to be *likely sustainable* because of commitments and progress made by (a) MOE in policy support and fund allocation; (b) DSHE in decentralization; (c) separating textbook production from curriculum development and privatizing 19 out of 33 textbook printings; (d) the Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education reforming the examination system; (e) secondary schools adopting SPBMS and school-based management and examination reforms; and (f) the Government in budget allocation to sustain the project activities and approval and implementation of the follow-up SESDP.

The Evaluator agrees with the PCR findings and rates the Project to be *likely sustainable*. However, it is not possible to draw a definite conclusion on the financial sustainability of the Project as the PCR did not carry out a financial sustainability analysis of the secondary education subsector.

- (v) **Impacts (both intended and unintended).** The PCR indicated that the Project had a *significant* impact on the secondary education subsector in terms of institutional capacity development (e.g., MOE, DSHE, National Curriculum and Textbook Board, Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education, and teacher training institutions), and improved quality of secondary education.

Based on available information, the Evaluator rates the impacts *satisfactory*, rather than significant, because while the Project contributed to capacity development of secondary education institutions and gender parity in enrollment, impacts on secondary gross and net enrollment rates were not reported.

E. Overall Assessment, Lessons, and Recommendations (Validation of PCR assessment)

- (i) **Overall assessment.** The PCR's overall project rating was *successful*, based on the combined ratings of the following criteria: highly relevant, highly effective, efficient, and likely sustainable, as elaborated in Sections D (i)–(iv).

The Evaluator also rates the overall project performance *successful*, but with different ratings from those of the PCR in some of the criteria (i.e., relevant, effective, less efficient, and likely sustainable). The reasons for the differences in some of the ratings are discussed in Sections D (i)–(iv).

- (ii) **Lessons.** According to the PCR, important lessons learned from the Project are: (a) reforms of the education sector require a long implementation period, persistent pursuit of reform agenda, and continued budgetary support to accomplish targeted improvements; (b) the school-based management approach helps to utilize hands-on training support for teachers, new facilities, and equipment provided to schools; (c) effective school leadership is required to bring significant changes to school management and performance; and (d) clarity of roles and responsibilities of assistant inspectors, Upazila academic supervisors, and research officers is required for effective professional academic supervision.

The Evaluator agrees with the above lessons and identifies these additional lessons: (a) to implement secondary education reform programs effectively, it is necessary to adopt a program approach with adequate coordination supported by an appropriate mix of a program loan, a project loan, and advisory TA from ADB; (b) an education reform program should be disseminated in the areas of curriculum, examination, and decentralization, and adoption of the school-based management approach should be initiated from the development stage of reforms in order to provide relevant information and to build stakeholder ownership that ultimately helps to minimize resistance to change; and (c) timely and effective implementation of education reform activities requires decentralization of the decision-making process of review and confirmation for reform activities.

- (iii) **Recommendations.** The PCR provided general and project-related recommendations. The latter included (a) academic and field supervisors should be exclusively devoted to academic supervision, (b) leadership capacity of head teachers and chairpersons of school management committees should be included in school performance indicators, (c) continued support should be provided to the policy support planning unit, and (d) continuation of ongoing reforms under SESDP should be ensured through monitoring of progress.

The Evaluator agrees with the above recommendations, and appreciates that the PCR's recommendations were specific and focused on follow-up actions that should be conducted by the related ongoing SESDP and the Teacher Quality Improvement Project. The Evaluator identifies additional recommendations as follows:

- (a) Since the school-based management approach requires an effective school management committee, the Government should take necessary measures to improve the committee's composition, roles, and responsibilities based on lessons learned from the Project and to empower it through awareness-raising campaigns.
- (b) Systematic awareness-raising campaigns should be initiated to provide relevant information relating to the reforms with the objective of building stakeholders' ownership in the reform initiatives.
- (c) In order to measure the impact of the reform initiatives, priority should be focused on making the EMIS at DSHE operational as early as possible, mobilizing expertise available at BANBEIS and other relevant agencies.
- (d) To allow implementation of reform programs following the planned schedule, MOE should obtain approval on basic principles of reforms in each area from the highest level of government and decentralize the decision-making authority to the Project for implementation.
- (e) ADB should support the Government in developing a coordination mechanism to allow joint planning, monitoring, and review of the two ongoing ADB projects to harmonize the implementation of reform initiatives.

F. Monitoring and Evaluation Design, Implementation, and Utilization (PCR assessment and Validation)

- (i) **Monitoring and evaluation design.** The Project planned to establish an EMIS at DSHE with a network in zones and districts by June 2003. Design weaknesses included (a) the lack of benefit monitoring and evaluation; (b) the failure of the EMIS design to address coordination of monthly payment processing, a regular DSHE function; (c) developing the capacity of EMIS staff without a concrete retention plan; and (d) the failure to define BANBEIS's role, an apex body under MOE.
- (ii) **Implementation.** The PCR pointed out that the EMIS was established at DSHE. The Evaluator notes that the EMIS is not fully operational as reflected in the lack of continuous data collection and reporting.
- (iii) **Utilization.** The PCR did not mention EMIS utilization. The Evaluator notes that no mechanism exists to institutionalize and fully utilize the EMIS. As a result, annual EMIS reports were not available, and initiating appropriate actions to accelerate the progress of outcome/impact achievements was difficult.

Therefore, the Evaluator finds weak design, implementation, and utilization of the Project's EMIS.

G. Others (e.g., safeguards, including governance and anticorruption; fiduciary aspects; government assessment of the Project, as applicable) (PCR assessment and Validation)

The PCR did not report problems related to safeguards, governance, and anticorruption issues. The Evaluator finds no safeguard violations or major unintended consequences.

H. Ratings	PCR	OED Review	Reasons for Disagreements/Comments
Relevance:	Highly Relevant	Relevant	To be rated as <i>highly relevant</i> , the Project should have no major design weaknesses. The Project's design weaknesses are discussed in Sections C (i) and D (i).
Effectiveness in Achieving Outcomes:	Highly Effective	Effective	To be rated as <i>highly effective</i> , more outcome data (e.g., on dropout rates, cycle completion rates, and employability of graduates) are needed, and reforms initiated have yet to be institutionalized.
Efficiency in Achieving Outcomes and Outputs:	Efficient	Less Efficient	Inadequate evidence of improvements in internal and external efficiency, delays in project implementation, and inadequate preparation for implementation are reasons for this rating.
Preliminary Assessment of Sustainability:	Likely	Likely	Agreed.
Borrower and EA:	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Agreed.
Performance of ADB:	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Agreed.
Impacts:	Significant	Satisfactory	To be rated as <i>significant</i> , long-term impacts on improving secondary gross and net enrollment rates must be reported.
Overall Assessment:	Successful	Successful	See the reasons identified above.
Quality of PCR:		Satisfactory	See Section I.

I. Comments on PCR Quality

The PCR is *satisfactory*. It was well written and concise. It also followed the guidelines and provided generally sufficient data to evaluate the Project under various criteria. Since not all data were complete, the Evaluator downgraded the ratings in some of the criteria (e.g., relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency). However, despite the downgrading of these criteria, the overall project rating remains the same as that in the PCR (i.e., *successful*) due to the reasons discussed earlier, in Sections D (i)–(iv).

J. Recommendations for the Operations Evaluation Department (OED) Follow-Up

The Evaluator recommends that OED follow up with the South Asia Department to ensure that it implements the PCR's recommendations and additional recommendations provided by the Evaluator in Section E (iii).

K. Data Sources for Validation

The data sources for this validation exercise include the Government's PCR and the ADB's RRP, PCR, BTORs on loan review missions, and aide-mémoire on the Midterm Review Mission.

REGIONAL DEPARTMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT VALIDATION REPORT

On 10 October 2008, the Operations Evaluation Department (OED) circulated the draft Project Completion Validation Report for interdepartmental comments. OED received comments from the Bangladesh Resident Mission on 12 October 2008. The Resident Mission, also speaking on behalf of the South Asia Department, supports the assessment provided in the report.