

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT

Division: MKSS

TA No. and Name TA 3585-THA: Education Sector Reforms		Amount Approved: \$700,000	
		Revised Amount: \$700,000	
Executing Agency: Office of the National Education Commission	Source of Funding: JSF	TA Amount Undisbursed \$171,534.61	TA Amount Utilized \$528,465.39
Date		Completion Date	
Approval 14 Dec. 2000	Signing 23 March 2001	Fielding of Consultants April 2001	
		Original 31 July 2001	Actual 31 July 2002
		Closing Date	
		Original 31 March 2002	Actual December 2003
Description			
<p>In Thailand, students attend six years of primary education followed by three years of middle schooling to complete nine years of basic education. Historically, students in rural areas have not continued beyond grade nine because schools were not available and opportunity costs for students to attend schools in the towns were perceived to be too costly for poor students.</p> <p>Despite a significant national education budget, the education system is widely perceived to be deficient in meeting the demands of the labor market. Excessive central bureaucratic control over curriculum and program offerings threatens Government efforts to overhaul the school system and make it more responsive to the economy. Neglect of information technology and foreign languages has left most of industry at the periphery of the internet boom, and the majority of graduates perform poorly on national examinations. Furthermore, approximately 50% of total education funding currently supports the administrative costs of a bloated bureaucracy. To lower administrative costs, the Government had aimed to consolidate the Ministry of Education (MOE), Office of National Education Commission (ONEC), and the Education Reform Board into a new and downsized central education bureau.</p>			
Objectives and Scope			
<p>The objective of the TA is to strengthen the capacity of the Government to carry out the education reforms mandated by the National Education Act (NEA), including measures to improve teaching and learning, administrative leadership, and community accountability. The TA was envisaged to assist ONEC to introduce its education improvement model on a pilot basis in about 200 schools nationwide. The TA includes three components: (i) student-centered learning; (ii) continuous assessment; and (iii) school-based management.</p>			
Evaluation of Inputs			
<p>The TA design was adequate and the terms of reference (TORs) were clear and comprehensive. The original TORs provided 37 person-months of specialist services to coordinate activities and prepare a report recommending policy options to assist in implementing secondary school reforms for student-centered learning and administrative accountability, and to conduct a series of school workshops in 200 schools in three phases. The TA engaged 4 international (12 person-months)¹ and 4 domestic consultants (24 person-months). The TORs did not require any major modification during implementation. The consultants performed satisfactorily. The undisbursed amount represents savings due mainly to unused contingency funds and savings in consultancy services.</p> <p>A pilot project was financed under the TA to implement the whole-school learning reform concept in a sample of 250 schools selected from among 3,800 schools throughout the country that were considered ready for school reform. The concept emphasized improving the quality of students and internal quality assurance. The pilot schools also served as reform nodes for a number of nearby schools.</p>			

¹ The engagement of the Specialist in School Reform Policy/Team Leader was reduced from 5 to 3 person-months in lieu of a senior education specialist whom ONEC requested to engage for 1 person-month to synthesize the 4 domestic consultants' reports (in Thai) and 3 international consultants' reports, and prepare a project feasibility study for consideration of MOE.

A team of 44 academics and researchers from teacher education institutions, supervisory units and NGOs participated in the reform process. The pilot project was considered a big success so that MOE adopted the TA approach to expand it to another 1,000 pilot schools. MOE appointed a Working Committee on Learning Reform as its executing agency and established 80 Provincial Centers for Education Reform. The provincial coordinators attended the dissemination seminar and drew up the operation plan.

In June 2002, a national dissemination seminar was conducted to disseminate findings of the National Pilot Study, share experience and lessons learned with other target groups, and brainstorm and discuss policy and strategy for nationwide whole-school reform. Around 230 education officials representing MOE, Ministry of Interior, Office of the National Primary Education Commission, Office of the Private Education Commission, Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment, Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, and ONEC, attended the seminar. The review missions were useful in keeping the focus of the TA on the improvement of secondary education. The TA was adequately supervised through regular missions, meetings and discussions among concerned stakeholders. The performance of both ADB and ONEC, the executing agency, is rated highly satisfactory.

Evaluation of Outputs

The reports of the international consultants: (i) *School Reform Policy*, (ii) *Teacher Development for Quality Learning*, and (iii) *ICT for Direct Instruction and In-Service Training*, and those of the domestic consultants, were reviewed in light of sector reforms recommended under the TA. The domestic consultants' individual reports on (i) school based and decentralization management, (ii) assessment of learning and quality assurance, (iii) learning reform, and (iv) lessons and policy recommendation, were printed (2,000 copies) and distributed to all provinces. The outputs were much appreciated by education and planning officials and provincial coordinators. The TA helped ONEC work closely with MOE to implement the mandated educational reforms by strengthening capacity and know-how, especially for teaching and learning reforms leading to improved administrative and school efficiency. As provided under the TOR, the TA team submitted a report on policy options to assist in implementing school reforms. The TA Final Report was submitted on 16 June 2002 and was found to be of high quality.

Overall Assessment and Rating

The TA was implemented satisfactorily, attained its objectives, and was *successful*. Government officials, especially those of ONEC and MOE, are appreciative of ADB assistance.

Major Lessons Learned

In a sector with multiple objectives, some of which may have conflicting requirements (e.g., access and equity versus quality) it is necessary to establish a hierarchy of objectives. Giving them equal importance and pursuing them with the same vigor invariably results in mediocre performance for all of them. The participatory approach that was extensively used in the TA, enabled grassroots stakeholders to lay ownership on the process of searching for ways to improve secondary education in the country.

Recommendations and Follow-Up Actions

As a follow-up, the Government requested ADB to provide a small-scale technical assistance (SSTA) to prepare a feasibility study for a secondary school improvement project. The SSTA, included in the 2002 Country Assistance Program for Thailand, was prepared to assist the Government assess a pilot project in 80 secondary schools that provided distance learning through a multimedia network, and prepare an investment project to replicate lead programs in about 1,000 secondary schools (grades 10-12) with special emphasis on information and communication technology (ICT). The CSP Update for Thailand, 2002-2004 included a loan project for *Secondary Education Sector Development Program* for \$100 million (OCR) in 2002. However, the Government decided in late December 2001 that there will be no borrowings from ADB (as well as other multilaterals) in 2002 and the immediate future. All projects in the pipeline were subsequently put on hold. Because of this, ONEC requested for more time for consultations and for disseminating information nationwide. Subsequently, the completion date was reset to 31 July 2002.