

# Introduction

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Developing countries, including Southeast Asian countries, face an enormous challenge in ensuring equitable access to quality education in the context of deepening globalization and increasing international competition. They must simultaneously meet the goals of Education for All (EFA) at the basic education level and of developing a more sophisticated workforce required by the knowledge-based economy at the post-basic, especially tertiary, education level. To meet this challenge, developing countries need to reform/renovate their education systems and service deliveries as an integral part of national development. However, most of them have not yet fully developed the individual, institutional, and system capacities in undertaking necessary education reforms, especially under decentralization and privatization requiring new roles at various (central and local, or public and private) levels of administration and stakeholders.

Provided that an ultimate vision of educational development and cooperation in the twenty-first century would be to develop indigenous capacity in engineering education reforms, this book analyzes the overall education reform context and capacity, including the status of sector program support using the sector-wide approach (SWAp)/program-based approach (PBA) in developing countries. We also address how different stakeholders have been interacting in order to promote equitable access to quality education, particularly from the perspectives of capacity development under the system of decentralization. In this book, based on analysis of the global trends of educational development and cooperation, we propose an “Integrated Framework” of international cooperation to education in developing countries. This framework posits capacity development as a key concept for enhancing aid effectiveness and comprises three main dimensions of integration: (1) interactions among stakeholders at various levels; (2) linkages among different subsectors in the education sector; and (3) linkages/combinations of different aid modalities, namely loans, grant aid, and technical cooperation. It is expected that by applying this model to assess current conditions of international cooperation to education in developing countries, donor countries and international agencies could clarify their roles in the process of promoting education reforms and enhance their aid effectiveness.

Taking this framework as a theoretical and analytical reference, we present case analyses of those less-developed countries in Southeast Asia, i.e., Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), and Vietnam, which are preparing or receiving sector program support using country-specific forms of SWAp/PBA. These country cases from the region called Indochina examine how the stakeholders in political arenas of each country have been interacting in the process of promoting education reforms focusing on basic education. In lieu of a conclusion, we discuss prospects of achieving EFA goals through capacity development of local stakeholders in developing countries.

It should be noted that the contributors of this book have diverse backgrounds, consisting of specialists from Southeast Asia (i.e., Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Vietnam), the USA, and Japan. This diversity of authors' backgrounds makes it possible for the book to present vivid pictures of education reforms in three country cases and unique perspectives for these countries to promote capacity development.

This book is composed of an introduction, three parts, and a conclusion. Followed by the Introduction, we present in Part I (Chapters 1–3) a theoretical and analytical framework of this book, which covers various dimensions of education reform in developing countries. Yasushi Hirosato and Yuto Kitamura, the editors, present a discussion of the historical background and significance of the prominence of sector program support in Chapter 1. This chapter particularly argues the need for turning development support for basic education into a program form in line with the major issues confronting the educational sector, and with the revision of the target attainment strategy for EFA goals and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In Chapter 2, Hirosato suggests an outline for a conceptual model for “indigenizing” education reforms from the perspectives of a political economy approach using the concept of internal and external costs. In Chapter 3, Kitamura and Hirosato present a framework (diagram) of the interrelationship among actors involved in the education reform process in developing countries. This framework (diagram) helps us understand how different actors interrelate in the process of education reforms, which is outlined in the educational development conceptual model presented in Chapter 2.

In Part II (Chapters 4–6), William K. Cummings argues that the experience of success stories of East Asian Newly Industrializing Countries (NICs) indicates that reforms of basic education need to be coordinated with reforms in other subsectors of the human resource development endeavor as well as with reforms in the broader economy and polity. The discussion presented in Chapter 4 should be considered as a future reference for countries in Indochina as well as other developing countries to further develop their social capacities of promoting and supporting required education reforms. Throughout these three chapters, we call for a new political economy of education reforms, and a whole discussion relates to the issue of “indigenous” capacity. In Chapters 5 and 6, we provide an overview of educational reforms and capacity development in basic education (Chapter 5 by Hirosato and Kitamura) and in higher education (Chapter 6 by David W. Chapman).

In Part III (Chapters 7–15), we examine three country cases from the region of Indochina, i.e., Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Vietnam.

Cambodia cases are in Chapters 7, 8, and 9, in which Sitha Chhinh and Sideth S. Dy introduce the education reform context and process, Ken Chansopeak focuses on the question of improving quality and equity of basic education under the large-scale education reform, and Chet Chealy discusses issues and challenges in the rapidly growing postsecondary education including the role of private higher education institutions.

Vietnam cases are in Chapters 10, 11, 12, and 13, in which Takao Kamibepu examines the education reform context and process, highlighting aid coordination process in basic education, Donald B. Holsinger discusses the issue of education inequality based on recent empirical data as well as the political economy perspectives, Le Cong Luyen Viet argues, taking lower secondary education as a case in point, that reform measures which are largely piecemeal renovations are not sufficient for the rapidly changing economy of Vietnam, and Gerald W. Fry provides a comprehensive picture of higher education reform and its challenges and opportunities.

Lao cases are in Chapters 14 and 15, in which Inthasong Phetsiriseng explains the education reform context and process focusing on decentralization and capacity development in basic education, and Keiichi Ogawa examines the development process of the higher education system in Lao PDR including the establishment of a national university, regional universities, and private universities, and discusses higher education management and finance issues.

In conclusion, we highlight and synthesize significant characteristics of three country cases which are presented in nine chapters in Part III. Hirosato and Kitamura examine the characteristics of program formation in the light of the key constituents of the Integrated Framework for international cooperation to education. Also, by referring to the analytical framework (diagram) presented in Chapter 3, Hirosato and Kitamura analyze how different actors interrelate in the process of decentralization in three countries of Indochina, and highlight the prospects for “indigenizing” educational reform capacity of developing countries.

Both the conceptual and analytical framework and the country case analyses are intended to help developing countries simultaneously meet twin challenges of ensuring equitable access to quality basic education and of developing competitive workforces by renovating higher education in an era of globalization.