

Conclusion: “Indigenization” of Education Reforms Through Capacity Development

Yasushi Hirosato and Yuto Kitamura

1 Promotion of Quality Basic Education

Generally speaking, we believe that the promotion of high-quality basic education has been considered as the public policy that should be pursued by governments of developing countries. However, the developing countries of today, under the influence of neoliberalism ideology, are in favor of the promotion of decentralization of educational management and finance, and of education reforms through deregulation and privatization based on market forces. Therefore, as a means of diffusing quality basic education, while placing emphasis on the role of government, efficiency is being pursued in the process of diffusing basic education by means of reviewing the roles of central and regional governments, the introduction of market forces, and the law of competition. Above all, it is said that in regard to education management, if authority and finance can be devolved to the regions and if the local government and community actively take part in the decision-making process with the result that these bodies strengthen their capacity in taking on practical responsibilities, then highly cost-effective management and efficient practices would be possible (McGinn and Welsh 1999).

What is more, as Southeast Asian countries including three countries of Indochina comprise multicultural, multiethnic, and multilingual communities, there are regional and/or ethnic differences in attitudes toward education. Therefore, if one tries to impose a policy to promote a uniform basic education, local needs are not met, with the danger that nonefficiency of education management and practices may even result. In this regard, the majority of basic education support involving EFA goals is being conducted in the context of decentralization.

To illustrate, as described in chapters of this book, the World Bank’s Primary Education Project for Disadvantaged Children in Vietnam (World Bank 2002) and the Second Education Development Project in Lao PDR (World Bank 2004), the projects are targeted at poor areas with low enrollment levels or ethnic minority areas, and all practical responsibility for the projects are rendered to the local governments or communities.

The demarcation of roles between central and regional governments and the efficient management of schools are open to debate also in the education reforms

of developed countries. One cannot say that proper examination has been made on the effect of the neoliberalism that prizes efficiency, which is what underlies education reforms in developing countries of our era. The developing countries do not have the systemic conditions that would assist the establishment of such thinking. Rather, exclusive competition or selection may accelerate, pushing the vulnerable (the poorest nations or the underprivileged people in developing countries) outside the ring, producing a widening disparity between nations and regions. As the acceleration of globalization is inevitable, it is vital that we be totally aware of its negative aspects.

The other reason why the debate about the division of labor between central and local governments would become more complex is the ambiguity that may arise in defining the relationship between local governments and the different layers of bureaucracy in the central government's education ministry when dealing with the devolution of authority and finance from central government. This will inevitably cause confusion on the local level or in the schools themselves. The other possibility is that even if legislative delineation is clear, implementation thereof may not follow properly. In Vietnam, for instance, the various agencies involved in primary education administration find themselves in "double subordination."¹

2 Interest in Higher Education and Vocational Education/Training

The international thinking that placed emphasis on basic education that has prevailed since the 1990s came hand in hand with a criticism of higher education and vocational education/training as well as a cutback in government spending in these areas. However, the recent acceleration in globalization, intensification of international competition and the emergence of a knowledge-based society propelled by the advance in information technology have meant that a reappraisal has been made of higher education and vocational education/training in the education sector.²

UNESCO hosted the World Conference on Higher Education in 1998 and the World Bank and UNESCO published a joint report in 2000, outlining guidelines aimed at higher education aid tailored to the development stage of that particular developing country (World Bank 2000). The important policy issue in extending this aid is how best to promote the corporatization and privatization of higher education

¹That is to say, the Ministry of Education and Training of a province is under the guidance and control of the People's Committee of the province but at the same time is subject to the guidance and inspection of the central government's Ministry of Education and Training. The County Education and Training Bureau has to submit to the guidance and control of the County People's Committee while being subject to the guidance and inspection of the provincial ministry of education and training.

²According to Chapman and Austin (2002), the success to a certain degree of basic education diffusion have led to increasing pressure toward schooling at postsecondary level, and that in some countries, overemphasis on basic education has brought on limitations in the skills level of the labor force.

institutions. The specific areas for cooperation are wide-ranging, including support toward strategic planning, introduction into universities of competitive budget allocation and fund raising, and reinforcement of assessment and an accreditation system. For example, the World Bank supported the setting up of an assessment and accreditation system of higher education institutions in Cambodia, and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) implemented the Postsecondary Education Rationalization Project in Laos (ADB 1995). This project was a highly strategic one involving support for the amalgamation of the National University of Laos and was aimed at contributing toward infrastructure building in higher education administration and finance.

In the area of vocational education and training, the introduction of market forces and competition are being used to encourage private-sector led implementation closer to the requirements of the demand side of the labor market. In countries of Indochina, quality improvement of private sector training institutions is being reinforced and public bodies are strengthening their liaison with the private sector.

3 New Approach in International Cooperation in Education: Sector Program Support Using SWAp

In this book, we have discussed a relatively new approach in international cooperation in education that would address the above-mentioned issues, i.e., sector program support using the Sector-Wide Approach (SWAp). With a view to attaining the EFA goals while maintaining the balance among the subsectors of education, Sector program support using SWAp attempts to support the education reform process itself (King and Buchert 1999). Learning from the mistakes of a project-type cooperation format that lacked consistency, sector program support through efficient aid coordination and collaboration has been the aim since the 1990s as being the good practice in international cooperation as a whole.³ More directly underlying this is the fact that the education sector is playing an important role in poverty reduction according to the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) promoted by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. It should be also notable that the UK, Sweden, and the European Union have clearly adopted the stance of creating an efficient aid collaboration system for the purpose of poverty reduction (Ratcliff and Macrae 1999; Sida 2000).

Furthermore, the Sector Budget Support is a form of cooperation that evolved out of sector program support through SWAp. With the tide of decentralization

³It was Peter Harold and his associates that first defined the Sector Program. Its distinguishing features are: (1) the entire sector becomes subject; (2) there is an integral and consistent sector policy; (3) the developing country has ownership; (4) all aid agencies take part; (5) the procedures of cooperation are shared; and (6) technical cooperation is minimized. See Harold and Associates (1995). Also, see Buchert (2000), which examines the change from the project type to sector program type cooperation.

becoming firmly established, the financial controls in the developing country receiving aid funding are being transferred from the administration of the ministry in charge of different government sectors to the central government arm in charge of finance (ministry of finance), and from thence they are transferred to the local governments. Although there are prerequisites for the developing government's responsibility and capacity for briefing and the assurance of transparency of aid funding flow, this is a form of cooperation that ultimately aims for the developing country itself to become financially independent through the acceptance of aid funding as part of government finances as a transitional means.

SWAp is being pioneered in the education sector alongside the public health sector. In other words, the advantages of SWAp in the education sector are as follows: the public sector is dominant in the education sector and aid agencies can engage directly in talks with the government of the developing country; the budget level can be forecast as government expenditure; the provision of educational services is the major responsibility area of local governments and authorities; and many aid agencies are giving aid in the education sector as a priority area and there is a support base for SWAp.

In Southeast Asia, Cambodia is the pioneering example of introducing SWAp in education sector. Vietnam and Lao PDR are taking concrete steps to prepare for the introduction of SWAp. In Cambodia, under the Education Sector Development Program approved by the ADB in 2001, the government created a special scheme for Sector Budget Support that supports the current account budget, known as the priority action program (PAP) (ADB 2001). Through funding assistance for PAP, policy and financial support aimed at a balanced development of the education sector as a whole was given. Moreover, the Second Education Sector Development Program, likewise approved by the ADB in 2004, included support for the increasing of secondary education opportunities and basic skills training (ADB 2004a). In these ways, Cambodia has witnessed an expansion in the subject and scope of aid from primary education to secondary education and skills training, with the aim of supporting education reforms that are better balanced and comprehensive.

As a policy to underwrite the realization of quality EFA, the Fundamental School Quality Level (FSQL) concept has been introduced in Vietnam. Under this scheme, the Government of Vietnam and the aid agencies agree on the minimum quality of education to be guaranteed uniformly and nationwide. Then, financial assistance including Sector Budget Support is implemented. The FSQL of primary education is that which was stipulated by the World Bank as the quality of education to be guaranteed by the Ministry of Education and Training in the Primary Education Project for Disadvantaged Children. As for lower secondary education, the condition of financial assistance is the development of an equivalent FSQL by the Ministry of Education and Training in the Second Lower Secondary Education Development Project.

There have been various on-going attempts we can observe as described in chapters of this book; however, in actuality, there is a certain degree of anxiety concerning ownership and partnership, both of which being prerequisites for sector program support through SWAp and Sector Budget Support (King 2004). As mentioned in Chapter 1, ownership and partnership are the key pillars of the

New Development Strategy of OECD/DAC. A tendency that is sometimes seen is the dependency on foreign consultants employed by aid agencies in the very process of drafting sector programs (Samoff 1999). Also, the question arises whether it is possible for a proper partnership to be forged between the developing country and aid agencies or among aid agencies, with more time and labor expended on balancing out their own interests, so that the aid cost reduction envisaged by SWAp cannot be often achieved. Even if SWAp succeeds and the go-ahead is given for Sector Budget Support, it may not be possible to incorporate clearly an exit policy with a specific time frame in mind, and it may well result merely in reinforcing dependency on the aid agencies and foreign consultants. Then, there are too many problems associated with implementing sector program support to enumerate, and despite the initial aim to share and simplify aid protocol, matters may end up becoming just more complicated.

As described in this book, one can also witness the lack of systems or implementation capacity in developing countries and the problems of capacity and lack of experience of aid agencies. In spite of these problems, the inevitable course now being charted is toward sector program support through SWAp and Sector Budget Support. By building up experiences of actual implementation, these would probably continue to evolve as a new approach of international cooperation in education.

4 Potential for Regional Cooperation in Education: The Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Program

Another new cooperative approach in Southeast Asia is that of subregional cooperation, which is purported to bring a bigger market, greater economic scale, and more effective division of labor. A foremost example of this is the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Program, which was inaugurated in 1992 with the ADB as coordinator and promoter. GMS encompasses Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, and China (Yunnan Province), an economic bloc of some 250 million people that has a huge capacity for potential growth. The GMS Program is a unique attempt even in Southeast Asia and has become a model of subregional cooperation.⁴ The GMS Program entered its second phase in 2001. It comprises ten core projects relating to transport, communications, environment, natural resources management, tourism promotion, and human resources development. Education is treated as one of the subsectors of human resources development (public health and labor being the others). In the second phase, activities in the education sector have been given top priority.

⁴For more information on the GMS Program, see ADB (2000). A similar framework for subregional cooperation is the East ASEAN Growth Area Program involving Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. However, because of the political uncertainties and law and order problems around Mindanao, not much progress has been made.

A little over half the population of GMS is regarded as potential labor, but a large part of it is currently idle and there is a shortage in all sectors of human resources that can keep up with the scale and speed of growth. In addition, the low level of literacy among the young, the inadequate provision of primary and secondary education, and poor health mean that labor productivity cannot be said to be high. Indochina and Myanmar have not yet achieved universal diffusion of primary education, which is one of the reasons for low employment. To provide people with actual employment, more advanced technical education and vocational training are needed. Urgently required are standardization of skills within GMS, creation of skill inspection and evaluation systems, and improvement of labor market information services, amongst other tasks. Besides, though the improvement of primary and secondary education is in principle a domestic task for GMS countries, the common policy issues are decentralization management and improvement in education quality, and therefore, these would be priority projects from now on (ADB 2004b).

5 Importance of Capacity Development

Whether or not we can succeed in the “indigenous” education reform depends on both the governments of developing countries and aid agencies acquiring the capacity needed for promoting such reforms. In short, an appropriate capacity development must occur, as we put high emphasis on our discussion in this book. Above all, in the effort to attain EFA goals under decentralization, new cooperative approaches such as sector program support through SWAp and Sector Budget Support are being introduced. Consequently, the importance of capacity development is mounting on local government and at school levels. To make these efforts successful, while bearing in mind the basic principle of the creation of true ownership and partnership, working-level problems have to be overcome by both parties, namely, system inadequacy and lack of implementation capacity on the developing countries’ side, and lack of capacity and experience on the aid agencies’ side. Sector program support should rationalize education management; it would have the completely opposite effect if it becomes a damper on the implementation capacity of the developing country or aid agencies. Still, the importance of capacity development is being recognized and it is incorporated in various ways as individual tasks on a country-by-country basis.

Nevertheless, decentralization has dispersed the subjects of capacity development too much asunder or has given rise to reduplication. Oftentimes those who undertake capacity development are foreign consultants employed by aid agencies. Their methodology, by and large, lacks coherence and is not systematically organized. Although on the one hand it is necessary to satisfy capacity development needs in the context of each nation, it is important to identify the methodology or system and mechanism of capacity development common to the Southeast Asian region.

In this sense, the effort toward capacity development under the GMS Program is noteworthy. The Phnom Penh Plan for Development Management has been inaugu-

rated and in collaboration with major education and training institutions within the region, training of administrative officers is being undertaken (ADB 2002). In order to promote subregional cooperation, the emphasis is on a multi-sector approach. For instance, in regard to HIV/AIDS, early childhood care and development, school health, anti-drugs education, and other such training that are related to both education and health are being undertaken. However, education is just one area of the Phnom Penh Plan, and this framework cannot provide a key impetus toward capacity development per se. In future, what is needed is the establishment of a methodology and the creation of a system/mechanism of capacity development specially focused on education, while keeping in liaison with this Phnom Penh Plan.

6 Remaining Future Tasks

In the twenty-first century, what is crucial for a developing country to promote its own education reform aimed at achieving MDGs and EFA goals is for that country to succeed in its own capacity development. This is widely accepted as Chapter 1 of this book described (McGinn 2004; Hirosato 2001). With this fact in mind, we have attempted the creation of an education development framework based on indigenous capacity from the perspectives of a new political economy. However, we have to admit that the conceptual framework presented in Part I was not fully and extensively examined in country case studies presented in Part III, because the framework itself is still in the preliminary stage and needs to be further developed and sophisticated. This remains as our future task.

In its discussion, though in a limited manner, Chapter 2 has provided a conceptual explanation that the improvement of education sector governance through capacity development leads to the improvement of basic education indicators such as the school enrollment rate. The recognition of the importance of capacity development is evident from the fact that an education plan that integrates the six EFA goals and its implementation and management capacity constitutes one of the priority action plans in the *EFA Global Action Plan* adopted by UNESCO (UNESCO 2006). It would be necessary for international support to back up such action and for that support to be executed using an Integrated Framework as suggested in Chapter 1.

Capacity development in the education sector of many developing countries remains as yet chiefly that of policy-making, planning, monitoring, and evaluation at the central level. Although a new cooperative approach of sector program support through PBA is being introduced, actions at local government or school level remain inadequate. The real challenge toward high-quality achievement of the EFA goals lies not only in the quantitative achievement of targets relating to schooling but also to raising the quality of teaching and learning in schools. In other words, the task is to create “a sustainable learning environment with satisfactory quality” (ADB 2001) and to enhance the learning effectiveness on a continuous basis. This means taking fundamental action, to introduce an appropriate curriculum, to conduct teacher training of good quality, to provide satisfactory teaching materials

to schools, to ensure that the teachers can use them effectively, and to manage schools effectively (Smith 2005). Consequently, the achievement of EFA goals centering on basic education development would not depend only on action on the central level. Rather, it would depend greatly on the extent of successful capacity development of people, organizations, and systems at local (state/province, district, community) and school levels. This is why the Integrated Framework suggested in Chapter 1 is intended to be a guideline when considering the way forward for basic education development in this context.

As chapters in Part III have outlined, the countries that make up Indochina are facing various difficulties in the high-quality achievement of EFA goals. Their education sector governance capacity is still inadequate. In particular, the local education administration and school-level planning, implementation, and monitoring capacity is extremely weak and a “sustainable learning environment of satisfactory quality” has not been created. What is more, in many cases the actors responsible for capacity development are still the foreign consultants employed by aid agencies. Their methodology is more often than not lacking in consistency and is disorganized in systematic respects. Because of these weaknesses, while capacity development tailored to the context of each country is needed, it is important to search for the methodology and system/mechanism of capacity development that can be used not only in Indochina but in many other developing countries.

Finally, as a task for the future, there is the need for further investigation into the results of the sector program support that is being provided in many developing countries including those of Indochina for the achievement of EFA goals in a decentralized context. Also, a wide-ranging consideration is needed of the ideal means of capacity development required to bridge the gap with “sustainable learning environment of satisfactory quality” at school level. To back up this effort, the potential of basic education development support based on an Integrated Framework must be pursued further. The more such investigations are carried out, the more contribution can be made to the development of universal aid discourse. That is what we believe and why we continue our efforts.

References

- Asian Development Bank (ADB) (1995). *Report and Recommendation of the President (RRP), Lao PDR, Postsecondary Education Rationalization Project*. Manila: ADB.
- ADB (2000). *A Wealth of Opportunity: Development Challenges in the Mekong Region*. Manila: ADB.
- ADB (2001). *RRP, Cambodia, Education Sector Development Program*. Manila: ADB.
- ADB (2002). *Technical Assistance Report, GMS Phnom Penh Plan for Development Management*. Manila: ADB.
- ADB (2004a). *RRP, Cambodia, Second Education Sector Development Program*. Manila: ADB.
- ADB (2004b). *GMS Fifth Meeting of the Working Group on Human Resource Development, Yangon, Myanmar, July 2004*. Manila: ADB.
- Buchert, L. (2000). “From Project to Programme to Sector Wide Support: Some Questions and Concerns.” *Prospect*, XXX (December): 405–408.

- Chapman, D.W. and Austin, A.E. (eds.) (2002). *Higher Education in the Developing World: Changing Contexts and Institutional Responses*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Harold, P. and Associates. (1995). *The Broad Sector Approach to Investment Lending: Sector Investment Programs*. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, The World Bank Discussion Paper No. 302.
- Hirosato, Y. (2001). “New Challenges for Educational Development and Cooperation in Asia in the 21st Century: Building Indigenous Capacity for Education Reforms.” *Journal of International Cooperation in Education*, 4(2): 1–24.
- King, K. (2004). “The External Agenda of Educational Reform: A Challenge to Educational Self-Reliance and Dependency in Sub-Saharan Africa.” *Journal of International Cooperation in Education*, 7(1): 85–96.
- King, K. and Buchert, L. (eds.) (1999). *Changing International Aid to Education: Global Patterns and National Contexts*. Paris: UNESCO Publishing.
- McGinn, N.F. (2000). “An Argument for Dialogue in Definition of National Policies for Education.” *Journal of International Cooperation in Education*, 7(1): 15–25.
- McGinn, N.F. and Welsh, T. (1999). *Decentralization of Education: Why, When, What and How?* Paris: IIEP, UNESCO, Fundamentals of Educational Planning 64.
- Ratcliff, M. and Macrae, M. (1999). *Sector Wide Approaches to Education Development*. London: DFID.
- Samoff, J. (1999). “Education Sector Analysis in Africa: Limited National Control and Even Less National Ownership.” *International Journal of Educational Development*, 19(4–5): 249–272.
- Sida (2000). Sida’s Policy for Sector Programme Support. Stockholm: Sida.
- Smith, H. (2005). “Ownership and capacity: Do current donor approaches help or hinder the achievement of international and national targets for education?” *International Journal of Educational Development*, 25(4): 445–455.
- UNESCO (2006). *EFA Global Action Plan: Improving Support to Countries in Achieving the EFA Goals* (Edition of July 10, 2006). Paris: UNESCO.
- World Bank (2000). *Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril and Promise*. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank.
- World Bank (2002). *Project Appraisal Document (PAD), Viet Nam, Primary Education for Disadvantaged Children*. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank.
- World Bank (2004). *PAD, Lao People’s Democratic Republic (PDR), Second Education Development Project*, Washington, D.C.: The World Bank.