

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

IN AUSTRALIA'S AID PROGRAM

**Policy Statement announced by
The Hon Alexander Downer MP,
the Minister for Foreign Affairs**

August 1996



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INTRODUCTION

Education and training assistance is an important element of Australia's overseas aid program. By supporting improvements in education in developing countries Australia is helping to overcome one of the major obstacles to poverty reduction and economic growth.

Although significant progress has been made in education by developing countries in the last two decades, much more remains to be done. One third of all adults in the developing world are illiterate. One quarter of all school aged children are not attending school. By the year 2000 the school age population will increase to over 700 million with more than half this increase being in the poorest countries of Africa and Asia. These are significant challenges and Australia gives its commitment to help meet these challenges.

This policy articulates a change in focus for Australian assistance in education and training. While Australia will continue to assist directly with higher education through the provision of tertiary scholarships, there will be increased emphasis on the development of the education sector in partner countries, particularly in the areas of basic education and vocational and technical education. Training assistance will be closely linked to the human resource development needs of individual countries, thereby having a development impact across various sectors.

The nature of education and training activities provided under the aid program will vary between partner countries. Specific country needs will be matched with the expertise available in the Australian education and training community. The industry is now well placed to provide a greater variety of services through a range of delivery mechanisms.

Education and Training Policy

Goal: Recognising that education and training are fundamental to the development process, Australia's aid program aims to assist developing countries to meet the educational needs of their people.

Priority Areas: Basic Education
Vocational and Technical Education
Higher Education
Institutional Strengthening
Distance Education

Underlying Principles:

- To increase access to education including provision for re-entry to formal education and for lifelong learning
- To promote *equity* in the distribution of education opportunities and in resource allocation, including equal opportunities for disadvantaged groups, particularly women and girls and rural communities
- To assist with the achievement of overall *qualitative* improvements in education services and standards, particularly in basic education
- To provide education which is *relevant* to the needs of individuals and of the community
- To facilitate the *effective and efficient* use of resources in the education and training sector.

RATIONALE

Education, Development and Poverty Reduction

Education is development's most basic building block and a vital contributing factor to the alleviation of poverty. Education develops knowledge and skills, and imparts values and attitudes thereby equipping people to participate fully in the economy and in society. It contributes to the strengthening of institutions of civil society, to national capacity building and good governance, all increasingly recognised as critical elements in the effective implementation of sound economic and social policies required for poverty reduction.

Education makes further contributions to the alleviation of poverty through its impact on economic growth. Education at all levels increases the quantity and quality of human capital in the economy. Better educated workers are more productive workers and the

accumulation of knowledge increases the rate of technological change, thus accelerating economic growth. Education and training are instrumental in ensuring the supply of a skilled labour force in ever changing labour markets. The high economic growth rates in Asia have been attributed to investment in basic education and a resultant work force which is highly skilled, flexible and receptive to training.

Benefits from education are experienced directly at the individual level and this is particularly significant for the poor. In most cases the well-being of individuals is determined by the income they receive from their labour. Education increases individual labour productivity and improves access to employment in both the formal and informal sectors, where job opportunities are available. Over time education helps those in poverty to increase their earnings, resulting in an increase in living standards. As 70 per cent of the world's poor are women, education for women and girls is critical if the levels of world poverty are to be reduced.

Education, particularly for women and girls, contributes to poverty reduction in other less direct ways. Educated women are more likely to marry at a later age and have smaller families than those with little or no education. More educated parents, particularly mothers, are more likely to access health services and to change household health behaviour, resulting in lower maternal mortality and healthier children. They are more likely to educate their own children, particularly their daughters.

Women with four years or more of education compared with those who have less, have 30 per cent fewer children and the mortality rates of their children are halved.

The Global Situation in Education and Literacy

There have been substantial improvements in the provision of education in developing countries over the past three decades with enrolment rates at primary level increasing from 48 per cent in 1960 to 76 per cent in 1990. There have also been increases in enrolment ratios at both the secondary level (up to 46 per cent of 12-17 year olds) and at the tertiary level during that period. Consequently, an average six year old in the developing countries in 1990 could expect to complete 8.5 years of school, an increase from 7.6 years in 1980. Despite this progress there is still about 130 million children at the primary level and more than 275 million at the secondary level who do not attend school.

Education opportunities however, are not equal, particularly for girls who constitute the majority of the children without access to primary school. The gender gap in education reflects not only limited access, but also the lower demand by parents for education for their daughters. This demand is influenced by factors such as cultural norms, the value of girls' work in and around the home and the level of parental literacy.

An average 6 year old girl in the developing countries in 1990 could expect to attend school for 7.7 years. By contrast, an average 6 year old boy could expect 9.3 years of education. (UNESCO)

Inequalities in education are also experienced by rural populations who are disadvantaged by the lack of services; the poor who are disadvantaged because they are unable to meet the costs of education even at primary level; and working children who suffer because they are required to contribute to family income.

For those attending school, the quality and relevance of the education is often inadequate leading to low levels of achievement and high drop out rates. Pupils continue to leave primary school unable to read, write or solve simple problems. In many cases the low level of achievement is linked to poor quality teacher training and lack of teaching/learning materials, particularly text books and resource materials.

Education objectives, curriculum content and learning processes in developing countries are often not relevant for the communities they are intended to serve. Curricula are often outdated and inappropriate in terms of language and cultural norms. School systems produce graduates who can not find employment, who do not wish to return to their communities and who are ill equipped to face the challenges of their society.

"The quality of education provided in many Third World Schools is sometimes so distressingly poor that even pupils who persist in schools for several years may never achieve an enduring level of literacy." (UNESCO)

School systems in developing countries also face structural and management inefficiencies. Poor management at all levels gives rise to inefficiencies and inequitable distribution of scarce resources.

Adult illiteracy is a persistent problem across developing countries. While illiteracy rates have declined from 55 per cent in 1970 to about 35 per cent in 1990, the absolute number of illiterate adults has increased from 840 million to more than 900 million people. Of these, women outnumber men two to one.

International Trends in Donor Assistance

Following the *World Conference on Education For All* held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 there has been increased recognition internationally of the importance of basic education. This has been reflected in a shift in donor policies and resource commitments towards basic education. Bilateral donors have shown increased interest in basic education in their policy statements. Multilateral donors, especially the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and United Nations organisations have increased substantially their resources for basic education. In the period 1990-94 approximately one-third of the World Bank's lending on education was for primary education, more than double the share of the previous decade.

In recent years the international community has placed increased emphasis on the need to improve quality, equity and cost effectiveness of educational services.

Educational Priorities in the Asia-Pacific Region

- Improvements to educational management at all levels, from national systems to individual schools, so that scarce resources are used effectively and distributed equitably and educational standards are maintained and improved.
- Assistance to governments to provide a minimum of six years of good quality primary education that will see children achieve and retain reasonable standards of literacy and numeracy.
- Increased use of distance education as a means for people from remote areas to have access to basic education and as a more cost-effective way of allowing people access to further training opportunities through Australian and regional tertiary institutions.
- Improvements in the quality and relevance of post-school vocational and technical education, to raise the skill levels of the workforce and reduce the dependence on imported expatriate skills.
- Assistance for higher education particularly through opportunities to complete tertiary studies.

PRIORITY AREAS FOR AUSTRALIAN ASSISTANCE IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Australia has identified five areas in education and training as priorities for assistance under the aid program. The specific activities supported within these areas will be determined on a country-by-country basis in consultation with partner governments and taking into account Australia's skills and expertise. Each of these priority areas is described below.

Basic Education

Australia will assist with efforts towards the achievement of universal access to basic education, improvements in the quality of basic education and the equitable distribution of those quality improvements.

Basic education addresses the basic learning needs of individuals. It equips people to make informed decisions and contribute fully to their societies. It is the basis for all future learning.

Basic education includes primary education, lower secondary education, adult literacy and numeracy programs, and mass education programs (where the knowledge imparted is considered as essential and the standard of learning is equivalent to primary). While many developing countries have made substantial progress in the area of basic education, significant gaps remain with most developing countries falling well short of achieving their basic education objectives.

Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the early and fundamental stages.

(The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

Equal access to quality primary education is a fundamental human right. Primary education focuses on the achievement of literacy and numeracy and also lays the foundation for further education. Success at secondary level education is dependent on an effective primary education and success in higher education or in vocational/technical education can also be traced back through the secondary education phase to an effective primary education. Primary education is a sound economic investment in both the interests of the individual and the nation. It increases individual's labour

productivity and their opportunities for employment resulting in increased earnings. It has positive affects on child health and nutrition.

The low level of adult literacy in the developing world, particularly among women, is a major obstacle to development. Providing support for adult literacy and numeracy programs enables men and women to participate more fully in economic activities and leads to better health and hygiene, lower infant mortality and better child care. Literate mothers make more informed choices relating to their children's health and play a crucial role in educating the next generation. There is a strong association between the level of parental literacy and the demand for education for their daughters.

Mass education programs are an important mechanism for educating communities, for example in the field of health education. The media can be utilised to broadcast simple messages which provide basic information on matters such as the safe disposal of waste, non contamination of drinking water, basic nutrition and child health matters.

Australia has comprehensive expertise in the field of basic education, including expertise in systems development from the central level through to individual institutions, and in curriculum development. There is extensive technical capacity for teacher training both

The Philippines-Australia Project in Basic Education (PROBE)

PROBE is a major five year project aimed at improving the teaching of English, science and mathematics at the elementary and lower secondary level in the Philippines. The project assists the Philippines Government to upgrade teacher training through improving pre-service and in-service teacher education units and developing resource material in country. There is also training in Australia for a large number of specialist personnel under the project. Overall the project will benefit over 600 teacher trainers and education specialists, 8500 teachers and approximately 1 000 000 children in 880 schools. The total cost of the project is \$46.78 million, with the Australian contribution valued at \$28.71 million.

The Western Samoa Primary Education Materials Project

This \$2 million project provides an integrated package of printed classroom materials, radio broadcast material, in-service training for teachers and professional development for staff of the Western Samoa Curriculum Development Unit. The aim of the project is to improve the quality of education for students in primary classes from years 4 to 8 in the core subject areas: social science, mathematics, science, English language and Samoan language. The project will support improvements in curriculum design including locally produced materials for use in the classrooms. Teachers will be supported by specially designed radio broadcasts.

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in Australia and offshore, with substantial skills in upgrading teachers particularly in the science and technology fields. Australia also has expertise in the development of culturally appropriate curricula including curricula for basic literacy, for involving girls in education and for delivery in remote locations.

Vocational and Technical Education

Australia will contribute to the development of a skilled and adaptable workforce which meets the short to medium term needs of both the public and private sectors in developing countries.

Vocational and technical education (VTE) provides the means for creating an adaptable, well trained workforce. The push for economic growth, combined with the diversification of international trade, deregulation of economies and labour markets and the advent of technological change all contribute to the need for highly skilled workforces in developing countries. There is heightened awareness of the contribution of VTE in meeting these needs and the importance of developing integrated VTE systems which involve a more direct and substantial role for the private sector.

Though most developing countries have improved their VTE training capacities over the last few decades, they continue to face major shortages of skilled workers. Australia will assist with the enhancement of VTE systems on a country by country basis to enable them to address their particular workforce needs. Specific assistance will vary between countries according to their size, level of economic development and the scale and dynamism of the industrial sector. For example, where national training systems are already in place, VTE strategies may focus on improving the quality of the education provided with an emphasis on curriculum development, teaching standard and competency, and improved infrastructure and facilities.

Through extensive training reform, Australia has developed expertise in policy formulation and systems development relevant to developing countries' needs for rapidly increasing the skills base of its workforce. Australia has a systematic framework for involving industry as partners in the training of the workforce, including the articulation of industry's skills demands and in gaining their commitment to participating in the provision of training. Australia has developed comprehensive competency based training modules for every sector which could be adapted for individual country requirements. Australia has the capacity to provide assistance for vocational and technical skills training quickly and cheaply, both in Australia and in developing countries.

The PNG Maritime College Upgrading Project

The PNG Maritime College Upgrading Project will improve the level of training provided by the College to meet the need for trained staff to operate the increasingly sophisticated vessels in the PNG maritime fleet. Australia is providing \$8.7 million to the project which integrates capital works with curriculum development, staff training and equipment supply. It includes the construction of two buildings to house new training equipment, the provision of teaching aids such as a Radar Simulator and Computer-Aided-Learning Laboratory. The project will develop and revise curricula to meet the 1995 Convention on Standards of Training Certification & Watchkeeping for Seafarers.

In keeping with AusAID's approach to Vocational and Technical Education, the project will establish links with industry. An outreach component for employers emphasises the long term benefits of training. The project also encourages female participation in what has been a traditionally male dominated industry. It will produce a video for industry groups and women's organisations demonstrating the experiences of women who have been successful in the maritime industry.

Higher Education

Australia will support higher education needs in developing countries according to the knowledge and skill needs of each country.

Higher education provides opportunities for advanced and/or specialised training, essential for positions of responsibility in government, business and the professions. Tertiary institutions produce new scientific and technical knowledge through research and advanced training. They are conduits for the transfer, adaptation and dissemination of knowledge generated elsewhere in the world. Investments in higher education contribute to increases in labour productivity and higher long-term growth.

Australia provides direct assistance at the higher education level through the provision of scholarships for tertiary training. The scholarships contribute to human resource development for the recipient country and have a direct impact on development across various sectors. Scholarships also have an important role in fostering and sustaining positive relations with governments, particularly in our region.

The number and nature of scholarships provided will continue to be based on individual partner country requirements. The scholarship program increasingly reflects developments in Australia's higher education sub-sector, including offshore campuses

of Australian institutions, twinning arrangements and increased utilisation of distance education through new technologies.

Australia also provides assistance to the development of in-country higher education systems and institutions. Australia has expertise in all areas relating to higher education with particular strengths in policy development and systems development and management.

In-Australia Training

In-Australia training awards have been a significant and constant feature of Australia's aid program since the 1950s. Scholarships were originally offered under the umbrella of the Colombo Plan and other regional programs with scholarship holders generally nominated by the recipient governments. The 1984 review of Australia's aid program (the Jackson Report) recommended broadening the student base. A second stream of scholarships based on an equity and merit system and targeting the private sector, was introduced in 1990.

In 1996 there are approximately 6000 aid funded students studying in Australia. Most students are undertaking higher education programs with the remainder enrolled in TAFE or non award courses. Awardees come from approximately 60 countries with strong representation from the south east Asian region.

Institutional Strengthening

Australia will help strengthen both central and decentralised institutions at the sectoral, sub-sector or single institution level.

Institutional management and technical capacity is critical for the effective development and maintenance of quality education systems. Institutional strengthening is a means to achieving improvements in the provision of education services and may be applied at any level: basic, upper secondary, tertiary or system wide. In many countries it is central to implementing and sustaining educational reforms.

An analysis of the whole education sector is the most effective approach to identifying institutional strengthening needs within the sector. Institutional strengthening directed to system efficiencies can reduce unit costs, without impairing quality, thereby freeing resources for other education priorities.

PNG: Institutional Strengthening for the Department of Education

The PNG Government is implementing a large reform program to expand and improve its national education system. The program has set ambitious targets, including the establishment of a new elementary system with tuition in the vernacular, the provision of universal basic education to Grade 8 level, the doubling of enrolments in Grades 9 and 10 as well as a five-fold increase in Grade 12 output. The Education Sector Resources Study, completed in 1995, identified the need for the establishment of a Facilitating and Monitoring Unit (FMU) to help the Department of Education implement these reforms. AusAID is strengthening the FMU as part of a 3 year \$4.1 million project. This project illustrates many of the features which underpin sound institutional strengthening in the education sector.

Australia has substantial experience in the reform of education systems at all levels: schools, technical and vocational education and higher education. Government departments of education as well as teaching institutions have expertise in restructuring and structural management issues.

Short Course Training

Short courses can be an important component of a country's training program aimed at addressing human resource development requirements. Courses are designed to meet specific needs and, when delivered in country, provide substantial cost advantages. AusAID has supported trade policy short courses in Fiji, Laos and Indonesia to assist those countries understand the implications of the Uruguay Round. Regional short course training programs in standards were also included in a package of APEC related assistance. These involved a series of three training programs over one year for staff of national accreditation bodies in the Asia-Pacific region. The programs provided exposure to more developed and experienced laboratory accreditation systems.

Short courses are a valuable mechanism for countries seeking to upgrade the skills of senior and middle-level managers, who cannot be easily released from their positions for long periods of time. In Vietnam, training is being provided for public sector participants in project planning, appraisal and evaluation, environmental management, and macro-economic and socio-political planning. Two thirds of the courses are being held in Vietnam. As the courses are delivered by Australians in country, they retain a high Australian identity.

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Distance Education

Australia will promote the use of distance education as a means for increasing access, improving equality of access and enhancing the relevance and cost-effectiveness of education opportunities.

Distance education, can contribute to the improved access, equity and cost-effectiveness of education and training programs. Courses delivered through the distance mode can be accessed by learners regardless of their location. They provide equitable opportunities for those otherwise denied access to education and training due to remoteness, financial circumstances, family commitments or cultural constraints. Distance education is an important strategy to increase the access of women to education opportunities. It also offers substantial cost advantages.

Distance education is particularly beneficial at the post secondary level and can include:

- Bridging and adult education for those who have been pushed out of primary or secondary education and require access to different types of programs to re-enter the formal education system; or as part of life-long education opportunities to develop knowledge and skills for other purposes, including workforce upgrading;
- Short in-service training for those who are already trained in areas such as education, health, and agriculture, and who need to be kept up to date with new techniques and developments in their profession; and
- Upgrading of formal qualifications for those who have already undertaken initial training and are employed in the workforce and who wish to add to their qualifications.

Developments in distance education, particularly in relation to the use of new technologies, are rapid. Australia is at the cutting edge of these developments and is well able to help developing countries assess the opportunities and challenges that these provide. Australia can provide comprehensive support to governments for the establishment or further development of their distance education systems.

The ABC Television English Language Teaching Series

This distance education project involved the development of 26 half hour English language training television programs and complementary books, video and audio cassettes. The television programs will be broadcast via Australian television to the South East Asian region. The project utilises the advantages of television as a communication medium to present high quality instruction in a language increasingly sought by individuals in South East Asia.

IMPLEMENTING THE POLICY

An important first step for implementing this policy is an assessment of individual country needs, to determine which of the five priority areas should form the sectoral focus in each instance. In those countries where education and training activities are a substantial component of Australia's aid program, comprehensive sectoral assessments will play an increasingly important part in the planning and implementation of AusAID's country programs. A critical component of the assessments will be an appraisal of human resource development requirements. These will be considered alongside the options for delivery of Australian education and training services, so that individual programs fully meet requirements in a cost effective manner.

Through implementing this policy and process Australia will draw on the comparative strengths of the Australian education and training community to help address the priority needs of developing countries.