

Education Sector in Uzbekistan

This sector assistance program evaluation assesses the performance of ADB assistance in the education sector of Uzbekistan for the period 1996-2009. It also identifies factors affecting the performance, and draws lessons and recommendations to feed into the preparation of a country assistance program evaluation and future education sector operations.

The study undertakes strategic and institutional as well as project and program-level performance evaluation of the sector assistance.

The main challenge of human development in Uzbekistan lies in the development of skilled and knowledgeable personnel who are able to facilitate the country's transition to an internationally competitive economy. The availability of quality human resources is critical in effecting this transformation. The government, with the assistance of ADB and other development partners, is seeking to accelerate this transformation. Uzbekistan spends about 8%–9% of its gross domestic product on education, which is much higher than in countries at a comparable level of development. Ensuring efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of such high investment in education is a challenge for the country.

The total value of ADB assistance to Uzbekistan from 1996 to 2009 is \$1.29 billion, of which \$290.5 million (22.5%) were loans to the education sector. These were sourced from both the ordinary capital resources (72.5%) and the Asian Development Fund (27.5%). In addition, ADB extended 15 technical assistance (TA) projects totaling \$6.5 million and a grant of \$1.5 million from the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction. ADB is the leading development partner in the sector in terms of the volume of assistance.



ADB-financed Textbook Development Project provides free textbook to the poorest students and supplies textbook in all core subjects for grade 6, 7 and 8 in all schools in Uzbekistan.

Overall Assessment

Based on the assessments of the strategic positioning of ADB assistance; contribution to overall development results; and ADB's institutional performance, the overall rating of ADB's strategic and institutional performance (top-down) is *successful*. The bottom-up rating for education projects in Uzbekistan is *successful* based on assessments of the projects as being relevant, effective, efficient, likely sustainable and with substantial impact. The combined overall rating of all of the projects is *successful*.

Key Findings

For the past 12 years, ADB has consistently assisted the government in designing the country's new education system. ADB-financed interventions in education in Uzbekistan were generally inclusive as they targeted the entire school-going population, including girls. ADB's interventions also reached a large proportion of parents and families, including the poor in the rural areas. They also improved the working conditions of public employees, including teachers and education sector administrators.

ADB also addressed specific thematic issues in the sector, laying the basis for the government's aspirations on the vocational and technical side, and combining it with computer skills for pedagogic purposes. ADB's support has strengthened the core teaching-learning system by helping develop the Ministry of Public Education's new curriculum, instruction materials, guidelines, teacher training, textbooks, and by introducing the textbook rental scheme.

There is wide scope for public-private partnerships (PPP) in the education sector. Partnerships or joint ventures with high-quality international universities are an option. Uzbekistan is now embarking on some significant reforms through greater autonomy, school-level committees and management of off-budget resources.

QUICK LINKS

Sector Assistance Program Evaluation for the Education Sector in Uzbekistan
www.adb.org/Documents/Reports/SAPE/UZB/SAP-UZB-2010-29/default.asp

2006 Country Assistance Program Evaluation for Uzbekistan
www.adb.org/Documents/CAPES/UZB/cap-uzb-2006-02/cape-uzb.asp

ADB Projects in Uzbekistan
www.adb.org/Uzbekistan/projects.asp

Uzbekistan: Booking a Brighter Future for Children (Photo Essay)
www.adb.org/countries/photo-essay-flash.asp?doc_id=34481&p=uzbpe

Future opportunities for ADB will possibly be within the higher education and vocational training. The two levels of approaches could be (i) for the public sector, supporting programs such as information and communication technologies; and (ii) for PPP, supporting partnerships and/or joint ventures with high-quality international universities. However, these will require stronger and more conducive policy and regulatory environment.

Key Issues

ADB's assistance could have benefited from a more rigorous analysis – whether it was in relation to the drawing of the sector road map, in working out the interface of education with employment opportunities or in designing the financing modalities. Sustainable supply of marketable skills and competencies lies at the heart of an effective education development strategy. Significant reforms need to be made to progress rapidly in this direction.

The affordability of education presents challenges to many low-income families, particularly in rural areas. At the commencement of each school year, families need to meet new costs including school uniforms, textbook rentals, and informal payments for tutorials.

The Rural Basic Education Project, approved in 2007, mentioned that ADB planned to conduct a study on education financing, including a survey of parental contribution to education. It would allow ADB to work with the government in determining areas where further improvements in the sector are required. The data collected would be used as the basis for suggesting new mechanisms for education financing to increase the efficiency of the sector and strengthen its governance. Through its emphasis on devolution and its off-budget provisioning of resources under the National Program for Basic Education Development, the country is strengthening its capability to manage funds at the school level. A carefully devised and well-implemented reform policy is essential.

Lessons

- Loan-financed projects that respond to the government's priorities and have full government commitment are easier to implement and have better chances of success. Policy-based loans focusing on the structural and institutional reforms in a given system should be designed and implemented only in the context of a proper sector road map and good understanding of the political economy. This is required not only for the financing institutions but also for sharing the future vision of the sector with other development partners.
- Many executing agencies are still focused on outputs. Executing and implementing agencies need to understand that the outcomes and impact of the project are just as essential as the outputs in justifying the process, modality, and magnitude of assistance.
- Establishment of a full-fledged monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system should be a necessary condition for both designing and implementing a project. Too many projects are approved and implemented without established M&E systems.
- The terms of reference of technical assistance for consulting firms are seldom comprehensible to the lay decision makers, especially if the decision makers are uninitiated and lack technical know-how about the subject and the project. As part of the TA preparation, an agreement with the executing agency should include mechanisms and procedures for accessing readily available information.
- Public officials, traditionally, are not trained to analyze and handle quantitative data even if the information is readily available. Capacity building in data collection, data analysis, project evaluation, and M&E is required in a comprehensive manner.

Recommendations

- *ADB should remain engaged in the education sector, focusing on higher education and vocational training, i.e., skills that support new technology industries*
- *Two levels of approaches to be adopted: (a) for the public sector, support programs related to information and communication technology; and (b) for public-private partnership support partnerships or joint ventures with international universities*
- *Assist in building a stronger and more conducive policy and regulatory environment for the above*
- *Assist in building and operating a reliable system of M&E of the education sector's activities and their results*

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