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S U P P O R T

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

EVALUATION PROGRAMME

Summary of Evaluation Study on United Nations Development
System-Assisted Educational Innovation and Reform Projects

Report of the Administrator

Summary

This report summarizes the objectives, findings and recommendations
of an evaluation study of a sample of 25 United Nations development
system-assisted educational innovation and reform projects implemented
since 1970. It was carried out jointly by the respective Governments and
UNDP/UNESCO with the assistance of a team of independent consultants.
The full report of the study will soon be published.

The objectives of the study were to give a better insight of the role
of technical co-operation in helping in carrying out the process of
educational innovation and reform, and to determine what conditions and
structures should exist to ensure a reasonable success of Governments'
proposals.

The study divides the evaluated projects into three groups: (a) educa-
tion to promote integrated rural reform; (b) educational planning projects;
and (c) institutional modernization strategies. For each of these, the
study identifies a number of conditions that need to be met for the projects
to be effective in assisting Governments in introducing innovations into
a country's educational system and providing recommendations for identifying,
designing and implementing educational reform projects.

The study recognizes that educational reform can be sustained only if
the countries concerned rely first and foremost on their own resources and
initiatives. External aid can only facilitate some national efforts. The
study also recognizes that educational reform is a long-range effort and that
international technical co-operation must be programmed over periods of
several years.

DP/1982/20/Add.2
English
Page 2

I. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

1.   The evaluation of a selected sample of education projects, with specific
emphasis on educational innovation and reform, was undertaken jointly by UNDP and
UNESCO within the context of the thematic evaluations programme carried out by
UNDP with the specialized agencies and Governments. The projects selected for this
study share the aim of strengthening the educational system by a combination of
reform and/or the introduction of innovative procedures in one or more components
of the system.

II. OBJECTIVES

2.   The specific goals of this thematic evaluation were to:

     (a) Provide a framework for a better analysis of the soundness of proposals
presented by Governments for technical co-operation in the renovation or
introduction of innovations into a country's educational system;

     (b) Give a better insight into the optimal point of entry and appropriate
duration of technical co-operation to contribute to carrying out the process of
educational innovation and reform in accordance with the particular situation of
the country concerned;

     (c) Determine what conditions should exist and what structures should be in
place in order to give reasonable assurance of success in the introduction of
innovation or reform, and suggest guidance in overcoming problems which may arise;
and

     (d) Suggest the content of operational guidelines for project design and
preparation for use in future technical co-operation in education.

III. BACKGROUND

3.   The complexity and sequential nature of any educational system means that
substantial changes require a long time to implement. Typically, the system is an
intricate network of interlocking institutions, many of which produce entrants to
other institutions and, hence, have to satisfy both the quality and the quantity
requirements of those institutions. Curriculum reform, for example, is typically
introduced one grade-level at a time, so that a complete reform of the primary
level would take six years to introduce and become effective.

4.   In choosing the sample for this evaluation, UNDP and UNESCO did not attempt
to formulate new definitions; instead, current concepts of reform and innovation
were used to select projects for evaluation which were aimed at producing changes
of one kind or another in the educational system. The result was a sample of
25 projects from all regions of the developing world that covered a wide variety

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of educational projects and that attempted to achieve a diversity of educational goals. These projects fell, as determined by their basic strategy, into the following groups:

- Education to promote integrated rural reform;

- Educational planning and policy research projects; and

- Institutional modernization strategies

5.   The integrated rural reform group is characterized by projects which take as their basic premise the proposition that education can and should be the prime mover in instigating an integrated approach to rural vitalization. This approach envisions the school as a community education and development centre and the teacher as an "animateur" who not only teaches but also functions as a general extension agent for education, health, agriculture, and other development concerns. The projects place emphasis on different aspects of the educational endeavour in order to achieve the goal of integrated development; all, however, share a commitment to the primary, catalytic role of education. Most of these projects have multi-purpose goals as they seek to develop the capacity of education to promote development.

6.   The second group of projects is focused on the development of national capabilities to carry out educational planning and policy research. The implicit strategy of these projects derives from the belief that an effective, centralized planning and research body is an essential prerequisite for any large-scale reform of education. Educational planning promotes research essential to defining the problems, assessing the capability of the existing educational system, and proposing new alternatives to meet the needs discovered by the research. By articulating well-conceived options, educational policy research is expected to alert decision makers to issues and to provide them with clear and feasible alternatives to reform education.

7.   The third group is more diverse; but the projects all share an underlying approach which can be characterized as a strategy of institutional modernization. Each of the projects is involved in creating an educational institution, or in strengthening and increasing the capacity of an existing one. They can be classified as either innovation or reform projects, the former being undertaken on a less intensive or smaller scale than the latter. Most of these projects have more innovation than reform characteristics, particularly those involving the development of specific curricula and associated materials and teaching techniques. Even those projects which concentrate on a large institution are more oriented toward innovation than reform, with a goal of producing a more effective teacher training institution, technical college, or university. The implicit strategy in these projects is based on the assumption that educational institutions have strong multiplier effects, turning out successive generations of teachers, administrators, and students who, in turn, will take their places in the educational system and improve it. Significant improvement in the quality of a teacher training college will be reflected in the quality of its graduates, and subsequently in the classroom behaviour of the teachers.

IV. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.   Although successful in producing useful outputs, all three groups of projects experienced difficulties in having the desired impact on higher-order objectives for development and educational change.

A.   Education to promote integrated rural reform

9.   Of the three approaches, these projects face the most difficult task; consequently, they have the lowest chance of success. Careful analysis is therefore needed for such settings before extensive resources are committed.

Findings

10.   Reform projects require a high degree of consensus among the three or four Ministries which will have to co-operate. Such projects also require a strong consensus among parents, communities, professional educators, and political forces in the country. The linkages in these projects between actual project activities and the larger reform goals are often weak. Curriculum reforms are consequently not likely to have a major impact on such sectors as health, agriculture, or rural employment opportunities without many significant changes in these other areas as well. These projects often confuse the long-term development objectives of the Government with the immediate goals of a project which normally are only a small part of the national programme. Since educational reform requires a sustained national effort over a long period of time, individual UNDP-assisted projects, with limited time and resources can only be expected to achieve certain specific short-term results contributing to the over-all reform, which often is open-ended.

Recommendations

11.   As an alternative to the present approach, UNDP/UNESCO should consider identifying and supporting one or two specific components of a rural reform effort such as developing community schools, or focusing on the training of rural teachers/agents. Focusing on one component would increase the chances that the design of the project would be sound and facilitate the identification of a clear "point of exit" for the assistance.

12.   The first step in the design of such a project should be a realistic analysis to determine:

    (a) The priority of the assistance in the Government's view and how this is supported by official, approved policy;

    (b) The kind of specific and limited technical co-operation which can best contribute to a needed reform effort; and

    (c) A foreseeable terminal point even if it were to exceed the normal duration of a programming cycle.

13. Careful assessment must be made of the kind of co-operation among various government agencies and other organizations that will be required, as well as the type of co-ordinating mechanism and resources needed to make co-operation a reality. Establishment of functional co-ordination should be the first step of the implementation process.

14. It is desirable that the project assisting educational reform be initiated only after the reform programme is under way to ensure serious Government commitment.

15. If, for broader policy reasons, it is necessary to provide general support to reform efforts, it should be understood that the assistance is intended to stimulate general sectoral development in education and canno⁺ be considered as compact projects in the normally accepted sense of the term. The effectiveness of such assistance would then have to be judged by criteria other than its impact on specific aspects of the reform.

16. If a Government's conceptualization of a given reform is still in the early stages, the best project would be one which provided educational planning and policy research capability, one of whose outputs could be a series of specific, feasible sub-projects suitable for external co-operative support.

17. The objectives of the project should be clearly and precisely defined and be measurable, few in number and realistically geared to the project resources available both nationally and internationally. The specific objectives of the project must be clearly distinguished from the objectives of the reform programme as such.

18. The design of the project should establish a link between the objectives of the project and the role of the national and international personnel in achieving them, thus lowering the Government's expectations that the international professionals are there to meet any needs that arise. It would also help project teams meet priorities and organize their work more effectively.

19. Because of the close linkages between large-scale reform and national ideologies, the Government must take the major role in initiating and implementing such efforts. Ideally, UNDP/UNESCO would agree to assist with a specific component of an otherwise on-going reform effort.

B. <u>Educational planning and policy research projects</u>

20. As a group, the planning projects attempted to achieve fairly limited sets of objectives. These projects provided valuable assistance in the implementation of change, but they generally did not meet the hopes of their designers for stimulating the decision-makers to consider more than one significant reform option.

<u>Findings</u>

21. Planning projects were generally <u>not</u> the source of ideas or influence which led policy makers to embark on major reforms or innovation. Such decisions were

generally made on political or social grounds, often before planning projects had
formulated any recommendations one way or the other.

22. The optimal institutional locus of a planning project depends on the position
of the Government in regard to educational change. When the Government is well
aware of the problems and is actively seeking change, the best location is in the
Ministry of Education with direct access to the top-level decision-makers. If,
on the other hand, the Government is preoccupied with other matters and reluctant
to consider change, the best location is in a semi-autonomous institution where
new ideas can be developed and presented both to the Government and to other
implicated social institutions.

23. Educational planning projects often experience limited success in developing
local capacity to carry on with planning. Finding and keeping trained national
collaborators is particularly difficult because their training in analysis and
planning makes them unusually attractive candidates for other management roles
both in the field of education and elsewhere.

24. Planning projects are particularly appropriate in settings where a country
needs a period of exploration and development of educational goals. Under these
circumstances, project objectives can legitimately be more general with the
expectation that one of the outputs will be a series of other, more clearly
focused plans for technical assistance projects.

Recommendations

25. Educational planning projects should not be confused with projects for
implementing educational change. The latter should be done by curriculum specialists
teacher trainers, and educational managers, not planning sections or research
institutes.

26. Planning projects might be expanded to include the training of nationals in
the skill areas necessary to design focused and realistic technical co-operation
projects for consideration by donor agencies. Governments would benefit by being
better equipped to participate in an equal and effective manner in the dialogue
with external funding sources and UNESCO.

27. Planning projects are worth continued support from UNDP/UNESCO with the
understanding that they will function primarily to assist Governments in the
preparation of reforms to which Governments have already committed themselves.

C. Institutional modernization strategies

28. Projects in this group were better designed than the education for rural
reform projects, but had mixed success because of the nature of the problems which
they attempted to solve.

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Findings

29. Projects to improve a specific institution generally had a good chance of success. Governments are usually fully committed to supporting key institutions and are willing to provide the necessary resources, authority and linkages.

30. Institutional development projects are generally of a longer duration, reflecting the on-going need to keep the institution functioning. Such projects have a good multiplier effect through the students who are trained, provided that the curriculum is sufficiently relevant to meet the needs of employers.

31. Institutional projects often have serious trouble in achieving an appropriate balance in the utilization of experts between regular teaching and administration and development activities. Project designers should address this issue directly in developing priorities for activities and job descriptions for the experts.

32. UNDP/UNESCO is usually one of the smallest of several donors for such projects. The UNDP/UNESCO project should recognize and accept this fact by limiting itself to objectives which focus on one or two critical components of over-all institutional capacity. UNDP/UNESCO should attempt to co-ordinate all the donor efforts only if it can provide much more sophisticated management expertise than has heretofore been the case.

33. Effective distribution and utilization of new materials and methods requires the timely delivery of a package of inputs, all of which have to be present for effective utilization to take place. Most curriculum projects underestimate the difficulty of getting all the components in place.

Recommendations

34. Curriculum development is a difficult and lengthy process requiring considerable professional expertise and a long lead time. Careful consideration of the capacity of the host institution to provide the resources, both material and human, for the time necessary to develop the curriculum should be made at the project design stage.

35. Curriculum projects require a good capability on the part of the Government of realizing the linkages that should exist between inputs, activities and results, and strong administrative leadership to ensure that sufficient priority is given to all the components needed for implementation. Projects should not be undertaken without full understanding and commitment by the Government to mobilize the support of all the parties needed for the introduction of a curriculum reform.

36. Large-scale printing capability may be essential to curriculum projects, but it is equally important to ensure the proper distribution of teaching materials, teacher training, support and understanding of supervisory personnel, and compatibility of the curriculum with examination and promotion procedures. A positive assessment that all these factors are in place and functioning properly should be made before launching a project.

37. Science curricula need many additional special inputs. Project designs for development of science curricula should be careful not to underestimate the difficulty of providing these inputs on a large scale and particular attention should be given to choosing equipment and methods which are appropriate considering the limitations which exist in typical schools.

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