Role of Academic Research in Economic Development Work
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Exploratory Research Questions

Research Questions
Organizations like the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Asian Development Bank, Inter-American Development Bank and the African Development Bank work with country governments, non-governmental organizations and knowledge domain experts to develop Country Assistance Strategies for client countries. A logical source of knowledge would be the country’s academic institutions.

The purpose of this exploratory research is to understand to what extent the Country Assistance Strategy development process leverages in-country academic knowledge, and the alignment or lack thereof of in-country academic research with country development strategies.

- Is in-country academic research and knowledge leveraged in economic development work?
- Is the academic research and knowledge produced in-country aligned with the economic development strategy adopted by the country?

Sample Countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Academic Research Input</th>
<th>Topical Focus of CAS and Project Documents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>No evidence of any university involvement in the CAS document</td>
<td>Agriculture, Health, Social Protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>No evidence of any university involvement in the CAS document</td>
<td>Agriculture, Education, Health, Social Protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>Consultation with universities and professional associations is evident in the CAS and Project Documents</td>
<td>Agriculture, Energy, Environment, Financial Sector Development, Health and Nutrition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Evident in CAS and Project Documents</td>
<td>Agriculture, Energy, Environment, Financial Sector Development, Health and Nutrition</td>
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<tr>
<td>India</td>
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The Research Context

What is a Country Assistance Strategy?

The World Bank prepares a Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) for active borrowers from the International Development Association (IDA) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). The CAS takes as its starting point the country’s own vision for its development, as defined in a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper or other country-owned process. Oriented toward results, the CAS is developed in consultation with country authorities, civil society organizations, development partners, and other stakeholders. The purpose of the CAS is to set out a selective program of Bank Group support linked to the country’s development strategy and based on the Bank Group’s comparative advantage in the context of other donor activities. CASs are designed to promote collaboration and coordination among development partners in a country.

The CAS includes a comprehensive diagnosis—drawing on analytic work by the Bank, the government, and/or other partners—of the development challenges facing the country, including the incidence, trends, and causes of poverty. The CAS identifies the key areas where the Bank Group’s assistance can have the biggest impact on poverty reduction. In its diagnosis, the CAS takes into account the performance of the Bank’s portfolio in the country, the country’s credibility, state of institutional development, implementation capacity, governance, and other sectoral and cross-cutting issues. From this assessment, the level and composition of Bank Group financial, advisory, and/or technical support to the country is determined.


Observations

Of the seven countries sampled, only three had any evidence of involvement of academic institutions in the preparation of the Country Assistance Strategy – Argentina, Brazil and India.

Whether academic expertise is leveraged may have to do with the state of higher education in the country as may be the case in Cambodia or Liberia. However, in others such as Algeria and Ghana, the reason for lack of involvement is unclear from the documentation available.

There may be a regional strategy that promotes involvement of academic experts, for example the two countries in the sample from Latin America and Caribbean both included universities in the preparation and consultation steps. The university communities clearly has expertise aligned with the CAS focus.

There is an opportunity to increase the visibility of in-country academic research to those involved in the preparation.

One thing seems clear from the limited review represented here – the role of academic institutions and professional associations in the strategy development appears to be underutilized.

Increased access to and coverage of dissertations and theses in member countries might encourage the use of these experts and their research in the CAS preparation and project design and implementation.