



Armenia

Education for All 2015 National Review

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REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Education for All

National EFA 2015 Reviews

NATIONAL REPORT: ARMENIA

2014

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Section 1: Introduction

This report was prepared according to the outline of the Education for All (EFA) process.

The report was prepared for the following purposes:

- ✓ Analyzing the progress towards the EFA goals,
- ✓ implementation of national strategies to achieve the EFA goals,
- ✓ educational challenges.

The basis of state policy in education is the development of national school, the main goal of which is the formation of a person with high level professional preparedness and educated in the spirit of patriotism, statehood, and humaneness. Currently the most important state goal is to ensure the progressive development of the national education system, its competitiveness and compliance with requirements of knowledge economy.

In addition to improving the legislation field, the state adopted the policy of mid-term and long-term development planning, which is reflected in the Mid-Term Expenditure Framework and Education Development Programmes.

The education system of the Republic of Armenia is the integrity of the state education standards, educational programmes of different levels and directions ensuring education continuity, and education institutions and education management bodies (RA “Law on Education” 1999).

The education system of Armenia includes: pre-school education; general secondary education comprised of primary, middle level or basic and high school; preliminary vocational, middle level vocational and higher professional education; post-graduate education, specialist training and qualification improvement institutions.

The Education Development State Programme for 2011-2015 (EDSP 2011-2015) is the main education policy document of the Republic of Armenia. It sets out the main development goals for the given period. In accordance with the Law on Education of the Republic of Armenia, the EDSP 2011-2015 serves as a basis for formulation of public policy in the field of education. The EDSP 2011-2015 builds on the achievements already accomplished in educational system and aims at their gradual development by outlining the priority directions and strategies of this domain.

Section 2: Main EFA Challenges in 2000 and Targets for 2015

The Development Context of the Country

The Republic of Armenia is a sovereign, democratic, social state governed by rule of law. The state power is administered pursuant to the Constitution based on the principle of separation of the legislative, executive and judicial powers.

Armenia, the official name is Republic of Armenia - Hayastani Hanrapetoutyun, is a mountainous country located in South Caucasus region of Eurasia. It is located at the crossroads of Western Asia and Eastern Europe. The neighboring Countries of Armenia are: in the North: Georgia; in the East: Azerbaijan; in the South: Iran; in the South-West: Nakhijevan (Azerbaijan); in the West: Turkey. From the cultural and political points of view, Armenia is considered a European country.

Armenia is a unitary, multi-party, democratic nation-state with ancient cultural heritage. The Kingdom of Armenia was established in the 6th century BC, after the fall of Urartu. It became the first state in the world to adopt Christianity as its official religion, in the early years of the 4th century (the traditional date is 301 AD). The modern Republic of Armenia recognizes the Armenian

Apostolic Church, the world's oldest national church, as the country's primary religious establishment. Armenians have their own unique alphabet invented by Mesrop Mashtots in 405 AD.

On 23 August 1990, Armenia declared its independence. On 21 September 1991 the referendum on independence declaration was held and Armenia was officially recognized as an independent country. However, the initial post-Soviet years were burdened by economic difficulties as well as by the war in Nagorno-Karabakh unleashed by Azerbaijan.

Armenia has made a full switch to the market economy and as of 2012, it is the 39th most economically free nation in the world. (“Index of Economic Freedom 2009”. The Heritage Foundation”). Its relations with Europe, the Middle East, and the Commonwealth of Independent States have allowed Armenia to increase trade. Gas, oil, and other supplies come through two vital routes: Iran and Georgia.

Armenia is divided into ten provinces (marzer, singular marz), and the city of Yerevan which has special administrative status as the capital of the country.

The population of Armenia is 3041.0 thousand (as of 1st January, 2013), 96 % of whom are Armenians. The national minorities are Russians, Yezidis, Kurds, Assyrians, Greeks, Ukrainians, Jews and others. At the beginning of 2009, the urban population share was 64%, while the rural population was 36 %. At the beginning of 2012, the permanent population of the Republic of Armenia covered 48.6 % of male and 51.4 % of female gender population. As of beginning 2012, the average age of population was 35.3 years – for the male, and 36.9 years for the female gender.

The independence of Armenia (1991) has launched a transition towards free market relations and diverse forms of ownership – instead of the state common ownership form. Since 1993, the national currency of Armenia has been the “ Armenian Dram” (AMD).

Before attaining independence, Armenia possessed the industrial economy and its prevailing branches were in the chemical industry, electronics, machinery, rubber industry, food and textile industries, meanwhile it was highly dependent on imported raw materials.

Armenia exports coal, iron, bauxites, molybdenum, gold, silver, plumbum, and zinc. There is also purveyance of pumice, marble, tuff, perlite, basalt and salt resources. There is also abundance of precious and semi-precious stones.

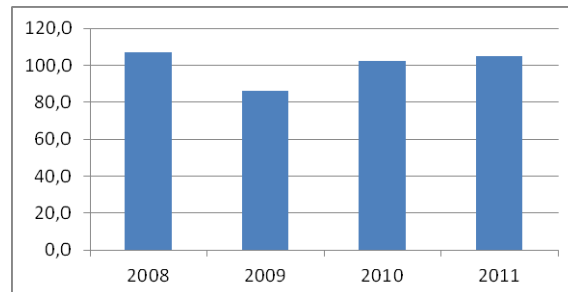
Until 1991, the agriculture share in the material production of the country was only 20%, meanwhile the employment share in agriculture sector reached nearly 10%. The major portion of energy in Armenia is produced by the fuel imported from Russia, including gas and nuclear fuels (for the operating nuclear power plant). The hydro-electricity supply is the major local energy resource. From 2001 to 2008, the cumulative index of the real GDP growth for 2000’s was up to 245, while in CIS countries’ generalized index for the same index was 172, meanwhile, among all of the CIS countries, only Azerbaijan index of 351 was higher than in Armenia, conditioned by the large-scale exports of oil and gas. The same figure for OECD countries amounted only to 130 index.

In 2000's, Armenia recorded steady economic growth. However, the global economic crisis hit the economy of Armenia, too. In 2009, a decline of 14.1% in the real GDP rate was registered, which has been followed by a slow recovery since 2010 (the GDP growth reached 2.2% in 2010, and 4.7% in 2011).

Throughout independence years Armenia has clearly maintained its scientific potential scientific organizations and schools, as well as had definite achievements in various fields of science and technical activities. Positive development trends can be observed currently in the field of science. About 17 thousand people of the Armenian scientific and educational organizations are engaged in

the scientific work. A competitive and programme funding system from the state budget has been established for the research projects and themes.

GDP Real Growth Index (Against the Previous Year)



In 2010, the Government of Armenia approved the "Strategy on the Development of Science in the Republic of Armenia". Armenia has signed the "Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities" (1998) and the "European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages" (2002). The RA Constitution guarantees to all citizens of the Republic of Armenia all the rights, freedoms and responsibilities of citizens – regardless of nationality, race, language, and religion defined by the Constitution and laws.

Poverty rate in Armenia has been assessed since 1996. In 2004-2011 the incidence of poverty has fallen by 34.6%: it has decreased from about 54% to 35%. In 2011 more than every third person of the population - 35.0% - was poor, every fifth of which - 19.9% - was very poor, and among them - 3.7% - of extremely poor level.

The overwhelming majority of the country's population follows the Armenian Apostolic Church. Religious minorities include Catholics, Molokans, Russian Orthodox followers, Evangelicals, Baptists, Trinities, Charisma Christians, Jehovah's witnesses, Mormons, Yezidis, Jewish, Sunni Muslims (mostly Kurds) and Shiite Muslims. Overall, 66 religious communities are registered in the Republic of Armenia. No complaints in the media against discrimination of religious minorities or serious reports from national minority representatives have been recorded in Armenia.

Armenia is a member of the United Nations, Commonwealth of Independent States, the Council of Europe and more than 40 other international organizations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Interpol (International criminal police), the World Health Organization (WHO), UNESCO, etc. In 2012 Armenia became a full member of the "International Organization of La Francophonie".

The current stage of education reforms started in 2003. At this stage they cover mainly the content issues, namely National Curriculum Framework, new subject syllabi, new system for assessment of students' achievements of ICT in learning process and etc.

Within past ten years, the state has developed and enacted a whole set of laws and legal and normative documents, which have been serving as a basis for the education system development.

Section 3: Progress towards the EFA Goals

3.1 Expanding ECCE (Early Childhood Care and Education)

According to the “Law on Education”, general education is a comprehensive teaching and learning process of an individual, that is carried out through preschool, primary, basic, secondary and supplementary education programmes.

The preschool education is the primary component of the continuous general education system.

In the implementation of preschool educational programmes, the Government delegates its key role to the family, at the same time committing itself to creating proper conditions for the comprehensive development of children and the organization of their care in the family. The preschool institutions operate all over the country: nurseries (for children of the age of 2-3), kindergartens (3-6-year-old children), nursery-kindergartens (combined).

In 1996, as a result of formation of a new system for the RA administrative and territorial management (in compliance with the RA Law on “Local Self-Government”), the preschool institutions were transferred under the community subordination, which had its negative impact on the preschool system.

Presently, over 400 communities across the country lack pre-school institutions, while in 2008, the gross inclusion rate in pre-school programmes made as little as 29.8% (39.3% in urban communities and 13.6% in rural communities). By prioritizing the role of pre-school education and wishing to set equal conditions for versatile development of children and school education, the Armenian government approved the Strategic Programme for Reforms in Pre-School Education for 2008-2015 (13 paragraph of Minutes N.10 for 13th Session held on March 13, 2008 by the Government of the Republic of Armenia on Approving strategic and pilot programmes for reforms in the pre-school education of the Republic of Armenia), which aims at raising the enrolment rate for upper pre-school age group (5 to 6 years old) up to 90%. The programmes give priority to disadvantaged families and communities not having operating pre-school institutions.

3.2. Universalizing Primary/Basic Education

Secondary education aims at comprehensive and harmonious development of mental, spiritual, physical and social abilities of children, as well as formation of their proper conduct and behavior.

According to the National Curriculum, secondary education is provided in three-level general education schools for 12 years of duration in total, with the following successive levels:

- (1) Primary school – 4 years (1st-4th years),
- (2) Middle (basic) school – 5 years (5th-9th years),
- (3) High school – 3 years (10th-12th years)

Primary school aims at the formation of cognitive, spiritual and physical skills of learners, as well as bases for linguistic and logical thinking and preliminary work skills. Primary school provides the required foundation for further learning and continuing education in the middle school.

The main goal of the middle school is to provide knowledge about humanity, nature and society, skills and abilities to apply them in life, moral and spiritual values, which are necessary for learners to continue their education in high school or vocational institutions, as well as implement work activities appropriate to their age.

The main purpose of high school is to prepare learners for further professional education and equip them with the knowledge, skills and abilities essential for their independent life.

The Special Education system includes the teaching and learning system for children with special educational needs, as well as for children displaying disruptive behavior. The special general education institutions operate throughout the whole country (with extended and night regimes), and they carry out general and special education programmes.

Special education institutions are established for children with impaired mental and physical development. The special education system also includes the Yerevan Medical-Physiological-Pedagogical Assessment Center, the main goal of which is to identify and assess special features in the physical, intellectual and spiritual development of children, to select forms of educational activities and to implement special education programmes in accordance with the capabilities of the children.

Series of reforms have been implemented in the field of education management, resulting in increased autonomy of educational institutions and expanded involvement of the civic society, creation of favorable conditions for the effective dialogue between the education system and business community, and the transparency of the government performance.

The Ministry of Education and Science operates the education management information system (EMIS), which is designed to collect and report data on general education systems. It includes tools to aggregate data, calculate key indicators and integrate with population data.

Distinct activities have been endeavored on expanding the participatory mechanisms in the education, particularly; the Ministry of Education and Science Council involves representatives of non-governmental organizations and academic institutions, all state educational institutions have been re-organized into legal entities namely State Non-Commercial Organizations and are governed by the representative management boards.

However, many problems are still in place for effective management system. A targeted training for education sector managers is not conducted presently, and the individual programmes on capacity building have not improved the situation significantly.

Since 2006, programme budgeting has been introduced in the education field. The improvements of the budgetary procedures and state budget management mechanisms are important in terms of both the cost-effective policy and public accountability of authorities. The main feature of the programme budgeting is the transparency and accountability of the provided services and their outcomes. The education system funding is based on the annual State Budget, the Medium-Term Expenditure Programme (for the next three years), as well as the Education Sector Development Programme (for the next five years).

3.3 Meeting the Learning Needs of Youths and Adults

At the present stage, the Armenian education system development policy is closely linked to the international trends, which, in their turn, are conditioned by significant changes taking place in the development of the world economy. The goal of education, in particular, general education is only to deliver stable, fundamental knowledge, as well as train citizens who are able to make decisions quickly, communicate actively and are open for life-time learning.

The state support to vocational education is not allocated in a manner to warrant maximum inclusion. Specifics and cost assessment of professional training for different specialists are not considered in compliance with the requirements of local and international labor markets.

At the present stage, the educational system has the strategic aim to address the current challenges in order to yield results in solving existing problems and make progress to restore the rating of knowledge and education and enhance Armenia's reputation of a scientific and educational country.

One of the outlined objectives by 2015 is the insurance of a 10% raise in inclusion rate in professional education programmes, particularly with young people from vulnerable groups.

3.4 Improving Adult Literacy Level

The education field, including lifelong learning, is regulated by a significant number of legal acts. There are a number of laws, concepts, strategies, which regulate this field, or include a number of provisions relating to the citizens' formal, non-formal education and lifelong learning issues.

Supplementary education, which is one component of lifelong learning, is defined by the RA "Law on Education" as an integral part of the education system, but the approaches to the supplementary education have not been fully implemented yet due to the lack of legislative regulations.

Supplementary education is defined in the RA "Law on Initial Vocational (Handicraft) and Middle Level Vocational Education", according to which, the given education institution may offer supplementary educational programmes such as trainings and professional development courses.

Supplementary education at the higher education level is defined in the RA "Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education" as specialists' professional development process. Training – as a way of implementation of supplementary education – is mentioned also in the RA "Law on Education", according to which, teachers should pass mandatory attestation every 5 years and one condition of the attestation is passing certain hours of training. Thus, many laws contain definite provisions related to supplementary education, which can also be viewed as lifelong learning (LLL).

Supplementary and continuous education/LLL currently faces problems that are caused by contradictions and omissions in the legal-normative filed, as well as deficiencies in the content aspects, and organization and implementation mechanisms. At the same time, for supplementary and continuous education/LLL a rather serious problem is the lack of effective cooperation between the labor market and educational institutions.

The RA Strategy on Supplementary and Continuous Education/LLL for the years 2013-2017 was drafted in 2013 and has to be approved at the nearest future. The Strategy identifies the basic principles to ensure equal access for all individuals to lifelong learning, as well as the mechanisms of its organization, implementation, management, financing and quality assurance. The Strategy will serve as a basis for further legal regulations and practices.

The targeted activities for the achievement of the core objectives of the Strategy are as follows:

- a) improvement of the legislative framework,
- b) creation of mechanisms for the involvement of social partners in the management of institutions,
- c) improvement of the administrative supervision capacities,
- d) introduction of an accountability system for all types of lifelong learning (in particular, statistical data collection and monitoring),
- e) Introduction of Information and Communication Technologies at all levels of the supplementary formal and non-formal education.

The implementation of this Strategy is expected to result in ensuring higher quality of various forms of continuous education/LLL and satisfaction of individual learning and professional needs.

3.5 Gender Parity and Equality in Education

According to the “Law on Education”, the Republic of Armenia (RA) ensures the right to education for all citizens, irrespective of national origin, race, gender, language, religion, political or other views, social origin, property status or other circumstances.

Armenia has no significant problems in the enrollment of general education. Gross enrollment in the general education is quite high: in recent years, the average rate has been about 90%. The enrollment in basic education system is homogeneous in terms of territorial distribution, gender and poverty groups, and in this sense, there are no significant disparities. At the same time, the high school gross enrollment rate is significantly lower - approximately 85 %. However, it should be taken into account that about 10 % of students graduating from basic school continue their education in preliminary vocational and middle vocational institutions. Thus, the high school low enrollment rate does not mean that a significant portion of students drops out from education. The dropout issue concerns mostly specific social groups.

The high school enrollment for poor and non-poor student population is considerably unequal, unlike that in basic education. The high school gross enrollment rate for the richest groups is 1.3 times higher as compared to the poorest ones. Thus, after graduating from basic school, the students dropping out from the general education system are mostly poor ones. According to the integrated households’ survey, only 2.8 % of 18-19 year olds from wealthy families do not continue their education after basic school while 16% of those who are from poor families do not get further education. The most alarming situation concerns the very poor population, as far as the dropout rate for students from this group is about 35%.

There is also some gender disproportion in the high school system. According to the statistical data, the proportion of boys in primary and middle school is higher than that of girls. However, the picture changes at the high school level, when the share of girls increases, which proves that the schoolboys leave basic education more often.

The information on enrollment of children with special educational needs is not complete. According to rough estimations, the number of children with special educational needs is about 8000. Meanwhile, the number of children enrolled in special education institutions and in inclusive schools are about 4000. As far as the detection system of children with special needs and the inclusive education system have not been introduced effusively, it is still impossible to say distinctively whether these children are left out from the education or attend other general education institutions. Most probably, part of them is not recognized officially as ones having special educational needs.

To ensure equal access and complete enrollment in the system, the core strategies and the respective policies of the government are as follows:

- Creation of equal start – up opportunities
 - expansion of affordable preschool services,
- Targeted support to socially vulnerable students
 - provision of free textbooks,
 - provision of free school meals,
 - establishment of day care institutions;
- Expansion of inclusive education
 - de-institutionalization of children with special needs and mainstreaming them,
 - expansion of the network of the inclusive schools,
 - decentralization of special pedagogical services,

- including inclusiveness and participation indicators in the schools' evaluation systems;
- Strengthening of the monitoring and evaluation system and increasing its efficiency
 - improvement of the children registry system;
- Targeted training of teachers;
- Transition to 12-year compulsory education.

3.6 Quality of Education

Since 1998, major reforms have been implemented in the sector of General Education. The first ten years of the reform process have been mostly targeted at structural changes and improvement of the financing and management structures in the system. Since 2006, the reforms have largely been focused on content areas of general education and the following results have been achieved.

- General education was extended from 10 to 12 years and 12-year State Curriculum was introduced; the educational standards and syllabi for all core subjects were reviewed and modernized; based on the new syllabi, new school textbooks were created;
- A network of 107 high schools was created;
- The assessment system was reformed to include both formative and summative assessment practices, particularly a unified examination system for school graduation and university entrance was introduced;
- Large-scale in-service training programmes for teachers were implemented; trainings were mainly directed to the application of interactive and cooperative teaching methods and use of IT as a new teaching and learning method;
- All schools were supplied with modern computer equipment and provided with Internet access; a portable Internet computer station was set up; the education process is increasingly incorporating IT as a new method of teaching and learning;
- A programme on establishment and strengthening the high school network is being implemented currently.
- The gross enrollment in the General Education system is pretty high: during recent years, it has been approximately 90% in average.

The improvement of the education quality is the highest priority of education sector. Important targets are also ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of the system and equal access to education according to the aspirations and abilities of every citizen.

Despite the considerable progress, the quality of education at all levels is continuing to be an important challenge. While quality education has been one of the most debated issues in recent years, no reliable and trustworthy performance indicators for the measurement of education quality have been fully embedded yet. The only internationally comparable indicators of the education quality available for Armenia are the achievement results of school students in the fields of mathematics and natural sciences from “Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study” (TIMSS).

The degree of beneficiaries' satisfaction demonstrates the importance of the education quality indicators. According to the "Global Economic Forum" 2009-2010 report, Armenia occupies only the 81st place among 133 countries with 3.3 index of satisfaction from the quality of primary education (the international average is 3.8), and the 105th place – with 3.0 index of satisfaction from the quality of overall education system (the international average is 3.8). The importance of

the improvement of the quality of educational services indicates the need to modernize the methodological benchmarks of education.

Important conditions for elaboration effective policies directed to the improvement of education quality are: efficient mechanisms for data collection and analysis, introduction of quality assurance procedures, expansion and development of the education management information system. Educators carry the pillar role in the insurance of the education quality increase and in the successful implementation of the reforms.

Section 4: Implementation of National Strategies to Achieve the Six EFA Goals

Policies and Strategies

The General Education Sector of the Republic of Armenia is regulated by the Constitution and a number of laws and by-laws: the "Law on Education", the "Law on General Education", the "Law on Preschool Education", the "Law on the Education of Individuals with Special Educational Needs", the "Law on Non-Commercial Organizations", etc.

According to the Constitution of Armenia, every person has the right to education in the Republic of Armenia. Basic general education is compulsory, with the exclusion of cases defined by the law. Citizens of the Republic of Armenia are ensured with free general education in all state educational institutions.

According to the "Law on Education", the EDSP is the basis of state policy in the education field. In June 2011, the RA National Assembly approved the "Education Development State Programme for 2011-2015". The programme aims at ensuring the progressive development of the education sector through identification of its reform priorities and development of strategies.

The Implementation of the general education development goals requires substantial increase in the education management efficiency; further development of both teachers' and managers' professional capacities, and continuous modernization of the education content to ensure that it meets the requirements of knowledge society. At the same time, the efficient use of resources is an important prerequisite for success.

The strategic objectives of the general education system in its current phase are to restore the status of education and knowledge as well as strengthen the reputation of Armenia as a scientific and educational country. However, the general education system is still far from full and complete implementation of its mission. It is facing the newly emerging challenges and meeting and overcoming those challenges successfully will shape the future education.

The improvement of the general education curricula and standards and the establishment of an optimal load for students, as well as the improvement of subject syllabi, textbooks and instructional materials still remain a major challenge for increasing general education quality. This challenge is particularly important in the high school sector.

The main programme directions for the progress of the general education sector are as follows:

- a) Setting up assessment goals based on National Curriculum, which encourage and also measure independent thinking skills in pupil; making student assessment an integral part of the learning process and, ultimately, aiming to improve the quality of student learning; improving techniques and instruments for continuous, formative and summative assessment using best international experience; to introduce modern and multi-factor methods and techniques for assessment of the learners' knowledge, skills, abilities and performance;
- b) Expanding the use of ICT in educational processes;

- c) Improving the network of high schools;
- d) Revising learning outcomes/state standards for general education to meet the demands of modern societies and knowledge-based economies;
- e) Strengthening the skills and capabilities of teachers through modernization and improved efficiency of training programmes,
- f) Implementing full-scale inclusive education through increasing number of state general schools; improving the management structures for inclusive education.

Learning, Teaching and Assessment to Achieve the Desired Learning Outcomes

i) Learning

The key provisions on organization of the educational process in schools are set out in the RA “Law on Education” and RA “Law on General Education”. According to these laws, the main goal of the school is the implementation of basic education (general) and supplementary general education programmes. The general education programmes also include curriculum for different streams and more comprehensive learning of separate subjects. Schools carry out 3-level general education programmes (basic and supplementary) based on the 3 levels of general education: primary, middle, and high. The basic organizational form of the teaching/learning process in school is the lesson. Classes in schools can be divided into groups during lessons of certain subjects. Schools may also organize individual teaching, in accordance with the procedures set-up by the Ministry. Upon necessity, multi-grade classes may be formed in schools.

However, the effectiveness of the education process is conditioned by the work efficiency of all participants of the education process (teachers, students, parents, administrative bodies and others), as well as by the learning environment, and availability of equipment and other resources. Therefore, the measures on improving the effectiveness of education processes have different dimensions: development of educational programmes, creation of textbooks, training of teachers, refurbishments of schools, insurance of the relevant legislative field, etc...

Whereas, to improve the quality of education process, it is necessary to:

- Increase the reputation of overall education system and, in particular, of schools;
- Increase the funding of the general education sector, and especially increase the funds spent on the supply of new goods and equipment;
- Make the education targeted: make a transition from the concept of “the requirements for all” towards the concept of “satisfaction of individual educational needs”;
- Improve the quality of teachers’ professional development;
- Make a transition from the traditional ways of teaching towards the modern methods of teaching and organization of the teaching and learning process. Introduce innovative pedagogical approaches.

ii) Teaching

Effective teaching criteria are presented in the document "State General Education Standards" and subject standards, which are set-up according to the levels of general education and learning outcomes of students in terms of acquired knowledge, values, and skills and abilities. The effective teaching perceptions include the following factors:

- a) Compliance of the teaching goals with the subject standards/learning outcomes,
- b) Compliance of the teaching methods with the lesson objectives.
- c) The use of electronic and other resources, ICT,

- d) Establishment of a relevant environment promoting learners collaboration, use of interactive learning methods,
- e) Application of wide range of assessment methods, etc.

The ensuring the equal conditions for learning are defined in the legal and normative documents. The RA National Assembly has approved the “Law on Education of Individuals with Special Education Needs”. However, there are difficulties in the execution of this Law, as far as the conditions of schools are not equal, in terms of learning environment and available resources. Especially the schools in rural and border areas face unequal conditions, while some of them, due to the lack of appropriate number of students, organize the teaching/learning process by formation of multi-grade classes.

In order to increase the effectiveness of teaching, systematic monitoring, analyses and studies are carried out in the system concerning the syllabi and textbooks, teaching and assessment methods, issues of educational topics in various subjects, impact factors of the learning environment and other issues.

Since 2005, an extensive training programme for teachers is being implemented in the direction of application of modern teaching methods, use of ICT, and new assessment system.

The education management bodies, participants of the education process, education policy makers and implementers, international organizations, and NGOs jointly conduct the evaluation of the teaching process effectiveness. The evaluation results are documented, discussed, analyzed, posted on websites and published in educational journals.

In order to ensure a proper learning environment, a number of aspects are taken into account:

1. physical environment
2. psychosocial environment,
3. Environment ensuring the safety and health of learners and teachers.
4. goods, supplies and equipment, etc.

All the aspects mentioned have a direct impact on the effectiveness and quality teaching.

Armenia has the necessary legislative and regulatory field for the effective teaching process: however, in order to evaluate the situation and develop policies to improve the teaching process, an evidence-based comprehensive research, analysis and information database should be established.

iii) Assessment

The main objective of assessment is to gather and analyze information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experiences; i.e. testing the knowledge, skills, abilities acquired and applied by learners. The assessment process culminates when assessment results are used to improve the subsequent learning. Assessment is an integral part of the learning process and, ultimately, is aimed to improve the quality of student learning.

The basic principles and new approaches to learners’ formative assessment derive from the key ideas and concepts defined in the RA “National Curriculum for General Education” and in the RA “State General Education Standard”. A new Concept paper “Students’ Continuous Classroom Assessment; Basic Approaches” was elaborated and put in use in schools in 2008. One component of the Concept was the transition from 5-scale to 10-scale scoring system. According to the Concept, the calculation of the students’ final grade is determined based on the students’ performance throughout the semester. The teacher awards a final semester grade based on the average of the student’s grades awarded over the entire semester for oral, written and practical work as well as the final semester mark. Students are graded in each subject area on a 10-point scale

(“Excellent” = 10-9; “Good”= 8-7; “Satisfactory” = 6-5; “Failing” = 4-1). The transition to 10-point system allows for more flexible and objective assessment of each learner’s real progress. This is an attempt to adjoin the general education goals, content, methods and realization with the assessment and evaluation processes.

In 2004, the "Assessment and Testing Center" (ACT) was established in Armenia and unified school leaving and university entrance examinations system was introduced. ATC is in charge of main functions on assessment and evaluation in the system, including the unified school leaving and university entrance examination, large scale national and international assessments, etc. The establishment of ACT was driven by substantial changes in the education sector, aimed at making the quality of education acceptable and recognizable on the international arena. In 2007, the first pilot unified examination (Armenian Language and Literature) was conducted by ATC during which, for the first time, standardized tests and modern technologies were used.

Since 2009, unified examinations have been used for all subjects. In 2010, for the first time, ATC conducted a National Large Scale Assessment, which provided nationally comparable data.

HAAS 2010 - Armenian language and literature and Armenian history.

BAAS 2011 - Physics and Chemistry was conducted in 2011.

Armenia has taken part in TIMSS international assessment four times - TIMSS 2003, TIMSS 2007, TIMSS Advanced 2008, and TIMMS 2011. **The** participation in TIMSS gave an opportunity to have an internationally comparable picture of the Armenian general education system, to compare the Science and Mathematics curricula, methods of teaching and to acknowledge problems and make improvements.

Since 2008, in the light of evaluation and testing theory, the "General Education: Assessment and Testing" magazine has been issued in the country and one copy of each issue is delivered free of charge to all schools.

In October 2008, Armenia – in the face of "AYB" Educational Foundation – became a member of the «Kangourou Sans Frontieres» association (the «Kangaroo without borders” headquarters seated in Paris). 39 214 students of 3rd-12th grades from 960 schools in Armenia and Artsakh participated in "Kangaroo 2013”.

Since 2009, Armenia has been holding the "Russian Bear" international competition based on evaluation of the learners’ knowledge of the Russian language. In 2013, more than 9400 students of 2nd-11th grades from Russian and Armenian schools participated in this competition.

However, it should be stated that neither the National Large Scale Assessments nor International Large Scale Assessments analyses are conducted properly. Thus, there is need for further capacity development in aspects of national and international assessments, such as designing test items and questionnaires, sampling, data analysis and being able to ensure that the results are used to enhance the curriculum development, educational policy making, and teaching.

In order to improve the assessment system, it is necessary to:

- Prepare competent specialists in testing theory and assessment. Apply diverse assessment techniques and tests in the educational process,
- Introduce a Master programme on Educational assessment, testing and measurement in pedagogical universities, develop course content and modules, and prepare university staff to teach the course.
- Develop training courses on classroom assessment and examinations for pre-service and in-service teacher trainings. The course should address different assessment purposes and types, such as how to create good assessments using different formats (multiple choice questions, an open-ended question format with scoring rubrics, portfolio, and others), etc.

Introduce appropriate course studies relating to formative and summative assessment at pedagogical institutions.

- Improve the quality of analysis of the assessment and evaluation results and provide feedback.

Section 5: Prospects for Post-2015

The prospects of education development in Armenia must be viewed in the context of the country's overall development and the main objectives of its national security by ensuring compliance to the principles of public policy on education:

- Strengthening the independence and development of civic society,
- Eradication of poverty and insurance of welfare,
- Ensuring sustainable economic growth and competitiveness,
- Preservation of the Armenian nation,
- International and regional cooperation.

Strengthening the independence and development of civic society

Armenia is passing through a hard way of sustaining the state and building a civic society. In this process, the issue of formation of a new generation is of great importance. The vital task of the education system is the formation of an active citizen who carries national values in combination with the world values.

Reduction of Poverty and Insurance of Welfare

In order to ensure the well-being of its citizens, Armenia has to resolve a number of social issues on its difficult way towards building a developed state. The priority in this process is poverty reduction. Education is considered to be among the main milestones for poverty reduction. Given Armenia's economic development trends, the primary goal for poverty reduction is creating equal opportunities of obtaining quality vocational and higher professional education, reducing social inequalities and ensuring proportional territorial development.

Sustainable Economic Growth and Competitiveness

In terms of Armenia's competitiveness, the education system is facing two major challenges. First, the education system still does not play a significant role in the economic development of the country. Meanwhile, without a radical reform of the education system, it will be impossible to ensure the continuity in development and establishment of the knowledge-based economy and society. Second, Armenia is an extraordinary reservoir of gifted and talented people. Armenia's high quality human capital is the main prerequisite for economic development. Without preserving the human capital, it will be impossible to ensure sustainable economic development in a long-term perspective. The education system should be responsible for the development of high intellectual and creative capabilities of individuals, guarantee competitiveness of science at the international level and prepare specialists for the field of high technologies. The successful implementation of the reform in the education sector will promote the sustainable economic growth in a long-term perspective, the modernization of the country and the institutional capacity growth.

On the other hand, the education itself can be one of the competitive advantages for Armenia. Being located at the crossroads of cultures and civilizations, Armenia and Armenians have historically acquired strong scientific and educational features and functions, which do not only find their relevance nowadays, but also could become the most important motivation pillars for the development of our state and society, ensuring our unique place and role in this rapidly changing

world. By adopting the European educational standards and providing high-quality world-class education, the Armenian education system could become quite attractive for the neighboring countries, provide educational services, as well as attract additional funds. Some of our neighboring countries also attempt to play such a role in the region, declaring their commitment to European integration, as well as taking active steps to develop their own educational systems in accordance with European educational standards. Having certain competitive advantages in this respect, Armenia should adopt a policy of swifter reforms, especially in the field of vocational and higher education.

International and Regional Cooperation

Being located in a region where the interests of different geopolitical forces are cross-cutting, Armenia has pursued a strategy of active international engagement. From one hand, it means active participation of the education field in the global and regional scientific-educational cooperation, and, on the other hand, it creates new challenges for education: to enhance potential for such cooperation, to overcome language and cross-cultural communication difficulties.

Preserving the Armenian nation worldwide is an important issue. Having Armenians around the world, Armenia have been always trying to involve the Diaspora potential, while, at the same time, assuming the responsibility of withstanding the assimilation and loss of cultural identity. In this context, Armenia's education system aims to ensure effective cooperation with Diaspora in the field of education and science, to consolidate pan-Armenian potential and use it rationally to solve the problems emerged, in particular, to comprehensively support the schools and cultural centers in Diaspora.

In the 21st century, the trends in development of civic society have been reflected in the social sciences of curricula in a greater extent, especially in civic education. The curricula for sciences have undergone fewer changes, but the hours allocated for sciences have been reduced.

At the beginning of each academic year, the “National Institute of Education” elaborates and reviews the subject syllabi. In a case of fundamental changes in the education sector, expert Work-Groups are established on by the Minister of Education and Science for development of a new National Curriculum and subject syllabi. In such cases, the curricula design is based, in general on the country development concept and in particular on the vision of education sector development. The working groups mentioned involve prominent scientists and experienced educators. Activities for the development of curricula and subject syllabi do not involve parents, students, business and NGO representatives. Based on the curricula and syllabi, new textbooks are created and pass expertise and piloting. While piloting the textbooks, the opinions of all stakeholders are taken into account. Thus, the development and review of curricula is a continuous process.

The teachers who have received rankings (ranked teachers compose about 10-15% of the total number of teachers) may play a significant role in the review and development of education curricula. In recent years, most of the teachers have participated in training courses and are aware of the changes in curricula.

The formative assessment of students is only partially based on the students learning outcomes and subject curricula. Students are rather “tested”/“scored”, but not systematically “assessed” in terms of their progress; assessment of higher-level thinking such as understanding, application, analysis, evaluation, creativity and problem solving is difficult for nearly all teachers and almost not used in schools. The lack of tools and capabilities for testing the skills and abilities of learners has a negative impact on the quality of teaching/learning. Formative assessment involves the teacher as the primary actor. Good formative assessment practices can make better every teacher and help improve student learning, thus more time should be spent on educating teachers and teaching them practices on how to make and use judgments about students’ learning. Thus, currently certain work is underway to develop and introduce a new national assessment system.

Very little research is done nationally on the different aspects of National Curriculum or assessment practices. To improve the quality of school curricula and syllabi, it is necessary to:

- Involve teachers, employers and other beneficiary groups in the education sector policy development works;
- Review the concept of pedagogical education and curricula;
- Prepare educational professionals in the field of curriculum, teaching/learning materials' development;
- Establish and introduce a system for monitoring the impact of school curricula and subject syllabi;
- Incorporate the requirement to use ICT in curricula and enhance the use of ICT in education.

i. Learners as Key Actors

In 2012-13 academic year, in total 386439 students were enrolled in general education schools, from which 185953 or 48.1% were girls. 98.5% of the enrolled students studied in state schools and 1.5% did in non-state schools. The total number of children studying in special education institutions was 2817, which forms only 0.7% of the total number of students. 233800 students studied in urban schools and 152639 studied in rural schools.

On 25 May 2005, the "Law on Education of individuals with Special Education Needs" was adopted, according to which, the education of persons with special education needs may be delivered by:

- a) State and non-state general education and vocational institutions, in forms of inclusive and home education;
- b) Special education institutions;
- c) Medical institutions (in case of long-term inpatient treatment – a home study);
- d) In other forms stipulated by law.

The programme on inclusive education was launched in 2005. At present, 49 general education schools are implementing inclusive education. It is planned that by 2015 the number of inclusive education schools will reach 150.

The laws on education have provisions for the education of national minorities. Special classes are formed for children of national minorities and their education can be organized both in their national language, along with mandatory study of the Armenian language.

The challenges in meeting the diverse needs and expectations of students are multiple as far as educational needs of students vary from athletic, artistic, aesthetic to work with gifted children or children with physical limitations. Children's needs differ also by social and geographical factors, such as village-city, socially vulnerable and poor families, etc.

The unique experience of meeting the specific educational needs of students was exercised while establishing a separate high school network and organizing a stream based education. However, the issues of technical/vocational streams in high schools are still remaining pressing problems and should be resolved.

For the urgent improvement of learners' needs, it is necessary to:

- Review curricula and create teaching-learning materials of different complexity;
- Introduce free of charge sports, art and other extra-curricular courses in institutions;

- Implement targeted projects on the development of rural schools;
- Establish an effective system of professional orientation, taking into account the learners' abilities, requirements, as well as the rapidly changing needs of the labor market.

ii. Providing Adequate and Quality Teachers

Teachers have an important role in bringing change and in achieving both school and classroom improvement. They are the “key agents for change” in education. Due to their centrally important role, the quality of teaching and learning improves which ultimately results in the improvement of the learning outcomes of the students, which is one of the key factors in increasing the quality of education.

There is no shortage of teachers in Armenia – in the quantitative sense of it. In 2011-2012 academic year, 40715 teachers worked in the country. 87% of teachers have higher pedagogical education.

There are 6 state Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) in the country that prepare teachers. Requirements for admissions to these HEIs are as follows: applicants should have a certificate of full secondary education, or a diploma of preliminary vocational, or middle vocational or higher education (for applicants choosing pedagogy as a second profession). The selection of applicants to these HEIs is conducted on a competitive basis based on the results of their scores from unified entrance examinations for defined by HEIs subjects.

While studying in the HEIs, students/future teachers are assessed based on several criteria, including their professional competencies. HEIs use different forms for assessment of students' professional competencies: course works, mid-term papers, essays, intermediate and semi-annual examinations, etc. Students are also required to pass teaching practices (do internship) in schools, which promotes the development of their practical teaching skills. During teaching practices in schools, students are given the opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge in practice. According to the “Law on General Education”, the minimum qualification requirement for teachers is Bachelor's degree. In order to complete studies and receive Bachelor's or Master's degree, students defend professional thesis and pass state exams.

HEIs are responsible for assurance of quality education, regular review of the curricula of courses in conformity with labor market and school demands, global development trends and international standards.

Teaching is a demanding job that requires not only in-depth knowledge of subject content, and age-specific pedagogy, but also many varied skills such as patience, leadership, creativity, etc. Thus, the government has outlined requirements and criteria as well as a general description for the teaching profession in the "Model Charter of the State Non-Commercial Educational Institution". The Charter also provides general information for other school positions such as administrators, counselor, school librarian, ICT specialist, etc.

Teachers are employed in schools on a competitive basis according to the procedures set-up by the Ministry of Education and Science in the Order on “Conducting Competition for the Vacancy Position of Teacher in the General Education Institutions”.

Ongoing education is a requirement for teachers in all the public schools for all levels, from 1st through 12th grade. Known as professional development, this education - usually in the form of workshops, seminars and training courses - helps teachers improve their knowledge and skills, stay up to date with new trends and learn fresh strategies, techniques and methods for classroom challenges. The professional development programmes are also aimed at training teachers to apply information and communication technologies in the educational process, as well as improve their assessment practices. Relevant legislative and normative documents determine the continuous professional development requirements and programmes for teachers.

In practice, extensive teacher trainings are carried out regularly. The overriding idea behind professional development is that increased knowledge helps teachers improve student achievement. This is so because professional development focuses on what each teacher needs to fine-tune his or her classroom practice.

For the improvement of teachers' performance, in addition to trainings, regular peer reviews and lesson-observations are held. In addition, teachers conduct open classes, workshops and discussions for exchange of their experiences.

In accordance with the Law on General Education, in order to remain in the teaching profession and continue to work in school, every schoolteacher is required to pass mandatory attestation once per each 5 years. To get recertified, certain hours of professional development are required. The "Order on Attestation of Teachers in the General Education Institutions" establishes the procedures and requirements for regular attestation of teachers. According to the Order mentioned, the ranking of teachers might follow the teacher attestation process. There are 4 categories/ ranks established for teachers and certain requirements for each rank are set-up. Teachers' salaries are dependent of the teachers rank, i.e. the salaries scale is based and ranking scheme- for each higher rank teacher receives surplus salary, which increases with the increased rank.

The state budget allocates substantial resources for teachers' professional development and surplus salaries dependent on their ranks. The State budget also pays supplements to salaries to teachers working in the high-altitude and mountainous areas.

Several other incentive structures are functioning in the country, which are aimed to motivate teachers for better performance. "The Teacher's Day" is one of the core events for teachers set by the RA National Assembly. In the frame of the "Teacher's Day", the Ministry of Education annually organizes several competitions such as "The Best Teacher of the Year", "The Best School Director of the Year", etc. Selected best teachers and school administrators receive prizes and awards.

The most experienced teachers are involved in works on creation of different documents and teaching-learning materials: educational standards, curricula, textbooks, and methodological guides. They also are involved in different committees and commissions, such as on evaluation of textbooks.

In order to improve the performance of present and future teachers, the following objectives have to be met:

- a) Improving teacher preparation system in HEIs and revising criteria and requirements for the applicants entering the teaching profession;
- b) Revising teacher preparation programmes at HEIs in compliance with the ongoing education sector reforms and new demands set-up by the state for schools and teachers, e.g. application of modern teaching technologies and ICT;
- c) Introducing mechanisms of monitoring and evaluation of teacher in-service training programmes in order to increase efficiency and effectiveness of the teachers' professional development process;
- d) Increasing the state budget allocations for purposes of professional development and increase of salaries of teachers;
- e) Organizing regular Teacher Exchange programmes, which serve as a cultural learning experience for teachers and as a means for expanding and enriching their pedagogical expertise?
- f) Engaging international experts to provide advise and assist in tackling the range of pervasive problems in the fields of teacher training, in drafting new documents, regulations, etc. as well as sharing the international experience;

- a) Establishing optimal student-teacher ratio and teacher loads in schools to improve educational expenditure and allow for greater teacher salary increase.

iii. Provision of Conducive Learning Environment

In order to create favorable learning environment for students in all educational institutions of Armenia, the respective state bodies/institutions have approved the sanitary-hygiene and urban-construction maintenance norms and criteria. The Ministry provides the license for operation of educational institutions with consideration of meeting the established normative requirements.

However, certain problems do exist in the educational institutions – concerning the compliance with these norms. Most of the school buildings were built at the Soviet times, and in many cases, their structures are not suitable to the climatic conditions of the given localities or do not match with the seismic conditions, especially in the zones of higher seismicity. Generally, maintenance of the schools aimed to keep the school building, furniture, and equipment in the best form for normal use is not systematically carried by the state due to the shortage of the public funds.

Thus, the need for major repairs is not prevented and many schools currently need urgent partial or capital renovation. However, public funds allocated for proper maintenance and school repair are very limited, while the need for financial investments is huge. Also, majority of school buildings are inaccessible for children with disabilities and lack appropriate facilities for the latter, thus cannot offer inclusive education. The urban and rural schools often have unequal physical conditions.

The Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Urban Construction, as well as Marz administrations are the bodies responsible for capital reconstructions and renovations of school buildings as well as for the supply of goods, furniture, and equipment; the recurrent repairs and partial improvements are planned by the management and advisory bodies of schools; financial donations and other means emerged from the paid services might also be used for repair purposes.

In terms of establishing modern education environment, an important issue for schools is introducing up-to-date information and communication technologies (ICT): furnishing schools with computer equipment, providing high speed Internet access and electronic resources. Currently almost all the schools in the country are equipped with computer equipment and the average student-computer ratio is about 22; almost all the schools in Armenia are connected to the Internet; The Armenian Educational Portal and “Armenian Educational Environment” with many educational resources are operating. It is expected to enhance the process of introducing the IGT in schools and making the new teaching technologies available to all schools regardless their geographical location.

In order to improve the education environment:

- Each academic year every school submits comprehensive data to the National Center of Educational Technologies, which summarizes the submitted data, analyzes it and submits it to the relevant authorities; the data is also published on the Center’s website;
- State and various organizations supply schools with new technologies and equipment, but the need is greater;
- The Government implements various programmes to ensure the security and access to education facilities;
- The Government provides additional funding and staff to schools to organize the education of children with special needs;
- The priority areas of improving the physical environment of schools are as follows:

- Elimination of the difference between the physical conditions of educational institutions in urban and rural areas;
- Reviewing the distribution of high schools through the country;
- Using school buildings efficiently /as a result of decreasing number of students school buildings are becoming half-empty/,
- Increasing financial investments for schools for capital reconstruction and the supply of goods, furniture, ICT and laboratory equipment;
- Improving high schools capacities, establishing modern libraries (resource centers), laboratories, supplying computer equipment and library stocks/facilities,
- Improving the educational environment for the children with special educational needs,
- Conducting a thorough study on the physical conditions and reparation needs of the educational institutions.

The Country's Support Systems for the Delivery of Education

i. Governance

A number of reforms on public administration have been implemented during recent years, in particular, reforms were implemented in the education management area, resulting in increased autonomy and role of the general education institutions, enhancement of the civic society involvement, and transparency of governance bodies.

Considerable progress has been registered towards enhancing the participatory mechanisms in education: the Collegiums of the Ministry operates, which involves representatives of non-governmental organizations and academic institutions; a National Council for the development of vocational education has been formed, which includes representatives from different ministries and employers. All educational institutions have been re-organized into state non-commercial organizations and are governed by management boards, which are composed of teachers, parents and representatives of local communities.

General educational institutions/schools are governed by the laws of Armenia and their Charter. The "Law on General Education" defines the functions and roles of all management bodies: the Government, Ministry of Education and Science, Territorial Governance bodies-Marzpetarans, Local Governing bodies- communities, School Boards, and the Director of the school.

The school director is elected and dismissed (the powers are suspended) according to the procedures defined in the legislation and School Charter order. Director is in charge of everyday operation and management of the school.

The governance bodies of schools regularly discuss the issues concerning education matters, funding issues, support mechanisms and outline development policies and strategies.

The Minister of Education and Science makes regular reports at Government sessions. Territorial and local governance bodies also make regular reports about their activities at government and community meetings. These bodies' activities are supervised and evaluated by the bodies empowered with functions of monitoring and inspection.

The design and the development of the education policy is the function of the Ministry of Education and Science. Representatives of the regional and local governance, educational institutions as well as international and NGOs are participating in the EDSP 2011-2015 implementation, strategies and in the implementation of those programmes. All programmes and projects are approved upon mutual agreement.

The efficiency of state programmes is monitored and evaluated at different levels and by respective control bodies. Mass media representatives are also involved in the monitoring and evaluation processes as well as in the discussions on the outcomes of state programmes.

The legislative-normative base of the education sector is common for all types of educational institutions. It provides the necessary conditions to meet the minimum quality standards and requirements set forth for all schools including the non-state/private schools.

The main areas for improvement in this field are:

- Improving performance of school boards;
- Improving EMIS;
- Implementing complete analysis of education data and using results in decision-making and policy formulation.

ii. Financing

The Education Sector is declared as one of priority areas for the country's development in several state documents, which also implies its priority in terms of funding. The main prerequisite of its development is an efficient financial system. According to the "Law on Education", the allocation for the education sector, as the percentage of total state budget, should not be lower than the percentage of the previous fiscal year.

The State Budget of Armenia is prepared on annual basis. In order to formulate and implement a clear policy on state spending and increase the efficiency public expenditures, a medium-term expenditure framework is developed annually. Thus, the Medium Term Expenditure Framework is one of the main tools of the Government in the realization of its main targets. It allows evaluating the micro-economic perspectives for the up-coming years.

Aimed to ensure the implementation of its programme goals, the Government also endeavors reforms on introducing budget programming. The priority goal of the budget programming is to increase the efficiency of public expenditures: allocate the resources according to the economic development priorities of the country.

According to the 2013 statistic data, 1393 state general education institutions/schools operate in the country (including 23 special education institutions). Approximately 382000 students are enrolled in these institutions. The state budget allocation for the general educational sector is 88081.4 million drams in 2013, which is 1.94 % of GDP.

In 2011, the gross enrollment rate in general education fell by 3.8%, as compared to 2010, and equaled to 86.3 %, while in high school it dropped by 11.6%, and equaled to 72.8 %. At the same period, there has been some growth in the enrollment rates of primary and basic schools: in primary schools– it has increased from 96.8 % to 99.0 %), and in basic schools it increased by 0.2% and equaled to 91.8 %.

40715 teachers worked in general education state schools during 2011-2012 academic year. In 2013 the student/teacher and student/non-teacher ratios were 14.3 and 23.9 respectively. In 2013, the average monthly salary of teachers reached 140.4 thousand AMD, or the annual salary of teachers exceeds the GDP per capita by 24%.

In 2011-2012 the State Budget allocated 491.5 million AMD for teacher training programmes. 494.8 million AMD is allocated for trainings of about 7000 teachers in 2013.

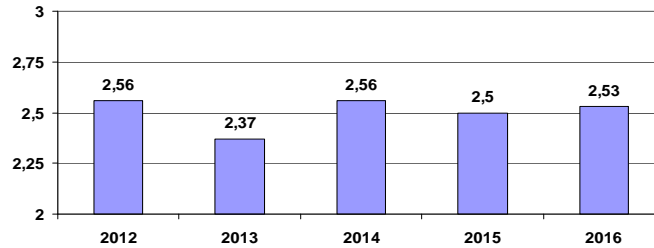
Inclusive education is carried out in 80 general education schools, where 2300 children with special needs are enrolled. In 2010-2012 the state budget allocated 2368.3 million AMD for inclusive education, and 1210.9 million AMD was allocated in 2013.

In 2012, the major portion of state allocations in the education system - 83.1%, was spent on financing the general education sector (in 2010 and 2011 that indicator was 82.3% and 81.9%, respectively).

The increase of state funding of the education sector is considered a priority for the Government for the whole 2014-2016 medium-term expenditure period.

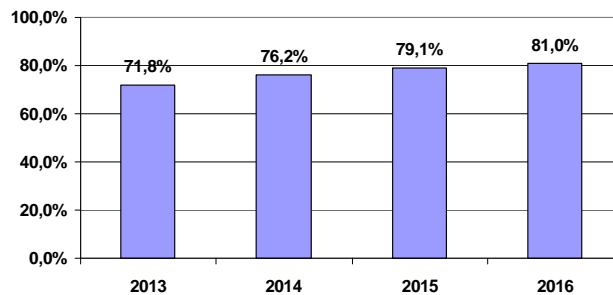
The following allocations for the education sector are planned for the time-period of 2014-2016: 124315.6 million AMD - in 2014, 133890.5 million AMD – in 2015, and 150275.4 million AMD - in 2016. The allocation for the education sector in 2014 will be 2.56% of GDP, in 2015 - GDP 2.50%, and in 2016 – GDP 2.53%.

State budget expenditure in the education field for the period 2012-2016 (%- in GDP)



In 2013, the state expenditure for the general education sector was 67.7% (against 69.6% in 2012) of the total education budget, in 2014 it will form 67.7%, in 2015 - 68.6%, in 2016 - 68.6%. The prevailing part of general education expenditures is salaries.

2013-2016 State expenditure on wages in the education field



iii. Overall System Efficiency

Over the previous 10 years, the government has implemented targeted reforms to increase the efficiency of the general education system. Due to these reforms, the student/teacher and student/non-teacher ratios in general education schools in 2013 reached 14.3 and 23.9 respectively—as compared to 14.0 and 23.2 ratios in 2007. The small average class size is the main reason of the low student/teacher ratio, as far as the teacher's workload and number of lessons are stable indicators. In 2013, the average class size in the general education schools was 16.2, which is much lower than the same indicator for OECD countries: in 2007, the average class size in OECD countries was 21.4 – for primary schools and 23.9 - for basic schools.

It should be noted that the above-mentioned indicators for Armenia are the average for all school levels, thus do not fully reflect the real situation at different levels. The norms for both class sizes and the weekly lesson-hours are different at different levels of general education. Given that these indicators are usually calculated separately for different levels of general education (primary school, secondary school, high school) in the international publications, there is also a need for splitting those in Armenia.

Thus, the core important challenge and precondition for improving the efficiency of the education system is the introduction of efficient system of indicators, which will enable to develop evidence-based policies.

Section 6: Summary

The most significant problems of the Education sector in the current phase are as follows:

- The systems for recording the children dropping out of schools and their inclusion in the education are inadequate;
- The capacities of general education schools to ensure education for all children, including the children with special educational needs are limited;
- Teachers do not master modern teaching methods and technologies, the efficiency of teacher in-service and pre-service training is low, the system for the teachers' professional development is not effective;
- School curricula remains heavily knowledge-based, encouraging memorization, repetition and the routine learning of facts rather than higher-level thinking skills such as understanding, application, analysis, evaluation, creativity and problem solving. School graduates have insufficient practical skills and abilities necessary for future life and professional education;
- The access to and use of modern information and communication technologies in educational processes are insufficient, there is a lack of e-learning materials;
- The school resources including goods, materials, equipment and furniture in many education institutions do not meet modern requirements,
- The education funding mechanisms need improvement; the use of funds and resources needs to be made more efficient;
- At all levels of the education governance, the management skills need further improvement; effective governance mechanisms have to be developed.

The EDSP 2011-2015 is the main education policy document of Armenia. It sets out the main development goals for the given period. Particularly, in the field of education, the following programme priorities are outlined:

1. Introduction of 12-year general education, ensuring revision of the curricula and standards for all subjects and publication of new textbooks in accordance with the new General Education State Standards;
2. Expanding the use of ICT tools;
3. Improvement of the network of separately operating high schools;
4. Increase of pedagogical education quality, effectiveness and reputation;
5. Improvement of the system of professional development of teachers;
6. Enhancement of education opportunities for children with special needs in general education schools;
7. Establishment of an effective system for identification of children with special educational needs and their integration into the education system;
8. Rationalization of special schools.

According to the EDSP 2011-2015, by 2015, the following outcomes are planned:

- The gross enrollment in the primary and basic schools will reach 99 %.
- Equal opportunities for quality general education will be increased for all school-age children, including those with special educational needs, ethnic minorities and different vulnerable groups; opportunities for inclusive education in all general education schools will be created;
- In high schools, including in vocational programmes, the gross enrollment will reach 95%;
- Armenia results in TIMSS will improve, ensuring 8% progress of Armenia score compared to the 2011 score;
- The number of graduates from primary and basic schools with passing grades/scores will reach 99 %;
- 95 % of teachers in general education schools will pass attestation;
- The school resources including goods, materials, equipment and furniture will be improved. All schools will be connected to the Internet.

Annexes: Detailed Statistical Tables

1. Preschool Education

Table 1: Gross enrolment rate in pre-school institutions broken down by urban and rural communities

Year	Number of pre-school institutions			Number of children included			Inclusion rate, %		
	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
2004	653	422	231	45971	37993	7978	20,0	27,4	8,7
2005	645	429	216	48674	40317	8357	21,8	29,7	9,6
2006	645	417	228	48015	39161	8854	21,8	29	10,5
2007	637	415	222	50491	42102	8389	23,3	31,1	10,3
2008	628	412	216	53718	44736	8982	29,8	39,3	13,6
2009	599	380	219	53161	43640	9521	24,3	31,5	11,7
2010	639	411	228	58316	47828	10488	25,3	32,7	12,4
2011	660	419	241	63542	52459	11083	25,9	33,7	12,4
2012	638	421	262	69465	56350	13115	27,9	36,6	13,8

Table 2: Enrolment in preschool education (in % of total number of children of corresponding age)

	Number of children				
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
in urban areas	31.8	30.3	31.6	33.7	36.6
in rural areas	11.0	11.3	12.0	12.4	13.8
Total	24.2	23.3	24.4	25.9	27.9

Table 3: Number of children enrolled in preschool education by regions for 2007-2012

	Number of children						of which girl					
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Yerevan	22173	23171	23737	24952	28573	31250	10904	11438	11738	12256	13728	15423
Aragatzotn	802	1152	1102	953	1270	1790	386	468	550	467	687	897
Ararat	3904	4252	4184	4652	4940	5322	2000	2196	2126	2386	2485	2676
Armavir	3754	3975	3733	4410	4269	4577	1977	2004	1814	2163	2111	2239
Gegharkunik	2461	2570	2639	2536	2576	2886	1380	1302	1377	1353	1334	1468
Lori	3221	3482	3303	3489	3688	4027	1521	1701	1575	1659	1773	1939
Kotayk	3839	5046	4252	5171	5126	5734	1919	2011	2142	2513	2657	2899
Shirak	3516	3801	3711	3759	2950	2915	1907	2019	1895	1837	1536	1583
Syunik	3467	3543	3554	3812	4000	4333	1701	1749	1737	1881	2003	2078
Vayots Dzor	628	702	703	742	811	944	297	326	350	371	374	463
Tavush	2012	2208	2243	2419	2651	2950	1022	1094	1105	1235	1329	1444
Total	49777	52912	53161	56895	60854	66728	25014	26308	26409	28121	30017	33109

Table 4: Preschool education data for 2007-2012

Data	Preschool Education					
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Number of children per teacher	9.8	10.1	10.0	10.6	12.3	13.5
Number of children per 100 places	72.9	75.3	77.5	78.1	83.0	90.7
Number of children per institution	80.7	87.0	88.7	93.9	100.1	105.7
Number of children per group	23.4	24.5	24.6	26.2	28.0	29.6

2. General Education

Table 5: Number of general schools according to the level of education programme

	Number of Schools			
	2009	2010	2011	2012
Total	1457	1450	1441	1435
in urban areas	585	579	573	570
in rural areas	872	871	868	865
Primary schools	13	13	13	12
<i>in urban areas</i>	4	4	4	1
<i>in urban areas</i>	9	9	9	11
Basic schools	313	457	495	461
<i>in urban areas</i>	163	306	346	315
<i>in urban areas</i>	150	151	149	146
High schools	52	102	118	109
<i>in urban areas</i>	49	95	112	102
<i>in urban areas</i>	3	7	6	7
Gymnasium	28	21	18	16
<i>in urban areas</i>	27	21	18	16
<i>in urban areas</i>	1	-	-	-
Secondary schools	1051	857	797	837
<i>in urban areas</i>	342	153	93	136
<i>in urban areas</i>	709	704	704	701
Special schools	26	28	27	27

Table 6: Enrolment in general schools, 2007-2012

Data	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Primary school						
Total	93.2	95.5	96.1	96.8	99.0	95.2
<i>female</i>	93.5	96.2	96.3	97.4	99.6	96.0
<i>male</i>	92.9	94.9	95.9	96.4	98.4	94.5
Basic school						
Total	95.9	93.5	92.1	91.6	91.8	94.8
<i>female</i>	96.0	94.0	92.7	92.1	92.2	95.6
<i>male</i>	95.9	93.0	91.6	91.1	91.5	94.0
High school						
Total	82.9	81.9	83.9	84.4	72.8	74.1
<i>female</i>	88.7	86.0	88.6	90.9	79.5	81.5
<i>male</i>	77.4	78.1	79.4	78.4	66.5	67.4
General school						
Total	89.2	90.8	90.2	90.1	86.3	89.2
<i>female</i>	90.4	92.1	91.7	91.8	88.5	91.7
<i>male</i>	88.2	89.6	88.9	88.6	84.4	86.9

Table 7: Gross enrolment in general schools, 2008-2012

Data	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Primary school					
Total	100.0	103.1	94.8	98.5	93.4
<i>female</i>	100.3	103.5	94.9	98.9	93.9
<i>male</i>	99.7	102.8	94.7	98.1	93.0
Basic school					
Total	-	-	93.1	93.3	97.0
<i>female</i>			93.6	93.8	97.8
<i>male</i>			92.7	93.0	96.2

Table 8: Gender equity in general schools, 2007-2012

Data	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Primary school	1.01	1.01	1.00	1.01	1.01	1.02
Basic school	1.00	1.01	1.01	1.01	1.01	1.02
High school	1.15	1.10	1.12	1.16	1.20	1.21
Total	1.02	1.03	1.03	1.04	1.05	1.06

Table 9: ICT in general schools, 2007-2012

Data	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Number of computers	7911	10848	13027	14061	16535	17547
Number of computers per school	5.4	7.4	8.9	9.7	11.5	12.2
Number of students per computer	54.5	38.2	30.2	26.4	23.4	21.0
Number of schools with internet connection	365	696	880	1180	1233	1358

Table 10: Enrolment per 1000 persons in general education, 2007-2012

	2009	2010	2011	2012
Total	392.9	370.9	386.4	368.7
<i>in urban areas</i>	238.4	224.9	233.8	223.8
<i>in rural areas</i>	154.5	146.0	152.6	144.9
Primary school	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.7
Basic school	72.1	137.1	154.3	136.1
High school	25.1	45.5	56.6	49.5
Secondary school	290.0	183.7	170.1	178.5
Special general education	2.8	2.8	2.6	2.4

2.1 State schools of general education

Table 11: Number of students in the schools by regions for 2007-2012 (state schools)

	Number of children						of which female					
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Yerevan	126616	121912	115704	109129	113024	106112	61236	58600	55478	52228	54532	51610
Aragatzotn	22330	20667	19406	18359	19330	18500	10694	9821	9216	8611	9109	8584
Ararat	38119	36628	35238	33225	34604	32852	18551	17707	16989	15906	16702	15714
Armavir	41730	39529	37086	34969	36399	34945	20091	18890	17517	16429	17089	16334
Gegharkunik	36312	35917	33868	31744	33135	31417	17477	17247	16204	15097	15767	14908
Lori	38215	35324	33826	31907	33131	31629	18771	17294	16507	15524	16214	15267
Kotayk	35772	36702	34717	33139	34930	33804	17540	17631	16828	15937	16924	16387
Shirak	40882	38537	35202	32774	33840	31428	20093	18639	16887	15639	16300	15071
Syunik	18717	18010	17448	16810	17733	16985	9259	8985	8624	8275	8747	8390
Vayots Dzor	8771	8035	7550	7083	7388	6876	4190	3849	3586	3367	3502	3222
Tavush	18427	17675	16909	16347	17182	16680	9034	8627	8266	8045	8500	8282
Total	425891	408936	386954	365486	380696	361228	206936	197290	186102	175058	183386	173769

Table 12: General education data for 2007-2012 (state schools)

Data	Preschool Education					
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Number of students per school	300.6	287.2	275.6	260.7	272.7	260.3
Number of students per classroom	22.8	18.0	17.3	18.6	18.5	16.3
Number of students per teacher	10.4	9.9	9.6	9.1	9.4	9.1
Number of teachers per school	28.8	29.1	28.7	28.8	29.2	28.5
Number of classrooms per school	13.2	15.9	15.9	14.0	14.7	15.9

2.2 Private schools of general education

Table 13: Number of students in the schools by regions for 2007-2012 (private schools)

	Number of children						of which female					
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Yerevan	3834	4546	4918	4316	4605	6071	1627	2017	2155	1896	2058	2695
Armavir	146	140	141	367	333	350	59	58	66	185	163	167
Gegharkunik	-	22	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	-
Lori	-	67	74	77	105	104	-	32	40	36	40	38
Kotayk	481	225	314	144	154	152	236	83	119	52	56	55
Shirak	663	561	517	485	513	773	318	273	248	227	234	379
Syunik	152	227	-	-	-	-	63	74	-	-	-	-
Vayots Dzor	-	57	28	17	33	30	-	27	12	7	16	15
Tavush	113	-	-	-	-	-	55	-	-	-	-	-
Total	5389	5845	5992	5406	5743	7480	2358	2571	2640	2403	2567	3349

Table 14: General education data for 2007-2012 (private schools)

Data	Preschool Education					
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Number of students per school	154.0	114.6	113.1	112.6	127.6	159.1
Number of students per classroom	16.7	9.7	9.6	11.1	11.4	12.7
Number of students per teacher	5.9	5.1	4.8	5.3	5.5	5.9
Number of teachers per school	26.2	22.6	23.3	21.4	23.2	26.9
Number of classrooms per school	9.2	11.8	11.8	10.1	11.2	12.5