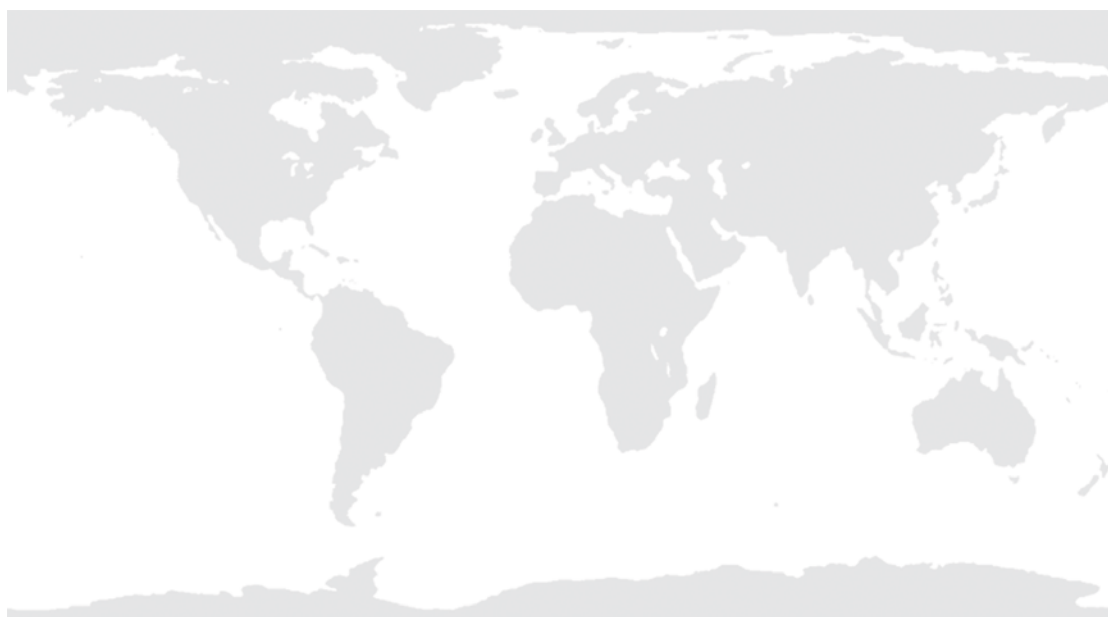




World Data on Education Données mondiales de l'éducation Datos Mundiales de Educación

VII Ed. 2010/11



Mongolia

Revised version, August 2011.

Principles and general objectives of education

Article 16 of the Constitution, adopted in 1992, stipulates that the citizens shall be guaranteed the right to education and that the State shall provide basic general education free of charge.

In the Education Law, first revised in 1995, the articles of socialist ideology were deleted and new educational goals and principles were proclaimed. The fundamental assumptions of education stated in this law reflects the principle of equality in education: “every citizen has equal rights to his or her education, regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, sex, religion, social status, and economic condition”; “compulsory education is provided to everyone of school age free of charge.” Furthermore, “education shall be humanistic and democratic, universally available and continuing.” These provisions specify that the country must gear towards a public education system grounded upon equality in educational opportunities.

In accordance with the Education Law 2002 and subsequent amendments, the goal of education is to provide the citizen with appropriate intellectual, moral and physical skills, and develop respect to the principles of humanism and ability to learn, work and live independently.

The vision of education sector is to ensure provision of reliable guarantees for sustainable development sources, national sovereignty and security of Mongolia through civil society to be educated with continuously enriching culture. (Government of Mongolia, 2006).

Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

Since Mongolia chose the democratic and market-oriented system in 1990, one of the most important tasks has been the development of a new legal basis for education.

To this end, several new legal acts, such as the **State Education Policy**, the **Education Law** of 2002 (amended in January 2003, December 2006 and May 2008), the **Higher Education Law** and the **Primary and Secondary Education Law** were adopted by the Parliament. These laws defined policies of democratization and openness in educational administrative structures; decentralized the administration and financing of all public schools; transferred the management of schools to local governments in the *aimaks* (provinces); increased the autonomy of colleges and universities; and enabled the establishment of private educational institutions.

The **Law on Technical and Vocational Education and Training** (TVET) was passed in 2003. This law determined the importance, scope, type, curriculum and standards of TVET in Mongolia and created legal environment for TVET centers to



work with businesses, schools, and social partners, and regulated the management and financing of TVET institutions.

The **Law on Preschool Education** enacted in 2008 provides for alternative forms of provision of preschool education services and requires every child to be enrolled in early childhood education activities.

The State Education Policy defines education as a priority sector of the society, as well as an important source of rapid growth of scientific, technical, economic and social development. In addition, for the first time the importance of non-formal continuing education for all is recognized.

According to current legislation, compulsory schooling encompasses primary and lower secondary education (nine years of study). Education is free of charge up to the upper (general) secondary level.

Administration and management of the education system

The central education authority in Mongolia is the **Ministry of Education, Culture and Science** (MECS, previously the Ministry of Science, Technology, Education and Culture). The function of the Ministry is defined by law as the promotion and dissemination of education, science and culture.

Nearly all publicly financed education is subordinate to or under the supervision of the Ministry. The administrative fields of the Ministry include not only preschool, primary, secondary, vocational and higher education and educational research, but also cultural and scientific affairs and non-formal education as well.

In accordance with the Education Law, the main tasks of the Ministry of Education are the following:

- to organize and ensure nationwide implementation of legal mandates for education;
- to develop a comprehensive and suitable system of education for all, including non-formal education;
- to coordinate the activities of those organizations offering various training programmes and providing professional help;
- to organize and provide in-service training for all educational personnel, putting forward the issues related to social benefits for teachers.

The Ministry provides guidance and advice for the operation of local public and private educational institutions, as well as financial assistance. It defines policies with regard to education, science and culture and it is responsible for the implementation of these policies. In addition, the Ministry publishes and approves textbooks and curricula and provides support for the supervision of local educational centres and national universities.

The Ministry is headed by the Minister who is a member of the Prime Minister's Cabinet. He is assisted by the State Secretary. The Ministry is divided into

four main departments which are the main providers of policy and planning guidelines and public administration and civil service management, namely: the Primary and Secondary Education Policy and Coordination Department, the Higher Education and Professional Education Department, the Economics and Finance Department, and the Department of Monitoring and Evaluation.

Mongolia is administratively divided in the capital city Ulaanbaatar and twenty-one *aimags* (rural provinces), each of them further divided into a number of *soums* (rural districts). In every *aimag* there is an **Education and Culture Department**, which oversees the educational and financial performance of schools and kindergartens in their areas, and mentors teachers on classroom management, teaching methods and student assessment. The provincial governments are responsible for:

- coordinating activities in implementing the nationwide education policy at the *aimag* and *soum* levels;
- administering, managing and establishing kindergartens and general secondary schools;
- appointing or discharging school principals;
- financing kindergartens, primary and secondary schools;
- organizing initiatives for providing compulsory basic education for all children;
- issuing local acts, laws and regulations and implementing related monitoring and evaluation activities.

The **State Inspectorate of Education, Culture and Science** is a government agency that monitors and assesses the implementation of educational policies, regulations, laws and develops recommendations to educational institutions if needed. (ADB, 2008).

At all levels, from kindergarten to universities, there is self-governance. The management committee of the school, e.g. the **School Board**, consisting of teachers, students, parents and representatives of the local community, is in charge of managing and monitoring all affairs related to the school.

The administrative authority on education has been transferred from the central government to each educational institution and to the local governments. This transfer of powers is even more pronounced at the higher education level, where universities now have more autonomy than ever and to the extent that they can equally participate in the decision-making process along with the MECS.

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is administered under the purview of the MECS and the **Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare Services** (MLSWS). MECS oversees formal long term TVET (more than two years) while MLSWS oversees the non-formal short term TVET (ranging from two weeks to 45 days). The **National Vocational Education and Training Methodology Center** (NVETMC) is responsible for the development of skills standards and curricular materials for both formal and informal TVET courses, the production of textbooks, the training of TVET teachers and industry practitioners to develop modular training materials, teachers' pedagogical training, and research work on TVET-related issues,

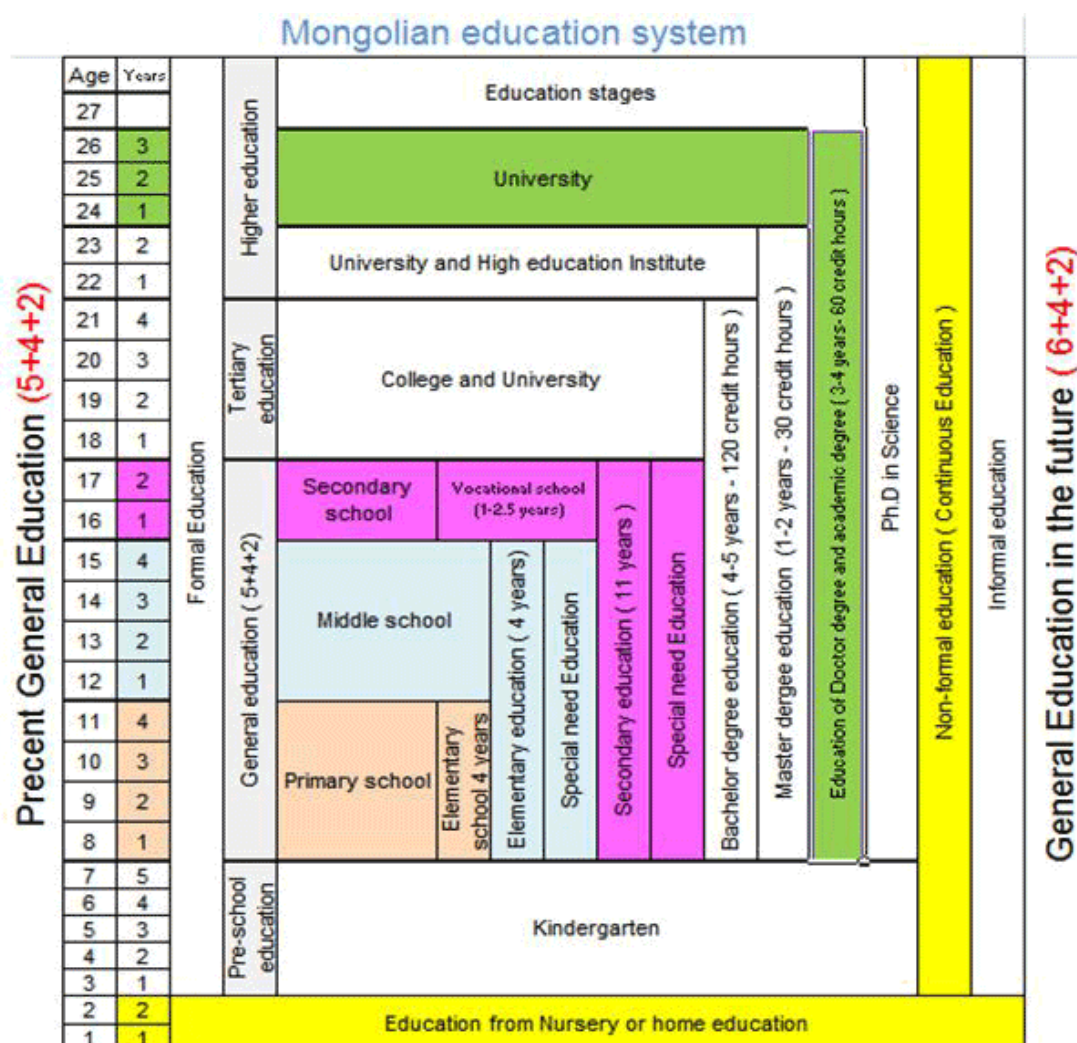


such as labor market studies. The NVETMC is located in MECS. The Mongolian National Council for Education Accreditation (MNCEA), in operation since 1998, accredits new private tertiary education institutions, and in principle also TVET centers and the quality of TVET programmes. Institutional accreditation is voluntary. (World Bank, 2010).

Structure and organization of the education system

The structure of the education system in Mongolia includes preschool education (kindergarten and nursery school) and general secondary schools (primary, lower and upper secondary). Schools for the primary, lower and upper secondary levels generally do not exist separately. Schools up to grade 10 are mainly found in the larger towns and cities. The amendment to the Education Law 2002 introduced a fundamental change in the education system in 2005, with a move to an eleven-year system of basic education organized around five years of compulsory primary education, four years of compulsory lower secondary, and two years of upper secondary, lowering the starting age for primary school from 8 to 7 years. (ADB, 2002). A new model is being introduced from 2008, with a shift towards a twelve-year education structure consisting of six years of primary education, three years of lower secondary (completing the nine-year compulsory education cycle), and three years of upper secondary. The admission age to primary education has been lowered from 7 to 6 years. (ADB, 2008). The transition to the new system is expected to be completed in 2016 (the Education Sector Master Plan envisages maintaining the 5+4+3 structure until 2015).

Mongolia: structure of the education system (2005)



Source: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

Pre-school education

Preschool education (kindergarten traditionally for the age group 3 to 6/7, and nursery school for the age group 1 to 2) is not compulsory; under the new structure of the education system being implemented, the admission age to primary education is 6. The goal of increasing preschool education coverage is reached through *ger* (traditional Mongolian dwelling) kindergartens, mobile teachers, with short-term preschool summer courses and home training complementing conventional kindergartens.

Primary education

Compulsory primary education covered a period of four years for pupils aged 8-12. After the structural changes introduced in 2005 and 2008, the duration of primary education is expected to be six years, and the admission age is 6. Most rural schools



have a dormitory to accommodate children of nomadic herder families. At the end of primary education, pupils have to pass the standardized test in order to receive a certificate.

Secondary education

Under the previous system, the four-year lower secondary education was the final stage of compulsory schooling, followed by two years of upper secondary education. On the basis of the new structure being implemented, secondary education will be divided into two three-year programmes, namely compulsory lower secondary and upper secondary education. At the end of lower secondary education, students have to pass the standardized test in order to receive the certificate of basic education. At the end of upper secondary education students have to sit the examination and if successful they receive the school leaving certificate. Vocational education is generally accessed after completing lower secondary and lasts two years, but it can also be accessed after completing upper secondary, and it then lasts one year. Technical education requires upper secondary completion and programmes usually last two years. Vocational training is conducted at the vocational training centers (mostly in the private sector) in the form of non-credit courses, with duration ranging from one to three months. There are no strict entry qualifications for taking up vocational courses.

Higher education

Tertiary and higher education is offered at colleges, institutes and universities. Colleges offer three-year diploma and bachelor's degree programmes. At university level, bachelor's degree programmes usually last four to five years (six years in the case of medicine). Master's degree programmes require one to two years of study after the bachelor's degree. Doctoral degree programmes take three to four years to complete.

The school year consists of thirty-four working weeks at the primary level, thirty-five weeks at the lower secondary, and thirty-six weeks at the upper secondary level.

The educational process

Pre-primary education

All kindergartens are publicly subsidized and preschool education is not compulsory. The main objective at this level, as determined by the Law of Primary and Secondary Education of 1995, is to help children develop their minds, bodies and personalities by providing them with an appropriate educational environment, conducive to the development of their talents, abilities and life skills. In kindergartens children are taught reading, writing, arithmetic, drawing, music and physical education. By the end of the 1990s, only 25% of 6-7-year-olds attended kindergarten. (MOSTEC, 1999).

The Education Law prescribes preschool education to be included in the general educational structure. In accordance with the Law, the nursery school is an



organization designed to provide daycare for children less than 3 years of age, and it is to be of three types, namely ordinary, caring, and for orphaned children. Accordingly, nursery is viewed as a non-educational organization generally designed to provide child daycare and is under the supervision of the Ministry of Health. Since the 1990s it has been conceived that it is more appropriate to bring up young children aged 0-3 within the family, under parents' care; therefore, a policy has been introduced to enable mothers take care of young children less of 2 years of age, while receiving child home care allowance from a social pension fund. However, only childcare centers for orphans and sanatoria are available and are financed by the state.

By Resolution No. 46 (April 1995), the government established a National Programme on Preschool Strengthening. The Resolution included an ambitious implementation plan for the period 1995 to 2000. This programme aimed at creating a favorable preschool education structure appropriate to both nomadic and sedentary populations; supporting nongovernmental preschool education institutions; improving curriculum, methodology, and provision of training facilities; supporting family education of preschool children; and strengthening skills of preschool educators to meet modern requirements. At that time, the key institutions providing preschool education were nursery schools (age 0-2) and kindergartens (ages 3-7). The main policy was "kindergarten-centered", and the government fully financed kindergartens. With the start of transition to market economy in 1990, along with decrease of economic capacity of the country the education sector had to face some difficulties. In the early 1990s, the number of day nursery schools for children aged 0-2 fell significantly due to local government budget deficits. The number of children in kindergartens fell substantially and about 2,000 kindergarten teachers lost their jobs.

The Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (IECDP) was adopted and endorsed by the Joint Order of the Ministers of Health, Education and Labor and Social Welfare in April 2005. This policy aims at improving and strengthening the inter-sectoral collaboration and coordination in early childhood development. The objectives are to creating and developing an integrated management of ECD social services as well as the availability, accessibility and quality of services. The policy encourages a comprehensive and coordinated approach and efforts in developing quality service provisions, developing alternative forms of service delivery with greater participation of private sector and other stakeholders with specific focus on disadvantaged groups: remote rural children, and children with disabilities. (UNESCO Beijing, 2008). During the period of the IECDP implementation, the MECS formulated and approved the "Procedure for issuing and terminating licenses for teachers of schools and kindergartens", "Procedure for issuance and termination of professional degrees for methodologists of general educational schools and education authorities and for teachers of non-formal education", and "Procedure of promotion of qualification of teachers and related officials of preschool, primary and secondary education." (MECS, UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007).

Kindergartens make up 90% of preschool education establishments in Mongolia. On average, they operate eight hours per day, five days per week from 1 September until 1 June. Kindergartens provide training for speech development, basic mathematical abstractions, music and singing, physical development and fine arts. In addition, kindergartens conduct excursions and health enhancement activities. There are twelve specialized kindergartens-sanatoria concentrated primarily in Ulaanbaatar.

These sanatoria accept children of the ages 2.5 to 6 years old who are underweight or disabled and provide them due medical care and health enhancement activities. They work 10 hours a day during the same academic year as standard kindergartens. There are five kindergartens-shelters in the *aimag* centers and Ulaanbaatar. They accept full and half-orphaned children from marginalized groups and children with disabilities. The implementation of the government policies on children and the child rights protection legislation is the function of the National Authority for Children (NAC). The NAC also monitors the activities of the child development and protection agencies. The National Council for Children is responsible for implementing child development and protection policies, management of the national resources for providing advice, coordination, monitoring to the government, related public agencies, and ensuring participation of the people. (*Ibid.*).

According to the Asian Development Bank, most public kindergartens have adopted the alternative training models and accumulated experiences to offer early childhood education (ECE) programmes. In particular, *ger* (traditional Mongolian dwelling) summer kindergartens are well received among kindergarten and primary school teachers, local authorities, and rural and nomadic parents. The following alternative forms of preschool education exist: (i) mobile kindergarten training, e.g. a temporary mobile *ger*-kindergarten from *soum* (district) kindergarten to *baghs*, in which herders' preschool-aged children will be involved in summer; (ii) shift group training, e.g. training organized for half a day or two to three hours a day for children who are not involved in kindergartens of *soum* and *aimag* (province) centers; (iii) visiting teacher training, namely a teacher who is tasked with reaching a remote nomadic family and giving lessons to their children; and (iv) short-term training, e.g. training organized in kindergartens of *soum* and *aimag* centers in the spring for children who will be enrolled in school in the fall.

In cases when nomadic children do have access to alternative ECE, the quality of such programmes is poor and the duration is short. For instance, in the visiting teacher programme, a teacher visits a nomadic family approximately once a month during certain times of the year, and the mobile kindergartens typically operate only in summer months. Therefore, nomadic children do not experience a sustained exposure to ECE programs. Furthermore, there is a lack of teacher certification and service standards, registration standards, and curriculum standards for alternative ECE, as well as no official guidelines regarding how, by whom, for what duration, and for what age group alternative ECE should be organized. The performance indicators for alternative ECE have not been developed and systematic training of teachers in alternative ECE has been weak.

Analysis of ECE in rural areas cites the shortage of funds as a critical constraint. Low economic capacity in the local administrative units negatively affects investment in and development of local ECE initiatives, resulting in considerable variation among *aimags* in ECE provision. The situation has been exacerbated by lack of incentives for additional ECE development at the local level. There is a fundamental issue of insufficient capacity of kindergartens, and many buildings are in need of repair. Underdeveloped roads and energy sources in remote areas, coupled with out-migration has decreased accessibility, quality, and effectiveness of services for young children, including ECE programs. Thus, in some areas of out-migration, kindergartens operate under capacity.



In 2007/08, there were 768 kindergartens (of which 87% are public) with an enrolment of 130,758 children. Only 57.1% of children aged 2–6 are enrolled in kindergartens. Of these, 43.8% are enrolled in formal kindergartens and another 13.3% in alternative forms of preschool education. According to MECS, of the 43% of children not enrolled in ECE, around 30% are children of migrant families and 13% are nomadic and rural children. (Asian Development Bank, *Mongolia: Education for the Poor—Financial crisis response project*, August 2009).

The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2005 found that 37% of all children aged 36-59 months attended a preschool education programme (kindergarten). Preschool education attendance varied by rural and urban areas as well as by regions. The rate was 25% in rural areas compared to 50% in urban areas. In rural areas only 20% of children of 36-59 months attended preschool education programme whilst the percentage in *soum* centers was 43%, in *aimag* centers 52% and in the capital city 48%. No gender disparities were found. Overall, 81% of children who were currently attending the first grade of primary school had been attending preschool the previous year (82% for boys and 79% for girls). (NSO & UNICEF, 2007). The National Statistical Office reports that in 2008/09 there were 783 kindergartens and four crèches with 4,242 female teachers serving 107,300 children (of whom about 4,800 in crèches). (NSO, 2009).

Primary education

Primary, lower and upper secondary schools generally do not exist separately. Most of the schools have at least eight grades, while schools up to grade 10 are mainly found in the larger towns and cities. All parents are required to have their children attend primary and lower secondary education. In principle, basic education (primary and lower secondary) is free. A combination of basic education and high school (upper secondary) is considered as general education. Under the previous system, primary education lasted four years.

The main objectives of primary education are to teach children to speak and write their native language correctly, develop basic numerical skills, and develop an elementary understanding of social, natural and human sciences. Furthermore, children are to be taught basic work and survival skills that are useful to themselves and to their environment. They are taught to respect humanity, adults, parents and teachers.

The yearly lesson timetable of the former four-year primary education programme is shown in the table below:

Primary education: yearly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of yearly periods in each grade			
	I	II	III	IV
Mongolian language	280	263	281	238
Mathematics	144	153	144	145
Environmental studies	52	68	68	–
Natural sciences	–	–	–	68
History and social studies	–	–	–	68
Music	52	68	51	68
Fine arts	50	51	68	50
Creative works and basic drawing	34	34	34	34
Physical education	68	68	68	68
Prescribed alternating subjects	34	34	34	34
Subjects decided by the school	34	34	34	34
Total periods per year	748	773	782	807

Source: Nergui Nerendoo, 2002.

Note: Each teaching period lasts 40 minutes. The school year consists of thirty-four working weeks at the primary level, thirty-five weeks at the lower secondary, and thirty-six weeks at the upper secondary level. Prescribed (compulsory) alternating subjects include health education, environmental education, economics and law (the latter at the lower and upper secondary levels). School-based contents may include: additional teaching in one of the subjects listed above; integrated subjects of natural sciences, techniques and technology, non-basic foreign languages; other subjects.

There is an automatic promotion policy from grade 1 to 4, and also continuous school-based assessment. At the end of primary education, pupils have to pass the standardized test to receive a certificate.

In 1998/99, the average number of pupils per class was 30.8 and the average teacher/pupil ratio was 1:32.4. In 1998, 94.3% of all primary school pupils were promoted to the next level, 0.9% repeated and 4.7% dropped out. (MOSTEC, 1999).

According to the Asian Development Bank (*Mongolia: Education for the Poor—Financial crisis response project*, August 2009), 90.6% of children in the primary school age group were enrolled in primary schools in 2008/09. In the same school year, there were 748 general education schools with a total enrolment of 532,058 students. Of the 748 schools, 207 were in Ulaanbaatar and the remaining were located in *aimags*. Of the total, 153 schools were primary schools only. According to MECS, 25,543 full-time teachers were employed in general education schools. The average teacher to student ratio was 25.5:1. In 2008/09, the 493 boarding schools enrolled 42,064 students (about 8% of the overall student population), of which 36,786 are herders' children.

The country implemented a standards-based curriculum reform in 1998 and began standardized testing a year later. New state education standards were introduced in 2003. These emphasize student-centered learning methodologies and the importance of developing higher order thinking skills—learning how to know, learning how to perform, and learning how to socialize and be a good citizen. General subject areas include science, technology, and English. While these standards are consistent with the acquisition of skills needed for work and life, the current curriculum and teaching practices are not consistent with these goals. The redesign of



the curriculum as the basis for the newly introduced twelve-year general education system is still in process and in 2009 new syllabi and new textbooks were completed for primary grades 1 and 2.

The curriculum continues to be by rote, too theoretical, and focused on traditional academic subjects, while teaching continues to be teacher-centered rather than interactive. Classroom instruction encourages memorization rather than critical and creative thinking, and individual learning rather than teamwork. While information and communication technologies (ICT) and English language subjects are part of the curriculum, teachers are generally ill-equipped to teach these subjects. In many cases, the teaching of ICT is limited by the lack of computers in schools and inadequate operating budgets, which are widely unable to finance ICT consumables, additional electricity costs, maintenance and servicing charges, and the costs of Internet connection. Schools also have a serious shortage of relevant e-materials in the Mongolian language. Thinking and behavioral skills can be integrated into every aspect of the curriculum through discovery-oriented teaching methods that include interactive learning, applying knowledge to real-life problems, integrating teamwork and peer tutoring into the learning process, and inviting student input into the structure and subject matter of lessons. However, these methodologies require well-trained teachers and adequate classroom facilities to make them effective in terms of delivering new education outputs. The implementation of student-centered learning will take time and require substantial investments in pre- and in-service training.

Monitoring and supervision is not adequate in preschools, and primary and secondary schools. Because of the great distances involved in Mongolia, monitoring and supervision are expensive activities that are more limited in times of financial constraint. As a result, misreporting of enrollments, boarders, dropouts, and transfers is likely to go unnoticed, which in turn makes accurate planning and budgeting problematic. Closely associated with the lack of effective monitoring and supervision is a lack of reliable performance evaluation mechanisms to accurately measure student and system performance. This is a cross-cutting issue that affects all education subsectors, including higher education. Even at preschool level, individual preschools are setting their own evaluation criteria and performance measurement systems in the reported absence of national guidelines. In primary and secondary schools, teachers are consistently reported to award higher grades to students in order to avoid disciplinary action from school principals. Technical, vocational, and higher education subsectors also report difficulties in standardizing the grading of students both on entry and graduation. The system currently has no access to international comparative performance testing, although the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) is expected to be launched in Mongolia in the near future. The shift to student-centered learning and a skills-based curriculum will only be effective if a national skills-based assessment system is introduced. Teachers are said to 'teach to the test.' If skills are not tested the tendency will always be to revert to the fact- and memory-based education objectives and outputs. (*Ibid.*).

According to the third report on the Millennium Development Goals implementation (2009), the net enrolment ratio in primary education was estimated at 91.5% in 2008 and the proportion of grade 1 pupils reaching grade 5 was estimated at 92.8%. The National Statistical Office reports that in 2008/09 the gross enrolment ratio in primary education was 93.6%, and in general education (primary and

secondary education) it was 94.4% (95.5% at the secondary level). In the same year, there were 25,543 teachers in general education schools, of whom around 20,800 were female teachers. (NSO, 2009).

Secondary education

The main objective of secondary education is to develop fundamentals of natural, social and human sciences based on primary school knowledge. At this level, students are encouraged to utilize their knowledge in practical life using technology of production programmes and to respect historical and cultural property, the environment and human beings. The upper secondary level is intended to give general and vocational technical education suited to students' level of mental and physical development.

Under the previous system, secondary education was divided into two cycles: lower secondary covering four years of schooling, and upper secondary lasting two years. The yearly lesson timetable according to the former structure is presented below:

Lower and upper secondary education: yearly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of yearly periods in each grade					
	Lower secondary				Upper secondary	
	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X
Mongolian language	140	114	122	97	36	36
Mongolian literature	61	61	52	52	63	72
Foreign languages (English/Russian)	149	132	97	88	99	90
Mathematics	148	149	149	148	162	153
Informatics	–	–	–	–	36	36
Natural sciences	62	36	–	–	–	–
Geography	–	43	62	61	36	36
Biology	–	43	70	62	36	72
Physics, Astronomy	–	–	61	105	153	135
Chemistry	–	–	52	61	99	90
History and social studies	70	87	87	88	36	72
Music	61	–	–	–	–	–
Fine arts	35	35	–	–	–	–
Physical education	70	70	70	70	72	72
Creative works, technical drawing	44	70	88	78	72	72
Prescribed alternating subjects	35	35	35	35	36	36
Subjects decided by the school	70	70	70	105	144	108
Total periods per year	945	945	1,015	1,050	1,080	1,080

Source: Nergui Nerenboo, 2002. Each teaching period lasts 40 minutes.

The Secondary Education Standards were introduced in 2003, and readjusted in 2005 to accommodate the extra year in primary education. These standards emphasize the importance of comprehensive skills—learning to know, learning to perform, learning to exist and learning to socialize. General subject areas do include practical knowledge areas such as science and technology and English. While these



standards are consistent with the acquisition of skills that are needed for work and life, the enacted curriculum and teaching practices are not very consistent with these goals. (World Bank, 2007).

Students are annually assessed and promoted by taking tests, in which they must receive grade 'C' or above 60% out of the total score. Provincial Education and Culture Department are responsible for developing the tests which are administered by the schools, approving, and reporting final results. Students graduating from the combined technical-vocational and upper secondary school receive both a vocational certificate and an upper secondary certificate. Therefore, graduates from these schools can transfer to universities and colleges. Due to the current ongoing process of transitioning from an 11-year educational system to a 12-year structure, the new system needs to be supported by curriculum reform and the development of agreed education standards for each subject and grade level. The focus of the new system is on shifting from academic-oriented instruction to a life-oriented one, and the overall curriculum aims to develop students' competencies in learning and living in the global world. (UNESCO Bangkok, 2009).

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) had been provided solely by the state almost until mid 1990s. The private sector participation in the sector is slowly increasing but still very limited. There is a serious mismatch between skills supply and labor market demand, and the provision of access to market-oriented short-term skills training for adults is poor. The most recent analysis³⁰ of the current situation of the TVET in the country reveals that: (i) the system does not provide sufficient supply of necessary qualifications to the labor market; (ii) TVET has low social status; (iii) there is an absence of any institutionalized vocational guidance for school leavers; (iv) the labor market relevance of TVET within formal education sector is low as the contents are mainly of a general educational and theoretical nature; and (v) there is a prevailing shortage of advanced training institutions for post TVET system occupations. (UNESCO Beijing, 2008).

As mentioned, the National Statistical Office reports that in 2008/09 the gross enrolment ratio in general education (primary and secondary education) was 94.4%, and 95.5% at the secondary level. (NSO, 2009).

Assessing learning achievement nationwide

"The National Assessment of Students' achievement (NASA) was conducted in 2005 among students at the end of basic education (grade 8) in mathematics and civic education, based on the adaptation to the local context of two international tests, TIMSS and CIVED. These instruments did not only test knowledge but also, and more importantly, the ability of students to apply this knowledge, skills or competencies for work and life. The average learning achievement for mathematics and civic education was 50% and 47% respectively, with large disparities between urban and rural areas. Schools through the quality of instruction, infrastructure and other inputs, do make a difference in student learning achievement, accounting for about 44% of the total variation in test scores. Adolescents perform particularly poorly in the skills that have the greatest demand in the labor market. Students performed significantly worse in complex procedures and problem solving tasks



(35%) than in knowledge items and routine procedures. In terms of complex and problem solving tasks, rural students do not do much better than a straight random guess at the questions. Performance on these important skills is particularly poor in geometry—15% for problem solving and 21% for complex tasks.” (World Bank, 2007).

The National Assessment of Primary Education Mathematics and Reading was organized in two stages. The first stage was a pilot study, completed in September, 2007. The main study was then conducted in April and May of 2008. For the main study, 4,750 students from 166 schools were chosen from among 46,067 fifth graders nationwide during the school year of 2007/08. Also, the administrators of 165 schools, 166 lead teachers, and 1,944 parents and guardians took part in the study. Test scores of students who took part in the study were as follows: mathematics, 45.4%; reading, 41.2%; with an overall average of 42.8%. This indicates that students’ knowledge is below international standard requirements. The average score for urban students were 13.6% higher in mathematics, and 10.1% higher in reading compared to rural students. Rural school students’ performance was 23.6% lower in mathematics, and 18.7% in reading compared to urban students. This indicates that the quality of education can be correlated to location. Students performed poorly on question of analysis, comparison, analogy, and reasoning, as well as with questions of creativity and organization. This indicates that students’ creative thinking abilities need further development. (READ, 2009).

Teaching staff

The Mongolian State University of Education, the Mongolian National University, the University of Social Sciences, and 4 Teachers Colleges are the major teacher training institutions of Mongolia. In rural areas there are universities in Khovd, Bayan-Ulgii, Arkhangai and Dornod *aimags*. According to the Law on Education, all educational institutions including universities and secondary schools have to employ teachers with a professional background and pedagogical training. Professional background covers a specialization in an academic subject while pedagogical training covers general pedagogy, methodology of teaching the subject and learners’ psychology. Therefore, teachers have to graduate from a pedagogical institution and hold a bachelor’s degree (normally a four-year programme) in order to teach in secondary schools. At the primary level, teachers have to graduate from a teacher training college. For higher education, lecturers should hold a master’s degree. Graduates from higher education institutes who are interested in teaching and have a subject specialization but do not have pedagogical training, are required to take special training to become eligible for teaching. Only certain educational institutions (e.g. the Mongolian State University of Education and the Institute of Education) can provide this kind of training (which comprises pedagogy, psychology and teaching methodology courses) and issue a valid certificate. The duration of this training is from 45 days (full time crash course) up to two years (for correspondence courses). With this certificate, teachers can apply for a teaching job. (ADB, 2008).

The Mongolian State University of Education (MSUE) is the largest teacher training institution in Mongolia. It consists of 12 schools and four teacher training colleges. Two institutions are located in the capital city; one is training teachers for primary schools and the other specializes in preschool education. MSUE is the only



institution that covers all levels of teacher training including preschool, primary and secondary education, and higher education. MSUE offers four-year bachelor's degree programmes in more than 50 specializations. About 70% of teachers currently working in primary and secondary schools are MSUE graduates and the university plus two of the teacher training colleges annually produce around 1,400 graduates, which is approximately 50% of the total number of teacher graduates from teacher training institutions in Mongolia. The qualifications of students entering teacher training courses has fallen dramatically and is one of the major problems affecting the quality of teacher training course delivery and outputs. In MSUE, students are accepted with 350-450 points out of a total possible 800 marks in the general education state examinations. The entry level is much lower for institutes outside of the capital and can be as low as 200-250 points. Teacher training is a four-year bachelor's programme with state examinations in year 3 and year 4. In year 3 students have state examinations in psychology, pedagogy, and subject methodology. Students also have 6-8 weeks of school-based practice as associate teachers. In year 4 students have state examinations on discipline subjects and 4-6 weeks of teaching practice. Only 19 credits (or 15%) out of a total of 120 credits needed for the bachelor's degree is allocated for teaching practice. There appears to be no system for the regular review and evaluation of the teacher education curriculum. (*Ibid.*).

New curricula for teacher training programs were under development in 2008. The new Curriculum Framework for the 12-year education system and the associated teacher standards have been developed by MECS and MSUE (with the support of the ADB's Third Education Project) and these are intended to be used as guidance for the development of pre- and in-service teacher training programmes. The introduction of the new 'integrated science' subjects in primary and upper secondary schools within the new 12-year curriculum has initiated questions, discussion and resistance among natural science teacher educators. It is also not yet clear which teacher training institution will be responsible for the teacher training programmes for primary school integrated science teachers.

Secondary school teachers are classified for remuneration purposes as: (a) advisor (highest level), (b) leading teacher and (c) methodologist (lowest level). The pre-requisite for teachers to be upgraded to the next qualification level is to participate in in-service teacher training and accumulate within five years 10 credits towards re-grading as a methodologist, 15 credits for leading teacher qualification and 20 credits for advisor qualification. The award of the methodologist qualification is made at the school level. The leading teacher qualification is conferred by the provincial department of education and the advisor qualification is awarded only by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. For all of these qualifications a teacher license is essential. In 2008, 46.6% of full-time teachers had professional qualifications and of these 38% were leading teachers, 57% were methodologists and 5 % had the advisor qualification.

In 2008 there was no agreed national teacher accreditation system in place. Young teachers graduate from different universities and colleges with different levels of education. Training programmes at these universities and colleges do not follow agreed national standards and are not moderated nationally. School and *aimag* authorities are in charge of teacher recruitment and assessment. However, due to the absence of national agreed professional standards and nationally moderated teacher



accreditation schemes, the knowledge and competence of new teachers varies greatly from one teacher training institution to another, and particularly between state and private institutions. There is a significant difference between the quality of graduates of MSUE and other institutions. The new national curriculum framework and the extension to a 12-year system will place new demands on teachers' skills, competencies and knowledge, which the current pre-service teacher training system is ill-equipped to cope with. (*Ibid.*).

The main constraint on improving educational quality is the absence of a comprehensive teacher in-service training system and national teacher accreditation system. Training programmes at teacher training universities and colleges do not follow agreed national standards. School and provincial authorities are in charge of teacher recruitment and assessment. However, due to the lack of nationally agreed professional standards and teacher accreditation schemes, the knowledge and competence of new teachers vary from school to school. The teaching techniques and subject knowledge of many teachers are inadequate and outdated and need to be upgraded, particularly in rural areas. The shortage of qualified English and vocational teachers is largely due to the inability of the education sector to compete with the private sector in employing personnel with these skills. (UNESCO Beijing, 2008).

References

- Asian Development Bank. *Report and Recommendation of the President to the Boards of Directors on a Proposed Loan to Mongolia for the Second Education Development Project*. July 2002.
- Asian Development Bank. *Mongolia: Education Sector Reform Project. Technical Assistance Consultant's Report*. (Prepared by Tony Read, Team Leader), May 2008.
- ASPBAE. *Education in Mongolia, with special focus on literacy and adult education*. Ulaanbaatar, 1996.
- Government of Mongolia. *Master plan to develop education in Mongolia, 2006-2015*. Ulaanbaatar, 2006.
- Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. *National report on the situation of adult learning and education, Mongolia*. Ulaanbaatar, April 2008.
- Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. Rural Education and Development Project (READ). *Profile of rural primary education teachers. Study report*. Ulaanbaatar, 2009.
- Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, UNICEF and UNESCO. *Review of the integrated early childhood development policy implementation*. Ulaanbaatar, 2007.
- Ministry of Science, Technology, Education and Culture. *Education for All 2000 Assessment: country report of Mongolia*. (Under the coordination of D. Munkhjargal). Ulaanbaatar, 1999.



Mongolian Education Alliance. *The Mongolian drop-out study*. Ulaanbaatar, 2005.

Mongolian National Commission for UNESCO. *The education system in Mongolia*. Document prepared for the International Bureau of Education, October 1997.

National Statistical Office of Mongolia. *Statistical Yearbook 2008*. Ulaanbaatar, 2009.

National Statistical Office and UNICEF. *Mongolia. Child and Development 2005 Survey (Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey–MICS 3). Final Report*. Ulaanbaatar, 2007.

Nergui Nerendoo. *The situation analysis of the national curriculum for basic education*. (Draft situation analysis produced as part of the project IBE-UNESCO Bangkok 'Basic education in South East Asia'). Paper discussed at the sub-regional workshop 'Building capacities of curriculum specialists for educational reform'. Vientiane, Lao PDR, 9–13 September 2002.

Rural Education and Development Project (READ). *Mongolian national assessment of primary education mathematics and reading*. Ulaanbaatar, 2009.

UNESCO Bangkok. *Secondary education regional information base: Country profile, Mongolia*. Bangkok, 2009.

UNESCO Beijing. *UNESCO National Education Support Strategy (UNESS): Mongolia*. Beijing, January 2008.

World Bank. *Mongolia. Building the skills for the new economy*. Report No. 40118, Washington DC, June 2007.

World Bank. *Mongolia Policy Note. Tertiary education in Mongolia: Meeting the challenges of the global economy*. Report No. 52925 – MN, Washington DC, March 2010.

Web resources

Ministry of Education, Culture and Science: <http://www.mecs.gov.mn/> [In Mongolian; some information in English. Last checked: August 2011.]

Mongol Education Portal: <http://www.mongoleducation.mn/> [In Mongolian. Last checked: August 2011.]

National Council for Education Accreditation: <http://www.accmon.mn/> [In Mongolian; some information in English. Last checked: August 2011.]

For updated links, consult the Web page of the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/links.htm>