

SECTOR ASSESSMENT (SUMMARY): EDUCATION¹

Sector Road Map

1. Sector Performance, Problems, and Opportunities

1. After a decade (2004–2015) of reforms associated with the restructuring of the education system from a 10-year (4+4+2) to a 12-year (5+4+3) system in line with international standards, the government’s policy and priorities have shifted markedly toward improving the performance of the education system. During the reform period, significant improvements had been made in the net enrollment rate for pre-primary, primary, junior secondary, and senior secondary education. Table 1 shows the net enrollment rate by level and by *aimag* in SY2015.²

Table 1: Net Enrollment Rate by Level and *Aimag*, SY2015

<i>Aimag</i>	Pre-Primary (%)	Primary ^a (%)	Junior Secondary ^a (%)	Senior Secondary (%)
Arkhangai	72.4	93.0	87.0	65.2
Bayankhongor	73.6	98.1	89.1	57.3
Bayan-Ulgii	60.2	86.4	89.4	75.8
Bulgan	77.5	88.3	81.8	55.4
Darkhan-Uul	71.0	104.3	102.5	75.8
Dornod	70.8	100.2	94.3	70.2
Dornogovi	66.4	98.2	94.6	63.9
Dundgovi	83.5	94.5	85.1	55.4
Govi-Altai	86.0	96.6	91.3	65.4
Govisumber	80.1	102.2	99.8	81.6
Khentii	92.1	97.7	90.7	60.5
Khovd	76.2	97.3	93.6	76.2
Khuvsgul	74.5	96.6	92.1	73.6
Orkhon	84.2	103.3	104.1	74.3
Selenge	74.8	93.2	87.5	66.7
Sukhbaatar	83.0	98.9	94.9	59.4
Tuv	83.2	88.7	82.2	53.6
Ulaanbaatar	72.3	96.8	94.0	72.2
Umnugovi	75.7	97.7	91.8	62.4
Uvs	83.6	93.5	92.7	66.2
Uvurkhangai	81.3	95.7	90.6	62.0
Zavkhan	90.7	99.5	94.9	73.3
National	75.1	96.3	98.1	68.7

Aimag = administrative subdivision, SY = school year.

^a Some data may not be accurate, as net enrollment rate cannot go above 100 by definition.

Source: Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sports.

2. The considerable gains in access to education were largely supported by the steady growth in education expenditures, which accounted for on average 5.5% of the gross domestic product during 2013–2016 (except a drop in 2015). Yet the education expenditures during this period were skewed toward recurrent costs rather than capital expenditures (10%–15% of the total education expenditures), likely reflecting the government’s priorities on school curriculum reforms and associated textbook reviews, pre-service and in-service teacher training, and institutional reorganization and strengthening. With severe cuts in the education budgets expected in 2017 and beyond, the government will face difficulties in meeting growing demand

¹ This summary is based on the full sector assessment prepared under the project preparatory technical assistance (ADB. 2016. *Technical Assistance to Mongolia for Sustaining Access to and Quality of Education during Economic Difficulties*. Manila [TA 9216-MON]). Available on request.

² *Aimag* is an administrative subdivision in Mongolia. “SY” before a calendar year denotes the year in which the school year ends, e.g., SY2016 ends on 1 June 2017.

for education, while completing the unaccomplished reforms, which has serious implications for access to and quality of education.

3. **Widening gap in enrollment capacity of schools and kindergartens.** Since 2009, the kindergartner population has been growing by 10%–25% annually, and the enrollment capacity of kindergartens and schools has been overstretched. This is because the increase in student enrollments outpaces that in additional seats available at kindergartens and schools. During 2009–2015, the number of kindergartens increased by 58% (474 new kindergartens, of which more than 75% were private), compared with a 106% rise in pre-primary enrollments, while schools increased only by 2% (15 new schools), as opposed to about 8% growth in primary and secondary enrollments. A consequence was large classes with more than 30 students (occasionally, 40–50 students) at schools and kindergartens, and schools operating in two and three shifts (Table 2). Urgent action is needed, as the kindergartner population is projected to grow further until 2019, and the school-age population until 2025.

Table 2: Average Class Size by Level and Students in Shifts, SY2016

<i>Aimags</i>	Class Size					% of Students		
	Pre-Primary	Primary	Junior Secondary	Senior Secondary	Average Primary and Secondary	1 Shift	2 Shifts	3 Shifts
Arkhangai	30	26	25	26	26	59	41	
Bayankhongor	31	27	25	26	26	66	34	
Bayan-Ulgii	27	22	26	25	24	55	45	
Bulgan	29	25	24	25	25	74	26	
Darkhan-Uul	32	33	29	28	30	50	50	
Dornod	33	29	26	25	28	61	39	
Dornogovi	33	30	27	30	29	64	36	
Dundgovi	31	25	23	26	24	84	16	
Govi-Altai	31	23	23	23	23	59	41	0.4
Govisumber	35	29	26	26	27	56	44	
Khentii	29	25	24	27	25	59	41	
Khovd	32	27	26	25	26	71	29	
Khuvsgul	36	28	27	24	27	60	40	
Orkhon	32	32	29	28	30	54	46	
Selenge	32	28	26	24	27	65	35	
Sukhbaatar	31	29	27	28	28	64	36	
Tuv	30	26	24	25	25	68	32	
Ulaanbaatar	34 ^a	37	33	30	34	49	47	4.0
Umnugovi	33	30	25	27	28	63	37	
Uvs	35	24	25	26	25	61	39	
Uvurkhangai	35	28	26	25	27	55	45	
Zavkhan	32	26	23	24	25	66	34	
National	33	30	28	27	29	62	38	

^a Huge disparities exist in the class size between the nine districts of Ulaanbaatar. In seven out of the nine districts, the average class size at kindergartens exceeds 40. In Chingeltei District, the average class size reaches 51.

Source: Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sports, Education Sector Information System.

4. **Unaccomplished curriculum reform.** The curriculum reform, which started in SY2013/14 with the pilot testing of a new curriculum for primary education, remains incomplete without the pilot testing and implementation of a new curriculum for senior secondary education. Moreover, the current curriculum still lacks learning outcome standards for each grade, which leaves students and teachers unguided and confused. The curriculum content is not clearly defined as a sequence of teaching units, with each teaching unit having a defined set of outcomes against which learning can be assessed. As a result, students do not know if they have reached the expected outcome level. Teachers cannot decide which possible teaching approaches and methods are appropriate to achieve the defined outcomes.

5. **Underdeveloped student learning assessment system.** The new curriculum should be supported by a student learning assessment system, which can provide timely feedback on student learning. The learning outcome standards to be developed will need different criteria and methods for assessment, with teachers expected to use formative assessment processes to monitor progress in individual student learning and use summative assessment for measuring the overall learning outcomes (including the attainment of higher order skills). A more secure and reliable external assessment system also needs to be developed, based on national standardized examinations at key points of schooling (grades 5, 9, and 12). The planned development of test item banks containing a validated sample of examination questions will be a big step forward for the establishment of a credible external assessment system. It can also help teachers and students better prepare for the grade 12 graduation exam. Such item banks can be extended to grade 5 and 9 graduation exams.

6. **Limited implementation of school-based management.** The new curriculum embraces the concept of school-based management (SBM), allowing schools to adopt autonomy in their day-to-day activities and take responsibility for assessing their own progress and the performance of the teachers in the school. However, only 42 “laboratory” schools (that pilot tested the new curriculum) have trialed SBM, while most schools (about 720) have never engaged in SBM. Moreover, the SBM trial needs to be strengthened by a coherent set of quality frameworks to structure school improvement plans and provide a road map for school leaders to follow. The quality frameworks should comprise (i) school evaluations (internal and external), which serve as a continuing reference point describing a school's performance across defined criteria; (ii) appraisal of teaching and teachers to ensure that strengths and weaknesses related to instruction within a school can be identified, and that feedback provided to teachers can be used to plan continuing professional development for teachers and school leaders; and (iii) management of school resources, including buildings, equipment, and learning resources.

7. **Lack of school and kindergarten teachers and managers' knowledge and skills.** The new curriculum requires teachers to adopt a child-centered methodology, along with formative and summative assessment and evaluation methods. However, pre-service teacher education programs are not fully aligned with the new curriculum, and existing in-service professional development programs do not assist teachers in adopting and operating effectively in these new approaches. School and kindergarten managers also need more training to (i) balance their roles as instructional leaders and administrators in schools and kindergartens, (ii) develop effective school and kindergarten improvement plans, and (iii) identify teaching skills that are inadequate. Moreover, as the provision of career advice for students and a more intensive focus on Mongolian language and literature have been integrated into the curriculum, teachers need to be trained in these areas. The potential to expand the existing e-learning platforms of the Institute of Teachers Professional Development to provide continuing professional development courses for teachers in all subjects, with video support for skill development (laboratory operations and sports), must be explored so that teachers can improve their knowledge and skills in their own time and location.

8. **Insufficient provision of teaching and learning materials.** The new curriculum needs accompanying resource materials such as textbooks and equipment that (i) are appropriate for child-centered learning, (ii) consider the need for gender balance and ethnic cultures, and (iii) are suitable for outcomes-based teaching and learning. However, it is not accompanied by profiles of or quality standards for teaching and learning materials (TLM) that schools and kindergartens should be supplied with to implement the curriculum. Consequently, huge disparities exist in the distribution of TLM among schools and kindergartens. This highlights the need for more equitable and effective ways of delivering TLM to students, particularly those in poorly-resourced schools. The wide application of e-learning opportunities, which promote blended-learning approaches,

could be explored while implementing the curriculum. Likewise, cost-effective ways of delivering learning materials (mostly in print form) to schools can be developed and expanded.

9. **Inefficiency in public spending on education.** The reforms put additional demand on recurrent costs, which are already higher than in other middle-income countries. The high costs of providing education services derive from the low population density and harsh winters in Mongolia, requiring schools, dormitories, and kindergartens to be built in sparsely populated rural remote areas, and constant heating during extremely cold winter months (November–March). Many non-teaching staff need to be employed to operate these schools, dormitories, kindergartens, and heating systems. The government lacks an effective information gathering, planning, and management system for schools, dormitories, and kindergartens, as well as the kindergartner and school-age population scattered across the country. There are no functioning resource sharing mechanisms among schools and kindergartens.

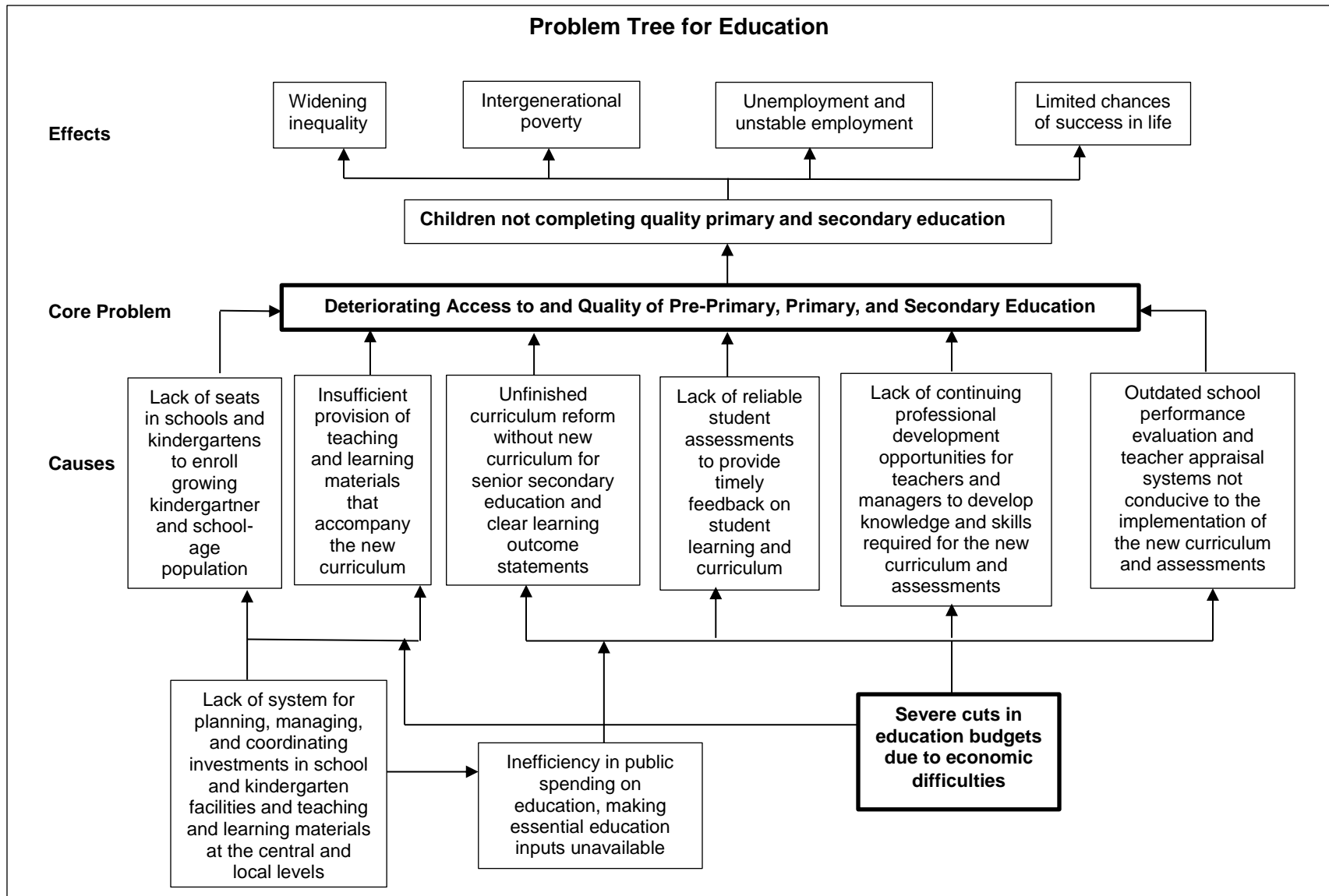
2. Government's Sector Strategy

10. The outline of the government's sector strategy is in Mongolia's Sustainable Development Vision 2030 and Action Program for 2016–2020.³ It includes six basic priorities, with 17 propositions for implementation during 2016–2020. Key priorities are to (i) provide equal, inclusive, and practical educational services, including career guidance services; (ii) allow every child in urban areas to enroll in a kindergarten; (iii) alleviate over-enrollment and eliminate three shifts in schools; (iv) introduce a system of evaluation of education quality and results at all levels of education; and (v) build an education system based on standards. To elaborate on and implement the education sector strategy, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sports established a working group in January 2017. The working group and its sub-working groups are tasked with developing directions and organization for the conceptualization of and planning for the implementation of an education system based on standards—particularly in the areas of senior secondary education reform policy; pre-primary, primary, and junior secondary education curriculum review; student learning assessments; school and teacher evaluation; and career guidance. Policy and financial sustainability are crucial to undertaking these reforms, which will be challenging, given the country's worsening economic and fiscal situation. Education budgets will likely be reduced for 2017 and beyond, and significant cuts in capital expenditures are expected, making the planned expansion of kindergarten enrollments and elimination of overcrowded classes and three-shift schools difficult. Recurrent costs (i.e., salaries and benefits of teachers and non-teaching staff, operational costs of schools and kindergartens) will be kept to a minimum, leaving little budget for the development of systems to ensure equitable, inclusive, and quality basic and secondary education services. Additional support for the education sector is therefore needed.

3. ADB Sector Experience and Assistance Program

11. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) education sector operations plan emphasizes improvements in student learning outcomes. In Mongolia, ADB has been engaging in policy dialogue with the government and supporting major education sector reforms through loans, grants, and technical assistance. ADB's country partnership strategy for Mongolia, 2017–2020, promotes economic and social stability by supporting investments, policy reforms, capacity building, and knowledge sharing that sustain inclusive growth in a period of economic difficulties.

³ State Great Khural. 2016. *Mongolia Sustainable Development Vision 2030*. Ulaanbaatar; Government of Mongolia. 2016. *Action Program for 2016–2020*. Ulaanbaatar.



Source: Asian Development Bank.