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Country Report
MONGOLIA

MONGOLIA

1. INTRODUCTION

In the past decade the Human Development Index of Mongolia has gradually increased. The country now ranks 116th in the 2006 Global Human Development Report with a HD Index of 0.691 and is considered as a medium human development country. In particular, improvements have been made in the areas concerning child and maternal mortality, gender equality, and education*.

National education system

The national education system is divided into several stages, which include both formal schooling and a broad range of non-formal educational training. An eleventh year of the complete general secondary education cycle was added in 2005 by enrolment of 7 year-olds into the first year of school. The complete secondary education will move to a 12-year system (6 years primary, 3 years lower secondary, and 3 years upper secondary) in 2008 by enrolling 6 year-olds in Grade 1. The number of years of compulsory education is 9 years. The number of years for postsecondary degrees will not change but, because of the introduction of a 12-year preparatory cycle, the content and rigor of degree will be strengthened. The technical education and vocational training sub-sector comprises of specialized upper secondary schools as well as post-secondary diploma programs housed in higher education institutions. Diploma (equitable to associate degrees), Bachelor's, Master's and Doctorate degrees are awarded by higher education institutions: universities, institutes and colleges. In addition, there is a non-formal and distance education sub-sector (please refer to attached **Figure 1**).

Higher education: number, location, types of institutions and enrolment.

Higher education system of Mongolia, over the past years, has experienced the paradigm shifts such as decentralization of the sector and liberalization of national higher education policy, emergence of privately owned domestic providers as well as foreign investment schools and branch campuses of foreign universities and colleges.

With these changes in the pattern, the most rapid increases in number, types of higher educational institutions and enrolment have occurred. According to the latest statistical data**, as of January, 2007, there are 170 higher education institutions (HEIs) with a total of 142,411 student population and 6,818 full-time faculty members. From the total number of HEIs, 48 state-owned (public), 116 non-state (private) institutions and 6 foreign affiliated institutions are operating in Mongolia. About 80 percent of HEIs are based in the capital city – Ulaanbaatar. (**Table 1.**)

* *Country Programme Action Plan between the Government of Mongolia and UND, 2007-2011, Ulaanbaatar, February 2007*

** *Statistical Bulletin for the Education, Culture, Science and Technology Sector /2006 financial year, 2006-2007 academic year/. Ulaanbaatar, MECS, 2007*

Table 1. Number and location of HEIs, student enrolment (2006/07 academic year)

Indicator		2006-2007 a. y.			Student enrolment in				
		Total	Location		Total	Diploma	Bachelor's	Master's	Doctorate
			Capital city	Rural area					
No. of HEIs		170	132	38	142,411	4,193	129,883	6, 286	2, 099
From which	State-owned	48	28	20	93,478	4,110	81, 915	5, 386	2, 067
	Non-state	116	99	17	48,552	83	47,537	900	32
	Foreign affiliated	6	5	1	381	-	381	-	-

Source: Data is integrated from the Statistical Bulletin for the Education, Culture, Science and Technology Sector, Ulaanbaatar, MECS, 2007

Sharp increases in student enrolment have been observed in higher education sector since 2000. In 2001-2002, the number of students enrolled increased by 27.8 percent from the previous year. This increase has been interpreted as an increase due to the numerous new private HEIs established that year (Bat-Erdene, 2007). Enrolment in private HEIs has more than doubled over the past years. Another big increase by 14.9 percent, occurred in 2004-2005 academic year, was linked to an increase by 36.5 percent in the number of 10th grade graduates that year. However, in 2006-2007 academic year, 39,460 students were newly enrolled in both public and private HEIs, which is by 8 percent lesser than the enrolment in the previous year (**Table 2**).

Table 2. Higher educational institutions, enrolment (at the beginning of 2006/07a.y.)

Types of institutions		Number	From which		New enrolment in		
			Public	Private	Public	Private	Total
Universities	Local	14	11	3			
	Branch campuses of foreign universities	6	-	6	?	?	39,460
Institutes and Colleges		150	37	107			

Source: Data is integrated from the Statistical Bulletin for the Education, Culture, Science and Technology Sector, Ulaanbaatar, MECS, 2007

Coordination of higher education and recent reforms in HE policies and institutions.

Coordination of higher education in Mongolia rests with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (MECS), the central state administering body which is responsible for the formulation of nation-wide policies pertained to education, academic activities, science and culture. The Ministry sets the standards for each level of education, schedules the school year, approves textbooks for general secondary education, administers state entrance examination procedures, supports local educational agencies, awards licenses to set up higher educational institutions and academic programs.

One of the latest endeavors taken by the Ministry is the education sector studies, including higher education. The studies were carried out in 2005 and had crucial

importance for generation of necessary inputs to higher education sector reform. In this regard it reviewed and analyzed the current situation and identified priorities and magnitude of further policy interventions, strategies and resource mobilization with appropriate mechanisms to ensure effective implementation. The following aspects were envisaged in the studies: (1) a legal environment of higher education; (2) management and structure of the sub-sector; (3) human, material, and financial resources development; (4) strengthening quality assurance of curriculum, program and standards of higher education etc.

(1) A legal environment for development of the higher education sector has been created within a short time under the auspices of the Constitution with a mission to establish and develop 'democratic, civic and humanitarian society'. A government policy on reforming the education sector that takes into consideration experiences and practices of market economy countries is being undertaken. Although several amendments were made to the Law on Education in 1998, 2000, 2002 and 2006, dramatic reforms meeting current needs and complying with universal standards of developed countries have not yet been undertaken. The national education reform process has been slow.

(2) Management and structure of the sub-sector. Advances have been made in the management of a decentralized the higher education sector of Mongolia and in support of independent operations of higher educational institutions. A Board of Directors has been formed for all government owned higher educational institutions with responsibilities to protect the organization from possible unlawful pressure from founders. But decisions made by the Board regarding investment and allocation of annual budget funds is still not accepted and a government authority remains in charge of finance. A Board of Directors of private higher educational institutions which works under the direct supervision of their founders also cannot fully exercise mandated responsibilities in support of fully autonomous higher education system.

There have been few positive developments made in a structure of government owned higher educational organizations. Duplication of responsibilities, inefficient and ineffective use of resources and improper structures continue to exist. The privately owned higher educational institutions are entering a new and difficult stage of its development. A generally unregulated environment has not provided the sector with a legal and regulatory framework for managing the expansion of the sector. Higher education institutions established under Mongolian government policy for encouraging the opening of educational institutions with foreign investment and branches of foreign universities are heading toward the creation of a better image. They promote competitiveness among higher educational organizations.

(3) Human, material, and financial resources development. According to the higher education statistics report by MECS, in 2006-2007 academic year there are 12,175 employers in higher education institutions among which 6, 818 full-time faculty members. Government support and assistance for pre-service and in-service teacher training in universities, institutions and

colleges are limited to government owned institutions. This is in breach of the Law on Education No. 2, Article 41. This limits greater access to further training in higher education management. A consolidated training system for improving managerial and leadership skills of higher educational managers has not been established.

Advances are being made in the provision of libraries and information access for higher educational institutions. In future, it will be necessary to enrich the types and items of library resources rather than targeting the quantity of resources. Still, a shortage of financial resources and lack of relevant experience reduces the potential for introducing modern technology, usage of the internet and ICT in teaching. Assistance and support is needed in this field. The number of internet users is increasing but the number of users or students per computer with internet connections is insufficient. Libraries of all higher educational institutions are required to be equipped with reasonably cost effective software and have effective networking capacities.

Student tuition fees constitute the major income source of universities, institutes and colleges. It makes up 80 percent of higher education income. Although institutions set the amount of tuition fees individually, government involvement still exists. All higher education institutions, regardless of their type of ownership, tend to lack financial resources. This can result in a failure of normal educational operations in the event that the government's strict policy on keeping tuition fees under a certain level is pursued continuously. Keeping tuition fees at a relatively low level may lead to an income deficiency for institutions and result in a focus on investment rather than training. There is high risk of reducing funding for teaching this worsening the quality of training. The government should exercise its obligation to finance the fixed costs of universities, institutes and colleges through the central state budget and render assistance and support to private institutions to have their own buildings as stated in the Law on Education. This will allow higher educational institutions to spend more on improving the quality of training, learning, and teaching environments as well as to reduce tuition fees.

(4) Strengthening quality assurance of curriculum, program and standards of higher education. A sample model of higher education standards of Mongolia, approved by MECS, has been a progressive step toward reforms in the higher education sector. The initiative has identified objectives for BA programs and specified universal and minimum requirements for graduates. It also puts forward critical issues such as democratization of training, resolving problems from different points of view (pluralism), foreign language competence, computer skills and team work skills. The next step is to secure national government approval so that higher education standards and relevant activities related to academic program accreditation can be enacted and institutionalized. Along with the extension of the BA degree curriculum, it is critical to increase the quantity of elective courses including their coverage within the curriculum. A schedule of degree courses should be changed with flexibility that allows students to choose a wider range of elective subjects.

The curriculum in support of the MA degree program has been developed even though the quality of MA and Ph.D training quality lags behind international standards. Further improvement and development of curriculum, types, arrangements and methodology of MA degree programs and creation of training standards are all required. In general, higher education methodology should concentrate on introducing new teaching methods and technology, moving from the traditional professor-centered teaching to student-oriented including problem-solving teaching, and developing active student participation.

An accreditation system for the Mongolian higher education sector started in 1998 and has since built a strong foundation. It is facing new challenges for developing more concrete criteria for accreditation, taking account of Mongolian peculiarities and reforming the accreditation process in respect to the latest trends of higher education internationally. Implementation for the accreditation of academic programs is strengthening because the legal grounding for academic program accreditation has consolidated. Furthermore, a legal basis which conforms to international accreditation requirements is one of the priority issues for higher educational institutions. Ongoing government support to accredited universities is required to encourage academic program accreditation initiatives. Finally, decentralization has led to the elimination of perceptions of universities *receiving everything for free*. Higher educational institutions with similar interests tend to cooperate and look for cooperative ways to protect their rights and strengthen their competitive advantages.

Emergence of new providers of higher education

The Mongolian Government exercises an open policy that allows establishment of foreign investment schools, as well as branch campuses of foreign universities and colleges in Mongolia. So far six (6) educational institutions established by the initiatives of foreign nationals are operating in Mongolia: four (4) Russian, one (1) Kazakhstan and one (1) Chinese university branches. In addition to these institutions, specialized courses and joint programs are offered by public universities and branches of foreign universities. It is considered that this new emerging trend creates favorable condition and has the positive impact of improving the competitive strengths of other higher educational institutions in the country.

2. SITUATION ANALYSIS OF CROSS-BORDER EDUCATION

With liberalization of its education sector, Mongolia welcomes both national and international private providers assuming their contribution to the national development agenda of the country. There is a single system for both domestic and foreign providers. According to legislation, international providers must not only fit into the national development vision, but also comply with the national higher education laws. First appearance of foreign HE institutions in Mongolia was accompanied by privatization of higher education provision.

Mongolian higher education has been involved in majority of the modes of the GATS cross-border provision. Compared to other nations, cross-border provision of higher education as it is defined in GATS terms is still low in Mongolia. The GATS defined the following modes of supply: (1) cross-border supply (where the service crosses the border not requiring the physical movement of its consumers); (2) consumption abroad (consumers get to the country of the supplier); (3) commercial presence (a supplier comes in another country to provide a service); and (4) the presence of natural persons (people cross the borders on a temporary basis to provide the service).

(1) Cross-border supply. There is no provision of cross-border higher education supply *out* of Mongolia.

(2) Consumption abroad. In this mode, consumers get to the country of the supplier. Mongolian universities have an experience educating international students. The largest providers are the National University of Mongolia and the Mongolian University of Science and Technology. These two universities are major institutions with a student enrolment of 15-19 thousand. They offer courses in social and natural sciences, economics, law, management and engineering. The National University of Mongolia has over the years had an international student body of not less than fifty (50) international students per academic year. In academic year 2004-2005, there were 630 foreign students from 14 countries studying in Mongolia.

Mongolia continues to exercise bilateral relationships with its traditional partners in educational exchange; the partners are former Soviet block countries that provide scholarships to both undergraduate and graduate students. Since 1990, number of foreign governments, international organizations and private sponsors providing tuition waivers and stipends to Mongolian students studying abroad has been significantly expanded. In average, the number of such stipends and scholarships is over 200 annually. In academic year 2004-2005, it was estimated that there are some 1496 Mongolian students studying overseas. But this number refer only to the number of students studying through the Mongolian Government grants or through bilateral agreements. There are a large number of self-sponsored Mongolian students studying in various countries as far as in the United States, Canada, Australia, Japan and New Zealand. For example, in Japan alone, there are more than 600 students from Mongolia studying on private basis. The exact number of students studying abroad is much bigger since students travel privately and there is no official data available to examine the extent of this phenomenon.

(3) Commercial presence of foreign providers of higher education in Mongolia is one that is still to make an impact in Mongolia. None of the Mongolian universities has established a satellite branch abroad. The closest are cases of foreign institutions establishing their branch institutions either independently or jointly with local institutions since early 1990s. Currently they enroll 381 students at undergraduate level in mainly economics, business management and information technology related fields.

- (4) **Presence of natural persons** is dominated by traditional forms of international exchange funded by external donors. This mode, in the form of Mongolian academic staff delivering specialized courses and subjects in educational institutions of foreign countries, is implemented by bilateral relationships with partner institutions in educational exchange. With the entrance to a market oriented economy, international community supporting Mongolia's move to a democracy have been putting significant funds to provide technical assistance. Thus, the European Union's TACIS/TEMPUS, Fulbright, Humphrey fellowships, IREX and other academic exchange programs funded by the U.S. government, and international consultants and volunteers are major providers of non-commercial academic provision.

Emergent issues relating to cross-border education such as the implication of GATS

Mongolia joined WTO and GATS in 1997. However, there is presently no concrete commitment under GATS was made regarding educational services. Current developments in higher education suggest that activities in this area will pick up in the near future and the country will be able to participate fully and take full advantage of the prospects of GATS.

While there have been no commitments made, being considered or high level debates on trade in higher education, universities in Mongolia are no strangers to the international trade in higher education. Although Mongolia has a large body of students studying at institutions outside the country, as it was mentioned above, there is not yet any debate at national level on potential implications of cross-border provision of higher education. The reason may be the lower level of research endeavors carried out to investigate the issue and the current socio-economic condition in the country that changes so rapidly. Furthermore, many evidences suggest that general public as well major employers are inclined to consider education obtained at foreign institutions allegedly of better quality than local education. Hence external education providers to enhance competition and deliver higher quality provision are openly welcomed. Mongolia's unilateral liberalization of participation in the education sector signals the Government's preparedness to allow partners help it develop the sector with a hope to enhance quality and conformity to international standards through increased participation and competition.

3. NATIONAL POLICIES AND PRACTICES ON QUALITY ASSURANCE AND MUTUAL RECOGNITION OF QUALIFICATIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Mongolia has a single legislative system for both domestic and foreign providers. A foreign provider wishing to deliver education in Mongolia is essentially treated the same as a Mongolian organization wishing to commence operation as an education provider. According to legislation, foreign providers must not only fit into the national development vision, but also comply with the national higher education laws and regulations. From the perspective of a receiver country, the Government of Mongolia encourages foreign providers and joint educational ventures conducted with well-established foreign institutions and requires their programs and teaching to be not lower in standard than the standards required of the foreign institution in its country of origin.

As far as the issues of quality assurance are concerned in this section, the following description would give a comprehensive picture of quality assurance system in higher education of Mongolia. Four (4) separate organizations are involved in quality assurance of HEIs in Mongolia: Mongolian National Council for Education Accreditation (MNCEA), Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (MECS), Mongolian National Audit Office (MNAO) and State Specialized Inspection Agency (SSIA). The set of main purposes of these organizations encompasses the whole spectrum of improvement, accountability and control agendas. (**Table 3**)

Table 3 . Mongolian Higher Education Quality Assurance System

MNCEA		MECS					MNAO	SSIA
ACCREDITATION (VOLUNTARY)		ATTESTATION (OBLIGATORY)	LICENSING (OBLIGATORY)		MONITORING (OBLIGATORY)	SUPERVISORY VISITS	AUDIT	INSPECTION
HEIs	Study programs	HEIs	HEIs	Study programs	HEIs	HEIs	HEIs	
Self-evaluation External evaluation		Quality control	External review		External review	External review	External review	State Control
Re-Accreditation		Follow-up attestation	Follow-up licensing		Follow-up monitoring	Follow-up measurements	Follow-up audit	Follow-up inspection

Abbreviations:

MNCEA – Mongolian National Council for Education Accreditation

MECS – Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

SSIA – State Specialised Inspection Agency

MNAO– Mongolian National Audit Office

HEIs – Higher Education Institutions

♦ ***National Council for Education Accreditation (MNCEA)***

Numerous legislative reforms reflected in Education Laws that were adopted and amended frequently since 1990 (Education Law of 1991, packet of Education Laws of 1995, substantial changes and amendments made in 1998 towards more liberalization, newly adopted packet of education laws of 2002 and amendments made in 2006) laid the ground for various regulations, which include inter alia the national qualification and accreditation framework.

Higher education institutional accreditation was established in Mongolia in 1998 and is currently maturing. As of February 2007, there were 90 public and private higher education institutions accredited. The institutions which were accredited in 1998, have undergone re-accreditation since 2003. Only those institutions which have passed the accreditation process are eligible to receive government financial support and likewise students enrolled in these institutions are eligible for government grants and loans.

The fact that the accreditation agency has a combination of government and public features is unique for Mongolia. This system suits the current Mongolian situation. However, it keeps the accreditation agency operations dependent upon the Government. According to Government Resolution 104 of 2000, it was declared that the accreditation agency shall operate as Non-government organization. However, in the same year this resolution was declared void by Government Resolution 194. In establishing the legal basis for institutional accreditation, it is important to learn and reflect on experiences of similar international organizations. However, the accreditation criteria and requirements need to be developed and formulated to suit the Mongolian situation as well as new education development approaches and directions.

The regulations related to program accreditation were specified in the 2002 amendments of the Education Law. The program accreditation process is undergoing its initial development stage. Professional program accreditation agencies/ institutions are not established in Mongolia. However, accreditation of academic programs (as distinct from accrediting institutions) has started from 2003 and currently 14 academic programs are accredited by professional councils which are operating under the National Higher Education Accreditation Council with the help of licensed professional NGOs. The fact that since 2003 only 14 have been accredited is related, on one hand, to the lack of demand for accreditation which itself may be linked to the lack of incentives to request accreditation and, on the other hand, to the limited capacity of the Council to deal with both institutional and program accreditation. Program accreditation has been carried out based on general program accreditation criteria as well as the government defined responsibilities (scope and roles) of higher education specified by the education law. In other words, it is being carried out without specific reference to academic program requirements, criteria and standards. The urgent issue in higher education program

Accreditation is an evaluation process to establish a regulatory framework that is congruent with international standards for program accreditation. The state support system to institutions which have successfully undergone program accreditation, as well as incentives to support the accredited programs, are not yet clarified.

The existing accreditation scheme is voluntary in contrast to other quality assurance practices in the country. In this case, the government support would be vital. In recent years higher education institutions in Mongolia have begun to practice internal self-evaluation exercises as an internal quality assurance mechanism. The format of the accreditation system is the benchmark for setting up the regulatory system for foreign providers as well.

- ♦ ***Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (MECS)***

Attestation. According to 2002 Higher Education Law, both public and private institutions are subject to attestation conducted by the Ministry every four years. The objective of Attestation of HEIs is to examine and determine whether the higher education institutions meet standards and norms set by the government on higher education provision, its quality and outcomes. HEIs which are not accredited must undergo the attestation.

Licensing. The objective of the licensing is to provide a legal guarantee for the development of independent education providers of any types of ownership who provide and protect the rights of the Mongolian citizens to acquire appropriate higher education.

Monitoring. The objectives are (i) enhance organizational structure and advance the quality of learning; (ii) ensure informed decision-making; (iii) support substantive accountability; (iv) build organizational capacity; and (v) improve strategies, programs and other activities.

The Ministry has a monitoring and evaluation department. The department of monitoring and evaluation is responsible for monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of national programs, public policies, legislations, international and domestic projects and institutional activities in education sector. It also carries out planning and coordination for overall monitoring and evaluation activities, including efforts to improve the evaluation methods and promote evaluation feedback.

Supervisory Visits are carried out to examine the compliance of HEIs with and adherence to standards and procedures set by the Ministry.

- ♦ ***Mongolian National Audit Office (MNAO)***

Audit. The National Audit Office performs financial statement audits and performance audits, making assessments and recommendations on performance of

state-owned HEIs, legal persons with state and local ownership or with state and local property ownership participation, projects and programs, which received financial support from the budget.

♦ ***State Specialized Inspection Agency (SSIA)***

Inspection. The Agency is the administrative body and carries out the specialized inspection of HEIs' compliance with and adherence to standards and legal procedures set in education, culture and science fields.

Accreditation, audit and other mentioned quality assurance schemes are systems for recognizing educational institutions and professional programs affiliated with those institutions for a set level of performance, integrity, and quality which entitles them to the confidence of the educational community and the public they serve. Thus, the organizations should dovetail their quality assurance efforts, as they have more or less similar purposes and interests.

Degree conferring agencies

Since the higher-education sector has been transformed from a single, state-run multipurpose university into a decentralized group of specialized universities, all have the freedom to appoint their own instructors, set their admission policies and confer degrees. In 1995, the promulgation of a higher-education law allowed diplomas and degrees (both undergraduate and graduate) to be conferred directly by the institutions that offer the programs.

Students, who successfully accomplish course requirements of their program, are accepted to take a final examination or defend a thesis. Previously, undergraduate degrees were conferred by the State Examination Commission established by the Minister. Graduate degrees (formerly, *ded erdemten*, now equalized to Ph.D., and *doktor*, now D.Sc.), were considered as academic degrees and conferred by the Supreme Council for Academic Degrees and Titles chaired by the Minister and composed of academics from respective fields.

Currently, in order to confer academic degrees at undergraduate level, the President of the institution establishes an examination committee consisting of professors from the institution and academics in related fields from other institutions. To award a graduate degree, a dissertation committee must be composed. Decisions of the committee are approved by the president. Although new regulations empowering the institutions are now in force, universities and colleges are still requesting the Ministry to approve the composition of the final examination committees.

Programs offered and Degrees conferred

A new degree structure - a more Western model, consisting of the B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. - was introduced in 1992.

Stage I: The first stage of higher education requires three-to-five years of full-time study leading to a Bachelor's degree. A student must complete a minimum of 120 credit hours to earn this qualification. Professional degrees in dentistry, pharmacy and veterinary medicine require five years, and degrees in medicine are conferred after six years.

Some institutions such as the Mongolian Technical University, confer a “diploma” (associate degree) that is equal to the first two years of a bachelor’s degree.

Stage II: The Master's degree is awarded after one and a -half to two years of study beyond the bachelor's degree. This degree requires a total of at least 150 credit hours.

Stage III: The Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) requires several years of advanced study beyond the master's degree in addition to a dissertation and public defense. A total of not less than 210 credit hours is needed for the Ph.D.

The Academy of Sciences, a special statutory academic body, is authorized to confer the degree of Doctor of Science for outstanding and remarkable contribution to the national scientific endeavor. In this sense, Doctor of Science is rather the title that indicates distinguished achievement than an award-bearing degree.

Academic programs

Degrees prominent in higher educational programs consist of three components: general education (liberal arts), basic professional education (foundations of the field), and specialized education (a major). This type of classification has been in practice since the first university was established in 1942. The proportion of each component in the degree structure was determined by the Ministry. Currently, ratios of the three components vary depending on fields of study and the institution offering the program. However, the Ministry made a recommendation that ratios of the components should be 3:4:3 respectively. The number of elective and optional courses increases as the student advances in the degree program.

As stated in the 1995 law and the amendments made in subsequent years, teaching at higher educational institutions is organized on the basis of credit hours. Till recently, only class hours were used for the design and organization of curriculum. The academic year is divided into two semesters, each of which is 15 to 17 weeks long. A credit is defined as an academic content unit that is equal to in average 16 hours of lecturing, 32 hours of seminars and 48 hours of practical work. For other forms of learning such as independent study and laboratory work, the calculation of credits is made by the institutions themselves with a focus on peculiarities of the field. The Education Law states that the program leading to the BA degree must be not less than 120 credits. In practice, it takes 4 years of study as a minimum. If the program is double-majored, the required total number of credits would increase accordingly and the component ratio differ.

Master's programs have been designed to accumulate at least 30 credits at master's level courses with a bachelor's degree entry. Up to 6 credits of the thirty may be counted for a thesis component. In the interim period of implementing the new credit system, independent individual works of scholarship may be equalized to course requirements.

Doctoral programs require advanced level courses and the completion and defense of a dissertation work, altogether not less than 60 credits after the master's degree. Up to 18 credits of the total are for the dissertation.

Exception can be seen in medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, public health, veterinary science, and law which have total cumulative credits reaches up to 252 and require up to 6 years of study. For example:

Medicine: 6-years-252 credits (General Physician) + 2-years (60 credits (at residence) – MD or 60 credits-MMSc) + 2-years Ph.D in Medicine;

Dentistry: 5-years (228 credits-Dentist), + 2-years (60 credits at residence-MMSc), + 2-years-Ph.D in Dentistry;

Pharmacy: 5 years (157 credits-Pharmacist), + 2-years (60 credits-MPSc), + 2-years-Ph.D in Pharmaceutical Science;

Public health management: 5 years (190 credits-BPH), + 2-years (60 credits-MPH), + 2-years-Ph.D in Public Health.

Practical experience

Practical training is considered a necessary part of the higher educational curriculum due to a shift in Mongolian higher education from a professional degree system to academic degree system. Therefore, in some fields such as medicine, law, and accountancy, licensing of professional practice has been introduced. The main precondition for licensing is to be a degree holder in the corresponding field from an accredited institution. As well, a similar license requirement for entering the teaching profession is proposed for introduction in the near future.

Different types of practical training are exercised by the institutions: seminars, directed study, labs, and learning practice within campus, technological practice, observatory surveys under supervision in workplace conditions, and pre-diploma independent practice at selected work stations. Duration and types of practical training vary depending on the fields of study.

Extensive practical training is required for medical, engineering, veterinary, and performing arts programs. Up to 10 weeks long pre-diploma practical training is planned for schedule in all undergraduate programs.

At the graduate level, practical training has a more research-oriented character. Both thesis and dissertation works require conducting independent research.

Grading and evaluation

Assessment and grading of student performance and achievement is regulated by the institutions. However, the Ministry has directed universities and colleges to introduce an equalization formula which unifies the grading system within Mongolia and also parallels that used internationally, ie, A, B, C, D, and F, with a figure equivalent of 4, 3, 2, 1, and 0. Until 1998, a 5-figure grading system was used in Mongolia, although in reality only four of them, specifically, 5, 4, 3, and 2 (5 being highest and 2 standing for fail) were used. In effect, grades previously used can easily be transferred to the new international version. It should be noticed that those students who did not pass at least one course requirement would not be conferred a degree.

Title and abbreviation of degrees and diplomas

Both the Education Law and Higher Education Law clearly state that higher educational institutions in Mongolia confer academic degrees. This contrasts with former professional “specialist” degrees. However, degrees conferred by accredited institutions in the fields of humanities, social sciences, management, engineering and education are generally considered to be certification for career entry into a profession. The titles of various degrees indicate the field of study. For example, Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) in physics, Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Mongolian language and literature, Master of Science (M.Sc.) in chemistry, etc. Titles of programs are modified by the Ministry in consultation with institutions in order to coordinate programs offered by different institutions. At the same time, it can be noted that titles and their qualifications are currently in the process of formation. Therefore, titles and degrees awarded by institutions vary. Special attention should be given to differences between old and new degrees as well as institutions authorized to confer degrees.

Information contained in the degree document

The document certifying an academic degree is called the Diploma. Before the enactment of current law, all public institutions issued diplomas with a uniform format which was approved by the Ministry. Since 1995, there is no unified format for diplomas since the diplomas are issued by the institution. Even so, there is a Ministry regulation that all diplomas must contain the following: full name of the holder, name of the program offered, title of the degree conferred, and name of the institution.

In Mongolia, a Diploma Supplement is already in place. A subsidiary text to the Convention for the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon 1997), it is a tool for promoting the transparency of higher education qualifications (Lisbon Recognition Convention Section IX. Article IX.3).

The Diploma Supplement explains the contents of the qualifications delivered by higher education institutions in an internationally understandable form. All diplomas are supplemented with annexes (type of academic transcript) that indicate names of courses taken by the holder, earned credits and grades, a title and a final examination grade or grade of a dissertation/ a thesis defended.

Recognition of qualifications awarded by higher education institutions within and outside the country: laws and policies adopted since 2000

Currently there is no law that regulates the recognition of qualifications awarded by higher education institutions outside the country. However, the Government of Mongolia has been working actively and making special efforts to establish agreements with other countries concerning mutual recognition of qualifications in higher education.

The Mongolian government is devoting much time and energy to establishing a policy for the recognition of qualifications awarded by higher education institutions within and outside the country.

The following procedures and rules were approved by the Minister of Education, Culture, and Science for all higher educational organizations conduct postgraduate training: “*Guideline procedures for the masters and doctoral (PhD) postgraduate training,*” approved by the Minister of MoECS’s order number 348, in 2001; “*Masters Degree Defense Board Rules,*” approved by the Minister of MoECS’s order number 110, in 2003; and “*Doctoral (PhD) Degree Defense Board Procedure,*” approved by the Minister of MoECS’s order number 32, in 2002.

There is also a strong necessity to shift from teacher-centered to student-centered, problem-oriented training, with an emphasis on development of independent skills and attitudes. The methods of electronic education and distance learning as well as computerization of training processes have started in higher educational organizations of Mongolia. The “*National Program of Distance Learning*” was approved by Mongolian Government Order Number 14 in 2002. The main objectives are to increase availability, quality and outcomes of official and non-official educational services and conditions for life-long learning.

During the last 10 years, standardization of professional specializations and index development had been done 3 times (1995, 2002, 2004), but during this processes specialties were split up too much, and now it has become difficult to follow the regulations. This classification is not only unsatisfactory for current needs, but could have a bad affect on the quality of specialists. There is a demand for taking into a count the particular requirements of Mongolia and future needs for professionals (and using the UNESCO information framework) to develop a “Mongolian Index and specialization list of professionals” to conform with international standards. It will give an opportunity for Mongolian higher educational organizations to participate in the international educational web, as well as to develop valuable curricula.

A Section on Program Accreditation was added into the Educational Law in 2002 and established its legislative basis. The “Educational Degree Training Program’s Accreditation Procedure” (Approved by the Order Number 13 of the National Accreditation Commission for Higher Education in 2002) declares that program accreditation should provide independent and professional assessment and accreditation of the quality of academic programs organized by higher educational organizations and grant official permission to offer degrees in the accredited programs. The objectives of program accreditation are to continuously develop curriculum, support implementation of new technologies into the training process, increase professional skills of graduates, and to publicize good programs.

4. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION, BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL AGREEMENT

The MECS has been making special efforts over the past years to establish an agreement for the recognition of foreign higher-education documents. For example, bilateral intergovernmental agreements on recognition of academic degrees and certificates have been signed with the People’s Republic of China (1998), Russian Federation (2003), Turkey (2004), Ukraine (2004), and Austria (2006). Preliminary measures have been taken to establish a similar agreement with France and the Netherlands.

The Government of Mongolia sees mutual recognition of and agreements with other governments on educational certification and qualifications as tools to enhance quality of education delivered and, at the same time, secure rights of degree holders to be employed consistent with professional status. As a preparatory stage to join international conventions on the recognition of qualifications and certificates, the Ministry of Education gives importance to conducting comparative curriculum analysis and benchmarking exercises.

Various meetings are taking place vis-à-vis reaching a common understanding and approaches to a regional framework, especially in the field of creating favorable conditions for mutual recognition of academic degrees and certificates at sub-regional and regional levels. Some of these meetings are organized by the UNESCO PROAP and others with international partners.

Prior to 1990, there were regular consultation meetings between representatives of Soviet bloc countries aimed at coordinating the unification of higher education programs. Since that time, every former member state is faced with dramatic change, including change in their higher education systems. So new cooperation and joint effort with interested parties and other nations is actively sought.

5. EMERGENT ISSUES RELATING TO RECOGNITION OF STUDIES, DIPLOMAS AND DEGREES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Ever changing environment and cross-border provision of higher education through different modes are new emerging trends in Mongolian education system. In the face of rapidly escalating globalization, the creation of ***mechanisms for the recognition*** of internationally earned diplomas and degrees, and ***the implementation of strategic measures*** to fight against fraudulent education documents are among the most critical issues facing the education sector in Mongolia.

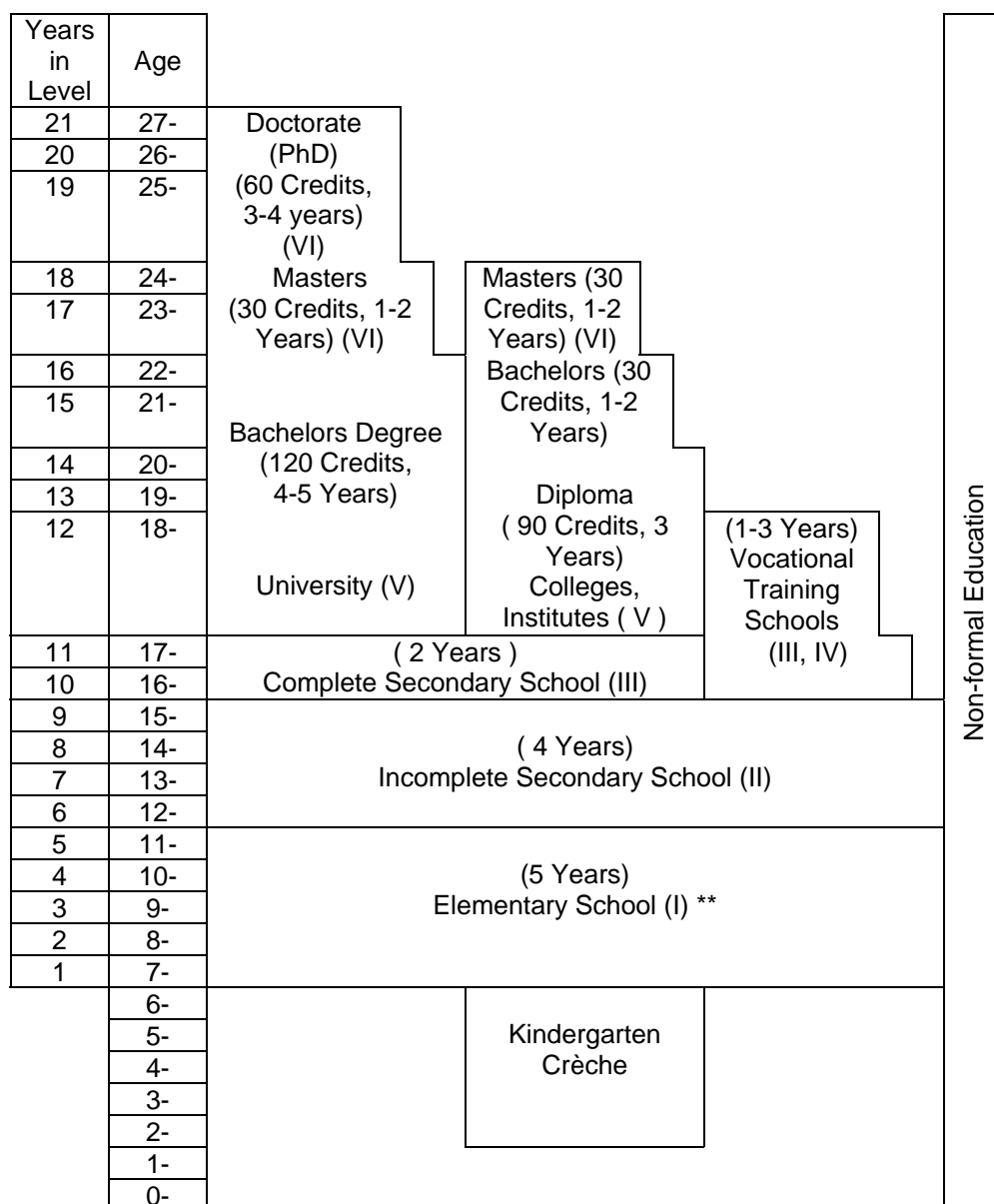
In the context of the changing environment, ***recognition*** of academic qualifications, especially ***of virtual or e-education*** is going to be one of the challenges in Mongolia in the near future. So far, we have not faced with these types of issues, but definitely it is going to be on an agenda once students start bringing similar type certificates or degrees. In this regard, sharing experience with other countries who have already faced with the same kinds of challenges would benefit Mongolia greatly. Another issue is ***how to distinguish or identify certificates*** awarded by non-reputable providers or ‘***diploma mills***’. Perhaps, one way of solving this problem would be exchange of information between countries of the region.

6. SUGGESTIONS FOR THE NINTH SESSION OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE

As the Ninth Session will focus on the revision of the Regional Convention in the light of the challenges posed by cross-border higher education, Mongolia, from the perspective of a receiver country, would like to make a couple of suggestions:

- ◆ In spite of the obvious progress with the promotion of the Regional Convention much remains to be done in the face of the changing environment in higher education. In this regard, international *exchange of information on good practices* in dealing with emerging issues of cross-border education between governments and quality assurance agencies of the region will be of great importance.
- ◆ In the absence of international regulation, the setting up standards for foreign providers has to be initiated to provide receiving governments with the grounds to reject rogue providers
- ◆ It is important to *establish a mechanism* to make sure that critical information (e.g. methods of detection of fraudulent certificates or name of providers of these type of certificates) are known throughout the region.

Figure 1: The Educational System of Mongolia (11-Year General Secondary) *



Source: MECS Non-formal Education Study Team, 2005.

* Beginning from September 2005, the formal transition from 10-year general secondary to a 12-year general secondary education system was phased in with the enrolment of 7 year-olds in the first year of an 11-year system, followed in 2008 by enrolment of 6 year-olds into the first year of a 12-year system.

** The Roman numerals in parentheses represent UNESCO ISCE categories designating the level of education represented.

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