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EXPLORING SECONDARY TEACHER WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT IN MONGOLIA: POLICIES, PRACTICES AND INSIGHTS

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ABOUT THE LEARNING CYCLE ON SECONDARY TEACHER WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT

This case study is a result of the KIX EMAP Learning Cycle "Secondary Teacher Workforce Management". Facilitated by the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), this Learning Cycle ran from 24 September to 30 November 2024. Across 10 weeks, it equipped participants with the necessary theory and practical techniques to plan and analyse data on their secondary teacher workforce in relation to teacher requirements, deployment, and utilisation and to identify potential policy options. Thirteen national teams took part in this Learning Cycle, including Bhutan, Cambodia, Egypt, Lao PDR, Maldives, Moldova, Mongolia, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tajikistan, Tunisia and Ukraine.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

APTR	adjusted pupil-teacher ratio
AFE Coalition	"All for Education!" National Civil Society Coalition
AUR	average utilisation rate
CEE	Center for Educational Evaluation
CSO	civil society organisation
CPD	continuing professional development
CCT	curriculum class time
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EUR	effective utilisation rate
FMESU	Federation of Mongolian Education & Science Unions
GAE	General Authority for Education
GDP	gross domestic product
GER	gross enrolment rate
HEI	higher education institution
HR	human resources
ICT	information and communication technology
IT	information technology
ITE	initial teacher education
ITPD	Institute of Teachers' Professional Development
KIX EMAP Hub	Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) Europe, Middle East and North Africa, Asia, and Pacific (EMAP) Hub
LCR	learning coverage rate
MED	Metropolitan Education Department
MoE	Ministry of Education*
MECS	Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoLSP	Ministry of Labor and Social Protection
MEA	Mongolian Education Alliance
MIER	Mongolian Institute for Educational Research
MNIER	Mongolian National Institute for Educational Research
MNUE	Mongolian National University of Education
MNT	Mongolian tugrik
NCTD	National Center for Teacher Development
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OUUR	operational under-utilisation rate
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PG	pedagogical group
PED	provincial education department
PTR	pupil-teacher ratio
RETEACH project	"Reforming Teacher Education towards Green and Digital Transition" project
STT	statutory teaching time
SUUR	structural under-utilisation rate
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TPD	teacher professional development
TETT	total effective teaching time
TTLT	total theoretical learning time
TTTT	total theoretical teaching time
TUUR	total under-utilisation rate
UN	United Nations
UNESCO IIEP	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP)
USD	United States dollar

* There have been several changes in the name of the Ministry of Education, as listed in the references.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For this report, the authors analysed secondary teacher workforce management in Mongolia and reviewed relevant education policies with the aim of making recommendations on teacher policies and on elevating the quality of learning and teaching throughout the education system.

The authors thoroughly examined the current situation of secondary teacher management, including secondary schools, teacher shortage, the effects of various factors on teacher management, and ongoing reforms in the secondary education sector. They attempted to analyse secondary teacher needs, allocation, and utilisation by employing the new methodologies and concepts introduced through KIX EMAP Learning Cycle 7. It was found that there are many practical challenges and policy issues in effectively managing the secondary teacher workforce across the country.

First, teacher policy formulations are incoherent and only partially efficient in terms of addressing the secondary teacher supply at the national level. The absence of proper teacher allocation, deployment, and redeployment systems has led to teacher management inefficiencies in the secondary education system. The authors carried out several analyses to examine secondary teacher management, based on the available data generated by the Education Management Information System. As a result, they were able to project teacher recruitment needs from 2025 to 2030. This exercise brought together information about teacher needs in individual subjects to identify which disciplines could face greater teacher shortages. Despite the absence of relevant policies, the authors made efforts to explore teacher availability/allocation and deployment situations throughout the country. Furthermore, analyses of teacher utilisation provided an overview of the structural and operational under-utilisation of teachers by identifying hidden teacher shortages, distinctive geographical and demographical characteristics of villages/provinces, and institutional capacity issues. Policy planners need to consider those interrelated, interconnected policy issues in developing effective policy for secondary teacher management.

The authors brought all the elements of the analysis together to offer recommendations/strategies for further improvement of secondary teacher management. The section on secondary teacher management policies and strategies incorporates systemic strategies, including teacher education, civil society organisations, and recommendations based on the findings. It reviews current policies and procedures for teacher management as well. The team is hopeful that the findings provide important insights into secondary teacher management and its reform in Mongolia.

INTRODUCTION

Secondary education is an important intermediary step between primary and tertiary levels and it equips young people with the skills and knowledge they need for the future (Tournier et al., 2024). The increased attention paid to the competitiveness of Mongolian citizens with basic employment skills, cooperative attitudes, and competencies (Ministry of Education and Science, 2020a) inevitably leads to a need to examine secondary teacher[1] management in the country.

The Mongolian government is committed to achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4. It recognises that skilled teachers are fundamental to addressing the diverse social and educational demands in the country. According to the "VISION-2050"[2] Long-Term Development Policy, it is projected that from 2021 to 2030, all educational institutions and schools will be equipped with creative, competent teachers and human resources (HRs) to meet the learning needs of students (State Great Khural, 2020). Supportive management practices that respect and cater to teachers' professional needs are essential to enhancing education systems and improving learning outcomes (D'Angelo et al., 2023).

To reach the SDG4 targets, the Mongolian government committed to progressively allocate 5% of its gross domestic product (GDP) and around 15% of its total public expenditure to education as per the agreed international benchmark. In 2024, the budget for the education sector was 4.2 trillion MNT[3] and reached 5% of total GDP (Hunnu.mn, 2024). In its budget for 2025, the government of Mongolia plans to allocate 14.3% of its total public expenditure (total public expenditure of 26 trillion and 485 billion MNT) to education. This includes an investment of 472.7 billion MNT to finance projects and programmes in the education sector, including the construction of 79 secondary schools (39,670 children's seats) and 16 dormitories (Ministry of Education, 2025c). The former Minister of Education noted that 78.4 billion MNT funding was spent on secondary schools in 2024, with 63% of this funding used to finance teachers, including salaries, additional salaries, and incentives.

Improving teacher management is crucial, but it requires significant capital investment from the state budget. As such, Mongolia is actively seeking strategies to enhance teacher supply and elevate the quality of education to better serve its students.

This report was produced as part of the KIX EMAP Learning Cycle 7 on "Secondary Teacher Workforce Management," facilitated by the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) from September to December 2024. The team in Mongolia prepared this report to address secondary teacher management issues at the country level. Section 1 of the report discusses the challenges in secondary teacher management. Section 2 projects the demand for secondary teachers. Section 3 diagnoses secondary teacher allocation. Section 4 analyses secondary teacher utilisation. Section 5 reviews secondary teacher management policies and strategies. Section 6 concludes the report.

Section 1 on challenges in secondary teacher management provides an overview of recent teacher policies and reforms, the social and demographic context of the country, the current situation, and challenges faced in the secondary education sector. It also reviews the effects of institutional, organisational, and individual factors on secondary teacher management.

The authors interpreted data on teacher needs, allocation, and utilisation in Sections 2, 3, and 4 in light of the methodologies and concepts presented in the Learning Cycle. Data were collected from the Mongolian Education Management Information System (EMIS) (Education Information Technology Centre, 2014), a unified database used in education policy and planning.

Section 2 presents an analysis to forecast the demand for secondary teachers from 2025 to 2030. This section also covers data and information related to teachers, school timetables, projected gross enrolment rates (GERs), and teacher attrition.

1 Secondary teacher means a subject teacher who teaches at grades 6–9 (lower secondary classes) or 10–12 (upper secondary classes) in Mongolia.

2 State Great Khural of Mongolia. (2020). Resolution No. 52 "Алсын хараа – 2050" Монгол улсын урт хугацааны хөгжлийн бодлого батлах тухай [Regarding the approval of "VISION-2050" Long-term Development Policy of Mongolia].

3 Mongolian tugrik (MNT) is the official Mongolian currency.

In Section 3, the authors analysed secondary teacher availability and allocation at the national level. Pupil-teacher ratios (PTRs), adjusted pupil-teacher ratios (APTRs), and learning coverage rates (LCRs) were calculated and used to compare teacher availability.

The overall level of teacher utilisation was analysed for Section 4. This section includes the variation in statutory teaching time (STT), average utilisation, under-utilisation, and over-utilisation of Mongolian secondary teachers.

In Section 5, recommendations on secondary teacher management policies and strategies are organised by thematic area, including the attractiveness of the teaching profession; teacher education; collaboration with civil society organisations (CSOs); improving the overall quality of teaching and learning; the Teach for Mongolia initiative; recommendations related to current policies and procedures in teacher management; and recommendations based on the findings.

Policy recommendations and strategies to improve secondary teacher management are included in Section 6, the conclusion.

SECTION 1: CHALLENGES IN SECONDARY TEACHER MANAGEMENT

Policies and Procedures in Secondary Teacher Management

Teacher policies and programmes are included in legislative frameworks such as the Teacher Development Support Act, the Teacher's Three-Pillar Policy, the Education Sector Mid-Term Development Plan, and the Fundamental Education Law.

The Teacher's Three-Pillar Policy was adopted in 2024. The objective is to implement comprehensive measures to increase the supply of teachers, improve teacher quality, and create conditions for stable employment at the preschool, secondary, and vocational and technical education levels (Government of Mongolia, 2024a).

The Fundamental Education Law states that education shall be the priority sector of the country's development. The law reinforces teachers' professional development system, monetary incentives, and social security, and it stipulates the establishment of a national education council led by the prime minister. It also contains brief provisions related to teacher reallocation and teacher redeployment (State Great Khural, 2023a).

As part of ongoing improvements, teacher pre-service training programmes and continuing professional development (CPD) will be revised in line with professional standards to improve primary and secondary teacher management (Government of Mongolia, 2024a; Ministry of Education and Science, 2020a).

The Mongolian National University of Education (MNUE) approved a conceptual framework for the pre-service teacher training programme in 2023 and competency standards for new teachers in 2024. The Mongolian National Council for Standardization and Metrology approved teacher professional standards in 2009. Teacher occupational standards were approved in 2022, and a Teacher Appraisal (i.e. teacher performance evaluation) Policy was updated in 2021. The Ministry of Education (MoE) is revising professional standards at the in-service training level.

Some experts claim that the concepts of professionalism and professionalisation are presented as complementary, but sometimes they are contradictory (Hargreaves, 2000). However, emphasising high professional standards can undermine the equally important emotional aspects of teachers' work in terms of being passionate about teaching and caring for students' learning and personal lives (Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996).

Following the 2024 parliamentary election, the new cabinet approved the Government Action Programme from 2024 to 2028, which also identifies the education sector as a priority. The programme aims to prepare and train 11,000 secondary schoolteachers and 2,000 English-language teachers in-country and abroad by 2028 (State Great Khural, 2024a).

Current planning and management of the teacher workforce in the country is believed to be problematic in general and a fundamental reason for teacher shortages in rural areas (MIER, 2019). Rural schools have fewer qualified teachers, as is mentioned in the policy document (Ministry of Education and Science, 2020a). The country background report noted that many qualified teachers, especially in mathematics, English, physics, and information and communication technology (ICT) are unwilling to work in rural areas (MIER, 2019). To address this challenge, Mongolia needs educational leadership at the system level and to avoid narrow teacher policy formulations that are not specified correctly (Hayward, 2024).

Budget Reform in the Secondary Education Sector

In 2021–2024, the MoE (with former minister Mr. Enkh-Amgalan) reformed its budget policy and introduced results-based budget policy and planning. Policymakers decentralised authority and responsibility for some budget functions to the school level. By law, schools must utilise sufficient resources for teachers and support teaching and learning (State Great Khural, 2023a). State funding for schools is provided based on the variable costs per child to obtain secondary education. These costs had two major components in the past, and the formula was renewed in 2022. These changes allowed schools to provide teachers with sufficient resources for their work and

professional development. The variable costs consist of several components to meet the needs of schools and teachers (see Table A1). Thus, the new formula has a positive impact on teaching and learning and contributes to improving the learning environment.

Each teacher is allocated 250,000–300,000 MNT for teaching and curriculum implementation expenses, 150,000–250,000 MNT for information technology expenses, 185,000–280,000 MNT for professional development expenses, and 100,000 MNT for health support expenses per annum through their school budget. All state-owned schools are also granted the right to purchase computers and other equipment. Teachers are provided with computers with 'equipment, related payments, and compensation' costs (Table A1). Several provinces (i.e. aimags) also initiated the provision of computers to teachers (UNDP Mongolia, 2023).

In 2024, the MoE reported that 60% of primary and secondary school teachers had received personal computers or laptops. The MoE planned to provide computers for the remaining teachers in the same year (General Authority for Education, 2024).

Policy planners are making active and continuous investments in education by recognising the importance of teachers to national development. The Teacher's Three-Pillar Policy reinforces the government decision to cover/pay all (100%) tuition fees for students in accredited teacher education programmes in higher education institutions (HEIs) from 2024 until 2030 (Government of Mongolia, 2024f). As a result, 14.5 billion MNT was provided to 4,923 undergraduate students over the 2023–2024 school year. The government will also cover all tuition fees for teachers if they pursue a master's degree at a national HEI (Government of Mongolia, 2024a).

In 2022, salary scales were abolished, resulting in a uniform basic salary for teachers at the school level. However, the average teacher salary in Mongolia remains relatively low, at 1,484,000 MNT (Government of Mongolia, 2024c) per month (around 425 USD). The government promised to raise the average salary of teachers in line with the national average salary (Government of Mongolia, 2024a), which was 2,672,000 MNT as of February 2025 (National Statistical Office, 2025c). However, funds are regarded as being largely dependent on the availability of the state budget.

Another major incentive is provided to teachers through their performance evaluation. Previously, teacher performance evaluations faced criticism for being arbitrary and imprecise and for contributing an unnecessary administrative burden (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012). To address these concerns, performance-based pay was revised and reintroduced in 2021. The government decided to implement results-based evaluations of teachers' work (State Great Khural, 2020), and secondary teachers are obliged to participate in performance evaluations (State Great Khural, 2023a) executed by the Center for Educational Evaluation (CEE). Around 90 billion MNT was allocated as incentives for the performance evaluation system in 2022, 2023 and 2024 (Table A2). Additionally, the long-term service incentive was amended to be offered equally to all public servants, including secondary school teachers, from 2023 (Government of Mongolia, 2018b).

The most recent additional payment is meal allowances. Starting from February 2025, the government decided to provide all employees (including teachers) of secondary schools with monthly meal allowances (MoE, 2025b). The increase in budgetary spending is largely due to the wage growth of teachers and staff (MIER, 2019). There was a dramatic increase in salary funds, from 915.9 billion MNT in 2021 to 2.3 trillion MNT in 2024 (General Authority for Education, 2024). Thus, its heavy weight on the national budget compels efficient teacher management to ensure the state budget is appropriately spent.

Through these policies and programmes, the government aims to make the teaching profession a leading profession in society and to implement appropriate measures to enhance recruitment, teacher professional development, and teacher deployment.

Mongolia's Schools, Teachers and Social and Geographical Context

Mongolia has a large land area of 1,564,100 km² and a population of 3,504,741. Almost half of the population, or 1,734,848 people, live in Ulaanbaatar, and the nation's capital is the most densely populated city in the country. There are 21 *aimags* (provinces) and 330 *soums* (i.e. villages) in all. A *bagh* is the smallest administrative unit in rural areas. *Aimags* are divided into *soums* and *soums* into *baghs*. Cities are comprised of districts, and districts are divided into *khoroos* (National Statistical Office, 2025a). All provinces are in one of four regions, and the capital city is regarded as an independent region with nine districts as shown in the EMIS (Table A3).

Mongolia is known for its high access to education, and its years of schooling are similar to those of high-income countries. According to the EMIS, 37,770 teachers worked in 885 schools at the primary and secondary level in the 2024–2025 school year. Women comprise 82.5% (31,161), and men comprise 17.5% (6,609) of all teachers. A great majority (79.6%) of teachers worked in 705 public (state-owned) schools, while the rest were employed in 180 private schools. More than a third (314) of secondary schools are located in Ulaanbaatar.

Secondary education and the teacher workforce situation are very distinctive at the country level. More than half (51.7%) of soums have resident populations of below 3,000; 30.1% have populations between 3,000 and 5,000 (Ministry of Education

and Science, 2020a). In all, 80% of all soums are located more than 100 km from the provincial centre, and herders live in areas that are 10–55 km from their soum centre (MIER, 2019). A soum usually has one boarding school, but a few have two or more. Figure A1 shows a map of school locations across the country.

Herders' children usually travel to the soum centre and stay in the dormitory over the school year. Some children live at home; others live with relatives in the soum. The distance and travel time between school and home vary. Children might not go home over the weekend if their families live far from soum centres. Thus, some children are eager for the school break to return home.

Schools receive state funding based on the variable costs per child as mentioned above. Smaller schools operating in remote soums with low student enrolments lead to under-utilisation of teachers. Thus, teachers with fewer teaching hours are regulated to be reassigned to teach similar subjects (Oyunerdene, 2024).

The gap in the learning achievements between students in rural and urban areas is mainly associated with the professional capacity of teachers (Ministry of Education and Science, 2020a). Students in soums underperform students in aimags, who underperform students in cities, with students in soums lagging those in cities by over two years of learning (Ministry of Education and Science, 2023b). Urban schools usually employ qualified teachers. Students in (especially upper secondary) rural schools commonly transfer to schools in provincial centres or major cities.

Reducing regional disparities is quite a complex task; decision-makers are acting to address the teacher shortage and to fill vacant positions. Thus, the secondary teacher workforce distribution requires comprehensive policy planning considering student enrolments, the quality of rural schools and teachers, the natural and geographical characteristics of regions, etc. It should be emphasised that good knowledge of the current situation and future demand is essential for effective secondary teacher management.

Secondary Education in Mongolia and Its Quality and Relevance

By 2030, the 6–14-year age group is projected to increase by 26%, the 15–17 age group by 84.8%, and the 18–22 age group by 46.6% (Ministry of Education and Science, 2020a). Furthermore, the population is projected to reach 4,491,875 in 2040 (National Statistical Office, 2025b). These demographic changes require expansion of the secondary education system, including the teacher workforce supply.

Secondary education is more expensive than primary education because every pedagogical group[4] (PG) needs several specialised subject teachers, and this leads to complex pedagogical organisation at the school level. In addition, students use textbooks for multiple subjects, science laboratories, and IT equipment in secondary education (Tournier et al., 2024). Therefore, Mongolia is facing challenges to mobilise a budget sufficient to finance schools and increase teacher salaries as demanded.

Reviewing the education system, the authors of the first Education Master Plan (1994–1998) reflected that 'Mongolia has had one of the most equitable education systems in terms of gender, ethnicity, and locational (urban-rural or regional) standards' (Ministry of Education and Science & the Academy for Educational Development, 1993). However, policy implementation is somewhat problematic at the school level. Multiple reports have indicated that the main challenge is the quality of education. Considerable achievement gaps exist between urban, rural, public and private schools (Ministry of Education and Science, 2023a).

Mongolia reports a higher share of 15-year-old students (38%) studying in schools where instruction is hindered by a lack of qualified teaching staff, compared to the OECD average (25%) (Ministry of Education and Science, 2023b). The learning outcomes of students indicate a critical need to improve the quality of national education (Government of Mongolia, 2024b). The quality of teaching and the students' ability to apply their knowledge in real life are insufficient, and the gap between school internal and external (i.e. CEE) assessment results is large (National Audit Office, 2021). Teacher-driven formative assessments that promote student learning should be prioritised (International Commission on the Futures of Education, 2021). International research often illustrates that there is a significant correlation between teacher quality and student achievement (UNESCO, 2020).

Another challenge is the relevance of secondary education. The new cabinet decided to update and enrich the curricular content of lower and upper secondary education with knowledge and information on high technology, the environment, and space science (State Great Khural, 2024a). The MoE is planning to establish specialised high schools in some areas as part of its reforms to secondary education. Secondary school leavers need to acquire relevant skills and competencies, including cognitive, technical, digital, and socio-emotional skills that fit the labour market, and become skilled workers in a fast-changing world (Tournier et al., 2024).

Mongolia's graduates have theoretical knowledge in their field of study, but lack specialised practical skills, and employers are often dissatisfied with their professional ethics and sense of responsibility (Begz, 2024). Policy planners need to carefully take into account the alignment of knowledge and skills provided in/by post-primary education and the skills required by the labour market in the 21st century. Thus, it will again impact decisions in recruiting current and future educators and their preferred

4 A pedagogical group is a class, e.g. 6a, 6b and 6c.

qualifications, training, and pedagogical skills needs in general (Tournier et al., 2024).

School leaders must have the main responsibility for instructional leadership. To raise the attainment of children in their school, school principals and managers need to improve the quality of teaching. Study results indicated that school leaders who more frequently observe classroom teaching or encourage collaboration among teachers may achieve better results in some disciplines (UNESCO & International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030, 2024).

The Mongolian government spends an adequate share of its budget on education to improve teaching and learning and ensure the sector's development at the national level. However, education quality and relevance evidently require policy planners to act to improve the system, including by improving teacher workforce management.

Curricular Reform

The quality of primary and secondary education is often affected by frequent changes to the curriculum (Ministry of Education and Science, 2023a). This ultimately led to a discussion of curricular reform at the system level. The Fundamental Education Law of 2023 stipulates that the educational curriculum must be in effect for 12 years post-adoption – the duration of primary through secondary education (State Great Khural, 2023a).

The government of Mongolia approved the "Concept of Preschool and General Education Curriculum (2024–2036)" in April 2024, and new, competence-based curricula will be adopted in 2025 (Government of Mongolia, 2024b). Current curricula and classroom teaching follow academic learning only (Eagle News, 2024; World Bank Group, 2018). There is not much difference from the previous (for 10 years) format of schooling. At the upper secondary level, education continues to focus on academic knowledge, not providing skills necessary to align with market needs (Begz, 2024). According to the new curriculum, Mongolian students will acquire six foundational competencies from preschool through to the upper secondary level. The rapid development of technology affects large industries; workplaces and economic sectors have been advancing as well (Ministry of Education and Science, 2020a). The curriculum should be redesigned to fit the local economy. Students ought to acquire collaborative skills, creative thinking, and soft skills to respond to new situations and modern technology.

In 2018, the Mongolian National Institute for Educational Research (MNIER) conducted child development research on Mongolian children and youth (aged 6–21 years) and their development characteristics with the purpose of developing development indicators associated with each education level (MIER, 2019). The results of this research are utilised in developing methodology for implementing and evaluating secondary education curricula.

Lower and upper secondary education curricula will be developed and completed in 2026–2027 (MNIER, 2024). The number of subjects at the lower secondary level is to be reduced to 15–16. At the upper secondary level, the number of compulsory subjects will also be decreased, and elective courses will be added due to the planned specialised high schools (Eagle News, 2024). There is a need to do research investigating curriculum development, considering how well secondary teachers are engaged in curriculum change and prepared to teach the new curriculum. Curricular reform is best done in a specific sequence, starting with prior reform of both pre-service and in-service teacher education (Schleicher, 2018).

Teacher Shortage

Swift educational reforms have often affected teachers' well-being and the quality of teaching. They significantly contribute to a crisis in teacher recruitment (Hargreaves, 2000). Globally, 31 million secondary school teachers will be needed by 2030 (Tournier et al., 2024). Against this global backdrop, Mongolia is not an exception. The country is also struggling to attract and retain teachers at both primary and secondary levels. Teacher shortages in Mongolia have a long history, highlighting the urgent need for solutions. For instance, the Education Master Plan emphasised in 1993 that "teaching staff is diminishing and many of the qualified teachers are leaving for better opportunities. New teacher supply is inadequate to meet the requirements for qualified teachers, and rural schools will have the least qualified teachers" (Ministry of Education and Science & the Academy for Educational Development, 1993, p. 13). Low salary levels further discourage both qualified and prospective teachers from joining and staying in the profession. The index of shortage of education staff indicates more shortage than seen in OECD countries, as perceived by Mongolian school principals (Ministry of Education and Science, 2023b).

These salary and supply issues are further complicated by Mongolia's unique geographical and demographic characteristics, which pose specific challenges to effective teacher allocation and utilisation for secondary schools in rural, remote areas. Moreover, secondary teachers typically require subject specialisation and higher qualifications than primary teachers (Tournier et al., 2024). The minimum qualification for primary and secondary teachers is regulated to be first-level higher education (bachelor's degree) in Mongolia. The newly adopted education law also allows Mongolian professionals in fields other than teaching to become qualified as teachers by attending a specialised teacher preparation programme.

In an effort to combat the teacher shortage, policymakers are working to reduce supply-side barriers that discourage prospective teachers, especially in the fields of natural science,

English, math, and technology, from joining the teaching profession (Oyunerdene, 2024). In 2024, the Mongolian government decided to hire contract teachers to address the shortage. Thus, teacher training institutions are regulated to offer special (45-day) training programmes for individuals with non-pedagogical undergraduate degrees to acquire teaching qualifications. Secondary teachers tend to oppose this fast-track alternative certification, saying that the importance of having highly qualified professionals who possess specialised pedagogical skills must not be undermined and ignored. By February 2025, 53 people completed the special training programme and were ready to enter teaching (MoE, 2025d). The government should reconsider the need for this fast-track initiative. The current Minister of Education has stated that contracting teachers with greater variety in education, qualifications, and experiences could have a positive impact on the learning outcomes of students. However, research regarding contract teachers has often reported controversial results, raising questions about the effectiveness of this approach (D'Angelo et al., 2023).

Institutional Factors

Size of Pedagogical Groups and Statutory Teaching Time of Teachers

According to the law, the duration of schooling is structured as follows: 5 years for primary education, 4 years for lower secondary, and 3 years for upper/complete secondary, totalling 12 years (State Great Khural, 2023b). In 2007, the regulation "Setting Norms, Work Standards for Kindergarten and Secondary School Teachers" was approved. This regulation stipulates the norms for the size of PGs at schools and teachers' official working hours at kindergarten and secondary education levels (MECS, MoLSP and MoF, 2007). Schools are regulated to have 32–35 students per PG at lower and upper secondary levels.

Most schools have two shifts at primary and secondary levels. EMIS data revealed that 56 public schools have three shifts in the 2024–2025 school year. Around 214,000 students, or approximately 30% of all schoolchildren, are studying in classes (PGs) with over 40 students in 235 schools (MoE, 2025f). Critics argue that the large class sizes of secondary schools negatively impact the quality of instruction (Galbadrakh, 2025). However, research evidence revealed that higher student-teacher ratios do not often lead to lower learning outcomes. For instance, South Korea is reported to show strong learning outcomes along with high PTRs (Tournier et al., 2024).

Teachers have an official workload of 40 hours per week, which is divided into various tasks: 19 hours dedicated to teaching, 15 to curriculum implementation, and 6 to non-teaching responsibilities. All teachers in Mongolia should teach for the STT – 19 hours weekly as per the regulation. In other words, these (19) hours should be used only for subject teaching (MECS, MoLSP and MoF, 2007). Teachers should spend 85% of their work time teaching and improving their pedagogical skills (National Audit Office, 2019). Subject specialisation poses challenges for managing the STT of secondary teachers on a subject-by-subject basis (Tournier et al., 2024).

The Instructional Plan

Instructional planning is the systematic selection of educational goals and objectives, and their design for use in the classroom (Hoose, 2020). The instructional plan (Tables A4, A5 & A6) is approved for schools and is now being implemented in all schools in the country (Ministry of Education and Science, 2023c). For grades 1–2, the learning hour lasts 35 minutes, and for grades 3–12, it is 40 minutes. Students in Mongolia receive 8,317 hours of compulsory instruction during their primary and lower secondary education (Table A4). This amount is 727 hours more than the average instruction received by students in OECD countries (OECD, 2019) and represents a significant difference in educational requirements.

'Teacher-managing hours' are also regulated as 'subject hours' from primary through upper secondary level. During teacher-managing hours, activities such as integrated lessons, clubs, and project work are implemented throughout the school year, aimed at developing students' independent learning, problem-solving, and social and emotional skills and facilitating career orientation as well (Ministry of Education and Science, 2023c). The curriculum and instructional plans serve as regulations that govern the number of disciplines in the curriculum, including 'teacher-managing hours.' But it seems teacher-managing hours are not included in the total learning hours of the instructional plan.

Schools should dedicate an adequate amount of time to teaching and learning – between 850 and 1,000 instructional hours spread across 180 to 220 days per school year at the primary level, and usually more for the secondary level (Abadzi. H, 2007). The instructional plan depicts that primary students (grades 1–4) usually study less than 850 instructional hours per school year in Mongolia. By law, Mongolian students must study for 170–185 days across the academic year at the primary and secondary levels (State Great Khural, 2023a). Thus, 7–12 grade students usually study 7.0–7.3 hours per day (Table A4), due to the number of days allocated per school year.

Regulations Related to Teacher Utilisation and Teachers' Annual Leave and Retirement

Currently, there is no formal teacher allocation policy in place in the education system. Regulations regarding teachers working at multiple schools or fulfilling their teaching obligations at nearby institutions are virtually non-existent. Teachers who exceed their STT of 19 hours per week are compensated for overtime or the additional teaching hours (MECS, MoLSP and MoF, 2007).

The law also stipulates that teachers can earn additional income by signing a parallel employment contract with another employer during hours other than their regular working hours (State Great Khural, 2023). Particularly in urban areas, many teachers tend to have part-time teaching jobs in another school. Some teachers have side jobs, like owning a small shop or tutoring, due to their low salary.

In smaller soums characterised by low population density, schools often have minimal enrolments. This results in the under-utilisation of some teachers, who may have to instruct in multiple subjects to fulfil their STT requirement. This situation leads to a hidden deficit in subject teachers and brings an adverse impact on teachers' professional development and depth of expertise (UNESCO, 2020).

Rural schools usually offer additional benefits like housing, fuel, and food (for the winter) to attract and retain teachers. Efficient teacher utilisation is essential in expanding the education system because inadequate utilisation usually leads to unsustainable cost structures (Lewin, 2008).

Under labour law, full-time employees in Mongolia are entitled to 15 annual leave days per year (State Great Khural, 2021). The Fundamental Education Law stipulates that 33 days of additional (paid) leave shall be provided to secondary school teachers (State Great Khural, 2023a) in addition to these 15 annual leave days. As a result, Mongolian teachers usually enjoy long summer holidays from June until mid- or late August, unlike other public servants. The annual leave policy of 48 days for teachers might be the only policy related to teacher management. It was inherited from the socialist era and has remained unchanged for decades.

Female teachers are eligible for a pension when they reach 55 years of age and have worked and paid social insurance for 25 years; or at 50 years old if a female teacher has four or more children and has worked and paid social insurance for 20 years. Male teachers are eligible to receive a pension when they reach age 60 and have worked and paid social insurance for 25 years, in general (State Great Khural, 2023c). By civil service law, all public servants have the right to work until 65 years of age (State Great Khural, 2017).

Organisational Factors

Regulations Related to Instructional Planning for Schools and Electives at the Upper Secondary Level

The instructional plan (Table A5) indicates the number of compulsory subjects (16–19) being taught at the lower secondary level.

At the upper secondary level, grade 10–11 students (Table A6) are required to study 19 compulsory subjects, and grade 12 students are required to study 16 compulsory subjects. In addition, all students must also study numerous elective subjects (from among 15 electives) according to their interests and career ambitions, as per the instructional plan. Grade 10 students learn four elective subjects; each subject amounts to three learning hours every two weeks (fortnightly).

Grade 11–12 students learn three elective subjects. Grade 11 students spend two hours per elective subject weekly, and grade 12 students spend six hours per elective subject weekly.

Based on the STT and effective instructional plan, schools are responsible for making their class timetables. Schools usually organise their upper secondary classes in the morning shift and lower secondary classes in the morning or afternoon shift, depending on the availability of classrooms. Some teachers indicate that they do not have enough time to clean their classrooms between shifts due to the timetable planning.

Grade 10–12 students are free to choose their elective subjects; however, the organisation of elective classes and timetables are dependent on the availability of specialised teachers at the school level. The "Medle" learning platform (so-called e-school) is designed to compensate for teacher shortages in remote and understaffed schools. It offers online courses based on students' needs, whose schools face challenges delivering elective subjects/courses due to teaching staff shortages (Education Information Technology Centre, 2022).

Rural schools have a smaller number of students, but electives cannot be compromised of one class (an elective class should have over 10 students in rural schools and over 15 in urban schools) at the upper secondary level. It is reported that 317 teachers are teaching 16 elective subjects to 17,453 upper secondary school students in 496 schools through e-school in the 2024–2025 school year (MoE, 2025a). Technology improves access to education for learners in remote, rural areas if it is utilised efficiently (UNESCO, 2024). "E-School" was also launched to provide equal opportunities for Mongolian students living abroad to obtain the knowledge and skills taught in secondary schools in Mongolia.

All schools must follow instructional plans and organise timetables. The MoE approved separate instructional plans for public and private bilingual (where instruction is delivered in English and Mongolian) schools (Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sports, 2019) and special schools (Ministry of Education and Science, 2020b). However, bilingual schools (where the media of instruction are Kazakh and Mongolian) in Bayan-Ulgii province are facing difficulties implementing the instructional plan for ordinary secondary schools (Tables A4, A5 & A6), as the provincial education department (PED) remarked. This indicates that local interests and specific needs should be appropriately considered in the decisions made by policy planners. Audit specialists also reported that some private schools did not follow the curriculum and instructional plan approved by the MoE (National Audit Office, 2021). There is no clear and consistent connection observed between STT and

the instructional plan. While STT has remained unchanged for two decades, the instructional plan is likely to be amended or changed every 2–3 years.

Policies Related to Teacher Recruitment, Salary and Retention

Labour law regulates the recruitment of teachers as public servants. The teaching profession is regarded as low-paid, and there is no competition for teacher recruitment (Maulana et al., 2023). 47,173 individuals have completed teacher education programmes since 2010. However, 18,028, or less than 40%, of these graduates are employed as teachers across all levels of education, as of 2024 (ParliamentMN, 2025a). Individual schools exercise the right to recruit the candidate for any advertised post. At some point, recruitment at the local level is likely to lead to political favouritism and nepotism. Thus, some local administrators simply appoint or promote political supporters and partners, relatives, and friends to fill vacancies (Tournier et al., 2024).

Schools and educational institutions generally follow the Labour Law, Fundamental Education Law, Preschool and General Education Law and internal regulations in defining the conditions and terms of employment and providing agreed terms for their teaching and non-teaching staff. Forced redeployment without adequate transparency and compensation should not be implemented (Tournier et al., 2024). Recognition, trust, and appreciation for the work of teachers are the symbolic conditions that make the greatest difference in teacher retention (UNESCO & International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030, 2024).

The government has already utilised a variety of levers at their disposal to attempt to ensure balance and teacher retention in scarcely populated rural areas and in urban areas. The basic salary of Mongolian teachers was 694,000–787,000 MNT in 2018. Since then, the monthly basic salary of primary and secondary school teachers has nearly doubled to 1,484,000 MNT. Teachers' salaries reached 1,050,000 MNT in 2022, which made them the first among public servants to reach 1 million. Mongolia has been making considerable efforts to increase teacher salaries; however, teachers seem to have a different opinion about their salary raise. According to a study by Tsomorlig et al. (2023), 88.2% of participating secondary school teachers reported feeling unhappy and dissatisfied with their salary level. The higher inflation rate might be the major factor in teachers' dissatisfaction with their income.

The status and attractiveness of the teaching profession are influenced by several factors, including salary (D'Angelo et al., 2023). In an effort to attract and retain teachers, the Mongolian government usually provides additional salaries and incentives to teachers at public schools. In addition to the monthly basic salary, teachers receive various additional salaries and incentives (Table A7). The teacher salary structure is complex. The authors attempted to analyse the salary structure as part of broader teacher management decisions.

The teacher salary structure still serves as an immediate and popular strategy for Mongolian policymakers to tackle teacher supply and retention. However, not all secondary teachers may receive the additional salaries and incentives shown in Table A7. For instance, the EMIS indicates that only 32 secondary teachers receive incentives for having a doctoral degree. Conversely, it also reveals that 95% of secondary teachers are eligible to receive monthly incentives for being public servants.

Regular teachers do not possess a professional degree and are thus not eligible to receive any incentives for having a professional degree. Table A8 indicates the number of teachers receiving remuneration corresponding to their professional degrees in the 2024–2025 school year. Performance evaluations are directly linked to the remuneration and additional incentives of teachers (Ganbat, 2024). Table A2 shows the number of secondary school teachers that received bonuses provided for performance evaluation in 2022, 2023 and in 2024.

Additional Salaries at the School Level

By law, the government is responsible for financing schools in order to provide equal opportunities to learning, taking into account the location of the school, professional/career field, curriculum, and special needs of students (State Great Khural of Mongolia, 2023a). There are different types of schools: ordinary secondary schools, schools with specialised (art, sports, etc.) curricula, schools with international programmes, and special schools, as EMIS data illustrate.

The government decided to provide more funding for teachers in special schools and schools with international programmes. Those schools provide additional salaries in addition to the existing teacher salary structure, as shown in Table A7.

In 2012, bilingual schools were established with the purpose of supporting secondary education and developing a national education in line with international benchmarks (State Great Khural of Mongolia, 2008; Government of Mongolia, 2012b). Three bilingual schools are located in the capital city, and one is located in Berkh village, Khentii province. These schools (where the media of instruction are English and Mongolian) are regarded as Cambridge schools (Cambridge International Education, 2020). One bilingual school is a secondary school with grades 10–12. The other three offer both lower and upper secondary (6–12 grade) levels. A total of 115 secondary teachers work in these schools, which are state-owned. Bilingual teachers have been regulated since 2012 to receive a 50% additional monthly salary (Government of Mongolia, 2012b). Thus, these teachers receive a 2,226,000 MNT monthly basic salary.

Mongolia started providing education to children with disabilities more than 50 years ago (Badamsuren & Munkhtuya, 2017). Six special schools are providing educational services

for children with special needs in the 2024–2025 school year. All special schools are located in the capital city. Three are complete secondary schools with grades 1–12. Three other schools have primary and lower secondary levels. In all, 363 teachers are employed in these schools, as the EMIS indicates. Special school teachers' monthly basic salary is 1,929,200 MNT. Teachers and assistant teachers in special schools have been regulated since 2012 to receive a 30% additional monthly salary (Government of Mongolia, 2012a).

EMIS data show that 20 special education teachers also work in ordinary secondary schools. By law, special education teachers are allowed to work between schools (State Great Khural, 2023b).

Furthermore, teachers and assistant teachers working with one or more children with disabilities in ordinary secondary schools have been regulated to receive 10% additional monthly salary above their basic salary, considering the child's developmental progress and the teacher's workload, since 2021 (Government of Mongolia, 2020).

Social Welfare Benefits

The government aims to encourage teachers to remain in the profession by providing additional benefits. In addition to the salary structures mentioned previously, there are a series of benefits for teachers.

The Fundamental Education Law guarantees the following social welfare benefits. Teachers and assistant teachers at rural schools in soums and/or baghs shall be provided with monetary benefits equal to the amount of basic salary for 6 months from the state in the fifth year of their employment and once every third year thereafter. All teachers shall receive a one-time allowance before the pension (at the beginning of their retirement), depending on the number of years worked at public school(s) or government organisations. One child of a teacher who has worked continuously for at least 15 years in public secondary school(s) shall be allowed to study at a state-owned HEI for priority and in-demand professions free of charge / with free tuition and on preferential terms.

Legislators changed the frequency of monetary incentive provision for rural teachers (in soums and baghs). Rural teachers are to receive monetary benefits every third year beginning in 2024. These payments were issued to rural teachers every fifth year until 2023.

The absence of comprehensive quantitative data on the number of teachers receiving additional salaries, incentives, or benefits, along with income levels on a teacher-by-teacher basis, impedes the ability to conduct thorough analyses of teacher salary structures.

Teacher Education

The MNUE is the largest teacher education provider in the country. This public university operates 30 (out of 43) undergraduate programmes for teacher education in the 2024–2025 school year. It is reported that around 50% of all teachers of secondary schools are MNUE graduates (Ministry of Education and Science, 2019; ParliamentMN, 2025c).

Regarding policy and the legal environment in the field of initial teacher education (ITE), studies have revealed that comprehensive ITE programmes are not in place in the country. Mongolia needs to invest in and reform its teacher education system (World Bank Group, 2018); a common curriculum for teacher preparation across HEIs is still absent (UNESCO, 2020). Issues in the quality and assessment of teacher preparation curricula and in the connection and extensive collaboration between pre-service teacher training and classroom instruction in kindergartens and schools remain pressing and complex (Government of Mongolia, 2024a).

Effective teacher education must address the factors that contribute to teacher attrition as well. Teacher education programmes are offered by 12 accredited universities (of the 64 public and private universities in the country; Table A9). Apart from in Ulaanbaatar, ITE institutes are located in Khovd (western regional branch of the National University of Mongolia), Bayan-Ulgii (Bayan-Ulgii branch of MNUE), Arkhangai (Arkhangai branch of MNUE), Dornod (eastern regional branch of the National University of Mongolia), and Darkhan Uul provinces.

In the academic years 2022–2023 and 2023–2024, 2,695 and 2,816 students, respectively, graduated from teacher education programmes. Nineteen specialisations are offered to undergraduate students (in 25 universities) to become secondary teachers, including special education teachers (Ministry of Education and Science, 2024b). Thus, 1,566 graduates completed their studies as subject teachers or secondary educators in 2024.

At present, 3,998 students are enrolled in the third or fourth year of a teacher education programmes (Odonchimeg, 2025). Undergraduate students in teacher education programmes are allowed to work as apprentice teachers in a vacant position in a kindergarten or a secondary school by law. More than 3,000 third- and fourth-year students were employed in schools as apprentice teachers last year, as reported by the MoE (Munkhbileg, 2024).

The MoE, MNIER, and General Authority for Education act as the national partners of the project "Reforming Teacher Education Towards Green and Digital Transition in Mongolia" (Erasmus+RETEACH project for short). This 3-year project was launched in 2024, and it focuses on strengthening the capacity of teacher training institutions and will be implemented

in collaboration with three European institutions and five Mongolian universities. The Erasmus+RETEACH project, funded by the European Union, aims at reforming teacher education and developing the teacher education concept for 2027–2032 (Erasmus+RETEACH, 2024).

Wider system benefits from curricular and standards reforms cannot be achieved without radical reform of national in-service training provision (Tony et al., 2011). A teacher's subject knowledge must be responsive to technological developments and labour market needs at the secondary-school level (Tournier et al., 2024). Restoration of the Institute of Teachers' Professional Development (ITPD) in 2012 strengthened the system of teacher preparation and professional development and improved the supply of professional teachers (MIER, 2019). The government dissolved the ITPD in 2021 and established the General Authority for Education (GAE) as a government-implementing agency (Government of Mongolia, 2021). The GAE is responsible for administering teacher professional development policies and programmes and organises in-service training for primary and secondary teachers as stipulated by law (State Great Khural, 2018; 2023a).

Teacher professional development (TPD) training includes mandatory and specialised training. In-service training providers should not organise professional development training for teachers after business hours or on the weekend (MoE, 2025e). Currently, the MoE is piloting the "Teacher Development" platform in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank and using private platforms to run virtual TPD training. Experts have remarked that the GAE might not be the right body, considering the policy issues of improving the teaching quality of primary and secondary school teachers throughout their careers (Hayward, 2024). A study conducted by Tuya et al. (2016) revealed a lack of research in TPD policy and its legislative framework. Experts have also claimed that the content of TPD training does not provide the knowledge and skills required by teachers (Ministry of Education and Science, 2020a).

In 2024, the MoE laid the foundation of the TPD system at the national level in collaboration with Cambridge Partnership for Education. As a result, the National Center for Teacher Development (NCTD) was established at the MNUE. NCTD will administer and deliver professional development training and activities for teachers and administrators at the preschool and secondary levels (MNUE, 2024).

Mongol Aspiration International School (a state-owned bilingual school) is the only educational institution that has implemented a professional development qualification programme for secondary school teachers since 2023. However, in terms of CPD and in-service training, research has shown the importance of providing on-site support and practical guidance in school settings (Tournier et al., 2024).

Individual Factors

Pool of Teacher Candidates

It is considered that policy planners managed the primary and secondary teacher workforce poorly over decades. A weak HR capacity (at the ministry level) impedes data-driven planning and efficiency in improving schools (Ministry of Education and Science, 2020a). A striking fact is that there is already a large pool of potential secondary teacher candidates (MoE, 2024b) in the Mongolian labour market.

In all, 3,415 students enrolled in the teacher education programme and received scholarships at MNUE in 2014–2018; one-fourth (834) completed their studies, and only 513 of these graduates (only 15% of enrollees) work in the education sector. Thus, the investment was inefficient and inconsistent with the purpose of providing scholarships (National Audit Office, 2019). Since 2015, the government has provided full or partial scholarships to 4,800 secondary school graduates with high scores on the University Entrance Exam to study in teacher education programmes. Almost 60% (2,800) of them did not join the teaching profession, as the MoE informed (General Authority for Education, 2024).

One MNUE lecturer strongly opposed the decision to hire contract teachers, stating: "Mongolian secondary schools do not face a teacher shortage problem at all. Study results illustrate that only one-third of MNUE graduates are entering the teaching profession" (Ts. Luvsandorj, personal communication, September 17, 2024). The Minister of Education, Mr. Naranbayar, confirmed that 19,998 people who have completed a teacher education programme since 2010 have not worked as teachers (Ministry of Education, 2024b). The startling reality of inefficient teacher deployment is directly linked to poor management practices and to allocation decisions in particular. If a certain number of those graduates entered the profession, needs would easily be met. It is necessary to do more research to explore the reasons why so many graduates do not join the profession. The low admittance capacity of teacher training colleges and the limited number of applicants for the teaching profession might not be real factors in the teacher shortage. However, further analysis is needed of other factors, including the slow response of teacher training institutions to labour market signals and the reduced ability to control teacher supply because of the increasing autonomy of HEIs, as stipulated in the law.

Shortages in disciplines, such as physics, can create particularly severe problems due to a vicious cycle of poor-quality schooling. For example, if there are fewer quality teachers in a discipline, fewer students will choose to pursue careers in that field and graduate as qualified teachers. As a result, even fewer graduates (who may lack the necessary competency) will enter the teaching profession. This ultimately leads to subpar teaching and, consequently, poor student learning outcomes, thus perpetuating the vicious cycle (Tournier et al., 2024).

Teacher Attrition

Teacher attrition refers to teachers leaving teaching due to death, retirement, illness, career change, etc. (Tournier et al., 2024). There are no reliable data about teacher attrition in the EMIS, including for teacher movement, career progression, death, leave of absence, etc. The absence of a comprehensive teacher preparation policy has contributed to the teacher shortage. The number of schoolchildren has increased by 43.7% since 2015, while the number of teachers has risen by just 23.3%. Normally, these two indicators would increase in the same way (Galbadrakh, 2025).

Teacher motivation has been indicated as a key challenge (D'Angelo et al., 2023), and induction programmes are often neglected both by policy and by profession. As a result, countries face the highest rates of attrition (International Commission on the Futures of Education, 2021). COVID-19 increased attrition rates for all teachers (Tournier et al., 2024).

Decision-makers never approved the policy of an induction programme for novice teachers in Mongolia.

Some teachers progress in responsibility to become school managers or principals. Some are promoted or choose to work in other educational organisations, such as PEDs (in provincial centres) or the Metropolitan Education Department (MED) or district education divisions in the capital city. There is a tendency in recent years for teachers to ask for leave from work (for short or long periods) for various reasons. Thus, remaining subject teachers are required to complete a lot of overtime to compensate for the lack of an additional teacher in that speciality. This noticeably increases teachers' workloads and might negatively influence the quality of education (teaching and learning) across the country (MIER, 2019).

In recent years, schools have also faced the challenge of losing teachers to work abroad in South Korea (the favourite destination) and other developed countries. It is widely reported that some schools struggle to replace those teachers who quit the profession. The MoE stated that teacher movement (attrition) rates are highest among younger teachers who have worked in secondary schools for fewer than 9 years. The average movement (movement related to going to another school or leaving the profession) rate is 9.8% at the national level; younger teachers tend to leave teaching or move to another school (Government of Mongolia, 2024a; Ministry of Education and Science, 2024a).

The drain of the most qualified secondary teachers going to private schools and brain drain to the capital city are also common in Mongolia (World Bank Group, 2018). For instance, 18 teachers have left one of the state-owned Cambridge schools since 2021, and 85% of them transitioned into a private school. The current structure of the education system cannot much influence teacher attrition. Because attrition is regarded as an individual factor, it is complicated to measure this phenomenon (Tournier et al., 2024).

Student behaviour might affect teachers' motivation and willingness to stay in the profession. A higher share of 15-year-old students in Mongolia face frequent bullying and feel unsafe on their way to and from school and outside the classroom compared to their peers in OECD countries (Ministry of Education and Science, 2023b). Although great attention has been paid to academic education over the last three decades, children's upbringing and behaviour management at the primary and secondary education levels have been almost neglected (Begz, 2024). Schools (and teachers) tend to care more about their learners' progress and achievement rather than their behaviour and attitude.

Apart from teacher attrition, there is a problem related to absenteeism. Schools need to minimise teacher absenteeism and hold teachers accountable. There is also a need to pay more attention to what is happening in the classroom and support effective teaching practices (Ulziisaikhan & Amarjargal, 2023). Some teachers tend to spend time not efficiently instructing on their subjects, or put their bags on the desk and disappear for a while during work hours. Thus, absenteeism negatively affects curriculum coverage and student learning outcomes and may reflect low motivation. Furthermore, absenteeism can erode the real utilisation rates of the secondary teacher workforce (Tournier et al., 2024). An accountability mechanism needs to be established to strengthen school-level management. School leaders can develop and implement a policy to monitor actual instruction time and distinguish between teachers being at school, being punctual, and being in the classroom when on site. School principals and managers should work to identify the causes of absenteeism and deal with latecomers and absentees.

Mongolian Teacher Unions and NGOs

Teachers have been a powerful voice in education since the socialist era. Policy planners tend to accept and reflect teacher-generated solutions in policies. For instance, in 2008, the government of Mongolia approved the resolution of a national programme for kindergarten and schoolteacher pre- and in-service training based on the resolution of the first Mongolian Teachers' Symposium. The Teacher's Three-Pillar Policy emphasised the importance of the resolution made by the eighth Mongolian Teachers' Symposium as well. The CEE even amended teacher performance evaluation to reflect teachers' feedback (Ganbat, 2024).

The country experienced massive strikes by secondary school teachers in 1995. More than 4,500 teachers from about 80 schools demanded higher salaries and improved working conditions. The Teachers Union appealed to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and requested international support "to speedily stop the rapid impoverishment of teachers" in Mongolia and

to improve salaries sufficiently (Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2006). In the end, the teachers received a 40% rise along with other civil servants (Federation of Mongolian Education and Science Unions, 2015), but the affair undercut the government's attempt to reduce inflation (Sheldon, 1996). Secondary school teachers have actively voiced their opinions in recent years about increasing their basic salary.

The "All for Education!" (AFE) National Civil Society Coalition and the Mongolian Education Alliance (MEA) are the largest non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the education sector. The AFE Coalition strongly criticised the absence of a consolidated, national-level teacher policy in the past. It demanded increases to the budget in the education sector and emphasised the importance of employing inclusive teachers in secondary schools. Established in 2004, the MEA was the first organisation to introduce and develop the concept of school-based teacher professional development (Mongolian Education Alliance, 2005). It has implemented a comprehensive range of training, post-training mentoring, collaboration, and encouragement activities based on the needs of teachers for over two decades. MEA has also organised good-quality TPD training since 2012 in collaboration with GAE and its predecessor.

Adina-Equal Opportunity NGO is creating a web-based online educational platform to help secondary school teachers improve their knowledge and skills in inclusive education when working with children with disabilities. The National School Parent Teacher Association has utilised good school support tools to improve schools and the collaboration of teachers, parents, and schools (Good School, 2018). Some public officials acknowledge that NGOs suggest appropriate ways and support mechanisms in tackling different issues for them at the policy implementation stage.

Union action and advocacy tend to protest government decisions regarding the funding of education and teaching services (Tournier et al., 2024). Two teacher unions are operating in Mongolia as of 2025. They are the FMESU (Federations of Mongolian Education and Science Unions), which has been running since the socialist era, and the Mongolian Teachers' Union, which was founded in 2018. In the 2024 election, one of the founding members of the latter was elected as a member of parliament representing the major political party in the country. It is admitted that NGOs and teacher unions constantly recommend main points that are not reflected in policy and identify risks to the rights of teachers. Both unions strongly opposed the policy of hiring contract teachers and demanded an increase in teachers' pay. The primary focus of teacher unions is on salary and social welfare negotiations (iKon News, 2024; Mongolian Teachers' Union, 2024; Mongolian Trade Unions, 2024a, 2024b). In the most recent example, the government agreed to provide all teachers and staff in secondary schools with a monthly meal allowance (shown in Table A7), based on the collective agreement of MoE and FMESU (MoE, 2025b). In doing so, FMESU contributed to adding one more category to the already complex teacher salary structure. Experts say that unions' excessive power can have a detrimental effect on the sector's smooth running, thus, the public and development economists rarely recognise it (Tournier et al., 2024).

Socio-Cultural Factors

It is reported that many low- and middle-income countries have experienced an acute shortage of female secondary teachers (Tournier et al., 2024). On the contrary, Mongolia faces a lack of male primary and secondary teachers and struggles to achieve gender equality in the secondary teacher workforce. In 2023–2024, 1,566 graduates earned bachelor's degrees, qualifying them to be secondary teachers, but less than a third (468) were male. Thus, gender inequality continues in secondary teacher management. It is common that families prioritise girls' education over boys' in Mongolian society. Because of the traditional nomadic lifestyles of herders and a booming mining industry, boys tend to discontinue their schooling and start earning for themselves or for their families (AFE Coalition, 2024). There is a criticism that schools need more male teachers who could act as role models for young boys and encourage them to choose the teaching profession as well (Unuudur.mn, 2020).

EMIS and Data Use Challenges

The data system (EMIS) functions as unified databases for the secondary education sector. Education managers and school principals are required to report/record all information on teachers accurately into the system. Due to successive changes in teacher education programmes, teachers gained undergraduate degrees with different names, such as 'Mongolian-English' teacher. Consequently, EMIS data do not show the subjects taught by individual teachers; the authors conducted analysis and calculations by including these teachers in the pool of both "Mongolian language teachers" and "English language teachers."

In some cases, school principals and education managers record the master's degrees of their teachers rather than their undergraduate degrees. The team was unable to calculate and analyse out-of-field teaching and tentatively calculated teacher attrition rates due to the clarity and availability of data.

The MoE is responsible for carrying out planned and unscheduled inspections of the EMIS and relevant data systems and taking necessary measures based on the annual audit reports and evaluations (Government of Mongolia, 2023). Mongolia is reported to have integrated student-level tracking systems into the EMIS and linked it to the Civil Registration System (GPE KIX, 2023). MoE, MED and PEDs do not work well to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the information in relation to teacher management (National Audit Office, 2021). It is evident that the EMIS requires considerable improvements in school-level data in terms of tracking and managing the secondary teacher workforce more effectively.

When teachers' quality is low, governments tend to operate bureaucratic command-and-control systems to direct their work. But competent teachers and qualified educators no longer accept schools that follow such outdated, industrial organisation of work (Schleicher, 2018). Teachers' involvement in decision-making on major teacher management issues has often been neglected, and their absence is widely recognised as a major source of teacher dissatisfaction (Tournier et al., 2024). In Mongolia, approximately 80% of secondary school teachers are dissatisfied with their absence from the formulation of education policies (Tsomorlig et al., 2023). Major national factors, such as students' overall learning achievement and persistent teacher shortage problems, have led to an increased focus on secondary teacher management in Mongolia. Given the increasing number of schoolchildren, teacher transition and movement, and the tendency of teachers to leave the profession, appropriate analysis is imperative regarding teacher supply, allocation, and utilisation at the secondary education level.

SECTION 2: PROJECTING THE DEMAND FOR SECONDARY TEACHERS

This section provides information on teacher age and a tentative analysis of teacher attrition rates and projections of GERs. Samples of real school timetables are also discussed in terms of learning hours and electives at the upper secondary level.

According to the EMIS, 37,770 teachers are working at the primary and secondary level in the 2024–2025 school year. There are 885 schools operating in the country. Each year, the MoE reports the number of teachers which need to be recruited by secondary schools (see Table 2). Furthermore, the authors analysed teacher recruitment needs and estimated the number of secondary teachers required nationally until 2030.

Teacher Age Groups, Work Experience and Attrition Rates

Table 1 shows the total number of teachers currently employed in secondary schools across the country. The average age of both primary and secondary teachers is in the 30–39 year age group, which represents more than one-third (35%), followed by the age group of 40–49 years, which constitutes a quarter of the population.

Currently, 17,292 secondary teachers possess a bachelor's degree, 6,508 secondary teachers have gained a master's degree, and 796 secondary teachers have received a diploma or short-term training. As EMIS data revealed, 1,170 secondary teachers have professions other than subject teaching.

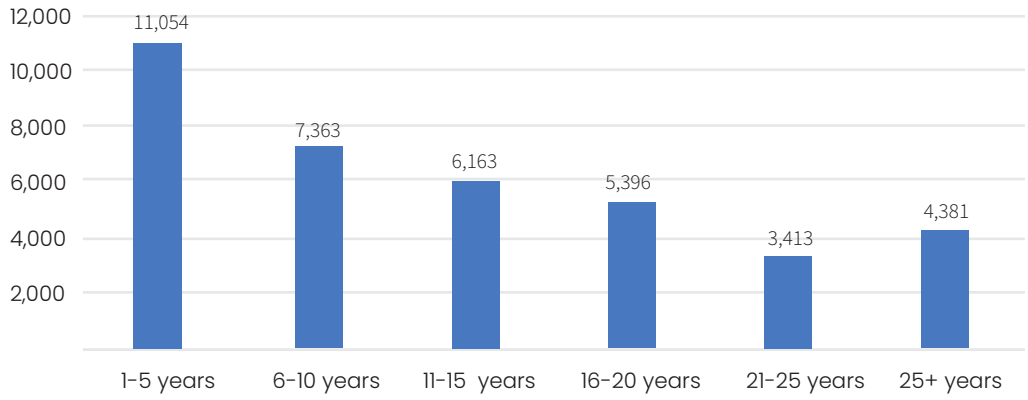
Table 1. Age groups of primary and secondary teachers

Age range	≤ 30 years	31-39 years	40-49 years	50-59 years	≥ 60 years	Total
Secondary teachers	6,256	9,513	6,737	2,624	668	25,798
Primary teachers	2,603	3,892	3,057	2,109	311	11,972
Sum	8,859	13,405	9,794	4,733	979	37,770

Source: EMIS (2025).

Figure 1 demonstrates the years of employment of all teachers at the primary and secondary levels. Around 30% have 1–5 years of work experience, which represents the largest group.

Figure 1. Work experience of primary and secondary teachers



Source: EMIS (2025).

EMIS data show that around 1,000 'retired' teachers are still working in schools. GAE reported that 1,200 'retired' teachers are teaching based on their own interests, and they are being rehired to instruct for limited hours (Nyam-Ochir, 2024).

Table 2. Attrition rate[5] by all teachers, for public and private schools

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Number of teachers available - start of the year	32,085	34,073	35,110	36,118	36,993	37,770
Teachers who left during the year (attrition)	4,181	3,924	3,609	3,482	4,234	2,068
Attrition rate	13.0%	11.5%	10.3%	9.6%	11.4%	5.5%
Average attrition rate over the period	10.1%					

Source: Ministry of Education (2025). Authors' estimation.

The Learning Cycle's template files for teacher attrition were used to determine attrition rates in 2020 through 2025. The first row of Table 2 indicates the total number of primary and secondary teachers employed by schools for the given school years, according to the EMIS.

In May–June of each school year, the MoE collects data on (current and future) teacher recruitment needs from public schools. Then, policy planners estimate the number of teachers needed nationally for the following school year, using data on current and future teacher recruitment needs at the primary and secondary levels.

Since the EMIS does not show data related to teacher attrition as mentioned above, the corresponding numbers do not exactly indicate attrition in Table 2. Instead, the authors used data on current and future teacher recruitment needs as attrition, in the second row ("Teachers who left during the year") in Table 2.

Tentative analysis shows the average attrition rate over the period was 10.1%. The rate for 2025 was lowest at 5.5%. Based on the calculation, the authors assumed that the shortage resulting from teacher retirement might account for 1%–2% of the total teacher shortage at the national level.

Apart from that, the team utilised retirement age as a reliable, relevant approach to estimating future teacher needs.

Gross Enrolment Rates

In the 2024–2025 school year, 797,905 students are enrolled in 885 schools; 379,647 (47.6%) are enrolled in primary grades (1–5); 273,943 (34.3%) are studying at the lower secondary level (6–9); 144,315 students (18.0%) are studying at the upper secondary level (10–12) (MoE, 2024c).

Demographic data by single year of age would provide the basis for a realistic estimate of the secondary school–aged population, but exact data were unavailable to estimate GERs.

Therefore, the authors used the third (iii) approach[6] to project GERs, as suggested in the Learning Cycle guidelines.

Table 3. Gross enrolment rate projections for 2025

Lower secondary	
Intake rate	96%
Completion rate	96%
Projected GER of lower secondary	96%
Projected enrolment of lower secondary	76139
Upper secondary	
Intake rate	84%
Completion rate	84%
Projected GER of upper secondary	84%
Projected enrolment of upper secondary	52855

Source: UNESCO IIEP, personal communication (2025). Authors' estimation.

For Mongolia in 2024–2025, GERs (Table 3) are projected to be 96% and 84% at the lower and upper secondary levels, respectively. The accessibility was analysed, and it is lower than the GER for the 2017–2018 school year (MIER, 2019) and the average of Central Asian countries as of 2019 (Tournier et al., 2024).

School Timetables

According to the EMIS, there are 12,270 PGs (lower and upper secondary) in public schools. Teachers usually decide whether they will teach higher and/or lower grades. Some teachers only teach at the lower secondary level. More experienced teachers might prefer the upper secondary level. Thus, some teach one shift, in the morning or afternoon. Others work double (morning and afternoon) shifts depending on their STT allocated on the school timetable.

School timetables are shown (Table 4) as real examples to depict seven consecutive periods of classes. Some (elective) classes for grades 10–12 are reported to be organised after school. The EMIS does not include information on school timetables and the pedagogical organisation of schools.

5 The attrition rate was calculated based on the number of (current and future) teachers needed in the given years, as reported by the MoE, not the number of teachers who left the teaching profession (attrition).

6 Please see Tournier et al. (2024), p. 41.

Table 4. School timetables

School A

Time	Morning shift	Afternoon shift
1st period	07:45 - 08:25	13:15 - 13:55
2nd period	08:30 - 09:10	14:00 - 14:40
3rd period	09:15 - 09:55	14:45 - 15:25
Breaktime	(10 minutes)	(10 minutes)
4th period	10:05 - 10:45	15:35 - 16:15
5th period	10:50 - 11:30	16:20 - 17:00
6th period	11:35 - 12:15	17:05 - 17:45
7th period	12:20 - 13:00	17:50 - 18:30

School B

Time	Morning shift	Afternoon shift
1st period	08:20 - 09:00	13:20 - 14:00
2nd period	09:00 - 09:40	14:00 - 14:40
3rd period	09:40 - 10:30	14:40 - 15:20
Breaktime	(10 minutes)	(10 minutes)
4th period	10:40 - 11:20	15:30 - 16:10
5th period	11:20 - 12:00	16:10 - 16:50
6th period	12:00 - 12:40	16:50 - 17:30
7th period	12:40 - 13:20	17:30 - 18:10

School C

Time	Morning shift	Afternoon shift
1st period	08:00 - 08:40	13:30 - 14:10
2nd period	08:45 - 09:25	14:15 - 14:55
3rd period	09:30 - 10:10	15:00 - 15:40
Breaktime	(10 minutes)	(10 minutes)
4th period	10:20 - 11:00	15:50 - 16:30
5th period	11:05 - 11:45	16:35 - 17:15
6th period	11:50 - 12:30	17:20 - 18:00
7th period	12:35 - 13:15	18:05 - 18:45

School D

Time	Morning shift	Afternoon shift
1st period	08:00 - 08:40	13:30 - 14:10
2nd period	08:45 - 09:25	14:15 - 14:55
3rd period	09:30 - 10:10	15:00 - 15:40
Breaktime	(15 minutes)	(15 minutes)
4th period	10:25 - 11:05	15:55 - 16:35
5th period	11:10 - 11:50	16:40 - 17:20
6th period	11:55 - 12:35	17:25 - 18:05
7th period	12:40 - 13:20	18:10 - 18:50

School E

Time	Morning shift	Afternoon shift
1st period	08:30 - 09:10	13:30 - 14:10
2nd period	09:15 - 09:55	14:15 - 14:55
3rd period	10:00 - 10:40	15:00 - 15:40
4th period	10:45 - 11:25	15:55 - 16:35
Breaktime	(15 minutes)	(15 minutes)
5th period	11:40 - 12:20	16:40 - 17:20
6th period	12:25 - 13:05	
7th period	13:10 - 13:50	

Source: Authors.

As of 2025, the majority of schools follow the timetable version of school C. Further analysis was hindered by a lack of data regarding electives, school shifts by lower and upper levels, and subject hours allocated to individual teachers at the school level.

Projections for Teacher Recruitment Needs

Due to the decline in the number of both secondary school teachers and teaching graduates in the labour market in recent years, it is necessary to estimate the supply and demand of teachers and take measures to prevent teacher shortages. The team performed the following analysis to estimate the need for secondary teachers at the national level, using the methodology presented in Learning Cycle 7.

In Mongolia, subject-specialised teachers are regulated to teach the discipline at the lower and upper secondary levels, and they are responsible for teaching their subject or subjects to several PGs. Some teachers teach multiple subjects; for instance, it is common for Mongolian language teachers also to teach national script and literature, and those teaching times are also included in their STT. Similarly, social science teachers usually teach history, social studies, and civil ethical education. Some teachers teach both English and Russian, or English teachers teach Russian and vice versa. The calculation was made based on the number of teachers, students, and pedagogical groups in both public and private schools at the lower and upper secondary levels, including lifelong learning centres and special schools.

Thus, in this analysis, the authors combined 'Mongolian language,' 'national script,' and 'literature' as a single subject under the name "national language." Likewise, social studies and civil ethical education are also integrated under "social science"; physical education and health are included in "physical education." Drawing, art, and technology are combined under the name "art & technology." Those combined subjects were inserted in tables (5, 6 & 7), and subject hours were summed appropriately. Elective subjects at the upper secondary level and teacher managing hours were excluded. Only compulsory (core) subjects taught at the lower and upper secondary levels were used to calculate compulsory learning hours in schools.

Teacher attrition rates were needed for the calculation of future teacher needs, so the authors utilised the teachers' retirement age as an alternative, relevant approach as mentioned above. The team made the following analysis to estimate the need for secondary teachers at the national level.

Table 5. **Number of lower secondary teachers needed by 2030 in public and private schools**

New teachers to request		2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Grand total
Lower secondary	English language	320	105	125	130	142	167	989
	National language	460	200	221	234	259	276	1650
	Mathematics	310	150	153	163	167	181	1124
	Social science	201	88	96	102	114	125	726
	Biology	120	58	59	63	69	73	442
	History	146	56	64	68	76	89	499
	Geography	60	25	27	27	30	33	202
	Chemistry	127	62	66	65	68	73	461
	Physics	141	61	67	64	70	79	482
	ICT	71	33	37	39	39	40	259
	Art & technology	287	106	125	130	130	157	935
	Physical education	218	102	117	124	127	137	825
	Music	169	51	67	56	58	65	466
	Russian language	184	70	75	79	78	89	575
		2814	**1167**	**1299**	**1344**	**1427**	**1584**	**9635**

Source: EMIS (2025). Authors' estimation.

The government and private sector must recruit 9,635 lower secondary teachers until 2030, as can be seen in Table 5. Subjects requiring the highest number of teachers at the lower secondary level are national language, English language, mathematics, and art & technology. Compared to 2025, the teacher shortage for all subjects in 2026 will be decreased by 2–2.5 times, but from 2027 onwards, it is estimated that there will be a gradual increase in the need for teachers in all disciplines.

In all, 5,554 upper secondary teachers need to be recruited by the government and private sector by 2030 (Table 6). At the upper secondary level, teacher demand shows similar trends regarding disciplines at the lower secondary level from 2025 to 2030. English language, national language, mathematics, and art & technology require the highest number of teachers. The need for teachers will also decrease slightly in 2026 but increase steadily over the years until 2030.

Table 6. **Number of upper secondary teachers needed by 2030 in public and private schools**

New teachers to request		2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Grand total
Upper secondary	English language	258	82	99	112	126	153	830
	National language	201	99	108	121	119	142	790
	Mathematics	154	99	91	98	84	86	612
	Social science	99	76	80	88	86	91	520
	Biology	51	35	31	36	55	61	269
	History	75	21	21	30	66	86	299
	Geography	37	30	31	35	62	68	263
	Chemistry	56	42	41	36	43	52	270
	Physics	77	41	44	40	36	37	275
	ICT	31	24	28	30	71	75	259
	Art & technology	201	76	87	97	72	79	612
	Physical education	103	75	91	96	87	103	555
		1343	**700**	**752**	**819**	**907**	**1033**	**5554**

Source: EMIS (2025). Authors' estimation.

Table 7 shows the total number (15,189) of new secondary teachers that will be needed at the national level for a 5-year period, namely 2025 onwards. The team used the template files provided and available data from the EMIS. Analysis indicates the total number of secondary teachers needed to instruct subjects at schools from 2025 to 2030.

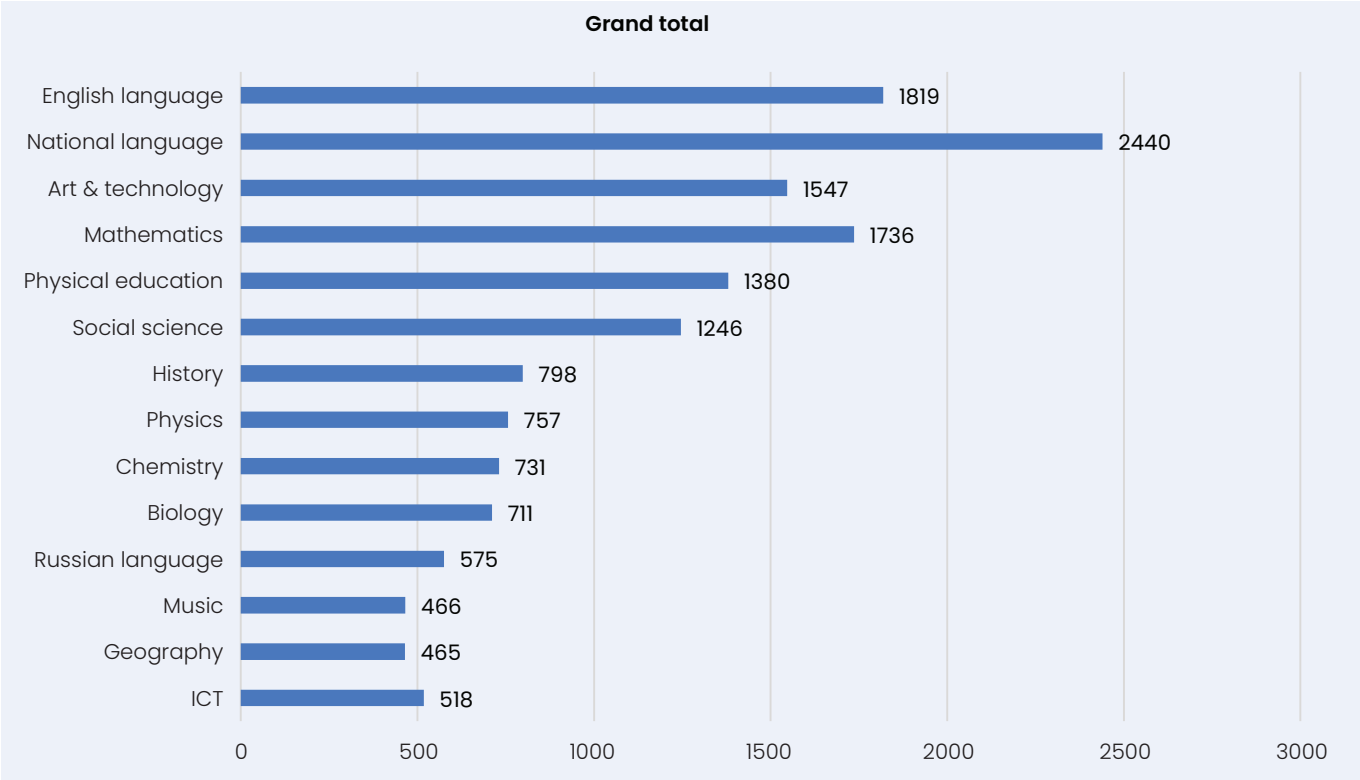
At the secondary level, English language, national language, mathematics, art & technology, and social science require 57.8% (8,788) of new teachers. Teacher needs in the music and geography disciplines show the lowest number of new teachers required until 2030.

Table 7. Number of secondary teachers needed by 2030 in public and private schools

New teachers to request	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Grand total
ICT	102	57	65	69	110	115	518
Geography	97	55	58	62	92	101	465
Music	169	51	67	56	58	65	466
Russian language	184	70	75	79	78	89	575
Biology	171	93	90	99	124	134	711
Chemistry	183	104	107	101	111	125	731
Physics	218	102	111	104	106	116	757
History	221	77	85	98	142	175	798
Social science	300	164	176	190	200	216	1246
Physical education	321	177	208	220	214	240	1380
Mathematics	464	249	244	261	251	267	1736
Art & technology	488	182	212	227	202	236	1547
National language	661	299	329	355	378	418	2440
English language	578	187	224	242	268	320	1819
	4157	**1867**	**2051**	**2163**	**2334**	**2617**	**15189**

Source: EMIS (2025). Authors' estimation.

Figure 2. Number of secondary teachers needed by 2030 in public and private schools



Source: EMIS (2025). Authors' estimation.

There is a need to point out again that the authors examined secondary teacher demand in 2025–2030, corresponding to the number of core subjects.

In some schools, secondary teachers teach subjects other than their speciality depending on the teacher shortage and other circumstances. For instance, a geography teacher might teach ICT to fill their teaching load. This is referred to as 'out-of-field teaching.' The EMIS does not provide out-of-field teaching data, so the authors performed analysis and calculations assuming subject teachers teach only their discipline.

The scope of available data and other implications of these results should be analysed further.

SECTION 3: DIAGNOSING SECONDARY TEACHER ALLOCATION

Pupil-Teacher Ratios at the Regional and National Levels

The decision of teacher allocation (to recruit teachers where they are needed) is decentralised to the school level in Mongolia. There is no system or regulation in place at the national level in terms of allocating teachers to schools. Therefore, the authors examined PTRs, APTRs, and LCRs for this section in an attempt to diagnose secondary teacher allocation in the country.

PTR, APTR, LCR and teacher allocation consistency were analysed based on the number of teachers, students, and PGs of public schools. Lifelong learning centres and special schools were not included in diagnosing teacher allocation, considering their difference from ordinary secondary schools.

The PTR compares the number of enrolled pupils to the number of available teachers.

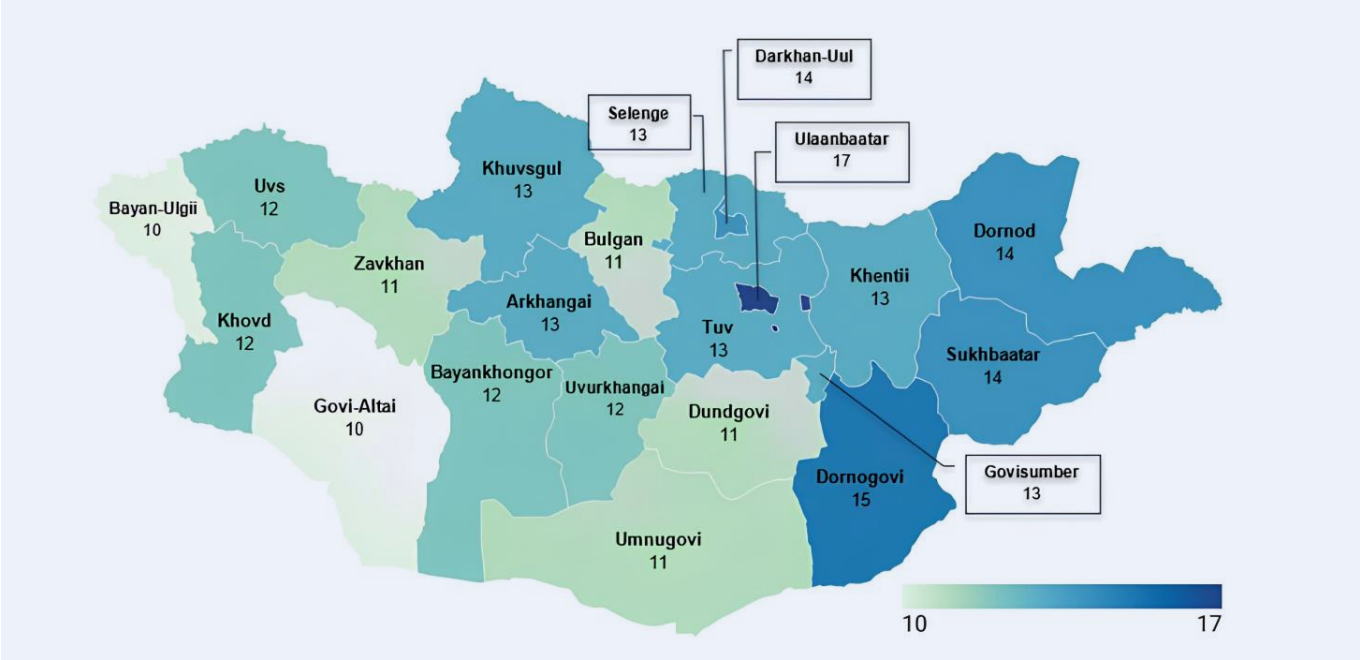
Table 8. Pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) in public schools by region, lower and upper secondary levels

Regions	PTR	Average class size
Western region	11	23
Eastern region	13	25
Khangai region	12	25
Central region	12	25
Ulaanbaatar	17	34
Average	13	26

Source: EMIS (2025). Authors' estimation.

Table 8 allows the comparison of teacher availability among regions. In Mongolia in 2024/25, the PTR differs between regions from 11:1 to 17:1 at public schools.

Figure 3. Pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) in public schools, lower and upper secondary levels



Source: EMIS (2025). Authors' estimation.

Figure 3 indicates the comparison between teacher availability for all provinces and the capital city. Overall, 10 students are allocated per teacher in Govi-Altai province, whereas 17 students are allocated per teacher in the capital city. The number of students per teacher is highest in the capital city, at 17:1. The PTR tends to decrease moving away from the capital city to remote areas.

A separate analysis indicates that 19 students are allocated per teacher at lower secondary, while 12 are allocated per teacher at upper secondary levels, respectively. In the 2022–2023 school year, the PTRs were 16:1 (lower secondary) and 13:1 (upper secondary) at public schools (National Statistical Office, 2025a).

Teaching and Learning Times

Curriculum class time indicates the number of class periods for a PG as per the curriculum. The number of periods is specified in the instructional plan in Mongolia. The guideline always uses the weekly measure related to all teaching and learning times (Tournier et al., 2024).

Table 9. Total theoretical learning time (TTLT) and total theoretical teaching time (TTTT) in core subjects for all public schools, lower and upper secondary levels

	TTLT	TTTT	Average Learning Coverage Rate
English language	234,680	64,562	28%
National language	412,194	57,950	14%
Math	289,839	44,555	15%
Social science	235,014	43,814	19%
Biology	122,689	27,398	22%
History	99,956	41,534	42%
Geography	78,561	41,534	53%
Chemistry	122,689	13,718	11%
Physics	122,689	20,558	17%
ICT	78,227	17,879	23%
Art & technology	156,453	25,593	16%
Physical education	156,453	45,486	29%
Russian language	77,224	20,995	27%
Music	67,863	22,268	33%

Source: EMIS (2025). Authors' estimation.

Total theoretical learning time (TTLT) illustrates the total number of classes due in principle to all PGs (curriculum class time [CCT] × number of PGs). Total theoretical teaching time (TTTT) indicates the total number of classes due in principle to all teachers (STT × number of teachers).

Table 9 shows the TTTT of Mongolian secondary teachers and the TTLT of secondary students at public schools corresponding to core subjects.

The average comparative endowment (overstaffing or understaffing) status for all subjects' available teaching time involves different indicators, including the average learning coverage rate (ALCR). ALCR results should be explained along with the results of other indicators. The EMIS does not contain HR management modules and various data to measure teaching and learning times in different ways. Therefore, the authors were unable to compute all indicators and fully analyse secondary teacher allocation consistency.

Analyses of Adjusted Pupil-Teacher Ratios and Learning Coverage Rates

A complementary approach to analysing the availability of secondary teachers is to use an adjusted PTR based on the number of students and the number of teachers. APTR was used to analyse teacher availability at a subnational level and by discipline (Table 10).

Table 10. Adjusted pupil-teacher ratio, by subject and region, lower and upper secondary levels

	Western region	Eastern region	Khangai region	Central region	Ulaanbaatar	Average
English language	23	25	26	25	34	27
National language	41	44	45	44	60	47
Math	29	31	32	31	42	33
Social science	23	25	26	25	34	27
Biology	12	13	13	13	18	14
History	10	11	11	11	14	11
Geography	8	8	9	8	11	9
Chemistry	12	13	13	13	18	14
Physics	12	13	13	13	18	14
ICT	8	8	9	8	11	9
Art & technology	15	17	17	17	23	18
Physical education	15	17	17	17	23	18
Russian language	8	8	8	8	11	9
Music	7	7	7	7	10	8
Average	16	17	18	17	23	

Source: EMIS (2025). Authors' estimation.

The indicator, APTR, is defined as the total number of learning hours due to all students compared to the total number of hours due from teachers:

$$\frac{\text{no. of students} \times \text{CCT}}{\text{no. of teachers} \times \text{STT}}$$

STT is 19, and CCT varies between grades as specified in the instructional plan. The CCT is 31 for grade 6, 35 for grades 7–11, and 36 for grade 12 (Table A4) at lower and upper secondary levels.

In Table 10, APTR is calculated at the regional level to analyse the variation in teacher availability across public schools in the country. Data show normal teacher allocation due to lower APTRs in most disciplines. The national language and maths have higher APTRs at both subnational and national levels, indicating disparities in teacher availability in those subjects. The 'national language' subject includes/combines total teaching hours for three subjects, as mentioned above: Mongolian language, national script, and literature. This might have had an impact on APTR.

Table 11. Learning coverage rates by subject and region, lower and upper secondary levels

	Western region	Eastern region	Khangai region	Central region	Ulaanbaatar	Average
English language	26%	25%	25%	26%	30%	26%
National language	15%	15%	15%	14%	13%	14%
Math	16%	15%	16%	15%	16%	16%
Social science	18%	15%	18%	15%	21%	18%
Biology	29%	24%	23%	26%	25%	25%
History	45%	43%	46%	44%	45%	44%
Geography	29%	18%	24%	24%	17%	22%
Chemistry	24%	22%	19%	24%	17%	21%
Physics	22%	18%	19%	21%	16%	19%
ICT	29%	24%	23%	21%	22%	24%
Art & technology	16%	12%	17%	13%	15%	15%
Physical education	32%	32%	33%	33%	28%	32%
Russian language	39%	33%	28%	34%	23%	31%
Music	38%	39%	37%	44%	33%	38%
Average	27%	24%	25%	25%	23%	

Source: EMIS (2025). Authors' estimation.

LCR is the ratio of TTTT to TTLT.

$$LCR = \frac{TTTT}{TTLT} \times 100\% = \frac{No.\ of\ teachers \times STT}{No.\ of\ PGs \times CCT} \times 100\%$$

Figure 4. Formula for LCR

Source: Tournier et al. (2024).

It signals the existence of a shortage of teachers in the case where the coverage rate is under 100%. As can be seen from Table 11, all regions/subjects/schools are understaffed with secondary teachers.

But this indicator is not suitable given the magnitude of the shortage and may not fully reflect the pedagogical organisation of secondary education (Tournier et al., 2024).

The LCR of each region, district, or school can be computed to examine secondary teacher allocation. For this, the range for an acceptable level of coverage should first be determined (Tournier et al., 2024). So, further analysis needed to be carried out at the local level to obtain more comparable results.

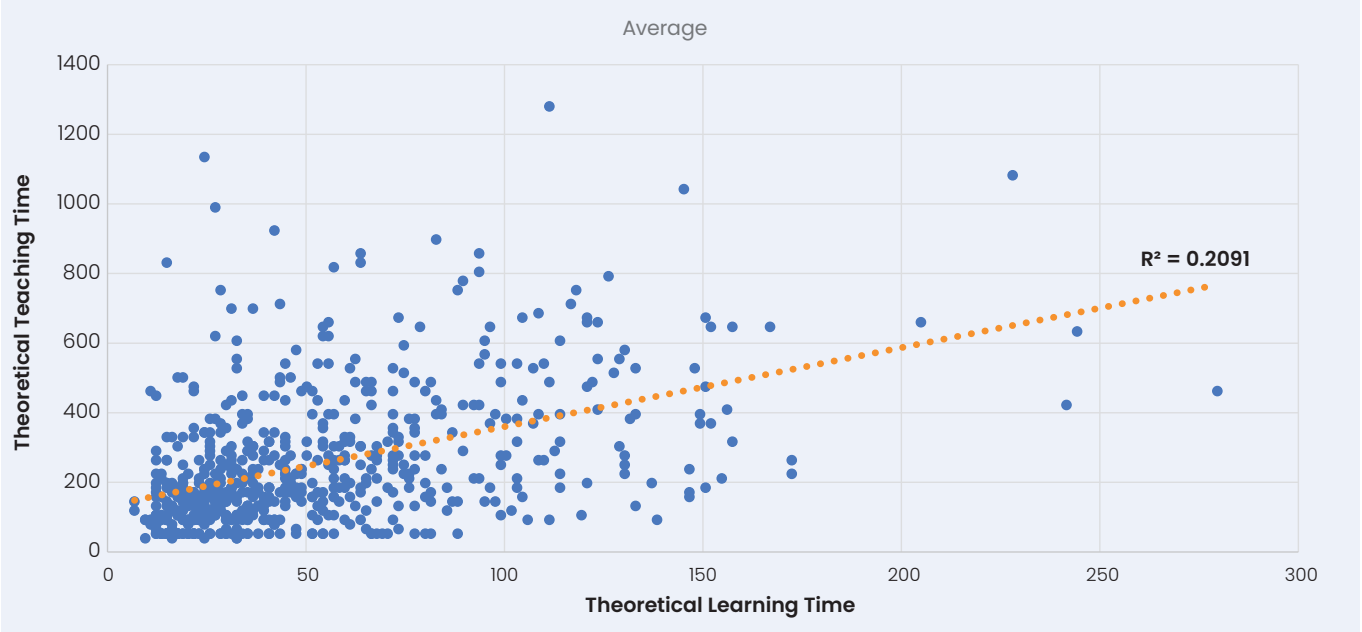
R^2 is the coefficient of determination (generally of a linear regression or a trendline). It measures the share of a change in one variable (e.g. teacher availability, measured either by teacher numbers or TTTT) that is explained by a change in a second variable (e.g. pupil's needs, measured by the number of pupils or TTLT) or a set of other variables. In situations of perfect deployment consistency, all the dots will be along the trendline, and the R^2 value will be 1 or close to 1.

The closer R^2 is to zero, the greater the disparities between schools in the relationship between teacher availability and pupils' needs.

The coefficient of determination (R^2) could not be determined for all subjects, so the authors calculated the average of all public schools. R^2 in Mongolia is relatively low, at 0.20, and the chart in Figure 5 illustrates poor deployment consistency. The more pronounced the inconsistency in teacher allocation, the greater the indication that the availability of teachers is explained by factors other than TTLT.

Mongolia does not resort to an appropriate HR management system to manage teacher posting and deployment decisions. Thus, a much more thorough analysis should be conducted to examine the inconsistency in teacher deployment across the country.

Figure 5. **Lower and upper secondary teacher allocation consistency (of all public schools) at the national level, measured by the relationship between total theoretical teaching and learning times**



Source: EMIS (2025). Authors' estimation.

SECTION 4: DIAGNOSING SECONDARY TEACHER UTILISATION

Variation in Statutory Teaching Time

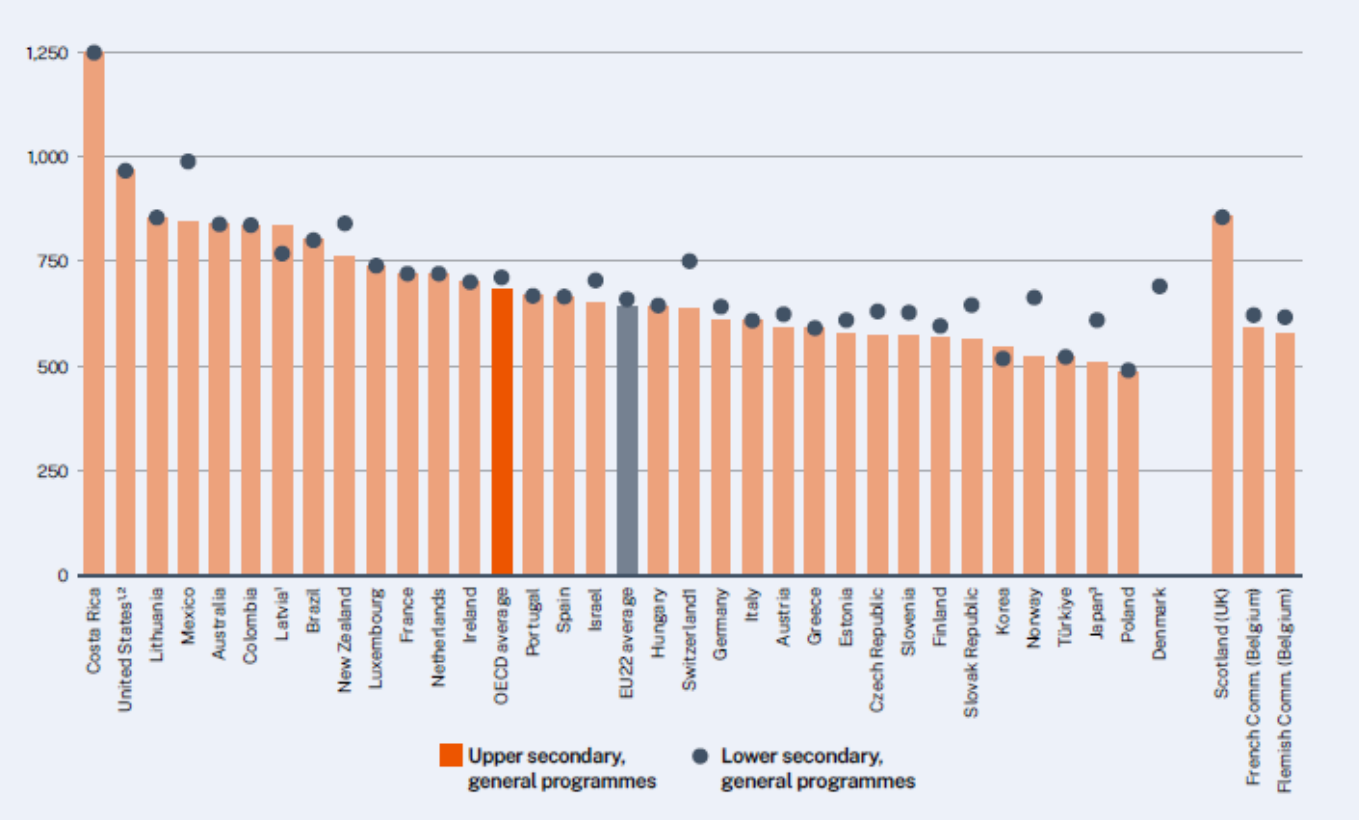
Compared to some OECD countries shown in Figure 6, Mongolian secondary teachers have lower STT at the lower secondary level and similar STT at the upper secondary level.

For instance, lower secondary teachers are expected to instruct 684 hours per school year, compared to 1,248 in Costa Rica. Upper secondary teachers are expected to provide 703 hours of STT per school year, compared to 980 in the United States.

Teacher Utilisation

Teacher utilisation measures the extent of teachers' full workload, which is 19 hours/ week as per the statutory requirement in Mongolia. If teachers instruct less than their STT, they are deemed to be under-utilised. Where teachers teach more than 19 hours, they are deemed to be over-utilised. Utilisation is optimal where teachers instruct exactly their STT, as per the Learning Cycle guidelines.

Figure 6. Average statutory teaching time of selected OECD countries



Source: Tournier et al. (2024).

Table 12. Average utilisation rate (AUR) by region of secondary teachers at public schools

	Western region	Eastern region	Khangai region	Central region	Capital city	Average
English language	52%	58%	56%	53%	48%	53%
National language	122%	128%	126%	134%	138%	130%
Math	91%	90%	89%	95%	95%	92%
Social science	110%	115%	105%	113%	99%	108%
Biology	54%	71%	65%	64%	66%	64%
History	34%	36%	33%	34%	35%	34%
Geography	61%	91%	71%	81%	101%	81%
Chemistry	68%	85%	80%	70%	91%	79%
Physics	72%	89%	78%	79%	99%	83%
ICT	50%	65%	60%	69%	66%	62%
Art & technology	93%	118%	93%	121%	110%	107%
Physical education	71%	72%	68%	70%	80%	72%
Russian language	37%	59%	57%	53%	58%	53%
Music	27%	31%	28%	27%	29%	28%
Average	67%	79%	72%	76%	80%	

Source: EMIS (2025). Authors' estimation.

The average utilisation rate, structural under-utilisation rate, operational under-utilisation rate, and total under-utilisation rate were used to analyse secondary teacher utilisation in several ways. Calculations were based on the number of teachers, students, and PGs of public schools. Lifelong learning centres and special schools were not included in the analyses.

Utilisation rates are centred around 100%, so that a rate above 100% indicates over-utilisation. Conversely, a rate below 100% indicates a situation of under-utilisation.

AUR estimates the teachers' STT needed to cover the needs of existing PGs. Table 12 shows that teachers are over-utilised in combined disciplines, where teachers teach more than one subject. Thus, teachers of the national language, social science, and art & technology are over-utilised or teach for more hours than their STT. On the other hand, the table indicates that teachers are more under-utilised or instruct less than their STT in eight disciplines, where the AUR is below 80%.

Over-utilisation first points to a teacher shortage, and under-utilisation may suggest a surplus of teachers (overstaffing). However, they may also reflect structural under-utilisation in some areas. Therefore, a complementary analysis is required to understand teacher utilisation.

Effective utilisation rate (EUR) is the ratio of teaching time effectively allocated to teachers (total effective teaching time or TETT) to TTTT.

The authors computed this indicator (EUR) at the individual school level by collecting a sample of teachers' timetables.

Table 13. Effective utilisation rates in some disciplines by an individual school

	Average utilisation rate	Effective utilisation rate
National language	130%	121%
Math	92%	121%
Art & technology	107%	137%
Physical education	72%	121%
Music	28%	105%

Source: Authors.

The analysis (Table 13) indicated that teachers of the national language, math, art & technology, physical education, and music are teaching more than their full workload at this school.

The ultimate value in being able to compute the EUR resides in comparing it to the AUR, for the same geographical location, school, or subject. Thus, further analysis was required to grasp effective teacher utilisation at the local level.

Table 14. Structural under-utilisation rates and operational under-utilisation rates, determined by region, of secondary teachers in public schools

Structural under-utilisation rate (SUUR)	Western region	Eastern region	Khangai region	Central region	Capital city	Average
English language	0.14	0.15	0.13	0.15	0.06	0.12
National language	0.14	0.14	0.13	0.16	0.07	0.13
Math	0.20	0.19	0.17	0.21	0.09	0.17
Social science	0.21	0.21	0.18	0.23	0.08	0.18
Biology	0.27	0.35	0.30	0.34	0.15	0.28
History	0.21	0.22	0.19	0.22	0.10	0.19
Geography	0.48	0.69	0.51	0.67	0.36	0.54
Chemistry	0.35	0.41	0.37	0.37	0.21	0.34
Physics	0.37	0.43	0.36	0.42	0.22	0.36
ICT	0.40	0.50	0.43	0.58	0.23	0.43
Art & technology	0.31	0.37	0.28	0.42	0.16	0.31
Physical education	0.19	0.18	0.16	0.20	0.09	0.16
Russian language	0.30	0.46	0.41	0.45	0.21	0.37
Music	0.39	0.41	0.35	0.40	0.18	0.35
Average	0.28	0.34	0.28	0.34	0.16	

Operational under-utilisation rate (OUUR)	Western region	Eastern region	Khangai region	Central region	Capital city	Average
English language	0.34	0.27	0.31	0.32	0.46	0.34
National language	0.32	0.30	0.31	0.25	0.33	0.30
Math	0.06	0.08	0.11	0.02	0.14	0.08
Social science	-0.01	-0.04	0.06	-0.05	0.20	0.03
Biology	-0.30	-0.70	-0.55	-0.55	-0.42	-0.51
History	0.00	-0.07	0.04	-0.03	0.09	0.01
Geography	-1.30	-2.41	-1.61	-2.11	-2.38	-1.96
Chemistry	-0.65	-1.04	-0.89	-0.71	-0.95	-0.85
Physics	-0.75	-1.14	-0.84	-0.93	-1.11	-0.95
ICT	-0.90	-1.46	-1.24	-1.65	-1.22	-1.29
Art & technology	-0.46	-0.84	-0.43	-0.92	-0.52	-0.63
Physical education	0.11	0.10	0.16	0.10	0.11	0.11
Russian language	-0.42	-1.26	-1.13	-1.08	-0.96	-0.97
Music	-0.85	-1.04	-0.82	-0.84	-0.72	-0.85
Average	-0.34	-0.66	-0.47	-0.58	-0.50	

Source: EMIS (2025). Authors' estimation.

A positive rate indicates the extent of under-utilisation, and a negative rate indicates the extent of over-utilisation, as per the guideline.

The analysis of the structural under-utilisation rate (SUUR) (Table 14) determined that structural under-utilisation of teachers (teachers instructing less than their 19 hours weekly) is common across regions. It depicts the reality of schools, including their pedagogical organisation, school size, and restrictions that hinder teachers from working at multiple schools or fulfilling their teaching obligations at nearby schools.

Our analysis of the operational under-utilisation rates (OUUR) (Table 14) revealed that teachers are over-utilised (teaching more than 19 hours weekly) in eight subjects across the regions.

This indicates the absence of teacher posting and transfer policies to regulate the redistribution of (surplus) teachers.

It is advised that the data must first be computed on a school-by-school and subject-by-subject basis if there is no policy to regulate provisions for teachers to work in two or more schools or to cover two or more subjects (Tournier et al., 2024). Therefore, the overall approach to computing rates of structural and operational under-utilisation should be employed for use at the district level.

Total under-utilisation rate (TUUR) is the sum of structural under-utilisation and operational under-utilisation (OUUR) (TUUR = SUUR + OUUR).

A negative TUUR indicates over-utilisation of teachers.

Analysis of TUURs (Table 15) indicates that teachers are over-utilised; teachers teach more than 19 hours weekly in 8 out of 14 subjects across the regions. Conversely, teachers are under-utilised, by teaching less than 19 hours weekly in other subjects, including physical education and history. The challenges of staffing inconsistencies and teacher utilisation ought to be carefully analysed further at school and district levels.

Table 15. Total under-utilisation rate, determined by region, of secondary teachers in public schools

	Western region	Eastern region	Khangai region	Central region	Capital city	Average
English language	0.48	0.42	0.44	0.47	0.52	0.47
National language	0.46	0.44	0.44	0.41	0.40	0.43
Math	0.26	0.27	0.28	0.23	0.23	0.26
Social science	0.21	0.17	0.24	0.18	0.28	0.22
Biology	-0.03	-0.36	-0.25	-0.22	-0.27	-0.22
History	0.21	0.15	0.23	0.19	0.18	0.19
Geography	-0.81	-1.72	-1.11	-1.43	-2.02	-1.42
Chemistry	-0.30	-0.62	-0.52	-0.34	-0.74	-0.51
Physics	-0.38	-0.71	-0.49	-0.51	-0.89	-0.59
ICT	-0.50	-0.96	-0.81	-1.08	-0.99	-0.87
Art & technology	-0.15	-0.46	-0.15	-0.50	-0.36	-0.33
Physical education	0.29	0.28	0.32	0.30	0.20	0.28
Russian language	-0.12	-0.80	-0.72	-0.63	-0.76	-0.60
Music	-0.46	-0.62	-0.47	-0.44	-0.54	-0.51
Average	-0.06	-0.32	-0.18	-0.24	-0.34	

Source: EMIS (2025). Authors' estimation.

SECTION 5: SECONDARY TEACHER MANAGEMENT POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

Recommendations Related to Teacher Education

Policy planners and legislators need to think and act to make teaching a profession that requires a high level of professional autonomy and has a collaborative culture (Schleicher, 2018).

The government committed to supporting the teacher education curriculum revision (and thereby capacity-building of the teacher workforce) of ITE institutes (Government of Mongolia, 2024a). The capacity-building activities of major teacher education providers are planned to be organised under the ongoing national-level project "RETEACH." Furthermore, RETEACH project implementers are aiming to develop "Benchmark Teacher Education in Mongolia" and the "Teacher Education Concept" for 2027–2032, under the leadership and coordination of the MoE. Through the synergy between policy and practice, this EU-funded project could have a significant impact on the scaling up and adaptation of pre- and in-service teacher training. Therefore, policy planners should initiate and lead consultations regarding a consolidated, common curriculum for teacher education programmes.

Curriculum and pedagogy must be revised and organised with a focus on fostering classroom teaching and the assessment of learning (Aldarmaa et al., 2022). High-quality ITE systems have five features:

1. They attract the best and most suitable candidates into the teaching profession.
2. They offer academic awards that are competitive, practice-focused, and built on relevant educational research.
3. They develop strong links between theory and practice in a way that helps students understand and explore the interconnectedness of educational theories and classroom practices.
4. They establish strong links between ITE and the CPD of teachers.
5. They ensure that all the above are underpinned by a clear understanding of evidence on how students learn to teach and that courses themselves are the constant subject of research development (Hayward, 2024).

ITE institutes should reconsider aligning the subject specialisation, knowledge, and skills delivered to their students in line with the curriculum reform at the secondary education level.

Educational and strategic leadership is necessary to make the NCTD operational and to administer effective CPD programmes for secondary teachers at the national level.

Affiliated research and innovation units will be established at professional educational institutions, and partnerships among employers, professional associations, teachers, and researchers will be strengthened (State Great Khural, 2020). This necessitates the establishment of a research centre at the new NCTD for teacher education. There is a need for more research to inform policy formulation, including by exploring the situation of undergraduate students working as teachers and the needs and motivations of new teachers, for example.

Collaboration With Civil Society Organisations

By law, NGOs and professional associations have the right to participate in teacher development activities (State Great Khural, 2023a). Thus, CSOs and teacher unions should be part of impactful discussions on improving secondary teacher management. VISION-2050 Long-Term Development Policy highlights the commitment to collaboration and engagement by multiple parties (governmental, non-governmental, and private sector organisations) in TPD activities. Main education stakeholders must take collective action to organise public information campaigns or advocacy work to raise teachers' reputation and social status in society, as specified in the relevant policy (Government of Mongolia, 2024a). Outreach to the media, career exhibitions, and public celebrations of teachers can be organised to enhance the image of teachers (European Commission et al., 2013). Furthermore, CSOs and teacher unions need to develop policy advocacy aimed at

implementing effective classroom management approaches and interventions in order to improve student behaviour as well. At the policy implementation level, educational specialists and government officials need to consider the nature of the transformative work of teachers and learn/have the same basic knowledge on how to support teacher autonomy and development.

General Recommendations on Improving the Quality of Teaching and Learning

Over the past decades, policy planners added subjects and extended total learning hours and years of schooling without much consideration of Mongolian learners. Students receive 727 more hours of instruction at the primary and lower secondary levels with fewer days allocated per school year. The total number of days devoted to teaching and learning in Mongolian schools is less than recommended and might not be quite appropriate for the provision of lower and upper secondary education at the country level. It has gradually forced 7–12 grade students to study more than 7 consecutive (7.0–7.3) hours per day, as shown in the effective instructional plan (Table A4). The longest recess is quite short, with only 10–15 minutes between periods (Table 4). The situation necessitates a deeper analysis of the number of days per school year in conjunction with the duration of the annual leave of teachers to foster better equity for both teachers and students.

The authors suggest decreasing daily learning hours to 6 for learners and increasing break times and the number of school days. Students should have daily break times of at least 20 minutes, and they need to study for more than 200 days per year.

School leaders need to follow instructional leadership for learning in terms of improving overall learning achievement and pedagogical development. They must strongly support teaching and learning and spend more time in classrooms to be engaged with teachers. In addition, decision-makers ought to increase community (local-level) involvement in the life of schools to address/minimise teacher absenteeism (referred to as 'invisible' teacher under-utilisation) and improve the professional accountability of teachers.

The MoE introduced the Pearson English Learning Programme and the math learning digital platform "Eduten" from Finland in public schools. These international programmes need to be studied to gain further insights in terms of whether they are improving teaching and learning as they are intended.

Policymakers, researchers, and teacher experts need to examine not only the existing teacher shortage but also the de-professionalisation of teaching as teachers crumble under multiple pressures, intensified work demands (thus feeling drained of their energy to work), and reduced opportunities to learn from colleagues (Hargreaves, 2000).

Teach for Mongolia

A few countries globally have brought personnel into secondary schools by teaming up with non-profit organisations, such as the Teach for All network (Tournier et al., 2024). The Teach for Mongolia programme was implemented in 2022. It recruits graduates to teach for 2 years in understaffed rural schools and to develop knowledge and insights from classrooms and local communities. The programme aims to develop participants into advocates of education reform as well. In all, 33 programme participants have worked in 14 schools (in 13 soums of 8 aimags) and had a positive learning impact on more than 7,400 students (Teach for Mongolia, 2025).

Increasing the Attractiveness of the Teaching Profession

The "[a]ttractiveness of the teaching profession is a set of characteristics of this profession that make it relatively attractive to skilled candidates with respect to other professions requiring the same level of qualification and that encourage competent teachers to stay in the profession" (European Commission et al., 2013, p. 13). Teachers' low status and an incoherent policy of salary and social welfare benefits discourage teachers and lead to dissatisfaction, as study results indicate (Tsomorlig et al., 2023). It is necessary to take appropriate actions to improve motivation and the attractiveness of the teaching profession to curb voluntary departures from teaching. The following strategies could be employed to improve educators' value and professional commitment and to motivate teachers to remain in the profession:

- Fostering interaction between urban and rural secondary teachers/education workers (Tournier et al., 2024);
- Implementing projects and scholarships/initiatives aimed at teacher exchanges, summer training, specialised training programmes, and engagement in Mongolia, regional countries, and international settings (Government of Mongolia, 2024a; State Great Khural, 2020) to promote teacher motivation and peer learning in Mongolia (Tuya et al., 2016);
- Providing opportunities and grants for teacher-led research and teacher-initiated research projects (Tuya et al., 2016).

Educators ought to be recognised for their work as knowledge producers and key figures in educational and social transformation, as is recommended (International Commission on the Futures of Education, 2021). This requires policy planners to change their minds and increase teacher involvement in decision-making on relevant policy development.

Recommendations Related to Current Policies and Procedures in Teacher Management

At the school level, secondary teachers receive learning and teaching resources and coverage of health and professional

development expenses. In Mongolia, all homeroom teachers are regulated to automatically receive an additional monthly salary (Table A7). Therefore, 12,270 (of 25,798) or 47.5% of secondary teachers receive (10%) additional salary as homeroom teachers. State-school bilingual (Cambridge) teachers are the top-earning secondary teachers (with 50% additional salary) among public schools in terms of their basic salary. The authors estimated that 20,902 teachers receive remuneration of around 46 billion 345 million MNT (above their basic salary) corresponding to their professional degrees in 2024-2025 school year. Rural teachers in villages and baghs receive more financial support with an extra 40% monthly local incentive and triennial monetary benefits as specified in the law.

Conversely, the teacher salary structure shows that the salary policy is not quite beneficial and is discouraging for teachers with fewer years of experience. EMIS data indicate that about a third of all teachers have 1–6 years of employment as of 2025. This means that up to 5% of their additional monthly salary is provided to them as an incentive for being public servants. In addition, new teachers are required to have at least 3 years of continuous employment in order to be eligible for the lowest level of professional degree/ranking.

In 2023, more than 75% of secondary school teachers were experienced teachers who received additional salaries and incentives. The remaining (new) teachers (those who had worked for less than 5 years received less additional salaries and benefits (General Authority for Education, 2023).

The government spent more than 90 billion MNT over three years for the performance evaluation (Table A2). However, high shares of (65-56%) secondary school teachers did not receive any bonuses from 2022 through 2024. More than 50% of survey respondents (Mongolian secondary school teachers) stated that they were dissatisfied with the results of external evaluation (Tsomorlig et al., 2023).

Both the MoE and the CEE need to review the test-based accountability system used for teacher performance evaluation. Some specialists claim that requiring professionals (teachers) to account for their performance conflicts with progressive, humanist educational values and the traditional autonomy of education professionals (Coleman & Earley, 2005).

Teacher standards will be created based on different skills and implemented in coordination with teacher development and HR policies (State Great Khural, 2020). Experts suggest that top school systems structure teacher pay and salary to reflect professional standards. The teacher appraisal system should be closely tied to career progression and professional development pathways in line with the teacher standards. Thus, teachers are encouraged to grow in their careers and work together to utilise best practices (Schleicher, 2018).

The Teacher's Three-Pillar Policy emphasised implementing measures to address gender equality issues in teacher management. Policy planners need to develop research capacity for teacher management and review teacher policy formulations to identify the level of impact on both new and experienced teachers as well.

Educational leaders need to strike a proper balance between performance management and creating the conditions for efficacy in the workplace (Coleman & Earley, 2005). Decentralising teacher professional development and teacher recruitment can better represent local needs and priorities. Upskilling teachers, especially in remote areas, is deemed less costly and more accessible. On the other hand, long-term planning is required for policy shifts and decentralisation related to school-level budget allocation and teacher evaluation. It is necessary to consider existing capacity at decentralised levels and ensure appropriate rules and regulations are in place (Tournier et al., 2024).

Recommendations Based on the Findings

The authors analysed future teacher needs and teacher allocation and utilisation at the secondary level.

For Mongolia in 2024–2025, GERs are projected to be 96% and 84% at the lower and upper secondary levels, respectively. PTR compares the number of enrolled pupils to the number of available teachers by province and region. It can be concluded that GER (Table 3) and PTR (Table 8 & Figure 3) values are relatively stable over the years. The PTR indicates normality and consistency in that it shows a smaller number of students allocated per teacher and PGs having fewer students than is stipulated national norms except in the capital city. Large class sizes should be addressed by taking into account the specific difficulties of certain schools in urban areas. There are not many disparities and imbalances observed in secondary teacher deployment in terms of PTRs across schools in Mongolia.

The absence of a teacher allocation policy impedes diagnoses of teacher deployment and redeployment across secondary schools. With regard to the learning coverage rate (Table 11), the analysis indicates that secondary schools are vastly understaffed across regions – though the comparison of results requires separate analysis of similar schools, considering regional disparities.

It can be concluded that STT is quite balanced in terms of secondary teachers' workload, performance, and utilisation in Mongolia in terms of its variation (Figure 6) compared to selected OECD countries. But STT per school year is a single indicator; thus, it cannot be interpreted without considering hidden teacher shortages and staffing situations at the individual school level.

The authors were unable to determine the attrition rate realistically due to the lack of availability of relevant data. The EMIS does not record data related to teacher attrition as explained above. The MoE reported that the average movement (movement related to either transferring to another school or leaving the profession) rate is 9.8% at the national level. Tentative analysis (Table 2) indicates similar results as 'attrition rates' from 2020 to 2025, however. For reasons of reliability, the calculation of teacher attrition was not used for further analysis. Nonetheless, the calculation provides a picture of current teacher movement.

Addressing Teacher Recruitment Needs and the Teacher Shortage

In all, 5,511 or 12.4% of the 44,220 HEI graduates over the last 2 years completed teacher education programmes. HEIs prepared 1,566 secondary teachers in 2024. This indicates that ITE institutes face difficulty in attracting enough candidates who meet the required standards corresponding to the demands of subject specialisation (Tournier et al., 2024). Our projection of future needs indicates that Mongolia needs more than 15,000 secondary teachers over the next 5 years. If elective subjects are determined and accounted for adequately, then future needs might increase more than projected.

A MNUE representative stated that 12,128 people will complete teacher education programmes and graduate with pedagogical degrees from 30 ITE institutes (4 state-owneded and 26 non-state-owned) from 2025 to 2028 (ParliamenMN, 2025c). It should also be noted that there are about 20,000 potential secondary teacher candidates in the Mongolian labour market at present. Therefore, policy planners need to develop and implement appropriate strategies to address the current teacher shortage and ensure adequate allocation of teachers to secondary schools.

The government must develop and employ a teacher allocation policy to prevent deepening inequalities in the system. These could include:

- Sending new teachers to remote areas or to underperforming schools if they received a full scholarship to complete their teacher education programme
- Incentivise high-performing, competent teachers to teach in underperforming schools to remove bottlenecks
- Incentivise candidates with housing benefits, the provision of transport expenses, and accelerated career progression, and encourage their working in remote schools for 3 years
- Institutionalise a rotation of teachers to improve the mix of new and experienced, qualified teachers in remote, hard-to-reach areas, as exists in the Republic of Korea and Japan (Tournier et al., 2024)

Raise Teachers' Basic Salary Sufficiently to Tackle New Teacher Recruitment and Retention at the Primary and Secondary Levels. There is a need to reiterate that education is the priority sector for the country's development as stipulated in the law. The government promised to raise the average salary of teachers in line with the national average. On the other hand, policy planners explain that teacher salaries cannot be raised alone and should be in line with other civil servants. This unclear situation has largely contributed to the creation of the existing complex salary structure. Therefore, the government must make the firm decision to consolidate the salary structure by increasing the basic salary and paying teachers enough to make the profession attractive.

Teachers' salary and remuneration system is also underscored in the VISION-2050 Long-Term Development Policy, which states that teachers' actual salary is ensured to be at a higher rate than the country's average. Salary acts as an important factor attracting teachers and can influence both teacher motivation and the profession's perceived esteem in a country, as prior research revealed (Tournier et al., 2024).

Support New or Recent Graduates of Initial Teacher Education Institutes in Joining the Profession. Decision-makers have already presented requirements for graduates and current students to enter teaching if they completed their studies with a full government scholarship. It is regulated that a full scholarship for an accredited undergraduate or master's degree programme in education requires them to start their employment within 12 months and work for at least 3 years in a rural school or a local educational institution, or at least 5 years in a school in the capital city. If graduates do not follow this regulation, they will be responsible for paying back the tuition fees (Government, 2024f).

Induction programmes need to be established to better retain early career teachers (Government of Mongolia, 2024a) and to increase the prestige or attractiveness of beginning a career in teaching (Tournier et al., 2024). Novice teachers need ongoing support, so school leaders need to provide early career support (European Commission et al., 2013) to them, including:

- A continuum of support from ITE through CPD
- A reduced workload during the induction period
- Mentoring by expert teachers
- Guidance by peers (fellow trainees and more experienced teachers)
- Ongoing links with schools or education departments at universities at the induction stage

Early career support as well as CPD and improved recognition were highly recommended for improving the effectiveness and attractiveness of teaching (European Commission et al., 2013).

Attract Those Who Gained Teaching Degrees Within the Past 10 Years and Encourage Them to Enter Teaching. Policy planners also promised to make strides towards utilising existing HRs (e.g. teacher candidates who did not join the profession after graduation) competently by allowing individuals to attend special programmes and join the teacher workforce at the secondary education level (Government of Mongolia, 2024a). More detailed and sophisticated plans and strategies need to be developed accordingly in terms of attracting and retaining the best BEds to enter teaching. They might include the following:

- Providing teachers financial assistance from soum development funds, offering jobs for their families if they make a choice to work in rural, remote schools for at least 3 consecutive years;
- Offering increased professional development and motivational activities, such as a paid study leave abroad after 3 years of teaching;
- Relaxing the requirements of and providing professional ranking directly as a recognition of making the choice to teach in underserved schools in rural areas or in schools with higher PTRs in urban areas.

Continue Offering Special Training Programmes and Hiring Contract Teachers. The Mongolian government made entry into the teaching profession easier for professionals in other fields. More than 50 individuals have completed a 45-day training programme and become the first contract teachers in the country (MoE, 2025d). Thus, some people might see an opportunity and shift from other career paths to the teaching profession. Schools need to offer early career support for contract teachers to preserve the quality of education.

Policy planners are responsible for setting limits/restrictions to training contract teachers, and they should not amount to more than 100 contract (primary and secondary) teachers per school year for two reasons. First, Mongolia has a sufficient number of teacher candidates with pedagogical degrees. Second, the government might need to learn from the practices of other countries in this regard. Experts argue that policy planners should prevent creating a dual labour market in the secondary education system (Tournier et al., 2024). Research regarding contract teachers has often revealed that their long-term use can reduce professionalism and overall instructional quality (Tournier et al., 2024). The MoE needs to consider policy formulations regarding the gradual reclassification of contract teachers as civil servants in the future.

Addressing Secondary Teacher Utilisation

Data analysis on TUUR (Table 15) revealed that both structural and operational under-utilisation exist in the secondary education system. Policy planners are working to address the shortage of teachers through the mapping of primary and secondary schools (Ministry of Education and Science, 2020a).

Structural under-utilisation is caused by the pedagogical organisation of secondary education, school size, and 'one teacher per school' and 'one teacher per subject' policies. Operational under-utilisation is the result of teacher management inefficiencies in terms of regulating deployment or transfers (Tournier et al., 2024).

Teachers are over-utilised in 8 out of 14 subjects across the regions. Over-utilisation (where teachers teach more than their STT) leads to resentment and low job satisfaction, which will influence teachers' motivation and commitment (Tournier et al., 2024). Further analysis of teacher utilisation should be conducted with a cluster of similar schools depending on school size, location, and student enrolment.

Conversely, teachers are under-utilised, by teaching less than 19 hours weekly, in six disciplines. Data analysis indicates that a significant number of subject teachers are under-utilised in all regions. Policy planners need to carefully examine structural under-utilisation and develop more concise planning for pedagogical organisation at the school level.

Structural under-utilisation could be addressed by policies that

- allow teachers to meet their full STT obligations in different schools or subjects; or
- offer existing teachers increased overtime pay to deliver more classes.

Teachers should be allowed to teach one subject by working in different schools to reach their STT. For instance, policy planners could encourage and regulate teachers to work in two schools if they are located close by (e.g. a less than 1.5-hour drive between schools in rural areas). Attentive micro-planning with geospatial school mapping is needed for this type of policy (Tournier et al., 2024).

Operational under-utilisation requires elaboration of teacher posting and transfer policies that enable the redistribution of teachers. Contextualised and complementary analysis are required to investigate further the staffing situation and teacher utilisation in different geographical locations.

Provincial and district-level specialists should be responsible for analysing secondary teacher utilisation at the school level and utilising this information in teacher policy reform.

Institutional Capacity. HR management for secondary teachers needs to be linked to the EMIS to allow reliable analysis, identifying teacher management issues (local needs, understaffed schools, etc.) and make decisions based on the analysis. In this regard, the Education Information Technology Centre should explore the good practices of Senegal's MIRADOR system for HR management in the development and expansion of the "Teacher Development" platform. The technical skills needed include knowing how to read and analyse the data and

how to use that data to formulate policy and inform planning (GPE KIX, 2023).

Previous reports have indicated that the institutional capacity of secondary teacher management needs to be strengthened at both the policy planning and policy implementation levels (Ministry of Education and Science, 2020a; UNESCO, 2020). The following strategies should be considered to improve institutional capacity and regulatory frameworks in teacher management policy (Tournier et al., 2024):

- Early involvement of political, legislative, civil, technical, and financial specialists in decision-making models and levels;
- Resulting clarity and coherence of legal and regulatory frameworks, which should accurately determine individual roles and responsibilities;
- Training of all specialists in HR management procedures, including teachers and unions, to improve their understanding of and respect for their rights and responsibilities, thereby reducing the likelihood of errors and the scope of teacher management inefficiencies.

Building technical capacity can deepen understanding and ownership of the system (GPE KIX, 2023).

SECTION 6: CONCLUSION

General Considerations for Policy Management

The significant challenges teachers must confront include dealing with diverse students in conditions of increasing moral uncertainty, where many methods and approaches are available, and more and more social groups voice their opinions seeking to influence them (Hargreaves, 2000). Exclusion, deficit thinking, and narrow epistemic assumptions should no longer abruptly drive teacher management policies at the secondary education level. Decision-makers need to consolidate various existing policy documents related to teacher management at both the primary and secondary levels. Policymakers are recommended to consider the interests, beliefs, motivations, and fears of the people (i.e. the larger, invisible part) rather than focus on smaller parts – laws, regulations, and institutions – when they reform the education system (Schleicher, 2018). They need to have a good understanding of path dependence, learn from past experience, and emphasise caution in their decision-making to reflect the fast-changing context (Hayward, 2024).

The enormous levels of state budget involved in teacher management and teacher management itself affect the whole population in the end. Policy issues in secondary teacher management can be addressed through interconnected components – teacher supply, allocation, and utilisation.

Inconsistency in teacher deployment is common, and effective teacher management and deployment processes require much more thorough analysis and rigorous systemic reform. Therefore, the MoE needs to set up collaborative mechanisms to consult with teachers and other stakeholders to initiate social dialogue on teacher policy development and to better respond to existing school contexts at the national level. It must be a top priority of the National Education Council to support this social dialogue and improve learning and teaching throughout the education system.

Strategies for Addressing Secondary Teacher Supply

Legislators need to integrate and simplify the different incentives and additional salaries of teachers at the policy level, within a certain time frame. The effectiveness of the enormous funding for current (and previous) students in teacher education programmes needs to be assessed. Policy planners should attempt to raise teachers' basic salary in terms of properly regulating available state budgets and addressing teacher distribution and utilisation.

The teacher salary structure should be regulated to reflect teachers' professional standards. The government should attract and encourage effective teachers with a swifter salary progression. Effective teachers have the requisite content knowledge and pedagogical approaches. They know how to teach content concisely and accurately. Effective teachers also identify alternative pathways for students and focus on stimulating thinking and learning (Béteille & Evans, 2021).

Strategies for Improving Teacher Allocation

Policy planners need to rethink the allocation of qualified secondary teachers, considering student enrolments, the quality of rural schools, and the natural and geographical characteristics of the regions. Without purposeful allocation systems, teachers are not distributed as efficiently as possible.

Managing teacher allocation and redeployment between schools or regions should be considered, and policy needs to be developed as specified in the law (State Great Khural, 2023a). MoE experts ought to elaborate the teacher allocation policy in accordance with regions and their local development centres, as detailed in the regional development concept (State Great Khural of Mongolia, 2024b). The EMIS and data collection should also incorporate secondary teacher management modules and be consistent with the divisions of regions, which is also specified in the regional development concept.

Strategies to Improve Teacher Utilisation

Teacher utilisation should focus on utilising current teaching staff, so existing norms likely need to be reconsidered to ensure the current school needs. Policy planners and implementers should investigate the structural and operational under-utilisation of secondary teachers as well. Structural under-utilisation may require realigning the pedagogical organisation of schools and teachers to make the teaching workforce more efficient in distinctive geographical environments with remote villages situated not far from each other. Multiple subject specialisation and multi-grade teaching could be considered and carefully employed in special cases, such as in hard-to-reach schools. The National Education Council must consider all these aspects and consult with the main education stakeholders in policy development, including teachers who better understand realities.

Broad Strategies for Secondary Teacher Management

Effective secondary teacher management in Mongolia requires collaborative system leadership and efficient policy implementation to address the on-the-ground needs and realities of all students, teachers, and employees. Many issues are interrelated, and improvement requires systemic strategies. Therefore, policy planners and legislators should work to strengthen the system rather than address a particular issue that they see and ignore other policy areas. They must identify crosscutting issues and address vicious circles in teacher shortages.

Multifaceted approaches should be employed in managing primary and secondary teachers, including immediate measures to fill current vacancies and long-term strategies to attract and retain qualified teachers across the system. First, legislators and other parties need to review policies and programmes related to teacher management and their implementations, as is comprehensively detailed in the Education Sector Mid-Term Development Plan (Ministry of Education and Science, 2020a). Second a thorough analysis of teacher management at the system level, including country-specific problems, can provide the most valuable information to feed into teacher policy reform. Country-specific problems include rural/boarding schools, male teachers, teachers with disabilities, and minority groups. These approaches could enable policymakers to carefully evaluate policy alternatives to enhance secondary teacher management.

Policy experts have advised that for results to be achieved optimally, policy planners need to develop indicators for the performance of policy programmes implemented in the sector (Open Society Forum, 2024). These indicators need to be consistent with the long- and medium-term development policies of Mongolia and the SDGs.

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APPENDIX

Table A1. Components of variable costs per student

1	Child protection
2	Health support
3	Teacher's continuous development
4	Teaching and learning resources
5	Digital use (international programs)
6	Equipment, related payments and compensations
7	Salary funds

Source: Ministry of Education (2024).

Table A2. Bonus provided for performance evaluation for all teachers, 2022-2024

№	Teachers' performance evaluation	Number of teachers, who received bonus	Funding spent for performance evaluation
1	2022	12,296	14,543,753,700.00
2	2023	14,623	24,382,121,400.00
3	2024	16,242	51,745,886,500.00
TOTAL		43,161	90,671,761,600.00

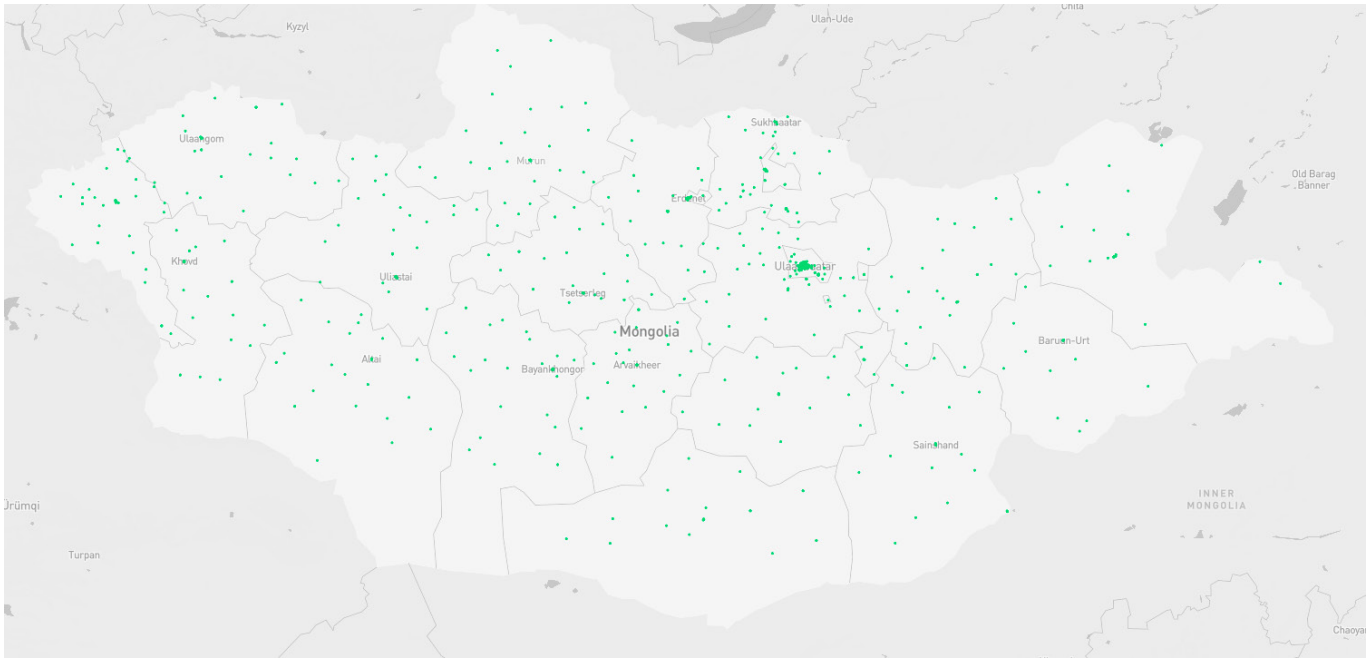
Source: ParliamentMN (2025b).

Table A3. Regions, by aimags and districts

1	Western region	Khovd; Uvs; Bayan-Ulgii; Govi-Altai; Zavkhan
2	Eastern region	Dornod; Khentii; Sukhbaatar
3	Khangai region	Arkhangai; Uvurkhangai; Bayankhongor; Bulgan; Orkhon; Khuvsgul
4	Central region	Govisumber; Darkhan-Uul; Dornogovi; Dundgovi; Umnugovi; Selenge; Tuv
5	Ulaanbaatar (capital city)	Khan-Uul district; Bayangol district; Bayanzurkh district; Songinokhairkhan district; Chingeltei district; Baganuur district; Bagakhangai district; Nalaikh district

Source: EMIS (2025).

Figure A1. General secondary school map, by aimag and capital city



Source: EMIS (2025).

Table A4. **Instructional plan**

Level	Grade	School week	Total learning hour			Weekly learning hour
Primary	Grade 1	34 weeks	727		3895	23
	Grade 2		736			23
	Grade 3	35 weeks	736			23
	Grade 4		800			25
	Grade 5		896			28
Lower secondary	Grade 6	36 weeks	957		4422	29
	Grade 7		1155			35
	Grade 8		1155			35
	Grade 9		1155			35
Upper secondary		37 weeks	Compulsory	Elective	3604	
	Grade 10		986	204		35
	Grade 11		986	204		35
	Grade 12		612	612		36

Source: Ministry of Education (2023c).

Table A5. **Subject learning hours in grades 6-9, lower secondary level**

№	Subject		Grade			
			VI	VII	VIII	IX
1	Mongolian language, script	Mongolian language	99	66	66	66
2		National script	66	66	66	66
3		Literature	66	66	66	66
4	Mathematics		165	132	132	132
5	ICT		33	33	33	33
6	Natural science	Physics	33	66	66	66
7		Biology	33	66	66	66
8		Chemistry	33	66	66	66
9	Social science	Civil ethical education	66	66	66	66
10		Geography		33	33	33
11		History	33	66	66	66
12		Social studies		33	33	33
13	Art	Drawing	33	33	33	
14		Music	33	33	33	33
15	Design technology	Drawing and art	66	66	66	66
		Technology				
16	Physical and health education	Physical education	66	66	66	66
17		Health education	33	33	33	33
18	Foreign language	English language	99	99	99	99
19		Russian language		66	66	99
Total learning hours			957	1155	1155	1155

Source: Ministry of Education (2023c).

Table A6. Subject learning hours in grades 10–12, upper secondary level

Subject				Grade		
				X	XI	XII
Compulsory	1	Mongolian language		34	34	34
	2	National script		68	68	68
	3	Literature		34	34	34
	4	Civil ethical education		68	68	68
	5	Mathematics		102	102	102
	6	ICT		34	34	34
	7	Biology		68	68	
	8	Physics		68	68	
	9	Chemistry		68	68	
	10	Mongolian history		34	34	
	11	Social studies		68	68	
	12	Geography		68	68	
	13	English/Russian		102	102	102
	14	Physical education		68	68	68
	15	Health education		34	34	34
	16	Design technology		68	68	68
Elective	1	Language	Mongolian language, script	204	204	612
	2		Literature			
	3		English			
	4		Russian			
	5	Mathematics				
	6	Natural science	Biology			
	7		Physics			
	8		Chemistry			
	9	Social science	Social studies			
	10		History			
	11		Geography			
	12		Business studies			
	13	Design technology	Design, drawing & art			
	14		Technics, technology			
	15		Information technology			
Teacher-managing hours				102		
Total learning hours				1190	1190	1224

Source: Ministry of Education (2023c).

Table A7. Teacher salary structure, including additional salaries and incentives

Wage and incentive	Indicators	Explanation
1. Additional salary of class/homeroom teacher	10% of monthly basic salary, since 2007	Every pedagogical group requires to have a class teacher. Class teachers receive additional salary, as homeroom teachers. (MECS, MoLSP and MoF, 2007).
2. Additional salary of leading methodology unit	5% of monthly basic salary, since 2007	At school level, some teachers lead methodology unit (of social science teachers etc.) and some teachers in charge of classrooms or laboratories receive additional monthly salary (MECS, MoLSP and MoF, 2007).
3. Additional salary for managing laboratories or classroom	5% of monthly basic salary, since 2007	
4. Incentive of professional rank/ degree	Shared percentage of monthly basic salary 10-20%, since 2007	Teachers are required to fulfill certain requirements to be entitled to the monthly incentives\remuneration of professional degree (Ministry of Education, 2024a). Methodologists, lead teachers and advisor teachers receive 10%, 15% and 20% above their monthly basic salary respectively.
5. Incentive for doctoral degree holder	15%-20%, since 1995	Doctoral degree holder – teachers are equally granted monthly incentive (PhD -15%; ScD-20%)
6. Local incentive for rural teachers ('hardship allowance')	20-40%, since 2001,	All rural teachers who work in soums\villages and baghs directly receive monthly local incentive of 40%, all teachers who work at the centre of provinces and three remote districts of capital city receive monthly local incentive of 20% respectively (Government of Mongolia, 2024d).
7. Incentive for skills	10-25%, since 1995	Teachers need to fulfill certain requirements to receive the quarterly skill incentives. School administrators exercise the right to issue skill incentive of 10 to 25% of the basic salary (MoES, MoLSP and MoF, 2021).
8. Incentive for performance evaluation and work results	15 - 40%	Based on the performance evaluation, teachers are ranked from 1 to 5 in the teachers' index and receive a quarterly bonus if they are ranked in places 1– 4 (Government of Mongolia, 2024e). Top performing teachers ranked 1 receive 40% above their basic salary. Teachers ranked 2 to 4 receive a bonus of 25%, 20% and 15% respectively.
9. Incentive for public servants depending on their year of service	1-25%	Incentive for public servants is offered for all (except for teachers who are in their first year of employment) teachers depending on the number of employment years (Government of Mongolia, 2018b).
10. Meal allowance	107,500 - 172,000 MNT	All teachers are eligible to receive monthly meal allowances (on average) of 107,500MNT per month in rural (aimag, soum and bagh) schools and 172,000MNT in schools of the capital city above their basic salary.

Source: Primary & secondary education sub-sector study report (2019) and Authors.

Table A8. Professional degrees/ranks obtained by primary and secondary teachers

Professional degree/rank	Regular teacher	Methodologist	Lead teacher	Advisor	Total
Secondary teachers	12,013	7,422	6,107	256	25,798
Primary teachers	4,855	3,616	3,375	126	11,972
Sum	16,868	11,038	9,482	382	37,770

Source: EMIS (2025).

Table A9. Accredited initial teacher education institutes

Accredited Universities in Teacher Education Program	
1	National University of Mongolia (NUM)
2	Mongolian National University of Education (MNUE)
3	Etugen University
4	Otgontenger University
5	School of Education in University of Finance and Economy
6	Orkhon University
7	Ikh Zasag University
8	CITI University
9	Ulaanbaatar Erdem University
10	International Ulaanbaatar University
11	Ider University
12	Education Culture and Law Institute

Source: Mongolian National Council for Educational Accreditation (2025).

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